

Where  
the past  
is present

# DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## TEACHER RESOURCE LESSON PLAN

### EXPLORING ETHNIC DETROIT



#### INTRODUCTION

This lesson helps fourth grade students understand the social, cultural and economic changes that occurred in Detroit in the second quarter of the 19th century. The lesson includes a comprehensive background essay, a list of additional resources, and copies of worksheets and primary sources.

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Who were the different ethnic groups that came to Detroit in the 19th century, when did they arrive and where did they live?

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Identify the different cultural groups that make up Metropolitan Detroit.
- Develop and interpret charts, graphs, and/or timelines that show population changes in Metropolitan Detroit.
- Locate on a map of Detroit where different ethnic and cultural groups live and lived.

#### MI GLCES – GRADE FOUR SOCIAL STUDIES

##### H4 – History of Michigan Beyond Statehood

- 4-H3.0.2 - Use primary and secondary sources to explain how migration and immigration

affected and continue to affect the growth of Michigan.

##### G1 - The World in Spatial Terms

- 4-G1.0.4 - Use geographic tools and technologies, stories, songs and pictures to answer geographic questions about the United States.

##### G4 - Human Systems

- 4-G4.0.1 - Use a case study or story about migration within or to the United States to identify push and pull factors that influenced migration.
- 4-G4.0.2 - Describe the impact of immigration to the United States on the cultural development of different places or regions of the United States.

#### COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS - ELA

##### Reading

- 1 - Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

##### Speaking and Listening

- 1 - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- 2 - Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

# LESSON PLAN: EXPLORING ETHNIC DETROIT

## BACKGROUND ESSAY

The 1800s brought many changes to Detroit. The animals and trees that once filled the shoreline were replaced by docks, mills, roads, and businesses. The fur trade was no longer an important industry. The fur trade was no longer an important industry. Not many Native Americans walked the streets. Gradually, they were forced to move north or west to reservations. The 1805 fire and Woodward plan forever changed the look and feel of Detroit. It was no longer a cozy settlement and a military post. By the 1860s, it was transformed into a mercantile center full of stores, hotels, and new immigrants. It was a settler's gateway to the rest of Michigan and to Canada. Detroit was a rapidly growing city full of opportunities for people from many places around the world.

During the first half of the 19th century, innovations in transportation made traveling faster, easier, and cheaper. The steamboat was the first to impact travel to Detroit. Before the steamboat, travel between Buffalo, New York, and Detroit took a month. In April 1818, the first steamboat on the Great Lakes, named the *Walk-in-the-Water*, made the trip in 44 hours and 10 minutes.

When the Erie Canal was completed in 1825, travel to Detroit was made even easier. The Canal connected the Hudson River with Lake Erie, making it possible to travel completely by water from the Atlantic states to Detroit. Moving from New York to Michigan became affordable and easy, because it was cheaper and faster to travel by water than by wagon.

When the railroad arrived in Detroit in the 1840s, transportation changed again. By 1854, Detroiters could travel to New York City in a matter of days on the railroads.

With travel to the interior of the country made easier, thousands of people made the choice to settle in Michigan. The United States government opened a land office in Detroit to sell land in Michigan. Large numbers of people travelled through

Detroit every day on the way to their new land. They all needed places to stay, food and supplies. Many people settled in Detroit where jobs were plentiful; Detroit needed people to build houses and shops, wagons and train cars, better roads and railways. It also needed merchants to sell everything from food and clothing to furniture and hardware.

In the mid-1800s, Detroit was on the verge of becoming an industrial city. Copper, iron ore and lumber replaced fur as the key exports. Detroit was the perfect location for raw materials to be brought for manufacturing. Detroiters took advantage of the dense forests of white pine which covered much of the Lower Peninsula. Lumber was brought as



logs to Detroit where it was then sent to sawmills to make boards. The boards were used to make wagons, carriages, ships and furniture. Copper and iron ore from the Upper Peninsula were brought to refineries in Detroit, where they were made into products like wheels, rail tracks, rail cars, stoves, pots, wire, or furnaces.

