

## Epilogue

In 1900 the State of Mississippi claimed a population of 1,551,270. The state counted one automobile as the year began. The 2003 state population approximated 2,865,000. In fiscal year 2003, the State Department of Motor Vehicles reported 2,412,357 vehicles registered.

In the 41 years between the completion of the second generation of Mississippi Gulf Coast Highway 90 bridges and the completion of the East Pascagoula High-Rise Bridge in 2003, the designation "Old Spanish Trail" slipped into obscurity. Historian John W. Murphey of the Office of Cultural Affairs in Santa Fe, New Mexico, who was then collecting information for a book on that highway association, stated in July 2003, "I have found evidence that the Old Spanish Trail Highway Association existed into the 1960s. After that, it apparently dissolved."

The name "Old Spanish Trail" is still preserved in 2003 in some Coast towns where streets now occupy portions of its former route. Highway 90, of course, remains a familiar name along the breadth of the Coast, where it is yet a crowded thoroughfare. But beyond Bay St. Louis the road through Pearlinton across the Rigolets and Chef Menteur into New Orleans is a little-traveled scenic drive. A motorist traveling that old highway today can go for miles without meeting an on-coming vehicle. The traffic (sometimes bumper to bumper) now flows parallel on the north along the new super highway that superceded the Old Spanish Trail—Interstate 10.

Several years ago, a local historian in a Coast town phoned this author for information to place on a Mississippi Magnolia Marker commemorating "The Old Spanish Trail." When informed that the road was not very old, not Spanish and was never a trail, but rather that it was a highway association formed in Mobile in 1915, he quickly lost interest. In fact, though, the Old Spanish Trail Highway Association had a greater and more lasting impact on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in its half century of service than did Spain in its 28-year dominion.

For the average contemporary citizen of the Coast the sole visible reminder of a long-ago Spanish presence is the Lion and Castle flag on the eight-flags display located on the beach alongside a modern American highway, the origin of which is known to a few. A Mississippi Magnolia Marker should be placed there beside the eight flags display reading:

### Old Spanish Trail Highway Association

A good roads organization founded in Mobile in 1915.  
As part of its mission to create a transcontinental highway  
from St. Augustine, Florida, to San Diego, California,  
this association led the effort that resulted in the building  
of the first highway from Mobile to New Orleans  
along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.