

# Guide to the Detroit in 2018

GEN MSS 1601



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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
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<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** GEN MSS 1601

**CREATOR:** Halverson, Karen, 1941- , photographer

**TITLE:** Detroit in 2018

**DATES:** 2018

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 6.51 linear feet (3 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** In English

**SUMMARY:** Photographs of residential neighborhoods in Detroit, Michigan created by Karen Halverson in July 2018. Images include portraits of residents working in private and community gardens as well empty lots and abandoned buildings.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.detroitin2018>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.detroitin2018>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Karen Halverson on the Frederick W. and Carrie S. Beinecke Fund for Western Americana, 2019.

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### Conditions Governing Access

This material is open for research.

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## Ownership & Copyright

The Karen Halverson, *Detroit in 2018*, are the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

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## Preferred Citation

Karen Halverson, *Detroit in 2018*. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

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## Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit. These materials have been arranged and described according to national and local standards. For more information, please refer to the Beinecke Manuscript Unit Processing Manual. Each folder in the collection contains a single inkjet print.

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## Karen Halverson (born 1941)

Karen Halverson is a documentary landscape photographer. Born in Syracuse, New York, Halverson received a Bachelor of Arts from Stanford University and Masters of Arts from Brandeis University and Columbia University. In 1975, she made her first photographic project, which documented the Garment District in New York City. Much of her work documents the tension between the natural and cultural landscapes of the American West. She is the author of *Downstream: Encounters with the Colorado River* (University of California Press, 2008), which retraces the route of John Wesley Powell's expeditions and explores what contemporary Americans have made of the waterway.

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## Description of Papers

Views of sites and portraits of people at Detroit, Michigan, created by Karen Halverson in July 2018 and printed as color inkjet prints on Canson Platine Fibre Rag Paper, 20 x 24 inches (51 x 61 centimeters). Images include views of abandoned buildings and empty lots as well as portraits of residents at community gardens. The prints are chiefly untitled with parenthetical numbers provided by Halverson to differentiate images. The collection comprises an edition numbered three of twelve. In an artist's statement from March 2019 that accompanied the collection upon acquisition, Halverson describes the work:

In the spring of 2018, several articles in the *New York Times* alerted me to the news that Detroit was "coming back" from the steep economic decline that had begun more than 50 years earlier. At its peak in the 1950s, Detroit had a thriving automotive industry. In the 1960s, the Germans and the Japanese shifted to smaller, more fuel-efficient cars while Detroit continued to produce gas guzzling cars. Soon factories were being closed and workers laid off. The Detroit race riots in 1967 resulted in white flight to the suburbs. When the city invested in urban renewal, it uprooted African American neighborhoods. In 2013, after decades of decline, the city fell into bankruptcy and receivership. Then in 2018 Detroit regained its own management, a sign that things were finally beginning to turn around. However, its population was down to 700,000 from its high of 1.8 million in the 1950s.

Detroit occupies 138 square miles. In 2018, about a third of the city's territory, or roughly 40 square miles, was unoccupied. Over the decades, thousands of houses were abandoned and left to

disintegrate. By 2018, the city had razed most, but not all, of them. Now vacant lots are a presence everywhere in the city. Many of them are green and some are even dotted with wildflowers.

Over the decades there's been a lot of coverage of Detroit's fall. Photographers have tended to emphasize the city's decay, making images that one local I met called "urban porn." I took a different approach. I chose to focus on what I saw as signs of Detroit's renewal, of hard work, and of creativity. I was especially impressed by urban agriculture and saw it as an expression of Detroit's desire for self-reliance.

Detroit has a long history of urban farming, dating back to the late nineteenth century. But there has been a resurgence in recent years. One organization, Detroit Agriculture, estimates that there are currently 1,500 gardens and farms in the city. People can buy a vacant lot cheaply and turn it into cultivated land, producing vegetables for home use, for sale, or for donation to the needy. Some gardens operate as educational opportunities for schoolchildren. Some unoccupied buildings that still stand have been painted vivid colors, or adorned in other visually striking ways. What I found in Detroit is that people care about their environment enough to improve it one way or another. They are not just waiting for the city or the state to come to their rescue. They're taking matters into their own hands.

