

Railroad Rail Sizes

The rail that weighed 45 pounds per yard would weigh 300 pounds per 20 foot rail.

The rail that weighed 80 pounds per yard would weigh 800 pounds per 30 foot rail.

The rail that weighed 120 pounds per yard would weigh 1,200 pounds per 30 foot rail.

The rail that weighed 120 pounds per yard would weigh 315,600 pounds per 1/2 mile of rail.

Today the modern 'continuous' rail weighs 200 pounds per yard.

Mount Savage Shops in Alleganney County, Maryland made the first rails produced in the United States. Between 1846 and 1866 they produced rails for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Co, one of the oldest railroads in the united states. Used rails were purchased from the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Co by the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos & Colorado Railroad Co.

The Brazos & Colorado Railroad Co. was the first to use 4' 8 1/2" gauge [distance between the rails or the width between the wheels] which is 'standard' gauge.

BUFFALO BAYOU, BRAZOS AND COLORADO RAILWAY

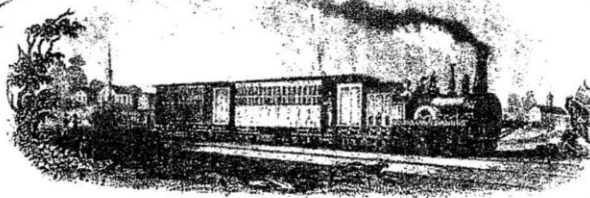
The first operating railroad in Texas was the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos & Colorado, completed from Harrisburg to Stafford in 1853. Later it became the the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway Company and ran from Houston to [Missouri City](#), [Stafford](#), [Sugar Land](#), Sartartia [Walkers Station], Riddick, Harlem, Dorothy, Flora, [Richmond](#), [Rosenberg](#), Damon Junction, Randon, Wenzell, Tavner and on to Columbus.

The road that ran beside the railroad was US 90 and State HWY 3 now known as US 90A.

SHARES \$100 EACH

BUFFALO BAYOU BRAZOS AND COLORADO RAIL-WAY COMPANY

No 610



10 Shares

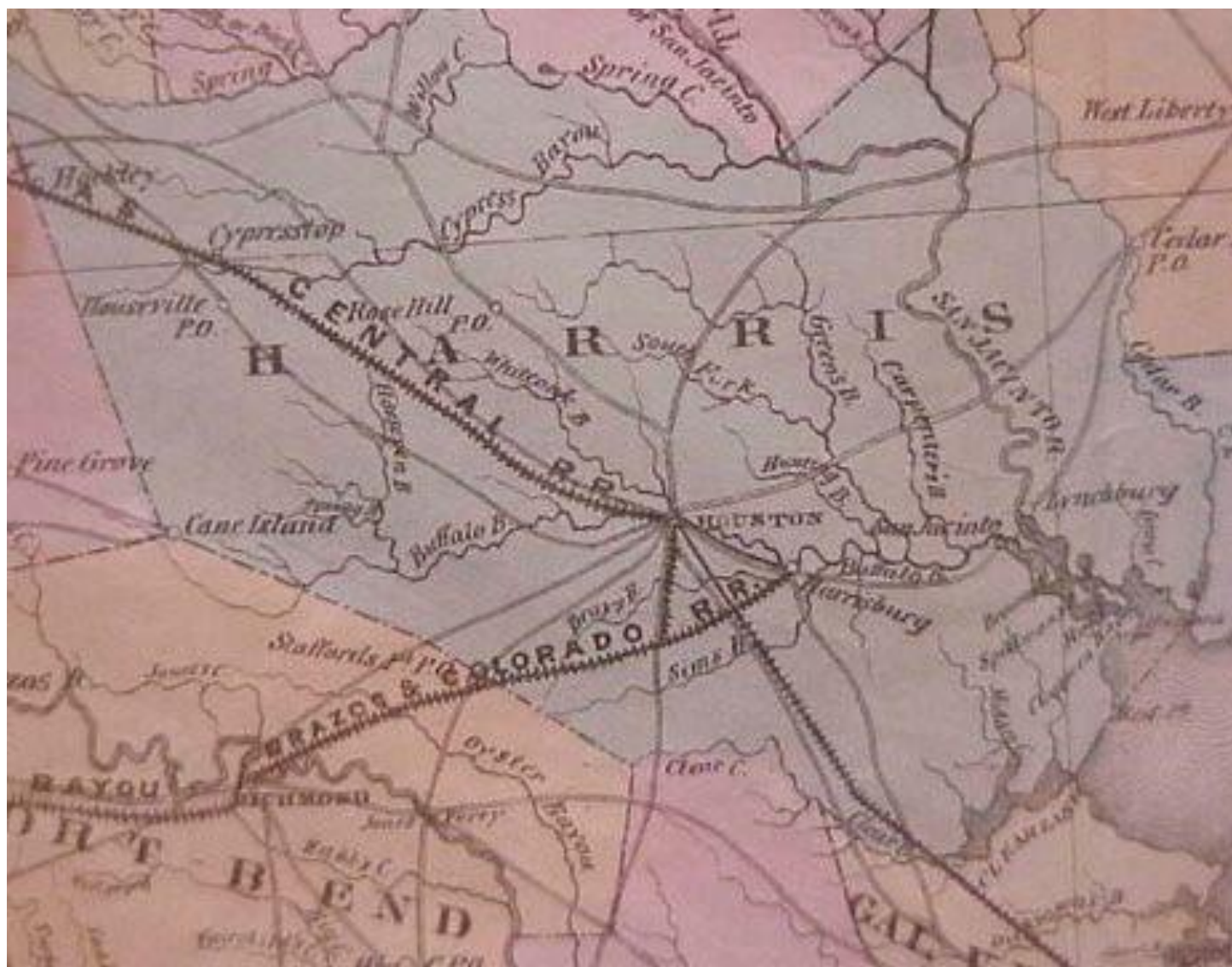
Be it known that William Alley of
Alleyton is proprietor of Ten Shares
in the Capital Stock of the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and
Colorado Rail way Company subject to the act of Incorporation and By laws of said Company.

