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## Book Reviews

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Whistle in the Piney Woods: Paul Bremond and the Houston, East and West Texas Railway.* By Robert S. Maxwell. Houston (Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association), 1963. 77 pp. Illustrations, maps, and index. \$3.00.

American railroads, like the American colonies before them, seldom proved profitable to their original founders and investors. The capital outlay was too great, the returns too slow in materializing, to make for quick financial success. A combination of private buccaneer and public benefactor, adventurer and visionary, the railroad promoter built to satisfy his ego, his purse (he hoped) and his belief in the economic potential of the area to be penetrated by his road. Such a man was Paul Bremond, who opened the Piney Woods of East Texas with his HE & WT Railway.

The HE & WT was conceived by Bremond after his earlier success in building the Houston and Texas Central which eventually reached Dallas. Chartered in 1875, "Bremond's Road"—as the HE & WT came to be called—was constructed out of Houston with agonizing delays between 1876 and 1886 when finally the Sabine was bridged and connection made with Shreveport. Bremond poured a large measure of his private fortune into this project; also, there was some support (mainly gifts of land) from localities touched by the road. In spite of Bremond's fund raising ability, New York capital became necessary to complete the line, and these mortgages led to receivership, changes in ownership, and eventually to absorption of the HE & WT by the Southern Pacific.

Professor Robert S. Maxwell presents a detailed and readable account of Bremond, his road, and its effects upon the Piney Woods area. The author successfully conveys the excitement and great expectations of the people as they waited for the arrival of the railroad to their town. Indeed, many new towns were laid out by the company to aid in developing the lumbering industry—the railroad's chief hope for freight revenues. Town and street names along the way provided a "who was who" directory with the HE & WT: Appleby, Burke, Blair, Bremond, Corrigan, Lufkin, Timpson, and Groesbeck.

Operations of the HE & WT, whether factual or legendary, are of interest to the railroad buff and the folklorist. Jay Gould has his "Wabash Cannonball" but Bremond had "The Rabbit"—a fitting Texas name for the bobbing and weaving narrow-gauge trains of the HE & WT. Information on schedules, rates, organization, and connecting lines is given to round out the picture of the railroad.

In Professor Maxwell's words,

. . . the HE & WT opened up the Piney Woods region of East Texas. Along its route grew up flourishing towns, thriving industries, and improved homes. In its cars, derided and ridiculed though they were in the early days, lay the only route to the out-

side world and to the city. The building of the HE & WT and its connecting lines to a large extent made possible the commercial lumber industry in East Texas and along the route of 'Bremond's Road' were to be found the plants of most of the big names in Texas lumber. . . . They supplied the principal traffic; the HE & WT supplied the transportation.

For an understanding of a railroad and its relation to an area and its people, this book is excellent reading. The work is pleasing in appearance, clearly written, and free from typographical errors. It is a worthy addition to the series of publications by the Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association.

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