

# Model T Ford Serial Numbers

NEW LIGHT ON ONE OF THE MOST CONFUSING FACETS OF FORD HISTORY  
BASED ON INFORMATION GATHERED AT THE FORD ARCHIVES, DEARBORN, MICHIGAN

(A reprint of an article which first appeared in the May-June 1978 issue of *The Vintage Ford*)

By Bruce McCalley

For some strange reason this writer has had an interest in the production figures of the Model T Ford. No doubt this interest was kindled by the confusing and conflicting information made available by the Ford Motor Company, plus that made available by other sources over the years.

Early in our history we published a list of serial numbers that was compiled from the sources which at that time seemed most reliable. That list was later published in our book, *From Here to Obscurity*. In the original articles we noted that there was some doubt as to the accuracy of the material, and that it seemed strange that production would begin and end each month with an even number.

In 1974, during a brief visit at the Ford Archives, we uncovered (with the assistance of Dave Crippen of the Archives' staff) the original, hand-written books in which each day's production was listed. Not all the books were there; those prior to 1915 are missing and those of 1920 and later are less detailed. At that time we were pressed for time (only one day) and hurriedly made notes of monthly production figures and other items of interest. We also uncovered other material which filled in the figures for 1913 during that stay.

The results of that discovery were published in the September-October 1974 issue of *The Vintage Ford*.

In March 1978 we again had an opportunity to visit the Archives and spent almost an entire week going over this same material, and copying the daily production figures *completely* from January 1915 until mid 1927, and monthly until 1932, then yearly until the end in 1941. That's a lot of numbers!

Not only did we uncover more information, we also found a few errors in our 1974 notes — such as the date of the last Model T engine produced. The earlier article gave the date as August 4, 1936 but the actual date was August 4, 1941.

During this recent visit we also found a list of the number of engines built during 1914 (but not the motor numbers) and by taking these figures and using the few known-accurate 1913, 14 and 15 numbers, plus the previously found 1913 production figures, we are able to compile a monthly list for 1913 and 1914 which should be within just a few numbers of being absolutely correct.

Taking the first number for fiscal 1913, 157,425 — listed in the records as being built October 1, 1912, and

adding the production quantities for each month, we can arrive at the serial numbers for each month. Using other known numbers, such as the last number of the year (1912) and the number at the end of the 1913 fiscal year (348,735) we come out exactly right. Carrying this forward through 1914 we are in agreement with other known standards and end up with 656,064 as the last number built in December 1914. The first number from the factory records for 1915 was 656,074 — ten off. We have no way of knowing where the error occurs; it could be in the production figures or in the first number listed for 1915. We know that 477,165 was built on March 18; that 500,000 was built on April 21; and that 572,437 was made on September 4, and all these fit into our list. The only discrepancy we have found is the number 578,042 — the number listed in the books as the beginning of production of all engines with the larger magneto, and shown on October 2. The first engine with the new magneto was 572,437 — September 4. There is only 5605 difference in these numbers; less than a week's production. We are inclined to believe the number should have been 598,042, not 578,042, which would have been made in early October.

The error of ten over the two-year period is well within one day's production, and is by far more acceptable than the published factory lists which are almost 50,000 numbers off in places.

While we cannot be sure, the numbers listed in published literature (and here) for 1909 are believed to be accurate. The 1910 to 1913 numbers appear to be "juggled" but are listed here because the original records cannot be found, leaving no other choice.

While we do now have the complete day-by-day serial number figures for every engine between January 1915 and July of 1927, the publication of such a list would fill several issues of the magazine, and would serve no really useful purpose. We have, therefore, compiled another monthly list which is complete from October 1908 until December of 1931, and a yearly list from 1932 until the end in 1941.

Those who might be interested in the exact day of manufacture of their particular engine can write the Club, enclosing a stamp, and we will return the information.

A number of interesting things were uncovered in our earlier visit, and even more on the latest one. Noted in each day's records were shipments of either motor

number records or unassembled motors to branches. Apparently Ford had pre-numbered record tags or papers which were attached to each engine as it came off the line, and the serial number on the paper was then stamped on the engine. From time to time blocks of the number records (not the engines themselves) were shipped elsewhere, usually to either Manchester, England, or to Cork, Ireland, and engines were built there. Where this occurred, obviously engines of these numbers were built out of sequence, if at all. It would be interesting to know if any engines of these numbers exist.

