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# Old San Antonio Trail Claimed First Real Highway in New World

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Long before the days when Martin Luther translated the Bible into German or John Calvin wrote or before Shakespeare was born. Long before any settlement was made at Jamestown or Plymouth Rock, Texas history was in the making and soon after the Spaniards and French first found and made explorations through our land a trail was laid out by usage and necessity from a point on the Rio Grande about 30 miles below, Eagle Pass, known as the Old Presidio to San Antonio and on Northeast through the Nacogdoches and St. Augustine country to Louisiana. The first traveler over this road according to history and tradition was St. Dennis in the year of 1714. But before this time there were explorers through our land, and time has erased all evidence of their journeys, but we feel sure that weary feet and brave hearts passed to and fro for a hundred years before St. Dennis recorded his trip.

From San Francisco to the Rio Grande soon after this time became a very important part of this road and over it we find the Franciscan Monks advancing into the wilderness building missions and establishing settlements among the wild tribes of Indians and as they advanced from the Rio Grande to San Antonio with emigrants and some commerce moving, history and romance followed.

The original and most used route was along the Presidio road which extends from the Presidio crossing on the Rio Grande to San Antonio via just north of Carrizo Springs in Dimmit by Loma Vista in Zavala by Old Frio Town in Frio County and through the Devine country into San Antonio.

### Detours Then Too

There is another route to and from the same points that was used I think as a detour to escape hostile Indians that camped on the big lakes in Dimmit and Zavala Counties to prey on emigrants and commerce. This last route however was adopted by the Daughters of the Republic and is well described by Morfi's diary of 1778, said route is much longer and further south leading from the same crossing in an easterly direction passing just north of Co-tulla in LaSalle County, by Hinds and near Charlotte and through Atascosa County to San Antonio.

The first route or Presidio road is almost straight and was later used as a military road by Old Mexico. Texas history and early maps of record show it, as well as the original land grants by Old Mexico along this route call for field notes to and from some point on the Old Presidio Road.

If the countless thousands who have passed over this first of all roads in the United States could

come back for one trip through this famous Winter Garden District and could tell us of the things that have happened and are now forgotten would be as interesting to us as the scenes of today would be to them.

At the foot of Espantosa Lake in Dimmit County on this road now grows a fine date and orange orchard that is a beautiful sight to behold and thousands journey there each year to rest in the shades of the eucalyptis and the palms and to fish in its placid waters.

Thousands of emigrants have pitched tents here for a night's rest in the long ago. Armies of Old Mexico bivouaced here and their marches to and from Texas.

Austin camped here alone on his mission to Mexico in 1833. The very name of the lake meaning "Ghost" carries legends and myths as classic as that of the Greeks. We are told that many a time when the tired travelers would stop for a night's rest and the mothers and daughters would go down to the lakes edge for water and to bathe, the mermaids would arise and carry the daughters away beneath the deep surface never to return.

### Lake Holds Mysteries

Emigrants and armies dreaded the phantom like mysteries of the great uncharted desert and the war-hoop of the Indian, the howl of the coyote and the buzz of the rattlesnake added to its terrors. But the pleasant climate of the winters and the flowers of spring added beauty to the richness of the soil and that great power of "I will" goaded them on and on until the water holes along the Kings Trail became happy home sites where the children sang in the soft light of the moon of their Bonite Juarez instead of the hideous noises of the past.

A very wealthy Spainard that was granted a large tract of land two centuries ago which land now lies within the Winter Garden district, requested in his will that when this country was safe for civilization that his body be removed from Spain and be buried on his premises here and this provision of his will was carried out, but after being planted in this fertile soil that responds so quickly to sunshine and rain, in a short time arose again and is still living somewhere in Southwest Texas.

I do not care to have this experience, but I do hope to live to see the day that Texas will complete an international highway to be known as the Pan-American and that it will be built over the old route, and historical road "Camino Real," the Kings Highway, so all the people in our land can travel the first and oldest road in the United States.

Suther about Cortez time

1699-1630

therefore, no.

- Presidio del Rio, 1699
- 1689-1690 When crossed R.R.
- 1691 Leran " " ?
- 1709 Espantosa Lake
- 1714 St. D. began no. west
- 1716 Ranney across the way to Colorado R.
- 1722 La Bahia founded + survey N.H.H. then west that way

Direct Route  
this appears to agree with map 1835

Direct Route

see map Hinds is San Miguel

Direct Route