Major moments in Metro Detroit race relations

By Zena Simmons / The Detroit News

1832: Michigan's first anti-slavery society is formed; two years later white abolitionist Seymour Finney arrives and hides slaves while their pursuers eat in his hotel.

1836: Thirteen black Detroiters form Second Baptist Church, which becomes a stop on the Underground Railroad.

1863: Federal troops restore order after angry whites stone and burn black homes when William Faulkner, who is black, is convicted of raping two girls; the girls later recant.

1869: The first blacks are admitted to Detroit schools.

1923: Henry Ford's auto plants become a major draw for black workers from the South, but most black Detroiters are confined to an area called Black Bottom on the lower east side.

1925: A white man is shot dead after an irate white mob threatens outside the home of Dr. Ossian Sweet, a black physician who moved to an all-white area in Detroit. Two trials end without convictions.

1942: Detroit police arrest 106 blacks and three whites in clash when black residents move into the Sojourner Truth housing project in a heavily Polish northside neighborhood.

1943: In one of the nation's worst wartime riots, 25 blacks and nine whites die when escalating racial friction boils over beginning at Belle Isle.

1944: A white neighbor

Twenty-five blacks and nine whites die when racial friction boils over in 1943.
sues, citing deed restrictions that bar blacks, when Orsel and Minnie McGhee move into a northwest neighborhood; the U.S. Supreme Court in 1948 sides with the McGhees and abolishes racial deed restrictions.

1950: Detroit's population reaches a high of 1.85 million, but over the next 10 years the black population increases by 50 percent while the white population drops 25 percent.

1958: Ozzie Virgil becomes the first black Tiger, 11 years after Jackie Robinson’s debut, despite Detroit Tigers’ owner Walter Briggs longtime opposition to blacks.

1960: Grosse Pointe real estate agents and sellers are found to use a “point system” that ranks potential buyers by race, nationality, occupation and “degree of swarthiness.”

1963: Nearly 250,000 blacks and whites, led by Martin Luther King Jr., march in Detroit to protest injustices two months before the famous rally in Washington, D.C.

1967: Five days of rioting leave 43 dead after Detroit police raid an after-hours saloon in a mostly black neighborhood.

1968: Congress passes the Fair Housing Act, which bans race discrimination in housing.

1970: Southfield and Oak Park prohibit home “for sale” signs to stem “blockbusting,” in which real estate agents incite panic-selling by moving blacks into a previously all-white block.

1974: Coleman A. Young, Detroit’s first black mayor and a racially polarizing figure, starts the first of five terms.

1978: Orville Hubbard leaves office after 36 years as Dearborn mayor marked by rigid opposition to integration; leaders later disavow his racism, but name a street and senior complex after him, and honor him with a holiday and statue.

1991: Television video shows black Detroit women beating and robbing three suburban white women at July 4 fireworks; one Detroiter
robbing three suburban white women at July 4 fireworks; one Detroiter pleads no contest, one is acquitted.

East Detroit, a predominantly white suburb, changes its name to Eastpointe in 1992 to distance itself from Detroit.

1992: East Detroit, a predominantly white suburb that borders Detroit along Eight Mile, votes to change its name to Eastpointe, hoping to increase property values by distancing itself from Detroit.

2001: Census results show Metro Detroit has the most segregated black-white living patterns in the nation.