

# Cross-Timbers Region History

Imagine you were traveling in wagons and on horseback to settle in the Texas territory, when you came across a wooded expanse in the middle of the Great Plains. This landmark came to be called the Cross-Timbers, and was used by many as a landmark to judge the distance they had traveled while crossing the expanses of the United States. The train you are riding on today runs through the heart of a wooded region known as the Cross- Timbers.

The expanse of wooded fields runs from Kansas to central Texas, and serves as a dividing line between the more heavily wooded eastern United States and the virtually treeless Great Plains. Today this wooded region is the site of numerous developments around the Dallas Fort Worth area because it is the only area in north Texas that has a dense tree mass, and shade is a precious commodity throughout the long summers.

For centuries the woods of the Cross-Timbers region has been a natural boundary for inhabitants and explorers in this region. The region served as a dividing line for Early Native Americans. While the Comanche and Pawnee preferred to live on the open plains and only ventured into the dense woodland to hunt for game, the Caddo and Tonkawa settled along the forest edge. Eventually the Tonkawa totally retreated into the safety of the woods. As Anglo settlements grew, the Cross-Timbers hid Comanche raiders. The Wichitas and other groups of Native Americans also used this region as a north-south passage, because they were hidden from enemies by the dense woods.

The value for the early peoples of the Cross-Timbers region goes beyond boundaries and reference points. The timber was used for fuel, shelter, and most importantly, as a source of water. The roots of the trees that grow in this region prevent water run-off, allowing water to seep into the ground into the artesian wells used at that time.

While on the train outside of Fort Worth see if you can tell when the train passes through this valued wooded region.

## Source(s):

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