

Where  
the past  
is present

# DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## TEACHER RESOURCE LESSON PLAN

### DETROIT UNDER THREE FLAGS: 1701-1796



**Detroit, c. 1705. Painting by Robert Hopkin, 1901.**

*Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library*

#### INTRODUCTION

This lesson was originally published in *Telling Detroit's Story: Historic Past, Proud People, Shining Future* curriculum unit developed by the Detroit 300 Commission in 2001.

Students in grades six through eight will gain a preliminary history of early Detroit and the three main countries that ruled the city. Students will participate in class discussion and mapping activities that will lead to a better understanding of some of the Core Democratic Values.

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Be able to chronologically describe the extent of European control in Detroit from 1701 to 1796.
- Understand the influence of economic and political factors in the development of Detroit to 1796.
- Use map skills to show French, English, and American holdings in eastern United States.

#### BACKGROUND ESSAY

##### DETROIT UNDER THREE FLAGS

The Detroit River played an important role in the development of the city of Detroit. Cadillac and the French settlers came across the Atlantic Ocean in their small ships, seeking adventure and opportunities. They were looking for a site to establish a trading center. As they came up the Detroit River, it was obvious that the ideal site for their settlement and trading center would be located on the first rise of ground from the river. It was a strategic location to command control of the waterway. Therefore, as soon as Cadillac saw the advantages of that site, he ordered his men to build a fort on the Detroit River in 1701 to protect themselves militarily and to use as an economic center for trading furs.

The English were envious of the French wealth and power. The English, too, wanted to trade in America. The French and English began a war in Europe in 1756. The fighting continued between these two nations in America. This war in America was called the French and Indian War because the French joined with several Native American groups to fight the English. In 1760, the English won the battle in Montreal, Canada. The French surrendered Detroit to the English. When the peace treaty was signed in 1763, the English won the lands that had been held by the French east of the Mississippi River. Therefore, the French flag flying over Fort Detroit was replaced with the English flag.

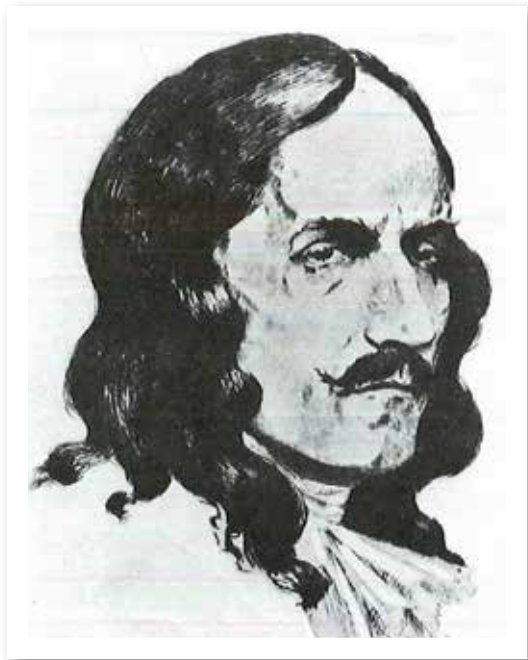
When Detroit was under the control of the English, Pontiac, an Ottawa chief, tried to help the French regain their control of Detroit. The Native Americans were dissatisfied with the English as trading partners. The English did not treat them as fairly as the French. Pontiac tried to organize the various groups in the area to retake the English

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settlements, including Detroit, for the French. He had devised a plan; however, the English learned about it and his plan did not succeed. A peace treaty, after the Battle of Bloody Run, was eventually signed between Pontiac and the English. Unrest among the Native Americans continued.

A new nation, the United States, was formed in 1776 with the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. The Americans defeated the English at Yorktown, Virginia in the last major battle of the Revolutionary War. The Treaty of Paris officially ended the Revolutionary War in 1803. When American soldiers came to Detroit, the English soldiers left and the English flag was lowered. The American flag was raised permanently, after the War of 1812.

Three flags have flown over Detroit. The first flag was the French, next came the British, then the American flag.



**Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac. Painting by Charles Barker, 1929.**

*Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library*

## CADILLAC: FOUNDER OF DETROIT

Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac (1658-1730) was the commander at Michilimackinac for three years and a successful French government official, soldier, explorer, and businessman. He had difficulties, though, in working with the Jesuit priests who were

also located in the settlement at Michilimackinac. The Jesuits were an influential force in the French government and they resented the presence of the French soldiers and the fur traders. They felt that the French commander, soldiers, and fur traders interfered with the religious mission to convert the Native Americans to Christianity since they provided Native Americans with brandy for their furs. At the insistence of the Jesuits, the French king requested that all soldiers and traders leave. Cadillac did leave but he returned later.

