



FORD'S MODEL T

"I will build a motor car for the great multitude," Henry Ford announced. "It will be so low in price, that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one." With these words, Henry Ford introduced the world to the Model T.

In October 1908, the Ford Motor Company produced its first Model T. It became one of the world's most popular cars. The Model T (there were models A through S) carried a 4-cylinder motor and traveled up to forty-five miles per hour. It came in one color: black.

The Model T introduced drivers to new mechanical improvements. In a Model T, the driver controlled the car with three floor pedals: a brake, a pedal for forward, and one for reverse. This left the driver's hands free to steer the car. Unlike most cars of the day, the steering wheel was on the left side of the car.

The Model T became popular because it was cheap. The first Model T cost \$850. Eventually, it cost less than \$300.

The Model T was also easy to fix. All a driver needed were pliers and a screwdriver to keep a Model T running. Spare parts were easily available, and the Model T never seemed to wear out.

The popularity of the Model T allowed the Ford Motor Company to open a new factory in Highland Park, a city within Detroit. At Highland Park, Ford introduced the moving assembly line.

Americans loved the Model T. A woman from Georgia wrote Henry Ford, "Your car...brought joy into our lives."

In 1927, the Ford Motor Company produced its last Model T. In 19 years, the company made 15,007,033 of the cars. In the 1970s, Germany's Volkswagen Beetle production numbers finally surpassed the Model T.

As the Ford Motor Company likes to say to this day, the Model T "put America on wheels."

Working On the Line

The Highland Park manufacturing plant was the home to Ford's Model T and the first automobile moving assembly line.

At Highland Park, workers built cars using simple tasks. Each worker did the same job repeatedly. The assembly line made it cheaper to build a car. Before using the assembly line, it took 13 hours to build a Model T. With the line, it only took 90 minutes to make a Model T. It even got quicker.

The two main parts of the Model T were the frame, or chassis, and the body. The chassis moved along the line at six feet per minute. It took thirty-one separate jobs to complete the chassis. Bodies were built on the upper floor of the plant. Wood parts were buffed and varnished, and paint was poured over the metal. Seat covers were stuffed with horsehair.

The last step was to combine the chassis and body. A body chute, called a drop, lowered the body onto the chassis. The completed car was shipped to a dealer and sold.

Rattling Down the Road

The Model T became a national sensation. Americans joked and shared stories about a car they nicknamed the "Tin Lizzie" because it rattled so much. One joke asked the question, "What shock absorbers do you use on your Ford?" The answer, "The passengers."

A story about a farmer who sent a tin roof that had blown off his barn to the Ford factory as a joke. However, he later received a letter saying although his Model T was "badly damaged," it could be repaired.

Another story told about a woman who saved all her empty cans and sent them to the Ford factory. A few weeks later, she got the following letter: "Dear Madam: We received the cans that you sent and are shipping you back one Ford. We are also returning eight cans that were left over."