

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL

The Padres and the Old Trails

Dedicated to those heroic souls, the early Franciscan Fathers, who were the pioneers of the great highway that now connects Florida, Mexico and California. They toiled across deserts and mountains thru imminent and deadly danger, bearing aloft the symbol of their order and inspired ~~far~~ by their love of mankind. While the explorations of the conquistadores flame on the scrolls of legend and history the works of the padres still stand as monuments and ruins along the Old Spanish Trail, witnesses of their faith and industry and architectural examples of their high resolve.

Lands of Romance and Riches

The Old Spanish Trail weaves together the ancient city of St. Augustine, the alluring country of the Gulf of Mexico, the lands of the Spanish Southwest, the cities and towns of the Mexican Border, the golden coast of Southern California, as the all-year outdoor land for the people; it cons the Southern Borderlands as the last and greatest frontier to settlement and development. The background of history is the oldest and most romantic in America. It reaches from St. Augustine, Florida, thru Pensacola, Mobile and New Orleans with their colorful Spanish and French periods; thru the old Spanish mission country of the Southwest---San Antonio and central Texas; El Paso, Texas and the Rio Grande Valley to Santa Fe, New Mexico; then Tucson and the Santa Cruz Valley missions in Arizona and Mexico; and then the mother mission of California at San Diego where the explorers of today may continue northward to Los Angeles and San Francisco and visit the missions and relics that glorify the California Coast.

The Conquistadores

Those were the days of Spanish Splendor, of cavalier and conqueror, of Columbus, Cortez and Pizarro, of Ponce de Leon, Balboa, de Soto and Coronado, and of priestly names whose kingdoms were of God. The romance and riches of Mexico and Peru roused prince and peasant. The Spaniards dreamed of gold and glory and with expeditions worth a king's ransom they struggled thru jungles, deserts and mountains to despair and death while the phantom of riches raised others to follow; the Spanish conquests reached nearly half the continent.

In South America they sought for the land of the Gilded Chief whom they called El Dorado; they searched for the Temple of the Sun and the Enchanted City of the Caesars. In North America they searched thru Arizona and New Mexico for the fabled Seven Cities of Gold, and in Texas and Kansas for the realms of the