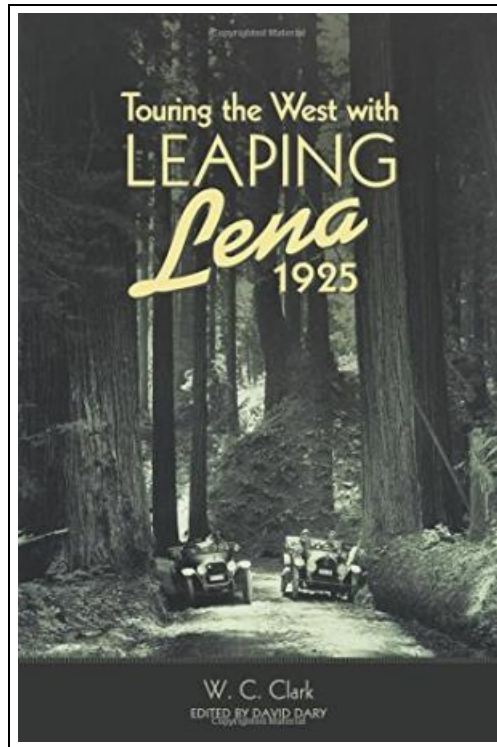


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Reviews




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(Johanna Roberts)*

TOURING THE WEST WITH LEAPING LENA, 1925 (PAPERBACK)



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University of Oklahoma Press, 2016. Paperback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. 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. Clark s 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 Clark s account among his grandfather s 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 car s front bumper, W. C. Clark turned out lively descriptions of the family s 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...*

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