

Henry L Gantt, 1861 - 1919 Debunking the myths, a retrospective view of his work

By Patrick Weaver

Henry Laurence Gantt, A.B., M.E. was an American mechanical engineer and management consultant who is best known for developing the Gantt chart in the 1910s. However, the charts Henry Gantt developed and used are nothing like the charts that are erroneously referred to as 'Gantt Charts' by modern project managers.

It is a tragedy that Gantt's real contributions to the advancement of management science are obscured by two glaring misconceptions that continue to be perpetuated by sloppy scholarship with various authors repeating earlier incorrect assertions without ever bothering to check the original source materials. This article is intended to set the record straight and recognise Gantt for his real achievements!

Henry Gantt was a very important management scientist; his contribution to production engineering is rightly recognised by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) by awarding an annual medal in his honour. The Henry Laurence Gantt Medal, was established in 1929 and elevated to a Society award in 1999, it is given for distinguished achievement in management and for service to the community.

Hopefully by the time you have finished this paper, you will agree the following myths should be 'busted' once and for all:

Misconception #1 Henry Gantt developed 'Bar Charts' – Fact, bar charts were developed 100 years before Gantt, his charts were sophisticated production control tools, not simple representations of activities over time.

Misconception #2 Henry Gantt contributed to the development of 'project management' – this is a complete fallacy, Gantt's work was in machine shops and factories focused on batch production and factory throughput. Many of his ideas can be adapted to modern project management but Gantt sought to eliminate 'one-off' jobs that could not be batched and managed efficiently.

Source Materials:

Thanks to the digitisation of historically significant books, the three original books relating to Gantt's work are now in the public domain:

- Work Wages & Profits (Henry L. Gantt, 1916)
- Organizing for Work (Henry L. Gantt, 1919)
- The Gantt Chart a working tool of management (Wallace Clark, 1923)

For convenience of readers, all three books can be downloaded from:
http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Resources_Papers_158.html

Bar Charts and Gantt Charts:

Throughout his career, Henry Gantt used a wide range of charts; in fact it would be true to say that one of Gantt's core skills was developing charts to display relatively complex data in ways that allowed quick and effective comprehension by managers. However none of these charts were simple forward projections of activities against time (ie, the conventional 'bar chart' used on modern project management), and the term 'Gantt Chart' was first used in the Wallace Clark book, where he describes the use of Gantt's charts to measure productivity.

The origin of the Bar Chart.

The concept of 'scheduling' is not new; the pyramids are over 3000 years old, Sun Tzu wrote about scheduling and strategy 2500 years ago from a military perspective, transcontinental railways have been being built for some 200 years, etc. None of these activities could have been accomplished without some form of schedule; ie, the understanding of activities and sequencing. However, whilst the managers, priests and military leaders controlling the organisations responsible for accomplishing these 'works' must have an appreciation of 'scheduling' (or at least the successful ones would have) there is little evidence of formal processes until the 18th Century.

Modern bar charts can trace their origins to 1765. The originator of the concept appears to be Joseph Priestley (England, 1733-1804); his 'Chart of Biography' plotted some 2000 famous lifetimes on a time scaled chart. Priestley is quoted as saying "...a longer or a shorter space of time may be most commodiously and advantageously represented by a longer or a shorter line."

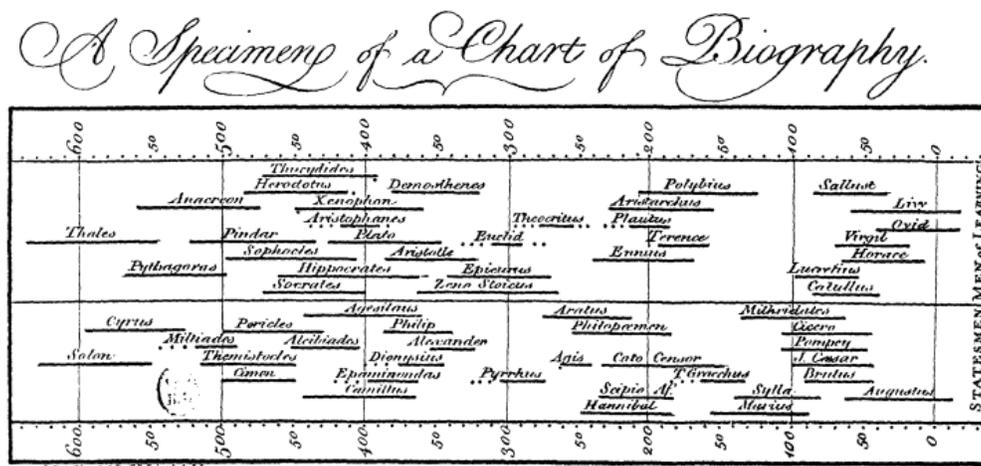


Figure 1 – Joseph Priestley: Chart of Biography

Priestley's ideas were picked up by William Playfair (1759-1823) in his 'Commercial and Political Atlas' of 1786¹.

¹ Playfair, W. (1801). The Commercial and Political Atlas and Statistical Breviary. Reprinted 2005, Cambridge University Press, New York, NY.

