

Rockwall History

Early pioneer T.U. Wade discovered the rock wall when digging a well in the mid-1800s, about the time the town was founded. Wade suggested naming the town Rockwall after the curious geological formation. The name was accepted and the town of Rockwall was platted on April 17, 1854.

When it was platted, Rockwall was part of Kaufman County. Rockwall was located in the panhandle of Kaufman County, and conducting business meant traveling the long road from Rockwall to Kaufman. In an effort to strengthen and expand business in Rockwall, the town seceded from Kaufman County, forming its own county.

Rockwall's earliest settlers arrived in the early 1840's, when Texas was still a republic. These early pioneers arrived either on horse, mule-drawn wagons or foot by way of the National Road of the Republic. Rockwall was located where the road crossed the East Fork of the Trinity River. Occasionally, the Trinity River's waters would swell, making the road impassable. Some travelers simply stopped here to begin their new life.

The first few decades of Rockwall's recorded history were slow. Without a means to export agricultural crops, raising cattle became the town's principal industry. During these years, Rockwall remained a small village with only a few businesses in the downtown area and large farms beyond the central square. It was not until the arrival of the Missouri, Kansas & Texas rail line that the population grew and the town began to prosper. Census records show the town's population doubled in size from 1880 to 1890. The train made exporting and importing convenient for business, and cotton production began to overtake the cattle raising industry.

By 1890, Rockwall's growth was highlighted in many local newspapers. By the turn of the century however, it was clear that Rockwall could not compete with nearby Dallas and Rockwall remained a small agricultural town. During the Great Depression, Rockwall suffered along with the rest of the county, seeing farm values drop 60%.

Rockwall's economy shifted again in 1940 in part due to declining population. Many residents departed to serve in World War II, while many others moved to larger cities for employment. Rockwall's economy began to turn around in the early 1950s when the Southwest's first aluminum plant opened a factory in Rockwall. A neighborhood of 70 new houses was announced to provide new quarters for the employees. In 1953 Rockwall adopted the slogan "The Aluminum Capital of the Industrial Southwest." Despite the enthusiasm surrounding Rockwall's introduction to small manufacturing, the city did not see dramatic changes in its economy until the 1960s.

One impetus for the improved economy was the completion of Interstate 30 in the late 1950s. This provided way access to Dallas as well as a more efficient means for exporting and importing goods. However, nothing helped Rockwall's prosperity more than the construction of Lake Ray Hubbard. Created in 1969, Lake Ray Hubbard brought a new focus to Rockwall. Soon large developments went up around the lake and the recreational and tourism industry created a strong economy.

In recent years, Rockwall has been one of the fastest growing communities in the state. Housing tracts are being developed in outer areas of the city and the Interstate 30 corridor is now built-up with brand name retail and restaurants. Today, Rockwall is considered one of the most progressive cities in the Dallas Metroplex.