On February 28, 1901, the Mahoning Rubber Manufacturing Company was legally registered in the state of Ohio. The company’s headquarters was based in the town of Youngstown located around 70 km from Akron; the latter would become the center of reference for the American tire industry in the next few years. The first steps were aimed at ensuring financial sufficiency and finding suitable land on which to build a modern factory. They would produce various articles derived from the transformation of natural rubber, such as different items of rubber created from molds, hoses, pipes, belts, rubber flooring, waterproof fabrics, golf balls and solid and pneumatic tires for carriages and motor vehicles (figs. 2-4).1

Once construction was completed and the name of the company changed to The Republic Rubber Company in December, the factory started production in early 1902.2 In 1904, Republic already offered solid rubber tires for carriages and motor vehicles such as automobiles, trucks and vans.3 In September 1905, Republic announced the creation of a department that would be responsible for manufacturing pneumatic tires and inner tubes for automobiles,4 and in 1907, a new production hall would be added to the industrial complex dedicated exclusively to manufacturing solid rubber tires. In 1915, the business of the Tire Division—responsible for solid and pneumatic tires—had increased almost 70% over the previous year.5

Early in 1917, Republic was preparing to factory equip approximately 50,000 automobiles for the Dodge brand.6 That same year, a thorough business reorganization was conducted with the aim of eliminating the company being dispersed via different branches and subsidiaries located throughout the country. On October 17 of that year, the already announced merger of Republic was formalized with another medium-sized company, the neighbor and competitor Knight Tire & Rubber—created in 1911 and also located in Ohio, in the town of Canton—, constituting the Republic Rubber Corp. of New York. In this way, the productive capacities of both companies were augmented. Republic’s daily manufacturing of 3,000 tires with 2,300 workers was added to that of Knight Tire & Rubber, which produced nearly 600 automobile tires per day—and that soon increased to 1,000 daily units—, with a staff of 400 workers. The new corporation was administered by the same management team from the former Republic Rubber Co., and administrative offices continued to be centralized in the Youngstown facilities.7

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SUGGESTED CITATION:
Medrano-Bigas, Pau.
The Forgotten Years of Bibendum. Michelin’s American Period in Milltown: Design, Illustration and Advertising by Pioneer Tire Companies (1900-1930).
In 1921, the corporation was financially destabilized. One of the reasons was the accumulation of debts as a result of the purchase of raw materials at very high prices during the Great War and the subsequent fall in prices. Faced with the impossibility of paying off their creditors, the business was taken over by a judicial administrator on June 22, 1921. This entity was in charge of managing the corporation to reduce monthly losses and implement reorganization and restructuring. After discontinuing activity for several weeks, on July 11 the production of solid rubber tires and pneumatic tires and inner tubes was resumed. On July 18, the manufacture of different rubber products was reinstated, although the firm was only operating at 25% of their actual capacity.

In 1923, the rival company Lee Rubber & Tire Corp. acquired Republic, and reorganized them as a subsidiary company, recovering their former name: The Republic Rubber Company. At the beginning of 1924, the former Republic factory was working at 75% productive capacity, with a growing workforce that was estimated to soon reach 1,800 workers. The factory of the now defunct Knight Tire Co. would be put up for sale in early 1925. In the following years, Republic specialized in certain articles derived from rubber and in truck tires—solid and pneumatic—under the control of Lee Rubber Tire & Corp. which in turn, would be absorbed by Goodyear in 1965.

The advice of an Elder
Republic’s early advertising resorted to prototypes similar to those of other companies, showing driving scenes and portraying typical figures and characters such as the seller and the customer or user, being male as well as female (figs. 1-10). Most of the advertisements were directly or indirectly aimed at presenting the company’s patented pneumatic tire model. This employed a unique and distinctive tread pattern known as the Republic Staggard Tread and was patented in February 1908. It was a non-skid rubber tread with six longitudinal and parallel columns formed by a succession of protruding studs. Each column was parallel to the rest but slightly displaced, so that the protrusions were not uniformly aligned. This unequal arrangement of the rubber studs was graphically represented in Republic’s advertisements, in which the word “Staggard” appears as the logotype—\textsc{Staggard}—, where the even and odd letters are alternately positioned above or below the text baseline alignment.