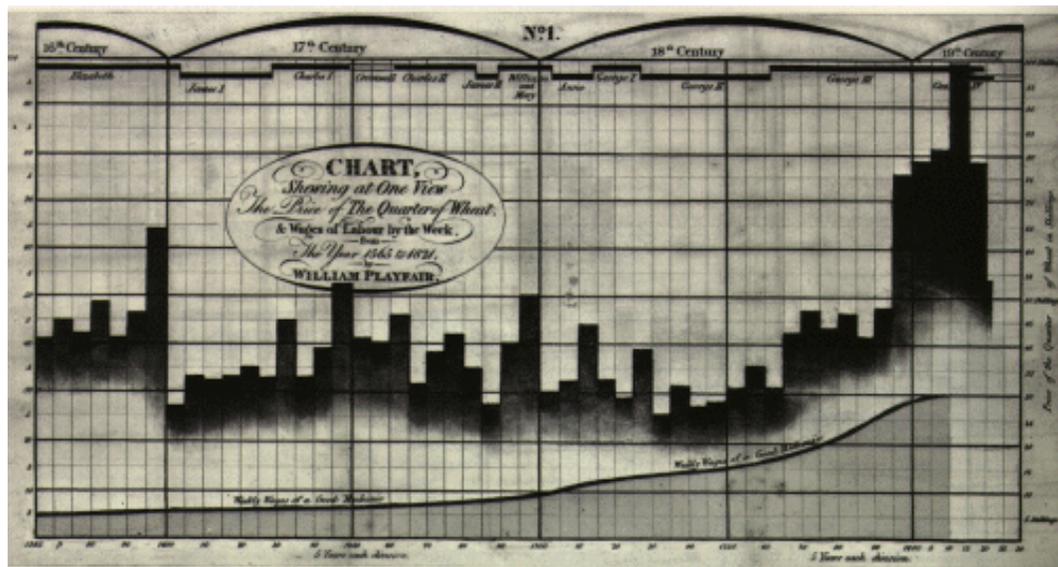


Figure 2 – One of Playfair's Charts from the 1801 edition of his Atlas

Playfair is credited with developing a range of statistical charts including the line graph, bar graph (histogram), and pie charts. His *Atlas* contains 43 time-series plots and one histogram.

Following on from Playfair; another European, Karol Adamiecki - a Polish economist, engineer and management researcher, developed the Harmonogram (or Harmonygraph) in 1896². Adamiecki's Harmonygraph has a date scale on the vertical axis (left hand side) and lists Activities across the top.

Each activity was represented by a scaled paper strip, and the current schedule and duration of the activities were depicted by the position and length of the strips. In the header above the strips, the name and the duration of the activity and the list of preceding activities were shown. The strips representing the preceding activities were always to the left of the strip of the successor.

The tabulation of each activities predecessors and successors in the Harmonygraph ('from' and 'to') makes it a distinct predecessor to the CPM and PERT systems developed some 60 years later.

² Morris P.W.G. (1994) 'The Management of Projects' Thomas Telford Ltd, London. p7.

time	From	-	-	-	A-1	B-1	...
	To	A-2	B-2.C	D-2	A-3	E-1	...
	activity	A-1<4>	B-1<4>	D-1<2>	A-2<4>	B-2<3>	...
1		█	█	█			
2		█					
3							
4							
5					█	█	
6							
7							
8					█		
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							

Figure 3 – Adamiecki's Harmonygraph

By 1912, the modern bar chart seems to have been fully developed and in use at least in Germany. A project to construct a small mountain railway in Bavaria was the subject of a lengthy report in the October 1915 edition of *Armierter Beton*³. The railway was of interest for the innovative use of reinforced concrete in a major bridge, not the schedule, but in passing the use of a bar chart and histogram were briefly discussed⁴:

A very accurate graphical building program was set up for the execution of the work, of which Fig.33 is a part. For that, each week is assumed to be five full days of real work, and thus all interruptions, by unfavourable weather, etc., were incorporated. By compiling the need for each of the individual services in the construction program to a second table (Fig. 32) the total demand at Baustoften was seen and overall performance was, with a view of the uncertain and irregular supply, achieved by timely provision being made for each appropriate supplies. The construction program was generally respected, and well laid non-structural (performance) measures about that as well as the construction program, mainly by Dipl.-Ing. J. Muller has been designed, excellently preserved, and, despite fairly significant investment costs, has proved very economical.

³ For more on the origins of the Schürch bar chart and a set of supporting resource histograms see:

The original published article (German Language):

http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/PDF_Papers/P042_Barchart_Origins.pdf

A 'rough' translation of the reference to the program contained in the article:

http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/PDF_Papers/P042_Barchart_Origins_Comment.pdf

⁴ Note, the translation is mine, using Google Translate, there may be errors.

