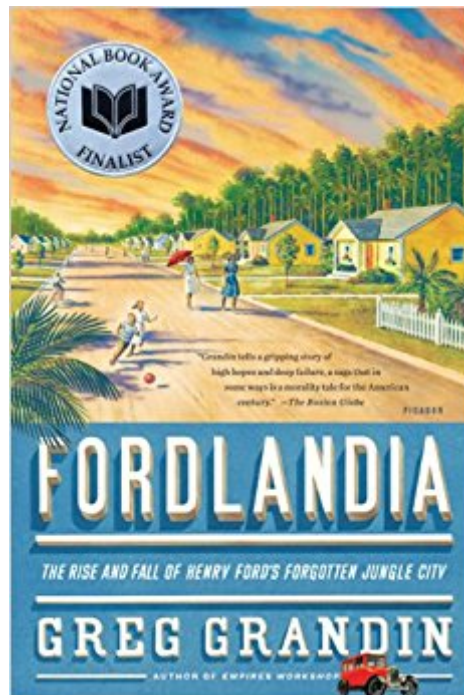




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Fordlandia: The Rise And Fall Of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City



Synopsis

The stunning, never before told story of the quixotic attempt to recreate small-town America in the heart of the In 1927, Henry Ford, the richest man in the world, bought a tract of land twice the size of Delaware in the Brazilian . His intention was to grow rubber, but the project rapidly evolved into a more ambitious bid to export America itself, along with its golf courses, ice-cream shops, bandstands, indoor plumbing, and Model Ts rolling down broad streets. Fordlandia, as the settlement was called, quickly became the site of an epic clash. On one side was the car magnate, lean, austere, the man who reduced industrial production to its simplest motions; on the other, the , lush, extravagant, the most complex ecological system on the planet. Ford's early success in imposing time clocks and square dances on the jungle soon collapsed, as indigenous workers, rejecting his midwestern Puritanism, turned the place into a ribald tropical boomtown. Fordlandia's eventual demise as a rubber plantation foreshadowed the practices that today are laying waste to the rain forest. More than a parable of one man's arrogant attempt to force his will on the natural world, Fordlandia depicts a desperate quest to salvage the bygone America that the Ford factory system did much to dispatch. As Greg Grandin shows in this gripping and mordantly observed history, Ford's great delusion was not that the could be tamed but that the forces of capitalism, once released, might yet be contained. Fordlandia is a 2009 National Book Award Finalist for Nonfiction.

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Customer Reviews

Best of the Month, June 2009: Proving that truth can indeed be stranger than fiction, Fordlandia is

the story of Henry Ford's ill-advised attempt to transform raw Brazilian rainforest into homespun slices of Americana. With sales of his Model-T booming, the automotive tycoon saw an opportunity to expand his reach further by exploiting a downtrodden Brazilian rubber industry. His vision, the laughably-named ian outpost of Fordlandia, would become an enviable symbol of efficiency and mark the Ford Motor Company as a player on the global stage. Or so he thought. With thoughtful and meticulous research, author Greg Grandin explores the astounding oversights (no botanists were consulted to confirm the colony's agricultural viability) and painful arrogance (little thought was paid to how native Brazilians would react to an American way of life) that hamstrung the project from the start. Instead of ushering in a new era of commerce, Fordlandia became a cautionary tale of a dream destroyed by hubris. --Dave Callanan

Take a Closer Look at Images from Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City(Click on images to enlarge)

A sketch of the opera house in Manaus,Brazil (aka. "the tropical Paris")

An ian familyemployed in the rubber trade

Ford executives on the deck of The Ormoc enroute to the

Workers clearing the rainforestbefore construction can begin

MundurucÃfÂ° mission childrenwith German nuns

A Lincoln Zephyr stuck in Fordlandia mud

Fordlandia's Riverside Avenuenear the TapajÃfÂ° s River

Ruins of Fordlandia's powerhouse

Ruins of the sawmillat Iron Mountain

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Starred Review. Grandin, an NYU professor of Latin American history, offers the thoroughly remarkable story of Henry Ford's attempt, from the 1920s through 1945, to transform part of Brazil's River basin into a rubber plantation and eponymous American-style company town: Fordlandia. Grandin has found a fascinating vehicle to illuminate the many contradictory parts of Henry Ford: the pacifist, the internationalist, the virulent anti-Semite, the \$5-a-day friend of the workingman, the anti-union crusader, the man who ushered America into the industrial age yet rejected the social changes that followed urbanization. Both infuriating and fascinating, Ford is only a piece of the Fordlandia story. The follies of colonialism and the testing of the belief that the Ã¢â¬âwhere 7,882 organisms could be found on any given five square milesÃ¢â¬âcould be made to produce rubber with the reliability of an auto assembly line makes a surprisingly dramatic tale. Although readers know that Fordlandia will return to the jungle, the unfolding of this unprecedented experiment is compelling. Grandin concludes that Fordlandia represents in crystalline form the utopianism that powered FordismÃ¢â¬âand by extension Americanism. Readers may find it a cautionary tale for the 21st century. 54 b&w photos. (June) Copyright ÃÂ© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or

unavailable edition of this title.

