

An Account of
**Colonel Fletcher's Record-Breaking
Transcontinental Trip**

San Diego, California, to Savannah, Georgia

Auspices, San Diego Chamber of Commerce

October 10-13, 1926

71 hours, 15 minutes, Western Union Time



Dedicating Plaza Milestone November 17, 1923, at San Diego. Colonel Fletcher reading President Coolidge's Address

**Log of Trip and All-Year National Highways Map--
Atlantic to Pacific**

Published by

SAN DIEGO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA



FOREWORD

With our all-year national highway from the Atlantic to the Pacific nearing completion, we believe the reader will find Colonel Fletcher's narrative of the building of this great highway, and his record-breaking run across the continent, interesting reading. This remarkable trip was made in his family Cadillac Sedan, San Diego to Savannah, including all stops, in two days, twenty-three hours and fifteen minutes, October, 1926, and breaking the fastest national record across the continent by eleven hours and fifty-six minutes. Only an airplane has ever made faster time, and the Colonel's record breaks that of the fastest passenger train by 28 hours.

The San Diego Chamber of Commerce has had for fifteen years as its chairman of National Highways, Colonel Ed Fletcher, who has given much of his time and money in furthering the national highway aspirations of San Diego and Southern California. In this pamphlet is furnished a partial report of the activities of Colonel Fletcher's committee, that we believe will be of interest to the traveling public.

Colonel Fletcher, as president of the Dixie-Overland Highway, San Diego to Savannah, vice-president of the Lee Highway, San Diego to Washington, as well as the Old Spanish Trail, San Diego to St. Augustine, Florida, we feel has rendered distinguished service to Southern California and the entire country which these highways traverse. San Diego owes a lasting debt of gratitude to him.

This gives the reader some idea of the conditions and possibilities of our Southern All-Year Highway for future transcontinental travel. For further information, write San Diego Chamber of Commerce.

HOWARD F. WORTH, *President*
San Diego Chamber of Commerce

Colonel Ed Fletcher's National Record Chamber of Commerce Run Across the Continent--San Diego to Savannah, Ga.

By Colonel Ed Fletcher

The object of the run was to demonstrate the feasibility of the route over the Dixie Overland highway, San Diego to Savannah, Georgia, and returning via the Old Spanish Trail, St. Augustine, Florida, to San Diego, also to report conditions, create renewed interest, and encourage the early completion of the missing links, that we may have all-year national highways from the Atlantic to the Pacific completed at an early date.

By telegraph before leaving, we arranged for permission from state, county and city officials wherever possible to make the run.

On the afternoon of Tuesday, October 19th, the day before we started, our friend, Dean Blake, U. S. Weather Bureau, reported that a cyclone was developing around Porto Rico and would strike Savannah, Georgia, by Saturday noon, the 23rd; that we would get a slight touch of rain in New Mexico from a storm working south from British Columbia on Wednesday afternoon, but that otherwise the weather would be clear.

My son, Ed Fletcher, Jr., had dared me to make the race, and "the old man" had to call him. We made the trip in our family car, a Cadillac sedan, which had been run 17,000 miles. One of our boys, Milton Jackson, was to drive the car to Tucson, and Ed Fletcher, Jr., and La Vern Kingsbury from there to Savannah.

We left the Western Union telegraph office at four a. m. October 20, 1926, certified time. We had red spotlights on our left for signalling at night, and white spotlights on our right. Every arrangement was made in advance by telegraph as to where we were to pick up our different guides, and replenish our supply of gas and oil, as well as food.

The remarkable thing about the trip was that every man was in his place across the continent, and our only delay was five minutes at Vicksburg waiting for a ferry to cross the Mississippi river.

The first two hours through darkness, we crossed a mountain range four thousand feet elevation and reached the Colorado desert. The police patrol met us at Dixie and paced us through El Centro and the renowned Imperial Valley to Yuma at a mile a minute. The Sand Hills in the early morning sun were a thing of beauty never to be forgotten.

