El Camino Real de los Tejas: Past and Present
By
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El Camino Real de los Tejas: Past and Present

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Defining a Camino Real
El Camino Real de los Tejas: Past and Present

What is a Camino Real?

Caminos Reales (royal roads) are defined as roads that connect a Spanish Capital to a Spanish Capital, a distinction not shared with roads connecting ordinary Spanish or Indian villages.
What is a Camino Real?

Historically, caminos reales connected economically important Spanish towns, capitals of provinces, and mines that possessed a charter prescribing royal privileges.

Villas like San Antonio had charters that prescribed such royal privileges.
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A Brief History of El Camino Real de los Tejas
La Salle lands on Texas coast in 1685. French outpost *Fort St. Louis* is established.
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Spanish Sea Expeditions in Search of La Salle

- 1686: Barroto and Romero Expedition.
- 1687: Rivas and Iriarte Expedition.
- 1687 – 1688: Third and fourth expeditions.
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Land Expeditions in Search of La Salle

- 1686: First expedition by Alonso de León.
- 1687: Second de León expedition.
- 1688: de León captures the Frenchman Jean Géry.
- 1689: de León discovers the remnants of Fort Saint Louis.
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The Beginnings of Texas

Of the 1689 expedition by de León Castañeda states,

“[s]ince this expedition was the first to penetrate as far as the Guadalupe River from the frontiers of Coahuila, [it] has generally been considered as marking the beginnings of Texas” (Castañeda 1936, 1: 333).
“de León marched … to the Neches River, where on May 22 he encountered a settlement of the Tejas [Indians]. After a brief search for an ideal site, the foundations for the first mission in East Texas, San Francisco de los Tejas, were laid, and mass was celebrated in the new church on June 1” (Chipman 2000, 89).
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El Camino Real de los Tejas Becomes a Major Route

- 1700: Foundation of the misión and presidio of San Juan Bautista on the Río Grande.
- 1714: Natchitoches founded by French.
- 1717: Los Adaes established as first capital of Texas.
- 1718: Foundation of la villa de San Fernando de Béxar and Misión San Antonio de Valero (The Alamo).
- Facilitation of trade between Texas and Louisiana, and later, the movement of U.S. settlers heading west.
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El Camino Real de los Tejas and Westward Expansion from the U.S.

• 1820: Moses Austin arrives in San Fernando de Béxar to establish a Spanish Colony.

• Around the same time, many Anglo-American colonists entered Texas at Gaines Ferry on the Sabine River and arrived at Nacogdoches and the interior of Texas over the road.

• 1836: David Crockett arrives in Texas.
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El Camino Real de los Tejas In Present Times
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Events leading up to El Camino Real’s Designation as an NHT

- 1915: Texas Legislature appropriated $5,000 to survey the route.
- 1915-1916: Zivley surveys the route.
- 1918: Markers erected along the trail.
- 1929: Texas Legislature designated the OSR one of the historic trails of Texas.
- 1949: Most of road from San Antonio to the Sabine River had been paved.
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Events leading up to El Camino Real’s Designation as an NHT

• 1991: Texas Legislature formed the Old San Antonio Road Preservation Commission.

• 1991: TXDOT study determined at least five routes were used at various times.


• 2004: On October 18, 2004, El Camino Real designated as a National Historic Trail and part of the National Trails System.
What is the National Trails System?

• The National Trails System Act of 1968 established the National Trails System. The Act states that,

“In order to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs … trails should be established (i) primarily, near the urban areas of the Nation, and (ii) secondarily, within scenic areas and along historic travel routes of the Nation which are often more remotely located.”
What is a National Historic Trail?

The National Trails System Act states in Sec. 3 (a)(3) that,

“National historic trails … will be extended trails which follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance.”
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What does the National Trails System Act say about El Camino Real?

- Sec. 5 (a)(24)(A) in regard to El Camino Real de los Tejas states,

“IN GENERAL - El Camino Real de los Tejas (the Royal Road [of] the Tejas) National Historic Trail, [is] a combination of historic routes (including the Old San Antonio Road) totaling approximately 2,580 miles, extending from the Río Grande near Eagle Pass and Laredo, Texas, to Natchitoches, Louisiana.”
Map of El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT
Places to See along El Camino Real

Jesus Treviño Fort y Rancho – Near Laredo, Texas

Exterior of Fort

Interior of Fort
Places to See along El Camino Real

San Antonio Missions and the Alamo – San Antonio, Texas

The Alamo

Mission Concepción
Places to See along El Camino Real

Mission Espíritu Santo y Presidio la Bahía – Goliad, Texas

Mission Espíritu Santo

Presidio la Bahía
Places to See along El Camino Real

Mission Tejas and the Old Stone Fort – East Texas

Mission Tejas – Mission Tejas State Park, Houston County

Casa de Piedra (Old Stone Fort) – Nacogdoches, Texas
Places to See along El Camino Real

River Crossings and Trail Segments – Across Texas

Apache Pass, Milam County

Mission Tejas State Park, Houston County

McKinney Falls State Park, Austin Texas
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Please visit our website: http://www.elcaminotrail.org

Join our association to give the trail the protection and recognition it deserves!
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Question or Comments?

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