



Ford Piquette Avenue Plant Museum

DETROIT'S NOTORIETY AS THE MOTOR CITY BEGAN IN THE NORTH END NEIGHBORHOOD, WHERE THE FIRST FORD AUTOMOBILES ROLLED OUT OF THE FACTORY

Photos and Story by Phil Eich, Storyville Social, as part of the Michigan Main Street Story Series

This is Henry Ford's very first purpose-built factory in Detroit. The first 12,000 to 14,000 Model Ts were made right here in this building just after the turn of the 20th century.

The Ford Piquette Avenue Plant was built in 1904, and Henry Ford was here until 1910, when demand for the Model T was so enormous that he went to the huge Highland Park Plant. This place is a historic landmark and one of the world's oldest surviving automobile manufacturing plants. We're very fortunate that it didn't burn down and wasn't repurposed. It was slated for demolition until a group of volunteers and community leaders purchased it in 1999 and saved it. One of the things people love about coming here is that everything is original with all of its original

character.

This factory was revolutionary in its time. It's what they call a New England textile mill-style building, all wood and brick. It was intentionally designed to be long and skinny to allow for windows and light and air for the workers. Because Henry Ford had seen other factories burn down, he included all kinds of fire prevention technologies, including a sprinkler system, a 50,000-gallon underground cistern, a water tower, and a dynamo generating DC current.

Everyone's heard the story that 'you could have a Model T in any color so long as it's black,' but the first Model Ts were actually carmine red. They didn't start the black era until about 1914 in Highland Park. So, the Model Ts made here

would have been red, dark green, and navy. Later on, it was cheaper to switch to making only black because they were rolling off the Highland Park assembly line at a rate of almost one per minute!

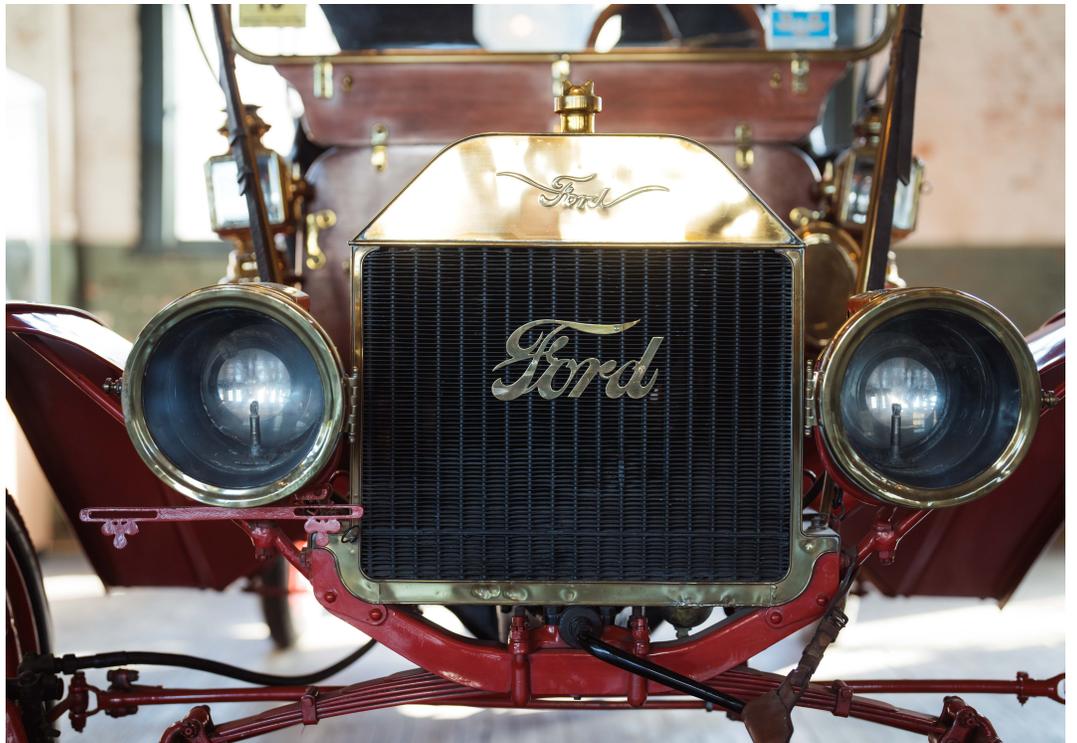
Here at the museum, we also have a wonderful collection of more than 60 rare vehicles, including the various letter car models that Henry Ford produced and a selection of Model T trucks, including a fire engine, a tractor, and a snowmobile. The Model T was produced in many different iterations. It was such an incredible invention. The Model T was affordable, cheap to fix, durable, and standardized. Henry Ford reinvented the way cars were made and produced.

There's nothing more iconic for Detroit than this plant. It really represents the innovation and entrepreneurship that is at the heart of Detroit. We're the Motor City, and this is its foundation.

—Jill Woodward, President and Chief Operating Officer of the Ford Piquette Avenue Plant Museum



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Michigan Main Street Story Series



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