



El Camino Real de los Tejas

**National Historic Trail
& Brazos County Crossroads**



El Camino Real de los Tejas



❖ **People settle in a place for a reason – and begin its history. The reason may have dried up and blown away, but not the history.**

Rick Vanderpool, photographer

Brazos County Commissioner's Court

Re: OSR/El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail
April 14, 2009

Good morning. Judge Sims, Honorable County Commissioners
This presentation is for the purpose of respectfully requesting:

- Brazos County to participate in developing OSR/El Camino Real de los Tejas as a National Historic Trail by partnering with the cities of Bryan and College Station, National Park Service, TAMU and TxDOT. Brazos County can anchor the Brazos Valley Region as Nacogdoches has anchored the eastern area of OSR, and take a leading role if it so desires.

- Also asking that \$10,000.00 be budgeted for the 2009/2010 year toward development of OSR in our county as part of a National Historic Trail system in Texas.

These funds will be used toward a National Park Service matching grant of \$30,000, with funds from several entities including hopefully the cities of Bryan and College Station, TAMU and TxDOT.

Relative to a location for development in Brazos County: Currently the main site selected for an interpretive wayside is at Rye School Loop on land owned by College Station, situated in the Bryan ETJ. It has been dubbed a 'rare jewel' by the National Park Service because of the unobstructed view of the prairie — the same view seen by travelers 300 years ago. No cell phone towers, no huge electrical-line towers, no water towers — just clear blue sky and a coveted expanse of prairie grasses. Amazingly it also contains a swale (or ruts) several feet long paralleling OSR before it curves to the north along Rye School Loop.

Shocking us all; however, the Navasota Swales, a second recently discovered site, turns out to also be a prime place to develop. It contains a set of swales which some believe to be the longest in the state. If that is so, it could immediately throw Brazos County into the national spotlight in heritage tourism advertising. The thing today is — we won't know until more research is conducted. We have a diamond in the ruff. Only we don't yet know how big the diamond will be. The two sites will complement each other and are both valuable historic and archaeological finds.

Visions at Rye School Loop are to develop an open area similar to Providence Church historic site near Easterwood Airport which TxDOT built in 2007. No buildings are planned. The National Park Service suggests also using signs to connect counties along all the trail routes, and to tell the history of the area, in our case — the Brazos Valley.

Cost and scope of signage down OSR for interpreting the story could range from a minimal number of locations, or include several, for example:

1. Brazos River
2. Site where Zebulon Pike camped in 1807
3. Rye School Loop, its history, settlers, terrain, springs, etc.
4. Rye School Loop swale
5. Fort Tenoxtitlan ca 1820s
6. Staggers Point ca 1829
7. Benchley (Hwy 6) crossroads to Calvert 1860s
8. Navasota River

At this time, the project is planned to cover two years in two phases:

- Phase I (1st year) for research and planning
- Phase II (2nd year) for construction and development

Phase I research prior to development could include, but not be limited to:

Factual documentation of each of above historic sites for interpretive signs

Magnetometer search of the site

Range ecology: grasses, brush, flowers

Soil survey

Water: locating local springs and crossing points

Settlements

Archaeological investigations

Design and layout

The site will need to be cleaned slightly, but very carefully, in order to preserve the existing swales and other artifacts which might be found.

Prior to today, the process has undergone several steps:

1. Request to the NPS: December 2008
2. NPS accepts and inspects property. Site visit: January 13, 2009
3. Cost Share Grant application for matching funds: March/April 2009
4. Research, Planning and Development: April 2009 – March 2010
5. A coordinating Planning Group has met in February, March, April

May I say the significance of OSR, our northern county border, cannot be over-estimated. Throughout 300 years of history, it has carried:

- Republic of Texas escapees during the Run-away Scrape in 1836
- Settlers of Stephen F. Austin's colony in 1820/21 including Richard Carter
- Gutierrez-Magee Expedition soldiers to retake Texas from Spain in 1813
- Missionaries travelling from Spain (Mexico) to Louisiana and Los Adaes 1716
- Explorers from the 1690s
- Indians guiding the explorers, following animal trails

We therefore consider OSR to be of great historical importance, 300 years ago and today.

