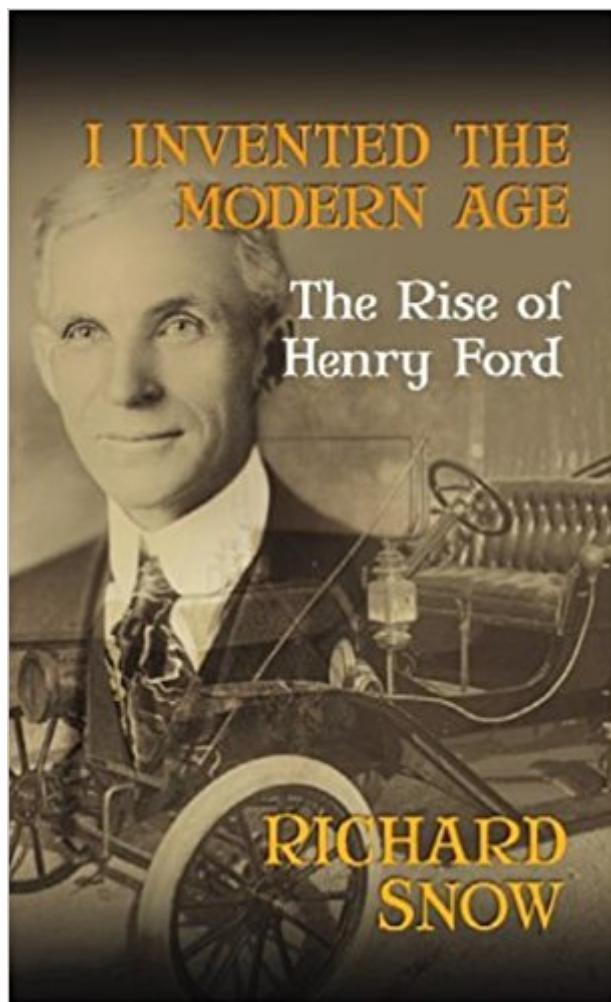


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I Invented The Modern Age: The Rise Of Henry Ford



Synopsis

From an acclaimed popular historian comes a fresh, meticulous, and entertaining account of Henry Ford and his invention of the Model T -- the machine that defined the dawning age in America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Automobile mogul Henry Ford changed drastically during the years his Model T was produced. When in 1927 a funereal-looking Ford personally steered the 15 millionth T out of the factory, few remained of his associates who were present at the creation of the first T in 1908. Gone, too, was Ford's reputation as a progressive industrialist. Opinion about The People's Tycoon (title of Steven Watts' 2005 biography) had nose-dived, and many thought he was an anti-Semite, a woolly-headed pacifist, and an authoritarian businessman, whose iconic car appeared antique-like compared to the competition. To track Ford's metamorphosis, Snow agilely follows Ford's relationship with the mechanical love of his life. During Ford's years of tinkering, which culminated in the Model T, a gregarious, long-limbed Ford lopes through Snow's pages, but he hunches over in ensuing ones, rejecting proposals to change the T en route to becoming an egotistic crank. Snow displays excellent storytelling skill as, stiffening by the years, Ford's character develops through anecdotes and events in a lively narrative sequence that will engross readers curious about Ford and the Model T. --Gilbert Taylor --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

"Stylistically, Snow mimics the marvelously folksy, protean temperament of his subject, dwelling on Ford's early mechanical inventions rather than his latter problematic prickliness, and everywhere portraying a compelling character." ---Kirkus --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

