

## Henry Ford Biography

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Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motors Company, had brought a revolution in the automobile industry. To know more about him, read his brief biography in the lines below.

Quick Facts	
Famous as	Businessman
Nationality	American
Religion	Episcopalian
Born on	30 July 1863 AD
Zodiac Sign	Leo
Born in	Greenfield Township, Michigan, U.S.
Died on	07 April 1947 AD
Place of death	Fair Lane, Dearborn, Michigan, U.S.
Father	William Ford
Mother	Mary Litogot Ford
Spouse:	Clara Ala Bryant (m. 1888–1947)
Children	Edsel Ford
Education	Detroit Business Institute
Founder/Co-Founder	Ford Motor Company

## Quick Facts

Works & Achievements	Ford Quadricycle, Inventor and Owner of Ford Motors Company, Model T cars and production of several other automobiles.
Net worth	\$188.1 billion
Awards	1928 - Franklin Institute's Elliott Cresson Medal 1938 - Nazi Germany's Grand Cross of the German Eagle



**Image Source** : <http://www.kpbs.org/photos/galleries/american-experience-henry-ford/>

Henry Ford, a renowned industrialist in America, was the founder of the Ford Motor Company. He also sponsored the development of the assembly line technique of mass production. Ford's launching of the Model T refashioned transportation and American automobile industry simultaneously. As a proud owner of the Ford Motor Company, he grabbed the status of one of the wealthiest and most famous person in the entire world. He was highly deemed for his concept 'Fordism' - which involved huge production of cheap goods paired with higher pay to workers. Ford had a universal perception with consumerism as the root to peace. His earnest commitment to orderly decreasing costs came out in numerous innovations related to technical and business. These discoveries also included a franchise system under which a dealership was established in each city of North America and also on the main cities in six continents. In 1920s,

Ford was recognized globally for a “Fordism System” that was looked to guarantee modernity, high salaries and inexpensive consumer goods but Ford’s “Anti-Semitism” led to controversy in the same time period.

### **Henry Ford Childhood and Early Life**

Henry Ford was born on July 30, 1863 on a farm in Greenfield Township close to Detroit, Michigan to William Ford and Mary Litogot. His father was born in Ireland but belonged to a family of Western England’s origin. His family migrated to Ireland when the plantation was created by English. His mother was from Michigan whose parents died when she was quite young and was then adopted by her neighbors. When Henry was in his teens, his father gifted him a pocket watch. At the young age of 15, he dissolved and reunited the timepieces of neighbors and friends many times and gained a status of a watch repairman. In 1876, Ford was highly depressed by the demise of his mother. His father wanted him to take over the family farm over the course of time but he denied telling his father that he loved the farm just because his mother was there. In 1879, Ford left home and started working as an amateur machinist in Detroit city. He started with James F. Flower & Bros and later with the Detroit Dry Dock Co. But in 1882, he returned back home to work of the family farm and became adroit at operating the Westinghouse portable steam engine. Ford was eventually appointed by Westinghouse Company for steam engines servicing. Simultaneously, he also studied bookkeeping at Goldsmith, Bryant & Stratton Business College in Detroit.

### **Career**

Henry Ford was hired as an engineer with the Edison Illuminating Company in 1891 and later became chief engineer after his promotion in 1893. He then had a lot of time to dedicate to his personal experiments on gasoline engines. These experiments ended up in 1896 when he completed his self propelled vehicle and named it Ford Quadricycle. On June 4, he test drove the vehicle several times and came out with

various methods to improve the vehicle. Ford was introduced to Thomas Edison in 1896's meeting. The latter agreed of Ford's automobile experimentation, which encouraged him to further experiment. Thus in 1898, Ford designed his second vehicle. With the support of the capital of Detroit lumber baron William H. Murphy, he resigned from Edison and established at Detroit Automobile Company on August 5, 1899. But the automobiles produced in this company were of poor quality and expensive. For the same reason, the company got dissolved in 1901.

In 1901, C. Harold Wills supported Ford to design and built a 26-horsepower automobile. With the ultra success of this automobile, Murphy and other stockholders in the Detroit Automobile Company came together to form the Henry Ford Company on November 30, 1901. Ford worked as a chief engineer. But when Murphy brought Henry M. Leland as a consultant in the company, Ford left it bearing his name in 1902. Afterwards, Murphy renamed the company as Cadillac Automobile Company. Ford then teamed up with the former racing cyclist Tom Cooper and produced the awesome 80+ horsepower racer "999" which was driven to victory in a race by Barney Oldfield in the late 1902.

### **Ford Motor Company**

Ford with the support of an old acquaintance, Alexander Y. Malcomson, a Detroit-area coal dealer, established an automobile manufacturing company named "Ford & Malcomson, Ltd". Ford designed a cheap automobile and both the partners leased the factory. They finalized a contract with a machine shop owned by John and Horace E. Dodge to give over \$160,000 in parts. The sales were very slow which gave birth to a crisis when the Dodge brothers asked for the payment of their initial shipment. With the response, some more investors were brought in by Malcomson, drawing the Dodge brothers to take a portion of a new company. On June 16, 1903, "Ford & Malcomson" was reabsorbed as the Ford Motor Company with

the capital of \$28,000. Ford and Malcomson, the Dodge brothers, Malcomson's uncle John S. Gray, Horace Rackham, and James Couzens were some original investors in Ford Motor Company. Ford organized an exhibition of a newly designed car on the ice of Lake St. Clair. He drove a mile in only 19.4 seconds, establishing a new land speed record at 91.3 miles/hour. The race driver, Barney Oldfield seeing the success of this vehicle gave a name to this model "999" honoring racing capabilities. He took the new automobile around the country which made Ford, a well known brand all around the United States. Henry Ford was also among the initial backers of the Indianapolis 500.