He went to France to convince King Louis XIV that France needed to establish a fort in the south to protect the French traders and the established settlements in the north, particularly along the St. Lawrence River. This fort on the river between two lakes would serve to keep the English from going northward into the lands held by the French (New France) at that time. He found friends who had some authority in government and was able to get permission to start a little colony on what is today the Detroit River. One of his friends was Count Ponchartrain after who the fort at Detroit was named.

The Treaty of 1701 with the Iroquois made it possible for the French to explore the area known as Michigan today without fear of Native American attacks and raids. Cadillac, though, was already on his way to Michigan to establish the French in a new area and to lay the foundation for the city of Detroit somewhere along Le Detroit. The expedition consisted of twenty-five canoes. Accompanying him were fifty *coureurs de bois*, fifty well-armed soldiers, and 100 Native Americans as well as his nine-year-old son, the second official in command, Henry deTonty, his brother, and two priests.

They finally came to the spot where Detroit stands presently on July 24, 1701 for the new settlement. They began the work of building the French settlement.

Even though the fort was named after Count Ponchartrain, the settlement became known as the Village of the Straits (*ville de troit*). Later, the word for village was dropped and it became known as Detroit. To Cadillac's credit, his plan was to make this a permanent settlement, not just a trading post. He encouraged French families to come and make Detroit their permanent home. His wife and Madame

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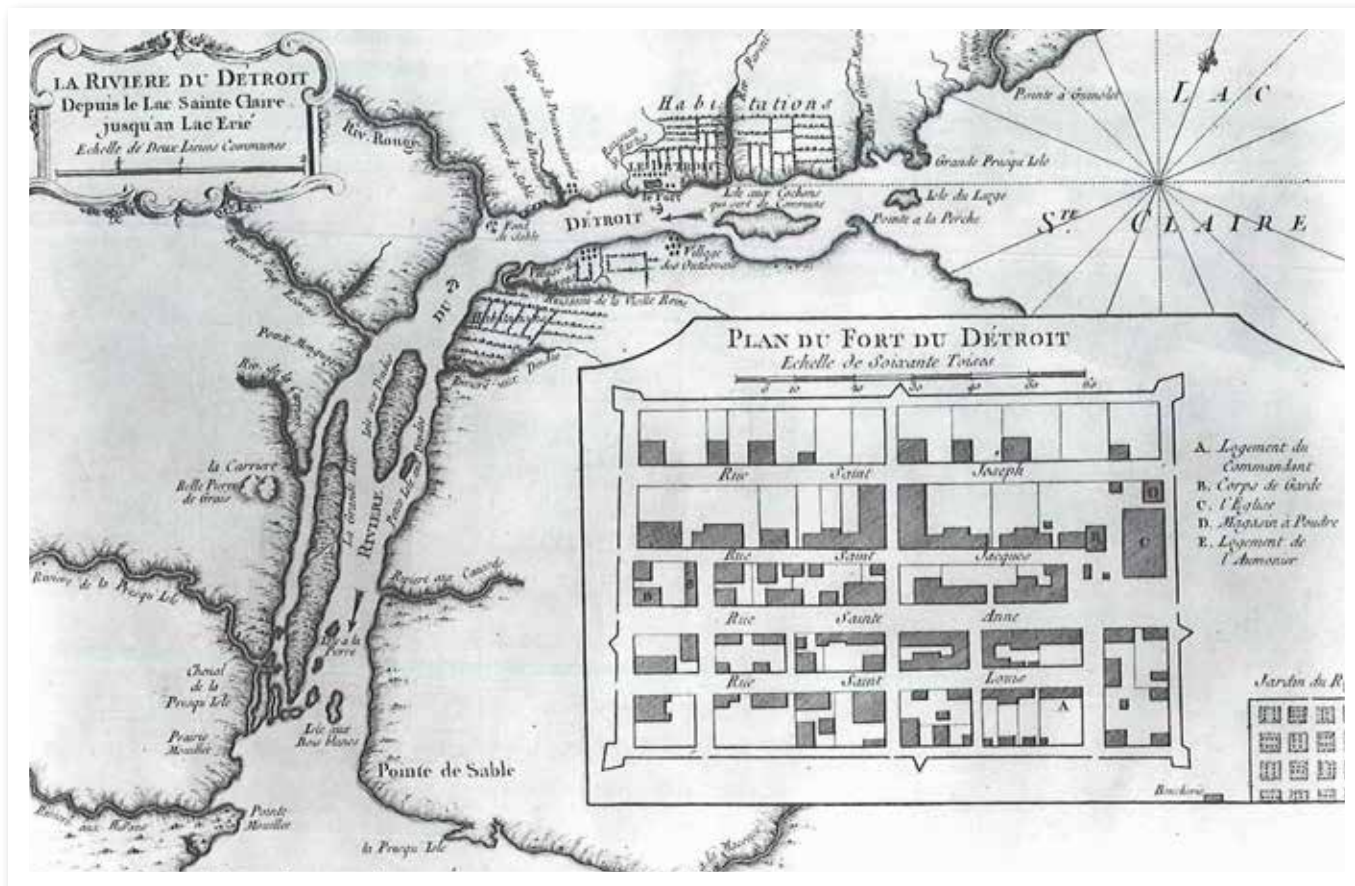
de Tonty followed him the next fall.

