Spindletop changes everything. Oil production in the US instantly increases 50%. Within a year 500 oil companies are born, including Texaco and Gulf. The price of oil plummets from 2 dollars a barrel to 3 cents. It's cheaper than water. Cheap enough to turn into gasoline. Around the turn of the century, millions of Americans live their entire lives within 50 miles of their home. Gasoline makes the US mobile in ways never thought possible. Today the average American drives the equivalent of 2 and a half round-trips to the moon. One man will seize the opportunity in cheap oil and change the face of the nation.

Detroit, 1908.

Henry Ford: maverick, visionary, obsessive. A man with a bad reputation. Recently let go by the company that will soon become Cadillac, he launches his third attempt to build cars. But these will be different. There are only 8,000 cars in the U.S...expensive toys for the wealthy, like owning a private jet today. “There were dozens and dozens of small companies building cars that were essentially play things for the rich. They were notoriously unreliable, they were not standardized. They were hand-built, essentially. And if you were to own a car, you practically had to have your own mechanic on staff as well to keep the thing running.” Nobody's figured out how to make a car that's affordable and low-cost. Henry Ford is about to change that. It won't just change how cars are made, it will change how everything is made.

Detroit 1913.

Henry Ford isn't just making a revolutionary car, he's making it in a revolutionary way - The production line: high volume, low cost, products identical. "The man who places the part doesn't fasten it. The man who puts in a bolt doesn't put on the nut, and the man who puts the nut doesn't tighten it." Work is standardized. Simplified. It's a more efficient way to make...everything. Mass production sweeps the nation. And it changes the world. “To be an assembly-line worker, you did not have to have a high degree of skill, You didn't have to be a card-carrying machinist or whatever it might be. All you had to do was to learn how to turn the same wrench on the same nut 5,000 times a day and that was your job.” Prices plummet. In 1913, a Model T cost two years' wages, by 1924, it's just three months. “The Model T, without question, is one of the single objects in the history of America that changed America. What Henry Ford developed was the car for the common man.” The impact of this little car is massive - 300,000 sold in 1913. By 1924, there's a new Model T every 24 seconds. “Suddenly, this form of transportation, which was entirely new, was something that people could actually engage in. They could afford it. It wasn’t like a spaceship where there are only several of them and they're millions and millions of dollars.”
Washington State, 1915.
The Model T success is creating a nation of student drivers. Roscoe Sheller used to be a dairy farmer. He's about to start a new job - Car salesman. The pay is fantastic. The only problem is... he can't drive.
“You're not riding a horse, just take it easy.” His boss offers to teach him the morning of his first day at work. It's not long before Roscoe has his first customers. Luckily, there's a manual called "How to drive an Automobile."

"Cranking is an art that is essential for the new motorists to become proficient in....It is always a good plan, undoubtedly a good idea, to lean to steer first. Steering is a very simple manipulation....An excellent plan for the beginning is to find a long, straight and slightly downhill road free of other traffic... "

Roscoe takes his customers for a test drive. Most are used to a horse and buggy. "The majority of first-time drivers completely ignored corners. Instead of using a brake, they shouted "Whoa" at the top of their lung power. Often, they demand I teach his wife and every kid old enough to reach the pedals"

America's love affair with the automobile has begun. “The American has a great sense of freedom and not being tied to one place. If I don't like it here, I'm gonna pack everything in the car. They don't require anybody's permission. They don't have to sign out, and the automobile really enables that”

"When I came to America, the first thing I want to think about, "How can I get hold of a car?" I had a love affair with cars from the very beginning because this method of movement that can enable you to see vast, expensive space, is something I never experienced in China. Never. This is something I wanted to do almost more than anything else, is to buy a car.” Roscoe Sheller is one of America's pioneer car dealers. Today, Americans drive 2.7 trillion miles a year in vehicles that are descendants of Henry Ford's Model T.

Cars. By the Roaring "20s” they are transforming the lives of millions. Now you don't have to live near work. Cities explode outwards, creating giant suburbs. Brand-new highways are built. Shopping malls with giant car parks.
Prohibition
America the Story of US: Episode 8: Boom: 31:40-43:47
Transcript

It's 1920. The country is at a turning point. For the first time more Americans live in urban areas than rural. Cities become a symbol for decadence and danger: jazz, cabaret, liquor. “It will take the shirt off your back! It should be whipped out the land of America with a whip of scorpions!” Billy Sunday, retired baseball player, reformed drinker, the most famous preacher in the country. America has a booze problem. At its peak, there is a "saloon" for every 300 people - 20 times more than today. 50% of all crime involves alcohol. Billy Sunday isn't the only one who thinks alcohol is ruining America. Religious group rally. Industrialists say it affects productivity. Women campaign against drunken men beating up their wives. Alcohol is the crystal meth of its day.

For many, a total ban is the only solution. On January 16, 1919, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution is ratified. Prohibition makes the manufacture and sale of alcohol illegal. “This period in the early 20th century just captured a whole swirl of desire to kind of rein in what's happening, shape it, come up with new policies that will ensure that people would get along, they will live virtuous lives. So Prohibition is this grand experiment.”

