



THEY CAME TO WORK: HOW THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY CREATED A QUILT OF DIVERSITY IN MICHIGAN

In the early 1900s, the economy of the United States was booming. One of the industries that was growing fast was the automobile industry. More and more people wanted to buy cars. The automobile companies needed to hire many people to keep up with the demand for cars. People came to the Detroit area from all over the country and the world to work in the automotive factories.

For example, in 1914, Henry Ford's Model T cars were so popular that he needed more people to help make them. To attract and keep a reliable labor force, he decided to pay workers five dollars a day. This was almost double the current wage at that time. Henry Ford believed that people should be paid equally for equal work. This idea was perhaps one of the first major steps to developing diversity in the American workplace.

Before long, African-Americans from the southern United States and immigrants from other countries were working side by side with other workers at Ford factories earning the same pay for the same work.

Other automakers soon matched Ford's pay, and that brought even more people from around the country and the world to Michigan. The population of the Detroit area grew very quickly. The following chart shows the population of just a few of the diverse groups of people already living in the Detroit area in 1910 when the production of automobiles started to increase. The chart also shows how many people from the same groups lived in Detroit in 1930 when automobile production had peaked.

Use this chart to answer the following questions:

1. Which group of people had the largest population in the Detroit area in 1910?
2. Which group had the largest population in 1930?
3. Which group had the highest increase in population during the 20 years?
4. Which group had the smallest increase in population during the 20 years?
5. How many more Hispanics were there in 1930 than in 1910?
6. In 1930, how many more Hungarians were there than Belgians?

Foreign-Born Population in Detroit		
GROUP	1910	1930
Germans	30,908	32,716
Italians	5,724	28,581
French	637	2,333
Hispanics	6,000	41,000
Hungarians	935	11,162
Finnish	59	2,811
Belgians	2,237	8,969
Greeks	584	6,385
Canadians	42,000	94,000
African-Americans	5,741	120,000
Scottish	3,320	23,546
Polish	35,745	66,113