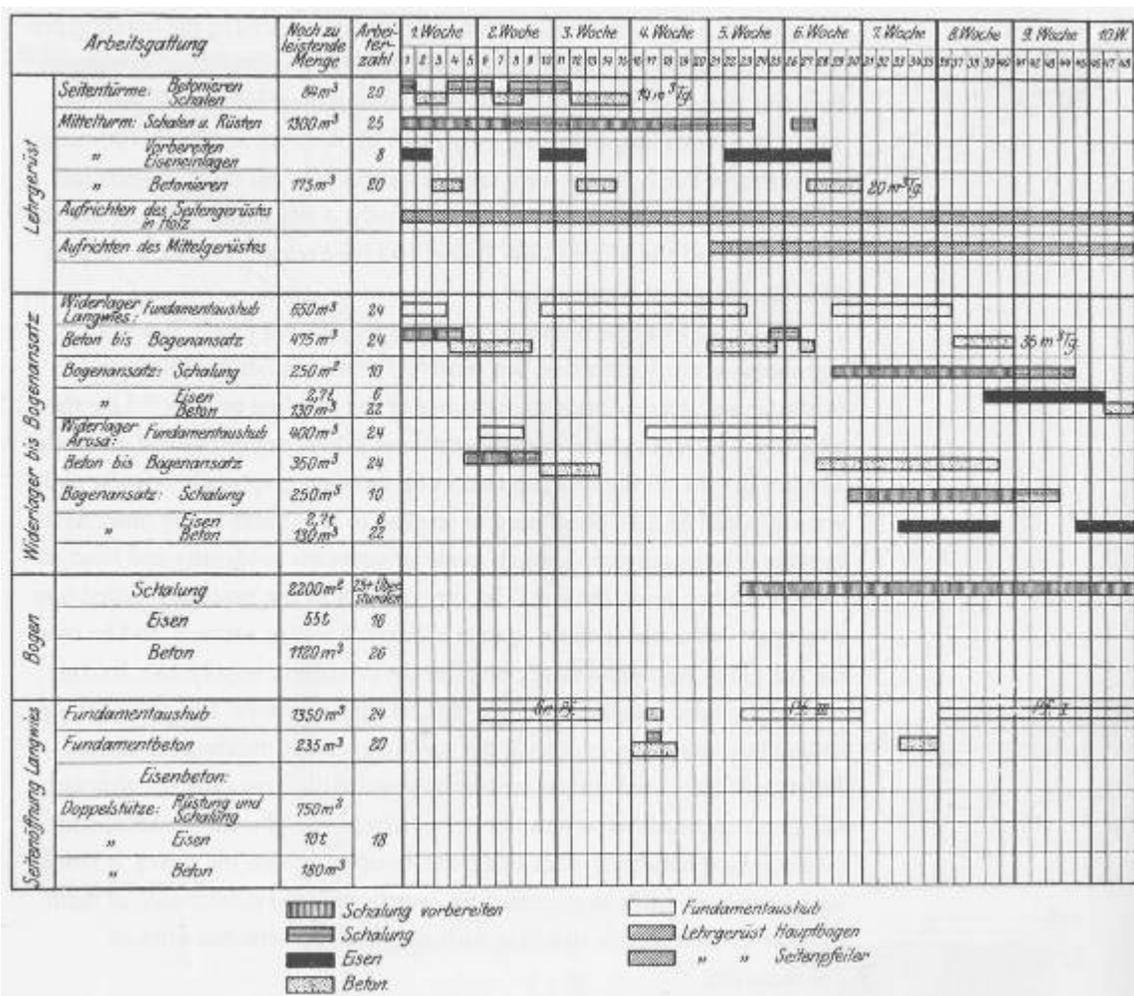


Figure 4 (Fig. 33 from the report): a Bar Chart developed for a bridge constructed in 1912⁵.

⁵ The same project is discussed in a book by Schürch published in 1916: This copy of the chart is from p35 of the book.

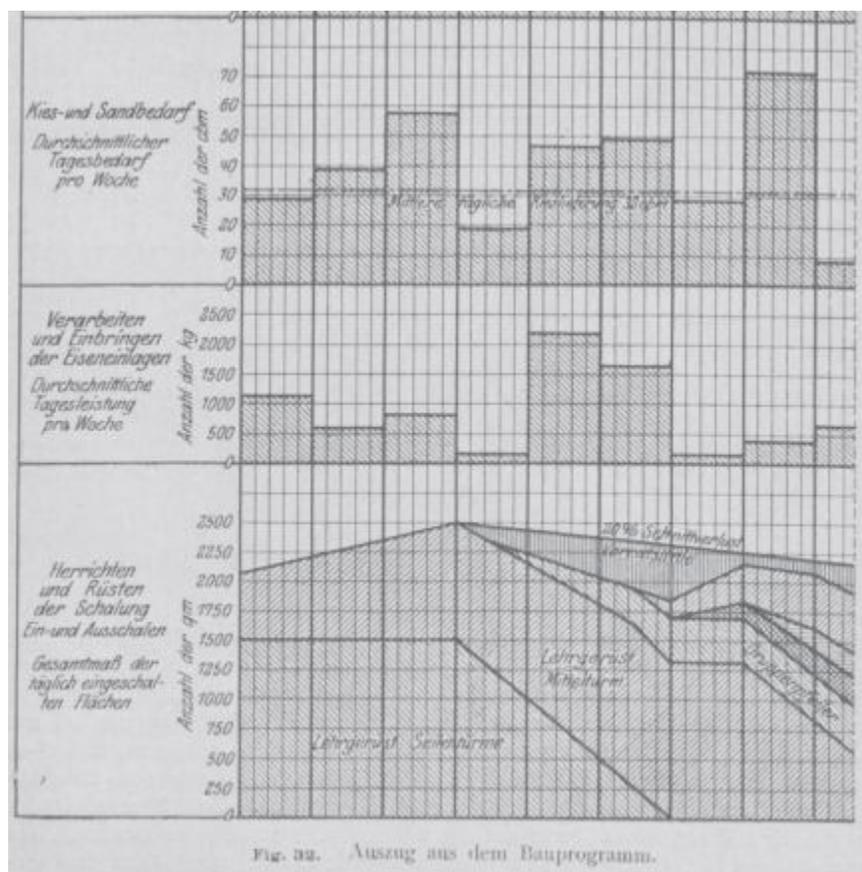


Figure 5 (Fig. 33 from the report): Part of the resource histograms from the same project.

Based on the use of language in the Armierter Beton article it would appear the use of this type of bar chart was routine, the only differentiation on this project was the effort put into the programming of the work.

Given the extent of use in Europe, I would suggest it is nearly impossible for an educated engineer such as Gantt to be unaware of this type of chart and its long history. He was aware of important German thinkers including Bismarck and Von Moltke and when discussing the benefits of using of his own charts, Gantt commented: *Many shops have very nice scheduling systems; they plan their work beautifully - at least, it looks very pretty on paper; but they have no means of finding out if those schedules are lived up to or not*⁶. We will never know exactly what type of chart Gantt was referencing in his disparaging remarks, but understanding what his charts could achieve would suggest he was talking about simple bar charts similar to the one above!

Gantt's Charts.

Henry Gantt developed and used a range of charts over the years to help visualise and understand data. Whilst some superficially look similar to Figure 4 above, the way they were developed and the information being communicated is quite different. The primary purpose of a traditional bar chart is to show which activities are planned to be

⁶ From: *Work, Wages and Profit*, p130 The task idea



Figure 7 A 'Bonus Chart' information on performance (bonus earned or not) is filled in at the end of each day.

The situation is slightly different in the third chart type discussed in this book. The horizontal red lines on the 'Production Sheet' (Fig. 8) show when work on each specific part is planned to start and finish, the number of parts produced are entered after each day's work to record the actual progress of the worker.

