



HENRY FORD, FIDDLER IN THE ROUGH

Thousands of people — both today and in the early part of the last century — know Henry Ford as an automotive man, an American industrialist, the founder of Ford Motor Company and the father of mass production.

But far fewer knew him as a Midwestern boy who, despite hating farm work, loved the country dances of his childhood and the fiddle melodies that led them. As a young man, he bought an inexpensive fiddle and even taught himself to pluck a few tunes.

As his automotive empire grew, Ford never left behind his rural past, said Henry Ford Museum Curator Jeanine Miller.

"He sponsored fiddling contests and hosted dances where people learned the reels, schottisches and square dances of Ford's youth. Many Americans joined in the fun — country dancing and fiddling swept the country. While the craze had waned by the spring of 1926, Ford's enthusiasm never did. He invited friends and business associates to dances, even building a ballroom in 1937 that he named Lovett Hall after his dancing master," Miller said.

The 1920s also launched the beginning of Ford's hunt for fine 18th-century violins, made by famous instrument makers such as Antonio Stradivari and Giuseppe Guarneri. He began to build his collection and lured some of the world's best musicians to his home to play them.

Seven of Ford's violins, which he collected through much of his adult life, will be on display in the summer of 2013 in Henry Ford Museum as part of the 150th anniversary of Ford's birth. Among those in the collection: the first violin Ford purchased as a young man, which was a late-19th-century simple instrument, and a Stradivarius from 1709.



PHOTOS FROM THE COLLECTIONS
OF THE HENRY FORD