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The town of Gary, Indiana had gone from booming successes driven by the steel and manufacturing industry, to a decline of its economic resources and crippling hardships faced by the void left by the diminished presence of its industry. The history of Gary demonstrated the repercussions de-industrialization had on a city built on manufacturing.

In its height, Gary, Indiana was a powerhouse of American steel production and manufacturing. The town was founded in 1906 near Lake Michigan and served as the U.S. Steel Corporation's Midwestern production center. Dubbed the "City of the Century", by the 1930s the city had a population of over 100,000 residents. The Great Depression sent the city into heightened unemployment rates. However, the economy was revitalized by the increased steel demand caused during World War II (Mohl).

The conclusion of the war in the 1940s brought with it a diminished need for steel. By the 1960s, the reduced manufacturing and production of steel caused unemployment to rise again in the city. By 1979 the chairman of the US Federal Reserve Bank announced "a policy designed to quell inflation no matter what the consequences might be for employment" which culminated in a further decline in manufacturing employment in Gary (Rapoport). In addition to the economic decline of the city, environmental concerns had grown in the wake of the

industrial activities. Environmental protection programs had been established such as the Northwest Indiana Environmental Initiative Action Plan to help combat damage to the environment. The program stated that “past industrial practices in Northwest Indiana ... have resulted in significant contamination of the soils and ground water” and outlined the measures needed to be taken to address the contamination (“Northwest Indiana Environmental Initiative Action Plan”).

By 2012, the steel industry still employed 20,000 workers in Gary, Indiana. However, this number was only a fifth of the 100,000 workers who were sustained in its old economy. The city’s mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson estimated that the “unemployment rate is at least 20 percent” in Gary. Freeman-Wilson also stated that the city had “a projected \$15 million deficit on its budget of \$60 million.” Without the significant presence of the steel industry, Gary’s public resources had also suffered. Under the strain of the deficit, the city’s 51 of the city’s 57 parks were unmaintained. The city was forced to shut down their main downtown public library and lay off 169 of their 732 teachers (Terry).

Through its hardships Gary, Indiana had stood as a testament to the effects de-industrialization can have on a once manufacturing-centric town. The town experienced the economic boom of the steel industry and the hardships left in its place. Without its primary source of jobs and income, de-industrialization left the present day Gary, Indiana as shadow of its former self.



A View of Gary, IN with the U.S. Steel Gary Works in the Background (Strawberrylizzie).

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