



#2: The Train Through Humble

Humble and many of the towns up through East Texas owe their existence to the construction of a railway from Houston to Shreveport, La. This railroad, called the Houston East & West Texas Railway (HE&WT), was the brainchild of Paul Bremond, who had helped build another railroad through Houston in the 1850s. Bremond received a charter for the railroad in 1875 and construction began in 1876. By 1877 the tracks had been laid from Houston into the Humble area. To cross the San Jacinto River, Bremond purchased a steel bridge from the Cincinnati Bridge Company for \$7,000; the same steel bridge the train still uses to cross the river today!

By 1878 the tracks had reached Cleveland. To generate funds while more track was being laid, Bremond ran daily entertainment excursions for the citizens of Houston. One popular excursion ran 19 miles from Houston to San Jacinto Springs, located on the north side of the San Jacinto River in Humble, near present-day Hamblen Road (of course, this area wasn't called Humble yet). At San Jacinto Springs, Bremond's company provided dancing, fishing and swimming. All of these activities, plus the train ride, cost adults .50 each. These excursions introduced Houston residents to the natural beauty of the Humble area.

As the tracks were laid through the forests of East Texas, sawmills purchased land along the tracks. This allowed the sawmill owners to easily ship their product on the train and sell their lumber across the United States. Several sawmills were built in the Humble area, and a community developed in 1882 on the west side of the tracks around the Lord & Noble sawmill. Irvin C. Lord, a former mayor of Houston, owned the sawmill, and the community was called Lord. Three years later, that sawmill was sold in bankruptcy, and the community fell apart. Shortly after, another community developed on the east side of the tracks: Humble.

The tracks finally reached Shreveport in 1886. By 1889, Charles Bender purchased the local sawmill and used the railroad line to ship long- and short-leaf yellow pine lumber to all parts of the country, including destinations in Canada. Originally the train used narrow-gauge tracks, which caused major problems when cargo had to be transferred to other train lines. To solve this problem, the HE&WT railroad converted the tracks to standard gauge in 1894.

After Bremond died in 1885, the railroad company was reorganized under the same name, but was eventually merged with the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1934. A train depot was built in Humble around 1904 (the same time that oil exploration was starting in Humble), and existed on Main Street until 1960, when passenger service was no longer being offered.

In 2017, Hurricane Harvey damaged part of the train tracks across the river, the wooden approaches leading towards the steel section of the bridge. The bridge was repaired and the train is back on schedule through the area. With all of the changes that have occurred in Humble over the decades, it's comforting to see the train come through the town...knowing that it was responsible for the development of the town well over a century ago.