

Data compiled in office of T.S.H.S.C. on the Southern Pacific and the Silver Spike Ceremony.

From A HISTORY OF TEXAS RAILROADS, by S. G. Reed, pages 192 ff.

"Thomas W. Peirce ... lived in Boston. He was a member of the firm of Peirce and Bacon of that city. They did an extensive business before the Civil War in Texas, handling principally cotton, sugar and hides. At the outbreak of the War they had 15 packets handling their business between Galveston and Boston....

"... The 12th Legislature passed an act on July 27, 1870, in which it was set forth that, in view of the fact that the B. B. B. & C. had been sold out twice since the War, and had expended large sums of money in rehabilitating the road and equipment, a charter should be granted to the new company under the name of the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway Company, on condition that it assume the debt due the School Fund of the State (which it did and paid), giving it the privilege of extending the road from Columbus to San Antonio, thence to a terminus on the Rio Grande with a branch from the most suitable point to New Braunfels (which was never built), or it might connect with any road to the Pacific.... After May 1874 Peirce was the controlling head of the enterprise....

"San Antonio was reached on Feb. 5, 1877. This was one of the most momentous events in the history of that city. For over a quarter of a century her citizens had sought a railroad to the Gulf. They had put up land and money, subscribed for stocks and bonds and offered other substantial inducements to get one.... The site for the depot and shops in San Antonio was donated by S. A. Maverick....

"... Shortly after the road reached San Antonio, C. P. Huntington came into the picture. He had ambitions and plans for a southern trans-continental route. He was then building the Southern Pacific eastward through California, New Mexico and Arizona. His plans originally contemplated a connection with the Texas & Pacific. But he evidently realized the advantages of a more southerly route. He entered into negotiations with Peirce ... probably about 1880. Construction began at El Paso eastward and at San Antonio westward about the same time, in June and July 1881. The construction westward did not present any unusual difficulties until Del Rio, 170 miles west, was reached on June 22, 1882. A few miles west of that place the line entered the canyon of the Rio Grande, and for several miles, or until it reached Devil's River, the route edged the Rio Grande, the tall limestone cliffs rising precipitously from the water's edge, making it necessary to blast the rock and use it for a footing. This made the work slow and expensive. This part of the line is one of the most attractive and picturesque sections of the road. The crossing of the Pecos was not made until the summer of 1882. The original line involved two tunnels, one on the east and other on the west side of the river.

"In the meantime construction eastward from El Paso was proceeding at an even more rapid rate, as there were no rivers to cross. It reached Sierra Blanca, 91 miles, on December 6, 1881; Marfa, 104.1 miles, on

January 16; Sanderson, 125.8 miles, on May 22, 1882. The construction forces from the east were met at a point just east of a tunnel on the west bank of the Pecos on January 12, 1883. At this point, 227 miles west of San Antonio, were joined the rails that completed the Transcontinental line of the Southern Pacific; and the Sunset Route between New Orleans and California became an accomplished fact.... At the meeting point a silver spike was driven by Peirce in the last tie laid in the track...." (Ibid., p. 198.)