

Henry Ford

Program Transcript

Narrator: It would come to be called "Fordlandia," two and a half million acres of virgin rainforest -- the size of Connecticut -- in the heart of the Amazon.

And almost as soon as Henry Ford had wired the \$125,000 that made him the sole owner of this vast tract of jungle, he began transforming it.

Newsreader (archival audio): The Ford Motor Company is ever seeking ways and materials to improve its products. One of the latest enterprises of the company is the development of a rubber plantation in Brazil.

Narrator: Rubber for tires was his stated purpose. But as with many things concerning Ford, there was a grander vision. In the primordial wilderness, he planned to build a modern utopia modeled on small town America.

Steven Watts, Historian: He came to believe that he was not only an economic entrepreneur but a prophet of proper living.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: Henry says, "Simple, plain, honest, hard-working people, that's the backbone of not just the United States; it's the backbone of the world. And I know how you have to live in order to achieve that."

Narrator: Ford practiced what he preached. Through his own fierce determination he had risen from obscurity to become one of the most famous and powerful men in the country. With the Model T -- the most successful car in history -- and the groundbreaking "Five Dollar a Day" wage, Ford ushered in the modern world.

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Nancy F. Koehn, Historian: The Model T greatly expanded Americans' mobility, knitting America very close together at the same time that it opened American sense of what was possible. So he liberated, at the individual level, the human spirit.

Douglas Brinkley, Historian: Henry Ford was a revolutionary. He changed all of 20th-century America. We're living in Henry Ford's world right now.

Narrator: But no matter his success, Ford remained restless and driven, always seeking to control what lay just beyond his grasp. The creator of an urban, industrial age, he longed for the simpler era he had helped destroy.

One of the nation's richest men, he despised the wealthy and feared a vast conspiracy threatened to bring him down. A hero to many ordinary Americans, he battled his workers and bullied those who looked up to him -- including his only son.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: What is it like to carry around so much power, that the ordinary wear and tear of reality that most of us deal with all the time, that keeps us pretty sane, is absent?

Narrator: As Henry Ford liked to tell it, his was a rags-to-riches tale. He was a child genius who fled an oppressive father to become one of the most successful entrepreneurs the world has ever seen. It was a great story, but only the last part was true.

Steven Watts, Historian: Since young manhood, if not childhood, Henry Ford felt a certain sense of destiny, that he was slated to do important things. He liked to picture himself to others, as a kind of heroic individual who climbed to success against the odds.

Narrator: In fact, Henry Ford was the eldest son of a caring successful Michigan farm couple. His parents expected all their children to work alongside them on the land. But when Henry found the work tedious and began obsessing over the machines that might make farm life easier,

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his parents indulged him. They allowed him to neglect his chores, and set up a workbench for him in the kitchen.

Douglas Brinkley, Historian: Not only would he take apart wrist watches and put them back together, but he would study every machine he saw.

Narrator: Henry's father, William Ford, understood that his son longed to learn more about machinery. When Henry turned 16, William arranged for him to stay with an aunt in Detroit, and even found Henry a job. On a cold day in December 1879, Henry walked the nine miles from his family farm to the city -- there he would reinvent himself.

For more than a decade, Ford worked long hours in one shop after another, forging a career as an expert machinist. By the time he was 31, he was chief engineer at the Edison Illuminating Company, the pioneer in providing electricity to American cities. As exciting as Edison was, Ford's passion lay elsewhere.

As the years passed, however, he began to spend less time worrying about providing electricity to the citizens of Detroit and more on what had become his after-hours obsession.

Steven Watts, Historian: The notion of horseless carriage was in the air. And he and all of his buddies, they just devoured magazines and newspaper articles. And I think that Ford just soaked that up.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: Transportation in America was terrible once you got away from the railroads. Terrible! It was an enormous burden. I mean if you're living on the farm, getting around on land is one of the biggest problems people have.

Narrator: At the dawn of the automobile industry in the 1890s most people saw the car as a luxury item for the wealthy. Ford had a different vision. He never forgot his feelings of isolation

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living on the farm and imagined that others shared his longing for greater mobility. If he could build a reliable horseless carriage, Ford believed, he could change people's lives.

Douglass Brinkley, Historian: He wanted to really change the tenor of his times. He is going to transform the world by building a type of cheap car that everybody could have.

Narrator: All the late nights and long weekends, the hard-earned cash spent on sheet iron and gasoline, the false starts and wrong turns, none of it mattered, when on June 4, 1896, Ford drove his horseless carriage through the streets of Detroit for the first time.

As the rickety vehicle bounced down Grand River Avenue, a friend cycled ahead to warn pedestrians out of the way. The quadricycle, as Ford dubbed it, had 28-inch bicycle wheels, a top speed of 20 miles per hour and no brakes. It couldn't go in reverse and was prone to overheating.

Yet wherever he went the quadricycle drew crowds of curious bystanders. Soon he attracted the attention of more than a dozen of Detroit's most prominent leaders, including the mayor himself, all eager to invest in Ford and his machine.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: There's some people, when they walk into a room, you notice them. He has an inner self-confidence that means the way he carries himself, you're going to notice it.

Narrator: Within three years of the inaugural drive, Ford had quit his engineering job. In a brick building on Cass Avenue in Detroit, he assembled a team of 13. The Detroit Automobile Company, incorporated on August 5, 1899, was one of the first car manufacturing firms in the city, but it wouldn't be the last. The automobile industry was exploding. Fifty-seven other firms were founded the same year -- within two years there would be more than 100.

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Nancy F. Koehn, Historian: There are all kinds of people that Henry Ford knows that are tinkering and playing and trying to produce a prototype. All men, all interested in machines, but all without a big picture view of what this could become.

Narrator: A company spokesman hailed Ford's first model "as near perfect," but when it went on sale it looked more like a "horse drawn delivery wagon without the horse." It was high sided, heavy, and, due to problems with the ignition and carburetor, rarely ran for more than a few minutes at a time. His backers pushed for a new, luxury model that was more reliable. But Ford stalled, determined to work out engine and design problems before building another car.

Nancy F. Koehn, Historian: He would move parts around. And then he would test it. And then he would go back and move some more parts. There's a kind of both breadth of vision in that kind of activity, but there's also a kind of monomaniacal focus. No detail is too small. But the overall objective, "make the thing better," is never lost sight of.

Narrator: As his investors increased the pressure, Ford bought himself time by having his employees make parts for vehicles he never planned to build. Meanwhile, he continued to experiment.

Steven Watts, Historian: His investors want to make an expensive car to sell to wealthy people. Ford disagrees fundamentally. He wants to create a car for the people.

Douglass Brinkley, Historian: He's trying to perfect an invention. In order to keep doing the trial runs and get it better, it's going to take a lot of capital to keep testing, keep testing.

Narrator: Finally realizing they were being duped, his backers pulled the plug. In the three years that the fledgling car industry had existed in America, Henry Ford had managed to squander his chance to be part of it. And he knew exactly who to blame: his investors.

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"From here in," Ford declared, "my shop is always going to be my shop. ... I'm not going to have a lot of rich people tell me what to do."

Douglass Brinkley, Historian: He hated the people that invested in him, loathed them. These were the scum of America, to Henry Ford. These are the people that looked down on the slang of the farm and the kinfolk of his that had worked the land for generations. He did not like these people.

Narrator: While Ford was stalling his investors, he had also been working on a secret project -- a race car. Intrigued by the challenge of building an engine that could achieve high speeds, he also harbored a greater ambition -- to make a name for himself and start a new car company.

In October 1901, Ford took on the most famous driver in America, in the first automobile race in Michigan. Interest in the event was intense. Shops closed. One judge adjourned his court for the afternoon. And packed streetcars ran out to the parade ground every 30 seconds.