Developing it would benefit Brazos County on two levels:

1. By bringing Heritage Tourism, a new industry to the Brazos Valley, and creating jobs.
2. By bringing more people to book more overnight motel rooms, spend more money here and perhaps buy property to join us in building a thriving Brazos Valley. Bryan/College Station holds the central point on OSR between San Antonio and Louisiana and is a perfect stopping-off, spend-the-night place from which to tour the area and surrounding counties. Instead of staying one or two nights to see a football game, we would like to attract heritage tourism travelers to stay one or two weeks.

We would like to emphasize that joining this project is entirely voluntary. One part of the county might want to participate in development of a site in their area. Another segment of the county may choose not to join in. The National Park Service will work with whoever requests their help and will not press any land owner to develop unless the land owner requests and instigates the process. No landowner will be bothered or their land infringed upon in any way by the Park Service and/or others in the process.

Thank you for your time in hearing our requests and we hope your reply will be positive.

Barbara Donalson Althaus ▪ Brazos County Historical Commission
2101 Hillside, Bryan, TX 77802 ▪ 979-260-2951
althaus@txcyber.com

El Camino Real de los Tejas

A road by any other name...

- **El Camino Real de los Tejas**
- **The King's Highway**
- **Old San Antonio Road**
- **Old Spanish Road**
- **OSR**



El Camino Real de los Tejas



Purpose:

Partnerships

Anchors

Funds

Trail Partnerships

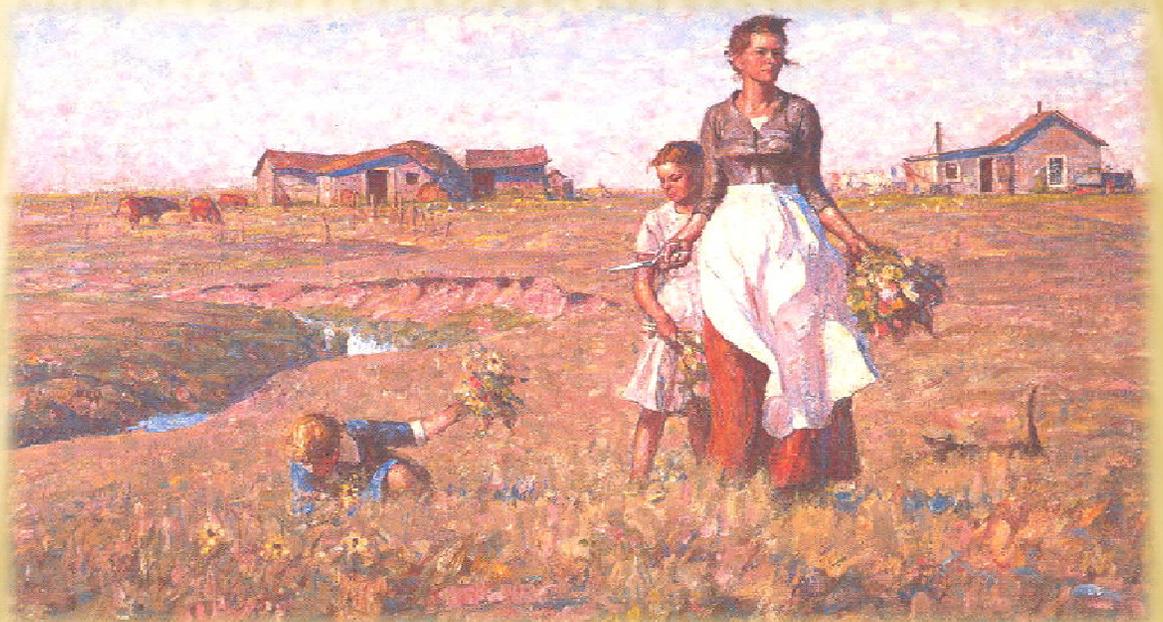
❖ Partnering with:

