

# America's Oldest Magazine turns 200

## The Challenges and Evolution of its Licensing Program

2021 marks the 200th Anniversary of The Saturday Evening Post, America's oldest and one of its most beloved magazines.

The Saturday Evening Post chronicled the history of America from early reporting on The Alamo and Lincoln's assassination, to detailing accounts of World War II and the evolution of post-war America. The magazine pages are filled with countless articles on important science, politics and industry events, unique historic photographs as well as works by literary legends like William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Mark Twain. But perhaps what most Post readers identify with are the tens of thousands of covers and inside illustrations that peppered the magazine. Over 500 artists painted and illustrated for The Saturday Evening Post, including Norman Rockwell, John Falter, Stevan Dohanos, J.C. Leyendecker and George Hughes among many others. The images, often humorous and endearing, are rich in nostalgia and Americana values and have undoubtedly been a large part of the magazine's success.

200 years in publishing creates a treasure



trove of content. At the start, The Saturday Evening Post was only a 4 page "broadsheet", but by the early 1900s it had grown into a weekly magazine with over 100 pages per issue! Our current archive stands at over



430,000 pages, each loaded with stories, articles, cartoons, photos and illustrations and all available for licensing through Curtis Licensing.

In the early years of licensing, given the huge popularity of the SEP covers, most of the licensing programs were based solely on the use of those images on fairly obvious items such as prints and greeting cards. As the program grew in the early 2000s, these images were featured on thousands of licensed products and countless promotional campaigns, both in the United States as well as internationally. Over time, as demand for images increased, so did Curtis' need to secure more content. Enter "the legacy project", a massive scanning endeavor aimed not only at preserving the historical value of the magazine's collection, but also at eventually offering the archive to consumers digitally. Beginning in 2009, every issue was scanned cover to cover, and as a result, Curtis Licensing is now able to view various pages on a digital screen simultaneously, rather than perusing printed issues

page by page looking for materials. Soon, the Curtis Licensing image offering swelled from a couple of thousand covers, to tens of thousands of inside illustrations, articles, photos and cartoons that had not been available previously. However, despite the abundance of content, it became clear to Curtis Licensing that for many companies, access to a large archival collection did not always translate into useable images.

"Our archival images were produced for use in the magazine as a cover, so it made perfect sense that they are typically complex and full of detail. However, if you are looking for a simple graphic to use on stationery or a tee, that image may not work so well," said Cris Piquinela, Director of Licensing at Curtis





Licensing. "Flexibility has always been a cornerstone of our business, not only when discussing deal terms, but also as it relates to our collection. Allowing licensees to heavily manipulate our images gave them the power to modify our content to better fit their needs"

Since not all licensees were able or even sure how to manipulate such complex images, the Curtis team soon started doing some, if not most, of the modifications in-house.

"It can be intimidating for a licensee to be told they can make changes to a famous Rockwell cover. They may not know where to start or may feel apprehensive about doing it to begin with", said Piquinela. "So, for those companies that needed a bit more help, we simply started manipulating the images on their behalf."

Soon, the art manipulation lead the Curtis Team to offer broader design services. Licensees were now able to not only request changes to their selected images, but Curtis designers could now mockup products and presentation boards that licensees could use on their retail calls.

Manipulation does not solve all issues, however. "When a licensee is asking for Scandinavian style Christmas images or Lemon-based collections, there is no degree of manipulation that can cover that," said Piquinela. "The only solution is to create new art". And that is exactly what the Curtis Licensing team started doing.

By closely researching international and domestic color and image trends and working closely with licensees to identify their needs ahead of time, the Curtis Licensing team is now able to design entire trend-based image collections which the licensee can present to their accounts exclusively. Often times the new artwork uses elements from The Saturday Evening Post archive, however, other times, the designs are completely new and created by Curtis Licensing's own designers. It is worth noting that all of Curtis' work is done free of charge and at no cost to the Licensee, whether it is a simple image modification or the creation of a large thematic collection. "Sometimes a licensee or company will provide a design board or ideas on the look they are going for, which is very helpful to our designers. However, other times, we just create thematic image collections from scratch just so we can stay ahead of the trends and offer fresh content to our partners," said Piquinela. When the pandemic hit and Curtis Licensing began feeling the effects of their licensees not being able to attend shows or newly launched collections not doing as well as expected at retail due to closures, they took things in stride and decide to focus their efforts on things they could control, like creating more artwork and further expanding their design services.

"The Licensing industry has always faced challenging times. Back in 2008 the recession hit and overall licensing spending was vastly

reduced from years prior. Last year's pandemic was also a huge challenge for everyone, us included. However, we have a wonderful team who loves what we do, so we continue to adapt and try to make the process as easy and painless as possible for our licensees.

When faced with challenges, we always try to focus on what we do best and that is maximize the potential of the Saturday Evening Post's amazing archive while creating new content that complements and also expands that collection", said Piquinela.

The Saturday Evening Post has a well-established art legacy that includes classic illustrations by some of this country's best artists.

In an industry where there are many art licensors, some with very large collections, Curtis Licensing distinguishes itself by their willingness to go above and beyond for their licensees.

"Our hope is that our hard work further enhances the rich art tradition of The Saturday Evening Post magazine, and by making the licensing process easier, more people will have a chance to enjoy this great art as much as we do."

For more information contact Curtis Licensing at [info@curtislicensing.com](mailto:info@curtislicensing.com) or visit [www.CurtisLicensing.com](http://www.CurtisLicensing.com)

