

Section

1

The Growth of Railroads

Main Ideas

1. Rail travel was faster and more reliable than other forms of transportation in Texas.
2. Railroads brought trade and businesses to many towns.
3. The expansion of railroads led to the development of the Texas frontier.

Key Terms

- transcontinental railroad
- junctions

Why It Matters Today

Railroads brought an economic boom to many towns. Use current events sources to learn about transportation in Texas today.



TEKS: 6A, 6C, 8A, 9A, 9B, 11A, 12A, 12B, 20A, 20C, 21B, 21C, 21H, 22A

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on the growth of railroad transportation in Texas.

The Story Continues

On Christmas morning in 1871, hundreds of people gathered outside of Austin. They hoped to get a glimpse of the first locomotive to enter the capital city. By mid-afternoon the crowd had moved to the downtown terminal. Officials hammered in the last spike of the railroad line as Austinites cheered. The crowd celebrated the completion of the rail line connecting Austin with Houston and Galveston.



New Railroad Lines

Many Texans eagerly awaited the arrival of rail lines, hoping they would spur economic growth. The state's economic development had been slowed by its transportation problems. Most Texas rivers were either too shallow or too unreliable for shipping goods, and dirt roads turned to mud during wet weather.

As a result, moving people and goods was time-consuming and expensive. Railroads promised cheap, fast, and reliable transportation. A 35-mile trip that took a day and a half to travel by horse took less than two hours by rail. It was also cheaper to ship goods by railroad than by wagon. In the 1870s wagon freight rates averaged \$1 for every 100 pounds shipped 100 miles, while railroad rates were less than 50 cents for the same amount over the same distance.

In 1861 there were about 470 miles of rail lines in Texas. However, the Civil War interrupted plans for new railroad construction. At the end of the decade, Texas continued to lag behind the rest of the country, which had almost 53,000 miles of track in 1870. The United States even had a **transcontinental railroad**—one that runs across a continent.

Community leaders in Texas offered to fund, or help pay for, railroad construction. Many cities issued bonds to help pay for rail construction. A bond is a certificate that represents money owed by an entity such as the government to the person who purchased the bond. San Antonio had issued the first Texas railroad bonds in 1850. Between 1850 and 1876, Texas cities and counties issued about \$2.4 million in railroad bonds.

The Constitution of 1876 banned these local bonds but allowed the legislature to pass a general land grant law. For every continuous mile of track completed, a company could receive 16 square miles of land. The railroads were required to sell the land to finance surveying and construction of their lines. Texas eventually gave more than 32 million acres of land to more than 40 railroad companies.

Reading Check Comparing and Contrasting List the advantages of railroads over other forms of transportation in Texas.



The Growth of Railroads, 1860–1902

Interpreting Maps Railroads allowed Texas farmers to ship goods to markets faster and at less cost and carried imports of construction materials and supplies to western parts of the state.

Environment and Society How do you think railroads affected the development of the Texas frontier?



