

# HENRY FORD

[www.idealfinder.com/history/inventors/ford.htm](http://www.idealfinder.com/history/inventors/ford.htm)

Henry Ford, the son of farmer, was born in Greenfield, Michigan on 30th July, 1863. He left school at 15 to work on his father's farm but in 1879 he moved to Detroit where he became an apprentice in a machine shop. To help him survive on his low wages he spent his evenings repairing clocks and watches.

Ford returned to Greenfield after his father gave him 40 acres to start his own farm. He disliked farming and spent much of the time trying to build a steam road carriage and a farm locomotive. Unable to settle at Greenfield, Ford returned to Detroit to work as an engineer for the Edison Illuminating Company.

During this period Ford read an article in the *World of Science* about how the German engineer, Nicholas Otto, had built a internal combustion engine. Ford now spent his spare time trying to build a petrol-driven motor car. His first car, finished in 1896, was built in a little brick shed in his garden. Driven by a two-cylinder, four-cycle motor, it was mounted on bicycle wheels. Named the Thin Lizzie, the car had no reverse gear or brakes.

By August, 1899, Ford had raised enough money to start his own company. His first group of investors withdrew after Ford had spent \$86,000 without producing a car that could be sold. Eventually he produced a car that appeared at the Grosse Pointe Blue Ribbon track at Detroit. Its performance helped him to sell 6,000 \$10 dollar shares in his new company.

This also ended in failure and in June, 1903, he found twelve more people willing to invest a total of \$28,000 in another motor company. Ford now began production of the Model A car. The car sold well and the company flourished and by 1907 the profits reached \$1,100,000. In 1909 Ford took the decision to manufacture only one type of car, the Model T.

Initially it took 14 hours to assemble a Model T car. By improving his mass production methods, Ford reduced this to 1 hour 33 minutes. This lowered the overall cost of each car and enabled Ford to undercut the price of other cars on the market. Between 1908 and 1916 the selling price of the Model T fell from \$1,000 to \$360.

On the outbreak of the First World War in Europe, Ford soon made it clear he opposed the war and supported the decision of the Woman's Peace Party to organize a peace conference in Holland. After the conference Ford was contacted by America's three leading anti-war campaigners, Jane Addams, Oswald Garrison Villard, and Paul Kellogg. They suggested that Ford should sponsor an international conference in Stockholm to discuss ways that the conflict could be brought to an end.

Ford came up with the idea of sending a boat of pacifists to Europe to see if they could negotiate an agreement that would end the war. He chartered the ship *Oskar II*, and it sailed from Hoboken, New Jersey on 4th December, 1915. The Ford Peace Ship reached Stockholm in January, 1916, and a conference was organized with representatives from Denmark, Holland, Norway, Sweden and the United States. However, unable to persuade representatives from the warring nations to take part, the conference was unable to negotiate an Armistice.

After the war Ford became increasingly interested in politics. He joined the Democratic Party and in 1918 was narrowly defeated when he failed to win a seat in the U.S. Senate.

In the 1920s the Ford Motor Company continued to grow rapidly. In 1925 Ford was producing 10,000 cars every 24 hours. This was 60 per cent of America's total output of cars. However, his decision not to bring out new models allowed other companies to challenge his dominance. By 1927 Ford had sold over 15,000,000 Model T cars. However, sales were on the decline and the General Motors's Chevrolet was the current best-selling car.

In the 1930s Ford opposed Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. He refused to recognize the

United Automobile Workers Union and used armed police to deal with industrial unrest.

Ford had a stroke in 1938 but returned to run the company after his son, Edsel Ford, died in 1943. Although initially an opponent of the USA becoming involved in the Second World War, after Pearl Harbour, Ford turned over his vast production resources to his country. For example, the Ford plant at Willow Run produced over 8,000 Liberator bombers during the war. Henry Ford died on 7th April, 1947.



**Henry Ford drives out his 20 millionth car on 24th April 1931.**