

## THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL

By G. M. West

This euphonious title of the proposed highway from St. Augustine to the Old Missions on the Pacific coast, running east and west through the Lower South, is derived from a Florida antiquity, a road that was constructed through the northern part of this state by the Spaniards, hundreds of years ago, to connect up their various missions and settlements and which, in places, is being now used as a part of the modern cross continent highway, the "Old Spanish Trail."

The first mission established within the eastern United States was that of San Augustin (St. Augustine), in 1565, first by the Jesuits, and later — about 1573 — by the Franciscans, who within twenty years had established a chain of missions along the Atlantic coast from St. Augustine to St. Helena in South Carolina, as well as some on the west coast of Florida. History states that by 1615 there were 20 missions, with about 40 Franciscan workers, established in Florida and the adjacent regions. The first books ever printed in the Indian language were a grammar and some devotional works, written by the Franciscan Father Francisco Pareja, in the Timucuan language, a group of related tribes that occupied northern Florida from about latitude 28 degrees to above the mouth of the St. Johns on the Atlantic Coast, and from Tampa Bay northward on the Gulf coast, to Apalachee Bay, or the Aucilla River.

Wherever the Spanish government established a settlement in Florida, there was a mission, and a Franciscan or Dominican brother. Thus it was that from St. Augustine on the east to Pensacola on the west, with off-shoots to St. Marks and St. Joseph Bay, there grew up a chain of these missions which were united by the road that these early settlers and the Christian Indians constructed, evidences of its location still remaining visible where causeways were built across swamps.