



Chaldeans in Detroit (Images of America)

By Jacob Bacall



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Chaldeans (pronounced Kal-de'an) are a distinct ethnic group from present-day Iraq with roots stretching back to Abraham, the biblical patriarch of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam who was from the "Ur of the Chaldees." Chaldeans are Catholic, with their own patriarch, and they speak a dialect of Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ. Chaldeans began immigrating to the United States at the beginning of the 20th century, when Iraq was known as Mesopotamia (the Greek word meaning "land between two rivers," the Tigris and the Euphrates). Lured by Henry Ford's promise of \$5 per day, many Chaldeans went to work in Detroit's automotive factories. They soon followed their entrepreneurial instincts to open their own businesses, typically grocery markets and corner stores. Religious persecution has caused tens of thousands of Chaldeans to relocate to Michigan. Today, the Greater Detroit area has the largest concentration of Chaldeans outside of Iraq: 150,000 people.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Jacob Bacall epitomizes the successful Chaldean American, as he immigrated to Michigan in 1977 and quickly established himself as a successful businessman. He tells the rich story of Chaldeans in Detroit with skillful prose and personal insight.

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