

MILESTONE FORDS

By David L. Lewis

Ford missed its first chance to publicize a milestone car, having produced its millionth automobile in 1915 without having been aware of it. The company had yet to learn that milestone cars usually are made, not born, i.e., a certain car in a certain plant is arbitrarily designated as *the* milestone unit.

As the V-8 era approached, however, Ford knew all there was to know about making and promoting milestone cars, having built and publicized far more of them than any other company. The early V-8 era itself produced its full share of vehicles, and Ford capitalized on most of them.

The first milestone V-8 was the one millionth V-8, produced in the Rouge plant on June 20, 1934 as Henry and Edsel Ford looked on. Edsel drove the car off the line to a nearby new-car parking lot. There the Fords, with manufacturing executive Peter E. Martin, posed with the car for cameramen. The vehicle then was driven to Chicago, where it was a feature attraction at the Ford Exhibit at the Century of Progress Exposition.

The twenty-two millionth Ford – a V-8 – was produced on July 14, 1934. “It will not be placed on a pedestal, or sent on a nationwide tour or be fondled and petted by Henry and Edsel Ford,” reported the *Detroit News*. “It will pass quietly into the care of some ordinary citizen.”

Ford Twenty-three Million – also designated as the two millionth V-8 – rolled off the Rouge assembly line on June 13, 1935. As Henry Ford watched the car being completed, he was asked which millionth car gave him his greatest thrill. “The last,” he replied. “But I’m more interested in the one behind it – the 23,000,001 st.” The milestone car was driven to the Ford Exhibit at the California Pacific International Exposition in San Diego.

Ford’s three millionth V-8 was displayed at the Ford Exhibit at the Texas Centennial Exposition in Dallas in 1936; the company’s three millionth truck, also produced in 1936, toured the East, then was displayed at the Great Lakes Exposition in Cleveland and Texas Centennial Exposition.

The twenty-fourth millionth Ford was built sans fanfare. But Ford Twenty-five Million came off the Rouge line on January 18, 1937 in the presence of approximately 100 reporters and photographers, as well as Henry and Edsel Ford. Edsel Ford drove the chromium-wheeled, cream job off the line, with his father beside him and manufac-

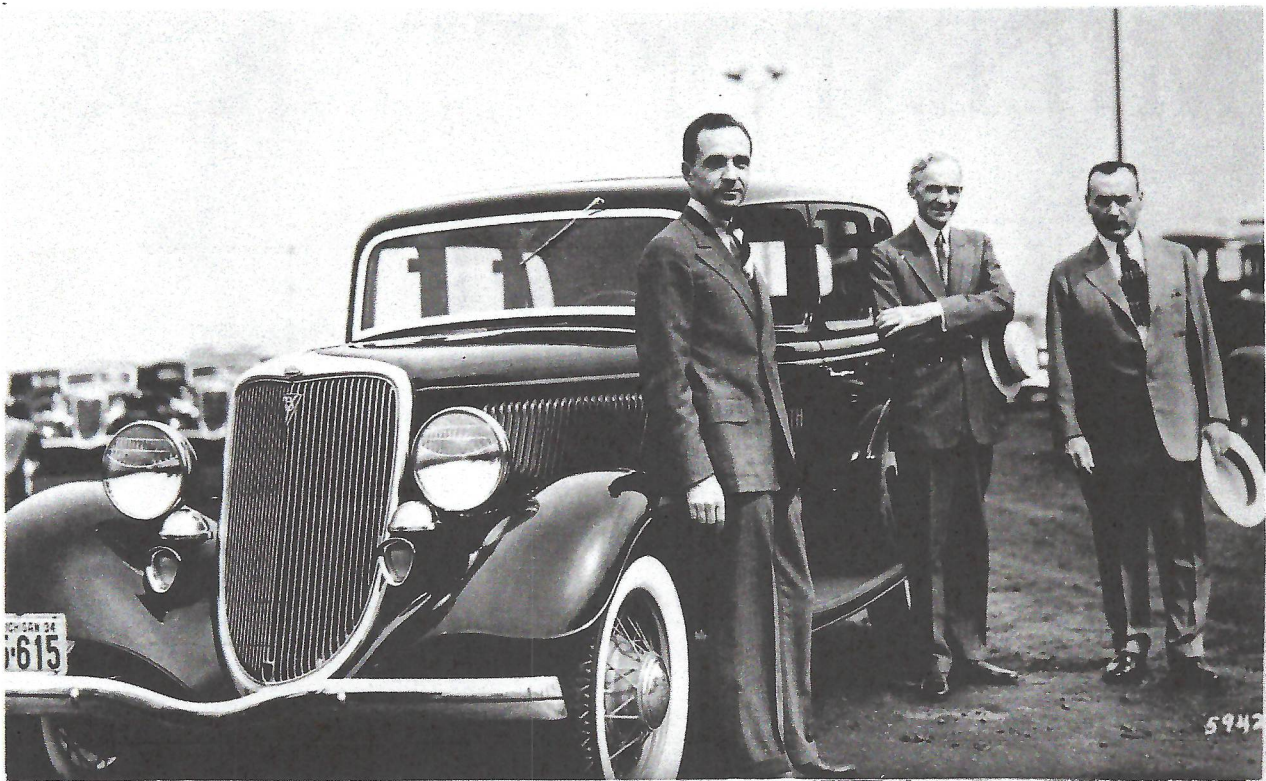
turing officials Martin and Charles E. Sorensen in the rear seat. The car was driven a half-mile to the Ford Rotunda Building, where it was displayed with Henry’s 1896 quadricycle and other milestone Fords. The car later was exhibited at the Ford-Florida Exposition in Miami.

