
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

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MODEL T AND THE MIDDLE CLASS

By Charles Krome



Model T helped create Middle Class

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Henry Ford was not the first person to build a modern-day automobile. That credit is usually given to Karl Benz, who patented a “vehicle powered by a gas engine” in Germany, in 1886. But Mr. Benz’ Patent Motor Car hadn’t made much of an impact on this side of the Atlantic by the turn of the century. In 1900, when the U.S. population topped 76 million, only 8,000 motor vehicles were registered. Today, there are about 258 million light-duty vehicles in service for about 323 million people. And the credit for that—and much more, including how those vehicles are produced—goes to Henry Ford and the Model T. In celebration of that iconic car’s 108th birthday (Ford finished the first production of the Model T on August 12, 1908) we look at how Ford shaped the auto industry, as well as the economy.

Indeed, bringing a low-cost, high-quality car to the American public was one of

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Ford's goals right from the start. The Model T, however, marked a tipping point. Introduced in 1908—following Models A, AC, B, C, E, F, K, N, R and S—the original Model T was priced from \$825. Ford sold 12,176 of them during 1909, which was the car's first full year of production. That number surpassed the total number of all vehicles on the road just nine years earlier. Still, the Model T's production process was holding things back. The way Ford removed that obstacle revolutionized not only the auto industry, but industry as a whole.

Many early automobiles—including the early Model T's—leveraged the concept of interchangeable parts for ease of assembly, but usually by having workers move from vehicle to vehicle in what must have been a bit like (barely) controlled chaos.

Henry Ford and a team of experts, drawn from multiple business fields, came together in 1913 with the solution: An assembly-line system in which vehicles were moved through workstations using chains and winches, with employees building each car through a series of simple, repetitive tasks as it moved by.

The first test of the moving assembly line was on the Model T's magneto (part of the car's ignition system). Ford initially divided the magneto-assembly process into 29 tasks, each performed by a single worker, and this cut production time by more than half. Eventually, the time it took to build a magneto went from 15 minutes to five. With changes like that, Ford was able to decrease the time needed to build a Model T from 12.5 hours to about 1.5, and cars were coming off the assembly line every 24 seconds.

The results were startling—and so was the way moving assembly lines changed the world of manufacturing.

That drastic reduction in production time meant an equally steep decrease in production costs, too, assisted by the ability to spread those costs across so many more vehicles. It was another key to Henry Ford's goal, since he passed a significant chunk of those savings onto customers, in the form of reduced prices. The same Model T that had a starting cost of \$825 in 1909 cost \$440 in 1914, after mass production began. That's a 47 percent drop.

During that same five-year span, purchases of the Model T soared more than 2,000 percent, with the company reporting 260,722 deliveries during 1914. By 1923, when the least expensive Model T was \$364, the Ford Motor Company produced a record 2,011,125 vehicles.

As Ford's methods became standard operating procedure throughout the auto industry, overall sales followed the same trend. Sales of passenger cars in the U.S. exceeded 100,000 units for the first time in 1909 and surpassed 1 million deliveries at the end of 1916. Automakers were soon doubling the number—with the Ford Model T accounting for more than a third of the vehicles.

By the time the Ford Model T was replaced with the brand-new Model A after 1927, annual industry sales routinely surpassed 3 million units, and 27.5 million U.S. families—55.7 percent of the total—owned at least one car.

Of course, the story of the Model T's impact goes well beyond the launch of a best-selling consumer product. By becoming the first affordable, mass-produced automobile, the Model T had a big hand in creating modern-day consumers in the first place.

Henry Ford quickly saw the need for a stable workforce for his moving assembly lines, and he believed the best way to achieve that was through his workers' wallets. In 1914, he raised wages to \$5 a day, which was both more than twice his previous rate and \$3 more than the average in the manufacturing industry. Ford also cut his workday from nine to eight hours. In return for the increase in salary, employees had to adhere to some pretty strict "character requirements." Ford "investigators" went to folks' homes making sure standards were being met.

