



Record Group Structure for

**HENRY FORD AND FORD FAMILY PAPERS,
1773-1955 (bulk 1914-1950)**

Catalog Number RG 002

Finding Aid Published: February 2012



Electronic conversion of this finding aid was funded by a grant from the Detroit Area Library Network (DALNET) <http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us>



20900 Oakwood Boulevard · Dearborn, MI 48124-5029
research.center@thehenryford.org · www.thehenryford.org

OVERVIEW

REPOSITORY: Benson Ford Research Center
The Henry Ford
20900 Oakwood Blvd
Dearborn, MI 48124-5029
www.thehenryford.org
research.center@thehenryford.org

CATALOG NUMBER: RG 002

CREATOR: Ford, Henry, 1863-1947

TITLE: Henry Ford and Ford family papers

INCLUSIVE DATES: 1773-1955

BULK DATES 1915-1950

QUANTITY: 163.4 cubic ft., 18 oversize boxes, 29 card files,
6 volumes, and 1 oversize folder.

LANGUAGE: The materials are in English.

ABSTRACT: This document presents an overview of the Henry Ford and Ford Family record group. A record group is an assemblage of accessions that were created by the same person(s) or organization(s). The separate accessions comprising the collection have their own finding aids, which contain more detailed description of the material.

Finding aids can be accessed through the Benson Ford Research Center online catalog at:
<http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford>

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

ACCESS RESTRICTIONS: The records are open for research

COPYRIGHT: Copyright has been transferred to the Henry Ford by the donor. Copyright for some items in the collection may still be held by their respective creator(s).

ACQUISITION: The bulk of the papers were donated by the Ford Motor Company Archives in 1964

PREFERRED CITATION: Catalog number RG 002, Henry Ford and Ford family papers, Benson Ford Research Center, The Henry Ford

Note: when citing material from the individual accessions use the preferred citation found in the accession finding aid.

PROCESSING INFORMATION: See individual accession finding aids for processing information.

DESCRIPTION INFORMATION: Finding aid written by staff of the Benson Ford Research Center, February 2012.

Finding aid prepared using Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS) and local guidelines

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Industrialist and philanthropist Henry Ford, born July 30, 1863, grew up on a farm in what is now Dearborn, Michigan. Mechanically inclined from an early age, he worked in Detroit machine shops as a young man and became an engineer at the Edison Illuminating Company in 1891. Henry and Clara Jane Bryant, married in 1888, had one child, Edsel, born in 1893. In that same year, Henry tested his first internal combustion engine, and by 1896 completed his first car, the Quadricycle. Ford partnered in two attempts to manufacture automobiles, Detroit Automobile Company and Henry Ford Company, before the Ford Motor Company was incorporated in 1903 with Henry as vice-president and chief engineer. In 1906 he became company president, and in 1908 he introduced the immediately popular Ford Model T. To meet growing demand, the company opened an innovative factory in 1909 in Highland Park, Michigan. At Highland Park, Ford combined precision manufacturing with the utilization of interchangeable parts and a division of labor; the continuous moving automotive assembly line was instituted in 1913. Three years later, construction of the company's next factory was begun on the banks of the Rouge River in Dearborn. It would be the world's largest industrial complex, a plant characterizing Henry Ford's ideas of mass production. All the elements needed for production, from refining raw materials to final assembly of the automobile, took place at the Rouge Plant.

Both Henry and Clara Ford had wide-ranging interests, particularly in areas of historic preservation, education, and community health. Their Dearborn Fair Lane Estate, built in 1915, reflected a love of the natural world and was declared a National Historic Site in 1967. In addition to Fair Lane Estate, Henry and Clara Ford owned properties for personal and business-related purposes in numerous states, including Georgia, Massachusetts, Florida, Tennessee, Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia. Richmond Hill was a winter residence, where the Fords also focused on improving community life, schools, and medical care, while working toward increased agricultural productivity. The Wayside Inn in Sudbury, Massachusetts, America's oldest inn, was purchased and restored by Henry Ford in 1923, along with 2,487 additional acres acquired to preserve the Inn's natural setting. In Tennessee, Ford purchased land abridging his coal mines specifically to donate to Lincoln Memorial University. In 1923 Ford purchased the northern Michigan lumbering town of Pequaming complete with three churches, schools, a town hall, a hotel, a powerhouse, sawmill, docks, tugs, and eighty-five houses.