We reached Yuma, Arizona, at 7:55 o'clock, three hours and 55 minutes from San Diego. A motor cop showed us through Yuma, and we were off for Phoenix up the Gila Valley. There is nothing more thrilling than a drive across Arizona on a cool Fall day, with its variety of desert growth, gigantic cacti, marvelous colored mountain peaks and wide expanse of irrigated and desert land. We forded the river at Gillespie dam without trouble, where the last bridge between Yuma and Phoenix is now being built, and soon were in the Salt River valley at Hassayampa where speed cops met us and showed the way through forty miles of marvelously irrigated land into Phoenix. We averaged over 50 miles an hour, including all stops, San Diego to Phoenix, making the run in eight hours and two minutes—405 miles. A large crowd met us, but in ten minutes we were off for Tucson, 136 miles away.

The Tucson speed cops were ready to show us the way in, but one of them in making a turn in the road at a mile a minute, missed, and our last glimpse of him was as he went through the sagebrush. Picking up our guide at Tucson, we were forced to go by way of Benson and Wilcox to Lordsburg on account of bridges out (now rebuilt) from recent storms on the Bisbee-Douglas road. We forded the San Pedro River without help.

We arrived at Lordsburg, New Mexico, at 7 p. m., filled up with gas and oil, and headed for our next destination, El Paso, picking up a guide at Deming. True to prediction we ran across some bad weather and muddy roads which slowed us up a little, but at last we reached the paved highway, a straight stretch seventeen miles into El Paso. Ten miles away we received the signal from the El Paso motor cops and gave a welcoming answer that we were on our way. It was with a thrill of delight that we pulled into El Paso three hours and fifteen minutes ahead of our schedule, arriving there at 12:05 a. m. Thursday morning, twenty hours and fifteen minutes from San Diego—832 miles away—averaging nearly 43 miles per hour, including all stops.

With everything in readiness, our car was soon re-fueled. We had a wonderful dinner, and in forty-five minutes were on our way over the Sierra Blanca range of mountains, headed for Fort Worth with a new guide. We arrived at Kent, Texas, the junction

of the Old Spanish Trail and the Dixie Overland highway, at 4:55 a. m., approximately 1000 miles from San Diego.

We struck muddy roads Thursday morning through Texas, had bad detours, stopped an hour to repair two punctures, picked up our guide again at Midland, Texas, and in the early evening passed through Mineral Wells.

Five miles out of Fort Worth, city officials were kind enough to meet us. After a "howdy", three motor cops showed us through Fort Worth at 55 miles an hour without accident. The noise of the sirens we will never forget, but the traffic sure gave us the right of way.

Entering Dallas, motor cops again led the way, and we arrived at our destination for gas and oil at 6:30 p. m. Thursday, Pacific time. The crowds were enormous. Many "darkies" grabbed our car for re-fueling, and three of them rushed us up an elevator for a shower bath and rub-down. A wonderful dinner awaited us below, and after a stop of forty minutes, we were again on our way for Shreveport, Louisiana.

It was a wonderful moonlight night and a delightful run through the forests. Speed cops picked us up a few miles out of Shreveport and showed us the way in, our arrival being at 1:15 a. m. To our utter amazement, 300 people were awaiting us. Another delightful dinner, our car re-fueled, and in 20 minutes we were off again guided by a captain of the police patrol of the Louisiana Highway commission—a dead-game sport.

Never will we forget that 205 mile ride which we made in four hours and twenty minutes through the swamps of Louisiana to Vicksburg—the morning sunrise, the lights and shadows, Lagoons, the forests and waving moss, and above it all, a thrill that cannot be put in words as we raced toward victory.

We arrived at Vicksburg at 7:55 o'clock, central time, and were only delayed five minutes by the ferry which took us across the Mississippi river. A few moments' stop at Jackson, a new guide, and we were off for Montgomery, Alabama.

It was a hard grind the second day. The boys driving were very tired, but eternal hope of a national record spurred them on. A western T-bone steak at Meridian, where we stopped for an hour, put new life into us all.

We arrived at Montgomery, Alabama, at 6:25 p. m. Friday, Pacific time. We got immediate service, and a new guide showed us the way, in two hours and twenty minutes—93 miles—to Columbus, Georgia, where a mob of several hundred people with tremendous enthusiasm, welcomed our arrival. We still had 278 miles to go—the last leg of our trip. Another good dinner, another guide, and we were off for our destination—Savannah.

