

Louisiana and it was finally sold to the United States by Napoleon. The Mississippi River was the doorway for all the midland country and in the restless struggle of races and of men to possess the West, New Orleans became the crucible where the burning passions of life and ambition were fused into a radical type different from anything in America.

San Antonio and New Orleans started the same year (1718), each becoming the military, religious and commercial seat of empire. San Antonio became an important seat of the Franciscan missions. New Orleans became the Louisiana seat of the diocese of Quebec. Nacogdoches remained the Spanish military and mission frontier and Natchitoches was the French frontier post.

Around New Iberia and St. Martinville in Louisiana is the land of Evangeline and of Longfellow's immortal poem. Among the moss-draped old live oaks and cypresses and the storied bayous a thousand scenes speak of the Acadian maiden.

Old Mobile

The French founded Mobile in 1702 and moved their capital from Biloxi. Mobile claims to be the first capital of Louisiana; New Orleans was not to be founded until 1718. Mobile takes its name from Mauvila the great Indian kingdom northward where De Soto and his caballeros sank in blood and misery. That was the first decisive battle in the United States. Spain maintained a hold on the bay at Pensacola and their trail led from Pensacola to an outpost on the east bank of Mobile Bay over essentially the same route as the highway is building today. The great ten-mile bridge now crossing the bay connects Mobile with the eastern shore at the old Spanish fort thus welding the modern-day highway over the waters where the French and the Spanish stood guard over one another.

The Old Trails

Tampa is the ancient gateway of De Soto and De Narvaez. St. Augustine is the "Ancient City." The Apalache country (Tallahassee), the center of a powerful Indian nation, is branded deep into the stories of the Narvaez and the De Soto expeditions and was a center for the later missions out of St. Augustine. The trail connected with Pensacola, Mobile and New Orleans. New Orleans and San Antonio were first connected through Natchitoches and Nacogdoches, for these were French and Spanish outposts of the two great capitals. Moreover the way straight through is beset with numerous waterways which to this day are great problems to the highway builders. In Texas the first Spanish trails were up the Gulf Coast, thence to Nacogdoches where the first missions were planted in 1690. When San Anto-

nio was settled an inland trail was followed from Mexico City through San Antonio to Nacogdoches and there connected with the trails eastward. This Texas road has gone into history as the Camino Real (King's Highway) and later as the Old San Antonio Road. It has been marked by the D. A. R. across Texas. Trails developed from San Antonio westward. El Paso was connected over much of the same route as the highway of today.

From Mexico City through El Paso to Santa Fe another Camino Real developed and connections made westward to Arizona. From Mexico City up through western Mexico another Camino Real led to the missions and works around Nogales and up the Santa Cruz Valley to Tucson. Westward those trails connected through Yuma to San Diego, and there in 1769 was begun the last and some of the greatest works of the Spaniards during their occupation of the California coast.

Florida was Spanish until 1821 except for a brief English occupation. At the time of the American Revolution Spain held the dominion known as the Louisiana Purchase and all that land known as the Spanish Southwest, California, Mexico, and also Florida to its junction with Louisiana.

The Old Spanish Trail Travelogs are filled with historical descriptions and data in separate articles carefully titled and under the cities and towns along the highway.



The Mission Bells.

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