Cadillac had permission to grant land in the new settlements and collect rent. Therefore, the land was not sold to the new settlers, as was the custom among the English and American colonists, rather the property belonged to the commander, Cadillac. He, of course, took full advantage of this option. The people to whom the land was granted were called "habitants." The habitants or renters often complained that Cadillac was over charging them, charging high fees for the use of mills, and other services. People were not pleased with him. Consequently, he made many enemies who resented his management and administration of the settlement as well as the wealth he was accumulating as commander of the French colony. Some even said that Cadillac treated the habitants like serfs in a feudal society. Some farming was done during the years that the French had control of the Detroit area.

Things did not go too well for Cadillac. France was involved in a war with England and the King was too busy to care about what was going on in Detroit. In 1710, the king appointed Cadillac as governor of Louisiana. He served there as governor until 1715 when he returned to France.

Today, a statue of Cadillac and other famous men of Michigan are on the Wayne State University campus.

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)



French map of Detroit, c. 1701

Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library



# LESSON PLAN: DETROIT UNDER THREE FLAGS: 1701-1796

## MATERIALS USED

- Outline Map: Eastern United States (without political boundaries)
- Topics for Study: Detroit Study Project

## LESSON SEQUENCE

### Opening the Activity:

1. Ask the students what they know about the founding of Detroit and Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac. Have students read the “Cadillac: Founder of Detroit” section of the Background Essay. Why was Detroit founded? What French influences do they note in Detroit today?
2. Ask students to read the “Detroit Under Three Flags” section of the Background Essay. What were the political and economic conditions which led to the French loss of Detroit? The English loss of Detroit?
3. Have the students prepare a classroom timeline, noting the important events involving Detroit between 1701 and 1796.

### Developing the Activity

1. Map Study: Give each student three outline maps of the Eastern United States. Each map should show the location of Detroit. Write out the answers to the questions on the back of the appropriate map.
  - Map 1701: Show, by color code, areas of English and French control. How important was Detroit as a fur trading center at that time?
  - Map 1763: Note areas of English and French control in 1763. What changes in control resulted as a consequence of the French and Indian War? What was left of New France? What happened to Detroit?
  - Map 1796: Note the areas of control by the English, French and Americans. What changes resulted as a consequence of the American Revolution? What was left of New France? Of the British Empire in America? What happened to Detroit?
2. Have the students compare the three maps and

discuss the political changes which occurred during 1701 through 1796 which affected the growth of Detroit.

3. Divide the class into three groups. Topics for Study: Detroit Study Projects. The findings of each group will be presented to the class in an interesting and creative way (newspaper; dramatization; video; diorama; museum display; interviews with Cadillac, Pontiac, and others).

### Concluding the Activity

1. Student presentation of reports.
2. After reports, summarizations of key events in the story of Detroit from its founding to American control.

