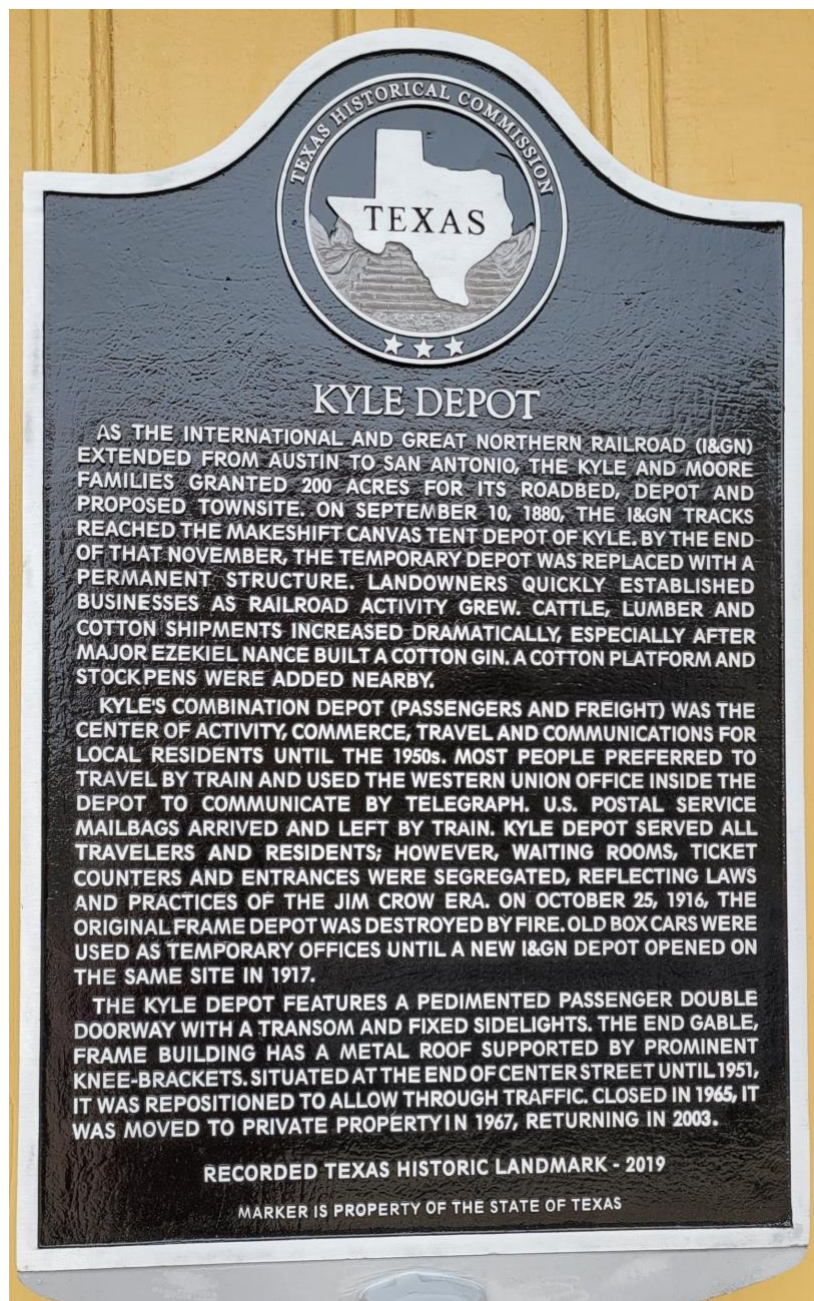


Kyle Railroad Depot and Heritage Center

The town of Kyle emerged in the 1880s when the International and Great Northern Railroad (I&GN) established a township and a depot. The I&GN began laying tracks for routes in Texas in the 1870s. A crucial part of the route was Central Texas between two main cities, Austin and San Antonio. Steam engines required periodic refills of water to run so I&GN needed to establish water stops or depots every 10-15 miles. Texas landowners like Fergus Kyle understood the advantages of partnering with railroad companies to get their cattle and crops quickly to markets and for local land development. The first permanent Depot was built by December 1880 and the new town of Kyle grew with the building first of a saloon, hotel and meat market to meet the needs of new residents, laborers, and travelers. In 1916 the first Kyle Depot building caught fire and the station's clerk, porter, and all-round helper Robert Parks, who lived at the Depot, courageously risked his life to save a majority of the shipments and an important delivery receipt book by throwing them out a window while the flames roared around him. Mr. Parks moved up in rank to become station master and spent 27 of his 48 years with the railroad at the Kyle Depot.

A new Depot was built in 1917 which was then located at the end of Center Street. It was moved slightly north to its current location in 1951 to allow access from downtown Kyle to Highway 81. The Depot increasingly became an important hub for shipment of cotton and cattle to and from surrounding areas. The Depot also grew into a center of activity for local residents who received telegraphs at its Western Union office, retrieved big and small shipments, and of course, travel from, or greeted their out-of-town guests arriving at the Depot. During both World Wars, the Depot was particularly busy as soldiers left or returned from overseas. By the 1960s, however, passenger cars, trucks, and interstate highways became the preferred mode for traveling and transporting goods and the Depot's business drastically declined. In 1965 the Depot closed after serving the town for nearly a century. Thanks to local prominent business owner, Charles "Chuck" Nash Sr., Kyle city leaders, the Burdine Johnson Foundation, Hays County Historical Commission, and many volunteers, the historic Kyle building was preserved. The Depot is now operated as the Kyle Railroad Depot and Heritage Center for visitors to tour and stands as reminder and a symbol of the founding of the City of Kyle.



In celebration of a new historical marker at the railroad depot in Kyle, the Hays County Historical Commission (HCHC) hosted a dedication ceremony on Saturday, October 8th. The ceremony, which coincided with the city of Kyle's 142nd birthday, took place at the Kyle Railroad Depot and Heritage Center at 100 N. Front Street in Kyle across from City Hall.

HCHC member Patrick "Hoot" Gibson, chair of the Kyle Railroad Depot and Heritage Center Committee, said the city sponsored the Texas Historical Commission marker which designates Kyle Depot as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark. "The city's birthday event theme was 'Kyle on Track', which recognized the city wouldn't exist without the railroad," Gibson said. "We felt it was appropriate to hold the dedication ceremony on the same day as the city's birthday celebration, since the two are uniquely intertwined."