That said—and though Henry Ford wasn't without his prejudices—those requirements didn't extend to skin color or nationality. The automaker opened up relatively high-paying jobs to everyone, including African Americans and recent immigrants, as well as women and other people often shut out of the business world at that time. The Ford Motor Company was a pioneer in providing opportunities for disabled veterans after World War I. Also, the first mosque built in the United States, in 1919 in

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Dearborn, Mich., was erected to serve Detroit-area families who had come searching for work with Ford.

But Ford's influence was not limited to the Motor City. By 1915, there also were Ford branch factories in dozens of other cities across the country.

At the time, the concept behind building a bestselling product like the Model T and combining it with secure employment, a living wage and modern-day production methods was called "Fordism." Nowadays, it's called the basis of the middle class.

Charles Krome currently writes about car buying. He has a particular interest in the role the Model T played in driving "Fordism." He is also a Ford fanatic and writer for CARFAX.

Editor's note: In 1915 my father, James Benzie, bought his first car, a model T, from James Frost a car dealer in Groton for \$515. Henry Ford sold his millionth vehicle that year and just before Christmas my Dad received a \$100 rebate which was almost 20 percent of his annual earnings and a welcomed gift at that time of year. Entrepreneurs were the backbone of the American economy in those days and hopefully they will be able to revive the economy again in the future.



FAMILY HISTORY MONTH

October was Family History Month. Family History Month began back in 2001 as an initiative to promote and celebrate family history research. Senator Orrin Hatch, of Utah, introduced the idea to Congress and explained that the importance of family history research to him is that "by searching for our roots, we come closer together as a human family."

The Groton Historical Society maintains a single Groton Family Record as so many people are included in several different families and this way they can be linked to each of the families they are connected to in the records without repeating individual records. Individual families can be printed out separately with all the individuals that are included in the records for that particular family.

Presently there are 86,749 names in the GHS Family Records master file. Member Reginald Welch is compiling names in a Welch Family file that exceeds 180,000 names, and members George Hall and Stuart Goodwin are working on their family records and frequently adding to the GHS master file. Other members and other relatives of Groton citizens are also adding new names and corrections of errors they have found. With continued help from everyone interested in family history we will be able to correct the errors and make the record more complete.

The Groton families recorded in the first U. S. Census in 1790 were published on the GHS website a number of years ago. All 7 families — Abbott, Bailey, Darling, Hosmer, James, Morse, and Townshend (John Darling's son-in-law, John Townshend, and his son, Robards Darling families were included in the Darling family) — were combined into one report, and individuals that were in more than one family had a different number in each family causing some confusion. Plans are now being made to publish families separately and update the records with new additions and corrections. Additional families in the 1800 and subsequent censuses will be added individually in the future.

GROTON VILLAGE HISTORY WALK

Lead by Erik Volk on Fall Foliage Day 2016

(see map and pictures on pages 8—9)

1 Peter Paul House – Built in 1840 By Peter Paul. It was occupied by Paul descendants for more than a century. Since 1989 home of the Groton Historical Society.

2 Millis House - (no picture) Originally built as a blacksmith shop and used by Selden H. Minard in the latter part of the 1800s. Later, George Millis had it remodeled as a residence in 1900.

3 New Blacksmith Shop - Built by Groton Timberworks during Fall Foliage Day in 2000 demonstrating Timber Framing, and those attending actually helped erect the Timber Frame.

4 Old Post Office. Built in 1925 by Postmaster George Millis. The lower floor had George Knox Poolroom, Mrs. Maude Lentz's Lunch Room, Charles Lord's printing office and the Town Clerks Office at different times.

5 Agricultural School Foundation (no picture) - Originally a blacksmith shop, it was remodeled for a classroom in the 1940s. The forge was kept and a woodworking shop added and was used by Groton High School Agriculture students until the community building was completed.

6 Dimick's Garage - Built in 1930s by Ulric L. Legare on the site of former Coffrin Block that burned in 1925. George Dimick owned and operated the service station from the 1940s until his death in 1968. Carwin Page operated it later followed by others.