A variety of other products were made in Detroit. Tobacco was processed into cigars and pipe tobacco. Pharmaceutical drugs were manufactured. Hybrid seeds were produced and packaged. Flour was milled, and beer was brewed.

### The Underground Railroad in Detroit

A few free African Americans lived in Detroit and owned property in the early 1800s. Detroit and all of Michigan was a free state by the mid-1800s. Many abolitionists (people working against slavery) lived in Michigan. There were free African Americans, Catholics, New England Protestants, Quakers and people of many backgrounds. They provided support to African Americans who decided to leave enslavement and seek their freedom in the north.

In 1850, the Fugitive Slave Laws passed in the nation's capital. They said that runaway enslaved people could be captured and returned to slavery.

# LESSON PLAN: EXPLORING ETHNIC DETROIT

Many free African Americans living in the north faced being returned to the south as slaves, and greedy bounty hunters tried to make money by hunting runaways. Detroit was just across the river from Canada, which outlawed slavery in 1819. Many refugees came through Detroit as their last stop on their way to Canada, where they could not be caught and sent back to slavery.

Runaways stayed in several Detroit area locations, including Seymour Finney's barn at Griswold and State Streets. It was a livery stable, but many fugitives stayed there until dark when they were taken to the river to cross into Canada. Another place to hide was the Second Baptist Church at Monroe and Beaubien Streets, which was built in 1856. This was the first African American church in Detroit. It was founded in the 1830s. Many members were formerly enslaved, and they were eager to help others to freedom. There were also several safe houses in the outskirts of the city.

Many people formed groups which participated in the Underground Railroad and fought to change slavery laws. One group was called the Convention of Colored Citizens of Detroit. The members were free African Americans, white abolitionists, and Quakers.

There were several individuals who were active in the Underground Railroad. William Lambert was manager and treasurer of the Underground Railroad station in Detroit. He was also a member of the Convention of Colored Citizens of Detroit. Lambert was a free African American from New Jersey who came to Detroit at age 18. He was quite wealthy, after opening a successful tailor shop in downtown Detroit. He used his money to fund abolitionist groups. He helped to free thousands of enslaved people by hiding them in his house and arranging for their transport at night. He sometimes created diversions for slave catchers and authorities while

freedom seekers escaped across the river to Canada.

One of Lambert's closest friends, George De Baptiste, was also an important abolitionist. De Baptiste grew up in Virginia. He worked in the White House for a period and was said to have been a close friend of President Harrison. He was in the clothing and catering business in Detroit. He was a leader and active supporter of the Underground Railroad in Detroit. He also helped thousands escape to Canada.

Another abolitionist was William Webb, a free black. He was a grocer from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He raised funds for escaped enslaved people to build new lives in Canada. Mr. Webb

often held meetings for important leaders in the abolitionist movement at his house on East Congress Street. William Lambert, George De Baptiste, John Brown and Frederick Douglass had a famous meeting at Webb's house in 1859. At this meeting, they planned to fight

for freedom of enslaved people at Harper's Ferry, Virginia.

## Conclusion

By the mid-1800s, the busy docks along the shoreline were bustling with people. Some were busy unloading logs into sawmills or iron ore into refineries. Others were loading finished goods into shops bound for eastern cities. Still others were getting off steamboats with the hopes of finding a better life. From the shore, goods traveled in and out of the city by new railroads or by horse and carriage.

Streets were lined with shops and businesses from millineries to printers to bakers. There were also factories that made shoes, cigars, glassware, packaged seeds, and stoves. Mueller's Confectioner and Ice Cream Saloon served sweet treats and Conklin's Watches and Jewelry repaired necklaces and other items.