In addition to the tires, the advertisements sometimes featured the characteristic Republic Black Line pneumatic inner tubes which were red in color (fig. 7). Furthermore, they also reinforced the projection in corporate aspects as a solid company by showing images of the factory and their infrastructures as endorsements of a powerful and well-established manufacturer (figs. 2-4).

After breaking his affiliation with the newspaper \textit{The Youngstown Vindicator} in July 1909, Daniel Webster Brown “Web Brown” (1876-1974) joined the Republic company as advertising director around 1910. He was a renowned editorial cartoonist from Akron who had been established in Youngstown and active professionally since 1899, especially in different key publications for the state of Ohio and also in Boston (figs. 30-31). Among his responsibilities was the development of printed corporate material and press releases with news about the motor vehicle sector—such as the results of various automobile trials and competitions—that alluded to the qualities of the tires manufactured by The Republic Rubber Co. and were to be inserted in different newspapers. He was also responsible for editing and illustrating with his drawings the corporate newsletter \textit{The Staggard}. The logotype of this publication’s title kept the typographic placement of displaced letters, was four pages long and folded into three to be sent by mail to the different Republic branch offices scattered throughout the country as well as to their employees.
The first issue was dated April 1, 1913 and the newsletter continued to be published for several more years, having a respectable print run—the February 1915 issue had a circulation of 25,000 printed copies—for this type of publication (fig. 30). 17

At the end of 1914, Web Brown created a mascot specifically dedicated to promoting the company's tires (fig. 11). The character was born from his imagination, an original creation formed by his own pencils with a basic premise as he himself declared: "In the first place, I wanted a humorous trade mark—a scheme—to stand up in the corner—hang on the walls—or stick on the windows, because of its novelty." 18 The result took the shape of Old Man Mileage, an authority figure that advised the motorist based on his long-standing experience. 19

His name refers to a wise old man with extensive accumulated experience, and many kilometers behind him ['mileage,' a recurring word in tire slogans, refers to travel in miles]. His was donned with a large top hat—like that of the patriotic Uncle Sam figure—with his name written on the hatband. He wore corrective glasses and smoked, just like Michelin's Bibendum. A thick, long, white beard covered part of his jacket, although a brochure by Republic Tires & Tubes could be seen protruding from one of his pockets. He wore checkered trousers, short boots, and held a folded umbrella in his hand as though it were a cane. That umbrella referred to the qualities of the advertised tire, which protected drivers and ensured safe driving even in wet terrain. The character was always accompanied by his faithful dog named Stag, an abbreviation of the brand name of Staggard Republic tires.

In the April 1915 issue of The Staggard, several characteristics of their corporate mascot were explained and he was also featured on the cover page illustration. Although he was officially known as Old Man Mileage, his full name was E. Normous Mileage, actually a new play on words: "Enormous mileage." The old man also had a wife—Mrs. Mileage—and a family. 20 The choice of an elderly character to advertise a relatively new technology that was rapidly expanding—such as that of the tire—was already questioned at that time. The figure of the experienced bearded old man dressed in old-fashioned clothing was the antithesis of the child in pajamas of the rival company Fisk, and of the beautiful young Lotta Miles, the Kelly-Springfield Tire Co. female mascot, both of whom were active at the same time as Old Man Mileage. In an article written by William Livingston Larned published May 1915 in Printers' Ink, the reference magazine of the American publishing and advertising sector, the author stated:

"Surely you have met that grand old veteran of the long-whiskered brigade, Mr. E. Normous Mileage, representing Republic Tires. Mr. Mileage is not exactly typical of the twentieth century, and his whiskers would make mighty poor roadbed, but the garage fellers all over the country think Old Man Mileage is the Abe Lincoln of the tire business, and whether we sympathize with him or not, we can't possibly forget him." 22