7 Brown's Meat Market - Built by Burt Brown in the late 1920s and operated by him until his death in 1962.

8 Morrison House - (no picture) Harry and Bessie (Blanchard) Morrison resided here. They also owned Morrison Hall which she rented for Town Meetings, sporting events, school plays and many other community functions after Harry's death in 1936.

9 Ricker House - Built by Edmund D. Ricker in the early 1900s. He owned E. D. Ricker & Son IGA grocery market (#18) with his son Carroll.

10 Central Telephone Office - The Molly Falls Telephone Company central office was located here and chief operator was Linnie (Johnson) Freer in 1930s and 40s.

11 Full Gospel Mission - A Christian mission by Irving Moulton was on this location. Later Gerald and Gladys (Hooper) Smith had a convenience store and snack bar in the late 1940s and 50's. This building and Shell gas station next door were destroyed by fire.

12 Atlantic Service Station - Operated by Richard Daniels 59-63, Les Avery 64-65, Paul Tinkham 66, and Del Hamlett 67. Now Veteran's Park with the new bandstand and playground.

13 Old Bandstand—(no picture) Bandstand built for McLure's Student Band to perform summer concerts in the 1930's and 40's. Now a parking lot.

14 White's Store - Remodeled by John R. Darling (who moved his business from the old Hall & Cochrane Store later Pillsbury Millinery # 24) in 1895. John White purchased the store in the early 1900s and operated it as J.K. White & Son until his death and later by his son, P.T.. Later operated by others as Groton General Store.

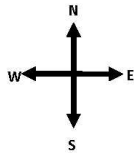
15 Goodine House - Residence of Charles Lord. He left it to his daughter Alice who married Henry Goodine and lived here for many years. Alice had a restaurant in the Weed's Hotel (# 19) called Henry's Diner and Henry had a barber shop there as well. A corsetry store was also run out of this building earlier.

16 Darling House - (no picture) Residence of Ellsworth Darling for many years. It also included a large barn to the east of the house. Later converted to a Mortuary by Carroll Ricker.

17 Ricker Mortuary - Originally the barn of Darling House.



Groton Historical Society Historical Tour (Central Village)



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Minard Hill Road

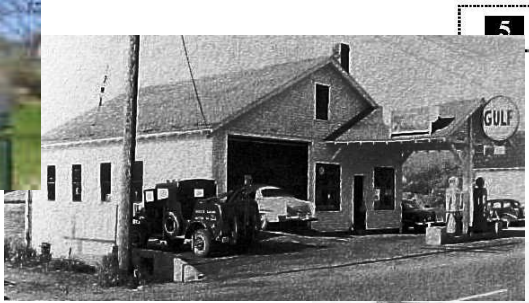


William Scott Memorial Highway (Route 302)

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18 Ricker's IGA Store - Operated by E.D. Ricker & Son for many years. Later purchased by N. Gordon McLam and continued to be operated as an IGA. It has also been an antique store and bakery. Now demolished.

19 Station Hotel/Weed's Hotel - Demolished in 1970s for the Post Office parking lot. Called the Station Hotel in the 1870's which was used by many train travelers. Later became the Weed's Hotel. In the 1930's, Suzanne Hanson had a variety store in this building and Henry Goodine had a pool room and barber shop. Alice (Lord) Goodine later ran a variety store and snack bar at this building.

20-Livery Stable – Operated by George Welch when he owned the Groton Hotel (#21) operated by his wife, Goldie.

21 Groton Hotel – Early hotel later used as a Boarding House by Goldie (Hutchins) Welch, It was purchased by Carroll Ricker and demolished to build the Post Office in 1950.

22-Blanchard's Store – A general merchandise store operated by Lee Blanchard for many years. Later, occupied by the Farm Machine Exchange, and later Tunbridge Tables. The building burned in 1967 and a Bank building was later erected here. It is now used as a residence.