As predicted by the weather bureau, the clouds had gathered, and everything indicated rain. We had wonderful dirt roads all the way to Savannah, but if the rain came our situation would have been hopeless for fast driving. La Vern Kingsbury was at the wheel. Within 50 miles he collapsed. Ed Jr., took the wheel, and also had to give it up at another 50 miles. We had had practically no sleep since we left San Diego. We all saw things that were not, and vice versa. Yet the boys, with marvelous determination, stuck to it. We drove for 50 miles through a dense fog at a mile a minute, seemingly cutting off the tail of one pig in the darkness and the snout of another. We also ran around a Ford truck without lights. Fifteen miles out of Savannah, Georgia, we were stopped by the city officials of Savannah, and motor cops again showed us the way in. Only one, however, could keep up with us, and we lost him two miles out of Savannah as he rounded a turn. A newsboy showed us the way to the Western Union telegraph office, where we went for our registered time. We had made the last 278 miles in five hours and 25 minutes, or an average of 50 miles per hour, completing the distance across the continent, including all stops—2535 miles—in 71 hours and 15 minutes, breaking the national record, ocean to ocean, by eleven hours and 56 minutes. We had made the run in less than three days, had beaten the fastest passenger train by 28 hours, and only an airplane has to date beaten us across the continent.

Within four hours from the time we arrived at Savannah, Georgia, it commenced to rain, and in 24 hours thereafter, rained 3.14 inches. The Fates were with us!