# LESSON PLAN: EXPLORING ETHNIC DETROIT

## MATERIALS USED:

### Data Elements

- *Essay: Exploring Detroit's Ethnic Heritage*
- *Essay: Michigan's Greatest Treasure – its People*
- *Map: Detroit Neighborhoods, 1904*

### Worksheets

- *Detroit or Bust Interview*
- *Detroit's Ethnic Communities*
- *Detroit Neighborhoods, 2011*

## LESSON SEQUENCE:

### Before the Lesson

1. A day or two before you intend to deliver this lesson, explain that the metropolitan Detroit area is made up of people from many different places and ethnic groups. Some arrived here centuries ago, and others arrived as recently as last week. Ask the students if they know when and from where their family first came to the Detroit area.
2. Distribute the *Detroit or Bust Interview* worksheet, and ask the students to complete it by interviewing their family.

### Day of the Lesson

1. On the day of the lesson, begin by discussing the students' results from their *Detroit or Bust Interview*.
2. Using information from the discussion, develop a class chart displaying when, where, and why their families came to Detroit.
3. Ask what ethnic groups came to Detroit during its history. Review should include groups such as Native Americans, French, British, African Americans, Eastern Europeans, Arab Americans, Asians, and Latin Americans.
4. Distribute and discuss *Essay: Exploring Detroit's Ethnic Heritage* and *Essay: Michigan's Greatest Treasure – Its People*.
5. Divide the students into small groups and distribute the *Detroit Ethnic Communities* chart to each group. Have the students work in their

groups to study the articles and complete the chart.

6. Have the class discuss the information they compiled on their worksheets.
7. Have the groups create a Detroit Metropolitan area map showing major locations of various ethnic groups.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1. Have the students create an artifact box for one of the Detroit ethnic groups. They should collect data, articles, images and objects that reflect the ethnic group. These could include pictures of food, clothing, musical instruments, cultural artifacts, or other appropriate artifacts. Have the students share their projects with the class.
2. Conduct an ethnic festival day for parents by having students select various groups to celebrate through dress, food and music.
3. Invite ethnic dance groups to perform for your students or school.
4. Create a patchwork quilt of Detroit's historic ethnic groups.

For more information about the **Detroit Historical Society**, or to schedule a field trip to the **Detroit Historical Museum** or **Dossin Great Lakes Museum**, visit [detroithistorical.org](http://detroithistorical.org)

# LESSON PLAN: EXPLORING ETHNIC DETROIT

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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- Badaczewski, Dennis. *Poles in Michigan*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2002.
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- Duer, Lynne. *Settling in Michigan*. Spring Lake, MI: River Road Publications, 1992.
- DuLong, John P. *French Canadians in Michigan*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001.
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- Glazier, Jack, and Arthur Wesley Helweg. *Ethnicity in Michigan: Issues and People*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001.
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- Helweg, Arthur Wesley. *Asian Indians in Michigan*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2002.
- Ketenbaum, Justin L., ed. *The Making of Michigan, 1820 – 1860: A Pioneer Anthology*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990.
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- Sengstock, Mary C. *Chaldeans in Michigan*. East Lansing, Mich: Michigan State University, 2005.
- Ten Harmse, Larry. *Dutch in Michigan*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2002.
- Walker, Lewis, Benjamin C. Wilson, and Linwood H. Cousins. *African Americans in Michigan*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001.
- Walker, Lewis. *Discovering the Peoples of Michigan Reader*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2008.
- Wilson, Brian C. *Yankees in Michigan*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2008.

## DETROIT OR BUST INTERVIEW

Interview a family member about how their family came to settle in the Detroit Metropolitan area. Use the following questions for your interview, adding a few questions of your own.

1. Around what year did you or your family come to settle in the Detroit area?

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2. Why did they come to Detroit?

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3. Where did your family originally settle in the Detroit area?

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4. In how many different homes have you lived while in the Detroit area?

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5. Did your family live somewhere else before coming to the Detroit area? If so, where?

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6. What caused your family to settle here?