Ford had no experience driving at high speeds and no money to pay a professional. But he had faith in the superiority of his engine.

Douglass Brinkley, Historian: The whole art of making it in America is about audacity. You've got to be reckless. You've got to take such risk that you can't be afraid to fail.

Narrator: For the first third of the 10-mile race, Ford lagged behind, struggling to control his car on the curves. Then on the sixth lap he started to close the gap. After his opponent's engine overheated and the crowd erupted as Ford zoomed past his rival, winning the race by nearly a mile. The aspiring automaker emerged from the victory a local hero.

"Henry Ford broke into the front ranks of American [racing]," crowed the *Detroit News*, "by the wonderful performance of his machine yesterday."

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Steven Watts, Historian: Even after all the failures that Henry Ford had, he was convinced that he should plunge ahead. He wasn't convinced that he had failed. It was sort of a momentary setback. It's an absolute confidence in your own talent and an absolute confidence in your own vision of doing something important.

Narrator: Ford followed his first win with a string of highly publicized victories. Within months, he had attracted a new slate of investors. On June 16, 1903, he incorporated the Ford Motor Company -- Ford's audacity and courage had won him another chance.

Within weeks, the company's first model was unveiled -- a two-seater with a reliable eight-horsepower engine. The first order came from a Chicago dentist. And much to the delight of company shareholders, the orders kept coming. Within less than two years the Ford Motor Company was producing 25 vehicles a day and had sold more than 1,000 cars. But the man at the top wasn't satisfied.

In early 1907, Ford walled off a corner of his factory on Piquette Avenue in downtown Detroit. The room had a door wide enough for a car and a lock to keep out everyone but his top engineers and mechanics. Then he set his team to work -- he had them experiment with innovative designs for igniting the engine and a more flexible suspension system. They tried new types of steel that would be lighter but tougher. "If a suggestion appealed to him," a colleague recalled, "he first showed it in a quick flash of his eyes and an approving smile ... He never ran out of ideas ... and it was impossible to keep up with him ..."

Steven Watts, Historian: He thinks nothing of plunging down onto the floor of the factory and leaping in to help do the job at hand, getting covered with oil and grease, joking with the men, working with the men. He's very loose, very participatory. And they love him.

Greg Grandin, Historian: I think that mechanical intuition that he had created a kind of charisma that drew people to him, and drew other creative people to him.

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Douglass Brinkley, Historian: He promoted people who had a drive, people that didn't sleep, people that wanted to work harder, people that weren't in the game because of the superficial reasons but really wanted to perfect his company.

Narrator: Every few months Ford introduced a new model, making his way through the alphabet -- but the Model K was too heavy and expensive; the Model N, though lighter and cheaper, had an engine cast in four pieces rather than one block. Ford kept at it.

"He wanted to help people and we as young men in the shop looked up to that," one worker remembered. "We could see that Mr. Ford's mind went to the farmer and the mechanic and to the people who lived in the hinterland."

Bob Casey, Curator: Even if you were on the factory floor assembling these cars, you knew you were part of something that was happening, something that was new, something that was changing the country.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: I think it was the same kind of excitement that the man-on-the-moon mission people had. There are a handful of those kinds of moments in American history where there's a dream that is so big in its potential, and you think you got it, and then you get it.

Narrator: In October of 1908, after two years of development, Henry Ford introduced the latest in his alphabet line -- the Model T. It had a four-cylinder, 20-horsepower engine, a vastly improved transmission, and an ingenious magnetic generator that provided power for an ignition and lights.

With an open top and an optional cover, it came in just one color -- green at first, later black. Weighing only 1,200 pounds, the Model T could go 40 miles per hour on a smooth straight road. It was also remarkably durable.

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Douglass Brinkley, Historian: They didn't break down a lot, compared to other vehicles, and when they did, they were very simple to repair. This wasn't somebody just ginning out a product. This was a quality to the economical car that the world had never even imagined could be possible.

Narrator: At a time when the average car cost more than \$2,000, the Model T sold for just \$850 -- and the price soon would begin to drop. The response was immediate, and overwhelming. Orders poured in from doctors, traveling salesmen, artisans, and farmers -- people who had never dreamed of becoming motorists.

Greg Grandin, Historian: The Model T changed everything. It gave people a new sense of power and authority and control over their lives. You can go wherever you wanted, and you can go by yourself.

Hasia R. Diner, Historian: You can get in your car, and you have access now to towns, to cities, to places that were beyond your reach just a few years earlier.

Steven Watts, Historian: Ford has a sense that this is it, that he's reached some kind of culmination in his work. And I think the sales of the car, as they begin to take off, only reinforces this notion that he's finally got to where he wants to go.

Narrator: A farm wife from Rome, Georgia, wrote Ford a letter of appreciation, one of thousands -- "Your car lifted us out of the mud. It brought joy into our lives."

They met at a country dance when Henry was 21. He liked to tell people he knew right away that Clara Bryant was the woman for him. After their wedding, the couple waited five years for a baby. Finally a son arrived. He would be their only child.

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Steven Watts, Historian: Edsel had a very good relationship with his father as a youngster. He admired his father. He was interested in the automobiles his father made. He tagged along with his dad to work.

Narrator: Henry and Clara sent Edsel to Detroit's most prestigious all-boys school where he excelled. But Ford wasn't convinced a prep school education was what his son needed most. Henry had barely completed eighth grade. Success, he believed, depended on hard work. His own life proved it.

Douglass Brinkley, Historian: Henry Ford was not very high on interior life. Sentiment rotted the soul. You could be sentimental if you were action-oriented, but the main thing was to *do*. What are you doing? Don't tell me what you know. What are you doing? What have you done?

Narrator: Ford wanted his son to spend as much time as possible in coveralls on the factory floor where he was tougher on Edsel than anyone else, frequently creating problems for him to solve. Most of the time, the bright and eager Edsel lived up to his father's expectations. "I've got a boy I can be proud of," Henry told a colleague. "He's sure taking an interest in his work."

John Staudenmaier, Historian: When they launched the Model T, it becomes clear pretty soon that they have hit a grand slam home run and that this market is immense. Think of a gigantic vacuum cleaner, right at the door of the plant, sucking every finished vehicle out, "Boom!" like that.

Narrator: On January 1, 1910, Ford moved his production line to a vast new factory on the outskirts of Detroit called Highland Park. He declared the company would soon achieve his ambitious goal of producing 1,000 Model Ts a day.

Greg Grandin, Historian: His whole business model is to sell a cheap product. And the way that you create cheap products is by making more of them in a shorter amount of time.

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Narrator: While Ford was able to make the machine parts quickly, assembling the cars bogged down the process.

Nancy F. Koehn, Historian: A friend of Ford's once compared him to a kind of boxer, tiptoeing and dancing round the factory floor, all the time thinking about, "What could we do here? What could we do there? How could we change the production process to make the car better and cheaper and bring out even more of them?"

Bob Casey, Curator: While they're groping about for improvements, someone begins to think about the meat-packing plants where the carcass of a hog or cow is hung on a conveyor and it moves through the plant, past meat cutters who cut pieces off the animal. "What if we turned that around? What if we put on some machine that we want to assemble, and we move *it* past people, and we have people put things on?"

Narrator: Ford's team tried out the idea in the flywheel magneto department, where the device that generated electricity for the ignition system was made. Rather than having one person build a coil at a time, the supervisor broke down the individual tasks into a sequence driven by a conveyor. The new system reduced the time it took to make a magneto from 20 minutes to 13 minutes, 10 seconds.

Bob Casey, Curator: And then somebody says, "Well, if it works on magnetos, what about transmissions? What about axles? Well, then, what about engines?" Productivity goes way up, time to produce a car goes down, and they realize: We're really onto something here.