I cannot thank enough the chambers of commerce, as well as the

SAN DIEGO AND LOS ANGELES WELCOME YOU TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA OVER OUR

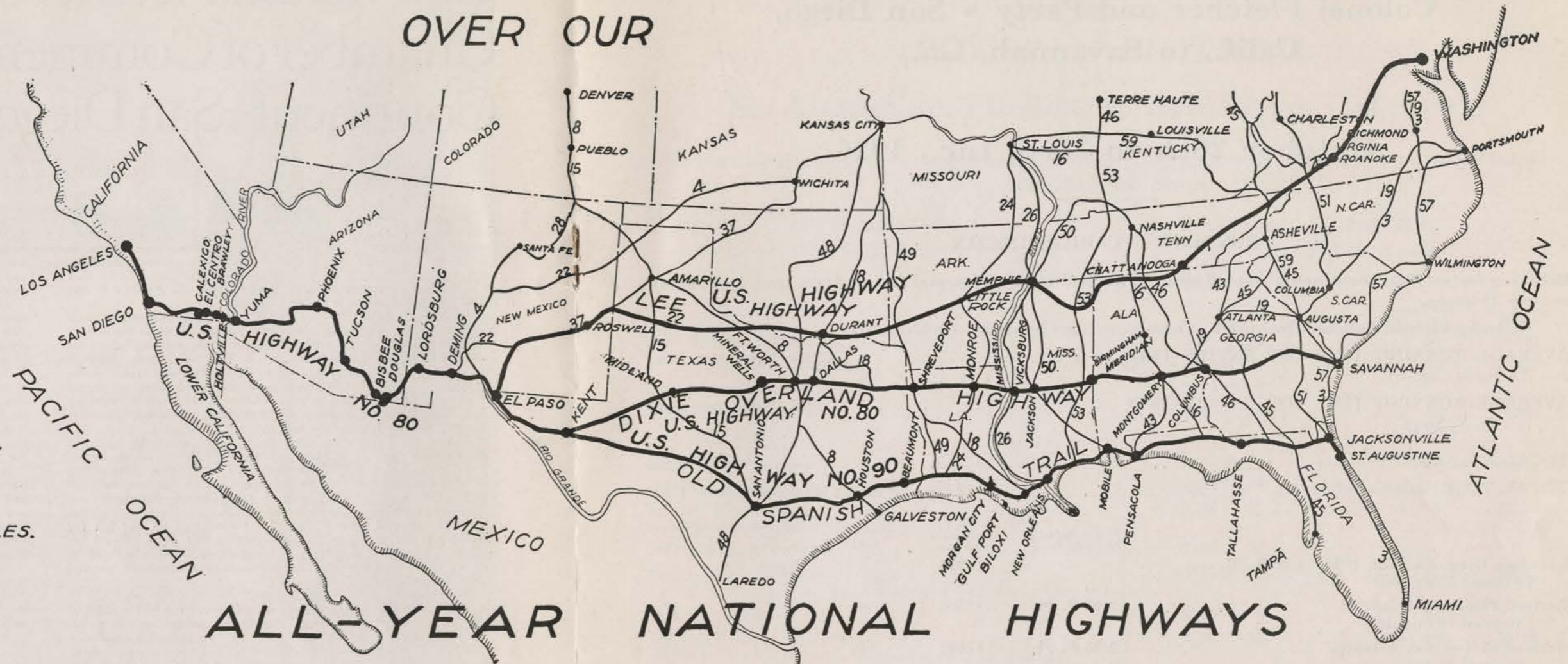
NUMBERS AND NAMES OF HIGHWAYS

- 3 ATLANTIC HIGHWAY.
- 4 ATLANTIC-PACIFIC HIGHWAY.
- 8 COLORADO TO GULF HIGHWAY.
- 15 GLACIER TO GULF MOTORWAY.
- 16 GLACIER TRAIL.
- 18 JEFFERSON HIGHWAY.
- 19 JEFFERSON DAVIS NATIONAL HIGHWAY.
- 22 LEE HIGHWAY.
- 24 LONE STAR ROUTE.
- 26 MISSISSIPPI RIVER SCENIC HIGHWAY.
- 28 NATIONAL OLD TRAILS ROAD.
- 37 SOUTHWEST TRAIL.
- 43 APPALACHIAN SCENIC HIGHWAY.
- 45 DETROIT-ASHEVILLE-MIAMI HIGHWAY.
- 46 FLORIDA SHORT ROUTE.
- 48 INTERNATIONAL PEACE HIGHWAY.
- 49 ITASCA PARK HIGHWAY.
- 50 JEFF DAVIS HIGHWAY.
- 51 LAKES TO FLORIDA HIGHWAY.
- 53 MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST TO CHICAGO HIGHWAY.
- 57 SOUTH ATLANTIC COASTAL HIGHWAY.
- 59 DANIEL BOONE TRAIL.

SAN DIEGO TO SAVANNAH,
DIXIE OVERLAND HIGHWAY, 2535 MILES.

SAN DIEGO TO ST. AUGUSTINE,
OLD SPANISH TRAIL, 2759 MILES.

SAN DIEGO TO WASHINGTON, D.C.,
LEE HIGHWAY, 3258 MILES.



Colonel Fletcher and his party in front of the New Mexican Building, Balboa Park, San Diego, ready for the Trans-continental record-breaking run.

state, county and city officials, who cooperated so well and made possible this record trip.

I wired the result of our trip to Mr. Thomas H. MacDonald, chief of the bureau of public roads and engineering, at Washington, D. C., and received his congratulations. Within a few weeks we were delighted to have the United States Government officially approve the Dixie Overland highway as Route No. 80, U. S. Highways, from Savannah, Georgia, across the continent to San Diego.

The next day we motored from Savannah to Jacksonville, Florida, and starting the following afternoon, October 25th, at 2 p. m., we made the run from St. Augustine, Florida, over the Old Spanish Trail, to San Diego, our actual running time being 75 hours and 35 minutes, total mileage—2809 miles. This distance has since been reduced to 2759 miles by new cut-offs completed. We distributed 15,000 pieces of San Diego Chamber of Commerce literature on our return trip, held sixteen highway meetings, and found the great enthusiasm for the completion of the Old Spanish Trail.