The figure of the old man and his dog was widely used in the design of advertisements for newspapers and magazines (figs. 12-16), in corporate and commercial stationery (figs. 22-24), in the form of large size cut-out figures and in transferable stickers for display windows at points of sale and garages (figs. 25-26 and 29-30) as well as in decorating vehicles of the company's corporate commercial and delivery fleet (figs. 27-28). This mascot was featured in Republic advertisements published in generalist magazines such as Harper's, The Literary Digest, Life, McClure's Magazine, Collier's, Sunset, The National Geographic and in the specialized automotive sector publications Motor, Automobile Topics, Motor Age, Automotive Industries, Automobile Dealer and Repairer, Motor World and Touring Topics. Advertise-
ments where he was protagonist were also placed in other magazines such as *Country Life in America*, *Scientific American*, *The Club Journal* and *Golfers’ Magazine*, as well as being utilized for different advertising modules published in numerous newspapers (figs. 17-19).

The last appearances of Old Man Mileage are dated at the beginning of 1917, probably as a result of the business reorganization that culminated, in autumn of that same year, in the newly created entity The Republic Rubber Corporation. Web Brown left the company at the end of 1918 to fully devote himself to directing the local weekly of Youngstown, *The Citizen*, which he had founded together with two partners in 1915;²³ the position of advertising director was then held by Honor Blocker, who had worked for two years as Brown’s assistant.²⁴

After the withdrawal of the mascot created to promote their tires, Republic Rubber Corp.’s advertisements employed the company’s founding emblem—featuring an eagle with outstretched wings—to replace him. The animal, symbol of the Federal Republic of the United States of America, had previously been used as a mascot, but had relinquished its role to the character of Old Man Mileage. One of the reasons for the eagle’s reinstatement was its suitability as an image for the firm at that given time. It was 1918, during the First World War and with patriotic sentiment in full force, when the relevant advertising campaign was developed featuring the bald-headed eagle as the protagonist. The bird would become the tires’ symbol and mascot, applied in both advertisements (figs. 37-45) and in identification signs for businesses associated with the firm’s commercial network (figs. 46-47). This would continue up to the moment when Republic was integrated into the Lee Rubber & Tire Corporation, which came into effect in 1923.
Notes
1. As stated in news reports published during 1901 in the magazine *The India Rubber World*: “New rubber factory in Ohio,” April 1; “Mahoning Rubber Manufacturing Co.,” May 1; “The new mill at Youngstown,” June 1.
2. According to news items published during 1902 in the specialized magazine *The India Rubber World*: “Change of name; increase of capital,” January 1; “Republic Rubber Co. (Youngstown, Ohio),” February 1.
13. Patent number 898,907, issued to Tod J. Mell/Republic Rubber Co. on September 15, 1908 as explained in the article “Holds Nobby tread infringes Staggard,” *Motor Age*, January 4, 1912, p. 84.
14. The word is the reflection of the English adjective ‘staggered,’ which means an alternating, overlapping, uneven pattern.
21. The American William Livingston Larned (1880-1969), born in Buffalo, New York, was a writer, poet, illustrator, art director and creative director of advertising. He wrote several books, including *Illustration in Advertising* (1925), which constituted a reference manual at the time. He also collaborated regularly and intensively with different publications for articles on marketing, advertis-
ing, illustration, graphic design and photography, as well as on business, literature, social relations, physical education and sports, and travel. He stands out for his extensive list of articles on advertising, illustration and design published in the magazines Printers' Ink, The Advertising News, The Printing Art, Advertising & Selling, Judicious Advertising and Bulletin of Photography. Biography that I elaborated based on a compilation of news briefs published in different newspapers, which include: “Writer of famed story dies at 80,” Abilene Report News, November 23, 1960, p. 50; and “Artist’s wife dead. Suicide?,” The Morning Telegraph (New York), April 4, 1905.


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SAFE ROUTES. The above image presents one of the first full-color press advertisements for The Republic Rubber Company. It demonstrates an example of comparative advertising: an automobile has skidded and runs off the road. Meanwhile another vehicle-equipped with non-skid Republic Staggard Tread tires passes by them following the correct route.

EXPANSION. Nearly fifteen years separate the two images shown here portraying facilities of the industrial complex and administrative offices of The Republic Rubber in Youngstown, Ohio, a testimony to their continued productive growth.