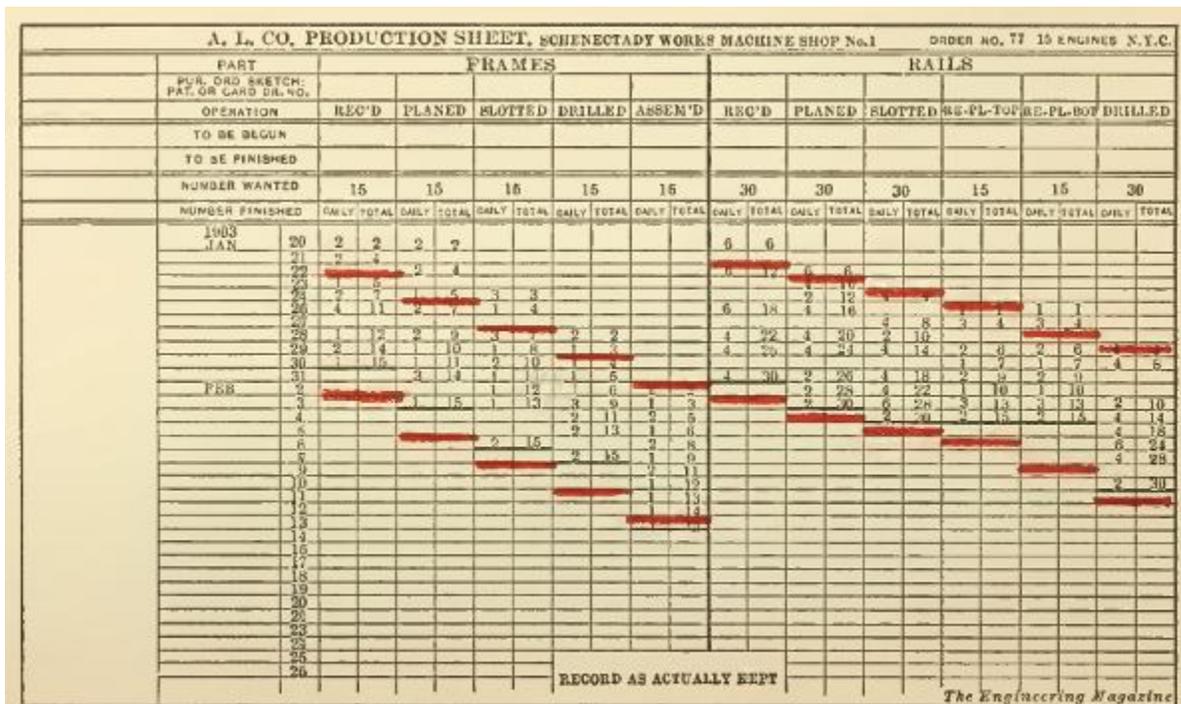


FIG. 23. GRAPHICAL RECORD OF WORK ON 15 LOCOMOTIVES AS ACTUALLY KEPT

Figure 8 A ‘Production Chart’ the information on actual production is filled in at the end of each day.

‘Work Wages and Profits’ also includes a number of graphs to demonstrate the effectiveness of Gantt’s methods and examples of job cards, time cards and other factory records.

Gantt’s second book, ‘Organizing for Work’ published in the year of his death is an interesting read. Henry Gantt knew his working days were nearing an end and he was free to say **exactly** what he thought! Here are a few of his grumpier comments⁷:

- *The most casual investigation into the reasons why so many of the [WW1] munition manufacturers have not made good, reveals the fact that their failure is due to lack of managerial ability rather than to any other cause.*
- *Our most serious trouble is incompetency in high places. As long as that remains uncorrected, no amount of efficiency in the workmen will avail very much.*
- *Our industries are suffering from lack of competent managers,—which is another way of saying that many of those who control our industries hold their positions, not through their ability to accomplish results, but for some other reason.*

Sentiments that I hear quite often today... however, I digress; as in his first book, Gantt uses a range of charts in ‘Organizing for Work’ (1919) to make complex information accessible to workers, supervisors and managers alike. As with the charts above, most

⁷ Copied from Organizing for Work, p64

of the information is entered after the day's work is completed, and the purpose of charts such as the 'Idleness Expense Chart' is to record inefficient working to allow production improvement efforts to be focused where needed.

However, in 'Organizing for work' Gantt does introduce the chart that Wallace Clark calls the 'Gantt Chart' (Henry Gantt always named charts for their purpose). In fact, the name 'Gantt Chart' can be traced directly to the title of Clark's book, 'The Gantt Chart a working tool of management' published in 1923.

Clark worked with Gantt and can be credited for ensuring much of his legacy remains available today. The 'Gantt Chart' used by Gantt and described in detail by Clark shows, for each item to be manufactured, the planned quantity and allocated time slot for manufacturing the 'batch', plus the actual, cumulative, and daily totals all in one line (Fig. 9).

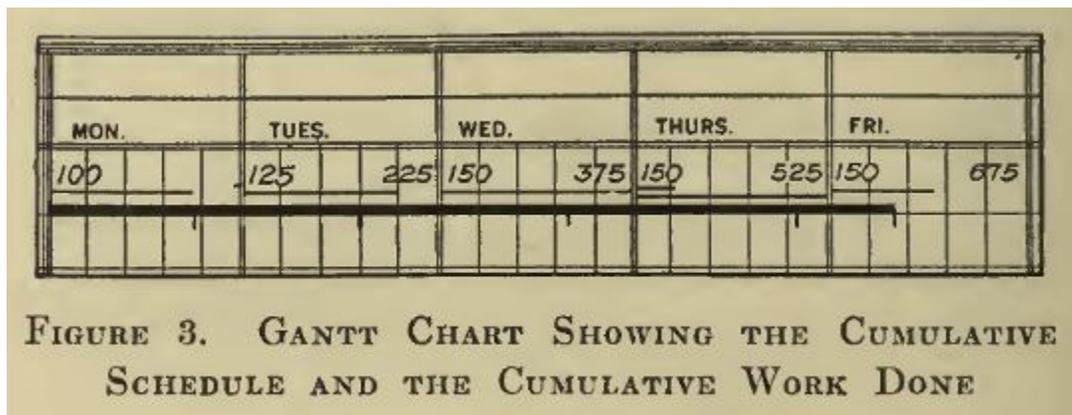


Figure 9 The details of a Gantt Chart.

To understand and interpret this chart:

- The heavy black line shows the planned work period (with the required quantity of parts in a tabulation,
- The numbers show the actual quantity produced each day and the cumulative total as at the end of the day.
- The thin line represents the percentage of the day's production achieved (if 100% is achieved, the thin line extends across the full day as on Wednesday),
- The small vertical 'ticks' below the thick black line show the cumulative amount achieved at the end of each day.