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7. Other question(s)

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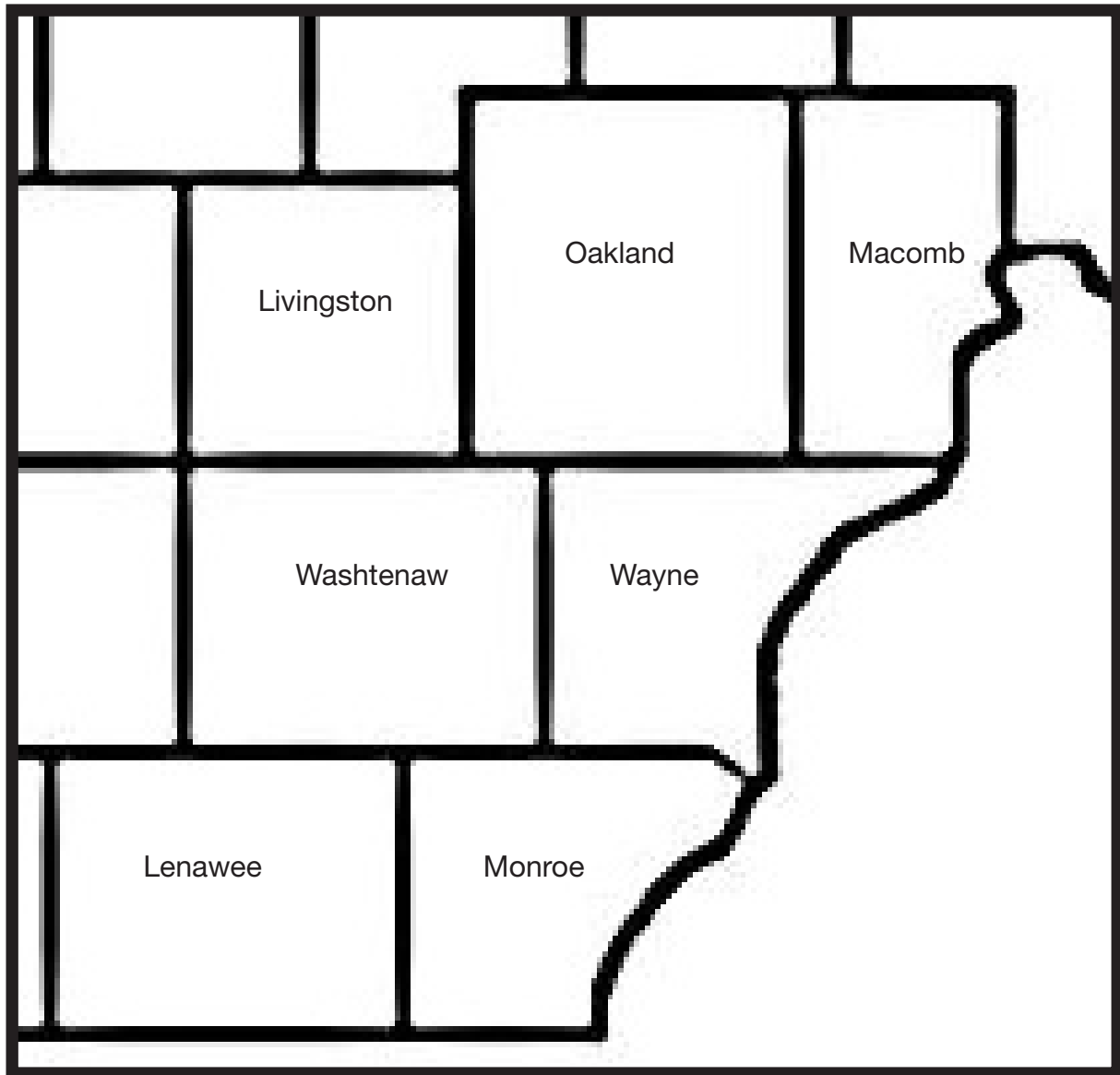
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## DETROIT'S ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