Over \$75,000,000 has been spent already on the Old Spanish Trail, and the country traversed can well be called "The Playground of America". Over fifty per cent of the highway has already been paved or under contract from St. Augustine to San Diego, and the work is rapidly progressing to com-

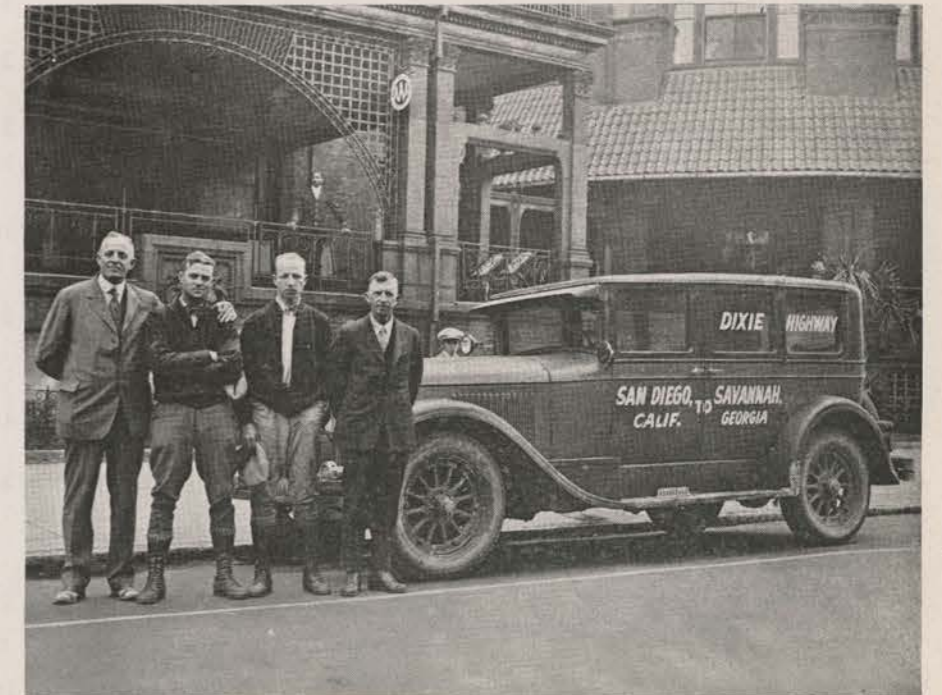
pletion. Anyone can make with safety today, the trip over the Old Spanish Trail, the Dixie Overland Highway, or the Lee Highway, and within five years we hope to see every foot of it paved over all three of the East and West National All-Year highways.

It would be unfair for me not to say a word of praise for the wonderful boys who made this record trip possible. Not a cross word was said; every man gave the best that was in him. There was a determination to succeed. There was one hundred percent cooperation, and every man did his bit.

Our old Cadillac sedan made a remarkable run, and made the round trip across the continent and back, in two weeks to a day (under the most adverse conditions on our return trip) all without delaying us for a moment.

Kelly-Springfield balloon tires delivered the goods. We did not have a single blow-out, and only seven punctures caused by seven nails, on the round trip.

The object of this trip was to awaken the South to the possibilities of a transcontinental highway completed at an early date. We feel our object was attained, and at an early date I hope to have the pleasure of travelling over a paved highway joining the Atlantic to the Pacific, and similar in character to the magnificent paved highway already completed on the Pacific coast from the Mexican border to British Columbia.



Arrival in Savannah, Georgia, 71 hours and 15 minutes after leaving San Diego. Left to right: Colonel Fletcher, Ed Fletcher, Jr., La Verne Kingsbury, and J. E. Graves.

Log of Record-Breaking Chamber of Commerce Trip by Colonel Fletcher and Party • San Diego, Calif., to Savannah, Ga.

October 20th to 23rd, Inc., 1926

RUN MADE IN CADILLAC SEDAN

Breaking fastest Transcontinental record by 11 hours and 56 minutes, and fastest train time by approximately 28 hours.

Kelly-Springfield Balloon Tires used. Three punctures by nails—No blowouts.

