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
What did Detroit look like and how did it change between 1825 and 1865?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
Students will:
• Identify details in primary sources which show differences in Detroit between the 1820s and the 1860s.
• Understand the causes behind the changes in Detroit between the 1820s and 1860s – immigration, industrialization, etc.
• 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.

MI GLCES – GRADE FOUR SOCIAL STUDIES
H4 – History of Michigan Beyond Statehood
• 4-H3.0.1 - Use historical inquiry to investigate the development of Michigan’s major economic activities from statehood to present.
• 4-H3.0.2 - Use primary and secondary sources to explain how migration and immigration affected and continue to affect the growth of Michigan.
• 4-H3.0.3 - Describe how the relationship between the location of natural resources and the location of industries (after 1837) affected and continues to affect the location and growth of Michigan cities.

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.
• 9 - Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

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.
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. 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, Detroiter 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. Detroiter 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.
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: DETROIT BECOMES A CITY

MATERIALS USED:

Data Elements
- **Narrative:** Silas Beebe
- **Narrative:** Mrs. Stewart
- **Photos:** Detroit Streets, ca. 1860s
- **Narrative:** Mr. Palmer
- **Graphs:** Ethnicity and Population
- **Photo:** Railroad Depot
- **Map:** 1830s Detroit
- **Painting:** A View of Detroit, c. 1853
- **Advertisement:** Michigan Central Railroad
- **Business Chart of Jefferson and Woodward Avenues, 1868**

Paper and pencils

LESSON SEQUENCE:

1. Review the information students learned in previous lessons by showing various primary sources. Lead students in listing some key words on the chalkboard that characterized Detroit at that time. For example: French, British, fur trading, fort, small town, on a river, rebuilding after fire disaster, ribbon farms.

2. Explain that they are going to learn how Detroit changed. Many of the words on the board are no longer true in the next period. They are going to find out how Detroit became different.

3. Divide students into three groups, and distribute the primary sources as follows:
   - **Group 1:** Narrative: Silas Beebe; Photo: Railroad Depot; Advertisement: Michigan Central Railroad
   - **Group 2:** Narrative: Mrs. Stewart; Photo: Detroit Streets, ca. 1860s; Business Chart of Jefferson and Woodward Avenues, 1868
   - **Group 3:** Narrative: Mr. Palmer; Graphs: Ethnicity and Population; Painting: A View of Detroit

4. Ask the students to study the sources carefully, looking for clues of things that are different about Detroit in the 1830s-1860s compared to the earlier days. Have them look for things that might be the same.

5. When they look at the photos, they should look at every area carefully and methodically. For example, look at the foreground first, then things farther and farther back, or divide it into sections, or read it like a book – top to bottom and left to right. List as many clues and details as they can.

6. The other sources can be studied in a similar way. Some examples of different things include: smoke stacks, railroads, steamships, brick buildings, cigar factories, two and three floor buildings, extended riverfront docks, hundreds of businesses, large population increases, etc. Some details that are the same include: horse and carriage, forest surrounding the city, churches, and some sailboats.

7. While the students are reading, draw a Venn diagram on the board. Label one side 1700s and the other 1800s. When the students are finished reading.

8. Lead a discussion where they list the characters of Detroit during both time periods. Place them in the appropriate place in the diagram.

9. Ask students to choose some of the details on the chart and use them in a paragraph. Remind students to include a topic sentence and to write the details in complete sentences.

10. A second paragraph could be written comparing and contrasting their lives today with Detroit in the 1830s to 1860s.

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
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


A TRIP FROM UTICA, NEW YORK TO INGHAM COUNTY, MICHIGAN IN 1838

On the 13th of January, 1838, my father, Silas Beebe, left Utica, NY for Detroit, Mich., keeping a diary of the trip. Proceeding over bad roads, he reached Buffalo on Jan. 27th. On the 28th, at 11 P.M., he left Buffalo for the West in a stage, the wind blowing gale, snowing hard, roads rough. After several break-downs and some walking he arrived at Erie on the 30th at 4 A.M.

They arrived at Lower Sandusky, Feb. 8th, at 4 A.M., “very tired sore, and cold. Camped down on a table with buffalo skins; could not get to sleep. Could not sleep in the road, - dared not risk it. At daylight found the house full of people, - travelers, stage passengers from the west, all complaining of impositions on the part of stage proprietors, tavernkeepers, etc., to which our experience was but an echo. We got the worst breakfast! Cakes as black as your hat. The hog of a landlord refused to take any money excepting currency of New York or Ohio. Not liking that appearance of things, and ascertaining the fare to Detroit, 104 miles to be $7.25, and that we had to take an open wagon for a stage through the Black Swamp, five of us hired a yellow fellow who has a good team, cushioned seats and buffalo skins (far preferable to stage accommodations) to carry us to Toledo, 42 miles for $2.50 each since it was 75 cents less than the stage fare to the same place.