The twenty-six millionth Ford went unheard, but Ford Twenty-seven Million, assembled in Richmond, California, in February, 1939, was promoted to the hilt. After being displayed at the Ford Exhibit at the Golden Gate Exposition in San Francisco, the car was driven to the New York World’s Fair, where it was a feature attraction of “Ford Day,” staged on June 16, the thirty-sixth anniversary of the company’s founding. The car then made its way back to San Francisco. Its logbook showed that more than 400 mayors, 25 governors, and hundreds of prominent citizens, including President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Vice President John Nance Garner, had “inspected” the vehicle.

Ford Twenty-eight Million was built on April 8, 1940 at the Edgewater, New Jersey assembly plant, then driven by Edsel Ford to the Ford Exhibit at the New York World’s Fair. This car was the first milestone Ford to tour Mexico and Canada as well as America, as the company consciously tried “to build up the international aspect and secure all possible publicity along this line.”

Starting from New York, Ford Twenty-eight Million was driven to Washington, where it was examined by Roosevelt and Garner, J. Edgar Hoover, Michigan’s Congressional delegation, and the Canadian minister and Mexican ambassador to the U.S. The car then visited Atlanta, New Orleans, Laredo, Mexico City, San Francisco (where it was a feature of Ford Day), Calgary, Winnipeg, Port Arthur, Windsor, Toronto, Montreal, and New York, where it also was a Ford Day feature. During the 13,000-mile, 68-day tour, the car made 15-minute stops in hundreds of small communities and participated in scores of parades in cities.

