



# WEBFOOTER EXTRA

SEPTEMBER 2015

## THE MICHELIN TWINS IN PORTLAND

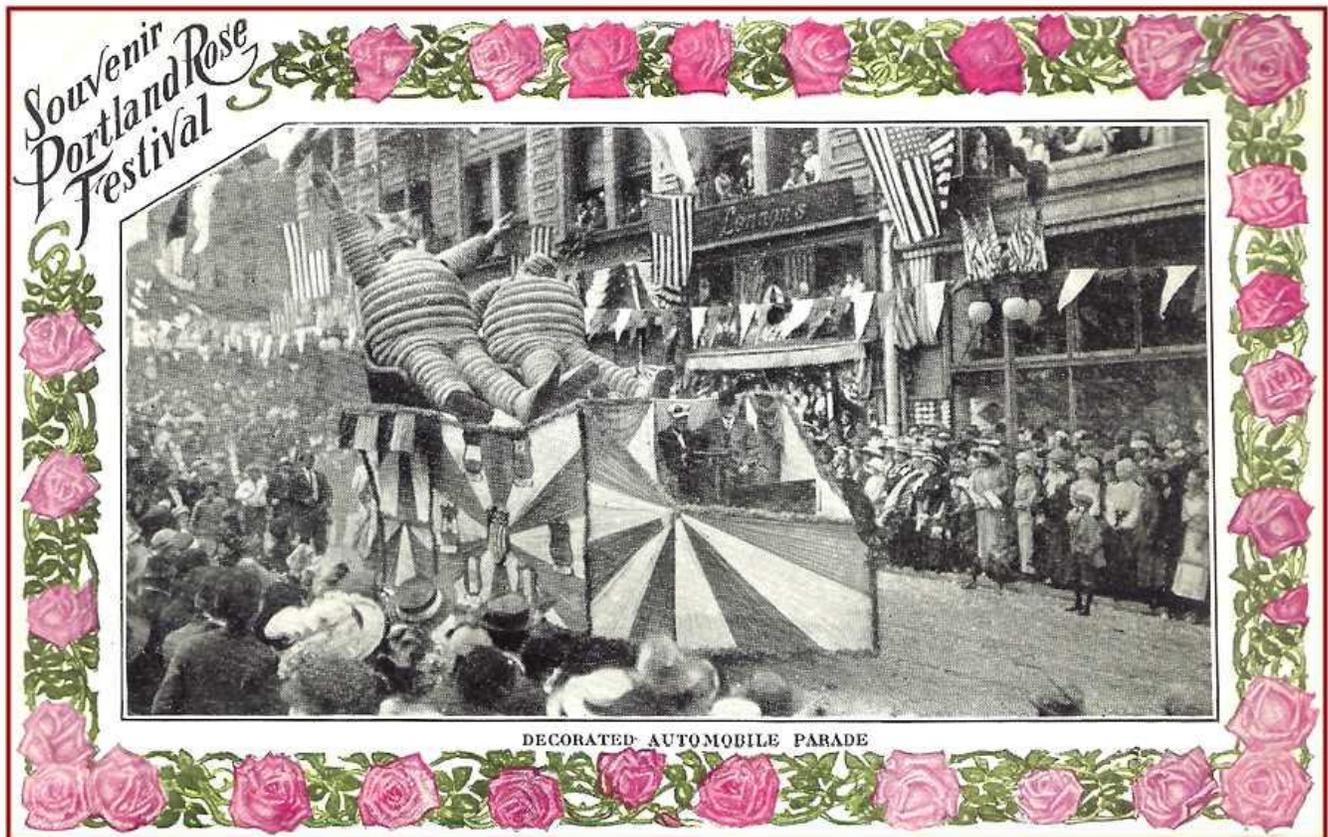


Photo Courtesy of Stephen Kenney

### WEBFOOTERS POST CARD CLUB

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- ◆ The History of Bibendum, the Michelin Man – see page 3.