Unassembled (Ford called them "knocked-down") engines were shipped to branches, as well as (apparently) complete engines, and these would have gone into cars built weeks or months later than cars at Highland Park. It is obvious, then, that motor numbers are not an accurate method of dating an entire car. Even where the engine is known to have gone into Highland Park production, there is little certainty that it went into a car the same day it was made.

The Highland Park plant made four types of Model T engines: left and right-hand drive; either type with or without metric spark plugs. While the records may be incomplete, the Ford Motor Company made 57,687 right-hand-drive; 44,973 left-hand-metric; and 21,693 right-hand-metric engines between January 1915 and August of 1920. The last right-hand-drive standard engine was made on August 29, 1919; the last left-hand-metric on July 29, 1920; and the last right-hand-metric on January 18, 1919 — at the Highland Park plant.

Production of the metric engines rose sharply during the war years and no doubt these engines went into cars and trucks which were shipped overseas.

After August of 1920, the records do not indicate anything other than the standard left-hand-drive.

#### MILESTONE MOTOR NUMBERS

500,000	April 21, 1914.	1 P.M.
1,000,000	December 10, 1915	1:53½ P.M.
2,000,000	June 14, 1917	1:02 P.M.
3,000,000	April 2, 1919	8:15 A.M.
4,000,000	April 11, 1920	10:15 P.M.
5,000,000	May 28, 1921	7:05 A.M.
6,000,000	May 18, 1922	9:14 A.M.
7,000,000	January 12, 1923	6:48 P.M.
8,000,000	July 11, 1923	10:19 P.M.
9,000,000	December 26, 1923	1:05 P.M.
10,000,000	June 4, 1924	7:47 A.M.
11,000,000	January 5, 1925	
12,000,000	June 20, 1925	
13,000,000	January 6, 1926	
14,000,000	July 21, 1926	4:30 P.M.
15,000,000	May 25, 1927*	
15,176,888	August 4, 1941 (Last T motor.)	

\*The 15-millionth motor was built on May 25, however numbers 14,999,999; 15,000,000; and 15,000,001 were held over and built on May 26. (See text.)

Earlier in this article we mentioned the shipment of engine numbers to England and Ireland, where, presumably, they were built and numbered. There are also a number of entries in the records of numbers "omitted." It is quite likely these numbers were also shipped out and the engines numbered elsewhere, yet it is also possible the numbers were just lost or, particularly in late April 1927, just skipped. The "omitted" numbers are listed in our compilation but we do not know if any or all actually were ever used on an engine. If any of our readers have an engine with one of these numbers, we would be interested in hearing from you.

In late 1924, Ford began manufacturing engines at the Rouge plant, as well as Highland Park. On September 24, engine number records 10,566,001 to 10,566,100 were sent to the Rouge plant, and on the 29th the first engine was made there. Eight more were made on the 30th; 12 on October 1, and similar quantities for a week, then increasing to over 700 a day by November. After the initial 100 tags listed above, the following blocks of numbers were shipped on the dates indicated:

10,587,001 — 10,587,500;	October 3, 1924.
10,707,001 — 10,713,000;	October 28.
10,764,001 — 10,774,000;	November 8.
10,805,001 — 10,825,000;	November 13.
10,851,001 — 10,871,000;	November 21.
10,914,001 — 10,934,000;	December 9.
10,959,001 — 10,998,000;	December 22.

Beginning January 5, 1925, the records were all transferred to the Rouge plant and now blocks of numbers were sent to Highland Park as production was rapidly discontinued there. Apparently the last engine made at Highland Park was 11,267,000, February 13, 1925.

During this change-over period, there is some confusion as to the dates on which each number at the Rouge was used. Using the blocks of numbers against the daily Rouge production figures, we end up 27 numbers off by the end of 1924. However, since they were making around 4500 engines a day, 27 is not much of an error.

These figures are shown in our compilation.

Near the end of production, another interesting item: MAY, 1927

May 23	14,984,264 — 14,988,964
May 24	14,988,965 — 14,991,900
	14,991,901 — 14,995,900 "omitted"
	14,995,901 — 14,997,514
May 25	14,997,515 — 14,999,998
	14,999,999 — 15,000,001 "omitted"
	15,000,002 — 15,002,217
May 26	14,999,999 — 15,000,001 (three engines)
	15,002,218 — 15,006,625
May 27 to 30	the plant was closed
May 31	15,006,626 — 15,007,032
June 1	15,007,033 — 15,007,446



15,007,033 has been indicated as the number of the last Model T Ford built at Highland Park. It seems odd that this should be the first number made in June, 1927.

