

Ford Marks 150th Birthday of the Man Who Initiated First Assembly Line, Better Wages

It was "Happy Birthday" time last week when Ford Motor Company marked the 150th anniversary of the birth of Henry Ford, the man whose "ideas revolutionized transportation and brought mobility to the masses."

The automaker recognized its founder's accomplishments through events and declarations across the United States and around the world.

Celebrations at Ford's Dearborn headquarters were complemented by a special proclamation by the state of Michigan declaring July 30 "Henry Ford Day." In Washington, D.C., hundreds downtown and on Capitol Hill marked the day enjoying commemorative cupcakes delivered by a food truck.

While last week's events marked the day of Henry Ford's birth, they are just part of a year-long celebration of the man and his achievements by Ford Motor Company.

Some of the events include:

- Dealers in 21 Asia Pacific markets have launched Ford Heritage month, transforming showrooms into exhibitions on Ford's rich history;

- Ford of Germany marked the occasion with a series of five road rallies that celebrated Ford's numerous automotive breakthroughs over the last 110 years;

- More than 4,000 people attended community events held by Ford in Romania;

- In Great Britain, celebrations were capped by the reveal of a restored statue of Henry Ford at the company's UK Tech Centre.

In coming months, celebrations will continue with additional events across the United States, Europe and South America.

Henry Ford's introduction of the automobile into the mass market transformed agricultural economies in the United States and around the world into prosperous industrial and urban markets.

Many historians credit him with creating a middle class in

America. His high minimum wage – revolutionary at the time – set a precedent for fair distribution of company wealth that influenced later management practices.

Ford initially struggled to get his company on solid financial footing, but broke through with the Model T. The vehicle debuted in October 1908, opening a new era in America. More than 15 million Model Ts were built and sold.

The innovative spirit of Henry Ford took root in many other forms after the success of the Model T, including:

- Moving assembly line: In 1913 Henry Ford introduced the first moving assembly line for cars. Within 18 months, the amount of time needed to build a Model T was reduced from 12½ man-hours to 1½ man-hours, ushering in the modern auto industry;

- \$5 work day: To reduce high turnover rates among workers, Henry Ford more than doubled their pay in 1914, from \$2.34 for a nine-hour day to \$5 for an eight-hour day;

- Vertical integration: To improve quality, Henry Ford sought to own, operate and coordinate all the resources needed to produce complete automobiles. This principle, known as vertical integration, was put into practice in 1927 with the Model A.

"What my great-grandfather established, especially his legacy of innovation, continues to inspire our commitment to a strong business, great products and a better world," said Ford Executive Chairman Bill Ford.

"We are putting unexpected levels of technology within reach of millions of people, accelerating the development of new products that customers want and value, and driving growth by creating jobs and bringing the freedom of mobility to the world."

Henry Ford died on April 7, 1947, at 83. More than 50 years after his death, in 1999, *Forbes* magazine named him "Businessman of the Century," and, in 2012, a History Channel documentary highlighted him as one of "The Men Who Built America."

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