



Transcript for Legacy Theater **Ford Rouge Factory Tour**

Welcome to the Ford Rouge Center, what is probably the most famous manufacturing facility ever constructed. To tell the story of this amazing place, we have to travel about 5 miles northeast of here and over 100 years back in time to this small shed behind #58 Bagley Avenue. In this shed, the chief engineer of the local power plant spent his nights and weekends tinkering with his own version of one of those newfangled contraptions, the automobile.

That man's name was Henry Ford, and he was determined to make a reliable car that everybody could afford. In 1903, in a small factory just a few miles from where you are now, Henry founded the Ford Motor Company. Five years later, he introduced the world to the legendary Ford Model T.

The Tin Lizzie, as it was affectionately known, could handle the rough roads of the day, and, unlike many of its competitors, it didn't break down every 2 miles. But, as with all car companies back then, it took a crew around 12 hours to assemble each one. If Henry was going to fulfill his dream of making cars affordable to everybody, he'd have to come up with a way of keeping the quality while making more, faster.

Henry knew that the meat packers in Cincinnati worked standing in a line, each doing their part of the job. He also saw how other factories, such as textile plants, had started to use simple conveyor systems. Henry Ford started to pull these strands together. The man who couldn't resist tinkering with things was about to assemble the future of industry as we know it.

Henry started experimenting. Instead of the men moving to the work, what happened if the work moved to the men?

By 1915, Ford's Highland Park plant could assemble a Model T in 93 minutes, and the workforce of 450 had swelled to 14,000. With his moving assembly line, Henry revolutionized the manufacturing process. But he hadn't only changed the way he made his cars — Henry changed the lives of the people who made them.

On January 15th, 1914, he had announced he was doubling wages to an unheard of \$5 a day. Ten thousand people showed up looking for work, from all walks of life and all parts of the nation. They came by road and rail looking for opportunity at Ford.

Those lucky enough to get a job at Ford could, for the first time, afford to buy the very cars they made. Their families, who in all their generations had never owned property, were now buying their first homes. It was not only cars that were being mass-produced at Ford. New members of the American middle class were streaming from its gates by the thousands.

But Henry's grandest vision was still to come.



FORD ROUGE
FACTORY TOUR

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He imagined a factory that never waited for parts, that never slowed for a lack of steel shipments or glass. He dreamed of a factory that, by using basic raw materials, would create everything it needed to build his cars. Henry built this ultimate factory right where you are now, an industrial marvel the likes of which the world had never seen.

It would be known forever as "The Rouge," and by the late 1920s, it was in full-scale production. Coal, iron ore, limestone, lumber and a hundred other raw materials arrived at the plant's deepwater docks. Twenty-four hours later, they were engine blocks, wheel rims and radiator grilles. Seventy-two hours later, they were automobiles. A mile-and-a-half long and three-quarters of a mile wide, with a staff of 100,000, The Rouge worked like a single complex machine.

In October 1929, the stock market crashed and America, and the world, fell into the worst depression ever known.

The Rouge was not immune to the darkness of the Great Depression. Rouge workers faced wage cuts and layoffs as the world slipped into poverty and demand for cars slumped.

By the mid 1930s, as America was beginning to return to work, the growing union movement continued to focus on the working conditions at The Rouge, conditions that could be hard and sometimes dangerous. Increasingly, workers felt that speaking with a single, united voice was their only hope for change.

Henry Ford tried to fight that change. He felt that he'd done more for his workforce than anybody in history. He ordered his security staff to keep the union out. On May 26th, 1937, union organizers arrived to hand out leaflets on the overpass leading to the plant. A newspaperman secretly photographed what happened next. His images stunned the world.

The union lost the battle, but they won the war. It took four more years, but the tide had turned. Henry relented and the Rouge workers voted overwhelmingly to join the United Auto Workers union. Although Henry did not like it at the time, this new strength and flexibility would be put to the test.

Car production stopped, and The Rouge went to war.

The city that gave us the freedom of the road became the Arsenal of Democracy. Thousands of men went to join the fight, and their wives, mothers and daughters filled their jobs on the line. What The Rouge possessed in industrial might was matched by the spirit of its people. The combination proved unstoppable. With the war's end, cars once again rolled off the line, and The Rouge resumed its tradition of welcoming visitors from all over the world.



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Henry Ford's ultimate factory has become the icon of industrial achievement, immortalized by artists, captured by photographers and studied by industrialists. Henry had always been generous in sharing his ideas with those who wanted to take part in the age of true mass production. The 20th century was taking shape, and that shape was being forged in the furnaces of The Rouge.

On the night of April 7th, 1947, Henry Ford died. With the death of its founder and chief visionary, a question hung over The Rouge: Could this industrial marvel, the embodiment of Henry Ford's dreams and ideas, survive without him?

But Henry had created more than just a factory of bricks and steel. He created a legacy, a legacy of constant improvement and reinvention, harnessing the power of industry to improve the lives of ordinary people.

New generations came through the gates of The Rouge, following in the footsteps of their parents and grandparents. The torch of leadership passed to Henry Ford II, who led the men and women of The Rouge into a new era. Together they created cars that not only became classics, they became symbols of the American spirit.

In the years to come, The Rouge would be rocked by new storms. A crippling oil crisis and a flood of imports threatened the entire American auto industry. True to its legacy, The Rouge responded by constantly improving its products, revitalizing its partnerships and reinventing the amazing process pioneered by its founder. But what about the future? How will the mighty Rouge that led the 20th century continue to be a leader in the 21st century?

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Bill Ford.

Welcome to the Ford Rouge Center. I'm so proud of what we're doing here because it honors the legacy of innovation established by my great-grandfather, Henry Ford.

When we celebrated our centennial, Ford Motor Company reinvented the Rouge Complex as a new kind of factory for the 21st century — smart, sustainable and even more efficient. And now we've introduced another breakthrough in technology — the new F-150 — that is just as innovative, smart, tough and efficient as the revitalized Rouge itself. The men and women that work here are justifiably proud of these accomplishments. But they also would be quick to remind you that the process of innovation will never be finished, because it is part of our DNA, and we're already working on the next big thing.

Thank you for coming to see what we're doing. I hope you enjoy your time here at The Rouge!