

# *Gran Torino*



Choosing Detroit as a backdrop for the movie *Gran Torino* was obvious. After all, the Motor City put the world on wheels!



PHOTO: THE HENRY FORD

By the mid 20th century, Detroit had become the motor metropolis of the world. The car industry was on the cutting edge and the “Big Three” auto companies, Ford, General Motors and Chrysler, forced most smaller competitors out of business.

The auto industry employed vast numbers of working Detroiters; hundreds of thousands of blue-collar workers found work on the assembly lines—one of every six people worked for the automotive industry.

Today, Detroit is still the world headquarters of the Big Three, but the Motor City is also home to developers

and young entrepreneurs that are reshaping the city and travelers from around the world are taking notice.

In the movie, Walt Kowalski (played by Clint Eastwood), a recently widowed Korean War veteran, is alienated from his family and angry at the world.

Follow in the footsteps of the actors in this four-time award-winning movie. Tour the film locations sites and explore the places where Clint Eastwood and fellow actors spent their downtime. Get the scoop and discover entertaining behind-the-scene stories and more.

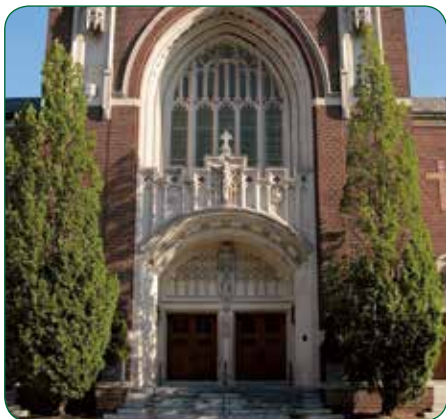




### **ST. AMBROSE CHURCH** **Grosse Pointe Park**

*Gran Torino* opens at St. Ambrose Catholic Church in Grosse Pointe Park, where Walt Kowalski (played by Clint Eastwood) is attending his wife's funeral. St. Ambrose Church celebrated its first mass on Christmas Eve, 1927.

It was hailed in *American Architecture Magazine* for its attention to detail. The majestic 2,400-pipe organ was added to the church around WWII. The beautiful arched stained glass windows were installed in the 1930s.



### **GRAN TORINO STREET SCENE** **13140 Charlevoix Street** **Grosse Pointe Park**

Take a ride over to this location and see where Walt Kowalski watched as the three neighborhood hoodlums gave Sue (actress Ahney Her) a hard time.

### **WIDGREN'S BARBER SHOP** **204 West 11 Mile Road, Royal Oak**

This is the same barbershop (called Martin's Barbershop in the movie) where the "man talk" occurred among the barber, Walt, and Tao. Although the barbershop closed shortly after filming, the building is still there.



### **POINTE HARDWARE** **15020 Kercheval Avenue** **Grosse Pointe Park**

Pointe Hardware is where Walt and Tao come to shop together for tools and start to bond with one another.



PHOTOS: PHIL ROSSI, THE PADDLE LLC

Inside the store is a sign that says, "Clint Was Here—Gran Torino 2008." It is the exact spot Clint Eastwood stood when picking out the tools for Tao.

### **ARTONA TAILORING** **17834 Mack Avenue** **Grosse Pointe Park**

This tailor store is where Walt gets fitted for his new suit. The owner of the tailor shop even had a part in the film.



### **CABBAGE PATCH BAKERY** **Grosse Pointe Park**

Be sure to stop in where Clint Eastwood ordered home-brewed ice tea here many times. One lucky lady behind the counter got to cut lemons for his tea, too.

Clint Eastwood often ordered scones made here. When the filming of *Gran Torino* was completed, Mr. Eastwood ordered a supply of the scones to be flown back to his home in California.



### **GOODNITE GRACIE** **Royal Oak**

The kick-off party for the actors was held at the trendy Goodnite Gracie. The popular nightclub is part of D'Amato's Restaurant and is a favorite for traditional Italian cuisine, cocktails and martinis.

The restaurant was built in 1927 in downtown Royal Oak's Washington Square building and designed in a romantic Art Deco style. Enjoy a cocktail and hear some of the great jazz music that Clint he enjoyed as well.

