

STATION FIVE – RAILROADS ACROSS TEXAS

Railroads

Transportation in early Texas was not always dependable. Many rivers in Texas were shallow or had a tendency to flood during the rainy season. Roads were poor or non-existent. These factors caused most of the population of Texas to live along the coast for easy access to the Gulf of Mexico and transportation to most other cities. During Reconstruction, Texas leaders recognized the need to grow into the frontier. Between 1850 and 1876, the state government began building railroads across the state. To finance railroads, the state constitution set aside land in the form of **land grants** (*assistance to acquire land*) to be given to companies to build railroads. Cities and counties also gave railroads cash and loans to build tracks through their area. If a railroad stopped in a city or town, it meant jobs, new businesses, and growth. If it did not stop, a town might not be able to survive economically. An example would be the town of Jefferson. By 1870, Jefferson was the sixth largest city in Texas. It had a large, successful cotton trading center that used its water connection by Big Cypress Creek to transport goods into Caddo Lake and onto the Mississippi River. Jefferson's economic success at the time led its leaders to make the decision not to support a railroad line until the 1880s. This was an economically costly. The surrounding towns of Marshall and Dallas which had railroad **junctions** (*a point where roads and railroad tracks meet and a settlement is built*) would prosper whereas Jefferson did not. By the end of 1880, railroad mileage in Texas doubled to almost 2500 miles and Texas was recovering from the impact of the Civil War much quicker than other southern states.

How important were railroads to the growth of Texas? _____