Narrator: Under the old, stationary system, the record time for assembling a car had been 12 hours and 13 minutes. Using the assembly line process, it took one hour and 33 minutes. By the fall of 1913, Ford had established the first automobile assembly line in the world and controlled nearly half the American car market. Henry Ford had achieved his coveted goal -- his company was now producing 1,000 cars a day.

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Douglass Brinkley, Historian: Efficiency becomes a religion to Ford. Time is a product; you get the maximum you can out of every hour.

Beverly Gage, Historian: Rather than being a craftsman, rather than having a variety of tasks and creating a single product, you were going to stand in one place all day long and do the same repetitive task over and over and over again.

Nelson Lichtenstein, Historian: Ford had a tremendous faith that with the principle of assembly line production, anyone could do it. So he didn't require skill. Skill was actually engineered out of it.

Greg Grandin, Historian: People describe him as being less emotional than he was mechanical. He once said that it took 7,882 distinct motions to make a Model T. And then he goes on even further, to break that down into how many can be done by able-bodied men, how many can be done by one-armed men. So there's a certain kind of imagining human motion in very rote, mechanical, and dehumanizing ways.

Narrator: "Fancy a jungle of wheels and belts ... of men, machinery and movement ..." one journalist noted. "Add to it every kind of sound you can imagine: the sound of ... a million monkeys quarreling, a million lions roaring ... a million sinners groaning as they are dragged to hell ..."

Many workers found the assembly line so alien, so monotonous and physically exhausting, they quit after just a few days. Company managers calculated that every time they wanted to add 100 men to the rolls, they had to hire nearly 1,000.

Nancy F. Koehn, Historian: Now, think about what it cost to find and train and bring workers up to speed in a factory, and get them productive and efficient and not making many

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mistakes. He desperately wanted to reduce turnover. That just made good strategic and economic sense.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: You cannot sustain the speed of a line if you have to invest so much of your resources in training people, even minimally, to do the work. So they have a huge crisis.

Narrator: With his company's future on the line, Ford would propose an unprecedented strategy -- one that would astonish his workforce, confound his competitors, and lead observers to predict the imminent ruin of the Ford Motor Company.

In the early days of 1914, Henry Ford convened a top-secret meeting with his senior managers. He spent the first few minutes scribbling numbers on a blackboard. In one column, he wrote \$26 million -- the company's profits for the previous year. As his colleagues looked on baffled, Ford jotted down another number, \$2.34 -- the daily wage of an assembly line worker. Then he wrote three dollars a day, four, four dollars and 50 cents, and finally five dollars a day.

One member of Ford's team vehemently protested, while another fumed silently. Ford stood his ground. A wage of five dollars a day, he insisted, would not simply reduce worker turnover, it would increase business.

Nancy Koehn, Historian: For most of American history, America was a producer society. The values of production, primarily agricultural production, were the dominant ones. And those values really give way very, very quickly, beginning around the turn of the 19th, into the 20th century, into a set of values around consumption. And it's all about: What do I own? How do I get and then spend?

Steven Watts, Historian: Ford put forward the notion that raising wages would allow workers to be consumers. And whatever you may have lost on the front end, you would get many

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times over on the back end. And that, he knew, was where the central action was economically in the modern world.

Narrator: As far as Ford was concerned, the thousands of Model Ts hurtling off his assembly line offered much more than affordable transportation. They promised leisure, abundance and a shared prosperity. Someday, he imagined, every worker would be able to buy a new Ford car.

On January 5, 1914, Ford went public with his audacious plan. "At one stroke [we] will reduce the hours of labor from nine to eight," he told the press, "and add to every man's pay a share of the profits of the house." His fellow automakers were appalled by Ford's announcement, certain that higher wages would devastate the industry. One business leader dismissed the idea as "the most foolish thing ever attempted in the industrial world." But the real verdict came next morning when 10,000 men showed up at his factory gates eager for a job at the Ford Motor Company.

Bob Casey, Curator: Same work, just as boring, just as repetitive, just as hard. But you got people who never dreamed they could make this much money.

Narrator: Ford's five-dollar day did more than solve his turnover problem. It transformed him into a national sensation. The story was picked up by papers across the country and around the world. Thousands of newspapers published biographies -- *The New York Times* alone ran 35 stories -- and nearly two dozen national magazines wrote features.

Douglass Brinkley, Historian: He has created the Model T, the people's car, he's brought the first modern, moving assembly line, and he's revolutionized how workers get paid. People are saying, "What's next for this guy?"

Nancy Koehn, Historian: Lots and lots of people in America and outside of America are fascinated by Henry Ford. And he, seemingly uninterested in money, is very interested in being

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in the public spotlight. A few months after his five-dollar day announcement, Ford established his own "moving picture" department.

Narrator: Its first production, *How Henry Ford Makes One Thousand Cars a Day*, was released that summer in movie theaters across the country.

Douglass Brinkley, Historian: Henry Ford was not bashful about self-promotion. I mean, in many ways he's the king of it. And film was another way to promote himself.

Narrator: Journalists fell for the carefully crafted message. Henry Ford was one of the richest men in the world, the press reported, but money had not changed him. He still loved nothing more than a home cooked meal and an afternoon working on his farm. He was a genius inventor with simple tastes despite his dramatic success.

"There is not much outward difference between Ford and his workmen," a reporter for the *Evening World* wrote. "He is just the hard working, mechanical genius that he was 10 or 20 years ago." Cameras captured him with movie stars, politicians, and celebrities like aviator Charles Lindbergh and Helen Keller. His idol, the inventor Thomas Edison, embraced Ford as a friend and fellow visionary.

Bob Casey, Curator: Ford recognizes that he himself is being transformed from a big-time player in the automobile industry to just a big-time player.

Steven Watts, Historian: He begins to believe the headlines: Henry Ford the great man, Henry Ford the folk hero, Henry Ford changing the world. He soaks all of that in, this farm boy from Dearborn, Michigan, and he begins to believe that stuff.

Narrator: Many of the men who worked for Ford were well aware of their boss's growing ego and one story in particular served as a warning to anyone who might challenge him. During a

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summer when Ford was in Europe, his team had built a prototype for a new car -- a successor to the Model T they believed, was long overdue.

Steven Watts, Historian: Ford comes in unannounced. He walks around the car several times, opens the door on the passenger side and literally rips it off the hinges. He walks around to the other side, rips the door off the driver's side. And he proceeded to demolish the car by hand.

Narrator: The message was clear -- Henry Ford, and no one else, was in charge.

"The impression had somehow got around that Henry Ford is in the automobile business," observed a close associate. "It isn't true ... Cars are the by-products of his real business, which is the making of men."

Ford's five-dollar day wasn't guaranteed; he called it an incentive wage and it came with strings attached. Ford required his immigrant workers, who represented as many as 53 nationalities and spoke more than 100 different languages, attend the company's English Language School. The school's curriculum relied heavily on mass recitation and included practical lessons based on daily life and routines. After six months of study, graduating workers participated in a ceremony called "The Pageant of the Ford Melting Pot."

John Staudenmaier, Historian: There's a great big pot. The graduates, all dressed in native costumes, climbed a ladder up and jumped into the pot and disappeared. And then the teachers came out behind on a catwalk at the back side of the bucket, with big long spoons, and stuck them in the pot, and walked back and forth, a little choreography, stirring the pot, then the workers come out of the same pot, one by one, wearing a suit, a straw hat, and waving a little American flag.

Narrator: But Ford didn't limit his reforms to the classroom. He was determined to change how his workers lived. In the months following the five-dollar day announcement, neatly

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dressed men prowled Detroit's working class neighborhoods seeking out the family, friends, and landlords of Ford employees. They were inspectors from the new Ford Sociological Department, sent to probe into the most intimate corners of workers' lives.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: How clean was the house? Did they have drinking problems evident? Did they send money back to the Old Country? Not to be done. Were they legitimately married? Were they keeping boarders in the house? Bad idea. There was a laundry list of what I'd call social engineering. That was Henry saying, "These peasants have got to become Americans. So we're going to use the five-dollar day to also Americanize them."

