

Clason Road Map Codes

by Mark Greaves (RMCA #39)

In the last issue of The Legend (#39, Summer 2008) we touched briefly on the fact that Clason started putting codes on their maps in 1928. The exact meaning of these codes is still unknown, but a little further analysis does reveal some patterns of interest. The table below shows the codes arranged sequentially. The first thing to note on these codes is that when they were first implemented in 1928, even numbers were used, with two exceptions, the California-Nevada and Ontario-Quebec maps, which had odd numbered codes (R-255A and R-305A respectively). These numbers started with 200 for Ohio and continued sequentially (by even numbers) through 282 for North Dakota, then skipping to 300 for Canada. There doesn't seem to be any logical order, however, as the arrangement is neither alphabetical nor geographical. It is interesting to note also that the number 254 is skipped, with the odd-numbered California-Nevada code (255) immediately following. Perhaps there was an earlier version of this map coded as 254, which was revised before the 1928 atlas.

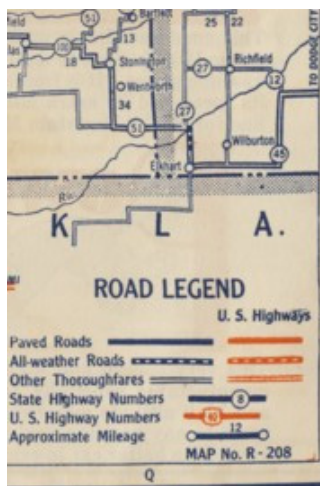
CODE	MAP	CODE	MAP
R-106A	1929-31 United States	R-245A	1929-31 Georgia
R-120A	1929-31 New England	R-246A	1928 Maryland-Del.
R-200A	1928-31 Ohio	R-248A	1928 Alabama
R-202A	1928-31 Pennsylvania	R-249A	1929-31 Alabama-Miss.
R-204A	1928-31 Oklahoma	R-250A	1928 Kentucky
R-206A	1928-31 Texas	R-251A	1929-31 Kent.-Tenn.
R-208A	1928-31 Colorado	R-252A	1928 NJ-Eastern Pa.
R-210A	1928-31 Iowa	R-253A	1929-31 New Jersey
R-212A	1928-31 Kansas	R-255A	1928-29 Calif.-Nev.
R-214A	1928-31 Missouri	R-256A	1928-31 Arkansas
R-216A	1928-31 Maine	R-258AA	1928 New Mexico
R-218A	1928-31 Mass.-Conn.-R.I.	R-260A	1928 N.H.-Vermont
R-220AA	1928 Minnesota	R-262A	1928-31 Washington
R-220A	1929-31 Minnesota	R-264A	1928-31 Montana
R-222A	1928-31 New York	R-266A	1928 South Carolina
R-224A	1928-31 Nebraska	R-268A	1928 Mississippi
R-226A	1928-31 Wisconsin	R-270A	1928 South Dakota
R-228A	1928-31 Indiana	R-271A	1929-31 South Dakota
R-230AA	1928 Illinois	R-272A	1928 Utah
R-230A	1929-31 Illinois	R-273A	1929-31 Utah
R-232A	1928-31 Michigan	R-274AA	1928 Virginia-W.V.
R-234A	1928 Arizona	R-274A	1929-31 Del.-Md.-Va.-W.V.
R-235A	1929-31 Ariz.-New Mex.	R-276A	1928 North Carolina
R-236A	1928 Wyoming	R-277A	1929-31 N.C.-S.C.
R-237A	1929-31 Wyoming	R-278A	1928 Oregon

R-238A	1928 Idaho	R-279A	1929-31 Oregon
R-239A	1929-31 Idaho	R-280A	1928 Tennessee
R-240A	1928 Florida	R-282A	1928 North Dakota
R-241A	1929-31 Florida	R-283A	1929-31 North Dakota
R-242A	1928 Louisiana	R-284A	1930-31 Calif.-Nev.
R-243A	1929-31 Louisiana	R-300A	1928-31 Canada
R-244A	1928 Georgia	R-305A	1928-31 Ont.-Que.

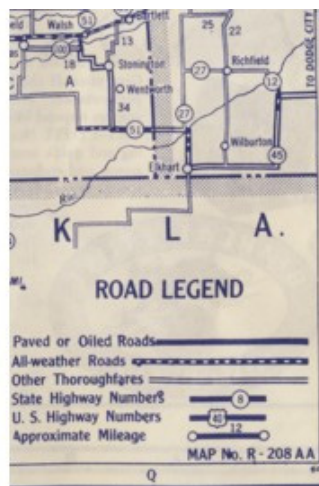
In 1929, several new maps were introduced, combining multiple states into one map, and some maps were revised. Two of these new maps were given even-numbered codes less than 200. The United States map at the front of the atlas was completely redrawn, with code 106, and a New England map was introduced with code 120. Maps that were combined, such as Arizona and New Mexico, were given an odd-numbered code one more than that for the code of the initial state in the pair, in this case incrementing Arizona's code of 234 to 235. Several states were also redrawn to more closely match the style of the rest of the atlas (Idaho, Georgia, etc.), and these were also given an odd-numbered code one more than the previous code for that state. Aside from these updates and additions in 1929, the only other modification to the codes noted was in 1930, when the California-Nevada map was redone, with a new code of 284.

As for the letters preceding and following these numeric codes, again not much is known about those either. One can presume that the "R" preceding the numbers would stand for "Road" map, to distinguish from the many other types of maps that Clason produced. And the "A" following the numeric codes would likely stand for "Atlas." This hypothesis is supported by the fact that after examining several individual folded road maps from Clason, I found that the codes on these maps lacked the "A" at the end (for example, a folding pocket map of Illinois has the code "R-230" rather than the "R-230A" found on the atlas map). A few maps had a double "A" at the end of the code in 1928, but the reason for that is entirely unknown at this point.

I have never been able to determine exactly what happened to the Clason Map Company, other than some vague references to it not surviving the Great Depression. The road atlases came to an abrupt end after the 1931 issue, and I have never seen any other maps from the company that can be positively dated later than 1931. However, looking at maps from the Hotchkiss Map Company, also based in Denver, Colorado, it becomes apparent that the Clason cartography lived on for a while. These Hotchkiss maps even carry the codes forward, with "Map No. R-208AA" appearing on a 1940 Powerline map of Colorado, for example. Does anyone know anything more about this?



c.1930 Clason map of Colorado



1940 Hotchkiss map of Colorado