Introduction of the New Ford Car



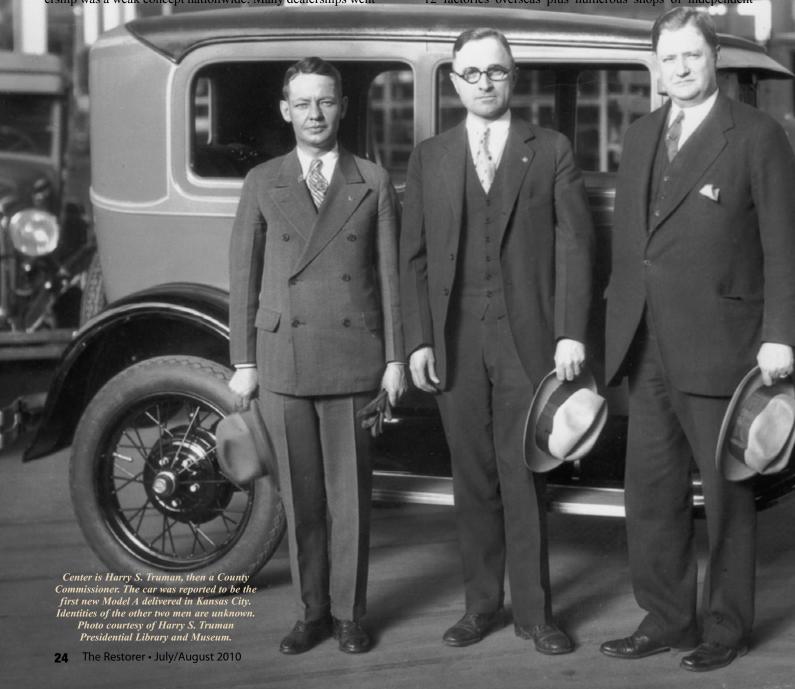
or those who don't know it, the Ford Motor Company discontinued production of the Model T Ford in May 1927. It wasn't until December 2, 1927 that the Model A was released.

When the Ford Motor Company finally set out to introduce the "New Ford," later named the "Model A Ford" it was careful. Ford's plan to enable the widespread announcement and sale of the car on December 2, 1927 fell short of its intended goals. To make this many deliveries from absolutely zero stock was a massive undertaking. Here are a few tales of the introduction of the New Model A Ford.

First, the idea of having a new Ford available at every dealership was a weak concept nationwide. Many dealerships went

months without a car to show and demonstrate. For dealers who had gone without cars since the mid-May stoppage of Model T production, this was truly a rough time to stay in business. Still, some dealers fought to stay in the automobile business. The public response for the new Model A was overwhelming. People would do the darndest things to see and get a hold of the new Ford. Public interest had never been higher for a new product.

Ford's main production plant was the River Rouge (Fordson) plant. In converting it to produce the Model A, plans were made to produce and overhaul some 34 other assembly plants in the United States and Canada. There were also a reported 12 factories overseas plus numerous shops of independent



outside suppliers. Before the end of Model A production, there were 36 domestic (including Canada) plus 17 other plants overseas that assembled Model A's and individual parts for

One of the important actions was the official hand stamping of Model A Ford engine Number 1, on October 20,

1927. Henry Ford stamped that engine himself. The very next day that engine was installed into a Tudor sedan body. Then the car was sent out from Dearborn Laboratories for 10 days of testing and inspection. During this timeframe Ford's





non-operational – waiting for results. Then on November 1, 1927, news went out to start Model A production. At that time production was slow with new Ford's coming off the Dearborn assembly line at a rate of just 20 per day.

Here in Kansas City, like many other larger districts, the new cars were placed in a large public area - in this case, it was at the Kansas City Convention Hall. Shown were the Tudor sedan, Fordor sedan, Roadster, Coupe, Sport Coupe, and the Phaeton. This display of six vehicles demonstrated the new Ford's style, performance and pricing. Dealers had only photographs and other printed materials to show their customers at their own dealerships initially. Hence, with just six cars and hundreds of willing buyers, the rush was on to get one.