VIDEO
Railroads That
Tamed The
West

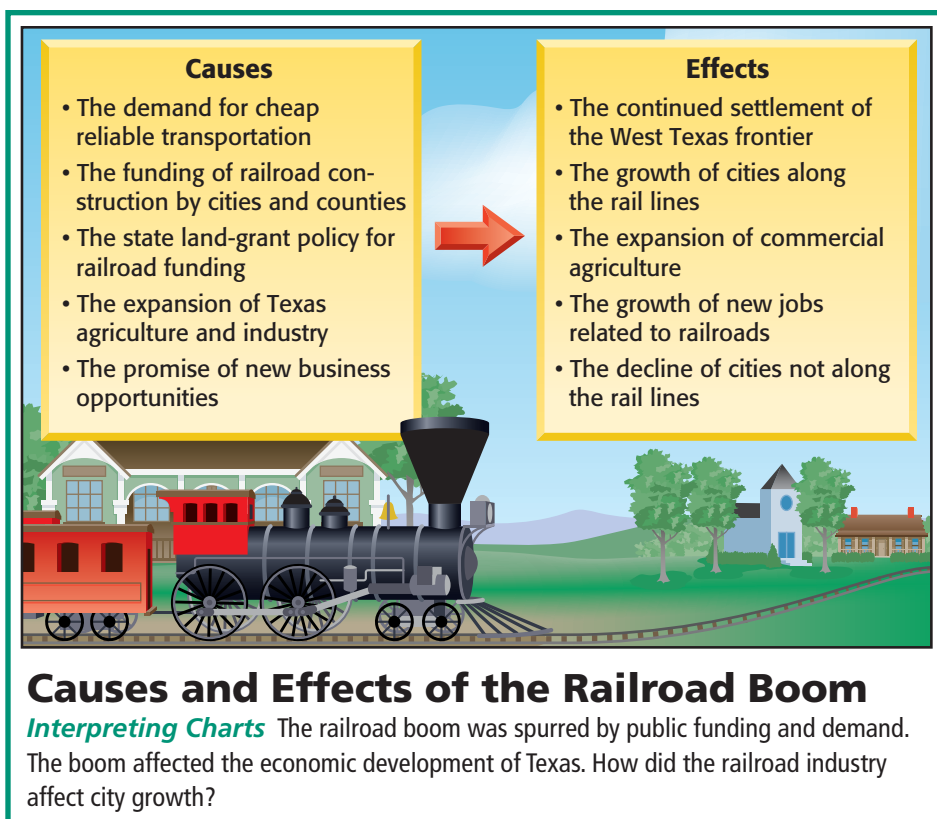
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The Railroad Boom

Land grants and other forms of government aid helped create a Texas railroad boom. In the early 1870s the Houston and Texas Central Railway (H&TC) built a line from Galveston to Dallas and Denison. At Denison, it met the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas line, which provided service north to St. Louis, Missouri. Between 1876 and 1879, railroad companies laid more than 750 miles of track in Texas.

During the boom, railroad companies began a race west. The Southern Pacific was building a rail line from California to Texas. Other railroad companies competed to meet the Southern Pacific first. The company with the most miles of track would profit by receiving the largest government land grants and the biggest share of business. The Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railway Company (GH&SA) had already built a line from Galveston to San Antonio. The line eventually earned the nickname the Sunset Route. In 1881 GH&SA work crews started building a line west from San Antonio toward El Paso. However, the Texas and Pacific Railway (T&P) had a jump on the GH&SA. Jay Gould, a national-railroad owner, had bought the T&P and begun construction on a westward route. In December 1881 the T&P met the Southern Pacific line in Sierra Blanca, some 90 miles east of El Paso. Gould was disappointed that his line did not reach El Paso, but he had helped complete the first transcontinental route through Texas.



Texas railroad companies also encouraged trade between Texas and Mexico by running lines to the Mexican border. In the early 1880s the International and Great Northern Railway extended its line from San Antonio to Laredo. The Panhandle was one of the last regions to receive rail service. The Fort Worth and Denver City Railway (FW&DC) began construction north of Fort Worth in 1881. New towns such as Amarillo emerged along the railroad stops in the Panhandle. Many of these towns boomed with the business that the railroads brought. Between 1879 and 1889, railroad crews laid 6,000 miles of track in Texas.

Reading Check Drawing Inferences and Conclusions Why did railroads compete to build lines in Texas, and how did they help expand settlement on the Texas frontier?

The Effects of the Rail Boom

The arrival of railroads greatly affected Texas. New cities were born, new areas were settled, and Texas became more connected to the rest of the country. Farm goods raised in Texas could be shipped out of state more easily, and goods produced elsewhere could be purchased in Texas. Towns such as Abilene, Big Spring, Eastland, and Sweetwater were established or grew with the arrival of the Texas and Pacific Railway (T&P). Cities grew rapidly at **junctions**, or the meeting places of two or more lines. These cities included Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, Galveston, Waco, El Paso, and Austin. Railroad-car repair shops and many other railway-related businesses appeared in these towns. Farmers and ranchers brought their crops and cattle to ship from cities along the railroad.

The economic boom in railroad towns attracted new residents. For example, Fort Worth grew up around a busy railroad junction. One local newspaper reported on the city's population boom.

TEXAS VOICES

"Work on the T&P . . . has already produced a good effect on the businesses of our town. It has infused [brought in] a new life and vigor [energy] into our people which reacts on those coming here with good results. Vacant houses are filling up; hotels are crowded."

