

The old roads as originally laid out were never straight and were trails where convenient and safe crossings could be had at creeks and rivers and where a never failing supply of water could be had at rivers, lakes or creeks every 10-15 miles. Only in time of danger or drouth was the exact trail followed. When there was plenty of water and no danger of an Indian attack by night, travellers took short cuts across the country.

In 1875 I travelled four different roads from Corpus Christi to San Diego. One road went through the Oso, entered the Rabb Pasture at the Chocolate Mott passed the Petronilla Creek, The Trinidad and la Guajillo. Another road followed very nearly the line of the Texas-Mexican Ry. Another passed Muscestown and N. of Banquete near the ranch of Mr. C. C. Wright, La Puerta, Precenos and the Lara to San Diego. Another followed the present Up River road to the Matoras road from thence to the Adami crossing on the Agua Dulce about three miles S. of Orange Grove passed the Tecolote ranch. Amargosa and Muertecito to San Diego.

It depended on the weather, the abundance of grass and water and the kind of team a man was using which road he selected. If a man was on horseback he selected the most direct route. If he was driving horses or mules he made choice of the road where grass was most abundant. If he had oxen he took the road where prickly pear was plentiful. With the possible exception of the Sta Fe trail that passed through a part of Texas no wheeled vehicles of any kind were used on the first roads. Everything was carried on pack animals. Few if any of the animals would eat corn or oats. I think I am safe in positively asserting that 45 years ago not one horse in five hundred would eat either corn or oats and it was often difficult matter to teach them to eat grain of any kind.

It seems strange nowadays to speak of laying off a road to pass permanent watering places within a reasonable distance of each other, as all the permanent running streams and never failing lakes have gone dry. Many people "recent arrivals in the state" say we never had permanent lakes and streams, that we only remember that the lakes and streams had plenty of water when we had plenty of rain.

But there were hundreds of permanent lakes and a score of running streams in this country 50 years ago. The new comer asks "Wells why did they go dry?" The principal if not the only reason is that the springs have been coked up by the trampling of tens of thousands of cattle, horses, sheep and goats. In dry weather when the grass is scant and the ground bare hundreds of animals lie around lakes and streams for hours every day, drink once or twice and every time they enter the water carry some earth into the lake until in the course of time the lake is filled up and the springs choked, but our new COMER is not satisfied with this explanation and says "Well according to history there were millions of buffalo and thousands of deer and antelope in this country before there were either cattle or horses, why didn't they fill up the lakes and choke the springs?"

Buffalo, deer and antelope never stayed in a part of the country where there was no grass, consequently carried less earth into the lake than they carried out and instead of filling up they deepened the lakes.