

Texas Railroads

Transportation was a problem facing Texas from the beginning of its economic development. The Republic and the State of Texas both subsidized railroad building by land grants. During its lifetime, the Republic issued four railroad charters, none of which resulted in a working railroad. Texas' first operating railroad happened when the Texas Legislature issued a charter to the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railway Company on Feb. 11, 1850. Grading began in June 1851 at Harrisburg. A locomotive, the "General Sherman," arrived in Galveston by ship in November 1852, and 20 miles of track were completed and in operation to Stafford's Point by Aug. 22, 1853. This was the pioneer railroad of Texas.

The Galveston & Red River, begun in 1853, was Texas' second railroad. Another railroad, the Washington County Rail Road Company was chartered Feb. 2, 1856, and some small coastal railroads followed. By 1861, Texas had 10 railroads and 500 miles of track. In the 1870s, there was a railroad boom.

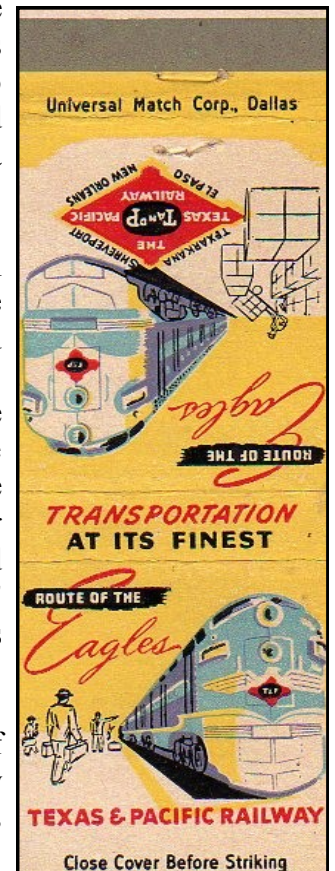
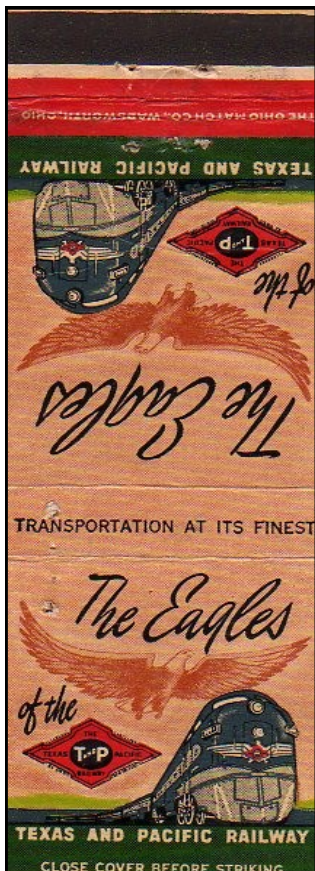
Just before the Depression, Texas ranked first among the states in track mileage, and continued to lead in new construction. Between 1925 and 1932, more than 1,000 miles of main-line rail were laid. Ultimately, even this state's robust economy fell victim -- and with it, new construction of all types, but especially railroads. Pearl Harbor changed everything. In retrospect, World War II was the rail industry's shining moment. Texas was blessed with lots of space, good weather, and deep-water ports. The result was an influx of new military bases, war-production factories, and record traffic of nearly 166 million tons of freight moved on Texas railroads during 1944.

Post-war prosperity was initially shared by the railroad industry as steam locomotives gave way to more efficient diesels and worn-out passenger trains were replaced with new "streamliners" named Eagle, Sunset or Chief. Large rail-served industrial districts were built in Dallas, Arlington and Houston. In the

late 1950s, however, freight tonnage was at the same level as in 1944, and passenger traffic had fallen to less than 10 percent of wartime highs. Mileage continued to decline and railroad employment in the state was reduced by 10,000. The only main-line construction was Santa Fe's 50-mile-long entry into Dallas from Denton.

The 1960s and 1970s were difficult decades for the rail industry of the United States. Texas carriers reflected the pressures of a transportation system increasingly oriented to trucks and autos on interstate highways. But the state's railroads fared better than their counterparts in the Midwest or Northeast of the United States. In 1976, the historic Texas & Pacific Railway was merged into the Missouri Pacific Railroad. The few remaining passenger trains in 1971 were absorbed into the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, better known as "Amtrak." Amtrak instituted only three routes serving 20 Texas communities as part of a sparse national network.

Observers of Texas railroading during the decades of the 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the disappearance by merger of the well-known Missouri-Kansas-Texas



Railroad, the sale of the Southern Pacific Railroad, some additional Amtrak passenger service, the promise -- but not the reality -- of new high-speed passenger trains, the sale of much urban freight trackage, further declines in track mileage, many line abandonments, and the creation of numerous new "short-line" railroads. In November 1986, the Union Pacific Railroad system applied to the ICC for approval to acquire by merger the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad (the M-K-T or Katy). The ICC said yes, and the famous Katy, a well-known institution in Texas since 1880, disappeared into the huge Union Pacific.