- National Park Service
- City of Bryan
- City of College Station
- TAMU
- TxDOT
- Area Heritage Organizations



Trail Anchors

- ❖ **Brazos Valley Region of El Camino Real/OSR just as Nacogdoches has anchored the eastern area of OSR**



Trail Funds

- ❖ **\$10,000 budgeted for FY10 toward development of El Camino Real/OSR as part of National Historic Trail system in Texas**
- ❖ **To be applied to matching grant of \$30,000 with funds from several area entities, hopefully, including the cities of Bryan and College Station**



El Camino Real de los Tejas



Sites:

Rye School Swales
Navasota Swales

First site

❖ “Rare Jewel”

- **Rye Loop Swales on OSR**
- **Land owned by City of College Station in Bryan ETJ**
- **Unobstructed view of the prairie grasses & clear blue sky**

Second site

- ❖ **“Diamond in the Rough”**
 - **Navasota Swales of Brazos County**
 - **Longest swales in the state**

El Camino Real de los Tejas



Vision:

Rye School

Vision: Rye School Loop

- ❖ Open area similar to Providence Church historic site
- ❖ No buildings planned at this time



Vision: OSR Signage

❖ Signage

- To connect the trail to other counties**
- To tell the story of Brazos Valley**
- Cost and scope could range from few to several signs**

Vision: Points of Interest

- **Brazos River**
- **Zebulon Pike campsite, 1807**
- **Rye School Loop – history, settlers, terrain, springs**
- **Rye School Loop Swale**
- **Fort Tenoxtitlan, ca. 1820**
- **Staggers Point, ca. 1829**
- **Benchley (Hwy. 6) crossroads to Calvert, ca. 1860**
- **Navasota River**

