

The History of Advertising in the National Geographic Magazine

National Geographic Volume 1, Number 1 was published in 1888 and it was the only issue published that year. 1889 saw three issues (Vol 1 nos 2,3, and 4). There were 6 or less issues between 1890 and 1893. 1894 saw 9 issues, but 1895 saw only 2 issues. 1896 was the first year with 12 issues (vol 7). 1896 was also the first year with ads.

RR ads

Jan 1896 (Vol 7 no 1) saw ads from C&O (1/2 page), Chicago Great Western, Burlington Route (CB&Q) (1/3), Northern Pacific and MILW (Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific). Other Railroad ads in 1896 included Union Pacific. 1897 showed a half page ad for the Florida East Coast Railway, as well as a half page ad for the Florida Central and Peninsular RR. These same railroads (except those in FL) along with Southern Pacific advertised rather regularly through mid 1901. Railroad advertising fell off as of June 1901 to just one railroad ad by Southern Railways. This trend continued until March 1902 when no railroad ads appeared. The November 1902 issue had an ad for NYC and these continued through early 1903.

The NYC was the only railroad advertising during most of 1904. 1905 showed no railroad advertising.

Automobile Ads

1907 was the first year to show cars or trucks in articles or ads. November 1908 was the first full page ad for a specific maker – Rambler. 1909 had Rambler ads in the first 10 months of issue. There were no ads for other car makers that year. The first ad to appear for automotive related equipment (oil, gas, batteries, tires, etc.) was a May 1909 ad for underground air-tight gasoline storage tanks.

1911 saw ads by the Matheson Automobile Company of Wilkes-Barre, PA for their “Silent six” and “big four” in three different months. The January 1912 issue sported the first ad by the Hudson Motor Car Co. of Detroit. It was followed by ads in 3 more issues that year. Pierce Arrow followed with their first ads in July and August 1912. November saw the first advertising by the Franklin Automobile Company of Syracuse, NY and the Nordyke and Marmon Co. of Indianapolis, IN. – “the Easiest Riding Car in the World.” 1912 also saw ads for “Exide” batteries (the Electric Storage Battery Co. of Philadelphia) and Texaco motor oil (The Texas Company) – in 4 issues.

1913 saw another increase in auto and equipment advertising. Eleven car companies had 32 ads posted in 1913 (double the 16 posted the previous year). Companies with their first ads were Reo, Packard and Stevens Duryea. Almost half (15) of the ads appeared in the last three months of the year (Oct., Nov., and Dec – showing off their models for the next year. There were only five ads during the first three month of 1913. There were no ads for the first time for Matheson and Franklin. Rambler, the first to advertise back in 1908 and '09, had no ads from 1910 to 1913.

1914 saw close to 40 ads from 9 different car manufacturers as well as at least 17 ads related to auto equipment (up from 12 in 1913) such as tires and oil products -led by United States Tires with ads in 8 different months. There was also an ad in 1913 and 1914 from the Electric Vehicle Association of America, one touting electric trucks. New to the scene in 1914 was the Locomobile Company of America (Bridgeport, Conn.) (4 ads) and Cyhalmers Motor Company of Detroit (3 ads). Companies with ads in 1913, but not in 1914 included the Reo, Anderson Electric Car Company, Rauch and Lang Carriage Co., and Stevens-Duryea.