Henry Ford, a self-made industrialist changed the world as much as his good friend Thomas Edison and anyone else in the early twentieth century. He spent the later part of his life trying to reshape his rural America back to a more pastoral era that his creation - an inexpensive car - did so much to destroy. In Brazil he tried to re-create his idolized version of small town farming community by creating a rubber plantation in the , in part to source this important automobile component through the Ford family. The author is quick to discount the manner in which Ford "blindly" set up the plantation, and the book would be stronger with more external verification of his claims. I do not doubt they are in part correct - just that they could be presented more convincingly. I enjoyed the book very much. Having been raised in Michigan, I already knew most of the Ford history, and still think a visit to Greenfield Village is one of the highlights of American cultural history. Its lesson on how long it took manufacturers to re-design the workplace for electricity instead of steam has played out again in my lifetime as first personal computers and then the Internet have had similarly profound impact on how we work. This book added to that understanding. By pushing agriculture into the forest in an effort to better people's lives - as well as make money - Ford was a pioneer in outsourcing. The lesson this failure taught was that trying to control the whole process just because you control most of it is often not as efficient as letting others do what they may be able to do better than you. Ford himself learned this lesson when he later bought rubber from S.E. Asia after the war. I suspect in fact he had several irons in the fire with regards to sourcing. Towards the end of the book, we see in contrast that Ford's failed idea later took root as some of the land was ploughed over to plant his beloved soybean. Soy grown there that is now being used as he had foreseen in manufacturing. A good idea, germinating at the wrong time, may not bloom - but it is still a good idea. Henry Ford was a complicated guy, and this book serves to shed light on only some part of his life. But it does a good job telling a very interesting, somewhat prophetic story.

Fordlandia provides a view of Henry Ford that reveals him to be an all too human combination of innovation, ignorance and arrogance. While not surprising in the sense that Henry Ford was, after all, just a man out to make a buck and impose his personality on everything, the book makes it quite clear Ford was a one-trick pony. (His one true innovation was to perceive the same 'interchangeable parts' model used successfully for gun manufacture would work just as well for automobiles and could further be extended to interchangeable and expendable people.) Outside his factory and off the assembly line, Ford manufactured a non-stop string of failures with the Fordlandia fiasco simply

being one of many. Perhaps the real lesson of Fordlandia is how often business moguls are actually extremely limited in their vision. That myopia may make them millionaires but it too often impairs them from seeing the world and the people in it as anything more than machinery to generate money and facilitate or impede illusions.

It's ok. The writing style is a little too dry and academic. I wish the balance between Ford Motor Co. history and Fordlandia were weighted for more stories about the village and inhabitants. This topic will make a great book or movie someday.

Fordlandia was an interesting read. I had certainly never heard of Ford's misguided attempt at establishing a rubber plantation in Brazil prior to reading this historical novel. This book provides an extensive and comprehensive detail of Ford's entire operation in Brazil, and also discusses at length the consequential effects on environment and the surrounding peoples. It was extremely interesting to read about the struggles and difficulties concerning the undertaking of such an improbable task as to create a master planned development in the heart of the rain basin. While I appreciated, to a degree, the in-depth bios of the various players, I felt that those sections were sometimes overdrawn and lengthy. I understand the need to establish personality, motives, etc. but in some cases the anecdotes just went on for far too long. I did find it interesting, however, that the book tracks the development of Fordlandia in parallel with Ford's own life and changes in his perspectives on values, ideals, and lifestyles. I took away one star for writing style. While the content is interesting, the execution is somewhat sloppy, as others have noted. The text is not truly a pleasure to read as other historical novels I have read in the past. It is, in short, not the page-turner it had the potential to be given the material. In some places it was just difficult getting through to the next page....

Overall this is a very compelling story of a rather bizarre chapter in the life of Henry Ford. The book is definitely well researched and has many photos of the site and some of the persons involved. It starts out strong but seems to lose focus the farther on it goes. In particular the epilogue, while not without merit, seems tacked on. There doesn't seem to be much of an overall thesis beyond a rather cliched sort of anti-capitalist narrative. Still, the book is rather compelling in parts, particularly when it traces Henry Ford's personal change from a somewhat benevolent tyrant who pushed his employees to (and sometimes beyond) their limits but also paid salaries & benefits well above the norm for the time to an Upton-Sinclair-esque caricature of a greedy lunatic ruthlessly exploiting his

employees.

Great book! Good history of Henry Ford and his company and the era along with his adventure.
Well researched and written.

I like that it presents the reality of the story along with the history surrounding it, which is very important and also that it portrays all sides of Ford. It doesn't sugarcoat, exalt, minimize, maximize; it's perfect.
The sugar on top is that it brings the story to present day Brazil, which is still part of the story as it's being written.

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