The Railroads Build a Town: Early Days

The railroad ultimately drove settlement in northern Arizona Territory. Soon after the Civil War, President Andrew Johnson charted the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad to build a transcontinental line along the 35th parallel. In December 1880, A&P track gangs laid out a new townsite just west of Sunset Crossing and south of Brigham City. The location provided access to the ample water supply from nearby Clear Creek. The first rail line arrived in the new town, named in honor of railroad executive Edward F. Winslow, in December 1881.

Winslow’s First Workers and Residents

The A&P recruited Navajos, Mexican nationals, European immigrants, and US citizens to move to Winslow and help build the new line. The railroad designated Winslow as a major division point. Clear Creek supplied water for the division’s permanent staff, steam engines, and rail yards.

Winslow’s Early Businesses

As Winslow boomed, it attracted businesses typical of a Western town in the late 19th century. Winslow’s main artery was Railroad Avenue, which ran alongside the tracks. It boasted mercantile stores, restaurants, hotels, and saloons. The town’s early population was an ethnically diverse mix of roadbuilders, entrepreneurs, and cowboys. Winslow was an exciting place to be as the Old West entered the 20th century.