AVERAGE RUNNING TIME FOR ENTIRE TRIP.....39.1 Miles per hour
(Deducting Stops)

AVERAGE RUNNING TIME FOR ENTIRE TRIP.....35.5 Miles per hour
(Including Stops)

TOTAL MILEAGE.....2,535

TOTAL TIME (including all stops).....71 hrs. 15 min., Western Union Time

	Time of Arrival All Pacific Time	Speedometer Reading	Miles	Elapsed Time Hr. Min.	Actual Running Time Hr. Min.
Left San Diego Oct. 20, 1926—4:00 A. M. (Stopped 5 minutes)		16923			
Arrived Phoenix, Arizona..... (Stopped 10 minutes)	12:02 P. M.	17306	383	8 2	7 57
Arrived at Tucson, Arizona..... (Stopped 15 min.)	2:55 P. M.	17442	136	2 53	2 43
Arrived at Lordsburg..... (Stopped 10 min.)	8:00 P. M.	17611	149	5 05	4 50
Arrived at Deming..... (Stopped 10 min.)	9:32 P. M.	17650	59	1 32	1 22
Arrived at El Paso, Oct. 21st..... (Stopped 45 min.)	12:05 A. M.	17755	105	2 33	2 23
Arrived Kent, Texas.....	4:55 A. M.	17909	154	4 50	4 05
Arrived Abilene, Texas..... (Stopped 1 hr. to fix punctures)	12:45 P. M.	18204	295	7 50	7 50
Arrived Dallas, Texas..... Left Dallas at 7:45 P. M. (Stopped 40 min.)	6:30 P. M.	18404	200	5 45	4 45
Arrived Shreveport, La., Oct. 22d..... Left Shreveport at 1:30 A. M. (Stopped 20 min.)	1:15 A. M.	18606	202	6 45	6 05
Arrived Vicksburg, Miss..... (Stopped 20 min.)	5:55 A. M.	18784	178	4 40	4 20
Arrived Jackson, Miss..... Left Jackson 6:35 (Stopped 10 min.) (Stopped Meridian 1 hr.)	8:10 A. M.	18831	47	1 15	55
Arrived Montgomery, Ala..... Left Montgomery at 7:25 P. M. (Stopped 45 min.)	6:25 P. M.	19095	264	10 15	9 05
Arrived Columbus, Ga..... (Stopped at Columbus 35 min.)	9:15 P. M.	19188	93	2 50	2 05
Arrived Savannah, Ga., Oct. 23d.....	3:15 A. M.	19458	270	6	5 25

TRIP OF COL. FLETCHER AND PARTY

RETURNING VIA OLD SPANISH TRAIL

St. Augustine, Florida, to San Diego, California

Sixteen Formal and Informal Meetings were Held Enroute. Time, 7 Days and 2 Hours
Including All Stops

TOTAL MILEAGE.....2,809 Miles

ACTUAL RUNNING TIME.....75 hrs. 35 min.

or 37 Miles per hour

	Date	Time	Miles	Running Time Hr. Min.	Speedometer Reading
Left St. Augustine, Fla.....	10-26	2:00 P. M.			19791
Arrived Jacksonville, Fla.....	10-26	3:10 P. M.	41	1 10	19832
Left Jacksonville, Fla.....		3:15 P. M.			
Arrived Tallahassee.....		7:55 P. M.	173	4 40	20005
Left Tallahassee.....	10-27	7:00 A. M.			
Arrived Pensacola.....		12:15 P. M.	212	5 15	20217
Left Pensacola.....		2:50 P. M.			
Arrived Mobile Bay..... (Included 14-mile boat-ride on the Bay)		5:00 P. M.	54	2 10	26271
Left Mobile.....	10-28	7:00 A. M.			
Arrived New Orleans..... (Crossed three ferries and stopped 1 hr. for lunch—2 hrs.)		3:15 P. M.	195	6 15	20466
Left New Orleans.....	10-29	7:00 A. M.			
Arrived Beaumont, Texas..... (1 hr. for lunch; 1 hr. for punctures; 1 hr. crossing ferries—Sabine River Morgan Ferry)		6:20 P. M.	320	8 20	20786
Left Beaumont (Raining).....	10-30	7:45 A. M.			
Arrived Houston, Texas.....		11:25 A. M.	99	3 40	20885
Left Houston, Texas.....		1:45 P. M.			
Arrived San Antonio.....		7:45 P. M.	220	6	21105
Left San Antonio.....	10-31	9:15 A. M.			
Arrived El Paso..... (Stopped 1 hr. for lunch) (Heavy rains)	11-1	2:15 A. M.	586	16 05	21691
Left El Paso.....		1:30 P. M.			
Arrived Douglas..... (Stopped 10 min. Lordsburg; Stopped 10 min. Deming, New Mexico, was afloat)		8:30 P. M.	266	7	21957
Left Douglas.....	11-2	8:00 A. M.			
Arrived Tucson..... (Stopped 10 min. Tombstone; Stopped 10 min. Bisbee)		11:30 A. M.	126	3 10	22083
Left Tucson.....		1:30 P. M.			
Arrived Phoenix.....		4:30 P. M.	136	3	22219
Left Phoenix.....	11-3	6:10 A. M.			
Arrived Yuma..... (Took moving pictures)		10:30 A. M.	195	4 20	22414
Left Yuma.....		10:50 A. M.			
Arrived El Centro.....		12:00 M.	62	1 10	22476
Left El Centro.....		1:10 P. M.			
Arrived San Diego.....		4:30 P. M.	124	3 20	22600
			2809	75 35	

