

The Legend

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Clason's Green Guides by Carl Liedholm (#836)

The Green Guides produced by the Clason Map Co. were popular reference books used by the road travelers during the early decades of the 20th century. Yet, nothing has been written on these important guides, and they are relatively unknown today. This article seeks to remedy this deficiency by providing not only a historical profile of these guides, but also information on how to date them - always a challenge with products of the Clason Co.

The Green Guides were a unique product of the Clason Map Company. They were pocket size (approximately 4"x6") guides that were published for many states and several cities. Each guide consisted of a booklet, ranging in length from 15 to over 60 pages with detailed information about the state or city, and one or more large maps that were pasted within the covers. Each of the state guides included a commercial index of the cities and towns that provided information on their individual populations, elevations, industries, hotels, and banks. In addition, there was general information about the state that would be of interest to the traveler on such topics as state history, scenic wonders, national parks, roads, railways, and "interesting facts about the state." Downtown city maps and pictures were incorporated into the textual descriptions.

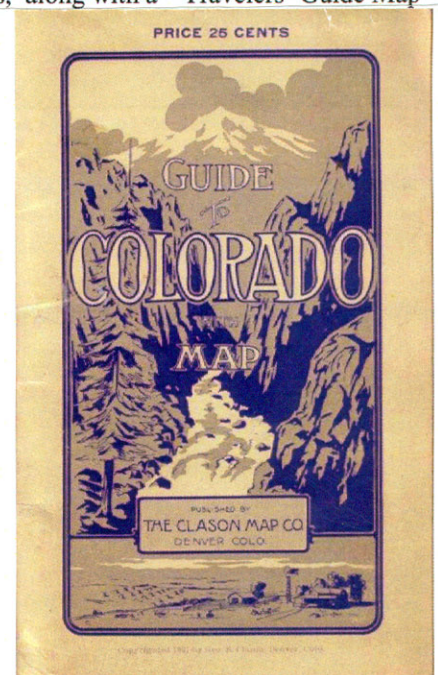
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These pocket guides, which Clason began producing in 1906, were not formally called Green Guides until 1920. Before that time they possessed green covers, but had different formats and titles over the years. The first section describes these guides before they were referred to as Green Guides. A discussion of the formal Green Guide years will follow.

CLASON POCKET GUIDES: 1906-1919

Pocket guides were first produced by the Clason Co. in the year 1906, three years after the company began producing maps. In 1906, it produced guides to the cities of Denver and Colorado Springs, along with a "Travelers' Guide Map of Colorado." In 1907, a state guide was produced for Arizona as well as Colorado and the series title was now standardized to *Guide to (state name) with Map*. The covers were beige, however, not the distinctive green that would shortly grace and ultimately come to characterize these guides. Each of the individual guides had different front cover images, ranging from the Grand Canyon on the Arizona guide to a river gorge on the guide for Colorado. All could be obtained for 25 cents.



1907 Guide to Colorado
(Image courtesy of The Autry Library, Autry National Center; 90.253/4076)

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Clason's Green Guides – from page 1



The all green cover first appeared in 1908, when five new states were added to the series - Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. The series title was enlarged to *Clason's Guide to (state name) with Map and Commercial Index of Important Towns*. There were, however, no longer any images adorning the individual state covers, which were now uniform, but rather bland. The copyright dates for these years were noted at the bottom the first page of the guides. The guides likely continued with this format until 1910, but this cannot be stated with certainty because very few existing examples from this period could be located.

From 1911 until 1914, the distinctive image of lady liberty holding a torch now graced the all dark green cover on all the guides and the title returned to *Clason's Guide to (state name) with Map*. A slight variation occurred in 1914, when lady liberty, the state title and publishing information were colored yellow. By that date, eight states outside the seven Rocky Mountain States were now included - California, Kansas, Nevada, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, and, Washington - along with the additional cities of Salt Lake City, Utah and Butte, Montana. Copyright dates appeared at the bottom of the first page of the guide as well as on the bottom of the most of the maps. If the map copyrights were missing, the date of the population figures in map would be listed. The map and guide copyrights did not always coincide; typically the map copyright date was later, which was probably the most reliable indicator of the date of issue.

It should be noted, however, that roads did not appear on the attached guide maps until 1913. Before that time, only railroads, rivers, cities, towns, country post offices, and national forests had been depicted. Clason did not create

brand new maps from scratch to reflect the addition of the highways in 1913. Rather, it followed the typical practice of the period by simply and rather crudely overprinting the highways in red over the existing guide maps. Two types of roads in these early guides were delineated, typically referred to as "Transcontinental Auto Roads" and "Local Auto Roads."

In 1915, the addition of roads to the guide maps was formally recognized when the cover title was changed to *Clason's Guide to (state name) with Map of Auto Routes*. This was still two years before Rand McNally launched its Auto Trails Map Series, which would ultimately prove to be a formidable competitor.

In 1917, a white border was added to the cover of the guide, and the green color was lightened. In addition, the state title, lady liberty, and publishing information were now delineated in white. The highways continued to be depicted as red overprints, but the two types of roads were now generally classified as "Main Auto Roads" and "Automobile Roads". This version of the Guide continued until 1919.

