

Ford, Industrial Genius Remained Man of the Soil

Henry Ford contributed as much as any other individual to the emancipation of the farmer from rural isolation.

Getting to the rural regions of America was a problem overcome by the famous Model T Ford. Fifteen million "Tin Lizzies" found their way along rough, muddy roads and even

mere fence lines to farm yards for duties never dreamed of when the car was introduced.

Pulleys were attached to the rear wheels and the 20-horsepower engine drove wood saws, ground feed, hoisted grain for storage, churned butter and became well-thought-of as a "country cousin."

Milk cans, chicken crates, sacks of potatoes and all types of pro-

duce either were carried in back seats or strapped to running boards and carted off to market.

HENRY FORD first experimented with an "automobile plow," a variation of an early car and forerunner of the tractor, in 1905.

He thought mechanical equipment should be a part of standard farm operation, so he developed a system to mass-produce the Fordson tractor, introduced in 1917.

By 1922, not all tractors manufactured at Ford Motor Co's Rouge plant were destined to see service on farms in this country. Many were sent to Europe and South America.

More than 1,000 went to Great Britain, 750 to France, and more than 1,000 to Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay early that year.

Tractor farming gained fast acceptance in the 20's. By 1923, sugar cane was tilled to Philippine mills by Fordson tractors. Ford tractors built roads in Colombia, cultivated farms in Norway, Sweden, Australia and New Zealand. The name "Fordson" was quickly recognized around the world.

AT THE TIME of Henry Ford's birth—on July 30, 1863—farming took 60 per cent of the country's work force just to feed the population. Ford himself was born on a modest farm at Springwells Township, near Detroit.

Young Henry loved the land but at the same time disliked the drudgery of rural life.

From his youth, he was interested in the power of machines and determined to find an economical way to replace farm animal power with mechanical power.

Henry Ford was the farmers' friend—one of their kind. His simplicity brought him respect and he was looked upon, not as a rich man with a hobby, but rather as a man sincere in his efforts to ease the farmers' tasks.

DURING the 1920's, he farmed more than 7,000 acres of Michigan farm land planted in wheat, corn, beans, alfalfa and trees. His private estate, Fair Lane, had a rural atmosphere with its many gardens, pastures, woods, the Rouge River and neighboring farm land.

Though Ford's mechanical contributions to farming are well known, his personal interest and efforts to introduce scientific technology to agriculture seldom are recognized.

One of his early scientific experiments was distillation of fuel alcohol from farm crops. He tried to design a Fordson tractor that would burn alcohol as well as gas-

oline, but dropped the idea because distillation costs were too high.

SINCE RUBBER is essential to automobiles, he sought a domestic source in 1923. He and Thomas A. Edison tested a wide variety of plants in Georgia and Florida for their rubber-bearing qualities.

The auto pioneer was noted for his interests in the soybean.

Soybeans can be grown in different types of climate, are drought-resistant and restore nitrogen to the soil. Ford planted several varieties of soybeans on Ford farms and set up special laboratory equipment to process them for new uses he developed.

He used soybean extracts in enamel paint and shock absorbers. Soybean meal was used to produce distributor caps, horn buttons and other auto parts. To dramatize the possibilities of soybean fabric, he had a suit of clothes made entirely from soybean material.

HENRY FORD contended that plastic car bodies were lighter, could be produced at less cost and could withstand more abuse than steel, but he never got past the experimental stage with this project.

In the 1930's Ford helped organize the National Farm Chemurgic Council, devoted to the problem of crop surpluses. The government responded by establishing a soybean industrial research laboratory at Urbana, Ill.

Ford introduced the idea of decentralization in industry, saying that cities were crowding people together. He established "village industries," many within a few miles of Dearborn, and by 1924, these small plants were employing 2,400 part-time farmers.

AS MUCH AS anything else, the village industries dramatized his belief that industry and farming should cooperate for a more healthy economy.

Not all of Ford's plans for agriculture worked out, but certainly he helped lighten the farmer's load and brighten his future.

Leaders Confer On Michigan's Traffic Problem

Gov. George Romney will confer with citizen leaders and traffic experts at several Regional Traffic Safety Conferences at seven cities around the state during the month of August.

Secretary of State James M. Hare, State Police Commissioner Joseph A. Childs and other top state officials will speak and give leadership to the program.

Representatives of the National Safety Council and other state and national organizations concerned about the increased traffic losses in Michigan will participate in the discussions.

THE SERIES is sponsored by the State Safety Commission and the Michigan Citizens Highway Safety Action Committee.

Improving licensing of drivers, a possible vehicle inspection law, expanded traffic law enforcement and raising standards for driver education will be the main subjects at the meetings.

These items received recent attention by the governor and the State Safety Commission as a result of an extensive inquiry by Sec-

retary of State Hare and a report by the National Safety Council.

One of the conferences will be held in Pontiac on Aug. 23.

MICHIGAN FIGURES for the first six months of 1963 reveal that traffic deaths, injuries and property damage reported have increased more than 16% over the same period last year.

If such a trend continues, financial loss alone could exceed \$300 million for the year.

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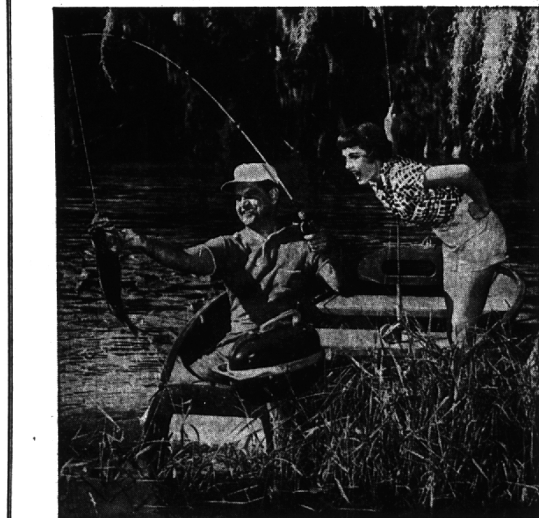


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