

HARRAL B. AYRES SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Harral B. Ayres was born on a farm in Bordentown, New Jersey in 1867. (1) He attended country schools early in life, (1) later living in nearby Trenton and graduating with Rider Moore Stewart Business College class of 1890. (2)(3) His predilection for finance led him to the New York world of money affairs where he was connected with business partners of the J. P. Morgan Co.(1) He became a prominent New Jersey seashore resident, serving two terms as president of the Asbury Park League of American Wheelmen, finance chair of the Ocean Grove School Board and cashier of the Ocean Grove Camp meeting Association.(4)

In failing health, Ayres worked sporadically in various financial circles on the eastern seaboard, managing a \$9 million receivership in New York City and creating a model in Webster, Massachusetts for successful wartime Liberty Loans that was used throughout New England. (4) Leaving the northeast in 1917 in hopes of improving his health with a sea voyage, Ayres sailed to Galveston intending to continue by rail to the west coast and on to Hawaii. (1) Instead he paused in San Antonio, golfing and enjoying leisure until recruited by the Chamber of Commerce to manage development of the Old Spanish Trail transcontinental auto highway. (1) A 1918 X-ray detected infection under one of his gold crowned molars. Repairs to the tooth began his recovery from the illness that had plagued Ayres for 20 years. (4)

Working with an executive board of well qualified San Antonio businessmen and Old Spanish Trail Association members of influence in each of the eight Gulf Coast and Border States, Ayres began gathering historical data and forming county, state and federal political affiliations that would lead to successful promotion of a paved highway from St. Augustine, Florida to San Diego, California. In order to garner War Department designation and federal funding for the highway, Ayres spent seven months of 1922 in Washington, D.C. (5) He rightfully attributed "his experience in negotiations and fostering financing agreements, backing these with effective publicity that were the underlying factors in the success of the enterprise." (6)

In February of 1929 Ayres closed the executive offices held for 10 years in the San Antonio Gunter Hotel, let the employees go, cut off the telephone and left his Alamo Heights home phone out of the directory in an effort to resign. (7) Old Spanish Trail motorcades from west to east in April and east to west, St. Augustine to San Diego, (8)(9) in October of 1929 kept him at work into 1930. (7)

Ayres' promotional writings of the conquistadors and padres that first traversed the southern U.S. borderlands caught the attention of the Spanish aristocracy. Highly publicized all across the U.S., north and south, the April 1930 presentation to Harral B. Ayres of the Condecoracion of the Royal Order of Isabel la Catolica made him an illustrious knight of the Spanish King. (10)(11) Health greatly improved, Old Spanish Trail paving completed, recognized by the King of Spain, Ayres returned north, fifteen years after leaving, to finish his book on the Connecticut Trail of the earliest New England settlers. It was published in Boston in 1940. (12)

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- (1) Alamo Heights Record San Antonio, Texas newspaper 10/17/30
- (2) Trenton Times Advertiser New Jersey newspaper 6/29/30
- (3) Rider College News, Trenton New Jersey 5/9/30
- (4) Asbury Park New Jersey Sunday Press 7/20/30
- (5) The Old Spanish Trail article by W. Frances Scarborough in THE TEXAS MONTHLY Vol.V #5 June 1930
- (6) Ayres' Dec. 1929 letter to find new job
- (7) Ayres' 1931 notes on resignation attempts
- (8) Motorcade Gunter Hotel Banquet Program
- (9) BALCONES HEIGHTS - a Crossroads of San Antonio by Lewis F. Fisher
- (10) Caleb Johnson July 1930 news article to 2000 newspapers
- (11) TEXAS PIONEER June 1930
- (12) The Great Trail of New England by Harral Ayres, Meador Publishing Co., Boston 1940

Harral B. Ayres Outline

- 1869 Born Bordentown, N.J.(1)
- Lived nearby Trenton, N.J.(2)
- 1890 Graduated Rider Moore Stewart Business College(2)(3)
- Lived Asbury Park N.J. seashore
- Pres. 2 terms Asbury Park League of American Wheelmen(4)
- Finance chair Ocean Grove School Board(4)
- Cashier Ocean Grove Campmeeting
- 1916 Webster, Mass. Liberty Loan Campaign(4)
- Begins work on Connecticut Trails book(12)
- War Years directed \$9 million receivership(1)
- 1917 Sailed N.Y. to Galveston(1)
- 1918 Tooth X-ray and repair(4)
- 1919 OST Managing Director(1)
- Months in Mobile, Ala.
- 1922 Seven months Washington D.C.(5)
- 1926 & 1929 Tried to leave OST(7)
- 1930 Spanish King condecoration(10)
- 1930 Finishes OST work(7)
- Returns north(12)
- 1940 The Great Trail of New England Meador Publishing Co., Boston(12)

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