

Old Spanish Trail at Tallahassee

San Antonio Man Wins Decoration

King of Spain Sends Medal for Work on Old Spanish Trail

HARRAL AYRES, managing director of the Old Spanish Trail development, will receive a distinguished honor from the King of Spain when he receives the Condecoración of the Royal Order of Isabel la Católica, with title of Knight Commander at a reception and ceremony of presentation Tuesday evening at the home of Mrs. Henry Drought, 1215 North St. Mary's Street, for his work in connection with the Old Spanish Trail movement.

Officiating at the ceremony will be the Spanish Consul Pablo de Ubarri, Spanish consul for Texas and New Mexico.

In the official party conferring the decoration besides Ubarri and Mrs. Drought will be Maj. Gen. William Lassiter, commander of the Eighth Corps Area, and his personal staff; Enrique Santibanez, consul general of Mexico; Col. H. M. Diekmann, president of the San Antonio Automobile League; Werner N. Beckmann, a representative of the Old Spanish Trail board; Dr. Frederick Combe, T. H. Etheridge, president of the San Antonio Real Estate Board; Mayor C. M. Chambers, County Judge Perry S. Robertson, State Senator W. A. Williamson, Arnold Shanklin, former United States consul to Mexico, and Walter Walthall, president of the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce.

The jewel of the order is a double-sided Spanish sunburst, two inches in diameter, suspended from a laurel wreath. On one side is the name of the order, and on the other is "La Lealtad Acrisolada," expressive of loyalty and merit.

Ayres accepted the Old Spanish Trail leadership in 1919 when there was no regular route across the

Southern borderlands. Automobiles were forced to pick their own course through mud, cattle lands and deserts with undependable ferries assisting them in crossing the numerous rivers en route.

The leadership of San Antonio and constant efforts for 10 years was the thing that eventually made possible the Old Spanish Trail. Federal and State officials were slow in granting recognition to the route and failed to do so until 1922.

The Old Spanish Trail movement was organized at Mobile, Ala., to build a highway from Florida to New Orleans. Western States became interested, and the plan was changed to an Atlantic to Pacific highway. No recognition was given the work for seven years because of the cost of construction and the slow progress.

There was no recognized route across South Texas until 1921. A conference in Houston in 1919 resulted in the routing of the road through San Antonio, though Dallas had been the prevailing choice until that time. San Antonio was chosen because of its missions and historical ruins of the Spaniards.

Ayres was selected as managing director in San Antonio shortly after the Houston conference. The first step of the San Antonio group was to hold a convention in this city. More than 100 West Texans attended this meeting and pledged the completion of the route through West Texas.

Ayres went to Washington in June, 1922, and succeeded in having a declaration signed by Senators and Congressmen that the road was a basic National need. The United States Bureau of Education sided with the road builders as did the American Auto-

motive Association. This work in Washington took seven months, and resulted in liberal appropriations. Construction work followed within a short time.

Florida in 1929 became the first State to complete the paving of its Old Spanish Trail route.

A women's department of beautification was started in 1923 under the leadership of Mrs. F. W. Sorell and Mrs. A. H. Moos of San Antonio to remove advertising signs and to beautify the road.

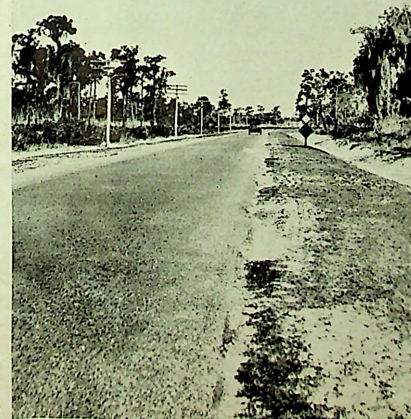
In 1925 the United States highways were designated. The Old Spanish Trail through West Texas was not recognized. Ayres again went to Washington after efforts to obtain recognition had failed because he was not present in the capital. On his arrival in Washington he opened the question and was successful in having the San Diego to St. Augustine route made wholly a United States highway.—San Antonio Express.

Silas: "What's that I hear, Hiram, about your hired man falling off the roof when he was shingling the barn last week?"

Hiram: "Yeh. He fell into a barrel of turpentine."

Silas: "Did it hurt him much?"

Hiram: "Don't know. They ain't caught him yet."



Old Spanish Trail, West Florida

Royal Decoration

For Harral Ayres

Honored for Work in Restoring Old Spanish Trail

Harral Ayres, who was born in Bordentown, and spent his early life there and in this city, and is now living in San Antonio, Texas, has had conferred upon him the most distinguished royal order of Spain—the Condecoración of the Royal Order of Isabel la Católica. This was conferred upon Mr. Ayres in the name of King Alfonso XIII, for notable work in having the Old Spanish Trail restored and converted into a national highway that links Florida and California.

The decoration was presented to Mr. Ayres at a reception held at the home of Mrs. Henry Drought in San Antonio, by Don Pablo de Ubarri, who represented the Spanish King. The presentation was participated in by Spanish, American, Mexican and Texas officials at a formal diplomatic reception. This is a rare honor, and is so jealously guarded that the Condecoración jewel, a double sided cross and sunburst in red and gold, the Spanish colors, suspended from a laurel leaf, that upon the death of the recipient or his promotion to a higher order, it must be returned to the Crown.

The Old Spanish Trail, used years before New England was settled, was cut by the Spanish princes, adventurers and Mission Fathers who explored and settled the Old Spanish country. Travel in those days was by sea and up rivers and over bays and overland by rambling trails. On this route were established the ancient cities of St. Augustine, Pensacola, Mobile, Biloxi, New Orleans, San Antonio, El Paso, Tucson and San Diego. With the advent of the automobile the road was practically closed to travel because of the insuperable barriers offered by the bays and rivers.

Everyone in the southland knew the romantic history attached to the old trail and the cities along its route, but practically nothing was done until Mr. Ayres went to San Antonio to make his home. Fascinated by the history and beauty of the borderland country, he set about having the Old Spanish Trail made a national highway.

The task was a long and often times discouraging one. It required interesting the United States Government; getting appropriations by Congress; traveling long distances and making speeches to interest people in the project; holding meetings in eight States through which the trail runs. Through his ceaseless devotion to the work, Mr. Ayres overcame tremendous difficulties, and today the Old Trail is a National Highway of major importance, built at a cost of more than \$80,000,000. Great bridges span the waters of rivers and bays and the highway now forms a continuous connecting link from Jacksonville and St. Augustine on the Florida East Coast through Tallahassee, Pensacola, Mobile, New Orleans, Beaumont, Houston, San Antonio, El Paso, Tucson, Phoenix to San Diego on the California coast.

Clayton L. Traver, who of recent years has traveled extensively through the Southwest, met Mr. Ayres a few winters ago in San Antonio. He found that the former Jerseyman had not only been born in Bordentown, but that he had graduated from Rider College in the days when it was the Elder Moore Stewart Business College. Last winter Mr. Ayres spent a brief time here with Mr. Traver, before the latter joined him later in the season at San Antonio.