

unrecognized sections. Ferrage totaled in spring flood periods \$30 to \$50. The more northern route, now U. S. 80, enjoyed official favor for economy, convenience and easy construction. War Department engineers considered the Old Spanish Trail route between New Orleans and Pensacola as impractical. Numerous highway promotions claimed the route in Florida. The large cities were working for highways from the North and feared the Old Spanish Trail project would complicate their efforts. Federal engineers very properly ruled a highway along the Mississippi Gulf Coast should not be built without a protecting seawall.

The Mobile Four-State Conference

A four-state conference of leaders, public officials and State highway commissioners from Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana was called at Mobile, March 20-21, 1922. The Managing Director spent three months in those States developing that conference. Mobile and Baldwin County, Alabama, paid the expenses. That conference was strongly attended but the Louisiana highway department did not participate because the construction east of New Orleans was considered impossible. New Orleans sent delegates. A stronger attendance or a more unified determination was hardly possible yet it was apparent still greater effort was needed before recognition and appropriations would come.

The Work at Washington

In June and July, 1922, Harral Ayres established himself at Washington. There Senator Underwood of Alabama and Congressmen McDuffie of Alabama and Wurzbach of Texas placed their offices and secretaries at his command and other southern Senators and Congressmen aided with the result that the War Department changed its road plans and declared for this far-southern highway as a military necessity. Senators and Congressmen signed a declaration it was a basic national need. The American Automobile Association urged it for winter recreation and travel. The U. S. Bureau of Education fell in step and in an official bulletin distributed to the public schools adopted the Old Spanish Trail as a medium for studying southern development and old history. It is interesting to note that since then the Old Spanish Trail publications have been requested by thousands of students, schools and libraries. Mobile citizens and Harral Ayres paid the Washington expense. This Washington and eastern work had cost seven months absence by Harral Ayres from the San Antonio headquarters.

Effect of the Washington Declarations

The Washington Declarations officially established the Old Spanish Trail as the southern national highway and the period

of liberal appropriations and great construction immediately followed. Today over \$80,000,000, including funds available for present work, have gone into this project. It is now half paved and paving San Antonio eastward will soon be wholly completed. All State highway departments today recognize this highway as of primary importance.

Florida First to Complete Its Paving

During this eastern work the Florida confusions had been cleared away. Harral Ayres attended the Dixie Highway Association convention at Jacksonville, May 26-27, 1922, and there with those delegates, and with the Florida road department officials, conflicting highway promotions were reduced to an orderly understanding and Old Spanish Trail recognition across Florida to Saint Augustine was established. Two months later he was called from Washington to the dedication of the million dollar Victory Bridge across the Apalachicola River. In March, 1926, he was called to Marianna, Florida, where at a State-wide meeting completing the Florida paving and bridges was authorized. By 1929 Florida became the first Old Spanish Trail State to be all paved; this included seven miles of new concrete bridges. The Florida people were very active in founding the Old Spanish Trail movement and have been leaders and friends in the development work thru all the years.

Redemption of the Mississippi Gulf Coast

At the Mobile Conference it was officially stated a first class highway could not be financed along the Gulf of Mexico. A seawall, costly pavement, and eight miles of waterways to be bridged, seemed a prohibitive cost. The Washington Declarations changed this attitude and that sector was designated a primary highway. And when Harral Ayres returned from Washington he asked the Mobile civic club presidents to put cars from each civic organization in a motorcade to the Mississippi Coast towns and crystallize interest. They agreed. Harral Ayres stopped in New Orleans and arranged for a New Orleans delegation to the Coast; they had to go by train for there was no road then across that section. August, 1922, those rallies fired the Mississippi people. The Chamber of Commerce, the Automobile Club, Rotary, Kiwanis, Civitan and Optimist clubs and public officials composed that motorcade. Today a completed seawall, a paved boulevard and concrete bridges along that Coast represent a cost of \$7,000,000 and another \$30,000,000 have gone into resort hotels and other private developments. That Gulf of Mexico shore line is becoming a foremost resort section. Roads and bridges have now opened the way to New Orleans and that alluring city and the Gulf Coast