As in the example above, the production target can vary from day to day depending on the precise nature of the work, learning curves, re-tooling, etc; and most of the information is entered at the end of each day. Gantt developed and used two variants of this chart, the 'Load Chart' (Fig. 10) and the 'Performance Chart' (Fig. 11).

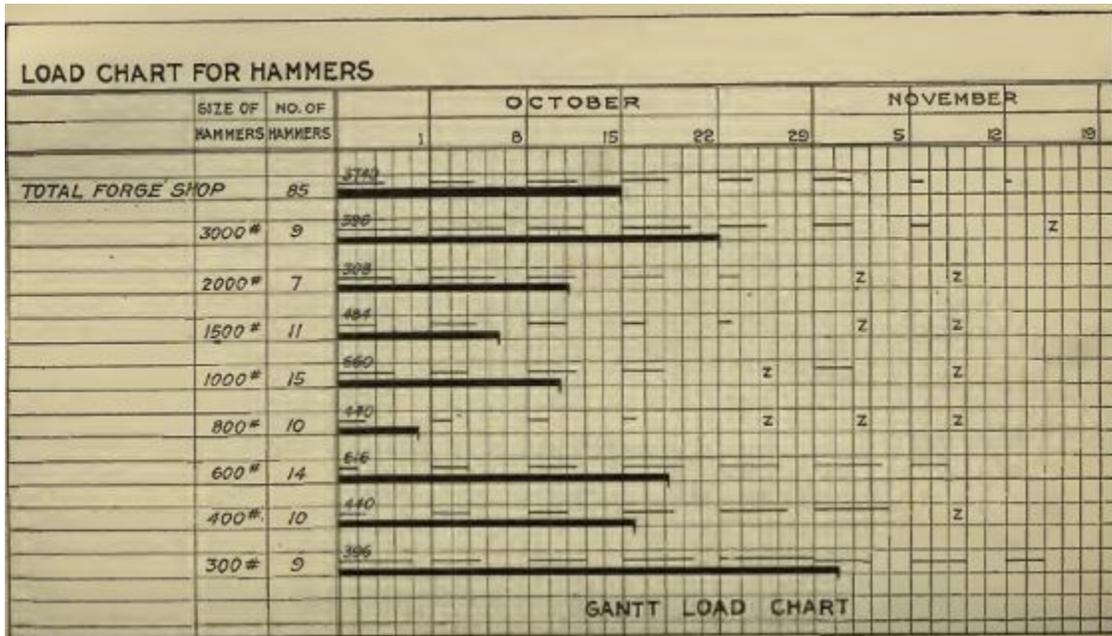


Figure 10 A 'Load Chart'.

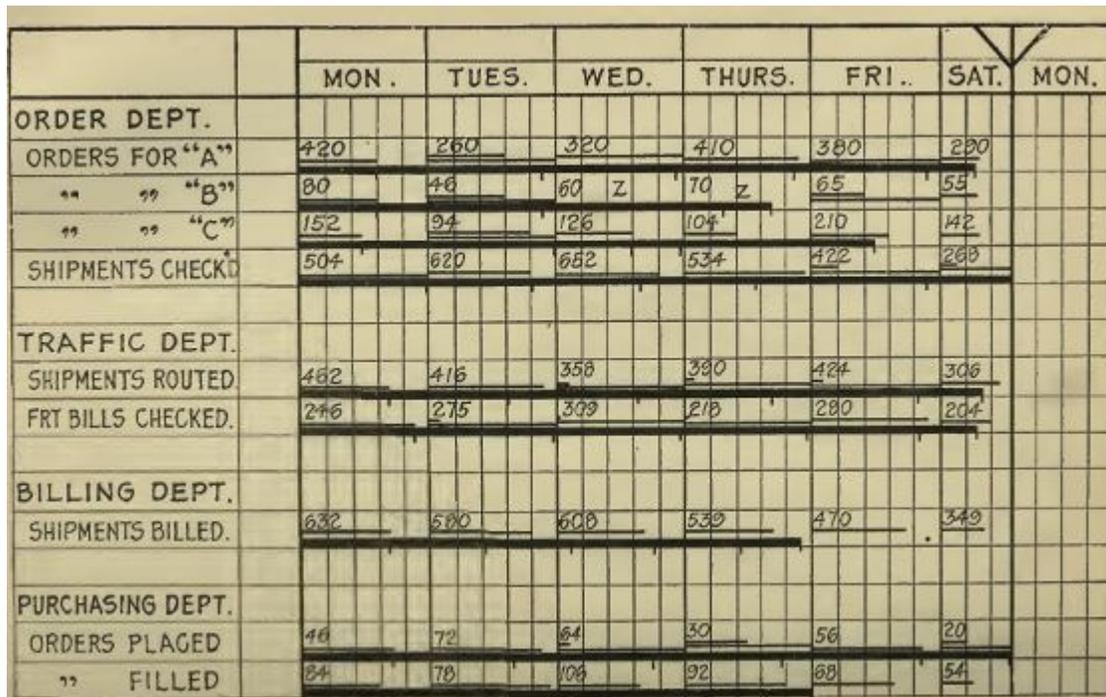


Figure 11 A 'Performance Chart'.

Clark's book goes on to describe many variants of the basic charts outlined above and different way they can be used to assist in machine shop management.

The book also describes how Gantt's work assisted the American First World War (1917 - 1918) production and mercantile shipping efforts⁸ initially at the Frankford Arsenal then on America's entry to the conflict at the Ordnance Department in Washington supporting the work of General William Crozier.

As with his commercial work, the primary focus of all of the charts used by Gantt during the First World War was on charting the difference between promises and performance⁹. As demonstrated above, work planned and work performed is shown in relation to each other and in relation to time¹⁰. It is interesting to note that after the war General William Crozier was moved on and the charts were quietly dropped as bureaucrats preferred to focus on what that they had done, rather than compare this with what they could have achieved!