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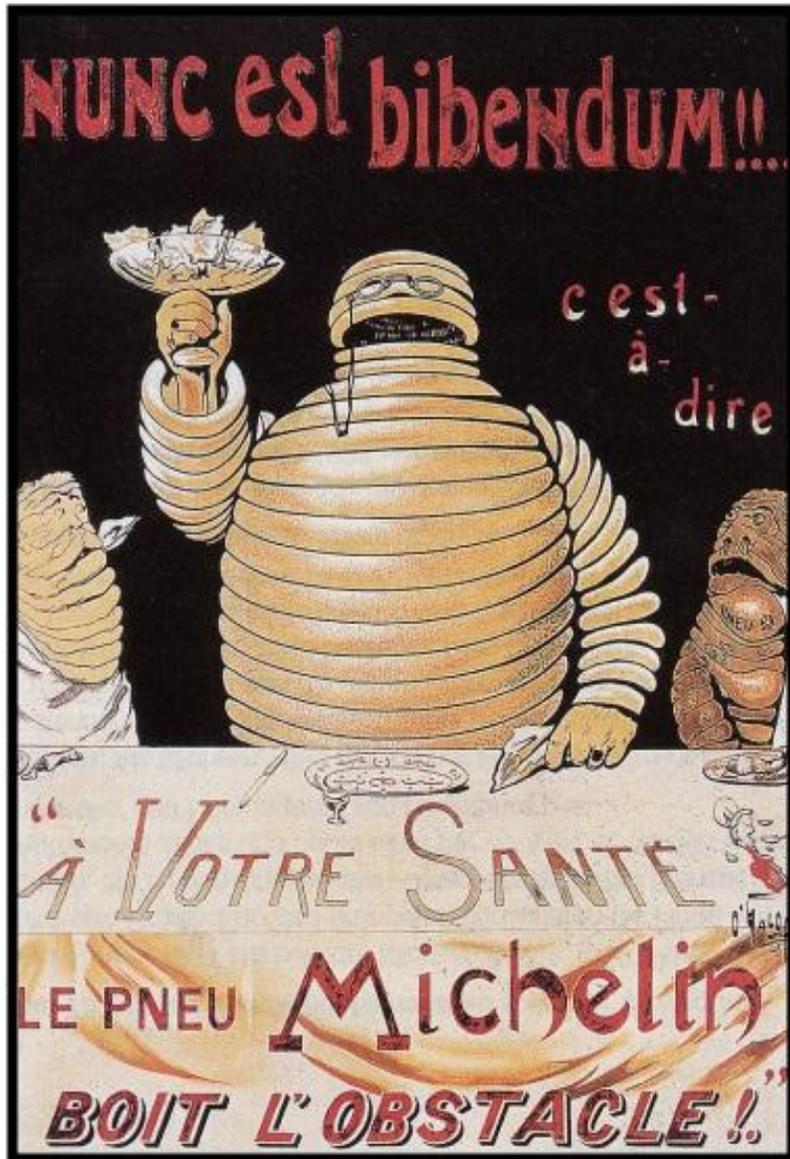
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# THE STORY OF BIBENDUM

Bibendum, or "Bib", commonly referred to as the Michelin Man, is the symbol of the Michelin Tire Company. The aim of all advertising is first to create recognition for a brand, and then, ideally, affection and loyalty. This can be achieved in a multitude of ways, but one of the best examples can be found in a symbol that is now 117 years old: the Michelin Man, or Bibendum, as he is formally known.