Why San Diego and Southern California Claim Recognition in their National Highway Aspirations

By Colonel Ed Fletcher

The only national highway route east to west connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific, free from snow and open every day of the year for travel, is along the Mexican border through southeastern Arizona, New Mexico and the South. The nearest point to the Pacific from Arizona is San Diego, approximately 180 miles from Yuma, Arizona. But until 1912 San Diego was surrounded by a mountain range of granite and a sea of sand and silt—the great Imperial Valley.

In 1910 Governor Hunt pledged the good word of Arizona that the first paved highway from Phoenix to the California line would be built to Yuma providing California did its part. With approximately 65,000 population at that time, San Diego County voted bonds and spent a million dollars in blasting a road to the Imperial County line through the mountains from San Diego. The business men of San Diego by private subscription raised \$60,000 and built the Mountain Springs Grade into Imperial Valley. They donated the lumber, Imperial Valley citizens did the work, and we demonstrated the feasibility of a plank road through the famous sand hills of the Colorado Desert to Yuma, shortening the distance across the continent by 45 miles. Today a magnificent paved highway has replaced the plank road, making those self-same sand hills one of the most interesting attractions of a transcontinental trip.

San Diego and Imperial Valley citizens raised \$25,000 to assist in the building of the Yuma bridge, and nearly as much more to enable Yuma County, Arizona, to sell its million and a quarter of highway bonds, assuring the grading of our national highway from Yuma to Phoenix in conjunction with the Maricopa County highway construction.

The history of our national highway aspirations is a record of sacrifice and hard work. Today every mile of the three national highways—Dixie Overland, Old Spanish Trail, and Lee, are federal aid projects. It is

only a question of time when they will be completely paved.

With these highways practically all graded today, and from forty to fifty percent paved or under contract, the increasing auto travel is a revelation. Five years ago the government inspection of travel into California at Yuma did not exceed five machines a day. During the last six months it has averaged over two hundred cars a day, with six or seven hundred people, and increasing at the rate of twenty-five percent a year. The estimate of the Eastern travel is slightly less, but likewise increasing in volume.

Our aim should be to work until we have secured a permanent highway across the continent, for it means lower costs of transporting products to market, increased values of real estate effected, and a tendency to assist in an immediate development of the country through which it runs. Increased state and national highways mean increased travel. It is estimated that twenty million people during the summer of 1926 were out in automobiles travelling from one state to the other, thereby keeping money in circulation, and more important still, securing a better understanding of each other's problems and mode of living. The West desires to go East just as much as the East desires to go West, and national highways will make for better citizenship and strengthen the bonds between the North and South, East and West.

National highways mean everything in the progress of this nation in time of peace, but become invaluable when war threatens. Have you ever stopped to think that it would be possible to transport a million men in two weeks across the continent by auto in time of emergency?

Let every chamber of commerce and every organization interested in highways, working together, bring pressure to bear on all federal, state and county officials, urging the completion of the missing links in permanent highways across the continent, and at as early a date as possible.



San Diego "Air Capital of the West," along the waterfront.