23-Clark House - Built for Benjamin Franklin Clark in 1895 who lived here a few years before his death in 1898. In the late 30's and 40's Everett Willey lived here with his wife Anna. His sister, Lena and her husband Walter Fletcher boarded with them when he was teaching at Groton High School. The building burned in 1977 and a log dwelling is now on the site.

24-Pillsbury Millinery - Used as a store by many including Peter Paul, Hosea Welch II, and J.R. Darling & Sons. After Darling moved his store to his new remodeled location (#14) in 1895, Mr. and Mrs. George H. Pillsbury operated a millinery and gift shop which they moved from the Coffrin Block. The building now has residential apartments.

THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

From the Pilgrim Edward Doty Newsletter November 2016

Thanksgiving is the quintessential American holiday, and for many of us, our favorite. Partly, this is because of the legend of the first Thanksgiving that we recount each year. This legend - although historically questionable - is filled with colorful imagery. What really happened at the first Thanksgiving, though? Historians give us some idea.

It was September 1620. The voyage of the *Mayflower* to the New World had suffered setbacks and delays, and so it was launching late in the year. After a long, turbulent ocean voyage, the Pilgrims landed in Cape Cod Harbor in November. But, they did not settle in the cold wilderness that they called "Plymouth" until late December.

Things continued to go badly for them. They did not have time to build adequate shelter, much less to plant crops. All of the passengers were debilitated: By spring, half of them were dead, mostly from exposure and disease. Of 102 passengers, only 53 remained alive by the following autumn.

Relations with the local Wampanoag tribe had a rocky start, almost all the fault of the Pilgrims. But, thanks to intervention by Squanto, a Native American who spoke English, by March the Pilgrims had made peace with Massasoit, the Wampanoag chief. Squanto had been captured previously and had spent five years in London. What good luck for the Pilgrims! Many historians believe that without Squanto, the colony would have perished. His bust is in Pilgrim Hall Museum.

Despite suffering tremendous personal losses, the remaining Pilgrims put their trust in God and held on. It probably helped the community

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that no other ships arrived, so nobody could leave. With further help from Squanto, things turned around.

These colonists were accustomed to celebrating “thanksgivings” - days of rejoicing for God’s blessings. We call the Autumn 1621 feast the “First Thanksgiving”, although the Pilgrims probably did not think of it as that.

Here is Edward Winslow’s firsthand account of the feast: *“[O]ur harvest being gotten in, our governour sent foure men on fowling , that so we might after a special manner rejoyce together, after we had gathered the fruits of our labours; they foure in one day killed as much fowle, as with a little help beside, served the Company almost a weeke, at which time amongst other Recreations, we exercised our Armes, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their greatest king Massasoyt, with some nintie men, whom for three dayes we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deere, which they brought to the Plantation and bestowed on our Governour, and upon the Captaine and others. And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so farre from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.”*

Historians are certain that wildfowl and Indian corn, as grain for bread or porridge, were on the table. Indian corn (aka “flint corn”) is a hard, colorful corn; these days we use it as holiday decoration. But, other commonly hunted and harvested foods were likely to be there, too. The table was laden with meat, meat, and more meat - the Pilgrims did not know about food groups! Venison (deer, rabbits, and other small game), geese, and ducks were preferred. Wild turkeys, swans, and pigeons were also eaten. Plus, eels, fish, and shellfish (including lobsters, clams, and mussels). Besides Indian corn, beans and squash (including pumpkins) were eaten regularly. NO potatoes, NO cranberries (yet), NO wheat for bread or pastry. And little beer: They drank water at meals, mostly.

THE RELUCTANT PRESIDENT

Excerpt of article by Ron Chernow in Smithsonian Magazine,
February 2011

On February 4, 1789, the 69 Electoral College members made George Washington the only chief executive to be unanimously elected. Congress was supposed to make it official in March but could not muster a quorum until April. The reason—bad roads—suggests the condition of the country he would lead.

