

# The United States in the 1920s

**Technological Advancements  
and Rising Consumer Culture**

# Learning Objectives

Explain the significance of Ford's Model T

Identify the cause of the rising availability of residential electricity

Identify the significance of Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart

Describe how radio impacted people across the United States

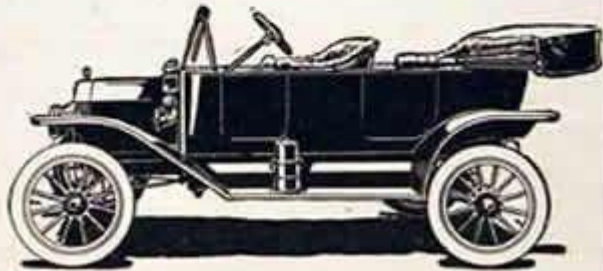
Describe the advent of movies and early Hollywood



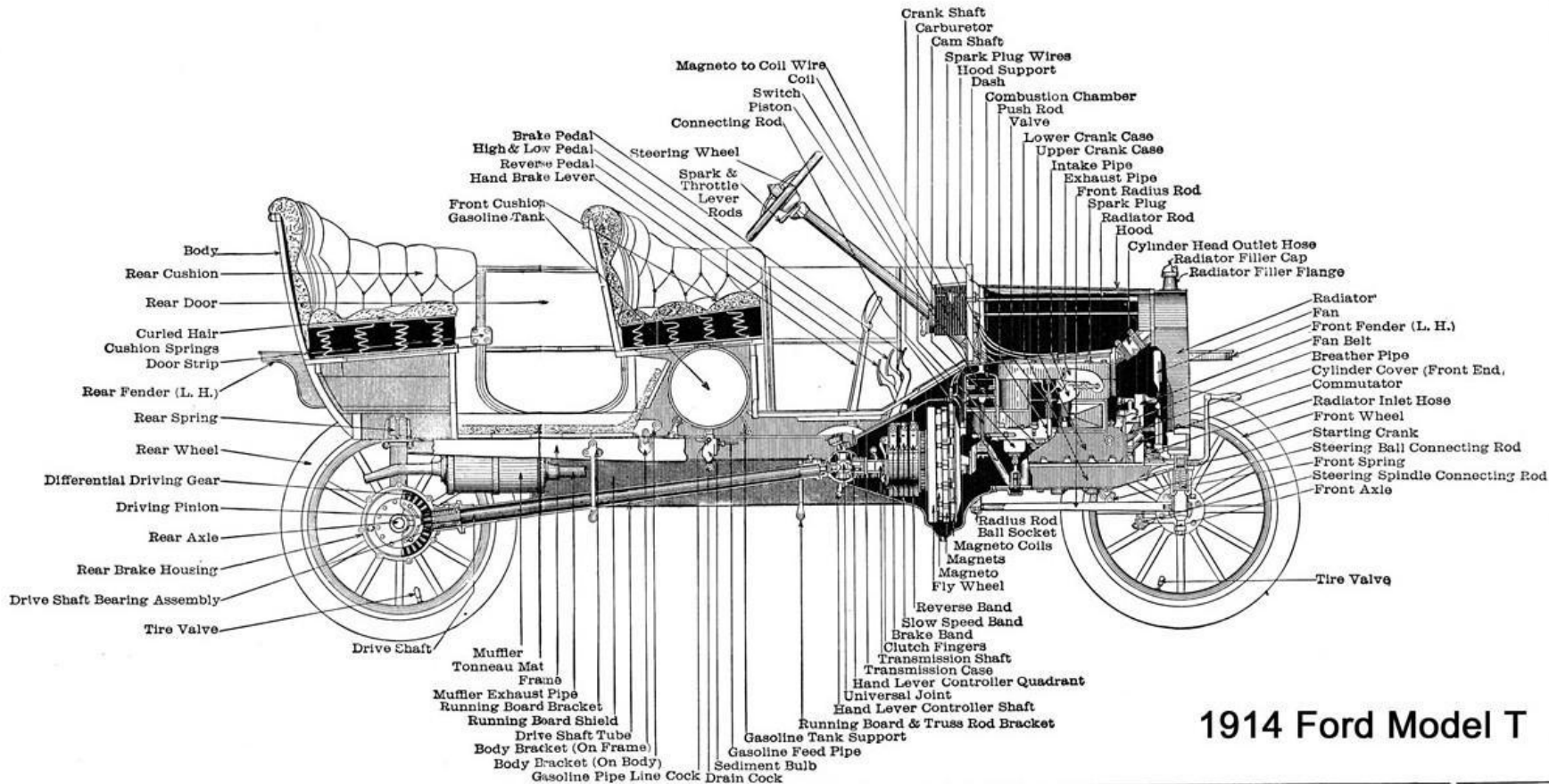
Buy It Because  
It's a Better Car

Model T \$650  
Touring Car  
f.o.b. Ford,  
Ontario

Get particulars from Ford Motor Co. of Canada, Ltd. Ford, Ont.



