

OLD SPANISH TRAIL DEVELOPMENT ACROSS AMERICAN CONTINENT

ALONG THE GULF OF MEXICO
AND THE MEXICAN
BORDERLANDS

By Harral Ayres, President

Three Centuries of Spanish Power, Progress and Decline

Spanish conquests and colonization were well established the first half century following the discovery of America; in that early period vast territory was brought under the Spanish flag. The Spanish Era continued for three centuries before the wars for independence destroyed Spain's New World empire in North, Central and South America. Spain began with conquests and carnage and rose to the creation of the noblest works in history for the benefit of subject races. When Spanish power ended, Indians and white vandals destroyed many missions and their properties; others stand in majestic ruins with their marvelous story for modern-day travelers; others are still in service and their irrigating systems still serve mankind as they have for centuries . . . all eloquent heritages of the Spanish conquering spirit.

Two Centuries Spanning the Continent

More than two centuries passed before the first faint trail connected Saint Augustine, Florida with San Diego, California. Spain founded San Augustin in 1565 and San Diego de Alcala in 1769—and they were the beginning of colonization in Florida and in California, a span of 204 years from the settlement on the Atlantic to the settlement on the Pacific. During those 204 years many settlements were made in this southern borderland country and trails gradually developed from one settlement to another. The modern Old Spanish Trail follows, as nearly as a modern highway can, those primitive pioneer trails.

The Early Settlements

The early settlements along the highway and their dates are San Augustin, 1565 . . . Santa Maria de Galvez de Pensacola, 1659 and 1698 . . . Saint Louis de la Mobile, 1702 and 1711 . . . Biloxi, 1699 . . . Nouvelle Orleans, 1718 . . . New Iberia, 1779 . . . *San Antonio de Bexar, 1715 . . . Ysleta, Socorro and San Elizario (El Paso Valley) about 1683 . . . El Paso del Norte (Juarez), 1659 . . . Santa Fe and other settlements northward, beginning 1538 . . . Tucson (San Xavier del Bac Mission), 1700 . . . San Diego de Alcala, 1769.

There were many other settlements in this Old Spanish Trail country and down in Old Mexico and now access-



ible by automobile. Missions and colonies were extended out into all fields. Both France and Spain pioneered in Old Louisiana.

French and Spanish Place-Names, Languages and Customs

Most of the rivers that are crossed and many other geographical places carry Spanish names or Spanish rendering of Indian names except in Old Louisiana (Mobile, Alabama to Lafayette, Louisiana) where French names prevail. French language, customs and architecture give Old Louisiana its colorful touches while Spanish language, customs and architecture clothe other sections with charm and interest. In the Old Louisiana sector French and creole cooking is enjoyed. Along the western sector are the Spanish-Mexican restaurants with their tamales, tortillas, chili con carne, enchiladas, frijoles and other foods. Old French peasantry is still seen in Old Louisiana and old Spanish-Mexican in the west.

The Eastern Trail

Along the Gulf of Mexico the settlements were at the Gulf harbors; then overland trails developed to connect those settlements. By 1738 an eastern trail (camino real in Spanish) connected Saint Augustine, Pensacola, Mobile, Biloxi and New Orleans.

The Midland Trail

Between New Orleans and San Antonio the modern highway is built across South Louisiana and South Texas thru New Iberia, Lake Charles, Beaumont and Houston but the old trails were farther north. The French established their outpost on the Red River in northwest Louisiana, founding Natchitoches in 1714. The Spanish had previously, in 1690, established a mission among the Tejas (Texas) west of Natchitoches—but Indians abandoned in 1693. In 1716 this mission and five others were located there to protect Spanish territorial

claims against the French; one was within 15 miles of the French Natchitoches and there in 1721 a presidio was also built and that settlement, Los Adaes, is now Robeline, Louisiana. The midland trail therefore developed between New Orleans and San Antonio thru the French Natchitoches and this Spanish mission group. In Texas it became the noted Old San Antonio Road.

The Western Trails

In Mexico and the West, Spanish trails (camino real—king's highway) progressed northward from Mexico City as missions and settlements were established . . . the one thru eastern Mexico and San Antonio to Nacogdoches, Los Adaes and the other East Texas missions and settlements . . . another thru Central Mexico and El Paso del Norte to the Santa Fe missions and settlements in New Mexico.

The Modern Highway

An organization to foster the construction of the modern highway was

formed at Mobile, Alabama, in 1915. The national headquarters were transferred to San Antonio, Texas, in 1919. In 1922 the Washington Declarations gave the project national recognition and importance. The new highway was dedicated at Saint Augustine, Florida, in 1929 as a completely opened travelway. The monument and in three days' dedication pageantry cost Saint Augustine \$16,000. The Spanish Government sent Don Rafael Casares Gil as representative of the King of Spain. A motorcade to the dedication ceremonies, led by a large delegation from San Diego, California, crossed the continent averaging 271 mi. a day for 11 days, keeping to schedule like a railroad train, thereby establishing before the world the progress of the great construction work connecting the two oceans across the big rivers and bays in the East, and the princely cattle ranches of Texas and the mountains of the West. Harral Ayres, ten years Managing Director, now President, was decorated by Don Pablo de Ubarri in the name of the King of Spain with the Cross of a Knight Commander of the Royal Order of Isabel la Catolica of Spain,

at a diplomatic ceremony at San Antonio, Texas.

The modern highway has cost to date (1932), including funds in hand for present work, over \$100,000,000. Complete paving across the continent and all bridges, including the bridge over the Mississippi River at New Orleans to cost \$19,000,000, are financed and progressing toward completion.

Crusaders Old and Modern

Conquistadores, adventurers, explorers, administrators, and the benign padres braved hardships and perils and blazed the trails in pioneer centuries past. Crusaders of the present day reared mighty bridges and built ribbons of pavement that the continent in this southern borderland country might be spanned. Modern-day explorers now travel the Old Spanish Trail in comfort and a new civilization is rearing its works and culture amid the works and culture of Old Spain and Old France.

Nearly eighty-nine per cent of cars figuring in accidents are found to be in good condition, indicating that the fault rested entirely with the

Recommended Service Stations

OKLAHOMA	MOUNTAIN VIEW—Johnson Gar.	ARLINGTON—Duncan & I.
ADA—Rose & Wintersmith, Inc.	MUSKOGEE—Bates 50-50 Garage.	ASHTOLA—Levell's Gar.
ALFUS—Ralph W. Morgan, Inc.	Carra Garage.	AUSTIN—Burnett's Garage
ALVA—Edwards Motor Co.	NEWKIRK—A. Phillips Serv.	Austin City
ANADARKO—Rock Island Ser. St.	NORMAN—Joe Ballard Ser. St.	Day
Apache—Super Service Garage.	OKEMAH—Turner's Motor Hotel.	Day
ARDMORE—Barrett Motor Co.	"Tribunal Motor Co.	
ATOKA—O'Neal Collie Chev. Co.	OKMOKA—O'Neal Collie Chev. Co.	
BARTLESVILLE—4th St. Garage.	OKLAHOMA CITY:	
*Efrestone Ser. Sta.	*Bill N Service Station	
BEAVER—Beaver Motor Co.	*Clasien Gas Serv. St.	
BEGGS—Begas Garage.	*Comber	
BILLINGS—Long Motor Co.	*Cotton	
BLACKWELL—Fitz's Auto Ser.		
BANCHARD—Camp Alamo Sta.		
BOWLING—Towlers Garage.		
BRIKLEY—Super Serv.		
BUFFALO		
CALVIN		
CHICK		