

# Georgetown Rail Road Company

1878 - 1882

## The Georgetown Railroad

by Lester Haines

During 1876, the International and Great Northern Railroad laid its rails southeast from Rockdale toward Austin, Texas, cutting across the southern portion of Williamson County. In July 1876, track layers reached Round Rock, Texas, where they laid the I&GN tracks south of Brushy Creek bypassing the community of Old Round Rock. Soon a larger new community developed on the south side of the creek called New Round Rock. A substantial number of Georgetown's merchants moved nine miles south to new locations nearer the first railroad built into the region.

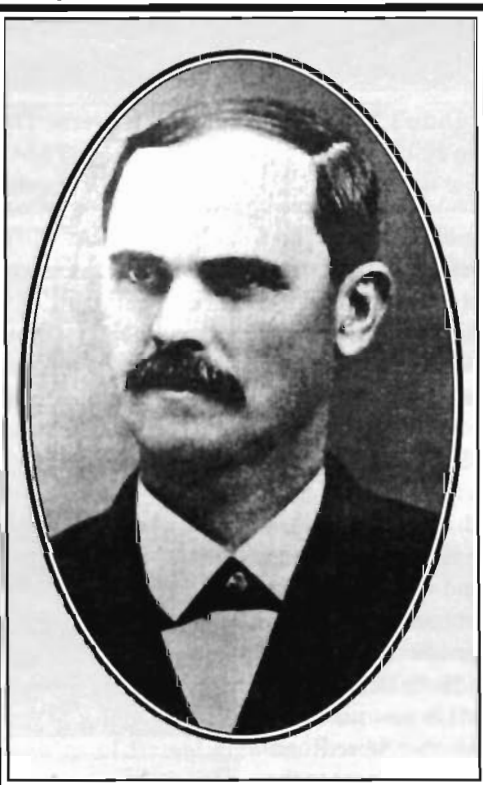
To retain their business interest in Georgetown, a small group of local citizens chartered the Georgetown Railroad Company on May 23, 1878. These men included Thomas J. Hughes, David Love, J.L. Rucker, John J. Dimmitt, Duncan G. Smith, Moses Steele, Frank Price, W.K. Makemson, Samuel M. Stayhorn, Richard Tansom and Emzy Taylor.

The company established its headquarters in Georgetown with Emzy Taylor acting as president and M.E. Steele as secretary and treasurer. The charter provided for a capital stock issue of \$50,000 for the purpose of constructing and operating a standard gauge railroad from Georgetown to Round Rock, Texas.

Just over \$20,000 of stock was initially sold necessitating that the company acquire additional money from a number of other parties. Seventeen thousands dollars in first mortgage bonds at 8% interest were issued to R. S. Hayes, the receiver for the I&GN Railroad. An additional second mortgage note was issued for \$7,000 to B.C. Ludlow. Construction began during the fall of 1878, and the road was completed into Georgetown on December 5, 1878, at a cost of \$60,224.67.

On December 19, 1878, Emzy Taylor and M.E. Steele ran the following notice in the Williamson County Sun. "All persons having claim against the Georgetown RR Co. for work done or material furnished are required to file the same with the Secretary by December 29, 1878, or the same will not be allowed."

The road opened for business a few days later. Although very little mention of the progress being made on the new railroad was mentioned in the local newspaper, the Williamson County Sun did report the following on page 3 of the December 5, 1878 issue. "The last half mile of iron is now being laid on this end of the road, and if a fellow wants to go to Round Rock now, he can get a ride on the construction if he will



Emzy Taylor, President of the  
Georgetown Railroad  
Photo Courtesy of:  
Georgetown Heritage Society

*be right clever with the conductor. It still will be several days, however, before the road is open for general business. The directors are determined to have the road in first rate condition before they ship much heavy freight over it. This is right gentlemen, have everything snug and tight on your road and keep it so. The community owes you thanks for the indomitable plunk you have displayed in building the road, and now that it is built we hope you will make it a source of profit for yourselves and at the same time afford to this community a cheap, easy and safe means*

*of communication with "all the world and the rest of mankind."*

A week later on page 3 of the December 12, 1878, issue, the Williamson County Sun noted that "on the first evening that the locomotive reached the limits of our corporation the whistle and the engine reverberated through our hills and valleys and glad shouts rent the air throughout the town and our immediate precinct in response to the welcomed sound of this great promoter of future welfare. The signal bell too chimed in, speaking promise of new enterprise, cheaper transportation and a forward movement in every business."

