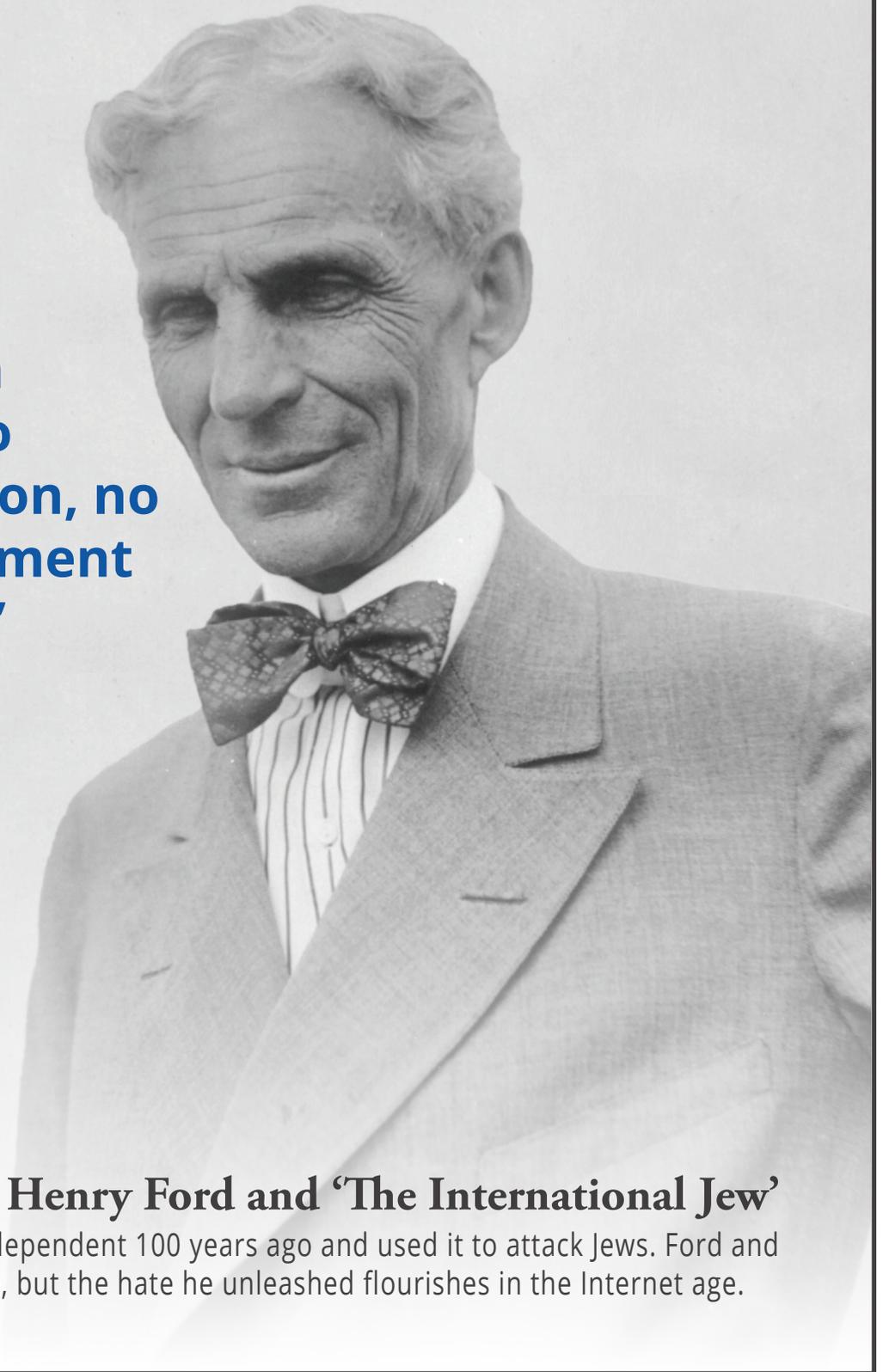


# The Dearborn Historian

Quarterly of the Dearborn Historical Commission  
Autumn 2018 Volume 55, Number 3

**“The Jew is a race that has no civilization to point to, no aspiring religion, no great achievement in any realm.”**

Henry Ford's  
Dearborn  
Independent



## **A Special Report: Henry Ford and ‘The International Jew’**

Henry Ford bought The Independent 100 years ago and used it to attack Jews. Ford and the paper are long gone, but the hate he unleashed flourishes in the Internet age.

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“Those who have known me for  
many years realize that anything that  
breeds hate is repulsive to me.”

