

HISTORY OF PLANO

The community of Plano originated in the early 1840's in the Republic of Texas. Most of the early pioneers migrated from Kentucky and Tennessee as small groups of settlers found their way to Collin County's blackland prairie. Initial efforts to settle the area began in 1841, but progress was halted by Indian attacks until 1844. The settlements were widely scattered in 1844 and only a few were made in 1845. In 1846, William Foreman bought Peter's Colony land from Sanford Beck and settled a half-mile northeast of Plano. Plano's birth was due in part to the enterprises of the Foreman family. Mr. Foreman erected a sawmill and gristmill that would be in demand by his neighbors. Later a store and gin were added and these facilities attracted other settlers to the area.

Joseph, Daniel and Samuel Klepper took up their head-rights in 1847 at the present site of the city of Plano. Many more people came to help form a community. Silas Harrington, his brother William and Dr. Henry Dye came to settle in 1848. Mr. Dye was the first medical doctor in the settlement. Mail service was established around 1850 and William Foreman's home became the unofficial post office. The scattered settlements had now become a closer community and Dr. Dye felt the need for a proper name and he dispatched to Washington D.C., an application requesting the name of Fillmore, in honor of the President of the United States. The name Fillmore was rejected and the name Foreman was suggested but declined by William Foreman. Dr. Dye, determined to have a community with a recognized name suggested Plano. He understood the word Plano to mean "plain" (to describe the surrounding terrain) in Spanish. Postal authorities approved the name and Plano became the name of the community. William Foreman served as the first postmaster.

Although raising livestock was the principal business in the county, more and more of the populace began farming the rich, black land. Churches and schools were built and local business began to prosper. In the closing years of the 1850s growth was steady, but this halted with the arrival of the Civil War. From 1861-1864, the growth of Plano was at a standstill. As the South would surrender in defeat, the men began to return to Plano to pick up their run-down farms and persist again to open more business and trade to attract new people to the area. New people came from the mechanized North as well as the South to escape their gutted communities and farms to start a new life.

With the completion of the Houston and Texas Railroad in 1872, the city was on its way to new growth. By 1874 the population numbered over 500. Plano was the first depot by rail entering Collin County by the south. The city was incorporated in June, 1873, and the town's first official mayor was C.J.E. Kellner. Fires in the business district destroyed the original buildings that were constructed with the coming of the railroad; the oldest structure in the district was the only building to survive the fire of 1881 in which 51 places of business were destroyed--the entire business district. Plano's determined businessmen would not be beaten, however, and after a short time of "business as usual," the reconstruction period began. Old burned and wooden structures were replaced with modern brick buildings and a new look of prosperity took place. Buildings and business flourished in the 1880's. Almost anything would be bought or traded in Plano.

Throughout much of this century Plano relied on surrounding farms and ranches for its livelihood. By the 1960s, the growth of both Dallas to the south and the success of several large high-technology firms began to make their influence felt on the local economy and city planners began making preparations for the growth they believed was inevitable. When the U.S. population began its historic shift in the 1970s, Plano welcomed newcomers with open arms and this resulted in Plano being one of the fastest-growing cities in Texas and the U.S.

Impressed by the meticulous planning and development of the city and the positive attitude of the local business community, many professionals and executives began moving to the city.

Today Plano looks and is much changed from the city of just a generation ago, but the growth of the city and the nature of its spirit can be traced back to those first settlers who came to the area 150 years ago.