Narrator: If a worker failed inspection he was given time to amend his ways and his additional wages were held for him. If he failed a second time, he was fired.

Beverly Gage, Historian: It's a level of invasion of privacy that is, I think, almost unthinkable in our world now. But Henry Ford expected his workers to behave in certain ways, and he was going to enforce that behavior. And there were almost no laws or institutions that stood in his way of exerting that kind of control.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: Part of Henry is an idealist. And part of him also thinks that he has the insight to teach other people how to live.

Narrator: In 1915, Henry and Clara moved into a new home. A fenced and guarded 1,300-acre estate named Fair Lane.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: The level of fame and celebrity that swoops down on him, almost without warning. He was not ready for that at all. There are no neighbors where he lives. Fair Lane is an island, and a protected one.

Narrator: The Fords had chosen to construct their 31,000-square-foot home in the farming community of Dearborn where they had both grown up, rather than the elite suburb of Grosse

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Point, where most wealthy Detroiters lived. They kept to themselves, rarely entertaining -- Henry preferred boxing with the men who kept Fair Lane's power plant running or helping his neighbors with their harvest.

Beverly Gage, Historian: Henry Ford remains really an outsider in some very fundamental ways. Though he is one of the richest men in the United States and in many ways in the world at this point, he thinks of himself as a virtuous producer. He is not like those kind of parasitic, in some ways rarified elite, out of touch, bankers and lawyers.

Douglass Brinkley, Historian: He never wanted to be part of the social elite. He didn't want to interact with Biff and Buff and know the Rockefellers. He did not care an iota for those people. What he cared about were the fellow people who could talk machinery with him.

Narrator: Even though he had hated working on the farm when he was young, Ford embraced it now -- cutting hay and threshing wheat. He foraged through the woods chopping down trees and looking for wildlife. He imported 600 pairs of songbirds from England so that he and Clara could watch them together. But the nuthatches, finches, and linnets flew away, never to be seen again.

Ford didn't have much better luck controlling his son. He had built Fair Lane with his family in mind -- three large greenhouses for Clara and her roses and a bowling alley and indoor swimming pool for Edsel. But Edsel was almost never home, preferring to socialize on the other side of the city with the sons and daughters of Detroit's aristocracy. He married into one of the city's elite families when he wed Eleanor Clay, the niece of the founder of Hudson's, Detroit's premiere department store.

Steven Watts, Historian: By the time Edsel was in his early 20s, there's a definite class difference between Edsel and Henry. Henry was, in many ways, a farmer's son. He was very old-fashioned. He was barely educated. Edsel Ford is a very kind-hearted, genteel, quiet young man.

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He hasn't come up through the ranks in a kind of rough-and-tumble fashion, as his father did. Henry Ford wants to make Edsel into a carbon copy of himself.

Narrator: Ford insisted that self-discipline had been critical to his success. He rose at dawn and exercised every day; he didn't smoke, never drank and did not allow alcohol in his house. And he expected the same from everyone around him, starting with his son.

During the spring and summer of 1915, Henry Ford began secretly buying up hundreds of acres of farmland along the River Rouge just a mile from his home. Though few knew of it, he had another bold plan in mind.

Steven Watts, Historian: Ford foresaw a factory the scope of which, the size of which, the extent of which had simply never been done before.

Narrator: With tens of millions of dollars in profits a year, Ford had plenty of cash to fund his new endeavor. But once again he ran into trouble with his investors. On November 2, 1916, Ford received an injunction forbidding him from using company funds to build the new plant. Two of Ford's original backers, Horace and John Dodge, were behind the suit. The Dodges complained that Ford was defrauding his investors by not paying out dividends that reflected huge profits.

Steven Watts, Historian: The Dodge brothers had a very traditional understanding of a corporation, and that is, it is to make a profit for the investors. Ford thought differently. He often described investors as parasites. They put some money in, but they didn't really do anything to make the company grow.

Narrator: Henry was particularly galled by the fact the Dodge brothers were planning on using their dividends to expand their own rival car company. After two years of legal wrangling, the judge ruled in the Dodges' favor, forcing Ford to pay \$20 million plus interest to each of the seven stockholders who retained minority control in his company.

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John Staudenmaier, Historian: Henry Ford believes everybody should worship at the shrine that he has created. Anybody that's been part of his operation is either a worshiper or a traitor. They turned traitors.

Narrator: Early in his career as a car maker, Ford had vowed to rid himself of meddling investors. Now he would make good on that promise.

The announcement began with characteristic grandiosity. "I am very much interested in the future ... of the whole world," Henry Ford declared in late 1918. But then came the bombshell. The 55-year-old automaker was quitting the Ford Motor Company to pursue other interests. His son Edsel would take over the company. The thought of a 25-year-old heading up a \$250 million dollar business with 45,000 employees rattled Ford's stockholders.

Two months later, the elder Ford delivered a stinging second punch: he was starting a rival company. The new company, he declared, would produce a car stripped down to its essentials and priced at \$300, less than the cost of a Model T. The automaker said he planned on building factories across the country and hiring 200,000 employees. As rumors swirled around Detroit, Ford Motor's investors grew increasingly frantic.

Steven Watts, Historian: By this time, he's sort of the master of manipulating the press, so of course this goes all over the country. What he was doing here was trying to frighten the stockholders of the Ford Motor Company. So this is all a very elaborate ploy to gain control of the stock in the original company.

Narrator: Acting on his father's orders, Edsel secretly hired a Boston banking firm to approach investors. One by one, as speculation about Ford Motor's future intensified, the investors sold their stock. The takeover cost Ford \$106 million. But for the first time in 16 years, he, Edsel, and Clara controlled every last share in his company. When told his scheme had worked, Ford danced a jig around the room.

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Steven Watts, Historian: Edsel Ford, when he was appointed head of Ford Motor Company by his father, he was ecstatic.

Bob Casey, Curator: Edsel knew his father was a pretty controlling guy. But Henry had enough money that he could do pretty much anything he wanted to do. Edsel may well have thought, "Well, Father's going to go off and let me run the company."

Narrator: By rights, Edsel should have been at the center of the plans to develop the massive River Rouge complex taking shape in Dearborn. In reality, his father directed every major move.

Henry oversaw the digging of the foundation for the Rouge's massive power plant and the dredging of the river to allow ships to load and unload. He reviewed plans for every street and railroad line that was laid and directed the construction of blast furnaces and a foundry. If any aspect of the project did not meet his expectations, the elder Ford intervened. When an engineer admitted that a 35-foot high coke oven wall was half an inch out of line from the original plans, Ford demanded it be demolished.

Edsel was left at Highland Park to shoulder the day-to-day duties of Model T production and sales. Soon after taking over as president, Edsel decided to relieve overcrowding in the administration building by constructing a new wing. When Henry saw the hole for the foundation, he confronted Edsel. He told his son the new building was unnecessary. Edsel promised to fill in the hole. "No," his father replied, "don't do that. Just leave it that way." Every day on his way to work, Edsel had to walk by the hole. A dejected Edsel confided in a close friend, "I don't know what kick father gets out of humiliating me this way."

Steven Watts, Historian: This was a display of Henry Ford's power. He was the guy that was running the show, and there was no doubt about it. If you didn't accept that, you looked at that big hole out in the ground there and it became abundantly clear to you.

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Narrator: Since forcing out his investors, Ford had consolidated his power at the company. Over the course of 12 months, he fired several high-level, loyal employees who had been critical to the success of the Model T.