	When did this group come to Detroit?	Why did this group come to Detroit?	What influence did they have on Detroit's culture?	Where did the first settle?	Where are they today (in Metro Detroit)?
African-Americans					
Arab-Americans					
Armenians					
Canadians					
Chinese					
Cubans					
East Asians					
East Europeans					
English					
French					
Germans					
Greeks					
Hmong					
Irish					
Italians					
Japanese					
Mexicans					
Native Americans					
Poles					
Scandinavians					
Scottish					
Other					

## DETROIT NEIGHBORHOODS, 2011

Using the information from your “Detroit’s Ethnic Communities” chart, fill in this map to show major locations of various ethnic groups today.





## ESSAY: EXPLORING DETROIT'S ETHNIC HERITAGE

People have come to Detroit from almost every country in the world. Most Detroiters are either immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Native Americans are indigenous residents, because they were the first settlers. They hunted here and they came to trade. From 1795 to 1842 a series of treaties between the Native Americans and the federal government forced them to give up their lands. The Native Americans received little in return. Today, there are about five thousand Native Americans living in Detroit.

As early settlers made their way westward during the 1700s and 1800s looking for better farmlands and greater economic opportunities, many stayed in Detroit or settled in other parts of Michigan. During the last 150 years, many people have come from other areas of the United States or from foreign countries. Little has changed today. People still come to seek out opportunities in the city.

When the Erie Canal opened in 1825 more people were able to come to Detroit. When the potato crop in Ireland failed in 1846, many Irish came looking for work and land to farm. The Scottish and the Germans, too, made their way to Detroit. Often, these people wanted to be farmers, but many of them stayed in Detroit and took jobs in shops and factories. Canadians often crossed the Detroit River and made Detroit their home.

Canada abolished slavery in 1834 and many enslaved African Americans came by way of Detroit to reach freedom in Canada. Some decided to remain in Detroit. By 1850, 2,583 African Americans lived in Detroit. Before the Civil War many people came from Poland, Italy and Holland. The number of foreign-born people living in Detroit grew every year from 1850 to 1930.

After 1900 more people came from eastern and southern Europe. Polish, Russian, Italian, Greek, Hungarian, Jewish, Armenian, Syrian, Romanian, and others came for a better place to work and raise their families. They found jobs in many new factories and businesses. They quickly became homeowners.

Historically, the newcomers were not always accepted and treated fairly in the workplace and in the community. Oftentimes, they tended to make their homes near others with similar backgrounds and language for security and acceptance. Therefore, different sections of the city tended to draw racial and ethnic groups.

In 1913, Henry Ford announced \$5 a day pay for anyone working in his factory. The prospective workers did not need any training. Many of the immigrants were farmers in their own countries, and often lacked education. However, they could easily be hired to work on the assembly line. Farmlands were slowly disappearing and many decided to work in the automobile factories. The need for unskilled workers sparked an explosion of immigration to the Detroit area that continued throughout World War I.

However, in 1929, when the stock market crashed and many people lost their homes and their jobs, immigration came to a temporary halt. This was reversed during World War II, 1941-1945, when Detroit and Michigan became the "Arsenal of Democracy." More workers were needed and more immigrants and migrants traveled to Detroit to work in the "bomber plants." After the war Detroit still needed immigrants to work in producing peacetime cars and other products. This change drew 400,000 African Americans and whites from the southeastern United States to work in the Detroit factories and live in Detroit.

In the 1950s the development of interstate highways enhanced roads. Change in the Federal Housing Authority loan procedures in the 1950s encouraged Detroiters to move to the suburbs. This move caused the ethnic population of the city to change from predominately white to predominately African American.

Today, the Detroit metropolitan area is home to a large population of Arab Americans, Jews, Latin Americans, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and more recent arrivals such as Filipinos, Vietnamese, Hmong, and Laotians. It is impossible to mention all the different ethnic groups that lived and continue to live in Detroit. It is important to note that today people have to be more creative about finding jobs for themselves. The demand for unskilled workers has dwindled. Many of today's immigrants manage small stores and restaurants, while others find jobs as laborers. Everyone adds something different and special to the metropolitan Detroit community.

