

**America's First Railroad**

**Lead: Far from the industrial North, America's first railroad began at Charleston, South Carolina.**

**Content: In 1828, Horatio Allen, an American engineer, became fascinated with the new means of transportation known as the railroad. He paid a visit to England to study the few railroads then in existence. He was very impressed. So much so that he bought four locomotives and had them shipped back across the Atlantic.**

**By that time, interest had become so great that two railroads were**

**already under construction. One of them was the Baltimore and Ohio. This would eventually link the middle Atlantic states with the growing and vigorous Mid-West. However, a Southern state was to have the honor of America's first commercial railroad. Planned and built under Horatio Allen's direction, the railroad ran due west from Charleston to the river port of Hamburg on the Savannah River. Goods could be shipped by river to Hamburg and transhipped on the railroad to Charleston, thus avoiding the rival port of Savannah. It was named the Charleston and Savannah, later the Charleston and Hamburg. It was the first railroad on line in 1830, operating six miles of track. Eventually, it was to have 130 miles**

**and was briefly the world's longest railroad line.**

**In addition to the work on the roadbed, Allen also designed and constructed America's first locomotive, "The Best Friend of Charleston." In June 1831, with South Carolina threatening succession from the union during the Nullification Crisis, the Best Friend of Charleston's boiler exploded, killing the fireman and blowing iron around the landscape like an exploding artillery shell. Rebuilt and aptly renamed "Phoenix," it remained part of the Company's rolling stock for more than a decade.**

**At the end of 1830 there were 23 miles of working track in the United**

**States, most of them across the low country of South Carolina.**

**"A Moment in Time" is produced at the University of Richmond. This is Dan Roberts.**

**Resources**

**Williams, John Hoyt. *A Great and Shining Road*. New York, NY: Times Books, 1988.**

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