Douglass Brinkley, Historian: Many people thought, "I perfected this transmission and now that it's perfect, you're throwing me out to the wolves?" And Henry Ford would say, "Yes." Go make your way somewhere else. Don't be a tick sucking the blood out of me.

Nelson Lichtenstein, Historian: Ford himself never directly fired anyone. He let others do it and sometimes this was done in a particularly brutal fashion. Someone would show up at their office and their desk would be gone. Or a whole department in one case showed up, and the room was bare.

Steven Watts, Historian: Ford had a massive ego. He begins to put into practice this compulsion to grab center stage, to be out there in the limelight, to get publicity, to give no one else credit.

Bob Casey, Curator: The power that he accumulated really did change him. When he got the ability to exercise this absolute power over people, he embraced it and exercised it.

Narrator: In early summer 1919, Henry Ford arrived at the courthouse in Mt. Clemens, Michigan, a small town north of Detroit. Ford had sued the *Chicago Tribune* for libel after the paper called him an "ignorant idealist ... and an anarchist enemy of the nation." Now, he would take the stand.

To disprove the allegation of libel, the *Tribune* set out to prove Ford's ignorance. "Do you know anything about the Revolution, Mr. Ford?" the *Tribune's* lawyer asked.

"Yes, sir," Ford replied.

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"What revolution did you have in mind, Mr. Ford?"

"In 1812," Ford answered to the amazement of the people in the courtroom.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: They basically asked him, you might say, high school questions. And he was revealed to be pathetically inarticulate and ill informed. The stuff he didn't know was amazing to people.

Narrator: "Don't you know there was not any revolution in 1812?" the lawyer persisted. "Don't you know that this country was born out of a revolution in 1776? Did you forget that?"

"I guess I did," Ford answered.

Greg Grandin, Historian: The defense attorneys want to paint him as someone who is semi-literate. They ask him to read passages, and he refuses. The first day, he says that he forgot his glasses. The next day, he said that he can't read because his eyes are watery. He comes across as being out of his depth.

Narrator: Newspapers from across the country covered the trial in breathless detail, as Ford was subjected to eight days of questioning.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: He hates lawyers, just as he hates Wall Street. And he can't get off the stand. He can't just get up and say, "I don't have to take this. I'm Henry Ford." "No, sir. You are under oath."

Narrator: When the trial finally concluded, the jury, made up mostly of farmers, found that Ford had indeed been libeled -- he may have been ignorant, but he was no anarchist. But despite the victory, Ford was deeply wounded by the experience. The press, in particular, heaped ridicule on the automaker for his embarrassing performance.

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Steven Watts, Historian: For everyone who was there, particularly newspaper reporters, what this seemed to clinch was their suspicion that Henry Ford was a rural rube, who had stumbled into his success, a stupid man representing stupid ideas and stupid people.

Narrator: "Mr. Ford," wrote the *New York Times*, "has been submitted to a severe examination of his intellectual qualities. He has not received a pass." The *New York Post* put it even more harshly, "The man is a joke."

A few weeks after the libel trial ended, Ford escaped to upstate New York to recover from his ordeal. His forays into America's wilderness with friends Thomas Edison and Harvey Firestone, the tire magnate, were an annual tradition. This year the trip was particularly healing as Ford learned that letters to him were pouring in from across the country. Upset by the coverage of the trial, farmers, shopkeepers, village leaders and small-town editors now rushed to Ford's defense. Ministers offered prayers to deliver Henry Ford from his elitist persecutors. Tens of thousands of ordinary people sent him heartfelt words of support.

"... You are my ideal of a self-made man ..." wrote one admirer.

"... You are loved by thousands of people all over the world," gushed another. "You have done more good and accomplished more for the people than any man living ... Do not let them discourage you."

To the bewilderment of some, the trial made Henry Ford even more of a folk hero than he had been before.

Steven Watts, Historian: There was a kind of divide between common people in the country and the intelligentsia on the other hand, who really loathed Ford in a lot of ways. And to his way of thinking, he stood exactly where he wanted to stand.

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Narrator: Over the years, Ford worked to reinforce his everyman image. This year was no different. As he embraced outdoor living, Ford made sure that journalists, photographers and his own camera crew were on hand to cover his every exploit.

"The well equipped excursions," wrote a colleague, "were as private and secluded as a Hollywood opening." Movies of the trips would later be shown in theaters across the country.

Steven Watts, Historian: He loves to camp, he loves to be out in the wilderness, he loves rural America, but there's also an opportunity there. You have Henry Ford the manipulator of the media; Henry Ford the shrewd operator who understands how the modern world works.

Greg Grandin, Historian: Ford had a lot of ideas. He had a lot of ideas how to organize society, about the best way to live, about proper roles of men and women. He had ideas about diet. He had ideas about smoking. He had ideas about exercise. And he also had ideas about Jews.

Narrator: In May 1920, Ford began publishing a series of articles in his hometown weekly, the *Dearborn Independent*, which he had purchased a year and a half earlier.

"If there is one quality that attracts Jews, it is power," Ford wrote. "It is not merely that there are a few Jews among international financial controllers; it is that these world-controllers are exclusively Jews ..."

Greg Grandin, Historian: He linked Jews to Wall Street. He linked them to banks. And he blamed them for war. He basically began to blame Jews for all of the problems of the modern world.

Hasia R. Diner, Historian: He lived in a culture, in which all sorts of attributions were made to "the Jews." The Jews are profiteers. The Jews cheat you in business. The Jews became *the* symbol of a world that was being manipulated and controlled.

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Narrator: Ford ensured that his anti-Semitic message would be read in households across the nation. In addition to subscriptions, he distributed the *Dearborn Independent* through his more than 7,000 car dealerships. By 1926, circulation had reached 900,000.

Hasia R. Diner, Historian: There are lots of small town newspapers that publish scurrilous anti-Semitic material, so it wasn't unusual in that way. But what's notable about the *Dearborn Independent* is that there'd be stacks of them in a dealership in California, a dealership in Massachusetts, a dealership in Iowa.

Narrator: The American Jewish Committee, the Federal Council of Churches, and over 100 prominent leaders, including President Woodrow Wilson, condemned Ford's attacks. But he was undeterred.

"The Jews are the scavengers of the world," Ford declared. "Wherever there's anything wrong with a country, you'll find the Jews on the job there." Ford even reprinted the notorious *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

Greg Grandin, Historian: The czars in Russia created this total fictional account of Jews conspiring to take over the world. And it's Ford that publishes it in America.

Beverly Gage, Historian: What really matters about Henry Ford is that just he had so much power and so much cultural authority. And when a figure like Henry Ford sanctions this kind of thing, it has -- you know, it legitimizes these ideas.

Narrator: A defamation suit by a Jewish lawyer forced Henry Ford to issue a public apology. After eight years of publishing the *Dearborn Independent*, he shut the paper down. Many Jewish organizations accepted Ford's apology as sincere. But those who knew him best did not. Behind closed doors, Ford remained convinced that Jews were at the heart of what he deemed the degeneration of American society.

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In 1920s America, change was everywhere: new forms of music and dance, new government prohibitions, new expectations for women. Nowhere was change more evident, however, than on the nation's roadways.

The automobile boom had fueled the expansion of the oil, rubber and steel industries, spurred road construction, stimulated real estate development, and created new businesses like gas stations, roadside motels, and restaurants. Streets were no longer littered with horse manure, but clogged with cars.

Bob Casey, Curator: People who can buy cars, do. People who can't buy cars want to.

Narrator: "The automobile," wrote one essayist, "changed our dress, manners ... vacation habits, the shape of our cities, ... and positions in intercourse."

Beverly Gage, Historian: The emphasis on leisure time, the emphasis on just going out for a drive in your car to nowhere, to wherever. I mean, these were new ideas, and this was a really new experience for Americans.

Narrator: Many of the changes didn't sit well with Henry Ford.