2. Engraving published on the cover of the specialized magazine *The India Rubber World*, March 1905.

IN YOUNGSTOWN AND CANTON. Above, a 1917 advertisement showing the facilities of The Republic Rubber Corporation in Youngstown, Ohio. The text explained that the company had also acquired—with the purchase of Knight Tire & Rubber Co.—another factory in Canton, a town in the same state, thus increasing their productive capacity.

THE FIRST CAMPAIGNS.

This page presents two examples of the type of advertisement utilized during the early stages of launching the non-skid tread Staggard tires. They portray driving scenes which demonstrate the reliable behavior of the tires as well as depicting the interaction of typical characters such as drivers, mechanics or servicemen and tire salesmen.

5. Full-page advertisement published in the generalist magazine *The Outlook*, August 1912.
6. Advertisement in *Life* magazine, April 17, 1913.
The Most Widely Imitated of All
REPUBLIC STAGGARD TREAD TIRES

The Tire Perfect
The Original, Effective, Non-Skid Tire
The six rows of heavy rubber studs not only prevent skidding and slipping, but add a wearing surface to the tire equal to two ordinary smooth tread tires.

The Republic Black-Line Red Inner Tube
‘The Tube Perfect’
A fitting companion for the Republic Staggard Tread Tire. This new inner tube gives twice the wear and double the riding comfort.

The Republic Rubber Co.
Youngstown, Ohio
Branches and Agencies in the Principal Cities

TREAD TRACKS AND INNER TUBES. The above image shows an advertisement for the Republic Black-Line inner tubes. The pattern of the border that frames and divides the composition is produced by the Republic Staggard tires’ tread track. The same track can be seen in the illustrated scene which depicts a moment of danger. A pair of drivers are in peril as another car approaches them head-on in a narrow road bordered by a cliff, a situation where Republic tires must react effectively.

7. Full-page advertisement published in Travel Magazine, April 1912.
WOMEN AND MEN AT THE WHEEL.
The above advertisement from 1911 shows a smiling woman who is at the wheel of her vehicle, properly dressed for driving and framed by a tire. According to the text that accompanies the illustration, Republic tires’ grip on the road ensured a perfect, smooth ride and safe driving without skids, ideal qualities that made them suitable for the woman driver. The image on the left presents a driver holding the Republic tire over his shoulder with a smile on his face and reminds the reader of the performance of a tire designed to be effective in rainy conditions.

Advertising stamps, also known as cinderellas, are utilized for advertising purposes. Their format consists of postal service stamps with their characteristic perforated border and adhesive backside. These small jewels, authentic miniature posters, originated around 1907 in Germany and their use extended to all kinds of products and events. The European and German influence crossed the Atlantic and consolidated in the United States around 1914. The year 1915 marked its full recognition, with the organization of exhibitions devoted to the subject and the edition of specialized publications such as *The Poster Stamp Bulletin* and *The Poster Art Stamp Supplement*. At that time, having private collections became popular and special albums were sold to preserve and display the thousands of advertising stamps that flooded the cities made of striking colors, simple designs and impressive illustrations.

**11.** Enlargement of a lithographed advertising stamp for Republic Rubber. Actual dimensions: 50 x 70 mm, c. 1915.
MAGAZINE ADVERTISEMENTS. This page presents four examples of advertisements published in magazines by The Republic Rubber Company that feature Old Man Mileage.

PERSONALIZED SERVICE. The above image shows one of the last advertisements for Republic that utilizes the character of Old Man Mileage prior to his retirement. The allegorical illustration portrays the satisfaction of the consumer as user of Republic's pneumatic tires and inner tubes: a driver and the mascot shake hands, expressing mutual gratitude.

NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS. This page presents three examples of advertising modules published in local press by establishments affiliated with Republic’s commercial network. On the left, with the title of “Why,” Old Man Mileage presents the new Republic WM tire whose pattern—the aligned repetition of these two letters—is engraved on the tread.


BRINGING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH THE WISE ELDER.

