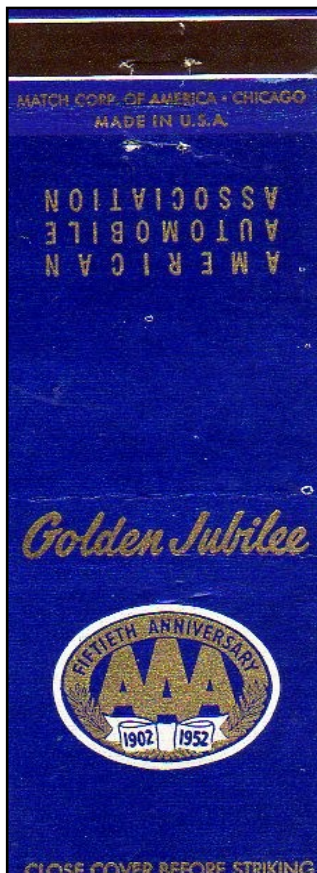




by Mike Prero



The **American Automobile Association** is a federation of motor clubs throughout North America. AAA is a privately held not-for-profit national member association and service organization with over 60 million members in the United States and Canada. AAA provides services to its members, including roadside assistance and others. Its national headquarters are in Heathrow, Florida.

In 1904, the AAA merged with the very first American automobile organization, the American Motor League, under the direction of the first chairman, Augustus Post.

The first AAA road maps were published in 1905. AAA began printing hotel guides in 1917. The Triple-A began its School Safety Patrol Program in 1920, the first of the association's driver safety programs, which provided local schools with materials, including badges and ID cards to train and organize students into a patrol force. The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, which conducts studies on motorist safety, was established as a separate entity in 1947.



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AAA created the Racing Board (Contest Board) in 1902 to officiate the Vanderbilt Cup international Cup automobile race in Long Island, New York. The Racing Board sanctioned the Indianapolis 500 and awarded national racing championships in 1905, 1916, 1920–1941, and 1946–1955. After the 1955 Le Mans disaster, AAA decided that auto racing distracted from its primary goals, and the United States Automobile Club was formed to take over the race sanctioning/officiating. In 2005, AAA re-entered racing as a sponsor of ISC-owned tracks. In 2006, AAA's foray into racing expanded when it made a three-year commitment to sponsor Roush Racing's number 6 car on the NASCAR Nextel Circuit.

In 1935, AAA published *Sportsmanlike Driving*, the first course outline for high school teachers. In 1936, AAA published the first driver education curriculum for use in high schools (now known as Responsible Driving). AAA has updated its driver training courses throughout the years and many clubs currently offer their own driving schools, or work with other companies to provide AAA's driving curriculum.

Knowing that vehicles pose a hazard to pedestrians, in 1936 AAA began a pedestrian safety program with a grant from the Automotive Safety Foundation. AAA went on to commission and publish (1938) an extensive study of pedestrian safety to reduce pedestrian fatalities and injuries. AAA's Pedestrian Protection Program began in 1937. The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety continues to conduct research related to traffic and pedestrian safety.

During the 1940s, AAA offered its services to the Advisory Commission of the Council of National Defense in anticipation of becoming involved in World War II. AAA President Thomas P. Henry was appointed consultant in the transportation unit of the Defense Council, and AAA pledged resources, including highway information, to national defense planning efforts as it had during World War I.

Increased need for conservation during the war led to AAA's supporting the manufacture of synthetic rubber in anticipation of a war-related tire/rubber shortage, urging motorists to reduce their driving speed to conserve fuel (1942); and backing a scrap rubber campaign. In doing its part to assist in the war effort, AAA placed its mapping facilities at the disposal of the Army department; conducted motor pool driver education; secured an order from the War Production Board that stopped the sale of certain anti-freeze solutions harmful to motors; launched a campaign to alleviate a shortage of auto mechanics; monitored tire and gasoline rationing; and established, with the Red Cross and military hospitals, a driver training program for veterans with artificial limbs. AAA also assisted in the development of a manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and their operation during wartime.