Nancy F. Koehn, Historian: Once people have bought one car, right, and have learned to use it and learned to drive it, a different set of related wants would set in. What if a car had different kind of fenders and different kind of upholstery and different kind of headlamps? Markets evolve as more and more people buy products. This is true of clothes; this is true of computers; this is true of smart phones today. It was no less true of the car.

Greg Grandin, Historian: It's the roaring 20s. People want style. They want speed. They want flash.

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Bob Casey, Curator: Ford looked around and he saw people buying these luxurious vehicles, and he seemed to think, "That's not the way to spend your money." Ford is uncomfortable in this new consumer world, that he's had a huge part in creating.

Narrator: "I sometimes wonder if we have ... fallen under the spell of salesmanship," Ford complained. "The American of a generation ago was a shrewd buyer. But nowadays the American people seem to listen and be sold."

Where Ford saw decadence, the president of rival General Motors saw opportunity.

Bob Casey, Curator: Alfred P. Sloan seemed to see what the future of the automobile industry was, beyond the Model T. He realized that once the market was fairly well saturated, you're going to have to give people an excuse to keep buying new cars and get rid of a perfectly good two- or three-year-old car.

Narrator: Sloan initiated the yearly model change and developed a wide range of vehicles from the modest to the extravagant: Chevrolets, Oldsmobiles, Buicks, and Cadillacs -- cars "for every purse and purpose." For the first time, the Ford Motor Company faced real competition.

Though the Model T had outsold its nearest competitors by six-to-one in 1924, as the 10 millionth rolled off the assembly line, sales were distinctly beginning to slip. Within the year Ford's market share had dipped below 50 percent and was continuing in free fall.

Meanwhile, sales of General Motor's jaunty Chevrolet -- available in practically any color, except black -- had more than tripled. Henry Ford refused to even entertain the idea of a new automobile. "The Model T," he proclaimed, "is the most perfect car in the world."

Nancy F. Koehn, Historian: He was so maniacally committed to his vision. The same thing that makes him successful now begins to create great vulnerability for him.

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Narrator: Ford dealers were exasperated. Some jumped ship to Dodge or General Motors. "The Model T," one complained, "has run its course."

On January 20, 1926, a six-page memo landed on Henry Ford's desk. Its author, Ernest Kanzler, a vice-president at Ford Motor and Edsel's brother-in-law, had fretted over the document for weeks, worrying that if he didn't send it, the company might collapse, anxious that if he did, the note might end his career.

"Our Ford customers," Kanzler wrote, "are going to other manufacturers. ... With every additional car our competitors sell, they get stronger and we get weaker. ... A new product is necessary. ... Practically every man in your organization to whom you have entrusted the greatest responsibility holds this same opinion."

Nelson Lichtenstein, Historian: Ford had surrounded himself with "yes" men. And so when he did encounter opposition, he reacted in a kind of aggressive fashion.

Narrator: Ford humiliated Kanzler at every opportunity, forcing him out of the company within months. "The only problem with the Ford car," Henry insisted, "is that we can't produce it fast enough." No one else in the company agreed, least of all his son. For once, Edsel refused to back down.

Steven Watts, Historian: Edsel Ford did not like conflict. He did not like tension with his father. He did not like butting heads. But Edsel, became convinced that times had changed, consumers had become more sophisticated, and you simply needed to put a new model out there.

Narrator: The fight went on for more than a year. Time and again, Edsel would show up in his father's office with plans under his arm for a new car; each time his father would send him away. After one exchange, Henry demanded that a colleague tell Edsel to take a trip to California. "Make it a long stay," he said. "I'll send for him when I want to see him again."

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"It was the old man's belief that he knew best what was good for [the public]," a colleague recalled. "Edsel, on the other hand, would try to give the public what they wanted."

On May 26, 1927, father and son appeared in public together to celebrate the 15-millionth Model T as it rolled off the Ford assembly line. As they posed for the cameras, an announcement went out to the press. The Ford Motor Company would discontinue the Model T and introduce an "entirely new Ford car."

Steven Watts, Historian: It's impossible to pinpoint a specific moment or a meeting where Henry Ford decided to put the Model T in mothballs. Henry Ford sort of throws in the towel. And he reluctantly agreed to put a team together to start developing a new model.

Narrator: After shutting down production for six months to re-tool, the new Ford car was finally ready in December 1927. Anticipation was intense. The company counted more than 100,000 orders before anyone had even seen a prototype. When it was unveiled, the sleek Model A received rave reviews.

Produced in a range of colors, it had a powerful four-cylinder engine, an electrical system with a self-starter and a shatterproof windshield. Fast, reliable, safe, yet still affordable, it was available on an installment plan. Everyone who worked at Ford Motor knew that it was Edsel who was responsible for its style and design. To Edsel's dismay, his father took all the credit.

Steven Watts, Historian: Henry Ford, shamelessly moves into the limelight and manipulates the press, as he had done for years, and emerges as the great hero in this story, the man bringing a new car to the people.

Narrator: The Model A did revive the Ford Motor Company's fortunes, with sales of 700,000 cars in the first year. Despite the success, Ford never forgave his son.

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Steven Watts, Historian: Henry Ford loved the Model T more than anything in his entire life. It was central to his identity. Getting rid of the Model T, in essence, was sort of cutting out part of himself.

Bob Casey, Curator: It's almost like giving up a child. He didn't want to admit that this wonderful design that was so much part of him, that that design was now obsolete.

Narrator: By the winter of 1928, after more than 10 years of construction, Ford's massive factory complex at the River Rouge was fully operative. Henry envisioned making 10,000 cars a day there.

Nancy F. Koehn, Historian: Ford's factories were in many ways like mirrors into his ambition and his drive. We see a little of this at Highland Park, but we see it much more clearly at River Rouge. This is an empire a large industrial empire that uses millions of dollars' worth of raw materials and ends with cars literally rolling off a moving assembly line. So Ford has created a factory that is completely under his own control and leadership.

Narrator: The Rouge included 15 miles of roadways and housed 120 miles of conveyors within 93 buildings. Water pumped from the Detroit River supplied the complex with 700 million gallons a day -- as much as consumed by Detroit, Cincinnati, and New Orleans combined.

Bob Casey, Curator: They had 100 miles of railroad track within the plant, just to move things around within the plant. It had its own water system. It had its own power system. They had their own security department. They had their own fire department. It was, in essence, a city where you made automobiles.

Narrator: Operating around the clock in eight-hour shifts, Ford Motor employed more than 75,000 people at the Rouge.

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Nelson Lichtenstein, Historian: Here was the real guts and the heart of industrial civilization. This was the vanguard, this was the most advanced, the most sophisticated manufacturing facility in the country. It really was a Mecca.

Narrator: Any lingering notions that the Ford Motor Company was interested in human development and progressive reform were a thing of the past. There were competitors to beat, and ever-higher production levels to reach. "Time loves to be wasted," Ford wrote. "From time wasted there can be no salvage."

Steven Watts, Historian: Any hint of camaraderie, teamwork, cooperation, common purpose, even the Sociological Department, all of that's gone from the Rouge. Its sole function was to have thousands of men working to churn out, as efficiently as possible, as many automobiles as they could.

Narrator: Although Henry Ford had carefully supervised every aspect of the Rouge's design, no sooner was it complete than he began to hate it.

Steven Watts, Historian: Henry Ford created this monster. The River Rouge plant was so big, it was so heartless. It was so removed from everything that he had experienced earlier, what you find is that as the Rouge is up and firing, Henry Ford spends very little time there.

Narrator: By the late 1920s, manufacturing was fast surpassing agriculture as the nation's economic driver. Dearborn itself, which had been dotted with barns and pastures, was now a sprawling industrial center, home to not just Ford Motor but Michigan Bell Telephone, the Pennsylvania Railroad, and Detroit Edison. More Americans now lived in cities than on farms: the rural, small town America of Henry Ford's childhood was rapidly disappearing. He felt increasingly at sea.