Clark concludes his book as follows:

General Benefits of Gantt Charts

In the previous chapters Gantt charts have been shown as:

- 1. A simple and effective method of planning work.*
- 2. A way of presenting facts so that they can be easily understood.*
- 3. A means of eliminating idleness and waste.*
- 4. A method of getting things done on time.*

But Gantt charts stand for something more than that, for where they have been in use for some time one will find:

- 1. Machines and equipment in good condition.*
- 2. Floor space arranged for use; neither cluttered up with unnecessary things nor arranged for appearance only.*
- 3. Work moving rapidly from one operation to another without confusion.*
- 4. Large reductions in inventories of raw materials, work in process, and finished goods, because of the shortening of manufacturing time.*

⁸ From the Preface: "In 1917, after a careful inspection of certain factories in which Mr. H. L. Gantt had installed his methods, General William Crozier, then Chief of Ordnance, retained Mr. Gantt to act in a consulting capacity on production, first at the Frankford Arsenal, and then, immediately after the declaration of war, in the Ordnance Department at Washington."

⁹ Dean Schneider discussing Gantt's charts in the Ordnance Dept. "Each production section has production and progress chart systems. These seem to vary in minor details only. Even without rigid standardization, the charts give a picture of the progress of the whole Ordnance Program including lags and the causes thereof. Combined in one office and kept to date they would show the requirements as to workers, as well as to materials, transportation, accessory machinery, and all of the other factors which make or break the program. With a plan of this sort the Ordnance Department would be in a position to state at any time its immediate and probable future needs in men, materials, transportation, and equipment." (Organising for Work, pp 80).

¹⁰ The density of information on a 'Gantt Chart', and its function to measure production is far more closely aligned with the concepts embedded in Earned Value than a traditional bar chart. Whilst the style of Gantt's charts is different, the information shown is precisely the same as plotting Earned Value and Planned Value in a modern EV system.

5. *Increased production not through speeding up workmen but by removing the obstacles which prevent them from doing their best.*
6. *Reduced costs, because of the elimination of idleness and waste as well as improvements in processes.*
7. *Men in subordinate positions willing to shoulder responsibility instead of "passing the buck," because they have definite duties and clear-cut jobs.*
8. *Courage and initiative stimulated, because men know they will get fair play.*
9. *No favoritism or special privilege, because every man's record can be seen by others.*
10. *Satisfied workmen, because the delays over which they have no control are few and they are left free to do a full day's work and therefore earn better wages.*
11. *Poor workmen trained and developed until they make good.*
12. *Promotions going to men who know their jobs and, therefore, an organization being built up of men who "know what to do and how to do it."*
13. *Men interested in their work, not only because of the wages but because they have an opportunity to increase their knowledge and improve their skill.*

Seeing such changes take place in one plant after another, watching arbitrary management become democratic and finding workmen not only interested in their work but proud of it, strengthens the conviction that the Gantt chart is the most notable contribution to the art of management made in this generation.

Sentiments with which I concur; over his life's work Gantt developed progressively more sophisticated charts that made complex information easy to comprehend and use by workers, supervisors and managers alike. But this was in the management domain of factory/ production management, not project management and the charts are production records, not bar charts.

Henry Gantt's Contribution to Management (not project management):

As discussed above, Henry Gantt's focus was on increased machine-shop production, through the use of effective measurement and planning. The various charts he used were a means to an end: *"The man who undertakes to introduce scientific management and pins his faith to rules, and the use of forms and blanks, without thoroughly comprehending the principles upon which it is based, will fail. Forms and blanks are simply the means to an end. If the end is not kept clearly in mind, the use of these forms and blanks is apt to be detrimental rather than beneficial."*

The starting point of Gantt's work was the ideas of scientific management introduced by Frederic Taylor (Gantt worked with Taylor in the early days). Scientific management presumes the best way to understand a complex task is to break it down into its component parts, scientifically study and optimise each part and then synthesise the best way to complete the work as a whole, from the optimised parts. What made Gantt's work uniquely valuable was the way this information was used to motivate workers.

Gantt's standout contribution was his innovative approach to workforce management, today we would call this 'team motivation'; overlaid with a strong sense of industrial democracy. His 'method' was focused on the efficient utilization of labour and a fair division of the rewards from any improvement in productivity between the workers and the owners of the factories.

The innovations introduced by Gantt are still very much the focus of modern management; they include team motivation, change management and the effective use of control systems. And whilst the focus of his work was in manufacturing (with the advantage of repetition and standardisation) many of his ideas and processes are of value in today's projects.

The centrepiece of Gantt's method involved the scientific investigation and careful standardization of the work into tasks. Figure 12 shows a task card with set processes and times to manufacture a heavy metal 'pin'. Once a task had been 'set' by an expert¹¹, the expert was required to provide individual instruction to each worker on how to accomplish the task, and once they had learnt to perform the task in the set time and to the required quality, a bonus was paid in addition to their daily wage.

Gantt recognised incentives are a far more powerful motivator than penalties. He described his approach as "*a system of education for the workforce, with a bonus for those who learned!*" It proved highly effective generating sustained productivity improvements well in excess of 100%.

¹¹ 'Setting a task' involved an experienced and skilled workman determining the best way to accomplish the work and the optimum time needed for each step in the process.

CLASS OF WORK		STANDING ORDER		ORDER NUMBER					
Lathe		460		16837					
MACHINE NUMBER	TOOL	CLASS OF METAL	FORGING NUMBER						
59	M E	14	22706 B. F.						
MAN'S NAME <u>S. SPEED BOSS</u>									
DESCRIPTION OF OPERATION	SHAPE OF TOOL	CUT	FEED	SPEED	TIME WORK SHOULD TAKE	TIME WORK DID TAKE	RATE		
Change Machine 20 Min (For 1st one only)									
1	Chuck for turning webs				12				
2	Turn webs	PRL	3cuts	E 4AF	1:40				
3	Change to pin centers				10				
4	Rough pin to 4 1/8" dia	PSR		005 5AF	2:10				
5	Rough face webs use end	double tool	2cuts	4AF	1:40				
6	Pin. " " " "	cut	H	"	50				
7	Fin. turn pin & cut fillets			E 2AF	2:00				
8	File pin round				1:10				
9	Polish pin			2BF	40				
10	Inspect				15				
11	Remove crank				5				
12					10:52	10:50			
13	Pin is *1 finish, webs are *3 finish.								
14	(Bonus earned)								
15									
16									
17									
18									
19									
20									
21									
22									
23							Previous time 54 hours		
SOLUTION CARD NO.		SHEEP DRAINING NO.		U.S. COL. EXHIBIT NO.		MONTH	DAY	YEAR	SIGNED
4811		PCMB		26194 1/2 A		7	17	01	Buckley
WHEN MACHINE CAN NOT BE RUN AS ORDERED, SPEED BOSS MUST AT ONCE REPORT TO MAN WHO SIGNED THIS SLIP									

Figure 12 A timed job card – the worker was taught how to achieve the ‘set times’ to earn his bonus.