## ESSAY: MICHIGAN'S GREATEST TREASURE – ITS PEOPLE (PAGE 1)

By Vivian M. Baulch / The Detroit News

<http://apps.detnews.com/apps/history/index.php?id=109>

Since the days when the British and French fought each other for the right to displace the Native American Indians, scores of nationalities and races have moved in, attracted first by Michigan's abundance of fresh water and natural resources, and later by good-paying jobs.

### African Americans

During the 19th century Michigan was an important stop on the Underground Railroad and many runaway slaves decided to make their homes here. Today, 14 percent of Michigan's population is African-American.

The first sizeable black migration into Michigan began in the 1840s, and by 1850, 2,583 blacks lived in Detroit. The industrialization of Detroit and the rise of the auto industry in the 20th century lured southern blacks -- and whites as well -- from hard-scrabble Southern farms with the promise of a better life. Detroit's black population ballooned from 5,741 in 1910 to 200,000 by 1943.

They first settled on the near east side in an area called Black Bottom because of its rich, dark soil. They set up stores, nightclubs and restaurants where blacks and whites mixed easily. The area thrived until the 1960s when it was wiped out by construction of the Chrysler Freeway, but not before a unique style of music developed that the city shared with a generation of Americans -- Motown.

### Germans

A fourth of the population in metro Detroit claims German heritage, a million in Michigan as a whole. During the middle of the 1800s Michigan needed farmers and settlers to help the state grow and hired promoters and printed pamphlets proclaiming the glories of the state. Representatives sent to New York and as far away as Germany and Bavaria sought to attract hardworking citizens to the state. Germans, who were viewed at the time as religious, well-educated and prosperous, were heavily recruited and thousands came. These early German settlers played a large role in developing the state's education system.

Many retained their German language and customs in the new world, creating problems for the community during the First World War. Laws were passed by suspicious legislators requiring their newspapers to be printed in English instead of German.

In Detroit Germans settled on the east side along Gratiot. A few settled along Michigan Avenue. Many later moved to Macomb County.

### Poles

About 850,000 ethnic Poles live near Detroit, centering on Hamtramck. One and a half million Michiganians claim Polish heritage, the largest group of all. A great wave came in the late 1800s and early 1900s, with many Poles attracted to Detroit by Henry Ford's offer of \$5-a-day jobs in 1914. Many settled near Canfield and developed a strong Catholic heartland, constructing magnificent churches. Sweetest Heart of Mary, built in 1892, and St. Albertus, built in 1884, are only a block apart. Some later moved to the west side, near St. Hyacinth, then on to Dearborn. Others moved east to Warren, Sterling Heights and elsewhere in Macomb County.

### Irish and Italians

The next largest groups, the Irish and the Italians, claim 500,000 and 400,000 respectively. The potato famine of the mid-1800s drove many Irish to seek a new life in America. In Detroit, they settled in the Corktown region just west of downtown, quickly assimilating and strengthening Detroit's Catholic underpinning. St. Patrick's Day is still a huge tradition in Detroit, and Michigan's political history is riddled by Irish names.

Many Italians settled on the east side around Eastern Market near St. Elizabeth and Holy Family churches. Many later moved eastward and into Macomb County.

### English

The English claim about 300,000, but seem to be largely ignored as an ethnic group. Smaller numbers of Cornish and Welsh, along with about 110,000 Finns, found their way to the Upper Peninsula in the middle of the 19th century. Many were miners who left their homes when the ores were depleted. They came to the copper and iron areas of Upper Michigan around Houghton (named after Douglass Houghton who first discovered the copper) and Keweenaw counties, settling in Ishpeming, Iron River and Iron Mountain. Their arrival in the 1840s rivaled the later California gold rush and made the beef "pastie" a staple of Upper Peninsula cuisine.