In the months that followed, the numbers were in sequence except for small gaps or "omissions" when blocks of numbers were sent to branches for assembly, presumably to use up stock on hand.

*Other interesting items:*

The new magneto (using the 3/4" magnets) began with engine number 572,437, on September 4, 1914. This might indicate the beginning of 1915 closed cars with electric lights.

Beginning on June 17, 1915, the oil seal disk (part number 3324) was installed in the tail-shaft of the brake drum in the transmission on all engines. This modification was made to reduce oil leakage at the rear of the engine through the universal joint and to the rear axle.

The first engine built with provision for the starter was number 2,815,891, assembled on January 2, 1919. The last non-starter engine (cast with the integral timing gear cover) was built on May 28, 1919.

In 1921, 42,348 engines were built in Walkerville, Canada; 26,657 in Manchester, England; and 924,652 at Highland Park — a total production of 993,657 engines worldwide.

The first engine with the one-piece valve cover door was built on November 1, 1921. The last double-door engine was built on April 3, 1922 — quite an overlap. 7,396 one-piece-door engines were built in 1921.

The later type "light-weight" pistons began to be used on March 12, 1924.

The oil tube with the large funnel began to be used on July 17, 1924 and was used on all production from August 12 on.

"New style" transmission covers began on July 17, 1924. These were the covers with the built-in oil slinger boss in the casting, we believe.

The "four-dip" pan began to be used the next day, July 18.

The last "old style" (pre-1926) engine was 12,218,728, built at 5:51 P.M. on July 27, 1925.

Beginning on October 26, 1925, bolts began to be used (instead of studs and nuts) to secure the valve cover door.

The motor supports which ran from the top of the transmission cover to the frame were not in full production until November 16, 1925.

Beginning on March 17, 1916, the cotter pins in the crankcase bolts were discontinued. It is not known if they were later reinstated in production as is commonly believed.

All through production, notes indicated almost constant experiments in different pistons, rings, timers, and other items, as well as comments on quality control (or the lack of it) on crankshafts, rods and so forth.

Being human, the men at the factory made a few errors, too. The first entry in the 1926 production book

noted an error of twenty-two engines during the two previous years — errors which indicated they used more motor bills than the number of motors accounted for. In order to bring the production figures into line with the actual production, twenty-two motors were counted which were not actually built. This writer is a bit confused on just how this was handled but the records show the last engine built in 1925 was 12,990,076 and the first built in 1926 was 12,990,055. It would appear that the first engine actually built in 1926 was number 12,990,077. No one knows if the error was in paperwork or in actual production but this juggling of figures was done to bring the records into agreement.

The Holley Vaporizer carburetor was used in all production beginning on July 19, 1926 (1927 models?).

The most interesting discovery, though, was that the Model T engine production did not stop in June of 1927 as has been commonly believed. 69,198 engines were built in 1927 after production of the car had stopped. In fact, 169,856 Model T engines were built after the last Model T car; the last being built on August 4, 1941!

Incidental to our research, we came across a startling note which read:

November 18, 1926. "Motor numbers ground off and replacements:

10,000,000 changed to 14,548,000

12,000,000 changed to 14,546,000

13,000,000 changed to 14,549,000"

Whether these "milestone" numbers were the original engines was not indicated. The fate of the original Ten-Millionth Ford is unknown; two MTFCA members own cars with engines of this number today. Perhaps the original car was dismantled at the factory, and the motor kept until this date. Who knows? Just another interesting discovery, and another unanswered question.

In the following list of engine numbers, numbers printed in **bold type** are those taken from the production record books. The numbers in medium type are from our previous research and are not verified.

