

FUTURISTIC
ELECTRIC
Cars

KERRILY SAPET



Mitchell Lane

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Chapter One

A HORSELESS CARRIAGE

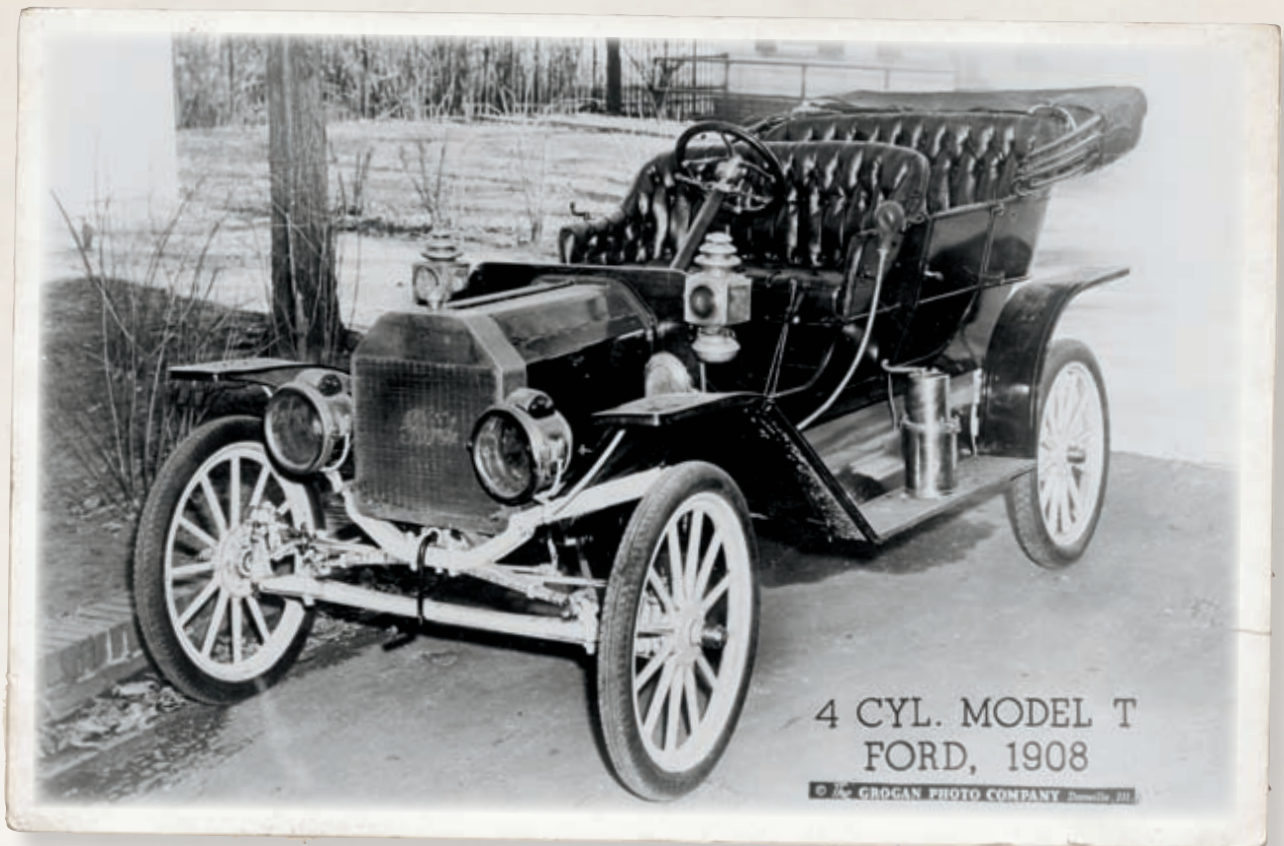
In 1885, Carl Benz drove his new invention—the world’s first car—through the streets of Munich, Germany. People stopped and stared. For years they had dreamed of a “horseless carriage.” Benz’s car, powered by a gas engine, looked more like a giant tricycle.

Bertha Benz, Carl’s wife, took the car on the world’s first road trip. She drove 60 miles to visit her parents. Her journey took 15 hours. Bertha made repairs using a pin from her hat and fabric from her clothes. She bought gas from drugstores, where it was sold as a cleaning solution.

While Bertha's adventure proved cars could be useful, most people couldn't afford to buy one. They walked, rode horses, and drove horse-drawn carriages. City streets were crowded with thousands of horses. Horse manure piled up and attracted flies. Children worked as "dirt boys," shoveling paths in the streets.

Inventor Henry Ford believed that if cars were affordable, they could replace horses. Growing up in Dearborn, Michigan, Ford had been fascinated by machines. His brothers and sisters kept their watches and wind-up toys away from him because Ford loved to take things apart to see how they worked. When Ford was 12 years old, he built a steam engine. The engine exploded and burned down a fence. But Ford kept building and inventing.

In 1908, Ford designed a car called the Model T. Nicknamed the "Tin Lizzie," the Model T was the first car most people could afford. It cost \$550.00—about as much money as the average person made in four months.



1908 Ford Model T



1913 Ford Model T assembly line

Ford used an **assembly line** in his factory to build cars quickly. Each worker added a part to the car as it moved through the factory. By 1925, the factory was making one car every 10 minutes. Every car was painted black, because black paint dried the fastest. Ford sold millions of Model Ts around the world. “The horse is DONE,” Ford scribbled in his notebook.

The Model T changed how people lived. No longer stuck close to home, people drove for work and for fun. They visited friends and took vacations. With more people on the move, paved roads soon stretched across countries. Today, cars move more people than buses and trains combined.

Over time, cars became stronger and safer. People built cars with more powerful engines, better steering and brakes, and tougher tires. Most cars still have gas engines. Gas is made from petroleum, a liquid buried deep in the Earth. Petroleum is a fossil fuel, formed from the remains of dead plants and animals over millions of years. Fossil fuels are a **nonrenewable resource**. They cannot be replaced. Fossil fuels may be used up by 2050.

When fossil fuels are burned to release their energy, they give off carbon dioxide and pollute the air. The carbon dioxide builds up in the Earth's atmosphere and causes **climate change**. As cars burn gas, they release particulates, tiny pieces of unburned fuel. Particulates are thinner than a human hair, but they contain harmful chemicals. Air pollution causes health problems and contributes to millions of deaths every year.

Burning fossil fuels is bad for people and for the planet. Many people think electric cars could help solve the pollution problem. "In order to have clean air in cities, you have to go electric," says Elon Musk, cofounder of Tesla.

Fun Facts

1

Cars in the United States burn 140 billion gallons of gas every year.

2

Henry Ford experimented with making fuel from corn, potatoes, peaches, and carrots.

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