



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

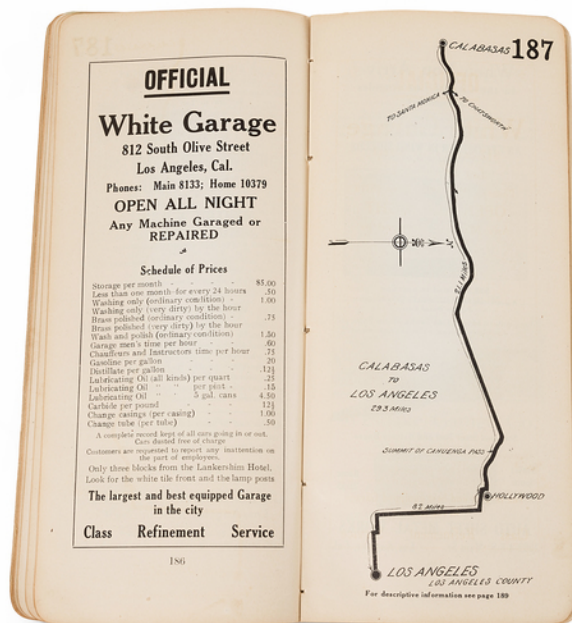
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(Early California Road Atlas) San Francisco Motor Club Tour Book: A Careful Compilation of Maps that you can Drive by, and Information That Informs.

Stock#: 103172
Map Maker: San Francisco Motor Club
Date: 1909
Place: San Francisco
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 4.25 x 10 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

A rare and very early California road atlas from the dawn of long-range automobile travel in the state. This road atlas, issued by the San Francisco Motor Club in 1909, covers two main routes between San Francisco and Los Angeles, as well as shorter trips in the Santa Clara Valley and nearby.

As so few roads were easily navigable by car during this period, the atlas takes the form of others from this time; single routes are shown between what are today major urban areas. In the case of Los Angeles, a single jogging road of 8.2 miles connects that city and Hollywood.

In addition to the actual routes, the book has dozens of photographically illustrated advertisements for local amenities and early automobile-related businesses.

The Turning Point of Modern California

Any modern denizen of the state knows how critical road infrastructure is to the state. The region's expanse and the relatively sparse spacing of cities make it so that road transport is critical to its infrastructure, and it means that cars would have a much greater importance than in any East Coast



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Region.

Not only is the era of cars critical for making modern California, but it is also critical for creating the north-south divide we still see today. While roads and car ownership started in the north, this was just because Los Angeles and San Diego were relative backwaters until the concentration of cars made it possible for these cities to be just as easily connected to the rest of the state. The cities built before the advent of cars would look drastically different than those built after: Southern California, as well as San Jose and parts of the Bay Area further from San Francisco, are built as sprawling, decentralized cities while San Francisco follows a more East Coast planned layout. The one, measly road which exits Los Angeles would reshape the state as we know it.

The Earliest Automobiles of California

The state of Californian roads in 1909 was a far cry from today. Driving would not really take off until the 1910s, which makes this remarkable little atlas very early. The first recorded public instance of driving dates from 1897 following a trial show run from Los Angeles to San Bernardino. This led to widespread popularity, and by 1905, there were approximately 6500 registered motorized vehicles. Still, this tiny number represented only a sliver of the state's wealthiest members, and the state still lagged behind its eastern counterparts in terms of car consumption.

The *California Highway Act of 1910* issued 18 million dollars in bonds, which allowed for better highway construction and propelled the state's automobile industry and economy into the modern age. Better roads meant more motorists and allowed for the distances between points to be shortened, and allowed for California's diverse industries to be properly connected for the first time. This would lead to positive feedback where more motorists led to more infrastructure needed, a feedback loop that has continued for over one hundred years.

Rarity and Primacy

There was an emergent focus on navigating California's nascent automobile infrastructure in the final years of the first decade of the 20th century, but road atlases from this period are extremely rare. The earliest California motorist's atlas is believed to be [the 1907 Hancock Brothers' Automobile and Motorcycle Road Book](#), of which only two complete examples are known.

This atlas is extremely rare; we locate no examples in OCLC, and a general internet search uncovers only one example, possibly at the Oakland Public Library (link broken as of 2024).



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Detailed Condition:

Tall octavo (4/5" x 10"). Publisher's ¼ blue cloth over pictorial paper wrappers (some soiling, pen marks to back cover, somewhat shelfworn with corners bumped and head- and tailbands rubbed). Manuscript map in pencil on pp. i, pp. i-viii separated from lower hinge, pp. 45-52 loose from spine. (Complete). [2, ads], x, 322, [2, ads].