Greg Grandin, Historian: He begins to condemn large, sprawling, crime-ridden cities and large concentrations of people. But he, more than anybody else, has concentrated industrial

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workers in large numbers, with his factory system. He's realizing that he can't control the forces in some ways that he has helped unleash.

Narrator: It was his tranquil antidote to the never-ending clamor and pollution of the Rouge. One writer dubbed it, "Henry Ford's Village of Yesterday." The automaker himself named it Greenfield Village, after his wife's hometown. The project had begun years earlier with a loving restoration of Ford's boyhood home.

When workmen recovered broken bits of his mother's dishes, Ford had her china reproduced and placed on the shelves just as it had been when he was growing up. He built a replica of the workbench where he had repaired watches as a boy, scoured antique shops to find furniture he remembered from his youth, and filled dresser drawers with shawls like those his mother had worn.

Then he bought 245 acres a mile from the Rouge. He purchased historic buildings, had them dismantled and sent to Dearborn for reassembly: the Wright Brothers' bicycle shop, Thomas Edison's Menlo Park laboratory, and the garage where Ford had built his quadricycle.

Steven Watts, Historian: Greenfield Village, in a certain way, becomes a monument not only to the American past, but to his past as well. He seemed to be yearning to somehow recapture the kind of society and culture that the automobile and the River Rouge had essentially destroyed.

Greg Grandin, Historian: You have him raising River Rouge, which is this enormous cathedral to industry and in the shadows of the River Rouge, he's building this 19th-century testament to a receding America.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: He lives nostalgia in excruciating detail. Nobody else had a billion dollars in the 1920s and said, "I'm going to create an alternative world. I can do it. And it's all mine." The whole thing is so he didn't have to live in the world that was around him.

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Narrator: Ford's vision of the past included a deep reverence for technology. He built a sawmill, restored a 17th-century forge and collected steam engines. He banned one invention, however: the telephone. When his manager protested, suggesting his boss might miss important communications from the factory, Ford replied, "Oh, forget that stuff. I come down here to get away from that gang."

John Staudenmaier, Historian: This is an immense investment of Henry's interest as well as his money. It clearly is increasingly where he wants to be and what he wants to do.

Steven Watts, Historian: He hates the Rouge. He loves Greenfield Village. That's where his heart is. He begins to pull away, even perhaps without realizing it, from the world he created.

Narrator: In Ford's hometown, the Depression that followed the stock market crash in 1929 hit harder than almost anywhere else in the country. The centerpiece of Detroit's economy was the manufacture of automobiles. During the booming 1920s, the city's population had grown by more than 50 percent. Now, the financial crisis devastated the industry.

Beverly Gage, Historian: In the course of four years, the stock market loses 90 percent of its value. And that in turn comes hand-in-hand with a real bottoming out of this kind of frothy consumer economy. In a city like Detroit, you've had this-this boom, and then all of a sudden your customers are gone. And they're really gone.

Narrator: Ford defiantly protected jobs, announcing instead that he would raise wages to seven dollars a day. But within months of the crash, Model A sales stalled and Ford was forced to lay off workers. Men who had flocked to Detroit when Ford announced the pay raise, were suddenly out of work and destitute. The mayor estimated that a third of the 200,000 people standing in breadlines had been laid off from Ford's factories. "Declining sales have changed Mr. Ford," noted *Fortune* magazine, "from one of the greatest U.S. money-makers to one of the greatest money losers."

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Steven Watts, Historian: The Ford Motor Company was staggering on its feet. Among the Big Three, it had moved into third place behind Chrysler, far behind General Motors.

Narrator: Three years into the Great Depression, with profits down by 50 percent, the Ford Motor Company was in trouble.

Ford responded to the pressure by coming to rely more and more on one man at his company. Harry Bennett was a former amateur boxer who had first joined Ford's company in the motion picture department before rising to become security chief at the Rouge.

Steven Watts, Historian: Harry Bennett had a background very different from any of the other Ford managers. He was a kind of streetwise, tough, roustabout, uneducated basically, a kind of tough guy, packing a pistol literally.

Narrator: Bennett surrounded himself with a group of street fighters, athletes, ex-convicts, and underworld figures. With their weapons often prominently displayed, his men roamed the factory enforcing strict workplace rules. Workers were not allowed to talk or even sit down while on the clock.

Nelson Lichtenstein, Historian: Workers described it as an internal Gestapo, a kind of police force inside the factory. Terror and fear was pervasive in the organization.

Greg Grandin, Historian: Harry Bennett ruled the River Rouge factory floor with an iron grip. He enforced discipline. He controlled almost every aspect of workers' lives. The old vision of Ford as the paternalist by this point had given way to a vision of extreme conformity and discipline.

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Narrator: Bennett derived his power from his close relationship with his boss. Ford often drove his security chief to work in the mornings and had a standing call with Bennett at 9:30 every night.

Steven Watts, Historian: Ford always stayed behind the curtain as the wizard of Oz, pulling the levers and manipulating the wires, making the big decisions. He *can't* relinquish control because that's what Henry Ford is all about.

Narrator: "If Mr. Ford told me to blacken out the sun tomorrow," Bennett once said, "I might have trouble fixing it. But you'd see a hundred thousand sons-of-bitches coming through the Rouge gates in the morning all wearing dark glasses."

As he drew closer to Bennett, Ford's relationship with Edsel grew increasingly strained. Even newsreels couldn't hide the growing tension between father and son.

Edsel Ford (archival): The United States, even when it is running in low, is a pretty big business proposition. But I believe that the country is getting ready to make a very decided step forward next year and we are doing all that we can to help it along. What do you think of that father?

Henry Ford (archival): Well I think everybody has decided they've got to go to work and I think from now on there's no one that can stop this country from going ahead, full blast.

Narrator: Over the years, Henry had grown frustrated with Edsel's management of the company. Where others saw Edsel as a progressive, collaborative leader, his father saw only restraint and indecision. "Mr. Ford," observed one employee, "didn't think Edsel was tough enough."

Steven Watts, Historian: People who worked for Edsel loved him because he didn't order people around, he didn't throw temper tantrums, he didn't act like a tyrant. It was very much a

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kind of modern style of management, but his father hated it, and he thought it was another sign of his son's softness.

Narrator: Edsel's personal life was a constant source of irritation to his father as well. Everything about the way Edsel lived -- his 60-room mansion, his art collection, his extravagant parties, his wealthy friends, the fact that he drank alcohol -- confirmed Henry's suspicions that his son was weak.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: Edsel says, "I am one of the wealthy and powerful." And that's just intolerable for Henry. He couldn't imagine living like that, himself. He just can't imagine it.

Narrator: Henry finally had enough and ordered Bennett to spy on his son.

Douglass Brinkley, Historian: He was a compulsive person, Henry Ford, and he wanted his son not to have any vices when Edsel left town. Henry Ford would break into Edsel's house and smash with a cane all of the liquor bottles.

Steven Watts, Historian: Putting spies on his son and accusing him of being an alcoholic and all of these crazy things, it was all in Henry Ford's mind.

Narrator: As his family life deteriorated and his company's fortunes declined, Ford turned his attention to a new threat. Union organizers had set their sites on the auto industry. The passage of the 1935 Wagner Act, which guaranteed workers the right to organize and bargain collectively, emboldened the United Auto Workers. Following a six-week strike, General Motors recognized the union. Chrysler capitulated three months later. Henry Ford resolved to fight.

Greg Grandin, Historian: Ford imagined himself as elevating the living conditions of the working class. But he hated unions with a passion, viscerally. He disliked them in principle. They were a challenge to his power, a challenge to the notion that the River Rouge was his.