# Henry Ford and the Model T



# 1914 Ford Model T

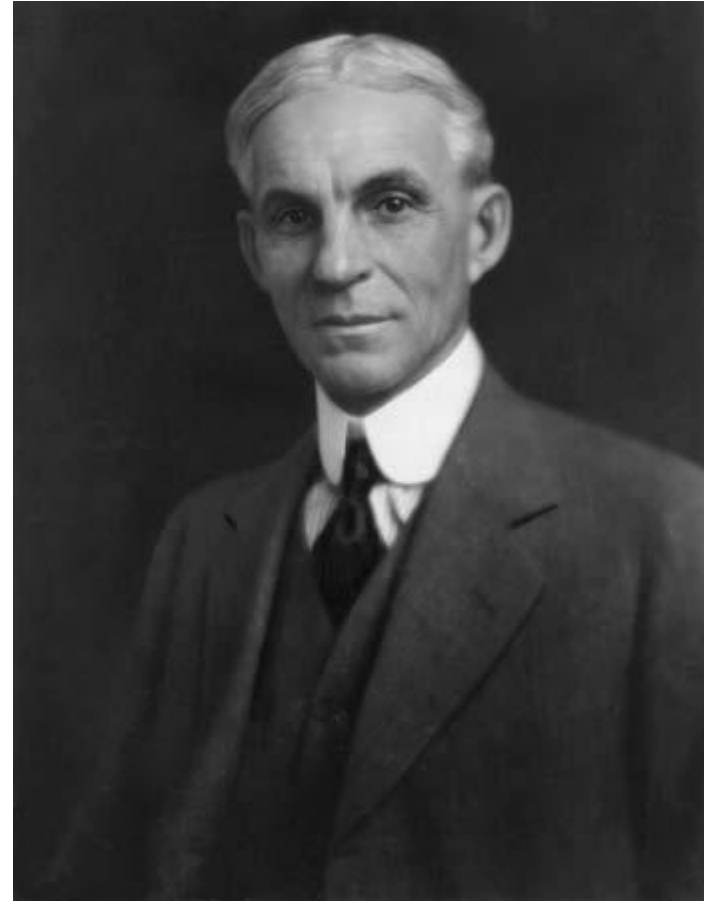
Fig. 468.—Side Sectional View of the Ford Model T Motor Car, the Most Widely Used Automobile in the World.

# Henry Ford

“Henry Ford was born on July 30, 1863 in Dearborn, Michigan and died April 7, 1947 at the age of 83. He was a self-made man who became a world famous American industrialist and the founder of the Ford Motor Company.

He developed an interest in mechanics by taking apart a pocket watch and then earning some pocket money as a watch repairman. His passion for machinery led him to leave the farm in 1879, to work as an apprentice machinist in Detroit city.

