

INVENTORS

Henry Ford

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Just past the turn of the century, in the United States, there were two prevailing beliefs about horseless carriages — they were a fad that would soon go away; or they were just novelties for the very rich. Nobody could ever produce a car that the common man could afford.
2. Most manufacturers of the time thought building a car for the working class was both impractical and unprofitable.
3. Henry Ford didn't buy either belief. He believed that a car could be built that was sturdy, inexpensive, and useful, and he dedicated his life to that goal.

THE PERSON

1. Ford was born July 30, 1863, the same month the battle of Gettysburg turned the Civil War in the North's favor.
2. He was a tall, slim man with sharp features, a somewhat gawky body, and a shrewd expression.
3. His father wanted him to be a farmer, but Henry preferred to tinker with anything mechanical.

4. His formal education consisted of eight years in a one-room schoolhouse and his grades were mediocre at best.
5. Through most of his life he had one interest — machines.
6. He married his wife, Clara, partly because she showed an interest in his dream of a horseless carriage.
7. He died from a stroke in 1947 at the age of 84.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. Ford was able to produce a practical, affordable automobile that was accessible to the mass market.
2. Ford's Model T actually cost less than a horse and carriage.
3. He became the largest automobile producer in the world.
4. He was the first to use the assembly line to mass produce standardized cars.
5. He invented a radiator to circulate water around the engine to keep it from overheating.

UNIQUE INFLUENCE

1. He transformed the United States into the nation of the automobile.
2. There is no way to assess the impact the mass-produced automobile had on the world; it changed the very look of our towns, cities, and countryside with roads, bridges, and freeways. It improved emergency services, made people more mobile, made food and merchandise easier to produce.
3. Positively or negatively, the automobile had greater influence on daily life in America than any other 20th-century invention, and it was Henry Ford, the uneducated farm boy with the natural genius, who made it happen.
4. When Ford left his father's farm in 1879, two out of eight Americans lived in cities. When he died at age 84, five out of eight lived in cities.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"The way to make automobiles," Ford said, "is to make one automobile like another automobile."

When an efficiency expert told Ford he should fire an employee who had been spotted with his feet on his desk, Ford said, "That man once had an idea that saved us millions of dollars. At the time, I believe his feet were planted right where they are now."

On using the assembly line idea, Ford said: "The work must go to the man, not the man to the work."

When asked what the worst thing about being rich was, Ford said, "Mrs. Ford doesn't cook anymore."

"He's a genius. There's no explaining genius," said a close friend when asked about Ford's contradictory behavior.

Will Rogers, upon meeting Ford, said, "It will take a hundred years to tell whether you have helped us or hurt us. But you certainly didn't leave us like you found us."