This page presents two different examples of the role Old Man Mileage played in advertising The Republic Rubber Company. Above, the figure of the mascot and his faithful dog Stag is adapted to the form of a small cardboard calendar made of cut-out cardboard and a support tab on the backside; onto this rigid base a small pad was stapled whose different sheets corresponded to the months of the year, which could be torn off. This promotional item was distributed in 1915 to establishments of the manufacturer’s commercial network as a gift for customers. On the right, an advertisement specifically aimed at attracting establishments interested in forming part of Republic’s commercial network, which utilized the appeal of the advertising support in written media that the company would provide.


“Republics give uninterrupted mileage under all road conditions!”

— says Old Man Mileage

Once a motorist tries Republic Tires he stops experimenting. Our dealers’ records show that the vast majority of their business is repeat sales.

What better profit assurance could you ask for? Here is a tire so completely satisfactory that it builds up a permanent trade you can depend on—a tire that delivers uninterrupted sales mileage.

Don’t you think you ought to investigate? Write for detailed facts about the Republic proposition.

The Republic Rubber Co.
Youngstown, Ohio
MULTIPLICATION OF THE OLD MAN MILEAGE MASCOT.
This page shows three more examples of the constant presence and use of The Republic Rubber Co. ’s mascot in all types of corporate and promotional elements. Above, a promotional card with a calendar for Republic tires, a gift by the establishment Victor Shumard in Milford, Ohio. On the left, corporate stationary for use by establishments comprising Republic’s commercial network and a pricelist with prices effective as of February 1915 for the company’s pneumatic tires and inner tubes.

23. Corporate stationary, c. 1915.
**DELIVERY TRUCKS.**
The image on the right shows a White brand truck acquired by the branch office of The Republic Rubber Company in Chicago, Illinois, for their delivery fleet. The company The White Co. from Cleveland, Ohio was a leading manufacturer of freight vehicles.


**SALES TEAM.**
Promotional photo of The Auto Tire Shop in Roanoke, Virginia, showing the facade of the establishment, their employees and a large cut-out figure of Old Man Mileage, indicating that this business was part of Republic’s commercial network.

25. Postcard. Photographed by Davis Photo Co. in Roanoke, Virginia, c. 1915.
26. Photograph portraing Thomas B. Baines and the facade of his establishment — Baines, The Tire Man Store —, which opened at 21 S. New Street in Staunton, Virginia in September 1914. The tire vulcanizing shop was associated with The Republic Rubber Co.’s commercial network. In the center of the image, as part of the background in front of the door and piles of tires, a large cut-out figure of Old Man Mileage can be seen.

PROMOTIONAL VEHICLES.
On the left, a van for the corporate fleet of The Republic Rubber Company in Pittsburgh, a commercial agency established in that city to cover sales and services for the territory. The figure of Old Man Mileage and his dog next to a tire adorned the sides of the vehicle.

INDOOR OUTDOOR MASCOT.
This double page shows the interior of a repair and retreading workshop for pneumatic tires and inner tubes, in which we can see two Republic posters featuring the mascot Old Man Mileage hanging on the wall next to another that corresponds to the Fisk tire brand from The Fisk Tire & Rubber Company. The smaller photo directly above presents another view of The Auto Tire Shop’s facade, an establishment from Roanoke, Virginia. This is different from the photograph shown on the previous double page, in which employees of the business pose next to the cut-out figure of Republic’s mascot.

29. Photograph of the interior of an unidentified service and repair station, dated 1916.
30. Postcard. Photography by Davis Photo Co. in Roanoke, Virginia, c. 1915.
QUALITY AND HONESTY. In this humorous illustration for the cover of the monthly bulletin *The Staggard*, a busy crowded day of fishing takes place. In the center is Old Man Mileage accompanied by his faithful dog Stag, who launches his fishing rod from a boat named 'Honesty' utilizing quality bait. The character's speech bubble states: "There are plenty of fish [customers] in this pool [the market] for all of us—but you must not try to fool them—they know what they want [the quality kind]." From the shore, manufacturers and businesses—helped by publicists—try unsuccessfully to catch some kind of fish. As it cannot be otherwise, the only fishhook that the fish bite is the line from the Republic Tires mascot character, who obtains a hefty catch.