### **THE TOWNSEND HOTEL** **Birmingham**

This four-star hotel is where actor Clint Eastwood and his two sons stayed during filming. The hotel offers European elegance at its finest. Guests can enjoy afternoon teas and fine dining at the Townsend. The lobby has marble fireplaces, crystal chandeliers and custom murals. While staying at the Townsend, Clint Eastwood ordered a grand piano to be brought to his suite. Although Clint Eastwood plays piano, it was his son, Kyle, who composed the music for *Grand Torino* on the piano in their hotel room.



## HOMWOOD SUITES

### Troy

The rest of the cast and crew, even Daisy the dog, stayed at this hotel. Daisy was originally found in a shelter. She stayed with her trainer at the hotel, but anytime they used Daisy on location, this canine star had her own air-conditioned trailer.

If you stay here, the hotel offers spacious suites and it's close to fabulous shopping, too.

## BOULAN PARK

### 3671 Crooks Road, Troy

A day at the diamond! The local production company hosted a phenomenal BBQ and a game of baseball for the cast, crew and their families involved in *Gran Torino* at Boulan Park.

Baseballs, gloves and bats were provided to all that needed them.

## MUST SEE ATTRACTIONS

What would a *Gran Torino* film tour be without a visit to some of the world's best automotive attractions—all in the Motor City region. Even Clint Eastwood made sure to do just that while he was in Detroit.

### THE HENRY FORD

#### Dearborn

America's greatest history attraction had a visit from Hollywood! The Henry Ford is a National Historic Landmark and although Clint Eastwood heard about The Henry Ford, he never visited until August 2008.

Seven Model Ts escorted Clint Eastwood and his wife, Dena, and 24 cast and crew members through Greenfield Village, an outdoor history park. Just as the Model T rolled into Greenfield Village, Clint Eastwood exclaimed, "Wow, this place looks just like a movie set." The tour included stops at Henry Ford's boyhood home and the Wright Brothers Cycle Shop. At one point, newlyweds were having wedding photographs taken in Greenfield Village when Clint Eastwood's Model T pulled up next to their horse-drawn wedding carriage.

Clint took off his sunglasses and said, "What a beautiful bride. Congratulations." Where else in the world could you have your wedding photographs in such a beautiful and historic place, have horse-drawn carriage rides for your party, and have Clint Eastwood step out of a Model T to compliment and congratulate you?

The 12-acre museum showcases a vast collection of artifacts and exhibits that celebrate America's ingenuity and innovation. It's the greatest gathering of everyday genius.

Apparently Clint Eastwood thought so too when, after touring the museum and village he remarked, "I heard that this was an amazing place, but it has far exceeded my expectations."

The Henry Ford is also the starting point for tours of the Ford Rouge factory, a fascinating interactive experience of the auto plant that put the world on wheels. The visit ended with a stop at the carousel

in Greenfield Village. The actor picked out his own carousel animal, which of course, was a horse. Clint Eastwood chuckled: "It's been a long time since I have been on a horse."

### EDSEL AND ELEANOR FORD HOUSE

#### Grosse Pointe Shores

Cruise over to the serene lakeside estate of one of America's most prominent automotive families, the Edsel and Eleanor Ford Home. The house became the new residence of Edsel Ford and his wife, Eleanor, in 1929. There is no other place that compares to experiencing this spectacular 60-room mansion nestled on 86 acres of magnificent gardens and grounds. Open to the public for tours all year.

### MEADOWBROOK HALL

#### Rochester

Tour a national historic landmark. Meadowbrook is the historic home built by one of the automotive aristocracy's most remarkable women, Matilda Dodge Wilson, widow of automobile pioneer John Dodge. The hall's 88,000-square-foot and 110 rooms make it the largest and most elaborate historic home in the Midwest.

### Birmingham and Troy

Close to the Townsend Hotel & Homewood Suites is the quaint shopping district in downtown Birmingham and the upscale Somerset Collection in Troy. Indulge yourself with unique boutiques and luxury shopping.