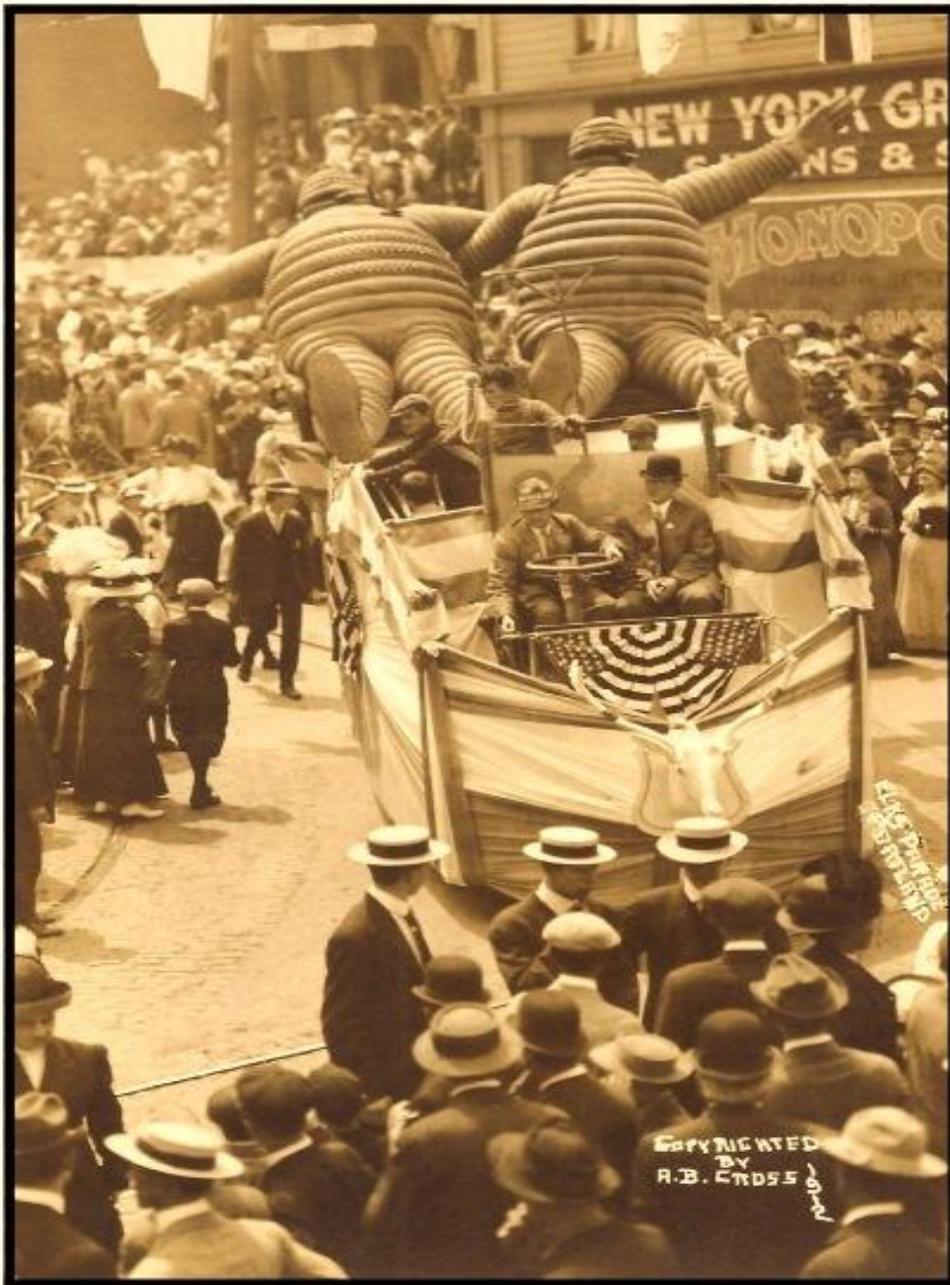
He is an unusual figure in logo design. A light-hearted, jolly character, the Michelin Man is more of a mascot for the brand, constructed solely from tires. In this he is very much a product of his time, as design

historian and curator Alain Weill suggests: "Using specific characters was the trend—the little girl for Menier, the Pierrot for Cointreau, and so on. The great thing with the chubby little man made out of tires is that he could be represented in various situations."

The origins of the Michelin Man can be traced to four years before he was first actually drawn, when the Michelin brothers, Édouard and André of Clermont-Ferrand in France, attended the Lyon Universal Exposition in 1894. Legend has it that on noticing a pile of tires on the Michelin stand, Édouard remarked to his brother, "Look, with arms and legs, it would make a man."

