

## STATION FOUR – COTTON AND AGRICULTURE IN TEXAS

### Agriculture

After the Civil War, soldiers returns to Texas farms and ranches ready to make a new home. The Civil War had cause relatively little war-damage and Texas was able to rebound with the support of cattle and cotton. New technologies like the windmill improved farming while barbed wired protected cultivate lands from wandering cattle. Arid regions in West and South Texas could sustain water-intensive crops such as cotton. Along with corn, wheat, rice, and even sugarcane, Texas railroads expanded the trade opportunities for harvest crops.

Many large plantations could no longer operate without slave labor and were replaced by smaller farms that were often rented by **tenant farmers**. Tenant farmers labor on the land in exchange for rent or shares of the harvest. **Sharecropping** where farmers who were provided land, tools, and seeds in return for a share of the value of their crop. The tenant farms and sharecropping lasted well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century since many lacked of **capital** (*money*) after the Civil War. Many during the period were confronted with drought, financial insecurity, overproduction, and pests. Many people who were formerly enslaved had little option but to work someone else's land for basic necessities.

The business of agriculture in Texas was very profitable and good for the Texas economy. By 1900, the number of farms in Texas increased from 61,000 to 350,000. The state of Texas set aside land in 1876 to build the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas (later known as Texas A&M University) near Bryan. Texas Agricultural Experiment Stations aimed to improve farming in Texas and prevent diseases that would affect crops and animals. Programs like 4-H and Future Farmers Association (FFA) were also established around this time for school-age Texans to learn more about agriculture. Today, agriculture in Texas is still an important and vital industry not only in Texas and the United States, but globally.