Edsel Bryant Ford died at his home in Grosse Pointe, Michigan on May 26, 1943 at age forty-nine; Henry Ford died at his home in Dearborn, Michigan on April 7, 1947 at age eighty-three; Clara Bryant Ford died at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, Michigan on September 29, 1950 at age eighty-four.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers are comprised of three subgroups covering the years 1773 to 1955: the Fair Lane papers subgroup, Ford Properties subgroup, and Estate records subgroup. Researchers should note there is much overlap in subject matter among most of the series.

There are summary records for each subgroup in the Benson Ford Research Center online library catalog. If a finding aid exists in electronic format, a link is provided to the online finding aid.

Use the following link to access the Research Center online catalog:

<http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford>

The **Fair Lane papers subgroup**, Accession 1, documents every aspect of the Fords' private, public, and business lives with family documents dating as far back as 1835. The papers are organized into three series. The **Personal and Family papers series**, 1835-1950 (47.2 cubic ft. and 2 card files), consists of biographical and personal materials relating to members of the Ford family; the Fair Lane mansion and other Ford residences; family legal and financial materials; social correspondence; materials which document family activities; and files on various subjects of personal interest to the Fords. The **Public Affairs materials series**, 1917-1945 (18.8 cubic ft.), includes documentation on a number of Ford activities and initiatives which were of a highly visible and public nature. These include newspaper publishing, education, restoration, collecting, pacifism, philanthropy, politics, radio broadcasting, music and dancing. The **Business Affairs materials series**, 1897-1955 (7.2 cubic ft.), is comprised of two subseries, Automotive Businesses and Non-Automotive Businesses and Enterprises. The first includes materials on each of the automobile manufacturing companies in which Henry Ford was involved. The second consists of material on a number of other business ventures, such as Detroit, Toledo, and Ironton Railroad and Henry Ford Hospital. In addition, 11 oversize boxes hold material related to each of the three series, including awards and tributes to Henry and Clara Ford; scrapbook pages; sketches and drawings; genealogical and family history documents; greeting cards; and business records.

The **Ford Properties subgroup**, while representing only a fraction of Ford-owned properties, serves as an adjunct to property-related material in the Fair Lane subgroup. The subgroup is organized into five series. The **Wayside Inn records series**, 1890-1945 (15.6 cubic ft.), Acc. 111, includes documentation of the history of the Inn and its original owners, the Howe family; its purchase by Henry Ford in 1923; the restoration and renovation process; material relating to the Inn's operation; diaries maintained for schools and shops; and papers relating to the nursery rhyme "Mary Had a Little Lamb." The **Richmond Hill Plantation records series**, 1773-1954 (1.6 cubic ft.), Acc. 97, documents the history of the Richmond Hill region, including Fort McAllister, as well as daily activities of the Georgia operations, primarily between 1940 and 1951. The series entitled **Ford Farms, Pequaming and Fair Lane records**, 1914-1935 (1 volume and 1 oversize folder), Acc. 93, is comprised of architectural drawings and photographs. It

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE continued:

includes an oversize photograph album of the town of Pequaming, Michigan; four ink on linen drawings of the Fair Lane entrance gates and lodge; and twenty blueline prints of Henry Ford Farms in Dearborn, Michigan. The **Jens Jensen Drawings series**, 1914-1921 (1 cubic ft. and 1 oversize box), Acc. 797, is a set of thirty landscape architectural prints prepared for the Fair Lane property. The **Lincoln Memorial University records series**, 1925-1933 (0.4 cubic ft.), Acc. 557, includes a copy of the warranty deed, printed material, and construction specifications relating to the university.