The large photo shown on page 24-25 is a 1928 Ford Tudor. It is supposed to be the first Model A delivered in the Kansas City area. The handsome fellow in the middle of the three men is Harry S. Truman, who would become the 34th President of the United States. On this day, he was a younger Jackson County Commissioner. The other two men are not identified, despite our best efforts. Take time to study their correct busi-

Trying to relive the birth of the Model A Ford is a monster project for even a magazine like The Restorer. The details are many more than can be related in this magazine. In my opinion, one of the best publications to cover the topic is titled "The Legendary Model A Ford" by Peter Winnewisser. This book is invaluable to any serious Model A collector and covers the entire production of the Model A. In that book Peter said, "H. C. Doss, manager of the Kansas City Branch, said that he visited every one of his 521 dealers, covering 30,000 miles in about six months. He kept the dealers sold on Ford and what Ford had and would have. He talked to bankers about loans, helped dealers build up their service departments and found ways to encourage them to get rid of non-productive relatives on their payrolls. The result was that he did not lose one dealer because there were no cars to sell."

By late November 1927, each dealer received a portfolio, titled "Introduction of the New Ford Car," with general instructions for the many procedures they were to follow in presenting cars to the public when they became available. They also received a large box containing window posters, banners, showroom display cards, car illustrations and color pictures of the cars. Toward the end of November, branches notified dealers of the location of new car exhibits. Some 2,000 sets of these instructions were produced and one sent to each dealership. All were laden with instructions that the information contained inside was confidential.

The size was something different, too. Each page was measured at 13" wide by 18" tall. There were 26 pages. So there isn't any chance of reprinting them exactly in The Restorer. However, we've reduced them so you can get a feel for the text project. I'm told that three complete sets of this portfolio survive. The one provided here is from our Model A friend, Howard Minners, Bethesda, Maryland.

Crowds were so heavy in Cincinnati that many were turned away, yet total attendance for the day was 296,475. These figures were easily exceeded by Chicago with 514,096 people the first day, and the Kansas City territory, where 651,000 people saw the new car. In the St. Paul territory, cars arrived at the

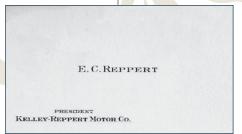
branch the night before the first showing. Some of these then had to be driven as much as 200 miles to their destination in spite of a raging blizzard and a temperature of 18-below-zero.

All the cars arrived on time and showed remarkable performance in traveling over snow-drifted roads.

Time magazine told about one enterprising rascal who took advantage of the crowds and filed along through the crowd with his "order book" in hand. He took orders from those willing to give him the \$25 deposit required. He finally ran away with who knows how many \$25 stuffed into his pockets.

"It's history - what a tremendous reception the Model A had," said C. W. Doss. "In Kansas City they literally broke the doors down to get in before it was time to open to the public. They pushed them right through. You couldn't control that mob. There will never be another introduction like that; never was before. That was the story all over the country. It was tremendous, fabulous. The advance orders on that car were tremendous. They just ran over you to get one."

2,250 cars were sold the day of announcement (December 2, 1927) at Convention Hall. 24,000 people attended the exhibit on Friday and Saturday.

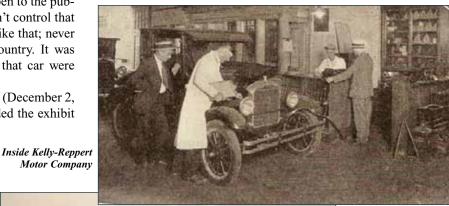


Motor Company

The story of the two Truman photos (one they are wearing their hats and other without them) goes like this. Found long after Mr. Truman's death at the Harry S. Truman Library was a

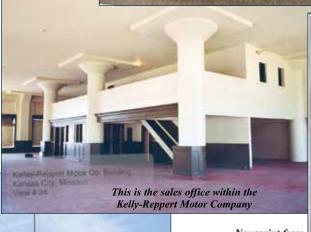
> personal desk that belonged to Mr. Truman. It had a side credenza that was locked and the key was long lost. Sometime later, workers opened the credenza and found the photos. One had the business card of E. C. Reppert, President, Kelley-Reppert Motor Company attached to it. Kelley-Reppert was one of the largest Ford dealers anywhere during the time. Their building still stands at 422 Admiral Street in Kansas

City. The building has been added to the National Historical Registry, but still maintains many of the original features used by Kelley-Reppert.

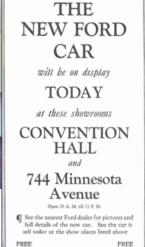




Harry S. Truman with first Model A sold in Kansas City



Newsprint from Kansas City Journal Post on December 2, 1927





Kelley-Reppert Motor Company. The Service Caller Receives Prompt and Courteous Attention. From Ford Dealer & Service Field - January 1928

The photographs with Harry S. Truman and the new Tudor appear to be taken at the Kansas City Ford Plant, 1926 Winchester Ave. It still stands, but today is used for a variety of other storage and manufacturing needs. The only mark of Ford are the letters that still are engraved on the large chimneys.