—Fort Worth Democrat, quoted in *How Fort Worth Became the Texasmost City*,
by Leonard Sanders

Towns that were bypassed by new rail lines often experienced drops in population and economic activity. For example, Jefferson was the sixth-largest Texas city in 1870. Tons of cotton and other farm products were shipped from Jefferson to New Orleans by water. But in 1873 the T&P built a rail line from Texarkana to Marshall, bypassing Jefferson. Jefferson declined in importance as goods were increasingly sent by rail.

Reading Check Identifying Cause and Effect How did railroads encourage business in some Texas cities, and what effects did this have on city populations?

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Immigrant Labor

Many Chinese immigrated to the United States and found work building railroads. The first group of Chinese to arrive in Texas, some 250 people, came in 1870. More Chinese immigrated after a three-year drought struck China in 1876. In 1881 approximately 2,600 Chinese workers arrived to build the Southern Pacific line east from El Paso.

U.S. railroad companies, including the Southern Pacific, also encouraged Mexican immigration to help fill their labor needs, and the majority of railroad workers in Texas were Mexican immigrants.

Why did some Chinese and Mexican immigrants come to Texas in the late 1800s?

Analyzing Primary Sources

Drawing Inferences and Conclusions According to this newspaper, what effects were railroads having on Fort Worth?

ECONOMICS AND MATH

The Railroad Boom

The growth of railroads allowed farmers to get goods to markets faster and at lower cost. The agricultural economy of Texas grew as more railroads were constructed. While there are fewer miles of track today, railroads remain an important method of transportation. Shipping by rail is cheaper and less harmful to the environment than other methods, such as shipping by truck.

YEAR	MILES	YEAR	MILES
1860	— 470	1940	— 17,057
1870	— 583	1950	— 16,296
1880	— 2,440	1960	— 15,445
1890	— 8,710	1970	— 14,683
1900	— 9,971	1980	— 13,075
1910	— 14,339	1990	— 11,541
1920	— 16,383	2000	— 10,749
1930	— 17,569	2011	— 10,425

Interpreting Data

1. Use the information in the table to create a line graph of the miles of tracks in Texas from 1890 to 1990.
2. How many more miles of rail lines were operating in 1900 than in 1870?

**Farmers Move West**

Railroads played a major role in opening the Texas frontier to farming. As railroad companies built tracks through West Texas, settlers followed these lines and purchased land near railroad stops. Railroad companies encouraged this settlement, hoping to make money by selling parcels of land grants to farmers. The farmers would then raise crops or livestock and ship their goods over the companies' rail lines.

Railroad companies advertised the region's rich farmland, sending brochures out to all parts of the country. To ease farmers' concerns about the West Texas climate, some companies created demonstration farms with a wide variety of crops. The companies then brought potential land buyers to see what crops could be grown in the region. Partly as a result of such efforts, people began flocking to the frontier to find inexpensive land. The population of West Texas boomed. For example, the population of Jack County jumped from 694 in 1870 to more than 6,600 in 1880. Even a New Orleans newspaper commented on this trend. "Farmers are pouring into western Texas so fast that ranchmen have just time enough to move their cattle out and prevent their tails being chopped off by the advancing hoe." The number of farms in Texas rose from some 61,000 in 1870 to 350,000 in 1900.

Reading Check Evaluating How did railroads contribute to the settlement and development of West Texas?

**Section 1 Review**

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ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

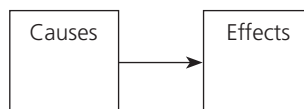
- transcontinental railroad
- junctions

2. Locate on a Texas map:

- Fort Worth
- El Paso
- Amarillo

3. Identifying Cause and Effect

Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to trace the development of the railroad boom and its effects on Texas.

**4. Finding the Main Idea**

- a. Compare the types and uses of new transportation technology in Texas in the late 1800s.
- b. How did the railroad have both positive and negative effects on urban growth?

5. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Drawing Inferences and Conclusions Write a short memo describing how railroads affected the development of the Texas frontier.

Consider the following:

- the rail lines into the frontier
- the rail lines that connected Texas with U.S. and Mexican railroads