HENRY FORD, P 8

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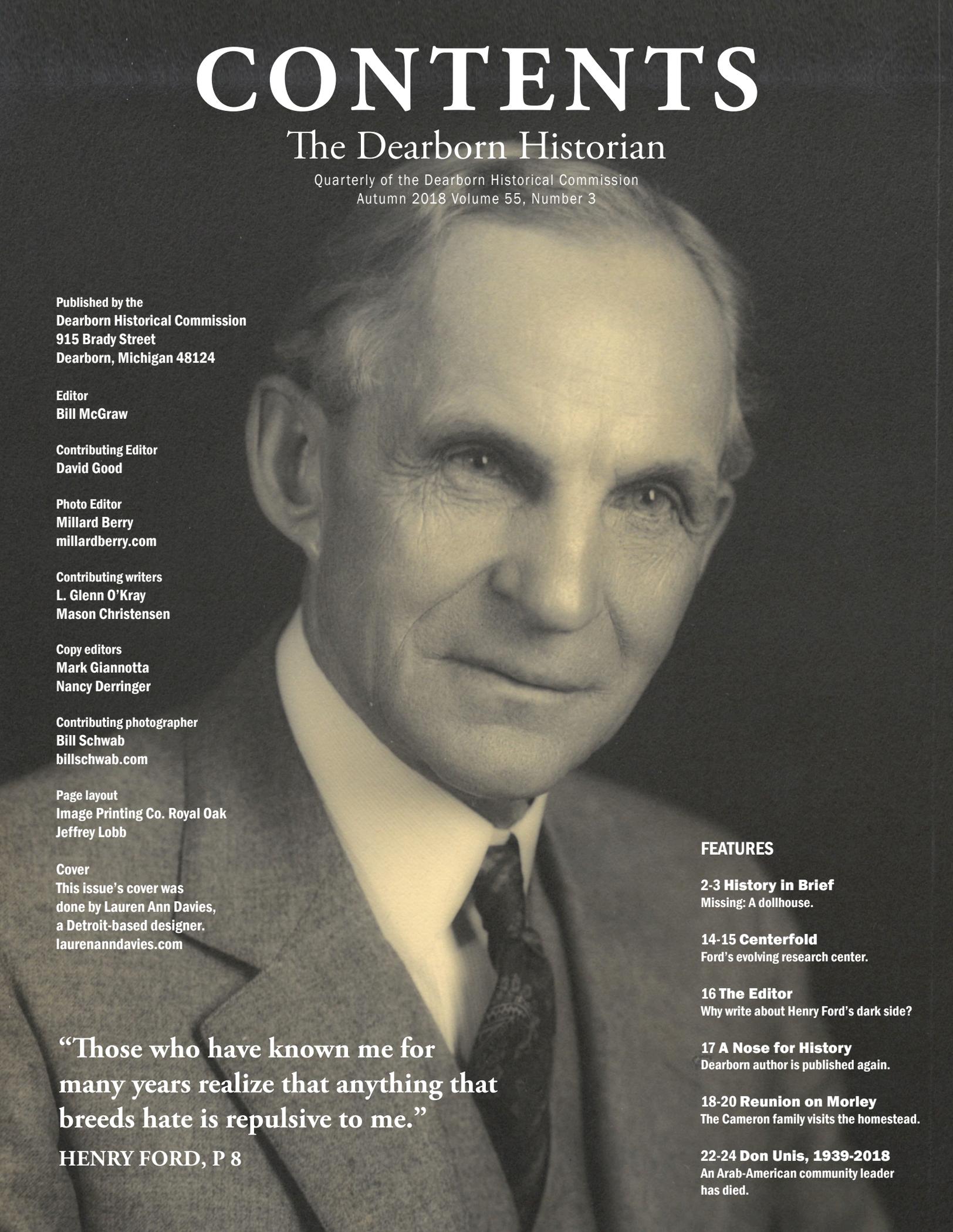
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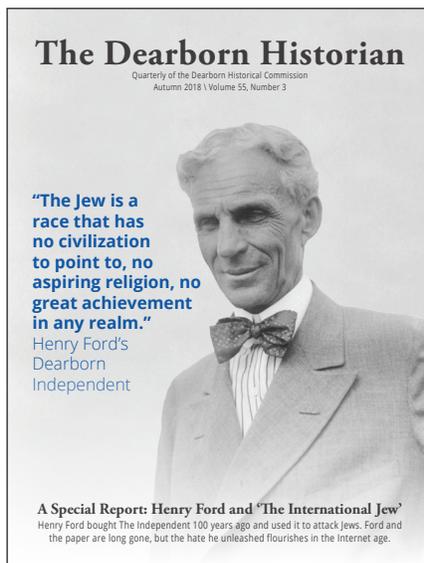
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# Henry Ford and ‘The International Jew’

## His Century-old Anti-Semitism Thrives in the 21st Century

By BILL McGRAW

### Chapter 1 Mass-Producing Hate

Henry Ford was peaking as a global celebrity at the conclusion of World War I, having introduced the \$5 workday, assembly line and Model T -- revolutionary changes that transformed the way people lived. Reporters staked out the gates of his Fair Lane mansion. Ford loved the limelight and he constantly made news, even running for the U.S. Senate in Michigan as a Democrat in 1918. He narrowly lost.

In the midst of his fame, Ford became a media mogul of sorts, forming the Dearborn Publishing Company and purchasing the sleepy Dearborn Independent weekly newspaper, which was dying of red ink. He published the

paper under his name for the first time 100 years ago, in January 1919.

Under Ford, the Independent became notorious for its unprecedented attacks on Jews. But Ford's anti-Semitism traveled far beyond the Dearborn borders. Showing the marketing expertise that had catapulted Ford Motor into one of the world's most famous brands, Henry Ford's lieutenants vastly widened the reach of his attacks by packaging the paper's anti-Semitic content into four books. Experts say "The International Jew," distributed across Europe and North America during the rise of fascism in the 1920s and '30s, influenced some of the future rulers of Nazi Germany.

In 1931, two years before he became the German chancellor, Adolf Hitler gave an interview to a Detroit News reporter in his Munich office, which featured a large portrait of Ford over the desk of the future fuhrer. The reporter asked about the photo.

The Ford International Weekly

# THE DEARBORN INDEPENDENT

By the Year One Dollar

Dearborn, Michigan, May 22, 1920

Single Copy Five Cents

## *The International Jew: The World's Problem*

*"Among the distinguishing mental and moral traits of the Jews may be mentioned: distaste for hard or violent physical labor; a strong family sense and philoprogenitiveness; a marked religious instinct; the courage of the prophet and martyr rather than of the pioneer and soldier; remarkable power to survive in adverse environments, combined with great ability to retain racial solidarity; capacity for exploitation, both individual and social; shrewdness and astuteness in speculation and money matters generally; an Oriental love of display and a full appreciation of the power and pleasure of social position; a very high average of intellectual ability."*

—The New International Encyclopedia.

THE Jew is again being singled out for critical attention throughout the world. His emergence in the financial, political and social spheres has been so complete and spectacular since the war that his place, power and purpose in the world are being given a new scrutiny, much of it unfriendly. Persecution is not a new experience to the Jew, but intensive scrutiny of his nature and super-nationality is. He has suffered for more than 2,000 years from what may be called the instinctive anti-semitism of the other races, but this antagonism has never been intelligent nor has it been able to make itself intelligible. Nowadays, however, the Jew is being placed, as it were, under the microscope of economic observation that the reasons for his power, the reasons for his separateness, the reasons for his suffering may be defined and understood.

In Russia he is charged with being the source of Bolshevism, an accusation which is serious or not according to the circle in which it is made; we in America, hearing the fervid eloquence and perceiving the prophetic ardor of young Jewish apostles of social and industrial reform, can calmly estimate how it may be. In Germany he is charged with being the cause of the Empire's collapse and a very considerable literature has sprung up, bearing with it a mass of circumstantial evidence that gives the thinker pause. In England he is charged with being the real world ruler, who rules as a super-nation over the nations, rules by the power of gold, and who plays nation against nation for his own purposes, remaining himself discreetly in the background. In America it is pointed out to what extent the elder Jews of wealth and the younger Jews of ambition swarmed through the war organizations—principally those departments which dealt with the commercial and industrial business of war, and also the extent to which they have clung to the advantage which their experience as agents of the government gave them.