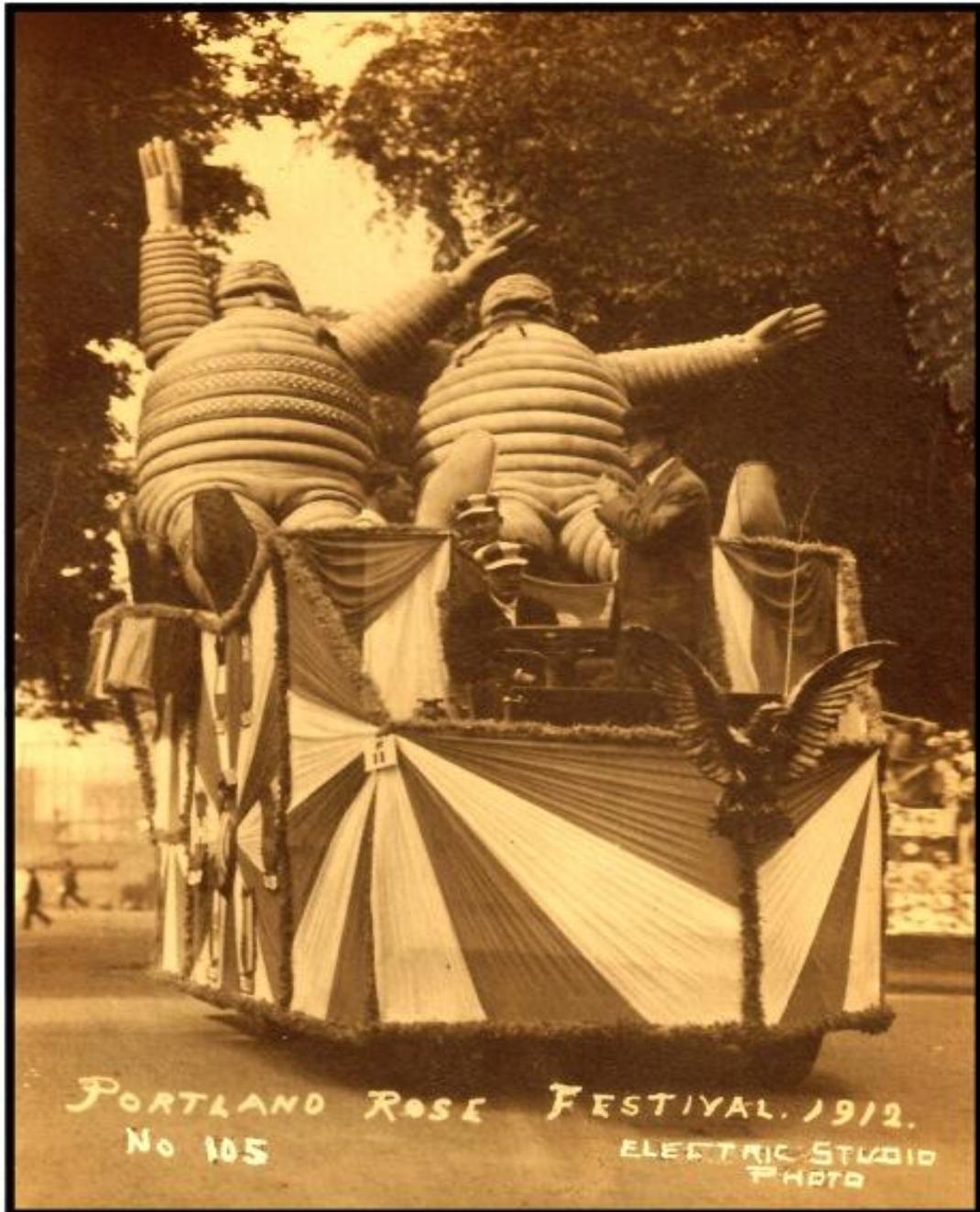
Four years later, André met French cartoonist Marius Rossillon, popularly known as O'Galop, who showed him a rejected image he had created for a Munich brewery—a large, regal figure holding a huge glass of beer and quoting Horace's phrase "Nunc est bibendum." André immediately suggested replacing the man with a figure made from tires.