Web Brown, whose complete name was Daniel Webster Brown (1876-1974), was born in Akron, the city of the tire. He created the mascot of the Republic Rubber company where he worked as Director of Advertising between 1910 and 1918. Brown was a prominent cartoonist and editorial illustrator. Between 1899 and 1945 he collaborated with different publications, which included the magazine *The Roller Monthly* from Canton (1900-1901) and the newspapers *Akron Daily Democrat* (1901), *Boston Post* (1902-1903), *The Youngstown Telegram* (1906-1909) and *The Vindicator* (1909-1910). He also created and directed *The Citizen*, an illustrated weekly publication for the town of Youngstown, Ohio (1915-1925).

32. Caricature illustration of the Fire Chief in Bradford, Pennsylvania, part of a series of humorous portraits featuring important members of fire departments from the United States and Canada at a convention in 1912. Published in *The India Rubber World*, May 1, 1912. Illustrated by Web Brown.

THE (PNEUMATIC) CIRCUS TIRE.

The images presented here constitute two testimonies of a unique promotional action: a circus parade. The procession was headed by a clown riding on the back of an elephant, followed by other pachyderms. The comedian held a large cardboard cut-out portraying a tire with Staggard treads, while large banners with the slogan "Use Republic Tires" hung from the flanks of the elephant. The show toured the streets of (presumably) Youngstown, Ohio in 1909, the town where The Republic Tire Company was founded and where their factory and offices were located.

35. Photograph of the promotional parade, presumably celebrated in Youngstown, c. 1909.
SPARE TIRE SALESMAN. Above, an example of character types used in certain advertisements after the retirement of Old Man Mileage, the experienced ambassador and advocate of Republic tires. In this specific case, two versions of inner tubes for the Black-Line brand, characterized by their distinctive red and gray colors, are presented.

SYMBOL AND MASCOT.
Since their inception, The Republic Rubber Company —later refounded as a corporation—had linked their name to the national symbol of the Republic of the United States of America, the bald-headed eagle. Different interpretations of the symbol are presented here as well as how it is applied in advertisements as a dynamic and animated element, fully taking on its role as a mascot.

37. Corporate symbol, detail from an advertisement in the magazine Automobile Trade Journal, April 1917.
**WELL-GRIPPED.** The advertisement shown above resorts to the natural qualities of the eagle for constructing the advertising message. The slogan "When all others fail" serves as a catchphrase for the illustration, which shows the eagle in flight firmly gripping a tire with its claws. The Staggard tread of Republic pneumatic tires behaves with the same strong grip on the road.

41. Corporate emblem used by Republic since their inception and preserved until the sixties. The emblem was maintained after the absorption of Republic by Lee Tire & Rubber Corp. in 1923, and remained as a symbol of identification for the company.
FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE. This page presents four examples of how the eagle of The Republic Rubber Corp. was employed as a mascot. The headlines of the advertising texts, such as “Worth-while war-time savings” or “A product of the new era,” constitute an explicit reference to the First World War and the scenario raised after the end of the conflict. And the figure of the bald-headed eagle used to illustrate the advertisements was equally explicit in its patriotic symbology.

42. Advertisement published in the generalist magazine The Saturday Evening Post, August 17, 1917.
43. Advertisement in The Saturday Evening Post, August 3, 1918. 44. Advertisement in The Saturday Evening Post, July 20, 1918.
45. Advertisement published in the specialized magazine Automobile Topics, September 23, 1922.
A DEPENDABLE EAGLE. The above image represents one of several advertisements that comprised The Republic Rubber Corp.’s campaign to potentiate their network of authorized service establishments. The garages and service stations were properly identified with large signs showing the eagle symbol as can be seen in these examples. The headline of the advertisement—“Dealers who display this sign are dependable”—and the accompanying text explain it clearly: “Wherever you go, the Sign of the Eagle is known as the sign of efficiency, dependability, and courtesy.”

47. Detail of an advertisement published in *Life* magazine, October 4, 1923.