**OCTOBER 1, 1908 to SEPTEMBER 30, 1909**

Car and Motor No. 1 to 11,100

**OCTOBER 1, 1909 to SEPTEMBER 30, 1910**

Car and Motor No. 11,101 to 31,900

**OCTOBER 1, 1910 to SEPTEMBER 30, 1911**

Car and Motor No. 31,901 to 69,876

**OCTOBER 1, 1911 to SEPTEMBER 30, 1912**

Motor No. 69,877 to 157,424

Car No. 80,000 to 150,000

**OCTOBER 1, 1912 to SEPTEMBER 30, 1913**

Motor No. 81 to 812,247  
 Motor No. 157,425 to 348,735  
 Car No. 150,001 to 332,500

**OCTOBER 1, 1913 to SEPTEMBER 30, 1914**

Motor No. 348,736 to 591,736  
 Car No. 332,501 to 539,000

**OCTOBER 1, 1914 to APRIL 30, 1915**

Motor No. 591,737 to 773,490  
 Car No. 539,001 to 742,313

**SERIAL NUMBERS BY THE MONTH**

**1908**

October 1 to 11  
 November 12 to 101  
 December 102 to 309

**1909**

January 310 to 646  
 February 647 to 1,052  
 March 1,053 to 2,025  
 April 2,026 to 2,691  
 May 2,692 to 4,036  
 June 4,037 to 5,980  
 July 5,981 to 8,107  
 August 8,108 to 9,840  
 September 9,841 to 11,148  
 October 11,149 to 12,405  
 November 12,406 to 13,132  
 December 13,133 to 14,161

**1910**

January 14,162 to 15,500  
 February 15,501 to 16,600  
 March 16,601 to 19,700  
 April 19,701 to 23,100  
 May 23,101 to 26,500  
 June 26,501 to 29,500  
 July 29,501 to 30,200  
 August 30,201 to 31,000  
 September 31,001 to 31,900  
 October 31,901 to 32,500  
 November 32,501 to 33,700  
 December 33,701 to 34,900

**1911**

January 34,901 to 37,000  
 February 37,001 to 40,000  
 March 40,001 to 45,000  
 April 45,001 to 50,800  
 May 50,801 to 57,200  
 June 57,201 to 60,500

**1912**

July 60,501 to 62,100  
 August 62,101 to 66,700  
 September 66,701 to 69,876  
 October 69,877 to 83,100  
 November 83,101 to 86,300  
 December 86,301 to 88,900

**1913**

January 88,901 to 92,000  
 February 92,001 to 95,900  
 March 95,901 to 103,800  
 April 103,801 to 112,900  
 May 112,901 to 123,800  
 June 123,801 to 132,000  
 July 132,001 to 139,700  
 August 139,701 to 144,500  
 September 144,501 to 157,424  
 October 157,425 to \*  
 November \* to \*  
 December \* to 183,564

\* The records of production between October 1 and December 31 are missing. The 1913 production book shows the beginning and ending numbers as shown. In addition, Ford produced engines bearing numbers B1 through B12,247 in the Detroit plant between October 1912 and October 1913.

**1913**

January 183,565 to 200,994  
 February 200,995 to 218,240  
 March 218,241 to 239,152  
 April 239,153 to 260,202  
 May 260,203 to 281,652  
 June 281,653 to 302,916  
 July 302,917 to 320,616  
 August 320,617 to 336,401  
 September 336,402 to 348,735  
 October 348,736 to 364,897  
 November 364,898 to 382,797  
 December 382,798 to 408,347

**1914**

January 408,348 to 436,568  
 February 436,569 to 461,018  
 March 461,019 to 487,283  
 April 487,284 to 506,823  
 May 506,824 to 526,041  
 June 526,042 to 540,851  
 July 540,852 to 550,939  
 August 550,940 to 569,239  
 September 569,240 to 591,736  
 October 591,737 to 617,536  
 November 617,537 to 636,736  
 December 636,737 to 656,064\*

\*See text.

**1915**

January 656,074 to 680,348  
 February 680,349 to 706,623  
 March 706,624 to 737,938  
 April 737,939 to 773,490  
 May 773,491 to 805,840  
 June 805,841 to 839,925  
 July 839,926 to 856,513  
 August 856,514 to 881,063  
 September 881,064 to 914,026  
 October 914,027 to 949,225  
 November 949,226 to 986,060  
 December 986,061 to 1,028,313

**1916**

January 1,028,314 to 1,071,928  
 February 1,071,929 to 1,119,003  
 March 1,119,004 to 1,169,023  
 April 1,169,024 to 1,219,573  
 May 1,219,574 to 1,273,413  
 June 1,273,414 to 1,328,148  
 July 1,328,149 to 1,362,989\*  
 August \*1,362,990 to 1,400,913  
 September 1,400,914 to 1,452,213  
 October 1,452,214 to 1,510,398  
 November 1,510,399 to 1,569,776  
 December 1,569,777 to 1,614,516

\* The factory records show 1,362,813 as the last number built in July of 1916. However, on July 25, 1,362,814 to 1,362,989 were actually built but these motors were transferred to fiscal 1917 production which began on August 7, 1916.

