

A REPORT TO OLD SPANISH TRAIL MEMBERS

THE RECORD IN THE CASE



THE time has come when all friends of the Old Spanish Trail must act to save it from disaster.

In three years this highway system has been developed from a mere dream without any substantial support or recognition, until today it is nationally recognized as of first importance, and embraces 4000 miles in its main and tributary trunks. It has cost three years of toil and sacrifice by men who have given unselfishly. At first only a little group of San Antonians and West Texans sustained the work, while elsewhere along the route claimed there were various other highway associations securing support of the people, and in ten or more sections this highway has been marked by other claimants. Many causes prevented support to the OST movement.

Great physical difficulties, and extensive primitive and undeveloped country, also discouraged interest, and made the dream of a connected transcontinental highway seem unreal. Communities, and even states, stood for policies and inaugurated construction programs that would have left the Old Spanish Trail, as projected, broken and discredited. In Texas the OST trunks are natural state highways; in several other states the state interest is so remote an active co-ordination of local, interstate and national forces was necessary to establish recognition and aid from the state.

Weathering Storms

By the end of 1920 the people were catching the vision of a great highway, and financial support was increasing. Then came 1921 with its financial depression, memories of which are still burned in the hearts of all business men. There was little money or thought for a distant headquarters of a far-flung project like this. The work was kept alive and growing thru 1921 because the Managing Director gave all his time and drew but \$750.00 for services, and merchants in San Antonio gave credits when they couldn't give cash, and field men struggled earnestly against odds. In the fall of 1921 the storms were weathered, moneys began to come in, accounts were being reduced, and 1922 was at hand with membership renewals due and the prestige of clean conduct to assure adequate income for all proper purposes and for those merchants and men whose good-will had saved the work. New memberships, too, were expected in considerable volume, for the constant efforts to unify interest from the Atlantic to the Pacific were having effect, and support was broadening. The marking in Texas, exceeding a thousand miles, had been accomplished in the midst of general depression; and but a thousand miles remained to reach St. Augustine with improved conditions to put it over. One hundred and twenty miles remained unmarked in Texas, and some sections needed improving. Time was ripe for maps and service to travelers and this was planned in December 1921 for early attention in 1922. The year 1922 promised easy and important progress, and this faith has been sustained by the memberships signed this year, and the moneys secured for the travel-service maps.

East Finances Work There and at Washington

Leaving all these asset-values to the San Antonio office for current expenses and for the payment of standing accounts, with understandings that new work should supply its own costs, and asking no moneys for himself,

the Managing Director left January 2, 1922 for the East where conditions were keeping the project a broken and unrecognized highway. There was no organization in the East. Eastern road-building problems are discouraging. State highway maps were being prepared for the Federal Road Bureau with sections of the Old Spanish Trail not included, or else included with secondary rating. Federal aid was denied in one important section, and that was a condition precedent to an extensive breakdown.

Indifference greeted the Managing Director at first, then those people rallied with fine earnestness. In March a Four-State Conference was held at Mobile, with crowded halls, and a greater one planned for 1923. The East by this time was supplying funds for all this extensive administrative work, then Mobile supplied the funds for the Managing Director's work at Washington where the Old Spanish Trail was finally placed on all state maps for primary attention and as a part of the federal system—and where the War Department maps and the OST system were brought into accord and a statement issued by the War Department that this highway and its borderland connections were now a part of the plans for national defense—and where senators and congressmen and other national leaders joined in declarations asserting the national importance of the project—and where, since, resolutions have been introduced in Congress seeking authority for army engineers to be detailed on certain of the great problems. Following the Washington achievements, civic clubs of the East threw their weight behind the administrative work and assured the finances for the continuance of it.

In three years the Old Spanish Trail system had not only attained a position as one of the few great national highways, but it had carried its tributary trunks to borderland points for international connections, and the people had become ready to unify into one great continental organization.

Incredible Conditions Out of San Antonio Office

August 7th the Managing Director returned to San Antonio to find conditions of gross carelessness and waste at Headquarters, and the confidence of the people of Texas and the West abused. 1922 had indeed proven a year of increasing support in Texas. Over \$11,000.00 have been paid the San Antonio office from January 1 to November 1—and it is gone. Instead of the marking and map service being well on toward St. Augustine, grave problems exist now in Texas to burden all work. Over \$5,000.00 have been collected in three districts in Texas for the travel maps, 30,000 of which are promised to be issued and distributed. 10,000 worthless booklets (not in any sense the service maps planned) were printed for one district; these were scrapped because of extensive ignorance and errors. It is difficult to estimate what it will cost now to correct the mis-information and get these maps cut with some degree of intelligence. It is also difficult to estimate the losses because these field men are not finished in Texas and intelligently at work in eastern sections where they are wanted and needed. Additionally, \$2,500.00 to \$4,000.00 of direct and contingent liabilities are outstanding. Those good merchants have not been paid; history booklets, membership emblems, office stationery, rent and other items used in building up this income, are still unpaid. The man who marked the Brownsville division in December is unpaid, also considerable sums were collected as a result of this marking. New claims are filed by field men. Bad checks and accounts of a field man are un-