Witness the hands of the President & Treasurer of said Company.

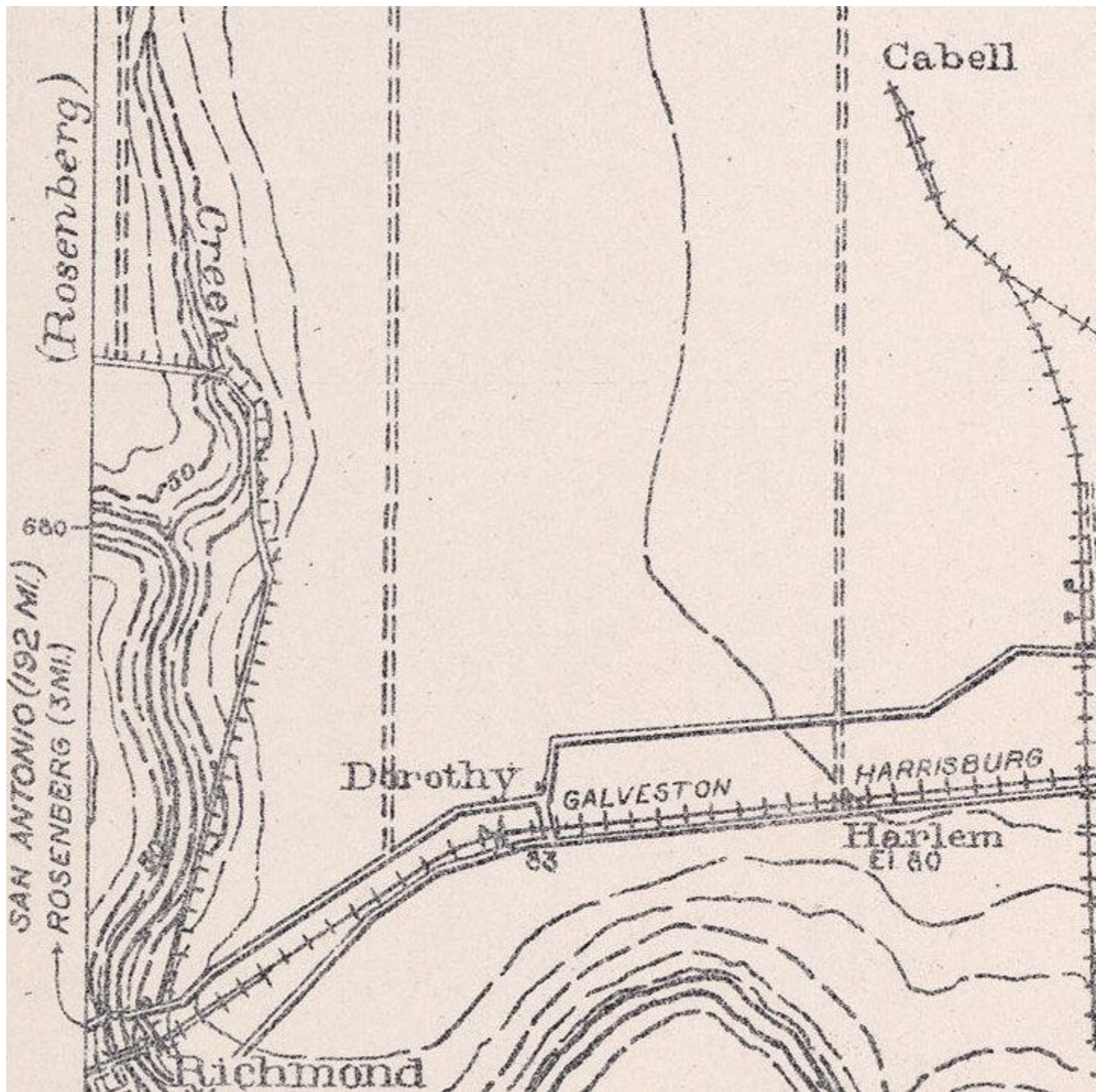
Harrisburg ~~Boston~~ Dec. 9th 1861

John Angier. Secy. John T. Bunch. Treasr.

Ten Shares at \$100.00 per share



1858 map



1915 Map

The construction of the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railway marked the beginning of the railroad age in Texas. It was the first railroad to begin operating in the state, the first component of the present Southern Pacific to open for service, and the second railroad west of the Mississippi River. In addition, the Houston Tap was built under provisions of the BBB&C charter.

On February 11, 1850, a group that included Gen. [Sidney Sherman](#) received a charter for the BBB&C. Construction began from Buffalo Bayou at Harrisburg in 1851; the first locomotive,

which was named for Sherman, arrived in late 1852; and the first twenty miles of track, from Harrisburg to Stafford's Point, opened in August 1853. By January 1, 1856, the BBB&C or Harrisburg Railroad, as it was commonly called, had been extended an additional 12½ miles to East Richmond on the bank of the Brazos River across from Richmond. Construction resumed in 1858, and in late 1860 the tracks extended eighty miles to Alleyton, near the east bank of the Colorado River opposite Columbus. Due to the debilitating effect of the [Civil War](#) and its aftermath on the BBB&C, the company built no new mileage after 1860. However, it extended its service to Columbus in 1867 over the Columbus Tap track. The CT was chartered in 1860 to connect Columbus with the BBB&C and in November 1867 completed its three-mile line and a permanent bridge over the Colorado River.

By 1868 the BBB&C was in financial difficulties and unable to pay a series of judgments rendered against the company. On July 7, 1868, the sheriff of Harris County sold the railroad to Col. William Sledge for \$13,000. Sledge retained a 25 percent interest in the line and sold the balance to a group that included [Thomas W. Peirce](#). The new owners rehabilitated the BBB&C, replacing many crossties and acquiring the first new locomotives and cars since before the war.

