The Houston and Texas Central Railway in the Development of Dallas and Houston

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The cities of Houston and Dallas began growing rapidly after railroads began building lines from and through their cities, bringing many new residents. I have tried to list these events by year.

On a trip to NYC in 1840, Mayor Francis Moore had the City of Houston seal carved, with a 4-4-0 American locomotive and plow.
After earlier railways were discussed, the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado (BBB & C) Railroad was the first Texas railway, built west in 1850-1852 from Harrisburg (near Buffalo Bayou and the present Port of Houston) to Richmond by Sidney Sherman. In 1856, the Galveston and Red River (G & RR) Railroad (chartered 1848 by E. Allen) was built northwest from Railroad Street on the north bank of Buffalo Bayou. In July 1856, the G & RR linked Houston to Cypress, 26 miles, and on Sept. 1, 1856 changed its name to: Houston and Texas Central Railway (H & TC), with a charter to tap into Harrisburg at Junction.
Founders of the Houston and Texas Central Railway were Thomas William House (below left) (who also built the first Houston street railway), Paul Bremond, and Ebenezer Allen, with Thomas Wentworth Peirce (below right) as a 1857 H & TC director. (Peirce joined the Southern Pacific acquisition in 1880-1883.)
In Jan. 2013, my CE brother and I visited the Harris Co. Cypress railroad museum (Southern Pacific map) where the H & TC built (by 1856), 26 miles from Houston (note later SP timetables through Cypress):
In 1856, the Galveston, Houston and Henderson (GH & H) Railway on Virginia Point on Galveston Bay began building toward Houston.

The Galveston and Houston Junction (G & HJ) Railway (1861) began building during the Civil War to connect the H & TC to the GH & H.

Little railroad construction was done during the Civil War and then several railroads went bankrupt and reorganized.
In October 1865, a timber Howe truss bridge (below left) over White Oak Bayou (near Allen’s Landing) and first 186-foot swing bridge (photo below right) over Buffalo Bayou were completed and the G & HJ Railway opened.
By Apr. 22, 1861 the H & TC built 81 miles to Millican, but the war suspended Texas RR building. After the Civil War, the H & TC began building north, reaching Corsicana in 1871.

From *Railroading in Ellis County* by Laurie Wilson and Peggy Rankin, Arcadia Publishing, 2010, 128 pp.: “The Houston and Texas Central Railroad made its way through eastern Ellis County in 1871 and played an integral role in the founding of Ennis, Texas. Eventually, that community would be designated as a division point along the line.”

The H & TC reached Dallas in 1872 and Dennison in 1873.
The following 2013 Dallas photos and details of the H & TC RR were taken during the Dallas Centennial ASCE Texas Conference. I found the remnants of the H & TC rails, just south of downtown Dallas:
Underneath the Dallas N.C. Expressway downtown at Pacific Ave., this plaque tells the interesting story of the “Junction of Texas & Pacific and Houston & Texas Central Railroads” (The Dallas Union Depot as it looked: 1910 from photo in Dallas Public Library):
The Texas & Pacific Railway had the first rail line opened between Longview, Texas and Dallas, Texas on July 1, 1873. From the plaque from the previous page, with the completion of the junction of the Texas & Pacific and Houston & Texas Central Railroads in 1873, the city of Dallas became the economic, communication and transportation center of North Texas. The Dallas gift of right-of-way for the T & P line along Burleson Avenue (changed to Pacific Avenue), $100,000 in bonds, and additional right-of-way at the intersection with the H & TC rail line for a depot convinced the T & P to move the tracks to follow Pacific Avenue, downtown. The resulting intersection became one of the first rail crossroads in Texas.
The arrival of the Houston and Texas Central and Texas and Pacific Railroads brought large numbers of people to Dallas, making North Texas the center of commerce for the Southwest, unprecedented without a major seaport or river!

The population growth of Dallas illustrates the impact of two major railroads, after 1873 (and by 1890):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dallas</th>
<th>Houston</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>9,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>10,358</td>
<td>16,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>38,067</td>
<td>27,557</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the 1872-1873 railroads, Dallas more than tripled from 1880 to 1890 from 10,358 to 38,067.
In 1873, the H & TC made a connection at the Red River with the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railway (MKT or “Katy”), providing Houston (and Dallas) first connection with the rest of the U.S. (See ad in All about Texas and the Southwest, railroad guide published in 1875 by W.N. Bryant.)
Early Texas law and the Texas Constitution in 1876 required that railroads operating in Texas must be headquartered here.

Sketch of 1875 H & TC cotton train pulled by *Bison*:

In 1877, the H & TC carried over 300,000 bales of cotton.
On Dec. 25, 1871, the H & TC Railway was Austin’s first rail connection, as the westernmost rail terminus. Austin became a trading center and population more than doubled in five years to 10,363.

“(In Austin) nearly all the public buildings and private residences are built on hills. Austin stands in the centre of Travis County, on the east bank of the Colorado River, and is the capital of the State.”
1880 Railroad Map of the U. S.: showing start of eastern Texas railroads..... "AMERICAN RAILROADS: Their Growth and Development" The Association of American Railroads, January, 1951
The H & TC (and T & NO and GH & H) had originally been built to Texas state rail gauge of 5 feet, 6 inches, but after the Civil War, 4 feet, 8.5 inches became the standard gauge of American railroading.