But Prohibition also creates a nation of criminals. This is one of them - Willie Carter Sharpe, 26, thrill seeker, outlaw. They call her "The Run-Running Queen". Its 1928, Prohibition is in its 8th year. "It was the excitement that got me. We were mostly kids who liked the excitement - cars scattering, dashing along the streets." Behind her is a convoy of moonshine. Franklin County, Virginia is one of the biggest moonshine producers in the country. Bootleg liquor headed across the county line. Sharpe's job, decoy, to distract the Feds. In Franklin County, 99 residents out of 100 are thought to be involved. Secret stills are everywhere. Moonshine is flooding across the country - 100 million gallons a year. Even the President has a private wine cellar “It seems so ridiculous. Anyone would ever tell you, you cannot legislate morality. You certainly can't stop people from drinking. People need a drink at the end of day.” Outrunning the cops is the new extreme sport. Locals witness Carter Sharpe in action, "I saw her go right through our town. There was a federal car after her. They were trying to shoot down her tires. She was driving at 75 miles an hour...She got away." She gets away because of this: an ordinary car souped-up for more horsepower. A supercharger rams additional air into the cylinders. The result, America's first "Muscle cars." They're so popular, they kick-start a new national pastime - stock-car racing. Even today, there's a driving maneuver called "the bootleg turn." But there's a darker side to bootlegging. The illegal liquor trade is worth tens of billions in today's money. And it's not Willie Carter Sharpe who's in charge. Its gangsters.
Organized crime has a stranglehold stretching across the country. Lucky Luciano in New York. Frank "Chee-Chee" DeMayo, Kansas City. Joseph "Iron Man" Ardizzone in LA. The Licavoli family, Detroit. Harry Rosen, Philadelphia. Charles "King" Solomon, Boston. And in Chicago, the most notorious gangster of all, Al Capone. He earns over a hundred dollars a minute from illegal alcohol - that's 1,500 dollars today. But his luck is about to change.

2122 North Clark Street, Headquarters of Capone's bitter rival, George "Bugs" Moran. February 14, 1929. Two men in police uniform arrive. Normally the cops leave without arrests after a quick payoff. But this isn't a normal day. And these aren't regular cops. What happens on Valentine's Day 1929 will change the course Prohibition in America.

Chicago, 1929. More than half the city's cops are on the take. In a North Side garage, seven gangsters are lined up. They think it's routine. But today is no shakedown. Behind them a group of men arrive, two carrying Thompson submachine guns. It's the most notorious slaying in Mob history. The question is, who's hit: The police or Al Capone?

and photographers flood the scene. shocking picture will appear in newspapers around the US - this is Prohibition has come to. America has enough. The federal government is act. Major Calvin Goddard, methodical, weapons expert, pioneer of a brand-science - ballistic forensics first time, vital clues like bullet casings murder scene can be analyzed.

Goddard's work leads to one of the first forensic crime labs in America. It will revolutionize the work of the FBI. His job, to find out who is behind the Saint Valentine's Day massacre. When a gun fires, it leaves mark on bullet casings as unique as a fingerprint. By analyzing casings at the murder scene, Goddard establishes that just two "Tommy" guns were fired. Neither is a police gun. Everything points to Capone. But convicting Capone of murder won't be easy - he has an alibi. He was in Florida at that time. They'll have to get him on a different charge.

Frank Wilson, accountant. A very different kind of crime buster. He's an agent of the Bureau of Internal Revenue in DC. He's going after Capone on tax evasion. In 1913, the 16th Amendment gives the Federal Government the right to tax personal income. Even criminals have to pay taxes. Capone is one of the richest men in the country, he should be paying 25% tax. Between 1925 and 1929, he pays nothing. "The defendant himself had no bank accounts, kept no book records of activities, bought no properties in his own name. He conducted all his financial dealings with currency." To secure a conviction, Wilson needs to prove Capone has an income on which he is paying no tax.
He uncovers a ledger, confiscated from a business called Hawthorne Smoke Shop, thought to be a Capone front. It's a detailed record of a gambling business but no taxes have been paid on the income from this business. If Wilson can establish a direct link with Capone, he may be able to nail the nation's most notorious criminal on taxes evasion. Wilson studies the ledger, but can't connect it to Capone. Then, a breakthrough - the handwriting. "A careful comparison of the handwringing in the ledger with specimens from various employees of Capone organization established that the handwriting belonged to the managers and cashier of the Hawthorne Smoke Shop." The handwriting proves Capone's connection to the business. It's the vital evidence. On October 18, 1931, Al Capone is found guilty of tax evasion and sentenced to 11 years in prison. “Frank Wilson found out that he was not paying his taxes. So I think this man who had done all these other things, ordered the execution of lots of people, was responsible for the murder of people, and they get him on tax evasion.”

Tax, is no small matter. Prohibition has been a disaster, it has massively increased the stranglehold of organized crime. It's cost the government billions in lost tax revenue. Gangsters like Capone have become rich at America's expense. But now more than ever, the government needs cash. The stock-market crash in 1929 has brought the economy to its knees. The government is broke. A levy on alcohol is a solution. On December 5, 1933 Prohibition is abolished, killed by the need for cold, hard cash. It's an extraordinary U-turn – the only time in history an amendment to the Constitution is repealed. The 3 decades of economic boom, fueled by oil, cars and the rapid growths of megacities are now over. The country has hard times ahead.