

Railroads: Part 1 - Introduction ^[1]

Railroads

by Douglas A. Wait and John R. deTreville, 2006

See also: [Atlantic Coast Line Railroad](#) ^[2]; [Carolina Central Railway](#) ^[3]; [CSX Corporation](#) ^[4]; [Norfolk Southern Railroad](#) ^[5]; [North Carolina Railroad](#) ^[6]; [Seaboard Air Line Railway](#) ^[7]; [Southern Railway System](#) ^[8]; [Western North Carolina Railroad](#) ^[9]; [Wilmington & Weldon Railroad](#) ^[10]; [Transportation: Air and Rail \(from NC Atlas Revisited\)](#) ^[11]; [History of Transportation for K-8 Students](#) ^[12]

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The development of railroad lines in North Carolina was initially energized in 1835 by state constitutional changes that gave greater representation to the population in the west and by the rise of the [Whig Party](#) ^[17], which advocated government support for public improvements and economic development. In the beginning, passenger traffic provided significant revenue to the railroads, but by the 1850s freight shipments became the most important source of income. The railroad industry was a central component of the Confederacy's transportation system during the Civil War, and in the postwar decades it became a cornerstone of the state's economic recovery. World wars, the Great Depression, and increased competition from the trucking and airline industries in the twentieth century led to countless changes in railroad names, routes, and affiliations. By the 2000s railroads, though diminished in number and significance compared to earlier decades, were still an important part of North Carolina's transportation industry as well as a compelling link to the state's cultural and economic heritage.

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[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[23]

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