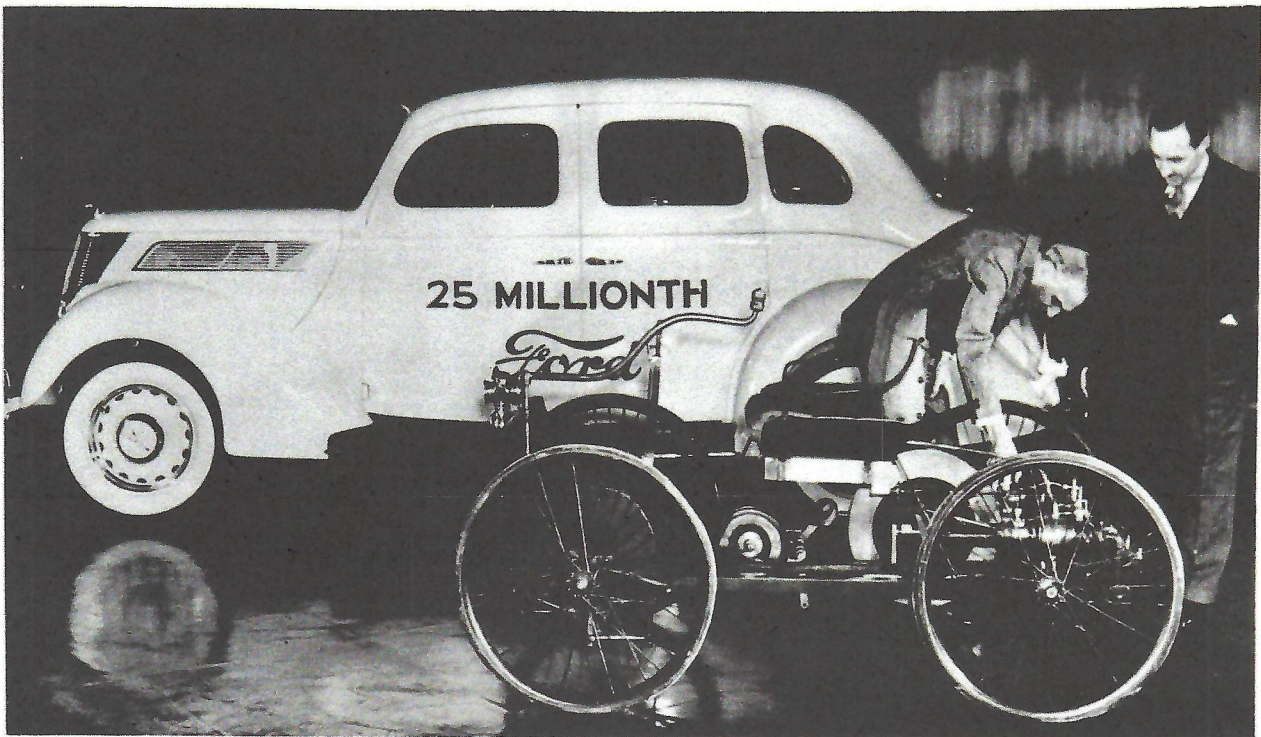
The last of the early V-8 milestone cars, Ford Twenty-nine Million, was the only one not produced in the presence of Henry Ford. Edsel Ford drove the car off the Rouge line, on April 29, 1941, after which he presented the keys to an official of the Red Cross Motor Corps. Ford Thirty Million had to await the post-World War II era.



Henry Ford, center, Edsel Ford, left, and manufacturing executive Peter E. Martin pose with the one millionth V-8, produced in the Rouge plant on June 20, 1934. The vehicle was driven to Chicago, where it was a feature attraction at the Ford Exhibit at the Century of Progress Exposition.



Edsel Ford looks on as the three millionth V-8 rolls off the Rouge plant's assembly line in 1936. The car was displayed at the Texas Centennial Exposition in Dallas.



Henry and Edsel Ford inspect Henry's 1896 "quadricycle" at the Ford Rotunda Building on January 18, 1937, the day Ford Twenty-five Million was produced at the nearby Rouge plant. The twenty-five millionth Ford later was exhibited at the Ford-Florida Exposition in Miami.



Ford Twenty-seven Million is surrounded by feminine pulchritude as it visits Dearborn's Ford Rotunda on its 1939 swing around the country. The Rotunda, until it burned about a decade ago, was an industrial museum and the "gateway to the Rouge" – the starting point for plant tours.



The twenty-eight millionth Ford, which made a 13,000 mile, 68-day tour of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, is greeted in front of the Rotunda Building in Dearborn by Sales Manager Clay Doss, left, Edsel Ford, second from left, and other Ford executives. Driver Jimmy Rooney is second from right.



Edsel Ford, back to camera, presents the keys to the twenty-nine millionth Ford to a Red Cross official on April 29, 1941. Ford Twenty-nine Million, the only milestone station wagon, also was the only V-8 milestone car built without Henry Ford looking on.