The Congressional delay in certifying George Washington's election as president only allowed more time for doubts to fester as he considered the herculean task ahead. He savored his wait as a welcome "reprieve," he told his former comrade in arms and future Secretary of War Henry Knox, adding that his "movements to the chair of government will be accompanied with feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution." His "peaceful abode" at Mount Vernon, his fears that he lacked the requisite skills for the presidency, the "ocean of difficulties" facing the country—all gave him pause on the eve of his momentous trip to New York.

The day after Congress counted the electoral votes, declaring Washington the first president, Charles Thomson, the secretary of Congress, was sent to bear the official announcement to Mount Vernon. He couldn't have relished the trying journey to Virginia, which was much impeded by tempestuous weather, bad roads, and the many large rivers he had to cross. Yet he rejoiced that the new president would be Washington, whom he venerated as someone singled out by Providence to be "the savior and father" of the country. Having known Thomson since the Continental Congress, Washington esteemed him as a faithful public servant and exemplary patriot.

Thomson and Washington conducted a stiff verbal minuet, each reading from prepared statements. Thomson began "I am honored with the commands of the Senate to wait upon your Excellency with the information of your being elected to the office of President of the United States of America" by a unanimous vote. He read aloud a letter from Senator John Langdon of New Hampshire,

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president pro tempore. “Suffer me, sir, to indulge the hope that so auspicious a mark of public confidence will meet your approbation and be considered as a sure pledge of the affection and support you are to expect from a free and enlightened people.” There was something deferential, even slightly servile, in Langdon’s tone, as if he feared that Washington might renege on his promise and refuse to take the job. Thus was greatness once again thrust upon George Washington.

Because the vote counting had been long delayed, Washington, 57, felt the crush of upcoming public business and decided to set out promptly for New York, accompanied in his elegant carriage by Thomson and aide David Humphreys. His diary entry conveys a sense of foreboding: “About ten o’clock, I bade adieu to Mount Vernon, to private life, and to domestic felicity and, with a mind oppressed with more anxious and painful sensations than I have words to express, set out for New York...with the best dispositions to render service to my country in obedience to its call, but with less hope of answering its expectations.”

Determined to travel rapidly, Washington and his entourage set out each day at sunrise and put in a full day on the road. Along the way he hoped to keep ceremonial distractions to a minimum, but he was soon disabused: eight exhausting days of festivities lay ahead. Townspeople along the way celebrated his arrival at Alexandria, Wilmington, Philadelphia, where he was asked to mount a white horse for his entry, Trenton, Elizabethtown, and New York.

In the first line of his inaugural address, Washington expressed anxiety about his fitness for the presidency, saying that “no event could have filled me with greater anxieties” than the news brought by Charles Thomson. He had grown despondent, he said candidly, as he considered his own “inferior endowments from nature” and his lack of practice in civil government. He drew comfort, however, from the fact that the “Almighty Being” had overseen America’s birth. “No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the affairs of men, more than the people of the United States.”

GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Visit GHS on the internet

Web page: grotonvthistory.org

Email: grotonvthistory@gmail.com

Facebook@[grotonvthistory](https://www.facebook.com/grotonvthistory)

2017 Annual Memberships are due January first. The last year your membership dues were paid is listed on the mailing label.

Currently GHS membership status is as follows:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Individual</u>	<u>Family</u>	<u>Total</u>
Life Members	29	11	40
Annual Members			
Paid in advance	3	2	5
Paid through 2016	45	12	57
Paid through 2015	6	1	7
Lapsed Members*			
Paid through 2014	1	0	1
<u>Dropped Members*</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>14</u>
Total	95	27	124

*Lapsed members will be dropped at the end of the year and Dropped members need to be reinstated.

The Groton Historical Society is committed to connecting members and potential members to the Town's story of people, places and things. An updated inventory of donated items is being prepared with names, dates and descriptions to help visitors learn more about our museum and library collections at the Peter Paul House. We strive to connect Groton's past with the present to ensure a shared future. Many find connections with their family history that makes them feel a greater part of the Town's, State's, Nation's and World's complex story. Presently there are 86,749 names in the Groton Historical Society Family Records connecting people within and between families, including some ancestors and descendants who have never been to Groton.

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