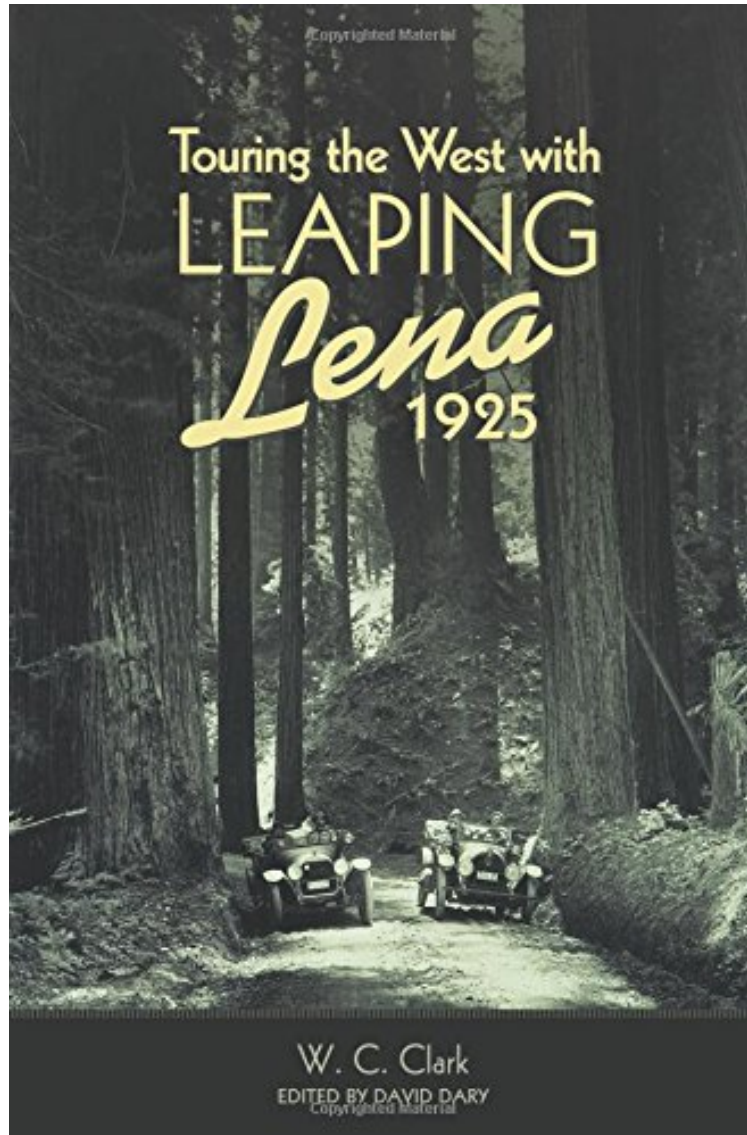


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## Touring the West with Leaping Lena, 1925

W. C. Clark

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**W. C. Clark : Touring the West with Leaping Lena, 1925** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Touring the West with Leaping Lena, 1925:

Driving across the country in the early twentieth century was high adventure. In 1925 Willie Chester Clark and his family piled into a modified Chevrolet touring car, affectionately named Leaping Lena, and took off for the West.

Clarks account of the journey will acquaint readers with cross-country travel at a time when Americans were just inventing the road trip. Editor David Dary discovered a copy of Clarks account among his grandfathers personal papers. Dary introduces the tale of how Leaping Lena clocked some 12,000 miles in five months, starting from West Virginia and traveling to the Northwest, down the Pacific Coast to Southern California, through the Desert Southwest, and back home via the Southern Plains. Among the highlights of the trip were visits to Yellowstone, Yosemite, Mount Rainier, and Crater Lake. Writing while sitting on a camp stool, his typewriter resting on the cars front bumper, W. C. Clark turned out lively descriptions of the familys experiences with all the wit and panache of his later journalism career. Clark details road conditions, the quality of accommodations, the cost of gas and food, user fees at national parks, and the number and variety of fellow tourists his party encountered. He also describes the pitfalls of life on the road. Flat tires were a daily occurrence, mechanical breakdowns almost as frequent, and the crude, mostly unpaved roads were named but not yet numbered, and only intermittently marked. And if the Clarks were not lucky enough to stay with friends, they had to camp. Framed by an introduction and annotations that set the story in context, and illustrated with photographs of gas stations, roadside attractions, and roadsters typical of the day, *Touring the West with Leaping Lena* gives a firsthand glimpse into the early days of cross-country automobile trips. Readers will enjoy its historical detail even as they realize that when it comes to family road trips, some things havent changed.

Possessed of a journalists wide-ranging eye for detail, W.C. Clark offers an intriguing snapshot of what life was like in the Far West during the early twentieth century, along with humorous descriptions of the adventures of motoring and considerable insight into how recreation and leisure were developing by the mid-1920s. Peter Blodgett, editor of *Motoring West, Volume 1: Automobile Pioneers, 1900-1901*