



IN HISTORY: IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HERITAGE

Time Line

Indiana Immigration and Nineteenth-Century Transportation

For those immigrants who chose to settle in Indiana, traveling westward was a lengthy journey by horse and cart on fairly rough roads. Many new immigrants first settled in the eastern states or in Ohio or Kentucky before coming to Indiana. Indiana's population doubled and then redoubled between 1820 and 1840, creating a demand for improved transportation routes throughout the state. By the mid-1800s, the extension of the National Road (the main thoroughfare westward from Cumberland, Maryland, to Illinois) and the construction of canals and railroads strengthened Indiana's link with the eastern United States. In turn, this increased immigration and industrial growth by providing easier access for manufacturing goods and more jobs for new settlers.

In 1822 Indiana and Illinois joined together in a plan to connect the Maumee and Wabash rivers. By 1835 the canal, which was constructed predominantly by immigrant Irish workers, linked Fort Wayne with Huntington, Indiana. When completed in 1853, the canal was more than four hundred miles long. By 1875 the Wabash and Erie Canal became obsolete due to lack of funds, malarial mosquitoes, dysentery, cholera, and other difficult working conditions.

On October 1, 1847, the last rail was laid on the Madison and Indianapolis rail line that linked

Indiana's capital with the Ohio River eighty-six miles away. By the early 1850s an explosion of new railroads spread out from Indianapolis. Although work had yet to be completed in this state, the "Report of the Superintendent of the Census" for December 1, 1852, proudly described the new system of railroad and transportation routes built to move people, agricultural produce, and other resources across the country:

In no other particular can the prosperity of a country be more strikingly manifested than by the perfection of its roads and other means of internal communication. The system of railroads, canals, turnpikes, post routes, river navigation, and telegraphs, possessed by the United States, presents an indication of its advancement in power and civilization more wonderful than any other feature of its progress. In truth, our country in this respect occupies the first place among the nations of the world.

Along the less-populated routes, travel was more challenging. Here is an account of early settlers written in 1850 by Daniel and Magdalena M'Cain, who arrived in Carroll County, Indiana, from Ohio in the early 1820s:

I have not many particular incidents to relate during our journey, except the road,

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if such it could be called, was very muddy and difficult to pass in many places, on account of the trees and gulleys. When we arrived . . . the men began the work of erecting a cabin. In just three days they had our cabin so that it was barely possible to live in it, the roof being on, a door cut out, and one side and end Cold weather set in so severe that we were forced to live in our house all Winter, just as we first went into it.

Our family was small when we first came here, having but one child. Our children now number eleven. We came here in high hopes, and our hopes have been in a great measure realized. What an astonishing improvements in the roads and travel! For years after we came here, if a man on horseback could ride from here to Lebanon, Ohio, in five or six days, it was considered a very speedy trip! Not so with the fierce and warlike iron horse; he goes thundering along at most fearful speed and carries you over the same distance in one day. What a contrast!

From *Early Settlement of Carroll County, Indiana* (np: 1875), 51–53.