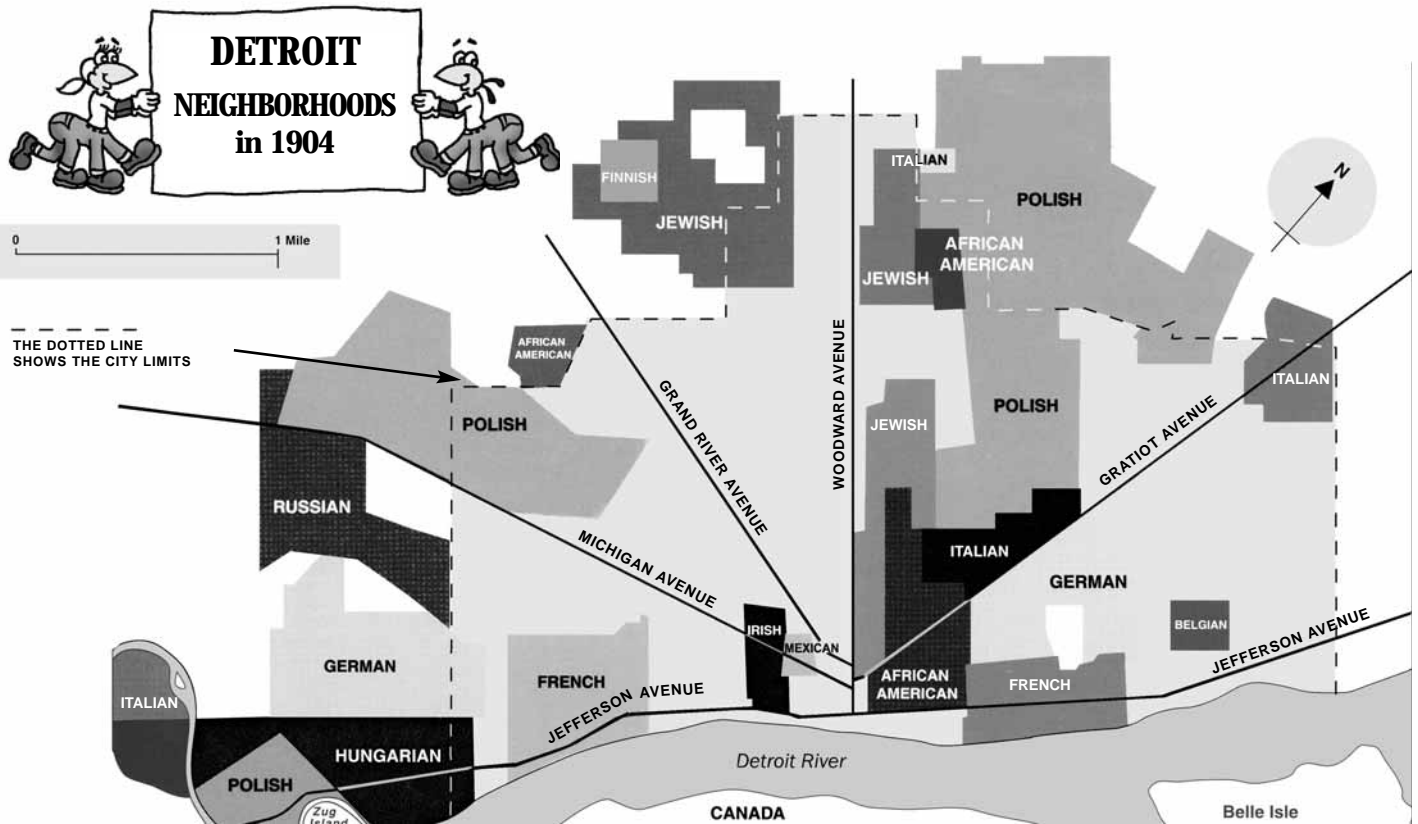




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Use the map below of Detroit neighborhoods in 1904 to answer the following questions:

1. Which two neighborhoods are totally outside the Detroit city limits?
2. Which group had the largest settlements?
3. If you traveled along Gratiot Avenue, which neighborhood was in the northeast corner of Detroit?
4. Which neighborhood extended the farthest north from Detroit?
5. What group had two neighborhoods along Jefferson Avenue?
6. Approximately how many miles long is Woodward Avenue from the Detroit River to the city limits?
7. In 1904, which group had the smallest neighborhood?



Other Learning Activities:

1. On a bulletin board, display a map of the world and a map of the Detroit area. Have the students identify the various countries that immigrants came from to work in the automobile factories. Mark the countries with pushpins and connect them to the area of Detroit where each group settled.
2. Research the different ethnic groups that settled in other parts of Michigan. Make a chart showing when they came to Michigan and why.
3. Make a large map of Michigan. Research where people with various ethnic backgrounds live today. Examples: Frankenmuth - Germans, Holland - Dutch, etc.
4. Have students research their own family trees to determine where their ancestors came from and why they came to Michigan.





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During the years of growth in the automobile industry, people from many different countries and many ethnic and religious backgrounds came to live in the southeastern area of Michigan. They were searching for a way to earn a better life for themselves and their families. The pay for work in the automobile factories was better than they could earn in their own countries. Many people wrote home telling how America was a fine place to make money. The letters made their friends and relatives want to come to America, too.

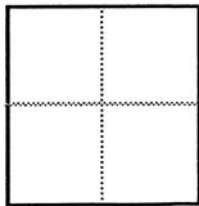
The people who came to work in the factories often settled near their friends and relatives from the "old country." Neighborhoods were created that carried on the foods and traditions familiar to those from the "old country." Often the neighborhoods were *bilingual*, meaning both English and their native language were spoken. The largest group of immigrants living in the Detroit area in 1910 was Canadian. Other people who came to Detroit to live were African-Americans from the southern United States, Greeks, Poles, Germans, Hispanics, Italians, French, Fins, Hungarians, Scottish and Belgians.

Today, immigrants continue to come to Michigan and other U.S. states looking for a better life for themselves and their families. Much like a patchwork quilt is a combination of various colors, patterns and textures, these groups combine to form a unique pattern of diverse cultures, traditions, languages, characteristics and foods to create Michigan's and America's cultures.

MAKE A DIVERSITY QUILT SQUARE

Choose an ethnic group that you would like to learn more about. Make a square for a **QUILT OF DIVERSITY** by following the directions below. When the squares are put together, they will make a **quilt** to display on the wall of your classroom. It will be a patchwork quilt of the many diverse nationalities that came together during the early years of the automobile industry in Michigan.

1. Fold a 12" x 12" square sheet of paper into fourths. Unfold.



3. Label the outsides of the flaps:
LOCATION (Country and Continent)
PEOPLE (Cultural Features)
LAND (Physical Features)
NATURAL RESOURCES

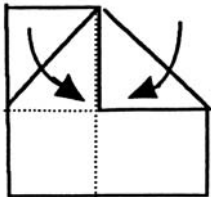


5. On the back, draw a map, write the name of the country and draw the flag.

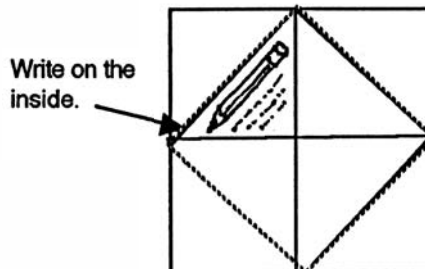
Back side.



2. Fold all four corners to the center to form flaps.



4. Lift each label and write information about the country to make a report.



OUR CLASSROOM QUILT