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## Arrangement

Arranged by the creator.

## Collection Contents

### Detroit in 2018

b. 1, f. 1	Map of Detroit, Michigan Black-and-white map of Detroit, Michigan, with red stars that designated locations of twenty-four farms/gardens visited by Halverson in July 2018.	2018
b. 1, f. 2	<i>What We Grow</i> (1606)	2018 July
b. 1, f. 3	<i>Untitled</i> (1971)	2018 July
b. 1, f. 4	<i>Coriander Farm</i> (1300)	2018 July
b. 1, f. 5	<i>Untitled</i> (1383)	2018 July
b. 1, f. 6	<i>Untitled</i> (1832)	2018 July
b. 1, f. 7	<i>Untitled</i> (1823)	2018 July
b. 1, f. 8	<i>Untitled</i> (1660)	2018 July
b. 1, f. 9	<i>Untitled</i> (1185)	2018 July
b. 1, f. 10	<i>Vacant Lot</i> (1790)	2018 July
b. 1, f. 11	<i>Malik from D Town Farms</i> (1963)	2018 July
b. 1, f. 12	<i>Cameron Church</i> (1333)	2018 July
b. 1, f. 13	<i>Untitled</i> (1871)	2018 July
b. 1, f. 14	<i>Freedom, Freedom</i> (1938)	2018 July
b. 1, f. 15	<i>D Town Farms</i> (1938)	2018 July
b. 2, f. 16	<i>Untitled</i> (1768)	2018 July
b. 2, f. 17	<i>Untitled</i> (1165)	2018 July
b. 2, f. 18	<i>Untitled</i> (1227)	2018 July
b. 2, f. 19	<i>D Town Farms</i> (1977)	2018 July
b. 2, f. 20	<i>Untitled</i> (1920)	2018 July
b. 2, f. 21	<i>Gwen at Coriander Farm</i> (1296)	2018 July
b. 2, f. 22	<i>Vacant Lot</i> (1516>	2018 July
b. 2, f. 23	<i>Oakland Community Garden</i> (1354)	2018 July
b. 2, f. 24	<i>D Town Farms</i> (1928)	2018 July
b. 2, f. 25	<i>Christian Methodist Episcopal Church</i> (1883)	2018 July
b. 2, f. 26	<i>Vacant Lots, Heidelberg Street</i> (1150)	2018 July
b. 2, f. 27	<i>Food Field</i> (1221)	2018 July

b. 2, f. 28	<i>Untitled</i> (1380)	2018 July
b. 2, f. 29	<i>Oakland Community Garden</i> (1361)	2018 July
b. 2, f. 30	<i>Vacant Lot with Abandoned School</i> (1884)	2018 July
b. 3, f. 31	<i>Fisheye Farms/Kenbrough Dry Cleaners</i> (1005)	2018 July
b. 3, f. 32	<i>Freedom, Freedom</i> (1992)	2018 July
b. 3, f. 33	<i>Vacant Lots</i>	2018 July
b. 3, f. 34	<i>907 Graffiti</i> (1245)	2018 July
b. 3, f. 35	<i>D Town Farms</i> (1992)	2018 July
b. 3, f. 36	<i>Untitled</i> (1376)	2018 July
b. 3, f. 37	<i>Beaverland farms</i> (1095)	2018 July
b. 3, f. 38	<i>Untitled</i> (1324)	2018 July
b. 3, f. 39	<i>Vacant Lot</i> (1324)	2018 July
b. 3, f. 40	<i>Coriander farm</i> (1311)	2018 July

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## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### Subjects

Abandoned buildings -- Michigan -- Detroit --  
Pictorial works  
Community gardens -- Michigan -- Detroit --  
Pictorial works  
Waste lands -- Michigan -- Detroit -- Pictorial  
works

### Geographic Names

Detroit (Mich.) -- Pictorial works

### Genres / Formats

Inkjet prints  
Photographs

### Acquired From

Halverson, Karen, 1941- , bookseller