The Kansas City Ford Plant, 1926 Winchester Ave, KC, MO Photo courtesy of Missouri Valley Special Collections Department, Kansas City Public Library. people," Oreed 'explained, ORDERS IN FOR 2,250 FORD CARS It is Estimated 105,000 Saw

Exhibit of New Autos in Convention Hall

Orders for \$,150 Ford cats, com-ptibling contracts totalling \$1,227,500, have been received almosthe car went on the market Friday morning, it was knoulded fast night by Ford skents.

have been received since the car went on the market Friday morning, it was knowled fast night by Ford agents.

Adds of the orders were received at Convention hall, where the new models have been on display. The plan cope, selling for \$495, f. o. b. Deirolt, led the other models in sales.

Approximately 24,000 persons stituded the exhibit yesterday and last night in Convention hall, bringing the total for Friday knu yesterday to nearly 106,000. The exhibit by the hall closed last night.

It is estimated 20,000 others yisited Ford agencies throughout the city to obtain price lists and other details of the new car.

The cars will be exhibited temorrow at the Town and Country, Motors, Inc., 1421 Modes afreet, and the Ford assembling plant, 1025; Winfehester avenue.

Newsprint from Kansas City Journal Post December 4, 1927

NEW FORD CARS

Six Models To Be On Exhibition for Public Showing in Convention Hall.

The general public will get its first view of the new Ford car to day.

Care will be on display at Convention hall, Thirteenth and Central streets, and at 714 Minnesola sevenue, Kansas City, Kas. The display rooms will be open from 10 o'clock this morning until 11 o'clock to-night.

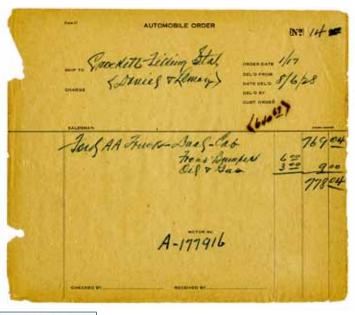
Complete details of the new car may be obtained from any Kyrd desier. The new car is being but out in six models. They are tudes cedan, forder sedan, Fredster, coupe.

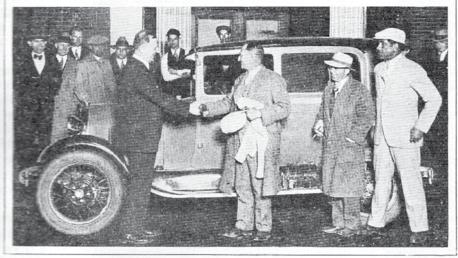
Newsprint from Kansas City Journal Post on December 2, 1927.



Arbuthnot Motor Company, Marysville, Kansas. December 13, 1927

Even small-time dealers, like Arbuthnot Motor Company, paid close attention to Ford Motor Company's instructions. Here the first Model A arrived on December 13 after a wait





E. Capek, manager Los Angeles branch, Ford Motor Company, congratulating Mr. Dahlinger upon his arrive els with the first transcontinental Model A Ford. At right, Arthur II. Vultee, sales manager for Hamlin nes, Inc., Los Angeles Ford dee'ze and Duke Kahamamoku, Hawaiian Olympic and world champion swim.

since December 2 for display. Still the dealership followed many of the instructions set forth in in the Introductions for Sale of the New Ford. Here we see Ford provided signage and pricing. Also, the dealer installed temporary wooden barriers to keep all but the most serious lookers from touching the car. One sign on the wall reads: "Orders will be filled strictly in the order received."

In Crockette, Texas, Daniel T. Lemay, owner of the Crockett Filling Station bought a new Ford AA Truck on January 17, 1928. But it appears that delivery of his truck didn't happen until August 6, 1928. Getting the backlog filled was no small task for Ford.

Will Rogers was one of the most famous Americans at the time the Model A came out.

Many say the first of all the Model A's went to Thomas Edison. However, not everyone can agree that the first Model A went to Edison. For an example, an article in the Ford Dealer & Service Field (March 31, 1931) about movie stars and Ford cars, claims the Beverly Hills Motor Inc., of Beverley Hills, California, delivered the first Model A in the United States to world-famous humorist Will Rogers.