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Narrator: Ford decreed that no one at Ford Motor was to meet with union officials, or discuss labor matters with anyone. Except Harry Bennett. In April of 1937, Ford authorized his head of security to "handle" the United Auto Workers. Bennett promptly declared that the UAW "was irresponsible, un-American, and no goddamn good." On May 26, 1937, union organizers arrived at the Rouge and began handing out leaflets entitled "Unionism not Fordism."

Nelson Lichtenstein, Historian: They knew that in order for the union to be secure in the industry, they had to organize Ford. And they had invited photographers. They wanted photographers to come. They wanted to show the country that leaflets were being distributed and workers were being recruited at the Ford Motor Company to join the United Automobile Workers.

Narrator: Bennett's thugs were ready. The Ford security force grabbed most of the cameras, but a few photographers got away. Pictures of the company's brutality were published in newspapers across the country. Through it all, the aging carmaker remained resolute, determined to keep the union out of his company.

Steven Watts, Historian: While his emotions are pulling him into the past, there's this almost primal urge in his character to keep control of what he created. The Ford Motor Company is his baby. He built it, and he's going to hold onto it.

John Staudenmaier, Historian: Why would he create such a violent world of spies and thugs? Why do that? Well, because he was lashing out against the world that had spun out of control, as far as he was concerned.

Narrator: As the years went by, Henry Ford began spending more and more time at Greenfield Village. He checked in on the children who attended his one-room schoolhouse, dropped by the farm where he was experimenting with soybeans, and enjoyed old-time dancing at Lovett Hall where he had a full-time instructor on staff. When he turned 75 in July 1938, Henry watched as

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performers re-enacted scenes from his life. But he kept slipping away from his party to check on his projects at the Village, preferring to be there than with the thousands of well-wishers.

It was clear to everyone he had slowed down. Few knew, however, that he'd also suffered a mild stroke. His father's mental state was what troubled Edsel. Instead of mellowing with age, Henry was growing more controlling and paranoid. He lashed out at employees, accused longtime associates of disloyalty or worse, didn't recognize them, and insisted that Jews were persecuting him. And he became convinced there was only one man in the company he could trust, "my Harry."

Steven Watts, Historian: Harry Bennett represented all of the qualities that Henry had been trying to push Edsel toward for years. Bennett became a kind of surrogate son for Henry Ford, a kind of idealized son that he always wanted Edsel to be, and Edsel could never become.

Narrator: In the spring of 1941, with war raging in Europe, Ford Motor secured several government contracts, including a \$480 million order for B-24 bombers. The infusion of cash put the company back on track.

But for the 90,000 workers inside the Rouge plant, the threats, violence, intimidation and terror continued unabated. Men discovered talking in groups were suspected of union activities and promptly fired, often after a severe beating.

With large defense contracts at stake, union officials were in a stronger position to push for fair treatment. They called for higher wages, overtime pay, and job security.

Steven Watts, Historian: Edsel counsels his father, "Let's work this out. Let's talk to the unions. Let's do what we need to do." Henry will have none of it.

Narrator: When Ford refused to meet his workers' demands, thousands walked out and went on strike. Edsel stepped in without his father's permission, meeting with union officials and

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hammering out an agreement.

When the formal contract between the union and Ford Motor was completed, Henry Ford refused to sign it. He raged at Edsel, saying he'd rather shut down his factories than give in to the union. It was an empty threat. The elder Ford knew he'd lost.

Nelson Lichtenstein, Historian: Henry Ford gives in to the union because he had no choice. If the strike had continued, if chaos had reigned on the factory floor, the government would have unquestionably come in. And he was told this, even by Harry Bennett.

Narrator: The following day, Ford Motor gave the UAW everything it wanted and more: a union shop, wages equal to the highest in the industry, and union dues deducted from workers' paychecks. When asked later why he had suddenly changed course, Henry would say that Clara had threatened to leave him if he didn't.

Soon after the strike, Edsel checked into the hospital. Like many of the executives at Ford, he had suffered for years from ulcers, which doctors believed were brought on by stress. They recommended that Ford's son have part of his stomach removed. But surgery didn't help.

"If there is anything the matter with Edsel's health," his father told associates, "he can correct it himself... Edsel must mend his ways." What Henry didn't know was that his son had terminal stomach cancer. Edsel returned to work, telling no one but his wife Eleanor.

Bob Casey, Curator: When Edsel's physical condition began to deteriorate, Henry just took it as another sign of weakness. "If he'd just eat right, if he wouldn't drink any wine, if he'd stop hanging out with those good-for-nothing rich friends of his, he'd fix himself."

Narrator: Matters came to a head in the spring of 1943 when Henry ordered a close associate to demand that Edsel reform his attitude and behavior or else. When he heard his father's long list of grievances against him, Edsel broke down in tears.

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A few weeks later, he collapsed. Eleanor revealed to Henry what she had known for months: Edsel was dying. As his son lay bedridden at home in Grosse Point, Henry refused to believe it. He frantically contacted Edsel's doctors demanding that they restore his son's health.

On May 26, 1943, Edsel Ford died at the age of 49. Henry Ford was shattered. For months afterwards he wandered the grounds of Greenfield Village at night by himself.

Steven Watts, Historian: Ford knew in his heart that his actions and his unfair treatment of Edsel in some way had been responsible for his death. And emotionally, mentally, physically, he was just never the same.

Narrator: "Harry," he asked one day, "do you think I was ever cruel to Edsel?"

"Not cruel, but unfair," Bennett replied. "If it had been me, I would have got mad."

"That's what I wanted him to do," said Ford, "get mad."

After Edsel's death, Henry Ford once again took over the presidency of Ford Motor. But after multiple strokes, he was in no shape to run the company.

Steven Watts, Historian: It was a period of absolute chaos. One observer described it as "the years of the Mad Hatter," because Ford would give directives and then contradict them the next day. He would call people back in who hadn't worked at the company for 30 years.

Narrator: "We have to go back to the old days, the Model T days," Ford would say. "We've got to build only one car ... just the one Ford." Officials in the government worried that with Henry at the helm, Ford Motor could not fulfill its war contracts.

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In 1945, Ford suffered another major stroke. Increasingly, he failed to recognize friends, avoided going out in public, and was afraid to let Clara out of his sight. On April 7, 1947, Henry Ford died in the middle of the night, his head rested on his wife's shoulder. He was 83.

Two days later, 100,000 people waited patiently in a line a mile long to view his body. They came to pay their respects, not to the author of the *International Jew*, the initiator of oppressive labor practices, or the father who bullied his only son, but to the most influential industrialist of his time, the man who, more than any other, had ushered in the 20th century.

Steven Watts, Historian: Henry Ford, despite all of his great success and his great wealth, had the soul of a common person, the soul of a common man. And I think people understood that instinctively. Somehow Ford was one of them.

His automobile represented this modern notion that happiness lay not in self-denial, not in self-restraint, not in scarcity, but it lay in self-fulfillment.

Nancy F. Koehn, Historian: What Ford saw and what he committed himself to in terms of producing a durable, affordable, effective automobile changed American life, changed American business, and changed Americans one by one, as it continues to affect us today.

Narrator: For the rest of the century, the Ford Motor Company remained one of the three dominant American car companies, though it never again controlled the market as it had in Henry Ford's heyday.

Shortly after Ford's death, the company's new president, Edsel's oldest son Henry, oversaw the first public offering of company shares on the New York Stock Exchange. In addition to ending the Ford family's control of Ford Motor, Henry II also put an end to his grandfather's experiments in social engineering.

By then, Ford's planned utopia in the rainforest had become a lawless outpost where rubber had

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never been successfully produced. In one of his first acts as president, Henry Ford II sold the land back to the Brazilian government for a fraction of its value. All too soon, Fordlandia was reclaimed by the jungle.

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