

Two Centuries Spanning the Continent

More than two centuries passed before the first faint trail connected Saint Augustine, Florida with San Diego, California. Spain founded San Agustín in 1565 and San Diego de Alcalá in 1769---and they were the beginning of colonization in Florida and in California, a span of 204 yrs. from the settlement on the Atlantic to the settle ont on the Pacific. During those 204 yrs. many settlements were made in this southern borderland country and trails gradually developed from one settlement to another. The modern Old Spanish Trail follows, as nearly as a modern highway can, those primitive pioneer trails.

VI

The Early Settlements

The early settlements along the highway and their dates are San Agustín, 1565....Santa María de Óliver de Pensacola, 1559 and 1698....Saint Louis de la Mobile, 1702 and 1711....Biloxi, 1698....Nouvelle Orléans, 1718.... New Iberia, 1779....*San Antonio de Béxar, 1715Yalstia, Socorro and San Elizario (El Peso Valley) about 1686....El Paso del Norte (Juaroz), 1659.... Santa Fé and other settlements northward, beginning 1598....Tucson (San Xavier del Bac Mission), 1700....San Diego de Alcalá, 1769.

There were many other settlements in this Old Spanish Trail country and down in Old Mexico and now accessible by automobile. Missions and colonies were extended out into all fields. Both France and Spain pioneered in Old Louisiana.

VII

French and Spanish Place-Names, Language and Customs

Most of the rivers that are crossed and many other geographical places carry Spanish names or Spanish rendering of Indian names except in Old Louisiana (Mobile, Alabama to Lafayette, Louisiana) where French names prevail. French language, customs and architecture gave Old Louisiana its colorful touches while Spanish language, customs and architecture clothe other sections with charm and interest. In the Old Louisiana sector French and creole cooking is enjoyed. Along the western sector are the Spanish-Mexican restaurants with their tamales, tortillas, chili con carne, enchiladas, frijoles and other foods. Old French peasantry is still seen in Old Louisiana and old Spanish-Mexican in the West.

VIII

The Eastern Trail

Along the Gulf of Mexico the settlements were at the Gulf harbors; then overland trails developed to connect those settlements. By 1718 an eastern trail (camino real in Spanish) connected Saint Augustine, Pensacola, Mobile, Biloxi and New Orleans.

* The date commonly given is 1718. Recent research shows the San Antonio site was first located in 1691 and named San Antonio de Padua. In 1709 the San Pedro Springs were named. In 1715 families were settled and in 1716 a mission was located and in 1718 the mission now the Alamo and a presidio were established and the importance of the settlement firmly fixed.

IX

The Midland Trail

Between New Orleans and San Antonio the modern highway is built across South Louisiana and South Texas thru New Iberia, Lake Charles, Beaumont and Houston but the old trails were farther north. The French established their outpost on the Red River in northwest Louisiana, founding Natchitoches in 1714. The Spanish had previously, in 1690, established a mission among the T6jas (Texas) Indians west of Natchitoches--but abandoned in 1693. In 1716 this mission and five tohers were located there to protect Spanish territorial claims against the French; one was within 15 mi. of the French Natchitoches and there in 1721 a presidio was also built and that settlement, Los Adaes, is now Robeline, Louisiana. The midland trail therefore developed between New Orleans and San Antonio thru the French Natchitoches and this Spanish mission group. In Texas it became the noted Old San Antonio Road.

X

The Western Trails

In Mexico and the West, Spanish trails (camino real--king's highway) progressed northward from Mexico City as missions and settlements were established....the one thru eastern Mexico and San Antonio to Macogoches, Los Adaes and the other East Texas missions and settlements....another thru Central Mexico and El Paso del Norte to the Santa Fé missions and settlements in New Mexico....another thru western Mexico to the missions and settlements in the Nogales and Tucson country of southern Arizona. From Tucson country a trail followed the Yuma River down to its junction with the Colorado River at the present Yuma, Arizona, and from there to San Diego, California, and to the other California missions and settlements. A western trail developed eastward--westward connecting the settlements from San Antonio to San Diego. A Spanish trail developed along the Pacific Coast connecting those twenty-one missions of California. Others of those primitive highways came into service as settlements spread about; in history, ~~the~~ ^{the} camino real of the respective localities.

XI

Fur Trading and Mining

The French developed the riches of fur-trading, planting their trading posts on the rivers. Overland trails developed to connect them. The Spaniards gathered riches from the mines of Mexico and the Southwest. They developed the missions in the West as a part of their benevolent policy for uplifting the natives and reducing the country. But when Spain took possession of Old Louisiana she fell in step with French trading works in preference to building mission establishments there.

XII

Pioneer Paths

Many trails developed in the present Louisiana from New Orleans to those trading posts. In Texas, trails developed from San Antonio to the Texas and Louisiana settlements...and from San Antonio northwestward to Santa Fé, the Spanish capital in northern New Mexico...and westward between San Antonio and El Paso...and between San Antonio and Chihuahua, Mexico by a roundabout route thru West Texas, for carrying supplies to that rich Mexican mining State and the wealth of the mines to San Antonio and the coast for shipment. Northward, a Spanish trail thru Utah connected the California missions and Santa Fé, New Mexico.