The same day the paper reprinted an article run by the Austin Statesman on December 7, 1878. "The completion of the railway from Georgetown to Round Rock was to have been effected yesterday. This consummation makes Round Rock and Georgetown important points in this portion of Texas. Both villages will be pleased to deem themselves as "cities" and they will have banks, and, at an early day, wholesale establishments, and enterprise in many transactions and descriptions of business that have been monopolized by old fogies and slow coaches and accurately selfish people of this capital. We would harm Round Rock and Georgetown in nothing. The greater and richer they become, if we build the proposed narrow gauge to Lampasas and the northwest, the better for Austin."

The following letter in the files of the Texas State Archives indicates that J. Riordan constructed the Georgetown Railroad and was to receive the state land given to the GRR.

"December 27, 1878

Hon. R.R. Hubbard  
Governor State of Texas  
Dear Sir,

I have completed the Georgetown RR under a contract with the Georgetown R.R. Co. and am to receive the land Certificates as part payment for the same. I therefore respectfully request that you will be pleased to appoint an engineer to inspect above railroad at as early a day as convenient and oblige.

Very Respectfully, J. Riordan"

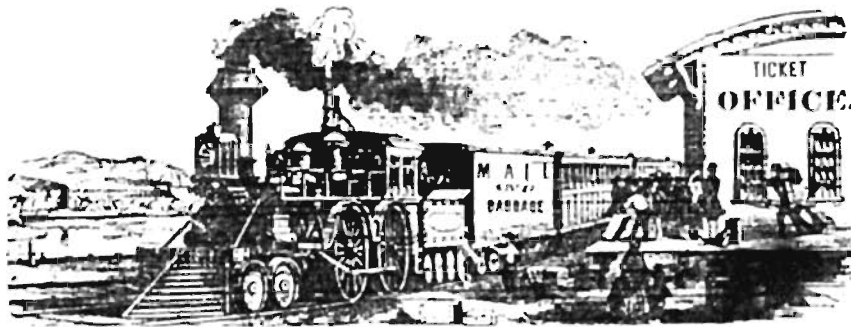
The stockholders of the railroad had immediate financial problems and several construction bills were not paid. Frank A. Hill, the company's Civil Engineer on the project, worked between October 20, 1878, and January 1, 1879. Under his supervision the tracks were laid, and the turntable and GRR depot were built at Georgetown. Having not been fully paid for his work, he had to file suit to obtain the balance of the money he was owed. The railroad entered a counter suit

against Mr. Hill, in the amount of \$200, claiming unskillfulness in the construction of the GRR turntable, depot and switches.

In the suit which Hill brought against the Georgetown Rail Road Company, he claimed the following expenses were due and payable to him for his work:

2 1/3 months wages at \$75/month	\$175.00
Horse feed during that time	7.00
Trip to Austin for GRR	1.60
Trip to Palestine for GRR	3.00
Stationary, Mapping supplies, etc.	3.00
Rent of level	10.00
4 1/2 days moving cars during Jan.	18.00
3 profile maps for Emzy Taylor	<u>7.50</u>

