

All Aboard: Florida's Railroads

TRANSPORTATION LESSON 2

The introduction of railroads to Florida made it easier to bring goods and people to the state. The first railroads that came to our state did not travel much farther south than St. Augustine. After the Civil War, Florida did not have the finances available to expand railroads beyond that.

Several businessmen from the North saw great potential in investing in the state. In 1881, Hamilton Disston purchased 4 million acres of swampland in the middle of Florida for just 25 cents an acre. This single purchase helped bring the state out of debt and continue railroad expansion. Soon after, entrepreneur Henry Plant began building and expanding Florida's railroads. Thanks to Plant, the Tampa Bay area became connected to the nation's railroad system. This helped establish a booming economy and trade industry in the area. Because Florida's railways were linked to Georgia, it became easier and faster for farmers to ship crops, such as citrus and celery, to northern markets.



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Oil tycoon Henry Flagler realized that in addition to trading goods, railroads could also help turn Florida into a tourist capital. After visiting St. Augustine with his family in 1882, he knew the city could attract many out-of-state visitors if they had better access to transportation and hotels.

His first construction project in Florida was the Ponce de León Hotel in St. Augustine. The hotel was a massive success and can still be seen as part of Flagler College today. To ensure that visitors could easily get to the hotel, Flagler began purchasing local railroads and operating them under his own railroad system.



History AT HOME

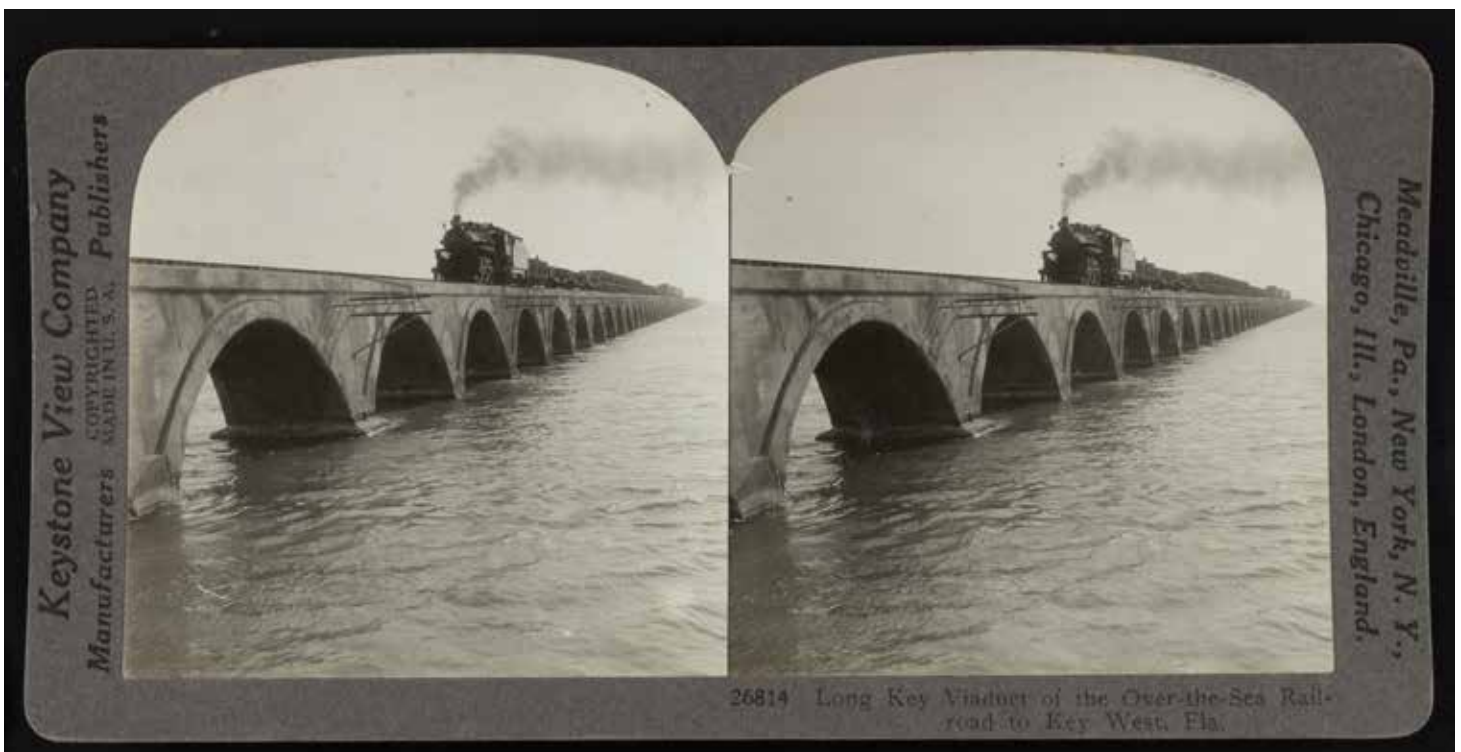
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While Plant expanded access to the west coast of Florida, Flagler focused on developing the state's east coast. Flagler extended his railroad south as he purchased or built hotels in Daytona and Palm Beach. Ultimately, he extended the railroad all the way to Miami after the freezes of 1894 and 1895 and is even known as the father of Miami because of the developments his railroad would bring to the area. An extension of Flagler's railroad, the Florida East Coast Railway, eventually reached all the way to Key West, one Florida's most populated cities at the time.

