

Teacher Resource A: Background information for Teachers

Mediana City History- The narrative...

The Southern Pacific railroad started building a railroad between San Francisco and Los Angeles in the 1870s after the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. At that time San Francisco was the largest city in California and Los Angeles was called "a little sleepy Spanish town". San Francisco had a port for trade so it had many manufactured products to sell and Los Angeles had meat and other cattle products that it could trade to people in San Francisco. The train would pass through the Central Valley which had agricultural products to sell.

It was difficult and dangerous to build a railroad with all of the mountains. Tunnels were built through the mountains. The railroad brought in laborers from China to help with this difficult and dangerous work. Some of these laborers had already worked on the transcontinental railroad.

Trains were powered by steam engines. They needed coal and water. No train could carry enough coal for the trip north to San Francisco or South to Los Angeles without refueling. About half way between San Francisco and Los Angeles, there was a perfect place to build a coaling station. A coaling station was built in present day Mediana City. It was the ideal location as it was near two rivers and close to coalmines in the mountains near the Central Valley.

Many people moved to Mediana City to work in the coalmines and to work at the Coaling Station. Chinese laborers camped there temporarily while building the railroad. Some of the Chinese laborers decided to stay in Mediana City and they started their own businesses and became merchants. The city began to grow and grow.

At the end of the 1800's, trains began using oil for fuel instead of coal. The coalmines and the coaling station were no longer needed so they closed down. Some people left Mediana City to look for new jobs. Other people stayed in Mediana City and decided to work on farms near the city. Agriculture became very important to Mediana City. The train still stopped to get water but now it also picked up the agricultural products to sell in Los Angeles and San Francisco. People continued to move to Mediana City.

Mediana City is a unique place. Most mining towns in California became deserted and people moved away when the mines closed because there were no jobs. The towns became ghost towns. However, Mediana City continued to have jobs available for its citizens and so it continued to grow and thrive.