

Joseph's Railroad Dreams

Elementary: Grades 3–4

Background Information

Chicago and the Railroads

Chicago is the most important railroad center in North America. Railroad tracks go in more different directions from Chicago than out of any other city. These tracks were first built in the 1800s, connecting Chicago to other cities like Detroit, St. Louis, and New Orleans. Trains provided a faster way of moving goods and people long distances across the United States than water travel did.

Freight trains were especially important for transporting wheat, corn, and animals such as cows and pigs. Chicago became the center for these products and shipped them all over the country. People traveled long distances by passenger train. Even today, many people who live outside of Chicago take trains to the city every day to go to work.

Source: *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*
www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org

The Pullman Company

George Pullman started Pullman's Palace Car Company in 1867. He hired many workers to build the sleeping and dining cars that passengers used when they traveled by train. Workers for the company lived near the factory in a small town on the South Side of Chicago called Pullman.

The Pullman Company employed many African American men to work on the trains as porters to make passengers comfortable during their journey. Work as a porter was hard, with long hours and many days away from home. But it paid better than many other jobs, and porters were able to see places all over the country. Eventually porters formed a group called the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to fight for better working conditions.

Source: *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*
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