We arrived at Toledo, tired and sleepy, at 7 o’clock. From this place to Detroit is 66 miles. We left Toledo at 5 A.M., and drove 22 miles, to Monroe, Michigan. The following day we left Monroe at 9 A.M., and dined at Gibraltar, a pretty little village at the mouth of the Detroit River. It has a light-house and shore-houses. We arrived at the Michigan Exchange at Detroit at half past six P.M.

Feb. 16th. I met in the street Mr. Stanton, the man I was going to see in Sharon. Made arrangements to go with him on his return to Sharon the next day.

The streets were so very muddy. Gentlemen are seldom seen in the streets without their boots outside their pantaloons, prepared to wade through the soft mud or mortar on the sidewalks, or where the sidewalks should be. The middle of the street is so constantly stirred up by the carts that it is a sea of mud so deep the little French horses often get set with almost an empty cart.

Feb. 17th. left at one o’clock in the splendid [train] car ‘Gov. Mason” on the Detroit and St. Joseph Railroad, which is finished as far as Ypsilanti, 30 miles. The ‘Gov Mason will seat fifty-six persons. It is a spacious, pleasant vehicle to ride in, and was nearly full of gentlemen and ladies; but the track being covered with snow and ice, and not being prepared to contend against them, we were obligated to stop often while the attendants removed the obstructions with shovels, we progressed slowly. We got to Dearbornville [now Dearborn], where we had to grad supper and started on; but after making headway about a mile and a half, we met with so much obstruction that a vote was taken and we resolved to return to Dearbornville and stay over night. The old iron horse backed us up, when Mr. Stanton and myself received back one dollar each of our fare, and started on foot to overtake a Mr. Fellows. After walking about a like and a half we found his team of horses. There we took a must hideous supper, and left with him comfortably seated in a sleigh, and drove over a tolerable road to Sheldon’s, where we stopped for the night. Mr. S. keeps a very good house, about twenty miles west of Detroit.”

Feb. 18th. Left after breakfast and passed over a very beautiful county. Passed Ypsilanti, and arrived at Mt. Stanton’s in Sharon at nine P.M.

Feb. 23rd. left with Mr. Stanton for Ingham county. We drove over and around many marshes and through some as fine farming country as I ever saw. Stayed in Ingham county and about 3 and a half miles east of this a beautiful site for a village. We think of calling it ‘Perkin’ [now called Stockbridge]. We bantered the owner, a Mr. Smith, for the whole village plat, 55 acres, which he offered at $25 per acre.

My father left by steamboat for Buffalo, April 11th, proceeded to Utica, N.Y., and on the 15th of May 1838, as appears from the same diary, he left Utica with his family and “2,240 pounds of furniture and 4,009 pounds of merchandise” for Michigan. They reached Buffalo, May 29th, took passage on the steamboat ‘United States’ at 9 P.M. of that day, arrived at Detroit, May 22nd, at 3 P.M. The family arrived at Stockbridge about June 1st, 1838. My father died in 1857, at the age of 53.

He settled in Stockbridge under impressions that it would be on the line of the Michigan Central Railroad to a point on Lake Michigan; but when the road reached Dexter it shot off in another direction, and Stockbridge was left out in the cold.

Courtesy of Michigan Pioneer Historical Collection
My father emigrated with his family, consisting of my mother, my younger sister and myself, from Rochester, N.Y., to Detroit in September, 1824, when I was a child seven years old. I have indistinct memories of a late night ride in a stage coach, and of our arrival in Buffalo before daylight; making this forced journey that we might be in time to take passage in the “Superior”, the only steamer then on Lake Erie which only made weekly trips.

In the summer of 1825, I think the military troops were removed to Green Bay, and the fort and its adjoining grounds speedily became a most delightful play-ground for the children in the neighborhood. Often have my friends and myself, climbed up the steps made in the embankment at one corner of the fort, and enjoyed a romp around the top, then descending a few feet on the inside, we would run in the path of the sentinels, stop at every stand of the now torn down cannon and peep through the port holes.

The “Savoyard,” a small stream in summer, and in the spring and autumn large enough to float canoes, was spanned by a bridge, on Woodward Avenue. I used to stop in the bridge on my way home from school and watch the minnows in the bright clear water. What an terrible fate awaited that beautiful little stream; it is now the principal sewer of the city.