Gantt’s system also interconnected the reward paid to the supervisor with the rewards paid to the workers. The foreman received a bonus for each worker in his team that received a bonus, but the foreman’s bonus was doubled if all of the workers in his team achieved a bonus. This encouraged the foreman to ensure his shop operated efficiently and to work with and support the least effective members of ‘the team’ to bring everyone up to standard.

Importantly whenever a bonus was not earned, the cause was investigated and the cause of the failure removed or remedied, Gantt wanted everyone to make their bonus every day! He knew that when this was achieved, the plant as a whole was working to its optimum productivity level and generating the maximum profits; a win-win outcome for everyone.

Gantt was also aware of the challenges of 'change management'. When introducing his system to a new factory, he recognized that *"in every workroom there is a fashion, a habit of work, and every new worker follows that fashion, for it isn't respectable not to."* Consequently, *"the changing of a system of management is a very serious matter and cannot be done by a superintendent in his spare time."*

The effort needed to introduce Gantt's system required a high degree of skill, took time, required on-going support, and needed planning! Gantt's starting point was the physical layout of the workplace. The photographs in Figures 13 and 14 are the same factory work-space before and after Gantt's involvement. Before introducing the bonus system, he wanted to make sure the workers could be successful!

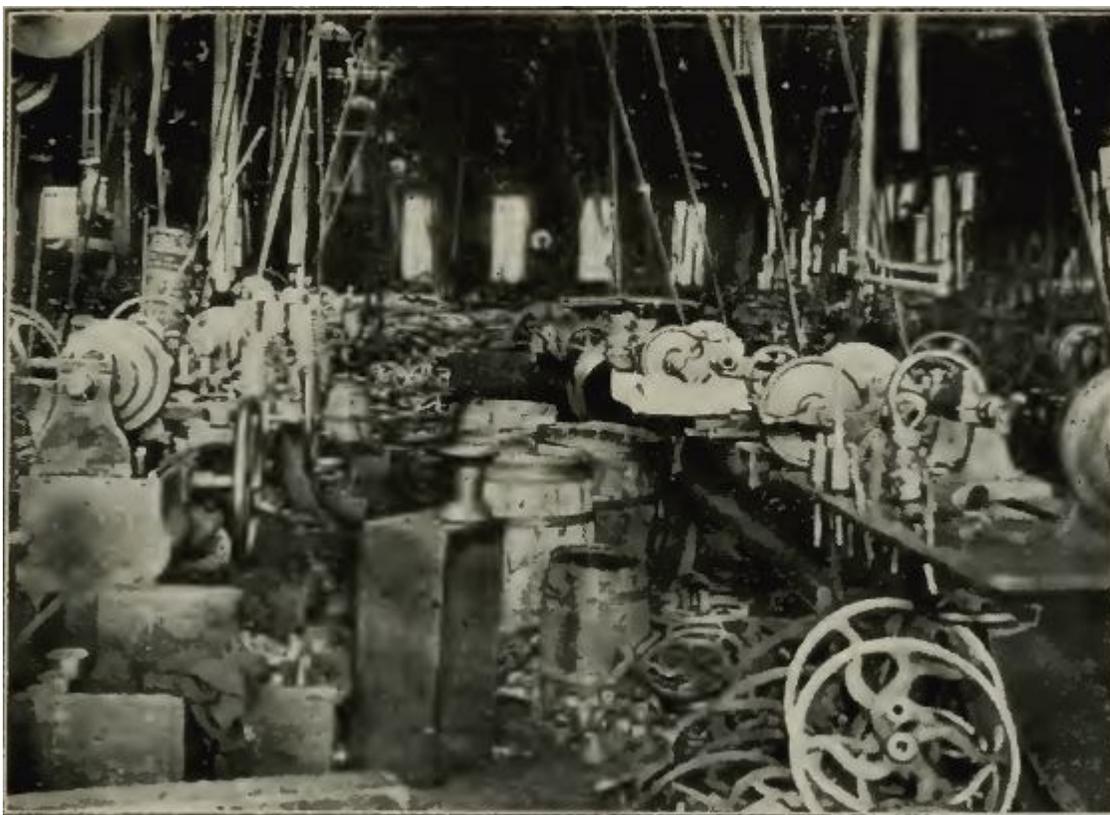


Figure 13 Before improvement.

Gantt also recognised these improvements required the active involvement of a skilled and committed management. He was highly critical of ineffective management focused on short-term profits! *"No ...laws.... have so far been framed that restrain the "high financier" who, without giving anything in return, taxes the community for his own benefit to an extent that makes all other forms of acquiring without giving an adequate return seem insignificant."*

