

# Beautification Department

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## Developing the Plans

The beautification work along the Old Spanish Trail was organized by southern women at New Orleans in 1923 at the Old Spanish Trail convention. This was the first organized movement in a national way for roadside protection and beautification. At this gathering the women emphasized the principle that while the men would build the roads the women should lead in developing their beauties and attractions. Since then long trips over the Old Spanish Trail have been made by groups of these women. Individual members of the Board have made trips thru many states and thru Europe studying conditions in the interest of this work.

## The Headquarters Section

Mrs. A. C. Seiser, Chairman.

One of the first practical steps was to adopt the 30-mi. road from San Antonio to Boerne, Texas, as a special Headquarters Section. The women recognized this would give them practical experience and qualify them better for leadership to the other localities. The Headquarters Section is scenically capable of beautiful development but it had the usual collection of advertising signs and crude roadside buildings; in places the road was too narrow, some curves were sharp and other conditions were unfavorable to nice development. The first necessary step was a wider right-of-way. All agreed one hundred feet was the minimum to be secured and experience sustains this conclusion.

Widening the right-of-way to 100 ft. has now been in progress for three years and has cost the combined effort of the women and the San Antonio civic organizations. Fences are being put back and the State is following along with improvements. Property owners are slow giving the needed right-of-way and this emphasizes the importance of getting a proper right-of-way before property improvements become too settled.

The Bexar-Kendall county gateway, costing \$1000, has been constructed of native stone columns and buttresses according to an architect's design. The road clearance between the columns is 40 ft. Where possible the State Highway Department prefers 50 ft. to 60 ft. The other counties thru West Texas are planning similar stone gateways at their county lines.

A rugged, shaded tract on the Balcones Creek was donated for a wayside park; this is being improved with stone fences and entrances, stone tables and seats, fire places, resting places and a stone caretaker's house. The Kiwanis Club, the Bexar County Medical Auxiliary and numerous San Antonio and Boerne citizens have cooperated to provide funds and materials for this work. Other beautiful spots along the Old Spanish Trail are offered for wayside parks. The experience with this park work will aid the planning of other parks.

## The Lessons Learned

The headquarters section has helped educate the women to the problems involved. Frequently a paved road on this Old Spanish Trail has been completed and a narrow right-of-way has thrown the ditches close to the paving leaving little margin for safety to travel, no provision for widening the roadbed as travel increases, and scant provision for tree planting or roadside ornamentation.

Nurserymen and individuals are offering expert counsel as to trees, shrubs and landscape plans but in many sections cattle still graze along the road, so stock laws must be passed; this takes time and should be pushed by all interested workers.

A board of nurserymen and landscape artists is being planned for but proper right-of-way and stock laws are the first steps. The cooperation received from the highway engineers, city, county and state officials, state highway commissioners and others has been splendid.

## The Beautification Program

Bulletins, architects' drawings, photos of completed works, and other helps are now available.

1—The most attractive and efficient route marking in the United States is being installed by the route marking department; the beautification department coordinates with this. Blue prints and bulletins are ready and the work is in progress. Localities may now go ahead with some of this work.

2—Signing of the historical, interesting and scenic places. An old Spanish design with the Spanish colors is being adopted for this.

3—County Line gateways. Architect's plans for stone or concrete columns and gateways will be mailed on request. A stone gateway has been erected at the Bexar-Kendall County line on the Headquarters Section. West Texas counties will place columns or gateways of native stone.

4—State Line gateways.

5—Wayside parks. On the headquarters section such a park has been donated, a stone caretaker's house is being erected, also stone tables, benches and fences. This is not an auto camp but a wayside park with a caretaker. Other donations have been offered along the Old Spanish Trail. It is somewhat expensive preparing such a park but cooperation on this park has been cordial. The caretaker will have a home and should sell enough for his living, therefore be no expense.

6—Improved city and town entrances. This will be much finer than the billboards and crude advertising signs along the highway to advertise the town or city.

7—Improved property entrances and fences. Individual property owners are responding to this suggestion nicely. Photos of improved entrances will be mailed.