# GEORGETOWN RAILROAD.



**TWO DAILY FREIGHT AND PASSENGER TRAINS  
BETWEEN  
GEORGETOWN AND ROUND ROCK,**

1879 Georgetown Rail Road Ad  
*Courtesy of: Williamson County Sun*

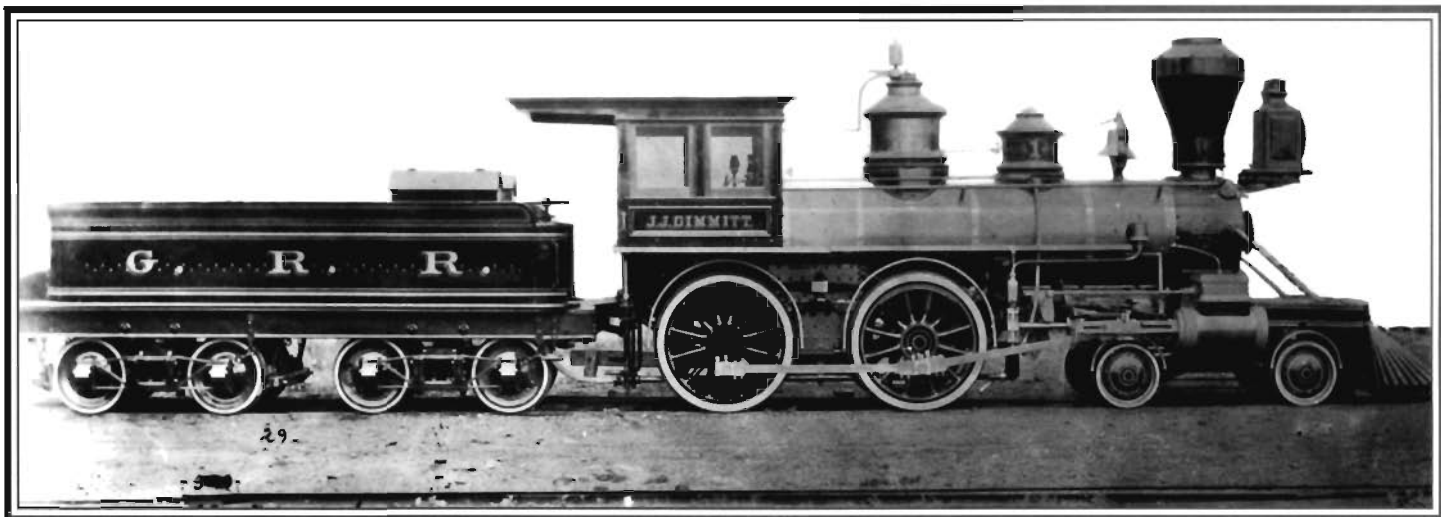
Total due in compensation	\$225.10
Amount received	<u>-140.40</u>
Amount of suit	\$84.70

The court ruled in Mr. Hill's favor and awarded him his expenses plus a minor amount for damages he had incurred. During the next several months, officials of the GRR would spend many of their days defending themselves in the court of Williamson County.

With the completion of the line into Georgetown, stage service from Round

Rock was terminated. On December 19, 1878, the Williamson County Sun reported that the "stage agents were in town one day last week to make arrangements for stopping here, instead of Round Rock, as soon as the mail could be brought to this point on the cars. Our Circleville subscribers will get their paper on Fridays instead of Tuesdays as soon as the change is effected. Since writing the above the changes have been made."

Although the Georgetown Railroad received 103,040 acres in state land as a subsidy for building the new line, it was not enough to pay off the balance the company owed its creditors. As financial problems continued, additional suits were filed against the company by the first and second mortgage lien holders. By August 5, 1879, the Georgetown Rail Road was sold under foreclosure to G.M. Dilley, an agent of R.S. Hayes, and the I&GN Railroad. The next week the GRR was decided to John S. Barnes, president of the I&GN, who leased it to the I&GN on August 20, 1879. The company operated under lease