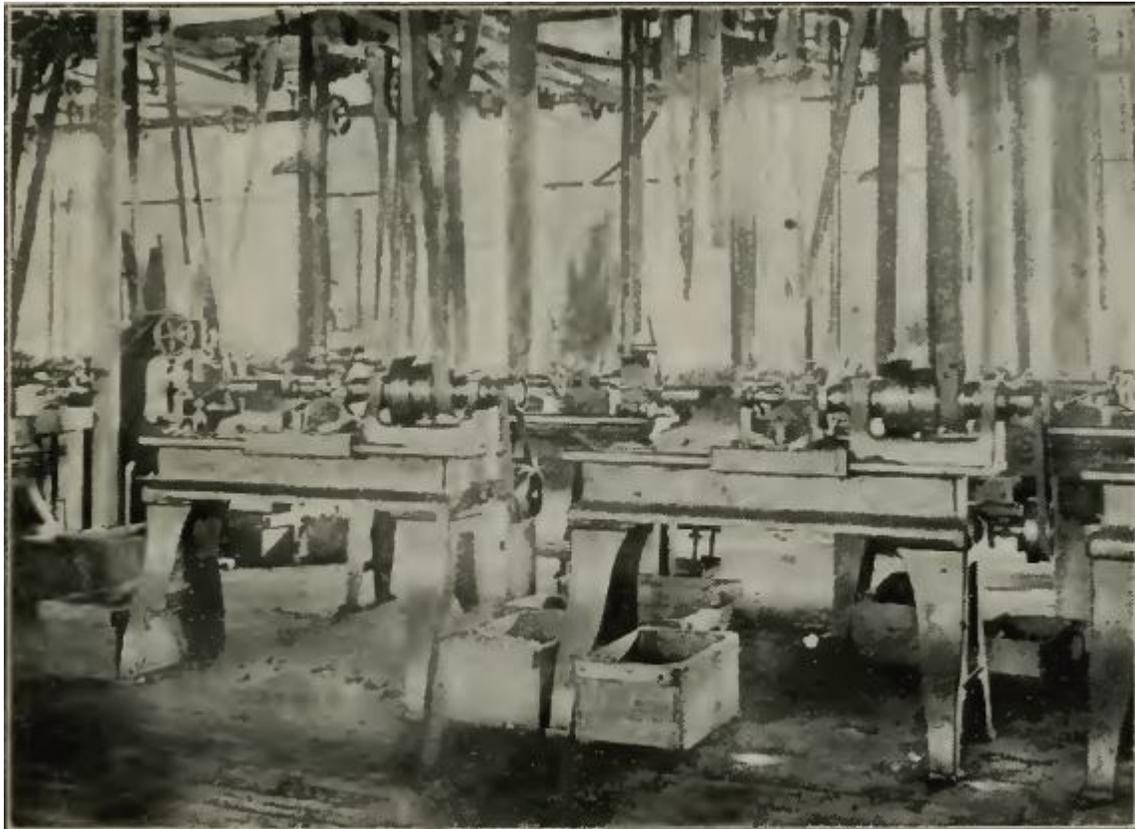


Figure 14 After improvement.

Gantt's method focused on balancing the whole production system, he recognized that a *'system of management requires all of its parts to work in harmony if it is to be effective, and this requires trained workers'* supported by skilled supervisors and managers. He understood that management was ultimately responsible for the efficient utilization of labour and implementing efficient systems that minimized errors (the focus of modern systems and quality engineering).

Gantt also recognised that to make the changes permanent, both parties needed to benefit and be satisfied with the outcomes for optimum productivity to be achieved, leading to the maximum payment of bonuses and the generation of enhanced profits long-term; this meant management needed to share the reward with the workers – *industrial democracy*.

Henry Gantt Conclusion:

Henry L. Gantt was a fascinating pioneer of modern management practice, much of his work still has an important place in project management as much as any other sphere of management.

- He focused on motivation over 'driving' workers: *"The general policy in the past has been to drive, but the era of force must give way to that of knowledge, and*

the policy of the future will be to teach and to lead to the advantage of all concerned”.

- He recognised the advantages of minimum inventory, clean work places and quality decades before ‘lean’ and ‘six sigma’ were thought of.
- He also introduced a wider social responsibility in his teachings: *“The business system must accept its social responsibility and devote itself primarily to service ... of the community's needs”.*

The management aspects of Gantt’s work have only been briefly discussed in this paper although they are the central theme of both of his books. However, with respect to the two myths highlighted at the beginning of this paper I hope you agree they are thoroughly ‘busted’!

- This paper has clearly demonstrated that the concept of bar charts pre-date Gantt’s work by 100 years (at least).
- We have also shown from Gantt’s own books his focus was on factory management and batch production, he had absolutely no involvement in developing the concepts of ‘project management’.

Gantt’s contributions to the advancement of management science are of great significance, we do not need to diminish them by associating him with simple time focused bar charts, even if during the 1930s lazy American managers dropped most of the sophistication embedded in a true ‘Gantt Chart’ and started calling any time scaled chart a ‘Gantt Chart’ and then in the 1950s and 60s, even lazier scholars blindly accepted the name as being synonymous with a bar chart, without doing some basic research into the man, his charts or the true origins of bar charts.

You don’t have to accept my views on this, all three books are short, interesting to read and can be downloaded from:

http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/Resources_Papers_158.html .

About the Author



Patrick Weaver

Author



Patrick Weaver, PMP, PMI-SP, FAICD, FCIIOB, is the Managing Director of Mosaic Project Services Pty Ltd, an Australian project management consultancy specialising in project control systems and a PMI Registered Education Provider. Patrick is also the business manager of Stakeholder Management Pty Ltd. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Building, Australasia (FCIOB) and a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (FAICD). He is a member of the PMI College of Scheduling, and the PMI Melbourne Chapter (Australia), as well a full member of AIPM, APM (UK) and the College of Performance Management. Patrick has over 35 years experience in Project Management. His career was initially focused on the planning and managing of construction, engineering and infrastructure projects in the UK and Australia. The last 25 years has seen his businesses and experience expand to include the successful delivery of project scheduling services and PMOs in a range of government, ICT and business environments; with a strong focus on project management training. His consultancy work encompasses: developing and advising on project schedules, developing and presenting PM training courses, managing the development of internal project control systems for client organisations, and assisting with dispute resolution and claims management. He is a qualified Arbitrator. In the last few years, Patrick has sought to 'give back' to the industry he has participated in since leaving college through contributions to the development of the project management profession. In addition to his committee roles he has presented papers at a wide range of project management conferences in the USA, Europe, Asia and Australia, has an on-going role with the PMOZ conference in Australia and is part of the Australian delegation to ISO TC258. Patrick can be contacted at patw@mosaicprojects.com.au or at www.mosaicprojects.com.au.