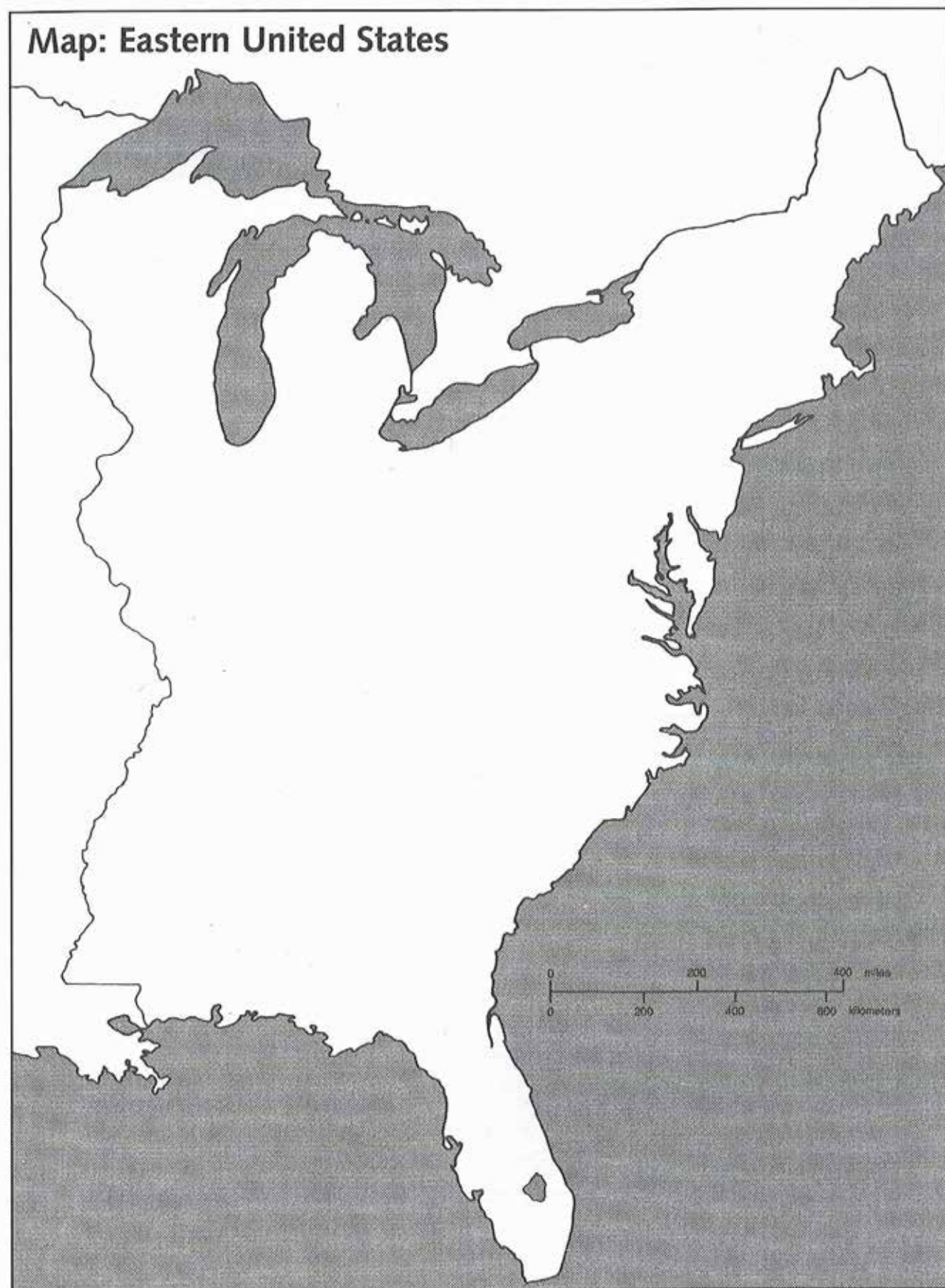
## EXTENDING THE LEARNING

- Create a timeline for the years studied, with an extension to the present.
- Students may wish to assume the identity of one of the individuals studied and visit other classes to acquaint them with the history of Detroit. They would be knowledgeable about the political, social, and economic conditions of the time the individual lived.
- Students may wish to volunteer to tell the story of Detroit under three flags by making a painting, sculpture, or any other art production.

## ASSESSING THE LEARNING

- Have the students answer either of the following Extended Response questions:
  - Should France have lost control of New France?
  - Should the British have lost control of the Detroit region after the American revolution?
- Use the Michigan Department of Education Social Studies Extended Response rubric ([www.mde.mi](http://www.mde.mi)) to score their answer.

## MAP: EASTERN UNITED STATES



# TOPICS FOR STUDY: DETROIT STUDY PROJECTS

## GROUP 1: 1701

1. What determined where Detroit was established?
2. How did each person or group view Detroit and the surrounding area?
3. What advantages and resources made Detroit desirable?

### PEOPLE/GROUPS FOR STUDY:

- Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac
- Marie-Therese Cadillac
- King Louis XIV
- Count Ponchartrain
- Huron Indians
- Coureur de bois
- Jesuits
- Algonquin tribes
- Habitants
- British Government
- Captain Alphonse de Tonty

## GROUP 2: 1760-1763

1. How did Detroit come under British control?
2. How did each person or group view Detroit and the surrounding area?
3. What advantages, resources made Detroit desirable?

### PEOPLE/GROUPS FOR STUDY:

- General James Wolfe
- Huron Indians
- Francois Picote, Sieur de Belestre
- Pontiac, Ottawa
- General Louis Montcalm
- Iroquois
- Major Robert Rogers
- Major Henry Gladwin

## GROUP 3: 1794-1796

1. Why did it take 11 years after the 13 colonies won their freedom from Britain for Detroit to fly the U.S. flag?
2. How did each person or group view Detroit and the surrounding area?
3. What advantages, resources made Detroit desirable?

### PEOPLE/GROUPS FOR STUDY:

- Colonel Henry Hamilton
- General Anthony Wayne
- Lt. Col. John Hamtramck
- Detroit residents
- President George Washington
- Chief Little Turtle, Blue Jacket
- William Macomb
- Chief Justice John Jay