The H & TC made the rail width conversion in three different “monumental one-day efforts” in 1874, 1876 and 1877.

In 1883, Southern Pacific (SP) gained control of the H & TC and purchased Charles Morgan’s Louisiana and Texas lines. The transcontinental Sunset Route was between New Orleans, El Paso and California.
After joining SP in 1883, Col. Thomas Peirce (H & TC) was allowed to make a speech and drive the silver spike on Jan. 12, 1883, where the lines met, west of the Pecos River, completing the southern transcontinental route:
U.S. Railroad Map in 1890 (showing transcontinental southern connection via Dallas, Houston: Southern Pacific), The Association of American Railroads, 1951

1890—The period from 1889 to 1890 was one of rapid expansion. More than 70,390 miles of new lines were opened in that decade, bringing the total network up to 163,547 miles. By 1890, several trunk line railroads extended to the Pacific. In thirty years from 1860 to 1890, the total mileage of the region west of the Mississippi River increased from 2,175 to 72,380, and the population of that area increased fourfold.
Although part of Southern Pacific since 1883, the H & TC continued to be operated by its own organization until 1927, when it was leased to the Texas and New Orleans.

At the time of the lease the H&TC operated 872 miles of track. It merged with the T & NO in 1934.

Therefore, the Houston and Texas Central Railroad (H & TC) name and time span was 1856 - 1934.
Nov. 1888 map of layout of Houston shops and roundhouse (Hardy Street shops) of the H & TC of Southern Pacific: (Montgomery is now N. Main):
After working on Illinois RRs, Milton G. Howe was a Houston civil engineer (ASCE Member) who became chief engineer and general superintendent of the H & TC, had his own H & TC RR car, and was City of Houston Alderman. His civil engineering son (MIT graduate), J. Milton Howe (ASCE Member), worked as H & TC Acting Engineer, Maintenance of Way, Asst. Engineer in 1899, and was a 1913 co-founder of the ASCE Texas Section and later President, as well as ASCE V.P.
The Howes are buried: Glenwood Cemetery-Houston. Near their grave sites is a statute of George Austin Quinlan (1837-1901) (by Employees of H & TC: “He entered the service of the H & TC Jan. 1, 1868 and was advanced .... until he became the V. P. and General Manager Apr. 1, 1892,.....”)
In 1889, the Houston Belt & Magnolia Park Railway was chartered to connect downtown Houston with the Long Reach docks on the Houston Ship Channel.

In 1916, the City of Houston built the Municipal Harbor Belt (MHB) Railroad to serve the Port of Houston, completed in 1914.

In 1924, the Navigation District changed MHB to the Port Terminal Railway Association to provide switching services to all railroads serving the Port of Houston.
In 1916, Brooks Locomotive Works built a MK-5 Class No. 786 for the H & TC. Austin received the donated 786 engine that was restored and leased in 1989 by the Austin Steam Train Association.
In the 1920s, 44 trains a day stopped at the SP Grand Central Station (images below) (built in 1880s, and replaced in 1934) and 32 trains a day stopped at Houston Union Station (now where Houston Astros and Minute Maid Park are located). Later, travelers to Dallas had their choice of the SP’s Sunbeam or the Burlington’s Sam Houston Zephyr. By 1938, fast trains left Dallas and Houston daily at 8:00am, arriving at 2:00pm in the other city.
Dallas had two new rail passenger depots: 1892 MKT Station at Market - Pacific Streets (removed in 1924) and 1896 Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe and Cotton Belt (St. Louis & Southwestern) (photo below) at Commerce - Murphy Streets (from *Lost Dallas*, Mark Doty, Arcadia, 2012, 127 pp.)
In 1911, George Kessler had a new Dallas city plan that included relocation of railroads downtown to alleviate congestion by building one new Union Station in 1916 (See 1923 photo of rail track removal at Pacific and North Lamar) (photo from *Lost Dallas, 2012*):
Dallas Union Station was built in 1916 to consolidate five rail stations scattered around Dallas into one, making Dallas a major transportation center. At the peak of its usage, as many as 80 trains stopped each day at the station. Now, Union Station serves DART Light Rail, Trinity Railway Express to Ft. Worth, and Amtrak.
Photos of Southern Pacific’s (H & TC) closed “Dallas” Eakin Street Yard Office in 1963, moved to Fair Park, where it served as the 1963 Museum of American Railroad’s Visitor Center. The Museum recently moved to Frisco: 6455 Page St., Frisco, TX 75034. Some Frisco Museum photos are next.

http://www.museumoftheamericanrailroad.org/
Frisco museum display: Pullman car service between Dallas and Houston

The new Frisco featured locomotive: Union Pacific 4-8-8-4 “BIG BOY: 4018.”
I recommend visiting the new Frisco rail museum.
After looking into past railroads, let’s look forward? There is a new private venture: Texas Central High-Speed Railway (TCR) and Texas Central Partners, LLC (Texas Central) are independent companies involved with a new Texas Project. Texas Central is developing a new high-speed passenger rail system that will connect Dallas/Fort Worth and Houston using a proven, world-class technology that will provide a travel time of less than 90 minutes. Texas Central will deploy Central Japan Railway Company’s (JRC) “N700-I Bullet” high-speed rail system based on their “Shinkansen” system that has been refined over more than 50 years of operation.
Check out the website:  www.texascentral.com

Thank you for viewing the Houston and Texas Central Railroad in Development of Dallas and Houston!