**Engine Number One of the Georgetown Rail Road Company**

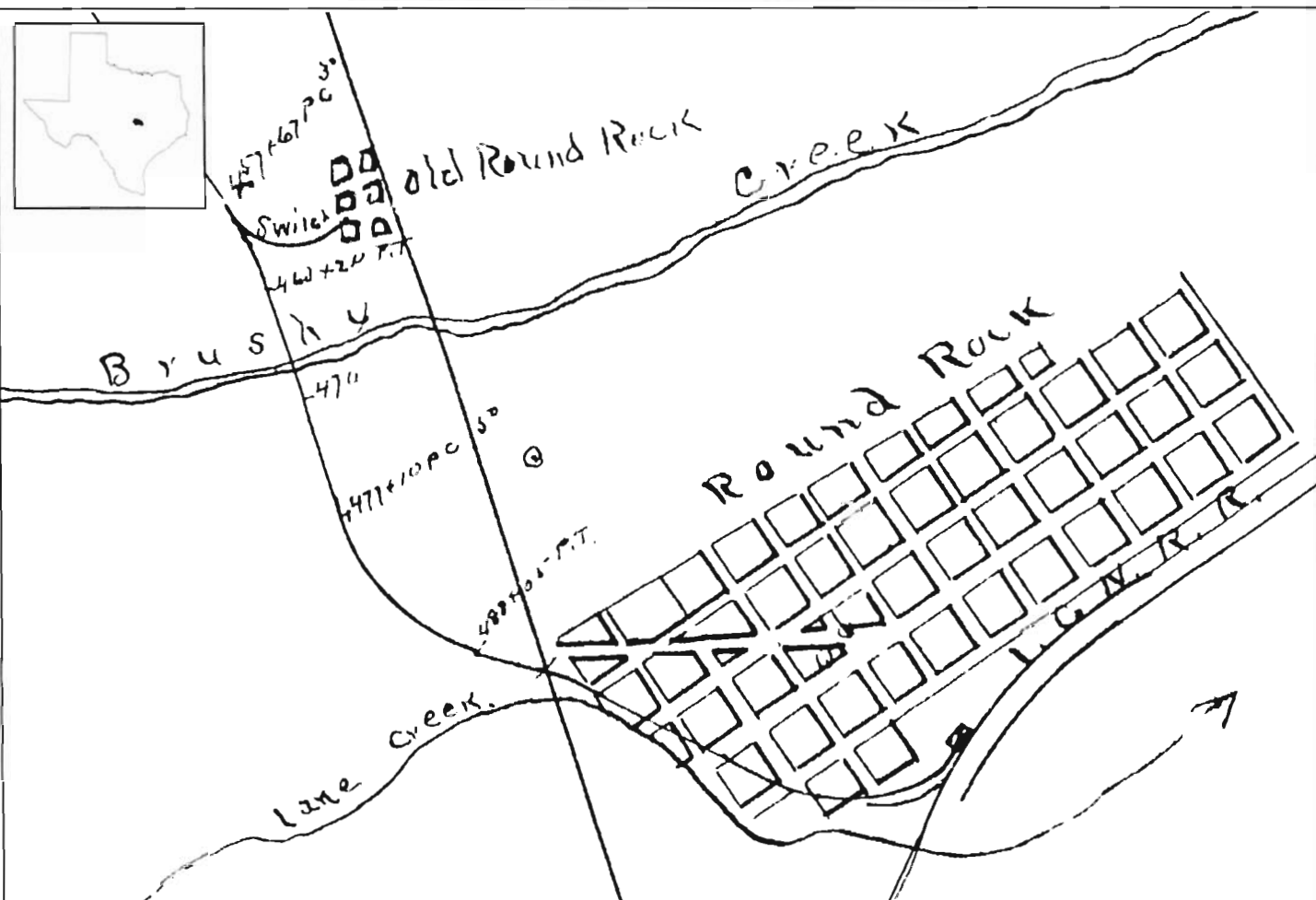
The J.J. Dimmitt was purchased new from the Baldwin Locomotive Company in September 1878. The small 4-4-0 had 50" drivers and 11"x18" cylinders. Her builders number was 4432. She later became the property of the International & Great Northern where she was numbered 746 in 1881, and later named the Reno and numbered 46 in 1886. The small engine was scrapped in 1891.

*Photo Courtesy of: Railroad Museum of Penn. (PHMC)*



**Georgetown Rail Road Bridge over Brushy Creek and the Spur That Served the Community of Old Round Rock**

The railroad bridge on the far left over Brushy Creek was the only major structure built along the line of the Georgetown Rail Road. It was destroyed by a flood in 1900. The other bridge was built at the site where the Chisholm trail and the Austin to Salado stage line crossed over Brushy Creek. Wagon ruts are still visible in the limestone bedrock at the site today.



**The Communities of Old Round Rock and New Round Rock, Texas in 1879**

The GRR filed this profile map drawn by Frank Hill with the Secretary of State in Texas on January 20, 1879. The I&GN tracks and depot were built southeast of Old Round Rock in July 1876. The railroad's location prompted New Round Rock to spring up along the I&GN tracks south of Brushy Creek. The old stage road and Chisholm Trail are shown running just east of the GRR line where it crosses Brushy Creek. The famous round rock for which the community is named is located near these crossings. A switch installed by the GRR to serve several businesses in Old Round Rock was later removed by the I&GN after it took control of the GRR.

