

Where
the past
is present

DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TEACHER RESOURCE PRIMARY SOURCE SET

DETROIT THRIFT GARDENS

PRIMARY SOURCE OVERVIEW

Detroit's current availability of vacant land has made it a popular place for urban farming, but this is not a new phenomenon brought about by abandoned neighborhoods and diminishing population. During the Great Depression, Mayor Frank Murphy suggested a program that would eventually become the Detroit and Wayne County Welfare Relief Administration's Thrift Garden Project. Started in 1931, it sponsored vegetable gardens for both "families in relief" and "needy borderline families".

Households that applied to be included in the program could either have a home garden in their backyards or adjacent vacant lots, or receive a plowed 40 x 100 ft. designated plot in one of the large field gardens on donated land around the city. Gardeners were issued commercial fertilizer, tomato and cabbage plants. Seeds for many vegetables, including radish, beets, kohlrabi, swiss chard, kale, squash, turnips, okra, and parsley were furnished by the State Emergency Welfare Relief Administration. To assist the gardeners, tools could be borrowed at each field office, and stockyard manure was applied to especially deprived fields. Insecticide was also made available and canning demonstrations and supplies were offered. Michigan State College provided informative bulletins to the gardeners.

Gardeners were not allowed to sell their produce, and if assigned to a field garden, they had to agree to serve occasionally as a night or day watchman to protect against theft. Field overseers were made special officers by the Police Department and given whistles, badges and the authority to make arrests, though few attempts were made to steal produce. The biggest problems were transportation and weather. Many gardeners had to travel long distances to reach a field garden using public transit or hitchhiking. Lacking proper irrigation systems, rain and drought hindered production. In 1932 the corn crop was wiped out by Stewarts' Wilt, a bacterial



blight.

To promote and publicize the project, educational exhibits were displayed at the Horticultural Society of Michigan's Fall Show, the Michigan Agricultural and Industrial Exposition, and the Michigan State Fair. Radio broadcasts and lectures in public schools touted the program, and a Spring Festival at the Masonic Temple raised money for the Thrift Gardens.

By 1935, the project had expanded to include the whole county, except Dearborn, which ran its own program. Surveys showed that everyone enjoyed working their garden and that the average garden value was \$35, but some were worth as much as \$100. The Project Commission determined that "Fresh air, sunlight and the visible results of their own work have altered the morale of many gardeners. The mental, physical and social rehabilitation of the individual gardeners is perhaps as important an aspect of the Thrift Garden Project as the financial benefits."

LESSON PLAN

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Analyze a primary source photograph
- Make assumptions about photograph based on prior knowledge and close observation

MATERIALS

- *Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Photographs*
- *Primary Source Analysis Tool*
- Primary Sources

PREPARATION

Make one copy for each student:

- One photo from collection
- Collections record for selected image
- *Primary Source Analysis Tool*

Print one copy of each of the other primary sources and their bibliographic records.

Recreate a blank Primary Source Analysis Tool on the board.

PROCEDURE

1. Distribute the copy of the selected photograph to each student.
2. Using the *Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Photographs*, lead students through the process as a group. Fill in the *Primary Source Analysis Tool* on the board with their answers.
3. For the "Observe" column: ask students to only comment on the things they see in the photo.
4. For the "Reflect" column: ask the students to comment on what is happening in the photo.
5. For the "Question" column: ask the students what information the photo itself does NOT provide (i.e. names, location, etc.) Make a list of questions the students have about the photo.
6. Distribute the bibliographical information sheet to each student. Review as a class and discuss whether or not the information answers their

questions. What questions remain?

7. Lead a discussion about what other sources could help them answer their remaining questions (i.e. other photographs, textbooks, letters, diaries, newspapers, the photographer, etc.)
8. Pass out a copy of the *Primary Source Analysis Tool* to each student. Place the students in groups of two or three and give each group one of the other primary source photographs.
9. Have each group work together to observe, reflect and create questions about their photograph. Each student should complete his or her own worksheet. Help the students by providing leading questions as needed (i.e. what do you notice first? what are the people wearing? What's happening?)
10. Have each group provide a brief report to the class on their observations, reflections and questions.
11. Lead a class discussion about the primary sources. Ask students what all the photos had in common, and how they differed. Encourage them to formulate hypothesis about the unifying theme presented (in this case, people farming.)