IN SIMPLE words, the question of the Jews has come to the fore, but like other questions which lend themselves to prejudice, efforts will be made to hush it up as impolitic for open discussion. If, however, experience has taught us anything it is that questions thus suppressed will sooner or later break out in undesirable and unprofitable forms.

The Jew is the world's enigma. Poor in his masses, he yet controls the world's finances. Scattered abroad without country or government, he yet presents a unity of race continuity which no other people has achieved. Living under legal disabilities in almost every land, he has become the power behind many a throne. There are

ancient prophecies to the effect that the Jew will return to his own land and from that center rule the world, though not until he has undergone an assault by the united nations of mankind.

The single description which will include a larger percentage of Jews than members of any other race is this: he is in business. It may be only gathering rags and selling them, but he is in business. From the sale of old clothes to the control of international trade and finance, the Jew is supremely gifted for business. More than any other race he exhibits a decided aversion to industrial employment, which he balances by an equally decided adaptability to trade. The Gentile boy works his way up, taking employment in the productive or technical departments; but the Jewish boy prefers to begin as messenger, salesman or clerk—anything—so long as it is connected with the commercial side of the business. An early Prussian census illustrates this characteristic: of a total population of 269,400, the Jews comprised six per cent or 16,164. Of these, 12,000 were traders and 4,164 were workmen. Of the Gentile population, the other 94 per cent, or 153,236 people, there were only 17,000 traders.

A MODERN census would show a large professional and literary class added to the traders, but no diminution of the percentage of traders and not much if any increase in the number of wage toilers. In America alone most of the big business, the trusts and the banks, the natural resources and the chief agricultural products, especially tobacco, cotton and sugar, are in the control of Jewish financiers or their agents. Jewish journalists are a large and powerful group here. "Large numbers of department stores are held by Jewish firms," says the Jewish Encyclopedia, and many if not most of them are run under Gentile names. Jews are the largest and most numerous landlords of residence property in the country. They are supreme in the theatrical world. They absolutely control the circulations of publications throughout the country. Fewer than any race whose presence among us is noticeable, they receive daily an amount of favorable publicity which would be impossible did they not have the facilities for creating and distributing it themselves. Werner Sombart, in his "Jew and Modern Capitalism" says, "If the conditions in America continue to develop along the same lines as in the last generation, if the immigration statistics and the proportion of births among all the nationalities remain the same, our imagination may picture the United States of fifty or a hundred years hence as a land inhabited only by Slavs, Negroes and Jews, wherein the Jews will naturally occupy the position of

Hot off the press: Henry Ford published the paper under his name for the first time 100 years ago, in January 1919. Starting with the issue of May 20, 1920, Ford turned the Independent into a platform for attacks on Jews. Every week for nearly two years, the paper published articles that assailed Jews for being sneaky and treacherous and for conspiring to control the global financial system.

“I regard Henry Ford as my inspiration,” Hitler told the News.

Ford’s anti-Jewish campaign provoked protests and a boycott of Ford Motor automobiles in the 1920s. Ford offered an apology -- received by the public with great skepticism -- and closed the paper in 1927. It was too late, though, as copies of “The International Jew” spread widely before and after World War II, influencing generations of anti-Semites. The glowing imprimatur of Henry Ford lent credibility to the preposterous charges against Jews the books contained.

But what might have been lost to history as an ugly curiosity has proven to be a Pandora’s box, as the Internet age has given Ford’s anti-Semitic literature a powerful new life. Today, a century after Ford purchased the Dearborn Independent and 72 years after his death, his legacy of hate is stronger than ever -- it flourishes on the websites and forums of white nationalists, racists and others who hate Jews.

Today, “The International Jew” by Henry Ford plays a significant role in fomenting resentment as the United States grapples with rising numbers of hate crimes and anti-Semitic incidents, ascendant white nationalism and a gunman armed with an AR-15-style assault rifle who massacred 11 people at a Pittsburgh synagogue in October. When he surrendered, the gunman told police he “wanted all Jews to die.”

An essay posted by the Anti-Defamation League says that by posting decades-old texts such as “The International Jew,” today’s anti-Semites demonstrate the longevity of their beliefs, legitimizing them to both dedicated followers and potential recruits.

Because of Ford’s fame, “The International Jew” has been a “particularly powerful tool for haters trying to validate their hostile beliefs,” the essay adds.

One example of Ford’s influence online today: On Stormfront, a white nationalist online forum, a contributor has taken the screen name Dr. Ford and uses a photo of Henry Ford as a profile image. On the same forum, a participant whose screen name is AllisonRM wrote last year: “I’m currently reading The International Jew: Essays from the Dearborn Independent (Ford)... Read these great books!... We, the white race, need to encourage ourselves and our children.”

Heidi Beirich, an expert on extremism in the United

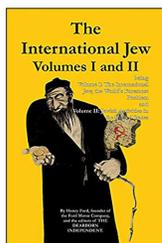
States at the Alabama-based Southern Poverty Law Center, said extremist websites contain thousands of references to Ford and “The International Jew.”

“In the world of the racist right, Henry Ford is almost a living, breathing human being,” Beirich said in an interview. She added that extremist leaders use Ford “as an inspiration” and “validator” to impress people while enlisting them to join the movement.

It’s not just extremist websites that are peddling Ford’s books. Shoppers can buy “The International Jew” by Henry Ford on the websites of Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Walmart.

“This is a wonderful book that should be required reading for all Americans,” wrote Tara, in a five-star Amazon review. “Sadly, many people like to label Henry Ford as an anti-Semite, when nothing could be further from the truth.”

And then there are the ads. After I explored the availability of Ford’s anti-Semitic books on Amazon in connection with this story, ads for “The International Jew” by Henry Ford began popping up on my Facebook page. They appeared next to ads for what I was actually shopping for -- a winter coat.