To cross the Brazos the railroad first used a ferry and inclined planes on each side of the river. This system was replaced in October 1858 by a low-water crossing. Trains had to cross at a high rate of speed in order to gain the momentum necessary to overcome the steep grade on the opposite side. This bridge presented numerous problems to the BBB&C and prevented efficient operation of the railroad, as it was out of service for extended periods of time when freshets hit the river. In April 1867 a separate company, the Brazos Iron Bridge Association, was organized to finance and build a permanent bridge across the Brazos River; the job was completed on July 8, 1869.

On January 24, 1870, the company was sold for \$25,000 under provisions of the 1860 mortgage on the property. A new company with the same name was organized with Peirce as president. In July the charter was amended, the Columbus Tap and the Brazos Iron Bridge Association merged into the BBB&C, and the name of the road changed to Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railway.

Although Harrisburg did not develop into the major city on Buffalo Bayou as a result of the construction of the BBB&C, the railroad otherwise fulfilled the expectations of its early backers. The first railroad in Texas, now a part of Southern Pacific's transcontinental Sunset Route between New Orleans and Los Angeles, handles heavy freight traffic as well as Amtrak's Sunset Limited west of Houston.

The Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway Company was chartered on February 11, 1850, as the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railway Company. Its name was changed on July 27, 1870. The Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado was the first railroad to begin operating in Texas, the first part of the Southern Pacific Transportation Company to begin operating, and the second railroad west of the Mississippi River. Between 1851 and 1860 the company completed eighty miles between Harrisburg and Alleyton and was in the process of clearing and grading a line along the east bank of the Colorado River in the direction of La Grange and Austin when the outbreak of the [Civil War](#) ended construction. The Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado did no additional construction after the war but did extend its operations into Columbus over the tracks of the Columbus Tap Railway Company in 1867. On July 7, 1868, the company was sold by the sheriff of Harris County in order to satisfy various judgments against the railroad. William D. Sledge, the purchaser, resold 75 percent of the company to various individuals including a 25 percent interest to [Thomas W. Peirce](#), who soon became the dominant