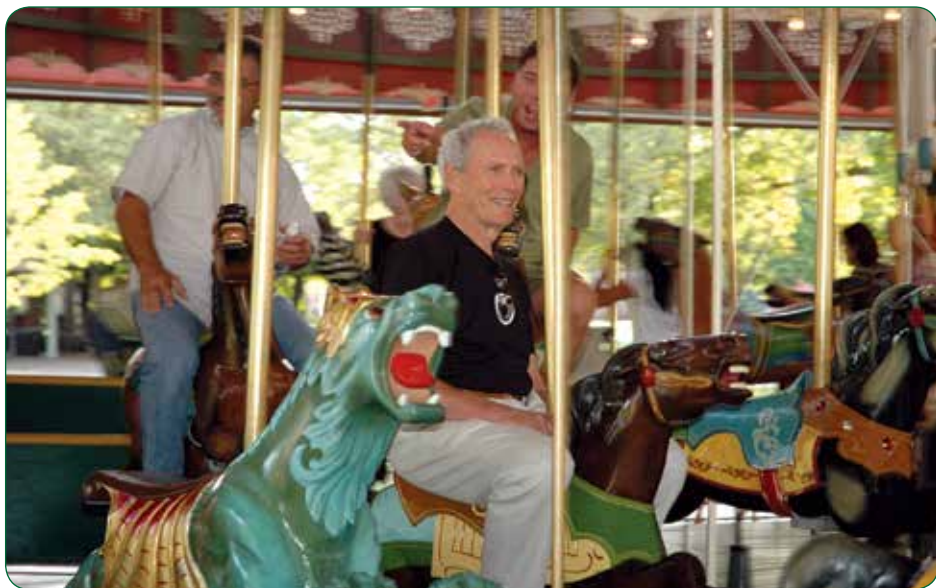


PHOTO: THE HENRY FORD





**WALT'S HOUSE**  
**238 Rhode Island Street**  
**Highland Park**

The original story of widower Walt Kowalski and the Hmong community was set in Minneapolis, but director Clint Eastwood felt Kowalski's past as an auto worker made the Motor City the perfect

backdrop. A scene shows Walt sitting on his porch with his yellow lab, Daisy.

When it came time to shoot the first scene with the dog, the trainer walked Daisy on the porch and placed the dog next to Clint. "Cute dog," Clint said in that signature voice of his as he made eye contact with Daisy. Just before cameras started rolling, Clint bent down to pat the dog's head. Obviously taken with the dog, Mr. Eastwood began making kissy sounds to her. Daisy immediately responded by jumping up and licking Clint Eastwood's face.

The trainer tried to stop the dog, but Clint Eastwood held up his hand to the trainer and said: "It's okay, she's just being a dog." Clint Eastwood became a bit attached to

PHOTOS: PHIL ROSSI, THE PADDLE LLC



the dog—when filming was completed he considered taking Daisy home with him, but thought better of it because he has allergies.

**TAO'S HOUSE**  
**238 Rhode Island Street**  
**Highland Park**

The young Hmong American boy is coerced by a Hmong gang to attempt to steal Walt Kowalski's Gran Torino. With no father in the family, Tao is expected to be the man of the house. When the car theft fails, Tao returns home and his family forces Tao to apologize and make amends to next door neighbor, Walt Kowalski.

**VFW POST**  
**25500 Sherwood Avenue**  
**Centerline**

Father Janovich (played by Christopher Carley) gets on Walt's back about life and death in his local bar—the Veterans of Foreign Wars Richard Menge Post No. 6756. Grab a seat inside and order a Pabst Blue Ribbon, as that is what Walt is drinking on the steps of his porch in the beginning of the movie.

**LAKESHORE DRIVE**  
**Grosse Pointe Farms**

As the film ends, Tao is seen driving the Gran Torino down a road with Walt's dog in the car, too. The drive is actually Lakeshore Drive in Grosse Pointe Farms and one can see Lake St. Clair in the background.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Just before filming was to start for the confessional scene with Walt Kowalski (Clint Eastwood) and the priest, St. Ambrose's own real-life priest (Father Tim) had a movie poster of Eastwood's previous film, *Unforgiven*. Fr. Tim put the poster on the wall of the confessional, behind where the actor portraying the priest in the film was to sit. Of course, when the confessional curtain opened, Clint Eastwood, sitting on the other side of the curtain in the confessional, saw the poster with the huge words, "UNFORGIVEN." Clint got a laugh out of it and in his classic, gravelly, low voice he said; "That's gotta come down."

