

First Texas Road Log Written 145 Years Ago Path of Camino Real From Rio Grande to Espada Mission Described by Father Morfi in 1777.

Staff Special to The Express.

AUSTIN, Tex., July 29.—As a result of the coming of a big delegation from Leon, Robertson, Brazos and other counties to the meeting of the State Highway Commission in Austin last Monday, all bent on having the department designate the old Camino Real as a State highway through that portion of Texas and on to Nacogdoches, State Highway Engineer J. D. Fauntleroy has been digging into the ancient records for the truth about the first route of a public road ever marked out by man within the limits of Texas.

This old road, sought to be made into a new and highly improved one, is undoubtedly of higher historical interest than any other road in Texas ever can be. It ran from a point near Rio Grande City on the international border through San Antonio and thence all the way to the Louisiana line, passing through the old town of Nacogdoches. It was in early days used more than any other trail, and is still the route for thousands.

It is the purpose of the State highway authorities to further reconstruction of the old road in every possible way. But it is learned the commissioners will not agree to designate the route for improvement as requested. They want the old trail to be followed as closely as economy and engineering problems will allow, but they draw the line at building a modern highway in just the way that the first cow and first horse moved from the Eastern frontier of Texas toward San Antonio.

Nowadays roads are logged with such ease and so frequently that they have little concern for the general public. But there is a log of that part of the old Camino Real, "Royal Road," or King's Trail, stretching from the Rio Grande to San Antonio in the archives here that is of local interest all over Southwest Texas and of peculiar value to good roads enthusiasts everywhere. It will soon be 145 years since Father Morfi and a few companions started the first trace of the Camino Real. This priest has left behind an imperishable record of his journeyings over a waste almost trackless. His description of the country as it then appeared between the Rio Grande and San Antonio is heightened in the minds of those who realize the changes that have taken place.

Father Morfi's log of the Camino Real, translated from the original Spanish, is one of the State Highway Department's most cherished souvenirs of early road building in Texas. It follows:

Dec. 24, 1777 we set out from Rio Grande, through some swamps and mesquite to the famous Rio Grande del Norte, two leagues, E. N. E., to the crossing called French Ford. (446). It was not possible for us to arrive at the next water-hole which is the only one nearby for the horses, so it was necessary to camp on the opposite bank of the river, a pistol-shot's distance away.

Dec. 25, I said mass before dawn. We set out at 7:30, over some hills, arid and rocky which form the opposite bank of the river, and entered a great plain of excellent land of good pasturage without water; and without seeing in any direction a single hill. At the termination of the plain (llano) we went down to a ravine of mesquite and other trees. The land is red, sandy. At the end of the ravine we found a large dry creek which preserves some pools of water all the year. It is called the Aguaje (waterhole) of San Ambrosia. Having passed this we saw another plain over which we traveled a league and a half to the spring of San Pedro.

We did not stop, but continued over the same red sandy soil, and at two o'clock arrived at the Aguaje of San Lorenzo, having traveled ten leagues East Northeast. This waterhole is a little pool of muddy water, surrounded by oaks (encinos) and other trees. From the ravine of San Ambrosio we saw many cacti, and from San Pedro much verdolaga (purslain).

On Dec. 26th we set out from San Lorenzo at 7:30, foggy, lasted until 10, when the sun came out. After ascending the hill (loma) near San Lorenzo, we found a shrub we call in Spain una de gato (cat-claw). We took a turn towards the east in order to ascend a hill (loma) not seeing anywhere anything but gradual hills (lomerias suaves), one arising above the other in the shape of a canoe. On top of it there is much loose and fine stone, which is not found in the ravines and meadows.

At 11 we arrived at the Aguaje of Santa Catarina. It is a little pool of water, somewhat cleaner than San Lorenzo. At 2:30 we arrived at the Pools of Barrera. The tents were placed on an elevation, having toward the east the Canoe (La Canoa). Ten leagues, five E. N. E., one east, and four E. N. E.

On the 27th we set out at 8 o'clock, cold, and after a short distance, the hills (lomeria) continuing, we arrived at a thick wood of mesquite, nopal, etc., and near its end is the Aguaje of San Roque, where there is water in pools all the year. We did not stop, but went up the crest of the hill, which is the only rocky place (penasqueria) in the vicinity, although covered with undergrowth. From here the Nueces River can be seen, and is not lost sight of until it is crossed. Descending the hill, the wood ends, and the lomerias (hills) continue to the Aguaje of La Romana, which is another pool two leagues from the preceding one, and not so abundant. We stopped here to warm ourselves. We set out through a little grove (bosquecito). The land changes to a cinnamon color. The last magueyes are seen. Four leagues further and on the left of our road, there is a hill a little higher than the others around it, which is called La Cochina. On this side a few days before the Apaches killed some men. A little before this a large number of wild horses crossed the road. We traveled two leagues over bare hills. Descended into a ravine formed by the wood of La Cochina. The wood is very dense and divided into two parts by a little hill (lomita) which cuts it from north to south. We went another league and entered another ra-

Morfi Diary. Route followed & checked by H A & Capt Bachus 1924-5 to Charlotte & Judge Carl Scott.