The market was a long shed-like building, in the center of Woodward Avenue, extending from Jefferson Avenue toward the river. Immense sturgeon fish were then caught in the river, below the city, and were often landed on the sand at the foot of the avenue, below the market.

When we had lived in Detroit two years we moved to a house on Jefferson Avenue, two doors down from the old Campau house, and from our back patio we had a fine view of the river. I never worried of watching the white winged vessels as they sailed up and down the beautiful stream. I wanted no other pastime. Every pleasant evening in summer, all along the river, canoes were launched, and parties rowed up and down stream, meeting and exchanging greetings, or side by side trying the strength and speed of their oarsmen. The large birch canoes of Governor Cass with its crimson canopy in the center, was always an object of special attention to the spectators on shore.

Mrs. E.M.S Stewart
Written in 1891

Courtesy of Michigan Pioneer Collection
PHOTOS: DETROIT STREETS, CA. 1860S
I came to Detroit in May, 1827, with my mother and two sisters, on the steamers “Henry Clay”. Our trip up the lake to Detroit was uneventful. We had a pleasant passage that occupied, I think, two or three days. The “Henry Clay,” commanded by Captain Norton, was a floating palace, we thought, and we greatly enjoyed the time spent on it.

When the “Clay” rounded Sandwich port, Detroit lay before us and, though small, the city presented quite an attractive appearance. The most conspicuous object in the distance was the steeple of the statehouse was located, where is now Capitol Square, and where the remains of Michigan’s first governor, Stevens T. Mason, now rest.

We landed at Jones’ dock, between Griswold and Shelby streets, on a fine day, about ten o’clock in the morning and all walked [to the residence of my uncle, Thomas Palmer, corner of Jefferson avenue and Griswold Street. There were no public conveyances in those days. Thomas Palmer lived over his store, as did many of the merchants doing business here at the time.

Well, the land boom that struck Michigan in 1837, changed very much the aspect of things. Steamboats and sailing crafts got to be quite plentiful; thousands of people came from New York and the New England States, and Detroit awoke from its sleepiness and became slowly the most giant that she is now.

General Friend Palmer
Written in 1905

Courtesy of Michigan Pioneer Historical Collection
**Ethnic Population of Detroit, 1850**

*Total Population = 21,019*

- Irish: 6,964
- German: 6,024
- English: 3,604
- Other: 3,096
- African American: 587
- Austrian: 587
- French: 597

**Population of Detroit**

*for the years 1810 through 1870*

1810: 1,650  
1820: 1,442  
1830: 2,222  
1840: 9,124  
1850: 21,019  
1860: 45,619  
1870: 79,603
PAINTING: A VIEW OF DETROIT, C. 1853
MICHIGAN CENTRAL RAIL-Road Line.

THROUGH IN 34 HOURS IN OPPOSITION TO A VOYAGE FROM 4 1-2 TO 9 DAYS LONG.

FOR DETROIT, CHICAGO,

AND OTHER PORTS ON LAKE MICHIGAN.

Cabin Fare through, (Meals and Berths on Lakes Erie and Michigan included,) S

THROUGH TO DETROIT WITHOUT LANDING!

THROUGH TO CHICAGO IN 34 HOURS—TO MILWAUKEE IN 44 HOURS,

AND TO ST. LOUIS IN 3 1-2 DAYS.

DISTANCE TO CHICAGO

By way of Lake St. Clair, Huron, and Michigan.
1,086 MILES.

THE NEW AND SPLENDID STEAMER

ATLANTIC,

CAPT. S. CLEMENT,

Leaves the Michigan Central Railroad Wharf, EVERY MONDAY and THURSDAY EVENING, at NINE O'CLOCK, P. M., in connection with the MICHIGAN CENTRAL RAILROAD, through without landing, arriving at Detroit in time for the Evening Train going West.

From Buffalo to Detroit in 17 Hours. From Detroit to New Buffalo in 11 Hours.
From New Buffalo to Chicago in 4 Hours. From Chicago to St. Louis in 48 Hours.

Passengers arriving by the Eastern Cars wishing to take this Boat will please have their Baggage placed under the MICHIGAN CENTRAL RAILROAD SIGN, in the Depot. A Baggaman will be in attendance to convey Baggage to the Boat.

For Passage or Freight, apply on board, or at the Office, at the Michigan Central Railroad Wharf, Buffalo.

BUSINESS CHART OF JEFFERSON AND WOODWARD AVENUES, 1868 (PAGE 2)

"Clark's Detroit City Directory, 1868" Published by Charles F. Clark
Collection of Detroit Historical Museum