The statement is backed by a telegram, dated December 22, 1927, from Will Rogers and quoted by David Lewis in his column in *Cars & Parts* (October 1981). "Got the car and the first time I have stopped is to write this telegram," it says. "Tell your dad it's my first bribe. But it runs so good it eases my conscience. Proud to have delivery of the first of the second fifteenth million. Next to an airplane, it's the best thing



Crowds of 651,000 in the Kansas City Region See The New Ford

he introduction of the new Ford Cars and Trucks (now known as the Model A) was certainly a series of events that matched military precision. Let's take a look back to examine some of the many issues that factory and dealers had to deal with at the time.

First, remember that Ford stopped production of the Model T's in April of 1927. From there dealers were forced to sell what they had in stock or rely only on used car sales. For most it meant there were long periods of time when they had no new cars to sell. Until the release of the new Ford on December 2, 1927, it was a long dry spell for dealers. Many relied quite a

bit on selling replacement parts for Model T repairs. Some even quit the business.

The media was littered with tales about the new Ford, what it would be like, how fast would it go, the costs, the features. But there was little fact – no photographs or prices through the summer and fall of 1927. Still, Ford enjoyed a faithful clientele, some 125,000 orders were placed for the new Ford before anyone had actually seen one. At the time, the new Ford wasn't even built.

After retooling plants, testing, and so forth, getting the new Ford to market was no small task. Most dealers had no new cars to sell and interest in the new Ford was near a fever pitch. Just how Ford could re-open and supply the largest chain of car dealers anywhere was the task. Still Ford felt it could, so a plan was made to introduce the new Ford to the entire United States on one day – December 2, 1927. It required close planning with much of the strategy confidential or just secret.

To help us learn about this, we rely on a very rare

Ford document. This booklet was more than a brochure – it was huge in size. Most pages were 18" tall by 13" wide. It was wrapped in a heavy Ford blue construction paperThe cover read "LET US MAKE HISTORY WHEN WE INTRODUCE THE NEW FORD CAR." with nothing else to identify it.

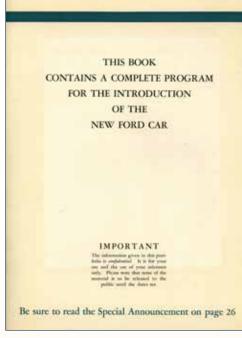
Most of the pages had a header that read, "Introduction of the New Ford Car." As we study this document it may look strange, even to longtime Model A fans. It seems that one copy of this booklet was sent to each Ford dealership (around 2,000). Our belief is that only three survive today. This one was generously donated for this project by Howard Minners,

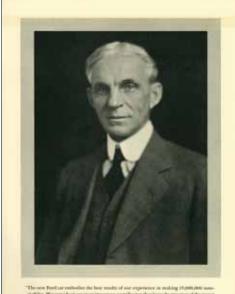
Bethesda, Maryland.

PAGE 1 – Alerting all dealers about the importance of knowing the actual number of people who came to see the New Ford on December 2, 1927, this letter asked that a night letter be sent to Ford with details of what happened.

PAGE 1 – The salient part of this page reads: "The information given in this portfolio is confidential. It is for your use and the use of your salesmen only. Please note that none of the material is to be released to public until the dates set."









PAGE 2 – A large and current photograph of Henry Ford.

PAGE 3 – Important text from Henry Ford. Read it well to understand how the car has survived. Also, note the final paragraph about advertising. Ford was not a big fan of using advertising in the 1920's, but must have seen the light with the introduction of the new Ford. Both Ford and the dealers are encouraged to advertise.

PAGE 4 – Close Co-Operation Needed. "This first showing cannot be handled haphazardly. It will not be the great event it has the right to be if one Ford dealer does one thing and another Ford dealer does another. There must be team-work. There must be co-ordination. There must be close co-operation.

On the following pages of this portfolio, we are given the complete details of the program we want Ford dealers to follow. This program has been worked out with great care. It has been planned with just one idea in view – to help you sell more Ford cars."

PAGES 5-7 – Here's three pages of dated showroom keys to make your plan successful. Tips about window decorations, picking out a man to give the demonstration talk, plan to get prospect's names when they call, put up poster No. 30 in your window, sustain interest by completely covering your windows, invite your present customers and prospects to your official introduction show, make arrangements with your newspaper for your own advertising, be sure your salesmen know every detail of the new Ford car, November 28 - December 2: hang out Ford full-page advertisements in the window, cut out your newspaper ads, be sure every prospect gets a booklet, be sure to display pictures of all types, show the specification chart in a prominent place, use these signs to advertise the features of the new car, place our fifth full-page advertisement in your window.