In the 1960s, AAA helped draft the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, setting safety standards for automobiles, tires, and equipment. AAA also helped draft the Highway Safety Act, specifying standards for motor vehicle inspection and registration, motorcycle safety, driver education, driver licensing, traffic courts, highway design, construction, maintenance, and traffic control devices.

During the oil crisis of the 1970s, the AAA Fuel Gauge Report was created to assist motorists in finding gas stations that had fuel and were open. In 1979, President Carter appointed AAA President James B. Creal to the National Alcohol Fuels Commission. Creal also chaired a task force on gas rationing and was appointed to President Carter's National Council on Energy Efficiency. AAA representatives serving on President Carter's Alcohol Fuels Commission were requested to sign the Energy Securities Act of 1980.

AAA maps were used in the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition where more than 13,000 full-color

AAA map images were provided on an optical laser disc for demonstration of an in-car navigation device in the Chrysler Pavilion. And in 1985, the AAA North American Road Atlas was sold at retail for the first time and made the New York Times best-seller paperback list within six weeks.

AAA joined government and private-sector companies—the Federal Highway Administration, Avis, General Motors and the Florida Department of Transportation—in 1990 for the Smart Car experiment. This test of a computerized in-car navigation and travel information system demonstrated consumer acceptance of telematics technology that would make driving easier and reduce traffic congestion.

A new driver's education program, "Teaching Teens to Drive", was introduced by AAA in 1996 to focus on parent involvement in teen driving education. In 1997, AAA launched Licensed to Learn, a campaign to increase awareness of the need for Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws in every state. Today, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have enacted some form of GDL legislation.

AAA helped to shape two pieces of landmark legislation: the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century in 1998 and the Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century in 2000. Both laws embrace the principle that user fees charged to motorists and air travelers should be fully invested in improving and modernizing the nation's surface and air transportation infrastructures.

AAA was cited in 1998 as the Clinton Administration's number one traffic safety partner. And in 2000, NHTSA presented AAA with a public service award in appreciation of AAA's leadership in the Child Passenger Safety Certification Program, which teaches how to properly install infant/child safety seats, and for its continuing efforts in Graduated Driver Licensing.

Skyrocketing gas prices led AAA to testify before three Congressional committees in 2000, and to lobby to prevent Congress from repealing parts of the federal gasoline tax, which would have reduced Highway Trust Fund revenue without guaranteeing consumers any relief from high gas prices. Participating in the U.S. Department of Transportation secretary's Aviation Summit, AAA President and CEO Robert L. Darbelnet communicated AAA's stand, saying that consistent underfunding of the nation's air transportation infrastructure had led to the crisis and offering a four-point plan to help turn it around. Also that year, AAA testified on proposed hours-of-service regulations for commercial truck drivers and launched Share With Care, a public education campaign on safely sharing the road with trucks.

In the early 2000s, AAA's focus on helping seniors stay mobile longer and more safely led to an appointment to the White House Conference on Aging. AAA promoted solutions such as senior-friendly road design, screening tools, education for seniors and their families, and supplemental transportation. Reader's Digest highlighted AAA's transportation safety agenda by focusing on the importance of road safety improvements, particularly for seniors. To help seniors become safer drivers or to recognize signs that it's time to stop driving, AAA developed Roadwise Review, a computer-based screening tool enabling older drivers to identify and address physiological changes that could affect driving.

Whew! But what about the covers? Well, there are *lots* of them, usually on Hotel or Motel covers. I currently have 9,442, and I've probably only scratched the surface. They're found in all sizes, except possibly Midgets, but I can't confirm that. AAA covers are readily spotted since almost all have the AAA logo somewhere, although in some instances those logs can be pretty tiny. As with any category, you just have to look closely.

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