### FORD FACT

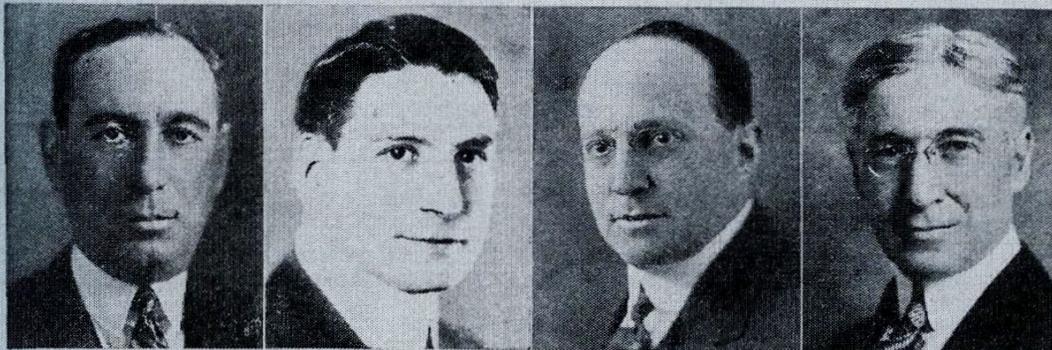
**While Henry Ford’s newspaper and books attacked Jews for dozens of imagined faults, neither Ford nor his Dearborn Independent ever advocated violence.**

## Chapter 2 Transforming a Country Weekly

Starting with the issue of May 20, 1920, Ford began using the Independent to attacks Jews. Every week for nearly two years, the paper published articles that assailed Jews for being sneaky and treacherous and conspiring to control the global financial system, a common Jewish stereotype. Ford also accused Jews of scheming to dominate such American industries as Hollywood, farming and liquor distribution.

“There is no other racial or national type which puts forth this kind of person,” the Independent said in June 1920. “It is not merely that there are a few Jews among international financial controllers -- it is that these world controllers are exclusively Jews.”

## All Little Pals Together—To Save the American Farmer!



ALBERT D. LASKER,  
Former head of Shipping Board.

AARON SAPIRO,  
Organizer of American farmers.

HON. E. MEYER, Jr.,  
Former head of War Finance Corporation.

HON. B. BARUCH,  
Former head War Industries Board.

# Jewish Exploitation of Farmers' Organizations

## II. The Story of the Sapiro Boys

By ROBERT MORGAN

THE history of Jewish attempts to seize control of the agricultural and horticultural resources and production of America begins with the employment by the late Harris Weinstock, then head of the California State Market Commission, of a young Jewish attorney, named Aaron Sapiro, as counsel for and legal advisor to the commission. There is nothing to indicate that the commission and Mr. Weinstock could not have used the state's legal department for such business as they had to transact with the courts, but a glance at the names of employer and employe will furnish at least one of the reasons for the opportunity so opened to Mr. Sapiro.

About two years were required by the new legal adviser to grasp the plan by which the co-operative marketing associations of California, then as now under state control, could be "improved." As soon as this plan had become well formulated, Sapiro left the state commission and branched out as "organizing legal counsel" for co-operative marketing organizations. Despite the statement of Herman Sisen, paucigrapher for Sapiro, that "nineteen out of twenty of the co-operative marketing organizations" were not functioning properly or profitably prior to the coming of this "counselor," it is a fact that the farmers in these associations, though prices for their products were lower than they now, received more money, net, acre for acre and tree for tree, for their crops, than they received last year.

Nevertheless, Sapiro was able so to influence the farmers of California, particularly the growers of deciduous fruits, that within two years, he had extended his activities into a dozen states. Today, he is legal adviser to every co-operative marketing association, with a combined membership of more than 500,000 agriculturists, or approximately one-tenth of all those men who till the soil in the United States. Back of these half-million owners of farms and orchards are at least two million women and children. These men and women and their sons and daughters are absolutely dependent on the advice, suggestion, direction and control of this attorney. He has had no experience in agriculture or horticulture in any form; he never has produced a dollar from the soil; he knows nothing of the problems which confront the farmer, save what he has read in books; he is not a producer of anything except ideas which require his personal employment by the American farmer. Yet, seventeen states have altered their laws to conform to his plans of co-operative marketing, and to enable farmers to fix prices for their crops at his command. Forty-seven states contain associations whose members have pledged their crops to boards of directors obedient to Aaron Sapiro, and have pledged not one crop, but all the production of their lands for periods of five to seven years.

Not a dollar can be paid by any purchaser to these American farmers unless the boards of directors of their associations—boards a majority of whose members are selected by Sapiro, or whose selection meets with his approval—permit it to be paid. These farmers must deliver the crops from their own lands, the production of their own supposedly independent and free American labor, when and where and to whom Sapiro directs, and accept for it the price his agents, or his representatives, or his boards of directors have fixed for it. The rapidity with which this young man

—he is not yet forty—has worked, and the gullibility with which his propaganda and plans have been swallowed by more than half a million American men who, prior to his coming, had been able to manage their own businesses well enough to make a fair profit therefrom, is little less than the eighth wonder of the world.

Just how Sapiro attained to this eminence in co-operative marketing in so short a time is a story of too much detail to be told here, and is not of especial interest except to students of economic theories and students of the legal aspects of the new development. What is of value, and of the greatest value, to the five million or more farmers of America today, is the present activity of this leader of the greatest agrarian movement ever attempted.

Aaron Sapiro is at present the head of the legal firm of Sapiro, Levy, Hatfield and Hayes, with headquarters in the First National Bank Building in San Francisco, where a suite of twelve elaborately furnished rooms are maintained, and with branches at 1606 Equitable Building, New York, and in the Magnolia Building, in Dallas, Texas. The firm consists, besides Aaron Sapiro, of Milton D. Sapiro, his brother; David L. Levy, George J. Hatfield, Lawrence L. Levy, Boyd Oliver, E. L. Hayes, Frederick B. Wood, Robert Beale and E. T. Korn.

The elder Sapiro spends very little time at the firm's headquarters in San Francisco, on the average, not more than one month out of the year. So great is the business of establishing control and leadership of the co-operative marketing organizations throughout the country that he is on tour of the agricultural, fruit-growing and dairying sections of this country virtually all the time. During his absences, however, the business is well handled by Milton D. Sapiro, who keeps out of the spotlight so continually thrown around his brother and the two Levys. Milton Sapiro keeps taut the cables with which Aaron has bound

the farmers in the associations, and the Levys attend to the legal repairs necessary to prevent leakage in the cables.

Every dollar that comes into this firm from these associations comes out of the pockets of the American farmer, in payment for "services" which he does not need, and for "direction" of his associations which were better directed when the farmer did the directing himself.

