

beach shell drive to Pass Christian. At that point the driver had to go through Bogalusa, pass over Lake Pontchartrain, drop south, and enter New Orleans from the west.

To rate the appellation "national highway" all three Mississippi counties would have to build bridges and Harrison County would have to construct a seawall. Louisiana would have to build a highway link from the Mississippi line to New Orleans.

The Work of the Old Spanish Trail Highway Association 1919-1928

The Old Spanish Trail Highway Association suspended operations in 1918 due to the war effort. In mid 1919, Managing Director Harral B. Ayers revived the work.

Ayers chose Gulfport as the site of the association's Fifth National Convention and set the dates for the meeting as January 28-29, 1921. As delegates from Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas arrived, the news came that Louisiana had let the contract for nine miles of road to connect Chef Menteur Pass with the Rigolets. On that welcome note the delegates got down to business. On the first day the delegates established a Mississippi Division of the Old Spanish Trail Association. The officers of the new division would have at their service a national office field secretary who would aid them in their work.

In his address to the convention, Ayers explained the difficulties of building a national highway. "We can get good roads built in county after county, but getting the continuing highway is the problem. Every hundred miles or so is an impassable swamp, or a bad river, or an indifferent county and the pleasure of the drive is destroyed. That is our big work, filling in the broken links Many of them cannot be completed until we can get federal aid to them and more federal aid must come from Washington."

Ayers further informed the assemblage that "the federal highway board was asking Congress to concentrate aid on a few transcontinental highways . . . [so] that some can be completed." He added, "We will not have continental highways in a generation if we keep scattering federal and state aid on a multiplicity of highways."

The worst problem with the Old Spanish Trail route was the indented Gulf Coast shoreline. Thirty-seven miles of bridges and causeways were necessary in the Pensacola to New Orleans section alone. On the other hand 50 percent of the mobile units of the U. S. Army were located on or near the Old Spanish Trail route together with 85 percent of the active flying fields, five naval stations, and five port cities. Thus the big selling point of the route was its military necessity. According to Ayers, the rivers and bays would have to be bridged and a seawall built to protect the road along the Mississippi Gulf Coast in order to assure federal highway aid.

Three days after the convention adjourned a ferry went into operation across the Bay of St. Louis, but Jackson County's commitment surpassed all other political entities in the Mobile to New Orleans region. Immediately after the convention the Jackson County Board of