### Finns

The Finns, the last of the Upper Peninsula

## ESSAY: MICHIGAN'S GREATEST TREASURE – ITS PEOPLE (PAGE 2)

arrivals, persevered to become the most influential ethnic group in the U.P. Many initially took work as miners and lumberjacks, but quickly switched to farming. They became the largest Finnish group in the United States and fostered their own education and religious traditions. Suomi College was founded in Hancock in 1896 to train clergy, and it still serves the community.

### Canadians

The 1800s also saw many Canadians, both English and French, cross into Michigan. These immigrants included farmers, fishermen, lumbermen, trappers and miners. About 60,000 in Michigan claimed French Canadian heritage in the 1990 census in addition to the 160,000 claiming European French heritage.

### French

Detroit and Michigan history is riddled with French names, including Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, founder of Detroit; Father Gabriel Richard, founder of the University of Michigan and St. Anne's; Robert Cavalier de la Salle, Great Lakes explorer, and Father Jacques Marquette, Michigan explorer and missionary.

### Hispanics

Hispanics in Michigan numbered 160,000 in the 1990 Census, and comprise the largest foreign language-speaking group in the state. In 1999, they accounted for 44 percent of new immigrants, many settling around what has become known as Mexicantown, a popular restaurant district west of Corktown.

### Greeks

There are more than 150,000 in Michigan who claim Greek descent, 120,000 in the Detroit area. Well assimilated, they still maintain the best known ethnic enclave, Greektown, on Monroe just east of downtown.

The first Greek immigrants settled in Detroit at the turn of the century and were followed soon after by a wave of immigrants who came in 1914 seeking Ford's \$5 a day jobs. Many came to escape political persecution of Greeks in Turkey which began in 1912.

### Dutch

The Dutch, more than 120,000 of them, settled on the west side of the state near Grand Rapids and Holland, where the tulip festivals are a popular

tourist attraction.

Immigration in Michigan slowed to a trickle in 1924, when the United States limited the influx of foreigners to only 164,000 per year, fewer than 20 percent from Southern Europe, and none from Asia. This quota system was not relaxed until 1968.

### Eastern Europeans

In the 1980s, established enclaves in the Detroit area offered asylum to Poles, Hungarians, Serbs, Croats, Bulgarians, Romanians, and Slovaks seeking to escape the turmoil in Eastern Europe as the old Soviet systems collapsed.

### Asians

In 1999, Asians accounted for 26 percent of new Michigan immigrants. In the 1990s, the Asian population around Detroit grew to more than 55,000. This group, including Indians, Koreans, Chinese, Japanese and Filipinos, are generally well-educated and live in affluent communities in the metro area.