CLASON GREEN GUIDES: 1920-1931

Clason's pocket guide, which had been colored green since 1908, was formally referred to as the Green Guide for the first time in 1920. At the bottom of the front cover of that year's guide there was a reference to "The Green Guide Series" and just above it was the admonition to "Take a Green Guide with you - and you will never go wrong". Yet, Green Guide still did not yet appear that year in the title, which was *Clason's (state name) Road Map and Railway Guide*. On the cover, which received a major

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facelift, there was now a Native American woman holding in her hand a Clason guide book with the map extending from it. The rear cover contained an advertisement for the guides and highlighted “Five Special Features of the Clason Green Guides”. The highways on the single, attached guide map continued to be depicted with crude red overprints. In the text, there were now references to the pole markings as well as listings of the distances between towns. Nine new state guides were added - Arkansas, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin - along with a guide for the United States.

In 1921, the guide was officially titled *Clason's (state name) Green Guide*. The Native American woman remained on the cover, although her dress changed, and the price was also increased to 35 cents. Between 1921 and 1929, the dating of these guides becomes more of a challenge because copyright dates and other dating clues vanished in 1920. The 1921 edition, however, had the phrase “New Census edition” across the top of the cover, reflecting the fact that it contained the final state population data from the 1920 census. Also, it was mentioned at the bottom of the cover that now Chicago joined Denver as one of the publishing locations of the Clason Co. The back cover of the guide contained an advertisement claiming that the “Green Guides are published of every state,” which is likely an overstatement. While there are library listings or copies in private collections for Green Guides covering seven additional states - Michigan, Ohio, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Tennessee, and Kentucky - there are none reported for any states east of Ohio. Thus, there is no evidence that the number of individual states covered by the Green Guides ever exceeded 31.

In what appears to be a 1922 version of the guide, the title was changed to *Clason's (state name) Green Guide Road Map*, and the “New Census edition” phrase on the cover

was removed. The image on the front and advertisement on the rear cover of the guide were unchanged.

A major format change took place around 1923, however, when Clason began to include a freshly drawn road map for each state along with the standard guide map that traditionally appeared in each of the Green Guides. These were the same road maps that were included in the Clason Touring Atlases. Since the maps in the Touring Atlases have now been dated (see *Liedholm and Greaves, Legend # 39*), these could be utilized to date subsequent versions of the Green Guides.

Green Guides issued during 1923 had the same basic cover as 1922, except for the added phrase “paved roads-road distances-pole markings” across the top. The rear cover has a different Green Guide advertisement stressing that there were now three large maps included – the guide map, the state road map, and a U.S. road map. The individual state and U.S. road map were on two sides of one sheet attached to the front of the guide, while the guide map continued to be attached to the back. The road maps were from the years 1923.

In 1924, there was another change in the cover format. The white border on the cover was removed and a dotted green fill replaced a solid fill in the cover's middle. The title was modified once again to *Clason's (state name) Green Guide with Road and Railway Maps*. This front cover format and title continued through 1929.

The rear cover of the guides now showed an advertisement for the Clason Touring Atlases. These advertisements, along with the number of attached maps, provide initial clues to the subsequent dates of the guides.

The Green Guides from 1924 until 1926 had an advertise-

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ment for the Paved Roads of the Nation version of the Touring Atlas on the rear cover. The 1924 edition is distinctive because it continued the earlier format of three large maps portrayed on two attached sheets.

In 1925, however, the U.S. road map was eliminated. The state road map was placed on the obverse of the guide map attached to the back of the guide. This format of two large maps on one attached sheet was continued in 1926 and became the standard on all subsequent editions of the Clason Green Guide. A more precise delineation of the date of the Green Guides during this period can be obtained by comparing the map features of the attached state road map with the information in the Clason State Map dating guide (<http://staff.lib.msu.edu/weessie2/clason/>).

The Green Guides from 1927 until 1929 can be initially

distinguished from the previous years by the advertisement for the 1927 version of Clason's Touring Atlas of the United States that now appeared on the rear cover. The Clason State Map dating guide can be used to determine the specific year.

In 1930, the cover format of the guide changed radically. The Native American was now sitting and the cover now had a red interior. The title was now *Clason's (state name) Maps*, and only in small letters on the bottom did one see the phrase "Green Guide Series." A 1930 copyright appeared at the bottom of the first page. The rear cover contained an advertisement for the Clason Touring Atlas of 1930.

In 1931, the last year of the guide, the phrase "New Census edition" appeared on the cover along with a 1931 copyright on the first page. With that edition, the Green Guide ended its long reign.

EDITOR'S NOTE: George S. Clason also created many local maps. These included maps of the various mining districts of Colorado, which are highly desirable among those who collect mining memorabilia. My earliest is a *Map Showing Approved Mineral Surveys in the Principal Mining Districts of Boulder County, Colorado*. The front cover of this map is shown at right, with the title block of the map itself below (it is dated 1904 below the title). It is interesting to note that it was published by "George S. Clason," rather than the Clason Map Company. The title also notes that in addition to publishing maps, he provided paintings of mining properties – I guess he was an artist as well. I have never seen such a painting, however.

