

The Old Spanish Trail was not easily traversed... conditions across the continent... the Texas line... the Mississippi River delta... While Mobile and Florida were crusading for their road some thought this dream-idea should be extended across the continent.

Conditions across the Continent

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South Louisiana, faithful to their promises, started building roads and by 1920 a... to the Texas line. From... Mississippi River delta... While Mobile and Florida were crusading for their road some thought this dream-idea should be extended across the continent. A southern national highway was an appealing thought. Moreover, old Spanish history and tradition are strong in the West. But the only route that then seemed possible would run from New Orleans northward to Shreveport, then westward through Dallas and El Paso. This again was the expedient idea of a more northern and less costly route.

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Harry Locke, then of Arizona, became Field Engineer for the Old Spanish Trail. In those formative years he made many trips across the continent searching out the proper route. Often, he reports, when making local inquiries he could get directions to the nearest railroad station easier than to any other place the next town. In those days ferrige in the East totaled, at times, seventy to eighty miles. Bogs in wet weather or harsh ruts and bumpy roads in dry weather called for all the spirit of adventure that lay latent in men's souls. Looking backward, it seems as though something of the fires that burned in the hearts of those Spanish pathfinders flashed again, for local crusaders and adventurous men kept blazing paths toward progress. East of New Orleans conventions were held at Pensacola in 1916 and at Tallahassee in 1917 and enthusiasts were kept alive but the costly road and bridge problems were not being solved.

Louisiana Crusaders

Men of South Louisiana realized the impropriety of routing the project through North Louisiana and North Texas. The route, by all logic, should stay along the Southern Borderlands despite obstacles and costs. The chambers of commerce of Lake Charles, Louisiana and of Orange, Texas arranged a conference of representatives from Galveston and Houston to New Orleans in April 1916 and they pledged allegiance if the routing was laid that way. In September 1916 they ran a motorcade of twenty cars to New Orleans, covering the five hundred miles in three and a half days. October 21-22, 1916 they met in convention at Lake Charles. They also were crusaders. The dream of the Mobile Convention of 1915 was now definitely spreading westward. But still South Texas, west from Houston through San Antonio, was a blank. The Old Spanish Trail propaganda map began to show the routing west to Houston, then north to Dallas, then west to El Paso and San Diego--this indicates they were progressing badly, but progressing. In addition, men were rising in South Texas, new crusaders who were to help steer the project into the right course.