The **Estate records subgroup** primarily contains material pertaining to the estate of Henry and Clara Ford after Clara's death, including documents accumulated earlier having a bearing on the liquidation of the estate. There are five series in the subgroup. The **Henry Ford Fair Lane Office records series**, 1895-1951 (0.8 cubic ft.), Acc. 384 and Acc. 844, consists of correspondence, financial papers, expense reports, and legal papers once maintained by Leslie J. Thompson, manager of accounts at the Ford estate. Records document a variety of Ford family activities, most significantly properties, yachts, travel, and charitable contributions. The **Office of Clara Ford records series**, 1918-1934 (6.4 cubic ft.), Acc. 290, are similarly related to Ford financial activities and are comprised of cancelled checks, disbursing vouchers, receipts, bank statements, and deposit slips. The **Office of Henry and Clara Ford Estate records series**, 1832-1955 (62.4 cubic ft., 4 oversize boxes, 27 card files, and 5 volumes), Acc. 587, consists of tax returns, deeds, titles, abstracts, purchase records property descriptions, and vouchers. The records, maintained during the dissolution of the estate after Clara's death, also include Henry Ford personal correspondence, some Ford Motor Company documentation, as well as material on the Edison Institute schools, Ford dance parties, the Ford cemetery, and various other topics relating to Henry and Clara Ford's personal and business interests. Closely related is the **Clara Ford Estate records series**, 1947-1955 (2 cubic ft. and 1 card file), Acc. 588, which includes disbursement files, cancelled checks, claims on the estate and sympathy cards. The **Memorials series**, 1943-1955 (3.4 cubic ft. and 2 oversize boxes), Acc. 1136 and Acc. 1390, is comprised of condolence letters, testimonials and bound remembrances of Edsel B. Ford and bound memorials and prayers in remembrance of Henry and Clara J. Ford. Throughout this and other collections, Clara Ford is referred to as both Clara J. Ford and Clara B. Ford, reflecting her middle name of Josephine and her maiden name of Bryant.

ARRANGEMENT

The papers are arranged into three subgroups and a number of series:

- 1) Fair Lane papers subgroup (Accession 1)
 - Personal and family papers series, 1835-1950
 - Public Affairs materials series, 1917-1945
 - Business Affairs materials series, 1897-1955

Link to finding aid in pdf format:

http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford/docs/FairLanePapersSubgroup_Accession1.pdf

- 2) Ford Properties subgroup

Wayside Inn records series, 1890-1945 (Accession 111)

Link to finding aid in pdf format:

http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford/docs/WaysideInnRecordsSeries_Accession111.pdf

Richmond Hill Plantation records series, 1773-1954 (Accession 97)

Link to finding aid in pdf format:

http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford/docs/RichmondHillPlantationRecordsSeries_Accession97.pdf

Ford Farms, Pequaming, and Fair Lane records series, 1914-1935, (Accession 93)

Link to finding aid in pdf format:

http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford/docs/FordFarmsPequamingFairLaneRecordsSeries_Accession93.pdf

Jens Jensen drawings series, 1914-1921 (Accession 797)

Link to finding aid in pdf format:

http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford/docs/JensJensenDrawingsSeries_Accession797.pdf

Lincoln Memorial Univ. records series, 1925-1933 (Accession 557)

Link to finding aid in pdf format:

http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford/docs/LincolnMemorialUniversityRecordsSeries_Accession557.pdf

- 3) Estate Records subgroup

Henry Ford Fair Lane Office records series, 1895-1951 (SE002: Accession 384 and Accession 844)

Link to finding aid in pdf format:

http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford/docs/HenryFordFairLaneOfficeRecordsSeries_AccessionSE002.pdf

ARRANGEMENT continued:

Office of Clara Ford records series, 1918-1934 (Accession 290)

Link to finding aid in pdf format:

http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford/docs/OfficeOfClaraFordRecordsSeries_Accession290.pdf

Office of Henry Ford and Clara Ford Estate records series, 1832-1955 (Accession 587)

Link to finding aid in pdf format:

http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford/docs/OfficeOfHenryFordAndClaraFordEstateRecordsSeries_Accession587.pdf

Clara Ford Estate records series, 1947-1955 (Accession 588)

Link to finding aid in pdf format:

http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford/docs/ClaraFordEstateRecordsSeries_Accession588.pdf

Memorials series, 1943-1955

Henry and Clara Ford Memorial subseries (Accession 1136)

Link to finding aid in pdf format:

http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford/docs/HenryAndClaraFordMemorialsSubseries_Accession1136.pdf

Edsel Ford in Memoriam subseries (Accession 1390)

Link to finding aid in pdf format:

http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/henryford/docs/EdselFordInMemoriamSubseries_Accession1390.pdf

SUBJECT TERMS

Names, Personal and Corporate

Ford, Henry, 1863-1947

Ford, Clara Bryant, 1866-1950

Ford, Edsel, 1893-1943

Ford family

Ford Motor Company. Office of Henry Ford.

Ford Motor Company--History.