*Map Courtesy of: Texas General Land Office, Austin, Texas*



### Railroad Depot at Georgetown, Texas

The GRR depot in Georgetown was built during the last months of 1878, under the supervision of Frank Hill. It was located on the northeast corner of Oak and Forest streets. Several hacks and carriages met this mixed train at the Georgetown depot sometime after the Georgetown Railroad had been taken over by the International & Great Northern Railroad in 1879.

*Photo Courtesy of: Georgetown Heritage Society*

to the I&GN as the Georgetown Rail Road until June 2, 1882. At that time it was deeded to the I&GN which had acquired full interest in the GRR for \$39,392.70.

In the company's first Annual Report to the Texas State Comptroller it was noted that the GRR owned one engine, one box car and one combination passenger and freight car. These had cost the road \$4,930.15. The line operated a mixed train twice a day over the 10.6 miles of track. The depot, turntable and other facilities

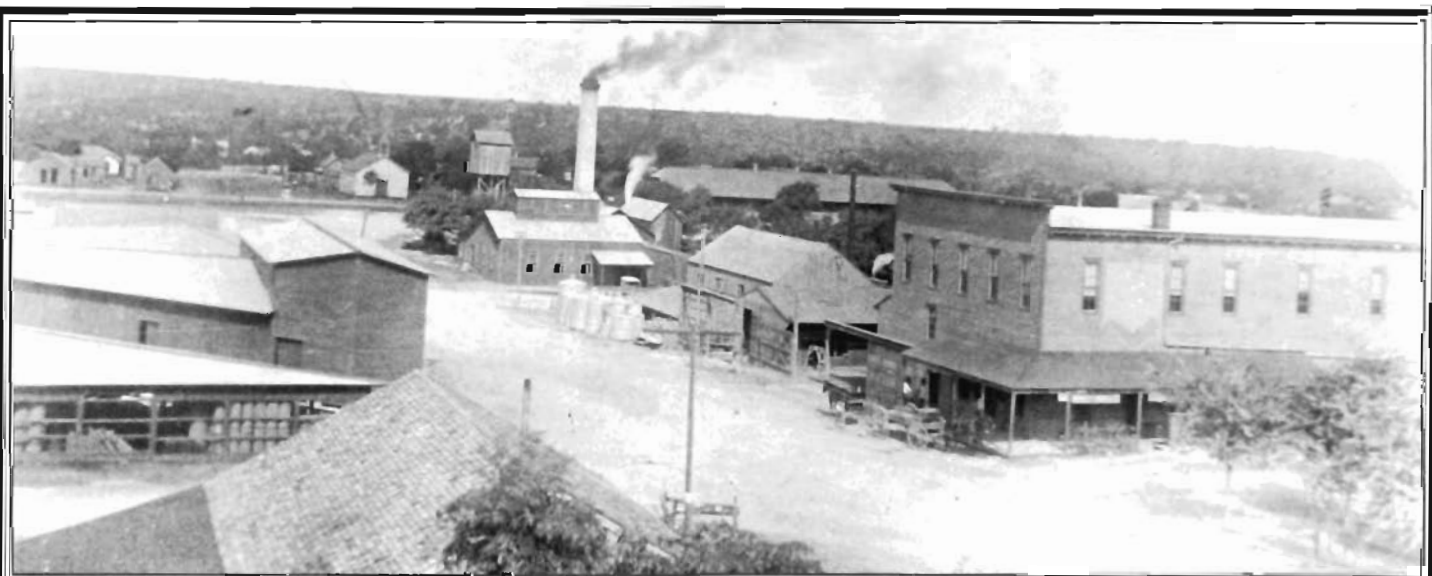
cost \$649.24. Between January and August 1879, the GRR grossed \$4,257.71 from passenger revenues and \$2,769.66 from freight revenues. An additional \$12,673.15 was received from other sources. This probably came from the sale of state land granted the company for building the road as the company noted that the first section certificate from the state was sold for \$8,228.

Freight carried by the new railroad consisted of 2400 tons of forest products, 16

tons of animals, 4 tons vegetable food, 0 tons agricultural products and 2500 tons of merchandise.