### **Model T**

On October 1, 1908, the Model T was introduced which came out with some innovations like steering wheel on left, enclosed engine and transmission, solid black was given to four cylinders, etc. The car was very easy to operate and drive, simultaneously it was cheap accompanying with inexpensive repair. In 1908, it was sold at \$825 only. Amazingly, the price of the car fell down every year. By the same, Ford grabbed excessive publicity in Detroit ensuring that each newspaper must have stories and advertisement about this new vehicle. Eventually, the car was known all over the North America. Ford's views to come out with efficient and cheap products made him introduce moving assembly belts into his plants in 1913, especially for farmers enabling huge increment in production. With the passing of the days, sales kept on increasing and by 1918, every second car in America was Model T. The final total production was an amazing 15,007,034.

In December 1918, Ford passed his presidency of Ford Motor Company to his son, Edsel Ford but the final decision authority was with Henry himself. Afterwards, Ford established another company called "Henry Ford and Son". He just enacted as if he were about to take his best employees to the new company but

the actual goal was to frighten the rest of the holdout stockholders of the Ford Motor Company so that they sell their stakes to him, before their value is lost. The trick worked and Henry and his son purchased all the shares from the stockholders and thus, making the family the sole owner of the company. But as a result of increasing competition, the sales of Model T declined horribly by mid 1920s. Though Edsel urged Henry to make changes in Model T so that it could be in sync with the newer models offered by the other companies, the latter denied.

### **Later Career**

By the year 1926, Henry realized that he could not go longer just remain solely dependent on his Model T and thus, evolved Model A. While Henry looked after the technical aspects of the car, such as the design of the engine, chassis and so on, his son Edsel worked on the exterior body of the vehicle. In the December of 1927, Ford Model A finally hit the road and was much appreciated and applauded by the mass. By 1931, more than 4 million of Model A cars was produced. Following that year, Ford Company adopted an annual model change system.

### **Ford Airplane Company**

During World War I, Ford stepped in the aviation business and built Liberty engines. Although post-war the company went back to manufacture automobile but in 1925, it took the Stout Metal Airplane Company. Ford's aircraft, 4AT Trimotor (Tin Goose) gained great success. The plane was very similar to Fokker's V.VII-3m. The Trimotor took its first flight on June 11, 1926 accommodating 12 passengers at a time. Ford was later honored by the Smithsonian Institution for changing the aviation industry. After producing about 200 trimotors, the production stopped in 1933 because of poor sales.

### **International Business**

Ford always believed in the company's global expansion. His views were also that the international trade and cooperation led to global peace. In 1911, he established Ford assembly plants in Britain and Canada. In a short span of time, the company became the largest automobile manufacturer in the world. Ford, in collaboration with Agnelli of Fiat, introduced the first Italian automotive assembly plants in 1912. In 1920s, first plant was launched in Germany, Australia, India and France and by 1929, Ford had dealerships on six continents. Ford also experimented taking a commercial rubber plantation in the Amazon jungle known as Fordlândia but it failed. Ford agreed on Joseph Stalin's invitation to build a model plant at Gorky. The Ford Motor Company had a policy under which the company could do business in any country where the United States had diplomatic relationships. By the year 1932, Ford became one-third manufacture of automobiles all over the world. Most of the people insisted that Fordism illustrated American capitalist development and the automobile industry was the key to studying the economic and social relations in the United States.

### **Later Career**

Edsel Ford died of cancer in May 1943, following which Henry assumed the presidency of the Ford Motors Company. But by this time Ford was elderly and ailing. He also had some cardiovascular problems and was mentally unfit, therefore not suitable for the post responsibility. The directors of the company nevertheless elected him, but he served the position until the end of the war only. During this time span, the company faced a huge decline and lost more than \$10 million a month. The administration of President Franklin Roosevelt also considered that the company should be taken over by the government but this consideration never progressed.

### **Personal Life**

Henry Ford married Clara Ala Bryant in 1888 and had only a singly child, Edsel Ford, who, in turn, died of cancer in May

1943.

## **Death**

During the ill health of Henry Ford, he surrendered the presidency to his grandson Henry Ford II in September 1945 and then went into retirement. In 1947, Ford died of a cerebral hemorrhage in FairLane, his Dearborn estate. A public viewing was organized at Greenfield Village where almost 5000 people per hour filed past the casket. His funeral service took place at Detroit's Cathedral Church of St. Paul. Henry Ford was buried in the Ford Cemetery in Detroit.

## **Awards & Honors**

**1928:** Was awarded the Franklin Institute's Elliott Cresson Medal.

**1938:** Ford was presented the Grand Cross of the German Eagle, which happens to be the highest medal awarded by Nazi Germany to foreigners.

**1999:** Was among 18 included in Gallup's List of Widely Admired People of the 20th Century, from a poll conducted of the American people.

**1965-78:** United States Postal Service honored Ford with a Prominent Americans series.