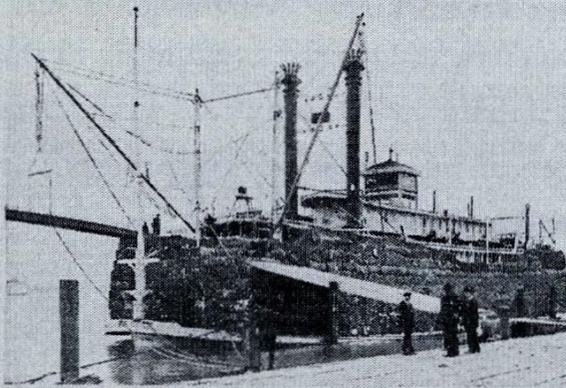
The example of Aaron Sapiro, who was admitted to the organization of the potato growers of this country, in 1923, state associations, to be followed by a national association. An announcement is made at the Sapiro headquarters that, by the time the 1924 potato crop is ready for the market, associations composed of at least seventy per cent of the potato producers of Maine, New Jersey, Virginia, Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, North and South Dakota, Idaho, Colorado, Utah, Nevada and California, will be in operation. The central or national organization will direct the sales policies and sales prices, transportation, distribution, and flow of potatoes to market, as well as name the markets to which the tubers shall be shipped. This is the same plan on which the other Sapiro-controlled co-operative marketing associations are operated, and, to quote Milton Sapiro, "the central body will control the distribution so as to equalize prices and conditions everywhere as a protection for the farmer."

The facts show that the farmer is not protected by these associations to the extent that he receives any more net for his crop than he received before, but that, on the other hand, the charge to the consumer is increased. The economic condition created by the Sapiro plan of control of all the products of the American farmer, however, deserves wider consideration later. Let us for the moment pass it by, and consider the other Jewish gentlemen who are concerned in the success of the exploitation of the farmer in the United States.

Bernard M. Baruch, known best, perhaps, for his connection with the Wilson administration, is one of these. So deeply is he concerned with the success or failure of the Sapiro plan, that he signs his name to the official foreword of a book called

"Co-operative Marketing, the Golden Rule in Agriculture," by Herman Sisen, managing editor of *The Prairie Farmer*. Though this foreword is very like the main text of the book in style and substance, the signature at the end of the foreword leads the reader to believe that Mr. Baruch is responsible for it. In this foreword appears the following appeal (and also warning, if read aright) to farmers to refrain from objecting when the high overhead, heavy salaries and other extravaganzas take their money:

"Mistakes will be made in co-operative marketing; they are made in all human affairs, and only experience can finally point the approximately perfect way. Here and there will be losses, due to mishaps which cannot be avoided or foreseen. When these arise, the members of the co-operatives should deal with them loyally, practically, and tolerantly; and, if they are led by the high type of business executive which the work demands, they will win through. For it is the man, more than the organization, who will win or lose for the co-operatives, and those farmers who allow themselves to be exploited by the so-called high salaries paid for co-operative executives are fighting against their own interests."



Cotton planter, the steambloomer operator and the staging Negro in the cotton fields, all pay tribute to the exploiters of the American farmer when the planter signs away his crop as a co-operative marketing association contract of the kind forced on him by the Sapiro plan.

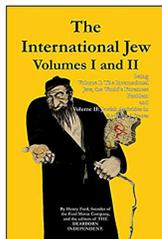
In 1924 Ford went after Aaron Sapiro, a young Jewish activist from California who had become a leader in the farm co-op movement. Sapiro fought back, filing a \$1 million libel suit against Ford. Juror misconduct led to a mistrial in 1927. Ford apologized to Sapiro and reached a financial settlement with him, yet Ford claimed he didn't know anti-Semitic material was published in his paper, and many people believed he was insincere.

While anti-Semitism goes back centuries, Ford's salvos were likely the most sustained printed attacks on Jews the world had ever seen. With his wealth and resources, Ford remains the most formidable anti-Semite in American history.

In 2019, many educated Americans have a vague understanding that Ford had anti-Semitic sentiments. Few people are aware of the details, though, of how Ford spent millions on his paper and the "International Jew" series of books.

The books spread like a virus, translated into 12 languages and distributed on three continents in the years after World War I. The books appeared as fascist forces were organizing, especially in Germany, one of the countries targeted by Ford's agents.

In its first couple of years, Ford sold more than 200,000 copies of "The International Jew." His underlings deliberately declined to copyright the content, so other anti-Semites were free to publish the books. That is one reason Ford's paper and books are widely available today, in printed form and online. With no copyright, it's nearly impossible to stop their proliferation.



### FORD FACT

**Henry Ford was an influence on Adolf Hitler, but Ford never met the Nazi leader.**

immigrant who was a star reporter and editorial columnist for the News, came aboard as the lead writer.

Experts have long debated the roles of these three in the production of the Independent, but a general consensus has emerged that Ford, not a skilled writer, talked over ideas with Liebold, who ordered Pipp and Cameron to transform them into stories. Some historians believe Cameron "undertook his assignment disgustedly," as David Lewis wrote in "The Public Life of Henry Ford," adding that Cameron "was either unable or did not try to dissuade Ford from launching the attack." However disgusted he might have been, Cameron remained a Ford aide into the 1940s.

In serving as the link between Ford and the rest of the world, Liebold was strategic and menacing. With Ford's money, Liebold organized a network of spies, many with government intelligence backgrounds, to snoop around outposts of Jewish life in America, paying special attention to community leaders. The agents funneled the information to Liebold in Dearborn as grist for the Independent's anti-Jewish campaign.

Henry Ford ordered that the Independent not be used to publicize him or the company, though the paper's nickname was "The Ford International Weekly" and Ford forced his dealers to conduct subscription campaigns. Some dealerships threw a copy of the Independent into newly sold Model Ts. Circulation eventually reached 900,000, making it one of the biggest periodicals in the country.

The Independent carried a weekly column by Ford -- verbosely ghost-written by Cameron -- that filled "Mr. Ford's Page." Ford commented on many everyday subjects, but virtually never used his column for the most blatant anti-Semitic content. The Independent's attacks on Jews ran separately, often starting on page one, almost always without a byline.

Under Ford, the Independent was tabloid in form, cost five cents and ran 16 pages. Its motto: "Chronicler of the Neglected Truth."

At the beginning, the Independent was unremarkable, filled with long-winded feature articles on national and international subjects such as farming in Europe, the Smithsonian Institute or a cure for leprosy. Most critics found the paper soporific, a Saturday Evening Post without

## Chapter 3 Henry Ford, Newspaper Publisher

After paying \$1,000 for the Independent (about \$18,000 in today's dollars), Ford named his closest aide, Ernest Liebold, the newspaper's general manager. Liebold was a hardcore anti-Semite.