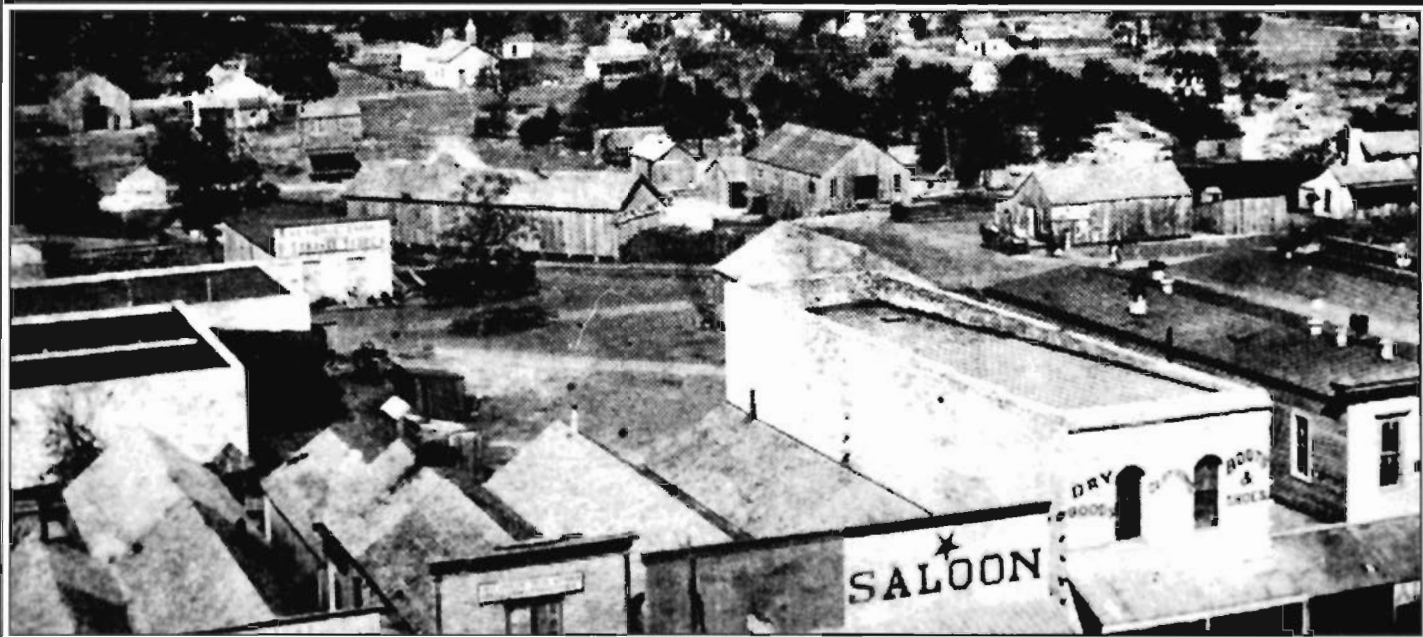
The GRR reported that it employed 1 engineer, 1 fireman, 1 conductor, 1 brakeman, 2 station agents, 1 section boss and 6 section hands. Cost of operation, including salaries, was \$4497.05.

The company was involved in one major accident during the year. The report notes "one little girl Matilda Clark run over by the passenger car and killed, while switch-



An ice house and large lumber yard were located along the tracks of the Georgetown Rail Road just west of the courthouse square.

*Photo Courtesy of the Georgetown Heritage Society*



A section of the GRR tracks in downtown Georgetown can be seen between two warehouses behind the saloon and dry goods store. Part of the platform of the GRR depot can also be seen. Refer to the Sanborn Fire Insurance map on the next page for exact detail.

