

THE ZERO MILESTONES

St. Augustine

San Antonio

San Diego



the land. Those were the days of Spanish splendor, of Cavalier and Conqueror, of Columbus, Cortez and Pizarro, of Ponce de Leon, De Sola and Coronado and of the great orders of priests whose missions are scattered along the Trail. The romance and riches of Mexico drew prince and peasant. From Mexico the old trails carried the adventurers into the South and Southwest; into the New Spain of their hopes.

The Spaniards dreamed of gold and glory, and with expeditions worth a King's ransom they struggled through jungles, deserts and mountains to despair and death while the phantom of riches raised others to follow.

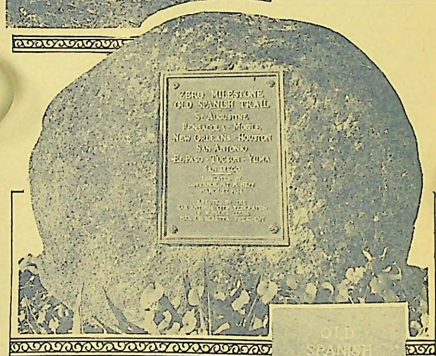
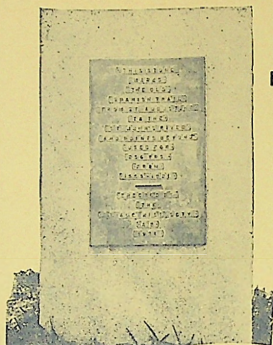
In South America they sought for the land of the Gilded Chief whom they called El Dorado; they searched for the Temple of the Sun and the Enchanted City of the Casacas. In North America they searched thru Arizona and New Mexico for the fabled Seven Cities of Gold, and in Texas and Kansas for the realms of the Gran Quivira; they sought the Great Kingdom of the Tejas, the Mountain of Silver, the Streams of Pearls, the Provinces of Wealth and the Fountain of Youth. They added luster to their period and won new empires and lost them. Today the Floridas and the New Spain of those days are the winter retreats of the people of the North American continent.

THE OLD TRAILS

St. Augustine, 1565, the oldest city in the United States, is the beginning of the Old Spanish Trail on the Atlantic coast. San Diego (Saint James), 1769, the beginning of California, is the terminus of the Old Spanish Trail on the Pacific coast. Midway lies San Antonio (Saint Anthony), 1718, Headquarters of the Old Spanish Trail and anciently an important mission and military center of New Spain. West from San Antonio is El Paso (El Paso del Norte—the Pass of the North), rich in the history of the earliest days. North of El Paso lies Santa Fe (Holy Faith), settled 1609 it became the second oldest city in the United States, and seat of missions, colonizing and government. Pensacola, El Paso and other places also lay claim to earliest settlements. Old Mexico was conquered by Cortez in 1519.

From Mexico City northward, like the ribs of a fan, trails dating from the days of the Aztecs developed into "Camino Reals" (King's Highways) of the Spaniards; one northeastward thru San Antonio, then to Nacogdoches and Natchitoches and on to Mobile and Pensacola and to St. Augustine; one thru El Paso to Santa Fe and the New Mexico territory; one thru Nogales and Tucson to the Arizona country. Then westward thru Yuma to San Diego and California. Up the California coast is the Camino Real of California song and story where those twenty-one missions were built and their hospitality offered to the wayfarers in that wild land.

From these trails or highways others branched until all the Southern Borderlands thrilled to the romance and tragedy of conquerors and explorers, settlers and missionaries, adventurers and dreamers—all a part of the great games of empire that for three hundred years were played to win and lose. The Old Spanish Trail of today is a project that has woven old trails and new ways together to open anew the Southern Borderlands to the modern day explorer.



The stone at St. Augustine was erected in 1921 to perpetuate Old Spanish Trail history locally and should serve as the zero monument for that terminal.

The stone at San Antonio was dedicated 1924 by Governor Pat Neff, city, state, federal and army officials, women's clubs and the Old Freighters Association.

The zero stone at San Diego was dedicated 1923 by an address of President Coolidge read by Col. Ed. Fletcher of San Diego.

As the highway is built on its permanent location the mileage will be accurately surveyed and mileposts of historical significance will be placed. The Women's Department of Beautification is now inviting designs for these mileposts.