This wonderful book pulls Henry Ford into the present by presenting us with his deep revealing shadow. Richard Snow has chosen to create a picture of Ford that starts in his early life and leads ineluctably to the development of the Model T, which Snow describes convincingly as having invented the modern age. This isn't a new idea of course but what this book does is not only evoke a vivid picture of genius at its peak but it provides the essence of what we gained and lost through Ford's bizarre twists of character. We gained, of course, mass production and the automobile as a transformative force. And with Ford doubling the working man's salary, we also gained a middle class. (The book goes on to report on the brutality Ford later used against his workers, but that early support of the worker was an almost heartbreaking reminder of what is now being lost --US manufacturing and the working middle class.) And we probably also lost the possibility of a global organization right after WWI. The book doesn't shy away from Ford's very weird and destructive anti-Semitism, his ruthless treatment of men who had been indispensable in his rise, nor his damaging and tragic relationship with his son. However, throughout this brilliant book I was periodically reminded of two other men, Steve Jobs and Robert Moses, who were also initially motivated by the desire to change lives for good. All three achieved monstrous changes in the fabric of society by building tangible stuff and overcoming extreme obstacles to do so. In the process, however, all three also underwent crippling psychological changes that made them, somehow, monstrous. To make this point, the important biographers of Jobs and Moses wrote very long books. Snow elegantly and kindly reveals this in far fewer pages. And it reads like a novel. (I hope some smart producer notices that the Selden patent case by itself has enough drama and character to fill a mini-series.) Snow even manages to make machinery thrilling, and this for a reader who doesn't know the difference between a monkey wrench and a monkey. I recommend buying it on the Kindle because at the end you can expand the picture of Henry Ford's face and place your finger on each side of it. You'll know what I mean when you buy this book.

I read this book as 'based on a true story.' The book is about a person named, Henry Ford, a rural bully and power-monger genius, with some car models in the story, mainly the T-model. The book is not about the industrial and social revolution, but the story is presented with the revolution as a backdrop. A lot of the alt-facts and alt-events are anecdotal and the points are not so connected,

and not so easy to compare. The book is easy to read, but sometimes a bit rambling and confusing. Skipping is totally OK, you won't miss something important. If not Ford, most probably other people would have taken the lead and put in place the same social and industrial revolution in USA. The real Henry Ford was not an inventor, or one of a kind scientist like Einstein or a President Roosevelt. Ford didn't invent anything himself, but was a shrewd organizer. He was an entrepreneur of the same type, if not the same style, as Apple's controversial founder or the 'nicer' Bill Gates of Microsoft. The story basically ends 1927 with a some look forwards in the epilogue. The alt-Henry Ford is conflict-prone and megalomaniacal person, who as the years go by becomes a deplorable person. At the end of his Golden Age Ford hires the sailor and bar-room brawler Harry Bennet (an Ernst Röhm type redneck SA/Nazi). Bennet hires 3,000 goons and criminals to terrorize the workers and then Alt-Henry drives his only child into death. In real life, Ford gave away 90% of the company's shares to a charitable foundation (not mentioned in the book). The problem is what to believe. Is the author Richard Snow perfectly informed, fair and unbiased? Or does he have an ax to grind or an agenda? I think so. Comparatively this book is biased and unbalanced. Sometimes the author comes in the way of the story. But it's an OK read, recommended. 3.5 stars.

If you like history, the automobile and manufacturing you will enjoy this book. It is a great history about the Path Henry took to invent a car, build it and get it into mass production. He made mistakes along the way and also took some big risks on big ideas. The part I found most interesting is that his son was actually better qualified to run the business but never allowed to spread his wings. Henry was not the best father and in many respects, not a good man to work for if you had your own ideas.

I listened to this on Audible.com and thought it was very good. I have absolutely no knowledge of automobiles and what makes them run (the internal combustion engine remains a total mystery) but found the author's descriptions of the early engines to be quite accessible and not at all intimidating. The account of the development of the 1st autos and of the early auto industry was fascinating, as was the portrait presented of Henry Ford. The discussion of how Ford's innovations forever changed social history, effectively destroying a way of life that Ford held dear, was also very interesting. So, a book that should not have appealed to me turned out to be a good read; I even recommended it to my sister-in-law as a gift for her husband, who does know a lot about engines and what makes them work.

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