

Crusaders-3

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Eastertide 1919 this Louisiana--East Texas group ran another crusading motorcade to New Orleans, this time seventeen cars. Celebrations and feasts greeted them everywhere coupled with pledges to press the project to completion...and, it is reported, the fire and faith of pioneers flashed in their talks, and in their labors also as they forced their cars along.

Bringing Texas into the Fold

July 25, 1919 a conference was held at Houston and at that conference San Antonio was asked to assume national headquarters work and press the project to completion. The San Antonio Chamber of Commerce accepted and Harral Ayres was called in and made Managing Director. A national convention was held at San Antonio, November 14-15, 1919. At that convention sixty West Texas ranchmen gathered and debated the problem of road-building across their extensive ranch country, five hundred and ninety miles to El Paso. Finally, they came into the convention and pledged the road....and the Old Spanish Trail was routéd across that interesting Hill Country that had so often thrilled to the tread of Spanish grandees and to the prayers of the padres.

The two hundred and twenty miles between San Antonio and Houston were still unsettled and complex problem when the convention adjourned but the trans-continental route now had its control points and the old Spanish cities of the far-southern country and the old Spanish trails of the centuries of Spanish pioneering were weaving together for the enjoyment of a new race of men. But for some years yet it was to remain an adventure to travel this country.

Opening Roads

During 1919-20-21 crusaders stepped forth in all sections. There were conferences, conventions, local pathfinding motorcades, crusading motorcades, community feasts, bond-voting campaigns that failed and others that succeeded, and travels by the Managing Director from place to place; often he was in mud and marshes and sometimes traveling by boat--ownership of a field automobile was not yet practical. Crusaders rose in various localities; men who gloried in facing problems and fighting through. Bridges, roads and paving must be financed. Rivers, bays and marshes must be crossed in the East and magnificent distances in the West. Incredible costs faced small communities. Graveled roads were being built in easy sections. Little "barrier sections" were being improved but the big "barrier sections" stood like ogres along the way; not a few of them but many and formidable.

Texas and the West were opening a road; dry climate and good soils helped them. But between the Atlantic and San Antonio there were thirty-one river and bay crossings to be solved; problems for taxpayers, problems for engineers. Those rivers carry to the Gulf the drainage waters of more than half the continent and necessity demanded bridges should be built to withstand the titanic power of floods that reach a mighty volume as they near the sea.

These arguments give an indication of the hundred and one problems that faced the crusading groups that were coming to the front in that country.

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