

Least Heat Moon, William (1939-)

Encyclopedia Article

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Contents

Least Heat Moon, William (1939-) Encyclopedia Article.....	1
Contents.....	2
Least Heat Moon, William (1939—).....	3

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In 1978 William Trogdon (who writes as William Least Heat Moon) was an obscure English teacher whose job and marriage were falling to pieces around him. Seeking to cope with his feelings of isolation and alienation, Least Heat Moon set out on a three-month, thirteen-thousand mile journey on the back roads—the blue high-ways—of America. Following his Osage background, he travelled clockwise around the country ("That's the Indian way."), interviewing locals and occasionally photographing them. His record of his journey, published as *Blue Highways: A Journey Into America* (1982), was a surprise publishing sensation, winning several awards and remaining on the *New York Times* bestseller list for 34 weeks. Unlike other famous American "road" books—such as Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley* (1962), Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968), and Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974)—*Blue Highways* combined real insights into the human experience with a tone that was modest and intensely personal. After this memorable book came *Prairie Earth* (1991), an in-depth study of Chase County, Kansas, its people and history. He has also contributed, as journalist and photographer, to numerous publications.

Further Reading:

Least Heat Moon, William. *Blue Highways: A Journey into America*. Boston, Little, Brown, 1982.

"Least Heat Moon, William." *Contemporary Authors New Revision Series*. Vol. 47. Detroit, Gale Research, 1995.