"He hated everything Jewish, and he saw the publication as a vehicle for promoting his agenda," Steven Watts wrote in "The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century."

Ford and Liebold then assembled a crack editorial team by raiding the Detroit News.

For top editor, Ford hired News' executive Edwin Pipp, a liberal Catholic who had been a muckraking Detroit reporter known as a soft touch because he wrote stories about people down on their luck. William Cameron, a Canadian



Ford and his ghost writer, William Cameron, who wrote Ford's column and some of the anti-Semitic content in the Dearborn Independent.

the pizzazz.

It was only months, though, before the Independent took a sinister tack. Ford's pet peeves – distant capitalists, aliens who refuse to assimilate, Bolsheviks (all code words for Jews) -- began creeping into the Independent's pages, according to Neil Baldwin's 2001 book, "Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate."

"His own page took on a strident tone as Ford lashed out against unnamed, hidden influences that continued to trouble him," Baldwin wrote.

Circulation lagged in the early going and Ford lost the equivalent of \$3.5 million in today's dollars in the first year. Staffers knew changes had to be made. "Find an evil to attack," Joseph J. O'Neil, a veteran New York newspaperman, urged Liebold in a memo. "LET'S FIND SOME SENSATIONALISM," he typed with emphasis.

Beginning with the issue of May 22, 1920, Ford found his target. That issue of the Dearborn Independent kicked off a 91-week campaign of insults, criticism and lies directed at Jews from Dexter and Davison to Krakow, Poland. "The International Jew: The World's Problem," read the inaugural page-one headline.

"There is apparently in the world today a central financial

force which is playing a vast and closely organized game with the world for its table and universal control for its stakes," the article said.

In subsequent weeks, the Independent hammered Jews for scheming to take over Broadway theater, baseball, American agriculture and countless other domains. Ford's paper also popularized an early 20th-Century forgery from Russia, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," which similarly purports to show Jews are bent on world domination.

### Chapter 4 Jews, and Others, Fight Back

The Independent -- put out by Henry Ford, Dearborn born and bred, legendary Tin Lizzie wizard, American folk hero and one of the world's richest men -- shocked Jewish Americans and many other citizens of diverse backgrounds. It wasn't long before they began to counterattack. The Independent was controversial from coast to coast in its day.

Pipp, whose Catholic conscience would not allow him to run an anti-Semitic journal, quit and began publishing his own paper, Pipp's Weekly, that was often critical of Ford. Cameron took Pipp's place. Ford's wife, Clara, and Edsel,

his only child, put off by the anti-Jewish articles, reportedly distanced themselves from the Independent.

As the Independent launched its anti-Semitic campaign and sent the paper, unsolicited, to libraries and school across the nation, protests broke out. Some cities attempted to ban the paper, but such moves raised First Amendment issues. Jews organized Ford Motor boycotts. Former President William Howard Taft, a future U.S. Supreme Court chief justice, slammed Ford in a speech. Later, he joined outgoing President Woodrow Wilson and dozens of other VIPs in signing a petition that denounced the Independent.

“God help Henry Ford. God forgive him,” said well known New York Rabbi Stephen Wise, who called Ford the “most contemptible little liar that ever lived.”

Louis Marshall, a New York lawyer and towering figure in the American Jewish community, played a key role in combatting Ford and the Independent. His first move was to send Ford a telegram, saying the articles “constitute a libel upon an entire people.”

The Independent was unimpressed. “Your rhetoric is that of a Bolshevick orator,” it fired back, linking Jews and Bolshevism, a common anti-Semitic trope.

In Detroit, Rabbi Leo Franklin, the head of Temple Beth El and an outspoken foe of discrimination, found himself caught between Ford and Marshall. Franklin was a Ford friend and former neighbor who had received yearly Model T’s as a gift. Marshall, in Manhattan, urged a more militant approach toward Ford in Detroit that Franklin was slow to adopt. Franklin eventually returned his 1920 Model T and told the Detroit News that Ford “has fanned the flames of anti-Semitism throughout the world.”

## Chapter 5 An Independent Target Sues Ford and Ford Closes the Paper

After nearly two years, Ford suddenly halted the attacks in December 1922. Just as unexpectedly, he resumed them

in 1924 when he went after Aaron Sapiro, a young Jewish activist from California who had become a leader in the farm co-op movement.

Sapiro fought back. He filed a \$1 million libel suit against Ford, igniting weeks of sensational coverage in the national press. The case came to trial in 1927, though juror misconduct led to a mistrial.

Ford, freed from being forced to testify under oath, a position from which he had embarrassed himself in the past, issued an apology to Sapiro. Ford also took back all of his attacks on Jews and withdrew “The International Jew,” though that proved to be much easier promised than done. He settled out of court with Sapiro.

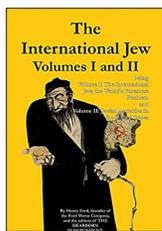
In his apology, Ford called himself “deeply mortified” by the attacks, but blamed underlings, denying he knew about the articles in advance. He relieved Liebold and Cameron from their posts at the Independent, but kept them on the company payroll for years. Few close observers -- or average Americans -- believed Ford was so removed that he hadn’t been aware of prominent articles in his own newspaper that had sparked an international outcry.

In an editorial headlined “Forgiveness without Fawning,” the Detroit Jewish Chronicle echoed many other papers in casting doubt on Ford’s claim that he had been unaware of the paper’s content.

“That Mr. Ford does not accept personal responsibility for the anti-Semitic articles is also obvious,” the editorial said. “His action in this respect is what is commonly known as ‘passing the buck.’”

Ford closed the Independent in December 1927. But the damage had been done.

“Ford’s well-publicized decision was disingenuous,” wrote Victoria Saker Woeste in “Henry Ford’s War on Jews,” because he knew that even after closing the paper, his hate literature already lived on in hundreds of thousands of copies of “The International Jew.”



### FORD FACT

Despite his anti-Semitism, Ford was known for hiring Jews and African Americans, and he had Jewish friends, including architect Albert Kahn and Rabbi Leo Franklin.



### Ernest Gustav Liebold

Liebold was Henry Ford’s personal secretary and Dearborn Independent overseer. Known as a fervent anti-Semite, Liebold stoked Ford’s animosity toward Jews. He was born in Detroit in 1884, and grew up speaking German in the city’s large east-side German community. He worked for Ford for three decades and died in 1956.