PRIMARY SOURCE LISTING



Detroit Thrift Gardens, c. 1931. From the Detroit Historical Collection.
Item Number: 2012.045.333

<http://detroitshs.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=228044DB-5393-4631-9CD4-402877544213;type=102>



Detroit Thrift Gardens, c. 1931. From the Detroit Historical Collection.
Item Number: 2012.045.334

<http://detroitshs.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=DC5B8917-4757-4A48-98A7-022646475145;type=102>



Detroit Thrift Gardens, c. 1931. From the Detroit Historical Collection.
Item Number: 2012.045.336

<http://detroitshs.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=93371FE3-C434-4D29-817B-233111467690;type=102>



Detroit Thrift Gardens, c. 1931. From the Detroit Historical Collection.
Item Number: 2012.045.338

<http://detroitshs.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=00E0053F-3E00-4759-80ED-548271072856;type=102>



Detroit Thrift Gardens, c. 1931. From the Detroit Historical Collection.
Item Number: 2012.045.339

<http://detroitshs.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=1ABA6E2D-51E9-4FAC-BF8F-134831811624;type=102>

PRIMARY SOURCE LISTING



Detroit Thrift Gardens, 1931. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.342

<http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=C69D4E1B-7107-4A29-A390-967110818310;type=102>



Detroit Thrift Gardens, c. 1931. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.0344

<http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=3D2F7CCE-E83C-41B5-A7A8-802583976722;type=102>



Detroit Thrift Gardens, 1932. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.348

<http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=D76F7907-F1E2-4058-8BE1-197029369612;type=102>



Detroit Thrift Gardens, 1932. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.350

<http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=BF58C4E1-ABD5-4B0D-8070-314316420170;type=102>



Detroit Thrift Gardens, 1932. From the Detroit Historical Collection. Item Number: 2012.045.351

<http://detroiths.pastperfect-online.com/33029cgi/mweb.exe?request=record;id=F4288CB4-2BA8-42A3-BF43-119047240323;type=102>

TEACHER'S GUIDE ANALYZING PHOTOGRAPHS & PRINTS



Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.

OBSERVE

Have students identify and note details.

Sample Questions:

- Describe what you see. · What do you notice first?
- What people and objects are shown? · How are they arranged? · What is the physical setting?
- What, if any, words do you see? · What other details can you see?

REFLECT

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the image.

- Why do you think this image was made? · What's happening in the image? · When do you think it was made? · Who do you think was the audience for this image? · What tools were used to create this?
- What can you learn from examining this image? · What's missing from this image? · If someone made this today, what would be different? · What would be the same?

QUESTION

Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.

- What do you wonder about...
who? · what? · when? · where? · why? · how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:

Beginning
Write a caption for the image.

Intermediate

Select an image. Predict what will happen one minute after the scene shown in the image. One hour after? Explain the reasoning behind your predictions.

Advanced
Have students expand or alter textbook or other printed explanations of history based on images they study.

For more tips on using primary sources, go to
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers>



PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS TOOL

OBSERVE	REFLECT	QUESTION
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FURTHER INVESTIGATION





Catalog Number 2012.045.333

Object Name Print, Photographic

Description Black and white photographic print taken of a well in the Detroit Thrift Gardens. A man, smoking a pipe, holds the well's bucket which is attached to a well-sweep, the fulcrum of which is on the right. Men, women, and children gather around him among the tall crops, and a man in a suit and hat stands in the foreground on the right edge of the frame. The roofs of adjacent homes are visible in the background.

Date c. 1931

Collection Municipal Services

Search Terms Detroit Thrift Gardens
Great Depression
Agriculture

Image 3A75B089-E14A-44DD-A899-297943502654





Catalog Number 2012.045.334

Object Name Print, Photographic

Description Black and white photographic print taken of a field at the Detroit Thrift Gardens. In the background, amid rows of crops, stands a well and well-sweep. Several women appear in the upper right corner of the image on the edge of the field. Beyond them are a row of billboards and a tress atop a debris pile, possibly dirt conveyor in use at a construction site.