In 1896 Henry Ford built his first car - a horseless carriage using a simple frame with an ethanol-powered engine and four bicycle wheels mounted on it. He called his creation the "Quadricycle". Following the commercial success of the Quadricycle he persuaded investors to help him form the Detroit Automobile Company and the Henry Ford Corporation to manufacture automobiles.”



# The Model T

“The Ford Model T, also known as the 'Tin Lizzie', is famous as the first affordable automobile. Gottlieb Daimler built the world's first four-wheeled motor vehicle in 1886 but it was too expensive for most Americans.

Henry Ford made the first inexpensive automobile by producing his Model T car on an assembly line. The first Ford Model T left the Ford Motor Company factory, in Detroit, Michigan, on September 27, 1908. Within ten years over half of all cars sold in America were the Ford Model T.”

The Ford Model T was made in nine different body styles that were built with the same engine and essentially the same chassis. The Ford Model T was the first automobile that was mass-produced on moving assembly lines with completely interchangeable parts.

The colors of the first Model T cars were grey, green, blue, and red – not black. In 1914 Henry Ford reduced costs and durability by using black paint.

The most famous Henry Ford quote, made in a 1909 planning meeting with his production team, was that in the future:

"Any customer can have a car painted any color that he wants, so long as it's black!"



An Assembly Line  
of the  
Ford Motor Company





# Residential Electricity

---

# Before there was Light

“For thousands of years, people all over the world have been fascinated by lightning. Some people must have wondered how to put that kind of power to practical use. But it wasn't until the 18th century that the path to the everyday use of electrical power began to take shape.

Remember American Founding Father and inventor Benjamin Franklin? In 1752, to prove that lightning was electrical, he flew a kite during a thunderstorm.

Throughout the next hundred years, many inventors and scientists tried to find a way to use electrical power to make light. In 1879, the American inventor Thomas Edison was finally able to produce a reliable, long-lasting electric light bulb in his laboratory.

By the end of the 1880s, small electrical stations based on Edison's designs were in a number of U.S. cities. But each station was able to power only a few city blocks.”

# The Spread of Electricity

“Although the majority of people living in larger towns and cities had electricity by 1930, only 10 percent of Americans who lived on farms and in rural areas had electric power. At this time, electric companies were all privately owned and run to make money. These companies argued that it would be too expensive to string miles of electric lines to farms. They also thought farmers were too poor to pay for electric service.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt believed strongly that America's farming areas should have the same access to electricity as cities did. In 1935 the Rural Electric Administration was created to bring electricity to rural areas like the Tennessee Valley.

By 1939 the percentage of rural homes with electricity had risen to 25 percent. The Tennessee Valley Authority also set up the Electric Home and Farm Authority to help farmers buy electric appliances like stoves and washing machines. Farm families of that time found that these helpful electric appliances made their lives much easier.”

Source: <https://www.tvakids.com/electricity/history.htm>



The Tennessee Valley Authority (Source- Youtube)

**Pioneers of Flight:  
Charles Lindbergh  
and Amelia Earhart**

---

# Charles Lindbergh

Lindbergh, Charles Augustus (1902-1974), an American aviator, made the first solo nonstop flight across the Atlantic Ocean on May 20-21, 1927. Other pilots had crossed the Atlantic before him. But Lindbergh was the first person to do it alone nonstop.

Lindbergh's feat gained him immediate, international fame. The press named him "Lucky Lindy" and the "Lone Eagle." Americans and Europeans idolized the shy, slim young man and showered him with honors."



Source: <http://www.charleslinbergh.com/history/>

# Amelia Earhart

“A pioneering aviator and inspirational figure, Amelia Earhart became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean and set many other records throughout her career.

Her disappearance in 1937 during an attempt to circumnavigate the globe devastated admirers across the United States and around the world.

Her public career lasted less than a decade (from 1928 to 1937), but she used her fame to promote two causes dear to her: the advancement of commercial aviation and the advancement of women.”



