

The Official Automobile Blue Book, 1901-1929: Precursor to the American Road Map.

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The Official Automobile Blue Book, 1901–1929: Precursor to the American Road Map

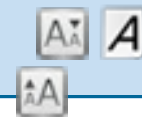
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<http://dx.doi.org/10.14714/CP62.182>

Abstract

Navigating by automobile at the dawn of the twentieth century was difficult because maps appropriate for this new mode of transportation were scarce. An early solution to this problem was the route guide. Listing turn-by-turn directions between various cities, route guides helped early motorists navigate a network of unmarked, local roads. This paper focuses exclusively on the Official Automobile Blue Book, the earliest and most popular of the route guides. It contends that the Blue Book series was a precursor to the American road map because the volumes served two important functions of road maps and did so before road mapping matured into a full-fledged cartographic business. The Blue Book commercialized automobile touring and provided directional

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information, helping motorists navigate. Twelve Blue Book volumes, covering 1901 to 1929, form the primary sources for this research. After examining the series' use, content, and history, the paper places the Official Automobile Blue Book within the larger context of the history of road mapping. A short review with directions for further research follows as a conclusion.

Keywords

Official Automobile Blue Book; route guide; road map; automobile navigation

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