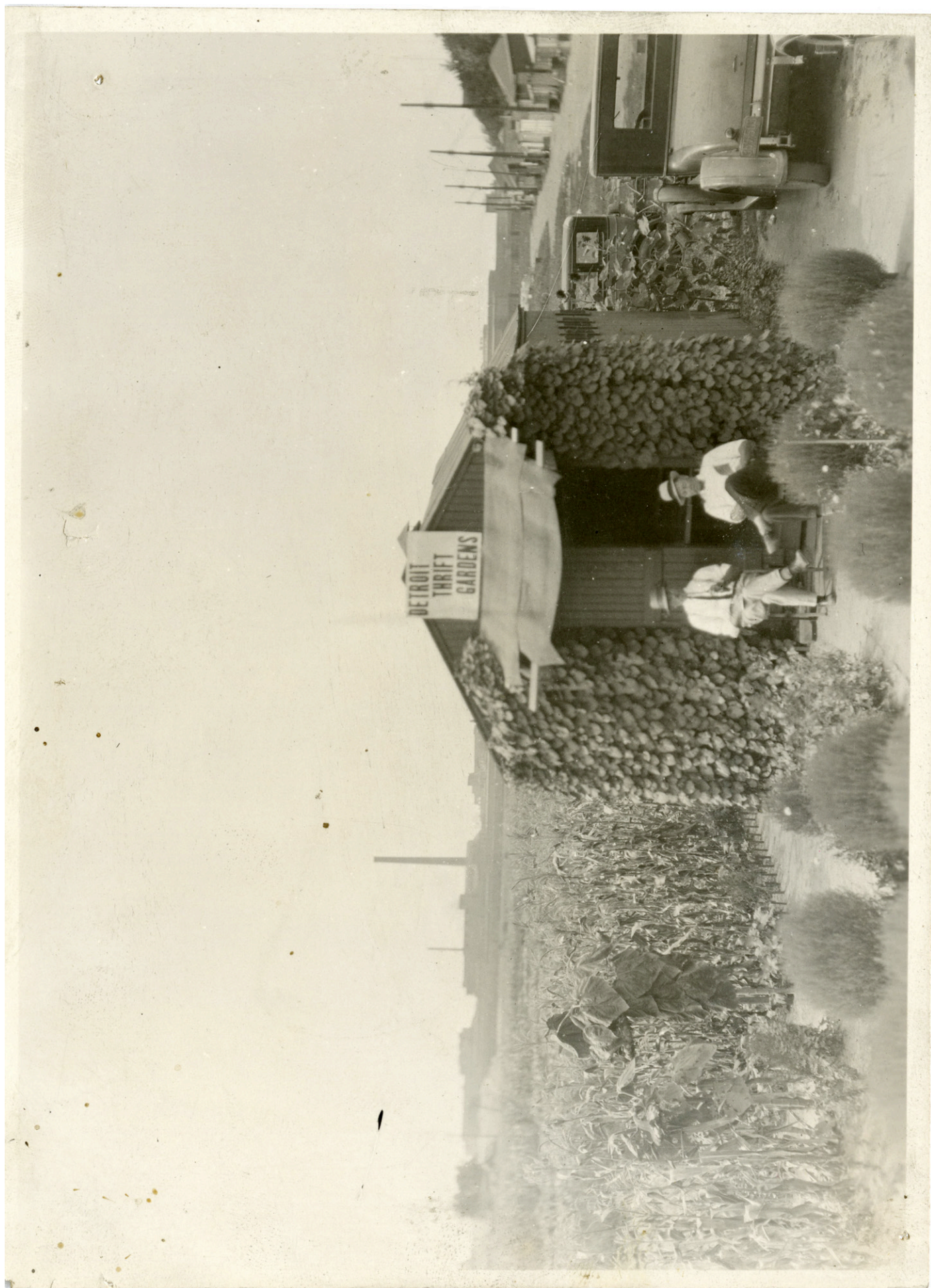
"Note-Old Country Sweep Well, dug by gardeners," and the number 3 in a circle are handwritten in pencil on the verso.

Date c. 1931

Collection Municipal Services

Search Terms Detroit Thrift Gardens
Great Depression
Agriculture

Image 02AE7B7F-8F73-4225-83F8-933259377820





Catalog Number 2012.045.336

Object Name Print, Photographic

Description Black and white photographic print taken of a two men seated outside of a shed decorated with a sign that reads, "Detroit Thrift Gardens." A field of crops extends on the left and behind the shed. The cars are parked along a dirt road to the right, which separates the fields from a row of small buildings. In the distance the builds and smokestacks of factory complexes are visible.

"1," is stamped on the verso.

Date c. 1931

Collection Municipal Services

Search Terms Detroit Thrift Gardens
Great Depression
Agriculture

Image 55B95471-93DB-4E14-BAF4-362727343451





Catalog Number 2012.045.338

Object Name Print, Photographic

Description Black and white photographic of a man plowing a field with a tractor as a boy runs alongside the trailer plow.

