

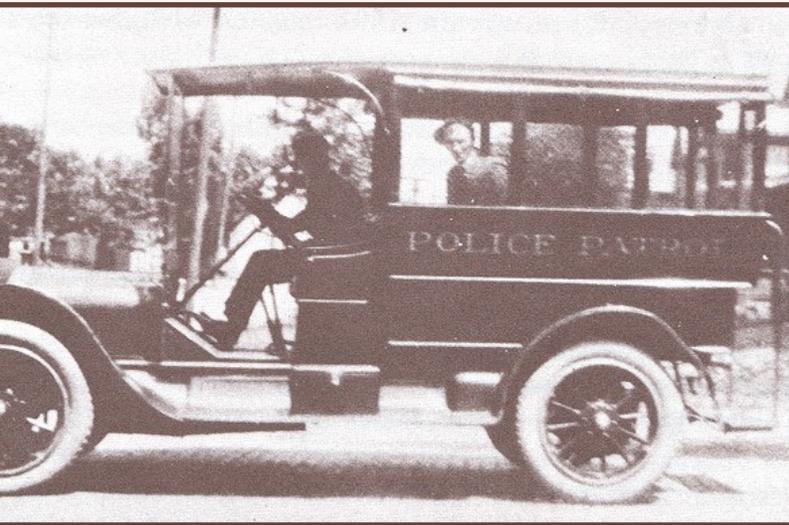
HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

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Barberton in the 1910s

By: Sarah Hays, Local History Librarian



Barberton's first police car

1910-1919 was a busy decade for Barberton. During this period, the city's population doubled to 18,811 and the town grew physically as well.

One substantial change was the improvement of community services when the Fire Department modernized with the purchase of their first pumper truck in 1912. The department's inability to fight a fire on Second Street in 1911 proved there was not enough water pressure in the old model to put out fires. The Police Department bought their first patrol car in 1913. New community facilities were also built, including Barberton Citizens' Hospital, parks, and many schools to serve the growing community. The Anna Dean Farm and Barber's mansion were built too.

The biggest event to impact Barberton, and the world, during this decade was World War I. It began on June 28, 1914, with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, of the

Austro-Hungarian Empire in Sarajevo. Due to the European countries having agreements to support and defend each other in time of war, the war expanded worldwide within a month.

One effect the war had on the United States was an increase in production needs to supply the war effort. This increase in production brought the country out of an economic depression, and coupled with the president's order to increase the size of the Army and Navy in 1916, brought a period of much needed prosperity to this country.

Since Barberton was a city of many diverse industries, this boom greatly affected life here. The Portage Rubber Company announced plans to double the capacity of its plants and Portage Rubber Company increased production to 2,000 tires per a day. By war's end, Babcock and Wilcox had produced over 500 naval boilers and about 1,000 merchant units for the emergency fleet. So many new workers arrived in town that housing soon became scarce. Workers shared the overcrowded rooms that were available, and sleeping in shifts became common.

On the home front, many shortages developed in Barberton, as elsewhere. People were limited to the amount of sugar and salt they could purchase and coal became scarce. Communities grew extra food in "War Gardens" to support the citizens at home.

When the war ended, the entire country celebrated. In Barberton, all of the factories closed for the day. On May 17, 1919, there was a big welcome home parade. There were five bands, arches and flags elaborately displayed along the streets of Barberton, and numerous city officials, the Ladies Band, and other dignitaries participated.



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