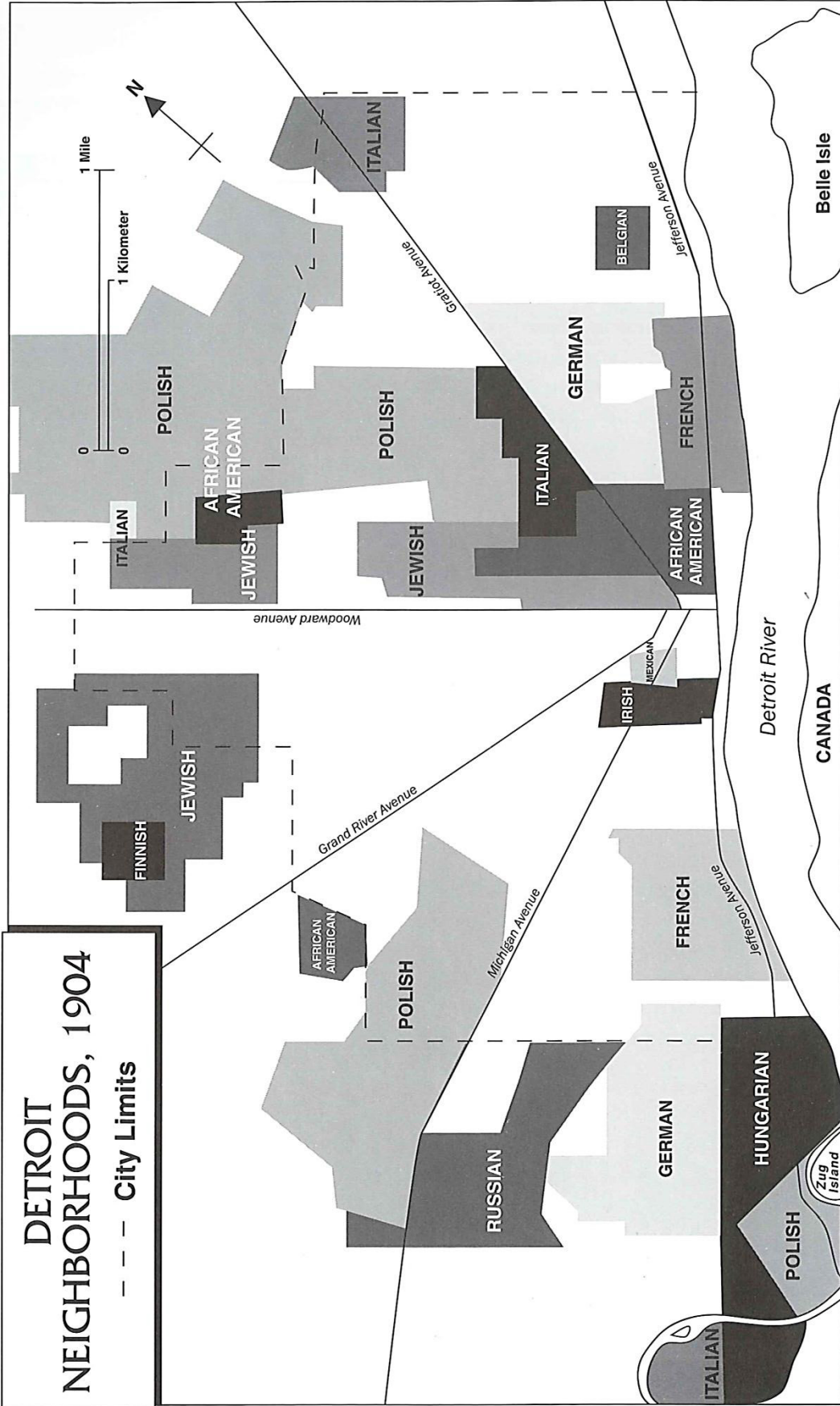
Detroit had a Japanese presence as early as 1892, but Japanese started moving to Detroit in more significant numbers around 1946 as the notorious relocation camps were disbanded. About 5,000 Japanese live in Metro Detroit. At the end of the Vietnam war, significant numbers of Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians settled in and around Detroit.

### Arabs

Arabs began settling in Detroit as early as the 1920s. They established a tight-knit community that welcomed arrivals pouring out of the Middle East to escape the turmoil following World War II. Estimates put the number of Arabs in the Detroit area, many of them in Dearborn, at more than 100,000. The community includes Chaldeans, Iraqi, Lebanese, Syrian and other Middle Easterners. Prominent Arab-Americans include Ed Deeb, president of the Eastern Market Merchant Association, who was honored by President George Bush with a Point of Light award for his service to the community, and U.S. Sen. Spencer Abraham, of Michigan.

According to historian Arthur Woodford, Detroit has "the largest multi-ethnic population of any city in the United States. Detroit has the largest Arabic-speaking population outside of the Middle East, the second largest Polish population in America (only Chicago has more), and the largest U.S. concentration of Belgians, Chaldeans and Maltese."

# MAP: DETROIT NEIGHBORHOODS, 1904



Courtesy of The McGraw-Hill Companies