## Chapter 6 Why?

Why did Henry Ford -- the entrepreneur Fortune Magazine in 1999 named the "Businessman of the 20th Century" -- spend so much time and money attacking Jews?

Searching for clues, because Ford never discussed his anti-Semitism in depth, historians have often focused on his childhood amid the farm fields on what are today the streets of east Dearborn. While only a long walk from Detroit in the 1860s and '70s, Ford grew up isolated from Jews and most other minorities, and 19th-Century rural America was a place where ancient Jewish stereotypes were widespread.

Experts also point to Ford's close friend, Thomas Edison, an anti-Semite who approved of the Independent's campaign, and Ford's close relationship with Ernest Liebold, whose anti-Semitic views were well known. Douglas Brinkley wrote that Ford's "increasingly vicious anti-Semitism appears to have grown out of his antipathy toward powerful bankers."

Ford's criticism of Jews and hatred of Wall Street were "the foibles of the Michigan farm boy who had been liberally exposed to Populist notions," wrote historian Richard Hofstadter.

"Ford disliked Jews who he believed exercised disproportionate control over the institutions that were vital to the rural-mercantile economy he wanted to build," Victoria Saker Woeste wrote.

## Chapter 7 Ford and the Führer

Henry Ford's hate campaign took a disturbing turn in the 1920s and '30s, when it intersected with Adolf Hitler's path to power. The collision produced what the 21st Century calls synergy.

Copies of "The International Jew" began re-appearing in the 1930s in the U.S., South America and Europe, especially in Germany, where the Nazi Party was poised to take power. Books wound up on a table in the office of Hitler's National Socialist German Workers' Party in Munich.

"Hitler's ravings and public speeches against Jews frequently were based on Ford's anti-Semitic literature," Ford expert David Lewis wrote.

One leading Nazi, Baldur von Shirach, the *Reichsjugendführer* (Hitler Youth leader) in the 1930s, became an anti-Semite after he read "The International Jew" in German, von Shirach testified at the Nuremberg war-crime trials. Found guilty of crimes against humanity for helping to send thousands of Viennese Jews to their deaths, von Shirach served 20 years in Spandau prison.

"If Henry Ford said that Jews were to blame, why, naturally we believed him," von Shirach is quoted as saying in Baldwin's "Henry Ford and the Jews."

Von Shirach added: "You have no idea what a great influence this book had on the thinking of German youth."

Numerous historians have noted that Ford is the only American mentioned in Hitler's "Mein Kampf" memoir. After asserting that Jews were increasingly exerting control over American labor, Hitler wrote, "one great man, Ford, to their exasperation, still holds out independently."

Conversely, experts on Hitler have noted Ford's literature influenced Hitler's writing in "Mein Kampf." Reading "The International Jew," which became a hit in Germany after being published in German in 1922, helped push Hitler further into "conspiratorial anti-Semitism," Thomas Weber wrote in "Becoming Hitler: The Making of a Nazi."

"Henry Ford is important for having provided to Hitler confirmation, coming from the very heart of America, of an idea that had been brewing in his mind," Weber wrote. The idea was that Jews' control of global finance was behind the world's problems.

"Henry Ford thus turned into an anti-Semitic icon for Hitler."

In summer 1938, with the German Wehrmacht having marched into Austria, and despite years of deflecting charges he was an anti-Semite, Ford accepted a 75th birthday present from Hitler. It was the Grand Cross of the Supreme Order of the German Eagle, the highest award the regime bestowed on foreigners.

The golden Maltese cross, surrounded by four small swastikas, was presented to Ford in Ford Motor's Dearborn offices by Fritz Haller, the German vice consul in Detroit.

News reports about the birthday present from Hitler triggered a bitter backlash across the nation. Ford apologized, again. And again, people laughed when they read his words.

## SPECIAL REPORT

“Acceptance of a medal from the German people does not, as some people seem to think, involve any sympathy on my part with Nazism,” Ford said.

“Those who have known me for many years realize that anything that breeds hate is repulsive to me.”

We can't know what was in Ford's heart when he said those words. Perhaps he was genuinely remorseful. Perhaps he accepted the medal to avoid embarrassing an international diplomat, or for business reasons.

Or perhaps anti-Semitism infected him to the bone, and his apology was as cynical as it seems to us. What we do know is that this chapter of his life, which lasted less than a decade, reverberates a century later in a crude hatred that seems impossible to eradicate. It's an ugly side of the patriarch of one of America's greatest families and founder of one of its best-known companies.

In November, a reader left this Amazon review:

“It's just amazing how enlightened Henry Ford became while living in a world of jew contrived deception ramping up in the USA. The European converted (fake) zionist jew has conquered amerika. Judaism = communism.”

The reader gave “The International Jew” five stars.



**In the Next Issue of  
The Historian:**

Building the Rouge --  
The Inside Story

Photo/Bill Schwab

## Response from Ford Family and Company Has Been Widely Praised

The response to Henry Ford's anti-Semitism by the Ford family and Ford Motor Co. has received considerable praise, from Jewish organization and other observers.

"The Ford family and Ford Motor Company embarked upon correctives even before the Old Man passed away, Neil Baldwin wrote in "Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate."

"Beginning with Henry Ford II, enlightened and succeeding generations of Fords have sought to put an end to Henry Ford's dark legacy, extending economic credit to the young state of Israel and generously supporting Jewish charities at home and abroad."

On its website, the Anti-Defamation League says:

"In the decades following Ford's death in 1947, the Ford family and the Ford Motor Company have engaged in numerous projects and endeavors in the public interest, including many that have been supportive of Jewish concerns. Ford's grandson, Henry Ford II, consistently supported Jewish charities and cultural organizations. In 1997, for example, the Ford Motor Company sponsored the first screening of Steven Spielberg's "Schindler's List," commercial-free, on national network television.



Henry Ford II

The chairman of the board today at The Henry Ford historical complex is S. Evan Weiner, of Edward C. Levy Co. in Detroit, who is Jewish. He welcomed a largely Jewish crowd of several



Ford family members pose alongside Henry and Clara Ford in June. Back row, from left: Henry Ford, Benson Ford Jr., Tom Buhl, Lindsey Buhl, Paul Alandt, Edsel Ford II, Fred Ford. Front row, from left: Clara Ford, Lynn Ford Alandt, Ellie Ford.

