Railroads In Chicago Essay, Research Paper

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Explore

Mid-Term

# 4 There is one reason Chicago is as big as it is today and that is the fact that it is the largest rail city in the world. The railroad made Chicago what it is today, and although the canal was very important in the history of Chicago the railroads importance out weighs it by far. The canal was important because it was the vision of the first settlers of Chicago to have an all water trade route that would go through Chicago. What those first explorers saw was a way to make a canal so that they could transport goods from the St Lawrence River all the way to the Gulf of Mexico with less cost and with more efficiency. The canal was the reason Chicago was settled in the first place if not for it there might very well not be a city called Chicago. You could argue that the canal was the most important thing in Chicago’s history but I think the railroads were much more important. The railroads enabled Chicago to become one of the biggest cities in the world by bringing in different business and all types of goods. Chicago is a very key location to have a railroad-shipping hub. This is because it is centrally located in the United States so goods can be shipped in almost any direction and received in a shorter amount of time. William Butler Ogden was the one who pushed for Chicago to adopt a large rail system and he should be known as the one who made this city boom. St. Louis or another centrally located city could have very well adopted the rail system and they would have reaped all the benefits.

Many businesses developed from Chicago’s growing domination over the rail industry. One of those businesses was the grain business. The invention of the grain harvester and grain elevators allowed farmers west of Chicago who grew grain, to bring there grain to Chicago, store it, and keep it fresh before it was shipped on the rails. Chicago was doing so much business in grain that they established the Chicago Board of Trade. At the Board of Trade grain would be graded and large amounts would be sold for varying prices depending on their grade, but would be delivered at a later time. Another business that was booming at that time was the lumber business. Lumber would be cut down in northern Wisconsin and other areas and would be shipped to Chicago. They would ship the lumber on the rails to Chicago were it would be stored. Pork was also a huge business in Chicago at the time. Meat packers would use the assembly line technique of preparing meat and would increase production up to 13,000 daily by 1894. With the invention of the refrigerated rail car Chicago meat packers could ship meat to all parts of the country without it going bad. The meat packing business became so big in

Chicago it became the cities number one tourist attraction. The last business that became very large during the time the railroads were being established was the mail order catalog business. Montgomery Wards, Sears and Roebuck, and Marshall Field were responsible for the boom in mail order catalogs. These catalogs would carry anything you needed from kitchen knives to stoves and the out of city farming communities loved the lower prices and greater variety these catalogs offered. Chicago was a perfect place for these catalog businesses to start because they were able to ship their products to their customers in a wide variety of areas thanks to the railroads. All these businesses were important to the development of Chicago because it helped them establish Chicago business as a player in the business world. All of those companies helped bring a great deal of prosperity to the city and it was all possible because of the decision to make Chicago the greatest rail city in the world.