

### THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL

Save for those who read their newspapers very closely and others whose interests bring them in contact with official proceedings, it will be news of prime interest to the public to know that the state highway commission at its recent meeting renounced the name "Old Spanish Trail" for that portion of this ancient highway which lies in Texas and substituted therefor the "Jefferson Davis Memorial Highway." We fancy that astonishment will rapidly give way to indignation as the public acquires a full realization of what this ruthless tampering with historical names means.

As is widely known, the Old Spanish Trail is designed as a highway from St. Augustine, Fla., to San Diego, Calif., from the Atlantic ocean to the Pacific ocean. The significance in designating this highway by a single name that shall identify it from one end to the other is little less pronounced than that it should be a continuous highway. If each state through which the highway runs shall give it a local name, then each county may further despoil the idea by the same process that will eliminate the last vestige of that continuity almost as much by the name as by the physical joining of the various local roads to create the whole.

Naturally those who have worked so hard, so unselfishly and so successfully to restore this ancient highway are grievously vexed over this action of the Texas highway commission and particularly because of the fact that there are now two "Jefferson Davis Memorial Highways" in Texas. About a month ago the commission gave the name to the highway from the Red river through Austin and San Antonio to Laredo. That highway theretofore was known as the Meridian highway and later as the Pat Neff highway.

At the same meeting that portion of the Old Spanish Trail from Orange to El Paso was changed to Stephen F. Austin highway, but at the last meeting of the commission the name was again changed to the Jefferson Davis Memorial highway. Recently the news reports told us that the Red River-Laredo highway is now being marked by the commission as the Jefferson Davis Memorial highway. That the commission can satisfactorily explain its reason for giving two distinctly different highways the same name we may doubt. But this confusion is merely an addition to the real injury that is done by abolishing the Old Spanish Trail from Texas. And, of course, it means the destruction of the trail entirely as a transcontinental highway because two-thirds of the highway is in Texas and it is not conceivable that the name can adhere to the east of Texas and to the west and skip Texas.

The Old Spanish Trail association was organized in Mobile in 1915 and has been a continuously active organization ever since. At a conference in Houston in 1919 San Antonio was asked to assume the national headquarters work. The value of connecting such a highway across Texas was recognized and the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce appropriated \$1000 and others followed with support in generous measure. In the ten years of this work members have spent \$100,000 personally. They have succeeded not only in making the Old Spanish Trail a connected transcontinental trunk line of very valuable possibilities to the south, but they have fostered the construction program until \$35,000,000 have already been spent; \$7,900,000 worth of construction work in progress will be completed this year, while \$10,000,000 of new construction will be inaugurated in 1925.

The Old Spanish Trail is known all over the land. It is of record in national offices everywhere, on all maps, in government manuals, in schools, libraries, colleges and with all magazine editors interested in outdoor life and automobile travel. More magazine and feature articles have been published about the Old Spanish Trail than any other national highway. Its name, its historical background, its potential service to national tourist travel and the possibility of its territory for settlement, development, fishing, camping and resting, all appeal to northern editors. If let alone it will be the nation's best known highway.

Surely the occasion requires prompt and vigorous action on the part of the people of Texas if they are persuaded that it would be a despicable thing for Texas to thrust aside this historical name and thus affront the people of the states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, New Mexico and California. It is too small, too provincial, too narrow-minded for Texas to do such a thing as this. To interpose our local sentiment, our narrow pride, to thus destroy a famous and greatly loved institution is too unseemly to be tolerated. Instead of rejecting the name Texas ought to be proud of it and to stand by it. It is too deeply impressed now ever to be entirely eradicated and despite the official designation the old name will cling to memory and be used for years to come, only to cause confusion between usage and official records, to say nothing of the vast amount of printed matter that will have to be destroyed and the waste of all that has been spent in establishing and advertising the name.