

Camino Real

(Old San Antonio Road)

by

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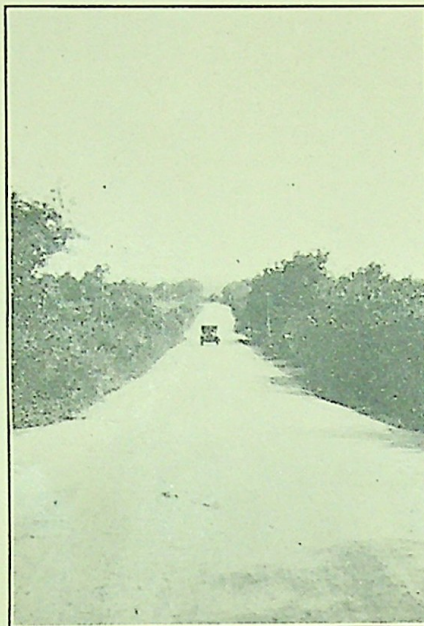
Historical.

It is probable that the Camino Real has been used as a road or trail for many centuries. The fact that its location throughout the eastern portion of its route largely follows the water-sheds between the rivers, that on the western portion the points of crossing many of the large streams of the state appear to have been well selected, and that throughout its length it crosses these streams above tide water, would lead us to believe that this old road was an Indian trail long before the Chevalier St. Dennis came over it in 1715. There is a local legend to the effect that in 1687 La Salle was killed near where this road crosses the Neches River.

The names of the rivers, towns or villages along this road bear testimony to the different races that have at different times occupied the country. For example, in Louisiana are many French names but after leaving the Louisiana line we find, applied to water courses, such Spanish names as 'Sabanillo', 'Carrizo', 'Atascosa', 'Borego', 'San Pedro', 'Guadalupe' etc. We also find streams with Indian names as 'Ayish', 'Attoyac', 'Neches' etc., and the town of 'Nacogdoches', and of later origin, scattered all along the highway, are many towns, cities, ranches, as well as smaller streams which bear American names, not forgetting that the sturdy German settlers have also made settlements along this road, as is testified to by such names as 'Neiderwald', 'Uhlant', 'New Braunfels' etc.

Dating back to the earliest days of American occupancy, we find such homely names as 'Pine Springs' (Old Stage Station), 'Granny's Branch', 'Cobb's Creek Town', 'Rock Fort', 'Stone City', 'Dime Box', 'East Plum Creek' etc.

It also brings back to us very vividly bygone days when we go past the old site of the 'Elisha Roberts Tavern' in San Augustine County, built in 1827 and the old stone fort at Nacogdoches which recalls the days when the Spanish Governor at this point held sway over a territory larger than many of our present states. Also, when we go by Alto, we recall that this was a battle field where the American settlers in 1832 defeated the Mexican army and took them all prisoners. It is rendered even more interesting when we realize that these Americans were at that time fighting to uphold the Mexican



Camino Real, Comal County

Government. Also in this section was fought the Fredonian War when Austin's troops upheld the Mexican authority and subdued Edward's revolutionists and their Cherokee allies.

We cannot help but feel a sense of curiosity as to who were these strange people who built the old prehistoric mounds, which this road passes by in Cherokee County, and we must needs be interested in the deep waters of Treasure Lake in Cherokee County and the legends which cluster around it.

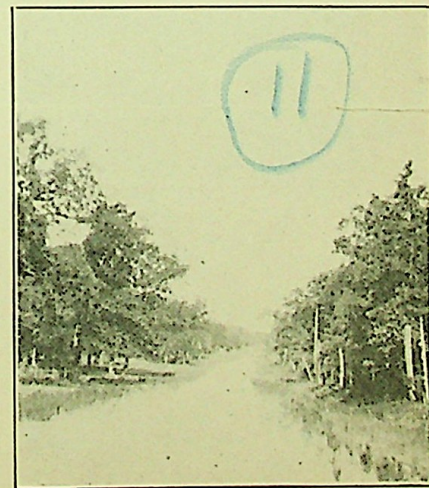
It is also interesting to realize the part which this old highway played in the early settlement of the country by the Americans, for we find that many grants of land bordered on this old highway, and it seems that many of the settlers followed this highway westward and staked out claims along the old Camino Real and bordering on it. Thus, the exact location of the road in many localities is very carefully recorded, though at the present time, in places, it has ceased to be a highway and is now in cultivated fields.

The old strongly built houses serve to recall to our minds that the life of these early settlers was one of great hardship and danger and that their houses were built, not only to withstand the elements, but frequently to serve as forts in case of sudden attacks by hostile Indians. A

forms the boundary line between Leon fitting example of this type of home is the George Dunne Mansion in Robertson County, often referred to as Dunne's Fort. As a reminder of modern progress and of the changes which have come over the country, we might mention that the old road passes in South Texas by Catarina Ranch of 226,000 acres, owned by Mrs. Anna S. Taft.

It seems to us very strange to read the legal documents of those times and to find that many of them are written in Spanish and still stranger to find Spanish titles prefixed to good English names; as for example, 'Alcalde' Harris, 'el empresario' Austin, etc. It is also worthy of note that many of the older land grants do not show measurements in 'rods', 'poles' or 'chains', but make mention of 'varas'. It seems that the early American settlers, having in mind future development, desired to secure large tracts of land, but the Spanish Officials said 'No more to any one than 177 acres, because that is as much as he can work by his own labor'. 'But' said the Americans, 'We need more land for our cattle'. 'Oh!' said the Spaniards, 'Then you can have a league of land additional', so many of the old titles call for 'A league and labor', the square league being equal to 4424 acres.

So well was the old road known that it was considered as a sufficient definition of the boundary of a county to say that its northern or southern limit was the old Camino Real. We thus find that it



Camino Real, Guadalupe County