"22," is stamped on the verso. Copy is mounted on a piece of black matting with the handwritten caption, "Land Preparation, Spring 1932."

Date 1932

Collection Municipal Services

Search Terms Detroit Thrift Gardens
Great Depression
Agriculture
Tractors

Image BA14606B-9081-4155-864A-879531724130



DETROIT TOWN LANDING



Catalog Number 2012.045.339

Object Name Print, Photographic

Description Black and white photographic print taken of a group of well-dressed men and woman standing outside a shed at the Detroit Thrift Gardens. Several members of the group are eating. An out-of-focus plant is in the foreground.

"Detroit Thrift Gardens," is stamped on both sides of the photo, and the number "23," is stamped on the verso.

Date c. 1931

Collection Municipal Services

Search Terms Detroit Thrift Gardens
Great Depression
Agriculture

Image FDDF58C6-C818-44D7-BD78-314563936327





Catalog Number 2012.045.342

Object Name Print, Photographic

Description Sepia-toned photographic print taken of a smiling woman posing to the right of a table covered fresh produce and a variety of jarred goods. She wears a long dress, jacket, hat, scarf, and gloves and holds what appears to be a tomato. Several other people in hats and suits as well as trees are visible in the background.

"1931," is handwritten and "42," is stamped on the verso.

Date 1931

Collection Municipal Services

Search Terms Detroit Thrift Gardens
Great Depression
Agriculture

Image 0158F672-6D54-4822-A3FB-931998416030





Catalog Number 2012.045.344

Object Name Print, Photographic

Description Black and white photographic print taken of a three men standing outside of a shed on which signs reading, "Detroit Thrift Gardens," and "No work after 8 P.M." are posted. A field full of crops extends behind them. To their right is a small landscaped area where the word, "garden," has been spelled out in rocks, and surrounded by small plants. Utility poles dot the field, and houses are visible in the distance.

"221," is stamped on the verso.

Date c. 1931

Collection Municipal Services

Search Terms Detroit Thrift Gardens
Great Depression
Agriculture

Image AF050D89-1C82-4FD3-84CE-748574853135



GARDEN COMMITTEE INSPECTING THIRIF GARDENS

--- JUNE 29 --- 1932 ---



Catalog Number	2012.045.348
Object Name	Print, Photographic
Description	Mounted sepia-toned photo photographic print identified by a handwritten caption as "Garden Committee Inspecting Thrif [sic] Gardens - June 29 - 1932." A group of well-dressed men and women, along with a small boy and girl are standing along a path through one of the fields of the Detroit Thrift Gardens.
Date	1932
Collection	Municipal Services
Search Terms	Detroit Thrift Gardens Great Depression Agriculture
Image	34888396-9DE5-49D0-B26E-913952950112



SCHOOL GARDENS — STATE FAIR GROUNDS
— JULY 30 — 1932 —



Catalog Number	2012.045.350
Object Name	Print, Photographic
Description	Mounted sepia-toned photo photographic print identified by a handwritten caption as "School Gardens - State Fair Grounds - July 30 - 1932." A large ground of women, girls, and boys are photographed using hoes to plow of the fields of the Detroit Thrift Gardens. A small shed stands on the field in the background. Beyond a row of trees, the roof of the Michigan State Fairgrounds Coliseum is visible.
Date	1932
Collection	Municipal Services
Search Terms	Michigan State Fairgrounds Detroit Thrift Gardens Great Depression Agriculture Michigan State Fairgrounds Coliseum
Image	4B194566-1D5A-4F29-8800-336742661220



FIELD No 28 - GRANDMONT ^{AND} ALONBY - 154 GARDENS
--- AUG 1. --- 1932 ---



Catalog Number 2012.045.351

Object Name Print, Photographic

Description Mounted sepia-toned photo photographic print identified by a handwritten caption as "Field No.28 - Grandmont and Alonby [sic]- 154 Gardens - Aug 1. - 1932." Two men work in one of the Detroit Thrift Gardens while a nearby boy holds something, and a man in a boater hat looks at the ground. A car is next to a shed on the left edge of the frame. In the background is a row of similar houses.

Date 1932

Collection Municipal Services

Search Terms Detroit Thrift Gardens
Great Depression
Agriculture
Grandmont Avenue
Allonby Street

Image 53AAD894-64B5-42A8-8D1C-449602628066