The contributions of both these Henrys – Plant and Flagler – left a lasting impact on the state, helping to repair the economy and permanently transform the landscape. Florida's railroads were the next step toward making the state the tourist destination it is today.



All Aboard: Florida's Railroads ACTIVITY

Long before social media allowed us to share our vacation photos instantly, tourists would send postcards from their visit to friends and family at home. Create a foil-Railart postcard to help your friends and family around the country get excited about the new Florida railroads!

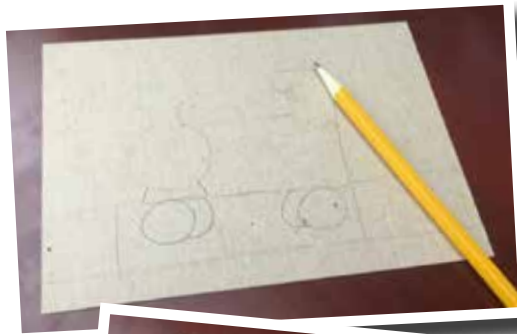
WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Cardboard or cardstock
- Aluminum foil
- Pipe cleaners*
- Foam or cardboard shapes
- Pencil
- Glue
- Tape
- Scissors
- Sharpies

**Don't have pipe cleaners? Try using straws, shoelaces, or even rolling clay to a string shape!*

All Aboard: Florida's Railroads

ACTIVITY



WHAT TO DO:

1. Draw a design on cardboard using pencil. Outline the design using pipe cleaners and foam shapes.
2. put dabs of glue down first and then pipe cleaners and foam shapes on top.
3. Lay the cardboard design upside down on top of the foil sheet. Cover the cardboard tightly and tape the foil on the back side of the cardboard design.
4. Gently rub a finger across the front of the cardboard sheet to create an indented outline of your design underneath. You should be able to see the pipe cleaner and foam shapes outlined under the foil.
5. Carefully color in the shapes using sharpies. Press very lightly or the foil will rip.
6. Color in the background to finish the postcard.

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This lesson helps reinforce these Florida State Standards for K-5th grade:

- SS.2.C.2.4 Identify ways citizens can make a positive contribution in their community.
- SS.3.C.2.1 Identify group and individual actions of citizens that demonstrate civility, cooperation, volunteerism, and other civic virtues.
- SS.4.A.4.1 Explain the effects of technological advances on Florida.
- SS.4.A.5.2 Summarize challenges Floridians faced during Reconstruction.
- SS.4.A.6.1 Describe the economic development of Florida's major industries.
- SS.4.A.6.3 Describe the contributions of significant individuals to Florida.
- SS.4.A.8.4 Explain how tourism affects Florida's economy and growth.
- SS.4.E.1.1 Identify entrepreneurs from various social and ethnic backgrounds who have influenced Florida and the local economy.
- SS.5.A.6.3 Examine the 19th-century advancements (canals, roads, steamboats, flat boats, overland wagons, Pony express, railroads) in transportation and communication.