IMPOSTANT-Be Sure to Read Pages 26 and 27

Use this letter to invite your present customers and prospects to your showroom Friday, Dec. 2

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FORD CAR

How to arrange your showrooms to the best advantage for your introduction show

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FORD CAR

Plan to handle a big crowd

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FORD CAR

is waiting for THE NEW FORD CAR

Get full details here Friday, Dec. 2

PAGE 8 – A Sample Letter. Use this letter to invite your present customers and prospects to your showroom Friday, December 2.

PAGE 9-11 – How to arrange your showrooms to the best advantage for your introduction show.

PAGE 12-13 – Samples of showroom signs that will be mailed to you.

PAGE 14-15 – Product information about the six initial body styles.

PAGE 16 – Prospect list building and "The Story of the New Ford Car" booklet. "Please put these booklets in a safe place and do not bring them

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FORD CAR









INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FORD CAR



INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FORD CAR

These new signs will be the feature of your display















Please do not use these signs before the dates specified

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FORD CAR







Use this card to build up a prospect list

HAVE AT DOOR AS YOU GO OUT

Give this booklet to every visitor at your public introduction



INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FORD CAR

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FORD CAR

This is the demonstration lecture to be delivered

on Friday, Dec. 2, the day the car is introduced

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FORD CAR

Tie up with the full-page advertising placed by the Ford Motor Company

Your local newspaper will set these advertisements in any size you wish to use

All

the

world

is

waiting

for the

NEW

FORD

CAR

Come in

Friday for full details

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FORD CAR

The new FORD

is the most amazing value ever offered in a

LOW PRICE CAR

Get full details at our showrooms this Friday

Use these advertisements to advertise your own agency

The New FORD CAR

Full details to be given at our showrooms this Friday

PARTICIPATION

about the NEW FORD CAR Come to

We will

tell you all

our showroom this Friday



INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FORD CAR

out until Friday, Dec. 2. Under no circumstances are these booklets to be distributed before that day."

PAGES 17-19 – This is the demonstration lecture to be delivered on Friday, Dec 2, the day the car is introduced.

PAGE 20-25 –Tie up with the fullpage advertising placed by the Ford Motor Company. Many sample ads and sizes for your dealership.

PAGE 26-27 – Special suggestions for announcement when you get a new Ford car to show. Not every dealer will have a new Ford car to

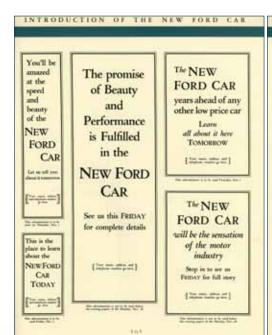
NEW FORD CAR

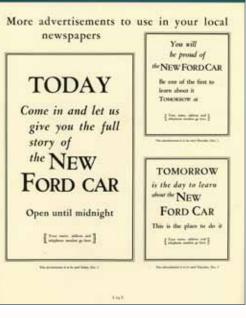
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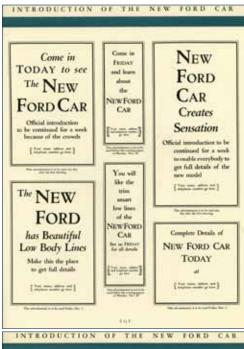
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INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FORD CAR





show on Dec 2. This letter helps you with that. "Observe This Rule to the Letter. If you do not have a car to show, do not tell the public that they can see the car at your showrooms on the day of the official introduction. Tell them to visit your showrooms "for full details" or the "full story" but do not say they can see the car. We insist that this rule be followed because we do not want to mislead the public in any way."

Armed with these instructions and a truly great small car, the Model A Ford was set to score some massive records. It became

one of the most popular cars ever and even today it survives like no other.

Use this advertisement in your local newspapers when you get the car

The new FORD CAR IS HERE

Beautiful new low body lines Choice of four colors 55 to 65 miles an hour Remarkable acceleration 40-horsepower engine Four-wheel brakes Standard, selective gear shift Hydraulic shock absorbers 20 to 30 miles per gallon of gasoline Theft-proof coincidental lock Typical FORD economy and reliability

COME IN AND SEE IT TODAY Arrange for Demonstration

«Time name and address in pr bords.



Franklin D. Roosevelt and his Model A Cabriolet. Roosevelt was governor of New York state at the time. To our knowledge only Presidents Roosevelt and Truman had any involvement with the Model A Ford. Photo courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum.