*Photo Courtesy of the Georgetown Heritage Society*

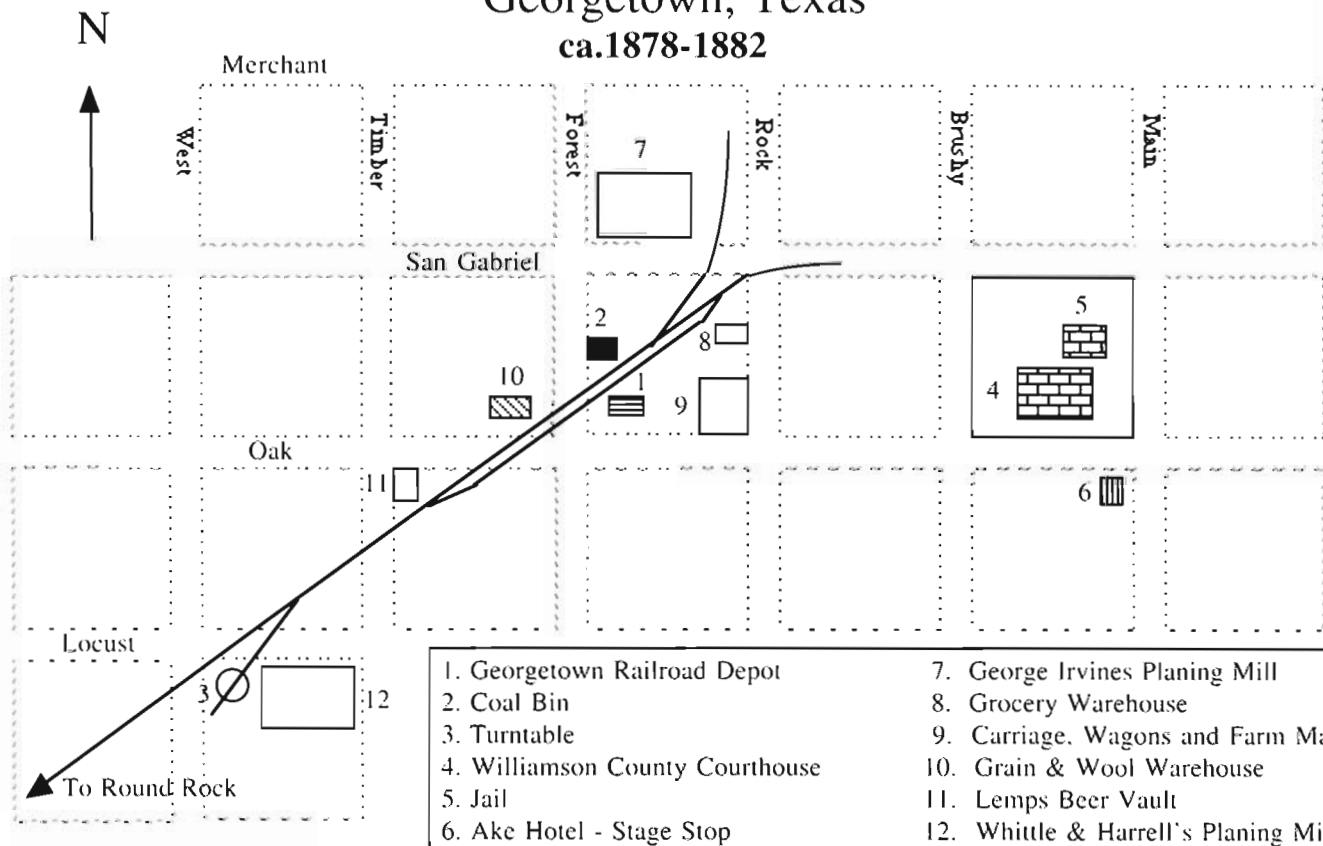
ing cars at the Depot at Georgetown. The coroner's jury acquitted the employee of the road from all responsibility for the above accident. No other accident occurred."

In his 1878 annual report to the Texas Secretary of State, Emzy Taylor, noted that