**1917**

January 1,614,517 to 1,679,591  
 February 1,679,592 to 1,739,906  
 March 1,739,907 to 1,812,013  
 April 1,812,014 to 1,888,043  
 May 1,888,044 to 1,968,619  
 June 1,968,620 to 2,044,131  
 July 2,044,132 to 2,113,501  
 August 2,113,502 to 2,162,888  
 September 2,162,889 to 2,231,009  
 October 2,231,010 to 2,310,409  
 November 2,310,410 to 2,383,951  
 December 2,383,952 to 2,449,179

**1918**

January 2,449,180 to 2,503,204  
 February 2,503,205 to 2,558,189  
 March 2,558,190 to 2,611,439  
 April 2,611,440 to 2,657,479  
 May 2,657,480 to 2,700,789  
 June 2,700,790 to 2,735,679  
 July 2,735,680 to 2,756,251  
 August 2,756,252 to 2,774,621

September 2,774,622 to 2,787,821  
 October 2,787,822 to 2,792,306  
 November 2,792,307 to 2,805,097  
 December 2,805,098 to 2,831,426

**1919**

January 2,831,427 to 2,880,166  
 February 2,880,167 to 2,933,046  
 March 2,933,047 to 2,997,146  
 April 2,997,147 to 3,067,736  
 May 3,067,737 to 3,139,951  
 June 3,139,952 to 3,210,841  
 July 3,210,842 to 3,277,851  
 August 3,277,852 to 3,346,876  
 September 3,346,877 to 3,429,401  
 October 3,429,402 to 3,515,431  
 November 3,515,432 to 3,560,200  
 December 3,560,201 to 3,560,400\*

3,563,001 to 3,563,000\*  
 3,563,001 to 3,563,200\*  
 3,563,201 to 3,587,996  
 3,587,997 to 3,659,971

\* These numbers were shipped to Manchester, England, but the engines were not built in the U.S. (See text.)

**1920**

January 3,659,972 to 3,743,076  
 February 3,743,077 to 3,817,076  
 March 3,817,077 to 3,910,001  
 April 3,910,002 to 3,969,151  
 May 3,969,152 to 4,055,281  
 June 4,055,282 to 4,141,451  
 July 4,141,452 to 4,233,351  
 August 4,233,352 to 4,329,901  
 September 4,329,902 to 4,426,386  
 October 4,426,387 to 4,526,541  
 November 4,526,542 to 4,617,928  
 December 4,617,929 to 4,698,419

**1921**

January None  
 February 4,698,420 to 4,736,431  
 March 4,736,432 to 4,810,014  
 April 4,810,015 to 4,907,505  
 May 4,907,506 to 5,008,005  
 June 5,008,006 to 5,114,533  
 July 5,114,534 to 5,223,135  
 August 5,223,136 to 5,337,545  
 September 5,337,546 to 5,400,000  
 October 5,400,001 to 5,475,000\*  
 November 5,475,001 to 5,447,816  
 December 5,477,817 to 5,529,519  
 5,529,520 to 5,602,301  
 5,602,302 to 5,638,071

Numbers (only) shipped to Cork, Ireland. (See text.)

			June	13,454,890 to 13,619,705		June	15,138,356 to 15,160,345
			May	13,619,706 to 13,769,814		July	15,160,346 to 15,162,310*
			June	13,769,815 to 13,790,000		August	15,162,311 to 15,165,673*
			July	13,790,001 to 13,800,000		September	15,165,674 to 15,169,414
			August	13,800,001 (1 built)		October	15,169,415 to 15,170,468
			September	13,800,002 to 13,912,754		November	15,170,469 to 15,170,784
			October	13,912,755 to 14,049,029		December	15,170,785 to 15,170,988
			November	14,049,030 to 14,098,800			
			December	14,098,801 to 14,100,000**			
			January	14,100,001 to 14,194,489			
			February	14,194,490 to 14,331,152			
			March	14,331,153 to 14,390,000*			
			April	14,390,001 to 14,400,000*			
			May	14,400,001 to 14,472,253			
			June	14,472,254 to 14,577,135			
			July	14,577,136 to 14,619,254			
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