

EL CAMINO REAL

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The Old San Antonio Road, . . . known also as the King's Highway and the Camino Real, was blazed in 1691 by Domingo Teran de los Rios, first provincial governor of Texas, as a direct route from Monclova, then capital of the province, to the Spanish missions which had been established among the Indians of East Texas in 1690.¹ In 1714 Louis Juchereau de St. Denis probably followed the road from Natchitoches to San Juan Bautista on the Rio Grande. Moses Austin traversed the trail en route to San Antonio to request an empresario grant from the Spanish government in 1820, and many of the Anglo-American colonists entered Texas at Gaines Ferry on the Sabine and arrived at Nacogdoches and the interior of Texas over the road and its trails.

In 1915 the Texas Legislature appropriated \$5,000 to survey and mark the route. The Daughters of the American Revolution and other patriotic organizations sponsored and endorsed the project, and V. N. Zivley was commissioned to make the survey.

In determining the route, Zivley studied river crossings and other topographic features, Spanish land grants, and laws of the Republic of Texas. From the Rio Grande to San Antonio he found little physical evidence of the trail, but by use of Juan Agustin Morfi's diary of 1778, he was able to establish the route. The road entered San Antonio via San Pedro Springs and was followed by the original irrigation canal for the missions. It passed the missions around San Antonio and then took a cross-country route. From San Antonio to the Sabine River, the river

¹ Mr. J. W. Williams says 1691 portion is only the Spanish Padres Trail; rest of OSR actually was laid out about 1800.

crossings were fixed, and topographic features assisted in retracing the line, although the road as traveled with the passing of the years had varied considerably between river crossings and other points of control. Permanent corners or markers were placed approximately every five miles; in 1918 the state of Texas and the Daughters of the American Revolution placed granite monuments as the designated points.

As officially marked, the road crossed the Sabine River at Gaines Ferry, passed through Sabine, San Augustine, Nacogdoches, Cherokee, and Houston counties to the Trinity River; formed the boundary between Madison and Leon and Robertson and Brazos counties over most of the distance from the Trinity to the Brazos River; passed through Burleson, Lee, Bastrop, and between Hays and Caldwell counties; and traversed Coma, Bexar, Atascosa, Frio, LaSalle, Dimmit, and Maverick counties to Pado [sic] de Francis on the Rio Grande, a distance of 540 miles.

In 1929 the Texas Legislature designated the Old San Antonio Road as a state highway and directed the Highway Department to preserve and maintain the road along the route. Save for some temporary deviations and a few locations impractical for a usable road, most of the distance from the Sabine to San Antonio by 1949 had been opened and paved. Normangee is the home of the Old San Antonio Road Association.

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