Phase I: First Year

❖ **Research and planning**

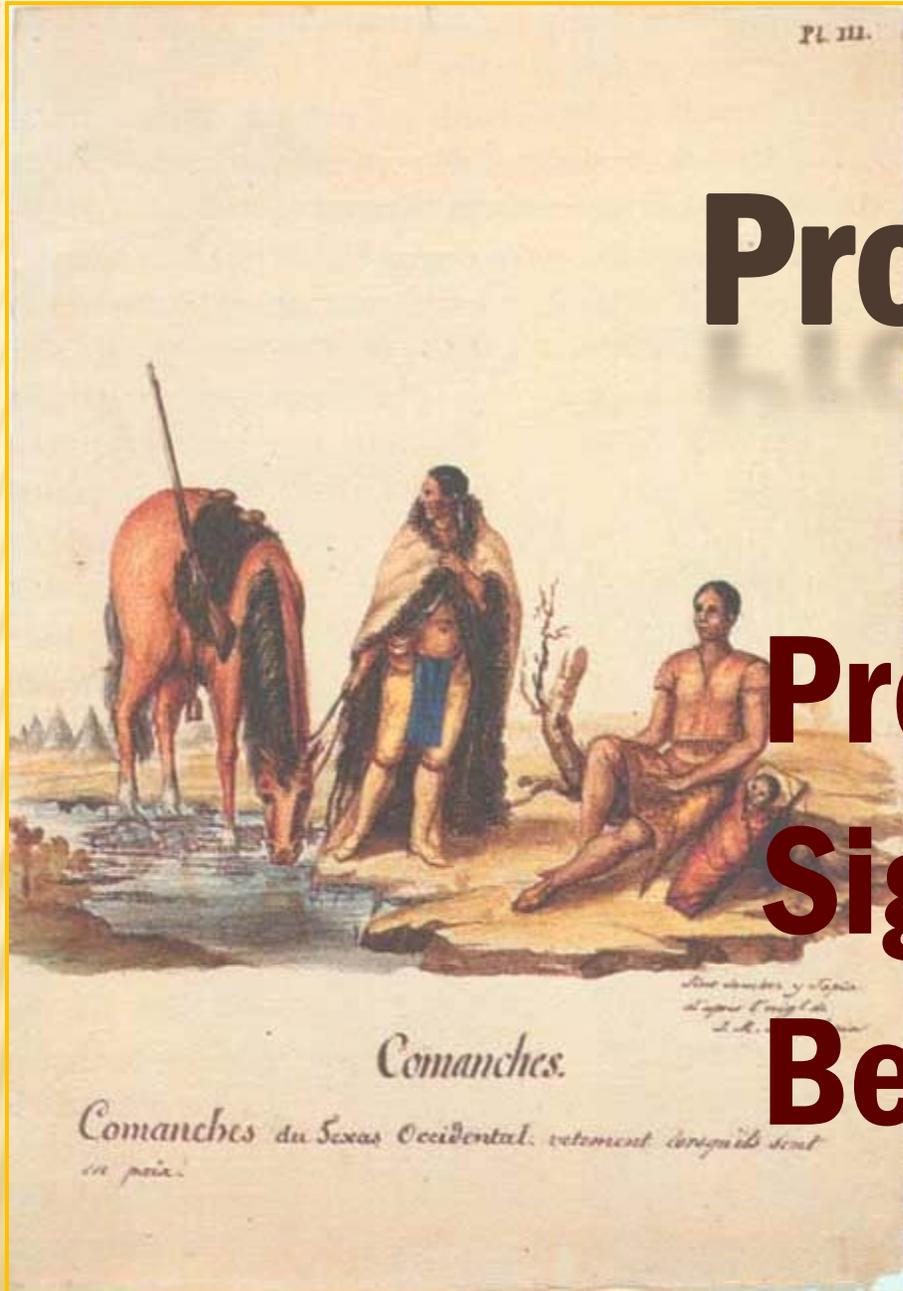
- **Factual documentation of interpretive signage**
- **Magnetometer search of the site**
- **Range ecology: grasses, brush and flowers**
- **Soil survey**
- **Water: local springs and crossing points**
- **Settlements**
- **Archaeological investigations**
- **Design and layout**
- **Site preparation with emphasis on preservation**

Phase II: Second Year

❖ Construction and development



El Camino Real de los Tejas



Process:

Process

Significance

Benefit

Process, so far:

- ❖ **Request for consideration: December 2008**
- ❖ **NPS accepts & inspects property: January 13, 2009**
- ❖ **Cost Share Grant application for matching funds:
March - April, 2009**
- ❖ **Research, planning & development: April 2009-
March 2010**
- ❖ **Planning group has met in February, March and April**

Significance: 300 Years

- ❖ **Northern county border**
- ❖ **Republic of Texas escapees during Run-away Scrape 1836**
- ❖ **Settlers of Stephen F. Austin's colony in 1820-21 including Richard Carter**
- ❖ **Gutierrez-Magee Expedition soldiers retake Texas from Spain in 1813**
- ❖ **Missionaries traveling from Spain (Mexico) to Louisiana and Los Adaes in 1716**
- ❖ **Explorers from the 1690s**
- ❖ **Indians guiding the explorers, following animal trails**

Benefit:

- ❖ **Bringing Heritage Tourism, a new industry to the Brazos Valley, thereby creating jobs**
- ❖ **Bringing visitors to:**
 - **Book overnight motel rooms**
 - **Enjoy our restaurants**
 - **Perhaps even buy property**
- ❖ **B/CS is the central point on OSR between San Antonio and Louisiana**



El Camino Real de los Tejas

Assurance



Assurance:

- ❖ **Joining the project is voluntary**
- ❖ **NPS will work with interested parties**
- ❖ **NPS will not press any landowner to develop**
- ❖ **NPS will not infringe on any land without permission**

In Closing:





El Camino Real de los Tejas

**National Historic Trail
& Brazos County Crossroads**