Thus O'Galop transformed the earlier image into Michelin's symbol. The 1898 poster showed him offering the toast *Nunc est bibendum* to his scrawny competitors with a glass full of road hazards, with the title and the tag *C'est à dire : À votre santé. Le pneu Michelin boit l'obstacle* ("That is to say, to your health. The Michelin tire drinks up obstacles"). The implication is that Michelin tires will easily take on road hazards. The company used this basic poster format for fifteen years, adding its latest products to the table in front of the figure. It is unclear when the word "Bibendum" came to be the name of the character himself. At the latest, it was in 1908, when Michelin commissioned Curnonsky to write a newspaper column signed "Bibendum."



The Michelin Twins appeared as guests at Portland's Elks Parade in 1912.

Such is the public warmth toward the Michelin Man that he has on occasion broken out of the realms of advertising and entered other forms of popular culture. The company recognized this early on, and put him at the center of their flagship Bibendum Building in London, built in 1911. Beginning in 1912, tires took on a black appearance because carbon was added as a preservative and strengthener to the base rubber material. Before then, they were a gray-white or light, translucent beige color. Bibendum's appearance also changed. Though briefly featured in several print ads, Michelin quickly changed back his appearance, citing printing and aesthetic issues for the change, and not racial concerns as commonly believed.



The Michelin Twins also appeared at Portland's Rose Festival Parade in 1912.



This poster from the International Advertising Exhibition in 1920 shows popular advertising characters of the day including the lightly-colored, cigar-smoking Bibendum.

Later in the 1920's the Michelin Man discarded his pince-nez eyeglasses, and also gave up his cigar. At the dawn of the motor age these appendages had helped him appeal to the very small, wealthy section of society that had the power to buy a car. The white tires remained, however, as an important visual throwback to his 19th-century origins. Bibendum's shape has changed over the years.

By the 1950's he had become a more rotund figure, and was even depicted gaily rolling a tire along the road; a further 20 years on and he had transformed into a true cartoon, in one iteration dancing euphorically beneath the slogan "I'm clinging in the rain."

The name of the plump tire-man became an adjective to describe someone obese or wearing comically bulky clothing. (e.g. "How can I wrap up warm without looking like the Michelin Man?")

*The Mile at pre-war cost*



The initial cost of the Michelin "Cablé" is higher than you paid in 1914 for a Michelin Tyre, but it more than repays you in extra mileage.

FIT  
**MICHELIN "CABLÉ"**  
**COVERS**  
 the latest development in Cord tyres.

Made in Clincher or Straight Side type.  
 — The Michelin Straight Side "Cablé" is the only S. S. tyre which makes it possible to do away with the "flap". —

*The Michelin "Cablé" is available in the 155, 150, 135, 120, 105, 90 and 30 x 3 1/2 beaded edge sections.*

A. 10. *Also 6, 5, 4 1/2, 4 and 3 1/2 Straight Side sections.*

Michelin Tire Ad from 1922.



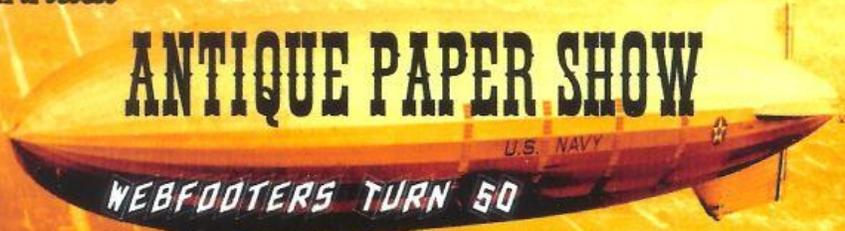
The Michelin Twins in London in 1975 with their omnibus.

In the 1980's, Bibendum was shown running, and in 1998, his 100th anniversary, a slimmed-down version became the company's new logo. The slimming of the logo reflected lower-profile, smaller tires of modern cars. Bib even had a similar-looking puppy as a companion when the duo were CGI animated for recent American television advertisements.



Today, Bibendum is one of the world's most recognized trademarks, representing Michelin in over 150 countries.

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