Local resident, Bernice, was invited to watch the excitement of the filming in St. Ambrose Church by her friend who was the secretary at the parish office. Lo and behold, 82-year-old Bernice caught the eye of Clint Eastwood—he wanted her to be in his movie. Clint Eastwood remarked that he thought Bernice was "beautiful and striking" for the part. All she had to do was walk with a cane down the church aisle just as the funeral scene was ending. And that she did! She appears in the beginning of the movie, during the funeral scene. How is that for being discovered?

The money St. Ambrose Church received for the use of their church in the movie was used to remortgage the historic church. Talk about pennies from heaven!

While at Goodnite bride, Clint Eastwood sat back and enjoyed watching the jazz band playing for most of the evening. Even St. Ambrose's very own priest (Fr. Tim) was invited to the cast party.

While filming the hardware store scene, throngs of onlookers stood across the street behind police barriers and away from filming. Each person was hoping to get a glimpse of the iconic actor. Clint Eastwood could see the large crowd gathering and, lo and behold, he stopped filming and graciously walked over to his excited fans and signed autographs.

Several funny retakes had to be done in one of the last scenes in the film, in which Clint Eastwood has died and is shown lying in a coffin. Clint had long legs and had a difficulty getting in and out of the casket. There was so much laughing on the set that several retakes had to be done to capture the scene correctly.

On his off time, Clint Eastwood enjoyed playing golf at the Lincoln Hills Golf Club in Birmingham.

First-time screenwriter, Nick Schenk, wrote the script in a bar during his time off from his job in construction. The movie unfolds around a Gran Torino because Nick Schenk lived near a Ford plant and wanted the car to be a Ford.

The Gran Torino in the movie is 100 percent real. Eastwood's staff found the car online and Warner Brothers bought the car through a classic car dealer on eBay. It had a few choice options: Magnum 500 wheels and a laser stripe painted on the sides. Owner Jim Craig described it as a mechanically sound barn-find, which he finally restored after five years. He never knew his car was about to star in a major motion picture when he sold it.

When filming was finished, Clint Eastwood was asked by his staff what they should do with the car. Clint replied, "It's done right by us," and he purchased the Gran Torino for his personal collection.

*Gran Torino* was shot in 33 days, two days short of its scheduled 35. And the production crew spent more than \$10 million while they were in town.

Clint Eastwood not only played the lead role, but directed the film as well.

*Gran Torino* was the first mainstream U.S. film to feature Hmong Americans. Thirty actors and over 500 extras in the film were recruited in Minnesota and locally. To find local Hmong actors, agents scouted a Hmong soccer tournament in Macomb County just outside the Detroit city limits. The result was 75 local Hmong actors appear in the film. The main actors in the film, Bee Vang (Tao) and Ahney Her (Sue), are from Minnesota and Lansing, Michigan, respectively.

Clint Eastwood's son, Scott Eastwood (credited as Scott Reeves) appeared in the movie as Trey. His other son, Kyle, provided the film's music score.

Over and over again, everyone who came into contact or worked with Clint Eastwood during the filming of *Gran Torino* had great things to say about him. Clint Eastwood was described as low key, kind, gracious, and did not allow swearing or trash talk while on the set.

*Gran Torino* was the first film to benefit from the new tax incentives Michigan was offering at the time.

Clint Eastwood's famous line in *Gran Torino*, "Get off my lawn" instantly became immortalized in the film just as Eastwood's phrase, "Make my day" did in the film *Dirty Harry*.

To quote famous movie critic, Roger Ebert, "I would like to grow up to be like Clint Eastwood. Eastwood the director, Eastwood the actor, Eastwood the invincible, Eastwood the old man. What other figure in the history of the cinema has been an actor for 53 years, a director for 37, won two Oscars for direction, two more for Best Picture, plus the Thalberg Award, and at 78 can direct himself in his own film and look meaner than hell? None, that's how many."





The Michigan Film and Digital Media Office (MFDMO) was created in 1979 to assist and attract incoming production companies and to promote the growth of Michigan's indigenous industry. Since its inception, the MFDMO commissioner has been responsible for implementing a program that lives within the parameters of Michigan law and works to ensure the program runs efficiently and effectively. Today, the MFDMO is working diligently to guarantee the film and digital media program accomplishes key results of private investment and workforce development by encouraging high wages, high-tech jobs and talent retention.

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