force in the company. On January 24, 1870, the railroad was sold under provisions of the 1860 mortgage. Peirce and his associates were again the purchaser and organized a new company under the original name and charter. Subsequent charter amendments, including the name change, the merger of the Columbus Tap, and authorization to build to San Antonio, Houston and Galveston, were approved by the Texas legislature on July 27. Although the company also had authority to build to La Grange and New Braunfels, the main thrust was now San Antonio. Construction west of Columbus under the direction of Maj. James Converse began in April 1873. The railroad reached Schulenburg in December, Waelder in the summer of 1874, Kingsbury in the summer of 1875, and Marion in the spring of 1876. However, the rails did not reach San Antonio, 125 miles from Columbus, until February 5, 1877. It was during this period that Peirce bought the interests of his other associates in the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio, and the railroad was commonly called the Peirce Line. The railroad itself used the nickname Sunset Route, a name that was in general use by 1874 and was later adopted by the Southern Pacific for the entire line between New Orleans and Los Angeles.

As early as 1878 Peirce and Collis P. Huntington, acting for the Southern Pacific interests, were reported to have reached an understanding regarding the expansion of the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio west of San Antonio. In January 1880 Col. J. E. Gray, chief engineer of the Southern Pacific, and Converse left San Antonio to inspect the proposed route to El Paso. In mid-April William Hood of the Southern Pacific began the actual survey. Preliminary work on the Mexican and Pacific Extension, or Sunset extension as it was frequently called, was under way. At this time the Southern Pacific was extending subsidiary companies eastward across Arizona and New Mexico. On reaching the New Mexico-Texas boundary in May 1881, the construction forces continued eastward under provisions of the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio charter. Work was done on two fronts-east from El Paso and west from San Antonio and track laying began at the latter point in late May. Construction was under way before all contracts were in place. Huntington officially acquired an interest in the company on July 1, 1881, and the contract with the construction company was approved on July 5. The two fronts met in January 1883, and on January 12 Peirce drove a silver spike at a point just west of the Pecos River to mark the completion of a new transcontinental route across Texas. In less than two years, 638 miles of track had been completed. In addition, the company also built several branch lines. In 1877 the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio reached Houston over the tracks of the International-Great Northern Railroad Company and built its own line in 1880. Also in 1880 the company completed a line from Smith's Junction to La Grange utilizing the grade that had been partially completed by the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado nearly twenty years earlier. In late 1882 the branch from Spofford to Eagle Pass was finished. East of San Antonio the Gonzales Branch Railroad Company was also completed in the same year. The sixty-three miles between Del Rio and Shumla were the most difficult part of the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio to build and operate. The original line had to dip down into the canyon of the Rio Grande on a shelf blasted out of limestone, required two tunnels, and crossed the Pecos River at its confluence with the Rio Grande. In 1892 the company completed a new line that crossed the Pecos on the original High Bridge, shortening the route by 10.7 miles and eliminating the two tunnels and the track through the canyon. This, along with subsequent line relocations, has reduced the rail distance between San Antonio and El Paso by twenty-five miles when compared with the original route.

In 1905 the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio acquired and merged five other Southern Pacific subsidiary companies with a total of 391 miles of track. These were the Gulf, Western Texas and Pacific Railway Company, the New York, Texas and Mexican Railway Company, the San Antonio and Gulf Railroad Company, the Galveston, Houston and Northern Railway Company, and the Gonzales Branch Railroad Company. The Galveston, Harrisburg and San

Antonio also completed a forty-seven mile line between Stockdale and Cuero in 1907 and an eleven mile line between Strang and Seabrook in 1914. In 1918 the company completed a new entrance into Houston between Chaney Junction and West Junction, and the original 1880 entry between Chaney Junction and Stella was partly abandoned. Effective January 1, 1925, the company leased the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway Company. Between March 1, 1885, and June 30, 1889, the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio was leased to the Southern Pacific Company. Before and after that period the company was operated by its own organization until March 1, 1927, when it was leased to the Texas and New Orleans Railroad Company. It was merged into the latter company on June 30, 1934. The Texas and New Orleans lasted until November 1, 1961, when it was merged into the Southern Pacific Company. On the eve of its merger in 1934 the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio operated 1,345 miles of track, which represented 40 percent of the Southern Pacific owned main track in Texas.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

P. Briscoe, "The First Texas Railroad," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 7 (April 1904).
Andrew Forest Muir, The Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railroad Company, 1850–1861, and Its Antecedents (M.A. thesis, Rice Institute, 1942).

George C. Werner