



## ***NEWS RELEASE***

# **1910-2010: The RV Industry Celebrates 100 Years of Exploration and Innovation**

A century ago, the popularization of the automobile, improving roads, and America's passion for exploration gave rise to mass-produced, manufactured recreation vehicles, and the RV industry was born. In 2010, Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) and the RV industry will mark this centennial with an array of special activities celebrating the 100-year journey of a uniquely American product.

In 1910, there was no TV, no air conditioning and no phone, but there were RVs. Through war and peace, booms and busts, fuel lines, fads and the cyber revolution, the RV lifestyle has endured and is still going strong, even in today's challenging economic times.

"Think about how far we've come in the past 100 years in terms in technology, yet the reasons to RV remain the same," says RVIA President Richard Coon. "RVing has been able to thrive and grow because people still enjoy the freedom that it provides."

The industry will celebrate its centennial in 2010 with a series of events that showcase today's innovations and new products while emphasizing America's century-long love affair with RVs.

"Recognizing and celebrating the 100th anniversary of the RV industry is a unique opportunity to tell our story to the media and public," says Coon.

The roots of RVing are as old as pioneers and covered wagons. But 1910 is the year that America's leading RV historians — David Woodworth, Al Hesselbart and Roger White — cite as the beginning of what has become the modern RV industry.

"The first motorized campers were built in 1910," says Woodworth, a preeminent collector of early RVs and RV camping memorabilia. "Before then, people camped in private rail cars that were pulled to sidings along train routes. The year 1910 brought a new freedom to people who didn't want to be limited by the rail system. RVs allowed them to go where they wanted, when they wanted."

Hesselbart, archivist for the RV/MH Heritage Museum in Elkhart, Ind., also pinpoints 1910 as the birth of the RV industry. "Camping has been around for centuries, but 1910 is when the first auto-related camping vehicles were built for commercial sale."

Known as "auto campers" or "camping trailers" a century ago, these vehicles were a forerunner of today's modern RVs.

"There were one-offs [individual units] built prior to 1910," says White, an associate curator for the Smithsonian Institution. "But 1910 is a good benchmark for the industry."

"The 1910 RVs offered minimal comforts compared to today's homes-on-wheels," says Woodworth. "But they did provide the freedom to travel anywhere, to be able to get a good night's sleep and enjoy home cooking. One notable exception to today's RV was the bathroom. In 1910, it was usually either yonder tree or yonder bush."

Hesselbart points out that one brand of auto camper in those days was equipped with a bathroom onboard. "Pierce-Arrow's 'Touring Landau' had a potted toilet," he says.

A version of today's Type B van camper, the Pierce-Arrow "Touring Landau," was unveiled at Madison Square Garden in 1910.

In addition to Pierce-Arrow, there were several other companies or auto-body builders producing motorized RVs. These companies and innovative products were featured in a Popular Mechanics issue in 1911, but Woodworth says the motorhomes highlighted in the article were actually built in 1910.

Camping trailers made by Los Angeles Trailer Works and Auto-Kamp Trailers also rolled off the assembly line beginning in 1910. Hesselbart says the earliest RV on display at the RV/MH museum is a 1913 trailer, ancestor of the contemporary travel trailer.

Photos of 1910 RV models appear in White's book on the history of RVing and exist in both Woodworth's and Hesselbart's libraries.

To mark the centennial, RVIA is creating a special 100th anniversary logo and commemorative decal that everyone in the industry will be invited to use in their own promotions and marketing. RVIA is planning an industry party on June 7 during the 2010 Committee Week in South Bend, Indiana, to which media and political guests would be invited.

RVIA will soon announce details of an RV caravan led by Woodworth with one of his early RVs, as well as a menu of celebration and promotion ideas for dealers, campgrounds, clubs and shows to use on their own.

"Celebrating our centennial will create excitement and pride throughout our made-in-America industry and provide an opportunity for manufacturers, dealers, suppliers and campground owners to unite under one banner," says Coon. "For 100 years, we've been helping Americans explore their scenic treasures and heritage more comfortably, affordably and enjoyably. That's something to celebrate."

***For More Information, Contact:***

*Kevin Broom*

*Director of Media Relations*

*703-620-6003, ext. 304*

*[kbroom@rvia.org](mailto:kbroom@rvia.org)*

*Fran Connors*

*Barton Gilanelli and Associates*

*215-592-8601*

*[fran@bartgil.com](mailto:fran@bartgil.com)*