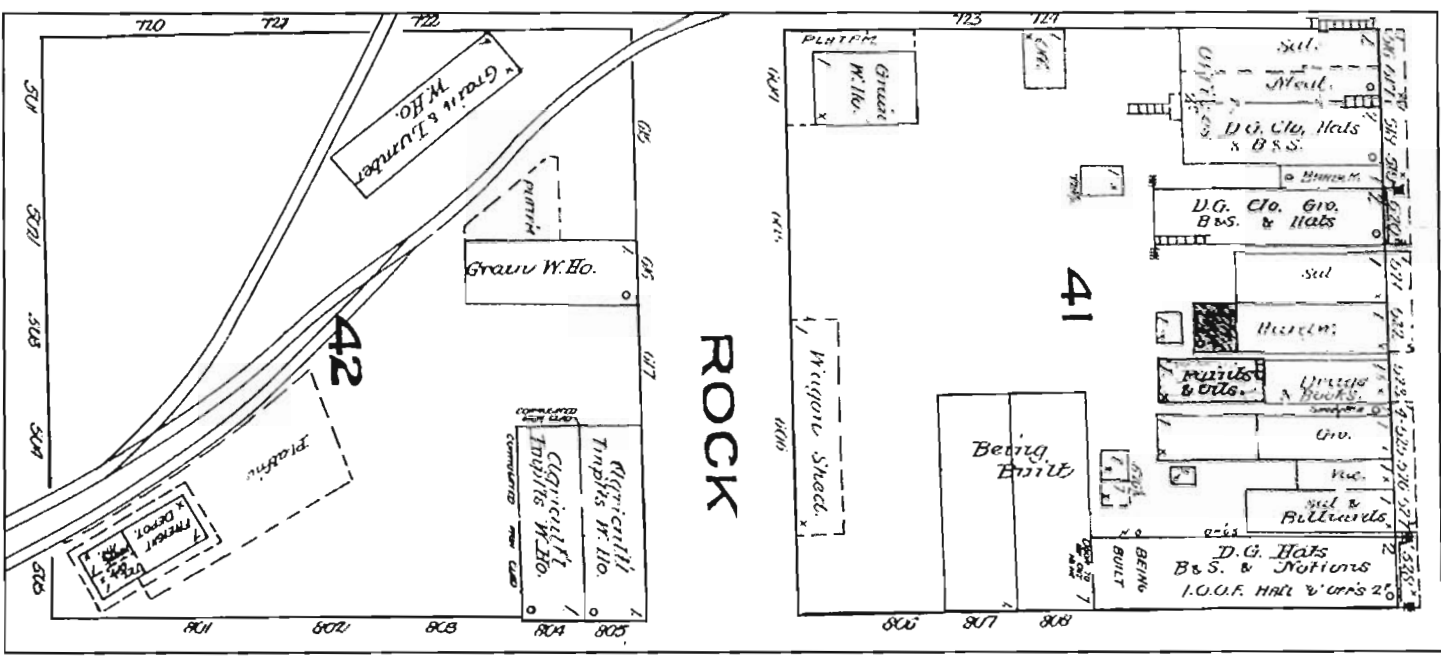
"the Georgetown Rail Road was sold to G. M. Dilley Aug. 5, 1870, and passed from under our control at that date." After losing control of the Georgetown Rail Road, Taylor continued to work as an active civic leader in the community. He

served as the town's first fire chief and became the president of the first bank in Georgetown. In 1890, Taylor promoted the Georgetown and Granger Ry. Co. which was chartered in December of that year. This project also ran into financial

## Georgetown, Texas ca.1878-1882



The original tracks of the Georgetown Rail Road terminated just west of the courthouse in downtown Georgetown. Later the I&GN built additional tracks and a depot several blocks west of this location. The stage stop was at the Ake Hotel, south of the courthouse.



difficulty and was ultimately completed by the Missouri-Kansas-Texas. As a result of Taylor's efforts, two major rail lines entered Georgetown and greatly stimulated the economic prosperity of the community. In 1926, the Georgetown Tap of the I&GN became a part of the Missouri Pacific system when that road acquired all the holdings of the International & Great Northern in Texas. In 1959, the Missouri Pacific abandoned the line and sold it to a group of Georgetown businessmen who owned Texas Crushed Stone Company.

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### Today's Georgetown Railroad Company

Starting with one worn out locomotive, no cars and a few miles of run down track, the new GRR has grown dramatically. Today it owns and operates 13 modern EMD diesel locomotives and over 1200 open top freight cars. Facilities include a modern locomotive shop built in 1975, and a car repair shop built in 1982. The company operates and maintains over 25 miles of track in the quarry and between Round Rock and Granger.

The primary function of the GRR is to

move rock produced by Texas Crushed Stone. A DUMP TRAIN developed by the company can unload 1000 tons of material from a string of specially designed hopper cars in less than 45 minutes. The GRR also has a patent on a SLOT MACHINE designed to unload a string of articulated open-end gondola cars.

Today, the present Georgetown Railroad employees 50 people and is one of the most successful shortlines in Texas. A color photograph of the GRR DUMP TRAIN and several GRR locomotives appear on the back cover of the Journal.



The Eclipse Stable, owned by Snyder and Bryson, provided carriages, horses and a hearse to serve the various early transportation needs of residents in Georgetown. It was located at Oak and Rock Streets just west of the original Georgetown Rail Road depot.

Photo Courtesy of: Georgetown Heritage Society