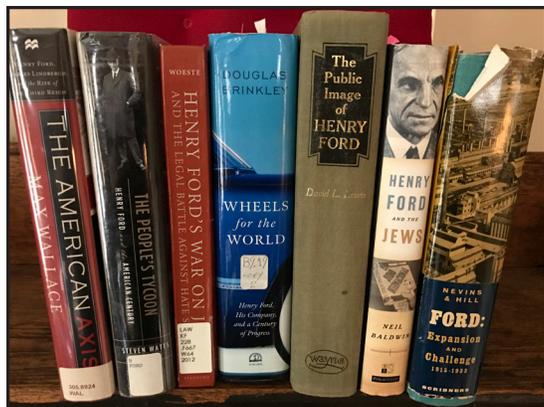
hundred people in November when the museum, in collaboration with the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, held a special one-day program, "The Henry Ford... Through a Jewish Lens" that examined Ford's bigotry and, through pop-up exhibits, celebrated Jews as American innovators.

Steven Watts, a historian at the University of Missouri and author of "The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century," spoke about Ford's exalted place in American culture, but added: "It's hard to find a more blatant anti-Semite in American history."

Larry Gunsberg, an officer at the Jewish historical society, told the Jewish News, "I found this an excellent way for the community to embrace the generational change in the Ford family." On the "My Jewish Detroit" website, historical society President Risha B. Ring said, "This monumental conversation is long overdue."

## For Further Study

Selected books and resources used in preparation of this story. All available at the Dearborn Public Library unless noted.



Neil Baldwin, "Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate."

David Lewis, "The Public Image of Henry Ford."

Steven Wyatt, "The People's Tycoon."

Douglas Brinkley, "Wheels for the World: Henry Ford, His Company, and a Century of Progress."

Max Wallace, "The American Axis: Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh and the Rise of the Third Reich."

Albert Lee, "Henry Ford and the Jews."

Allan Nevins and Frank Ernest Hill, *Ford: Expansion and Challenge, 1915-1933*.

Morton Rosenstock, "Louis Marshall, Defender of Jewish Rights."

"The International Jew," Vol II, III and IV.

Thomas Weber, "Becoming Hitler."

Volker Ullrich, "Hitler: Ascent."

Victoria Saker Woeste, "Henry Ford's War of Jews and the Legal Battle Against Hate Speech." (WSU Law School Library)

The Detroit Jewish News Foundation archive of the Jewish News and the Detroit Jewish Chronicle. Free. <https://dijnfoundation.org/the-archive/>

The Holocaust Memorial Center, Farmington Hills, [www.holocaustcenter.org](http://www.holocaustcenter.org).



# Why Write About Henry Ford's Hateful Side?

Bill McGraw

With its growing African-American community, the large Mideastern population and immigrants from a variety of countries, Dearborn is increasingly diverse. The Dearborn of today is almost unimaginable compared to the Dearborn of 1980.

Such diversity is reflected in the public officials who represent all or large parts of Dearborn: State Senator Sylvia Santana is an African-American woman. State Representative Abdullah Hammoud and Wayne County Commissioner Sam Baydoun are Arab Americans. Mayor John O'Reilly is a white man and U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingell is a white woman.

It's a varied cast of characters, and a reflection of an evolving America in which women and minorities are increasingly visible in public life. The trend is further illustrated by Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib of Detroit, a well known person in Dearborn and one of the first Muslim women elected to Congress. Her 13th Congressional District is next to Dingell's 12th District.

The emergence of minorities taking their rightful place has come with a price, and part of that price is fear of demographic change among some white Americans and a nationalistic backlash around the world. And a big part of that backlash is a rise in anti-Semitism.

The Anti-Defamation League recorded a 57 percent rise in anti-Semitic incidents in the United States in 2017, compared to the previous year — including assaults, vandalism, bomb threats and anti-Semitic literature on college campuses. In 2017, neo-Nazis marched in Charlottesville, Virginia, chanting "Jews will not replace us," and one anti-Nazi protester died. In October, a gunman killed 11 people in a Pittsburgh synagogue. "Growing Anti-Semitism Stuns American Jews," read a headline in the New York Times.

That brings us to Henry Ford.

In this issue, The Dearborn Historian carries a special report on Henry Ford's anti-Semitism. I wrote it. It's not a happy story. The magazine is running the report because of the current climate of anti-Semitism and because January marks the 100th anniversary of Ford buying the Dearborn Independent weekly newspaper, the platform for his attacks. We're also publishing the report because we believe local history publications should strive to tell the whole truth about our past, no matter how unpleasant, and connect local events to what's happening in the greater world.

While many people know vaguely that Ford had anti-Semitic

beliefs, I think it's fair to say most people have no idea that, as the article details, his anti-Semitic publishing effort was so vast in scope and had such a powerful impact, or that his publications from the 1920s are enjoying a renaissance today among extremist websites and online forums.

In general, metro Detroit and its institutions tend to treat Ford gently when it comes to his dark sides. But historians and other experts have delved into Ford's anti-Jewish campaign and published books and articles, and my story seeks to pull together the important findings of their research.

We've also provided a guide so readers can do their own reading, which should start in the Henry Ford Centennial Library. Its excellent Ford Collection carries a number of books and other media on Henry Ford, the Dearborn Independent and "The International Jew," the books that were collections of the paper's anti-Jewish articles.

The library approaches this dark side of Ford in an honest manner.

On another sensitive subject, Orville Hubbard, Dearborn in general has become more open to dealing with his segregationist side in recent years. City hall gradually downgraded the prominence of Hubbard's statue and the Dearborn Historical

Commission and The Dearborn Historian (under previous editor David Good) explored the issue forthrightly.

Re-examining dreadful corners of institutional histories became a trend over the past two decades as numerous banks, insurance companies, Ivy League colleges, media outlets, cities and religious denominations have studied their actions during the eras of slavery and Jim Crow, published their findings and, in some cases, issued apologies. The city of East Lansing apologized last year for the way it treated black citizens for much of the 20th Century. Proponents of such transparency believe it contributes to racial healing.

Henry Ford is legendary in his native Dearborn and around the world for good reasons, as the article makes clear. His legacy continues to loom large in the lives of residents of Dearborn and metro Detroit.

But his anti-Semitism is much more than a personal failing. Ford's attacks on Jews were distributed around the world before and after World War II and, alarmingly, they influence budding neo-Nazis today. It's a subject worth talking about in Dearborn.

Let the discussion begin.