A proposed merger of the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe (Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway) was rejected by the ICC in June 1987. In 1988, the large but financially troubled Southern Pacific plus subsidiary St. Louis Southwestern Railway (known as the "Cotton Belt"), were sold to Rio Grande Industries, parent company of Colorado-based Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad.

Amtrak's "Texas Eagle" between Chicago, St. Louis and San Antonio (via Dallas/Fort Worth and Austin) became a daily operation in June 1990. At the same time, Amtrak re-established service (also daily) into Houston from Dallas and Chicago by running a Texas Eagle connection between Dallas and Houston. Unfortunately, budgetary pressures have since returned both Eagles to tri-weekly only scheduling. The "Sunset Limited" continues tri-weekly runs between Florida and California by way of Houston, San Antonio, Del Rio and El Paso.

Well, are you ready to start a Texas subsidiary of your Railroad collection? O—h-h-h-h-h, how about a nice Texas Railroad display at AMCAL or the next Southeastern Swapfest! Might be a real eye-catcher...and what Texan wouldn't vote for such a display? (a little psychology, there). Even if you don't really want to break out your Texas Railroad covers separately, at least you know the general background of the companies now. And, if you're really into Railroad covers, Sierra-Diablo has been running a series on famous trains and railroads in its monthly Bulletin. [1996-97 *Texas Almanac*, published by the A.H. Belo Corp.]

Here's a listing of some Texas railroads:

AMTRAK

ALAMO GULF COAST RAILROAD CO.

San Antonio, TX 78257

ANGELINA & NECHES RIVER RAILROAD CO.

Lufkin, TX 75902

ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE RAILWAY

(see Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad)

AUSTIN & TEXAS CENTRAL RAILROAD

Cedar Park, TX 78730

BORDER PACIFIC RAILROAD CO.

Rio Grande City, TX 78582-0156

**BROWNSVILLE & RIO GRANDE
INTERNATIONAL RAILROAD**

Brownsville, TX 78523-3818

BNSF Texas Division

Ft. Worth, TX 76106

**DALLAS GARLAND & NORTHEASTERN
RAILROAD, INC.**

Garland, TX 75040

EAST TEXAS CENTRAL RAILROAD

Hot Springs, AR 71914

FORT WORTH & WESTERN RAILROAD

Fort Worth, TX 76116

GALVESTON RAILROAD, L.P.

Galveston, TX 77553

GEORGETOWN RAILROAD CO., INC.

Georgetown, TX 78627 *Texas Address*

P.O.Box 750, Brady, TX 76825

THE LONGHORN RAILWAY CO.

*Central of Tennessee Railway & Navigation Company,
Inc.*

Austin, TX 78758-7713

**MOSCOW, CAMDEN & SAN AUGUSTINE
RAILROAD**

Camden, TX 75934

PANHANDLE NORTHERN RAILROAD CO.

Borger, TX 79007

PECOS VALLEY SOUTHERN RAILWAY CO.

Pecos, TX 79772

**POINT COMFORT & NORTHERN
RAILWAY .CO.**

Lolita, TX 77971

PORT TERMINAL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

Houston, TX 77012-2149

**ROCKDALE, SANDOW & SOUTHERN
RAILROAD CO.**

Rockdale, TX 76567

SABINE RIVER & NORTHERN RAILROAD CO.

Orange, TX 77630

SOUTH ORIENT RAILROAD COMPANY, LTD

Brownwood, TX 76801

SOUTH PLAINS LAMESA RAILROAD, LTD

Lamesa, TX 79331

SOUTHERN SWITCHING RAILROAD CO.

Abilene, TX 79602

SOUTHWESTERN SHORTLINE RAILROAD

Perryton, TX 79070

TEXAS CITY TERMINAL RAILWAY

Texas City, TX 77592-0591

**TEXAS, GONZALES & NORTHERN RAILWAY
CO.**

Gonzales, TX 78629

TEXAS MEXICAN RAILWAY CO.

Laredo, TX 78042-04119

TEXAS & NORTHERN RAILWAY CO.

Lone Star, TX 75668-0300

TEXAS NORTHEASTERN RAILROAD

Garland, TX 75040

TEXAS NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY CO.

Sunray, TX 79086-9702

TEXAS SOUTH-EASTERN RAILROAD CO.

Diboll, TX 75941

WEST TEXAS & LUBBOCK RAILROAD CO.

Lubbock, TX 79407-3726

**WICHITA, TILLMAN & JACKSON
RAILWAY CO., INC.**

Fort Worth, TX 76107

*[There are other railroads that operate in TX, but
these are the Texas railroads]*