**Radio**

---



# Early Radio

“Guglielmo Marconi, an Italian inventor, brought electromagnetic waves out of the laboratory and into the world. He began with short-distance broadcasts in his own back yard. In September, 1899, he astounded the world by telegraphing the results of the America's Cup yacht races from a ship at sea to a land-based station in New York. By the end of 1901, Marconi had founded his own commercial wireless company and broadcast the first transatlantic signal.

For a time, wireless broadcasts were limited to coded dots and dashes. But on December 24, 1906, Canadian-born physicist Reginald Fessenden changed that by sending the first long-distance transmission of human voice and music from his station at Brant Rock, Massachusetts.

Entertainment broadcasting began in about 1910. An entertainment broadcasting venture based in Wilkesburg, Pennsylvania, became the first commercial radio station, KDKA, in 1920. The station WWJ, in Detroit, Michigan, also one of the firsts, began commercial broadcasting in the same year.”

# The Golden Age

“The period between the late 1920s and the early 1950s is considered the Golden Age of Radio, in which comedies, dramas, variety shows, game shows, and popular music shows drew millions of listeners across America.

But in the 1950s, with the introduction of television, the Golden Age faded. Still, radio remained a pop-culture force. Developments like stereophonic broadcasting, which began in the 1960s, helped radio maintain its popularity.”



“Will Rogers was born in Oologah, Oklahoma, on November 4, 1879. After performing in Wild West shows as a young man, Rogers broke into vaudeville and then Broadway. His folksy wit and common sense attitude made him one of the most famous actors and authors in the world in the 1920s and '30s.

Will's career broadened beyond the realm of show business, as well. He wrote 4,000 syndicated columns and six books, becoming a prominent radio broadcaster and political commentator. He called politics "the best show in the world" and described Congress as the "national joke factory." His folksy humor and honest, intelligent observations about the government and America earned the respect of the nation.”

# Will Rogers

**Here a few years ago we was so afraid that the poor people were liable to take a drink, that now we're fixed so they can't even get something to eat.**



# **Movies: Silents to Talkies**

---

# The Silent Period: 1895-1929

“The earliest American films, which appeared around 1895, were primarily a working-class pastime. Because they told stories without words, they appealed to the large, mostly illiterate immigrant population in the United States. After 1900, film became a more middle-class phenomenon, as filmmakers exploited film’s storytelling potential by adapting novels for the screen.

Until 1914, the major national film industries resided in Italy, France, and the United States. However, World War I devastated the Italian and French film industries, allowing American producers to gain the upper hand on the global market. The major American production companies pooled their film technology patents and used their patent leverage to impose block booking on exhibitors (movie theater owners), which forced exhibitors to buy lower-quality product along with high-quality product.”

Source: <http://sparkcharts.sparknotes.com/film/film/section4.php>

# The Move to Los Angeles and Hollywood

“From 1907–1913, many production companies moved from New York City to Los Angeles to take advantage of the warm weather that allowed for year-round outdoor production, giving birth to the Hollywood film industry.

The costs associated with vertical integration forced Hollywood studios to seek investment from Wall Street financiers.

This development, along with the industrial modes of production pioneered by Thomas Ince and the bourgeois storytelling conventions introduced by Edwin S. Porter and D. W. Griffith, turned Hollywood into a profit-driven enterprise and its films into commercial commodities.”

# Charlie Chaplin

“Born on April 16, 1889, in London, England, Charlie Chaplin worked with a children's dance troupe before making his mark on the big screen. His character "The Tramp" relied on pantomime and quirky movements to become an iconic figure of the silent-film era. Chaplin went on to become a director, making films such as *City Lights* and *Modern Times*, and co-founded the United Artists Corporation. He died in Corsier-sur-Vevey, Vaud, Switzerland, on December 25, 1977.”





Charlie Chaplin's "The Kid" (1921)





## Hollywood: A Celebration of the American Silent Film

Source: Youtube

# Review

What was the significance of Ford's Model T?

What was the cause of the rising availability of residential electricity?

Who were Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart?

How did radio impact people across the United States?

Describe the advent of movies and early Hollywood.