

Title: Climate, Geography, and Natural Resources: Their Impact on the History of Collin County

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Any historian can tell you the one thing that could make or break a civilization. It isn't its rulers or the type of government it uses. Only Mother Nature can lift a civilization up into the heavens and spread its name to every corner of the globe, and she could also decimate all its progress with one sweep of her fingers. Take the Byzantines, for example. If it weren't for their fortunate placement along the Indus Valley, their entire culture would have never survived the cruel whip of time. On the other hand, the Mayans, a powerful empire in their own right, was destroyed by a slight change in climate, and their own inability to adapt to that climate. Climate, geography, and natural resources play an important part in a nation's history, and Collin County is no different.

From its prehistoric days to our present times, Collin County has been blessed with favourable circumstances in order to start a civilization. The many rivers running in and around the county makes for fertile soil, manifesting itself in plentiful herds of cattle and an abundance of cash crops. The presence of Blackland Prairie is also a sizable boon, for it offers many natural resources and geographical features. Collin County's proximity to the Coastal Plains region, and in turn the Gulf of Mexico, presents us with a mild climate and access to booming international trade.

Before Collin County was settled by Europeans and boundaries were clearly defined, Native Americans had been attracted to this land for thousands of years. The earliest settlers, the Clovis, date back to 11,600 years ago, and the natural resources of the Blackland Prairie at that time can be seen through their use of lignite to light fires. After the extinction of the Clovis people, many other groups migrated to the Blackland Prairie and what we now know as Collin County, as the climate changed drastically following their demise. By 2,000 B.C, Proto-Caddoan groups had begun to migrate towards the Blackland Prairie, lured by the promise of a land rich in minerals and game. Around 700 A.D., the Caddo, one of the few tribes composed mainly of farmers, would begin to move into Collin County, as it was an agricultural gold mine, with rich fertile soil. However, they were forced out of Texas by 1839, and this event would mark the beginning of the settlement of Collin County by Texans.

After Collin County was established on April 3rd, 1845, it lived up to its promise, serving as a home front for two important fields in later years. As settlers arrived in this new land, they found that the soil was able to easily support the growing of wheat, hay, sorghums, and corn. The growing season was 228 days long, which meant agriculture soon became a huge moneymaker in Collin County. It was also home to large herds of wild cattle descended from buffalo that the Spanish bred while passing through the area, with enough pasture to feed these animals as well.

From 1866-1892, Collin County, particularly the Blackland Prairie, would become both the birthplace and the focal point of the cattle industry. This is due to the fact that the rich soil found in the Blackland Prairie made for prime open-grazing land. Secondly, a famous trail, commonly known as the Shawnee Trail, ran straight through Collin County. As a result, any cattle that travelled northwards had to pass through the county, and residents of Collin County benefited greatly from the convenient geography.

In 1870, the newspapers in Collin County reported an astonishing event. There was a stream of immigrant trains from across the country flowing into the northern Blackland Prairie,

looking to settle the fertile lands of Collin County. By June 18th of that year, there were 12,930 mules and horses, 22,799 cattle, and 5,535 sheep in Collin County. Later on, Collin County's successes were featured in newspapers. For their February 2nd, 1878 issue, the McKinney Weekly Enquirer highlighted Collin County's exceptional crops, saying that they were the banner county for high-class farming. On April 14th, 1877, Victoria Advocate lauded the particular short-horned breed curated by Collin County ranchers, noting that they were more marketable and less trouble than their longhorn cousins. In 1867, construction on the Houston and Galveston railroad began, bringing economic prosperity to Collin County for 50 years. Due to this railroad, there was a major agricultural boom in the area from 1890-1930s. Corn production increased from 64,903 acres in 1890 to 145,656 acres in 1910. By 1900, Collin County was ranked 14th in the United States for agricultural production, and the value of farms went from \$3 million to \$84 million by 1920.

As we turn in our hoes for computers, the attractive climate is still a draw for many immigrants, particularly those from the Northeastern United States. As more companies move here due to an abundance of land, we will definitely see an increase in job opportunities, which will inspire a new wave of immigrants from around the country to come settle in Collin County.

As you can see, the climate, geography, and natural resources of a region can greatly impact their history, and Collin County's rise to fame may not have been possible without these factors. From the first inhabitants of Collin County to the present-day residents, they have all been drawn by the abundance of resources, the warm weather, and the favourable geography. Without these factors, Collin County would not be what it is today, and what it will continue to be, generation after generation.

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