

## TRAVEL IN INDIANA LONG AGO – PART II

### RIVER BOATS

Pioneer families, with their household furniture and sometimes with a few cows, hogs, and chickens, floated down the Ohio River on flatboats to find new homes in Indiana. Early settlers sent their farm crops to market on flatboats. Sometimes the boats went as far as New Orleans at the mouth of the Mississippi River. Abraham Lincoln once made a trip from Rockport to New Orleans on a flatboat loaded with tobacco.

A steamboat appeared on the Ohio River for the first time in 1811. Steamboats could go upstream as easily as downstream. They carried passengers and freight of all kinds. At night the passengers slept in bunks on the boat. Music was often provided to entertain the passengers. It was not long until steamboats were common on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Many famous steamboats were built in Jeffersonville, Indiana.

Not all the rivers of Indiana were deep enough for steamboats. Once a steamboat made its way up White River to Indianapolis, but there it got stuck in shallow water. Flatboats had to be used on the small rivers.

Men not living along the rivers in Indiana asked the state to dig canals or deep ditches to connect the big rivers in Indiana so that they could send their crops to market by waterways. Three long canals were planned, following rivers that were not deep enough for large boats. One canal connected Fort Wayne with Terre Haute, and then went to Evansville. This canal linked the Maumee River with the Ohio River. Another canal was dug along the Whitewater Valley, to connect Richmond and other towns with the Ohio River. (A portion of this canal is still in existence and can be seen by visiting Metamora, Indiana.) A third canal was planned to connect Peru, Marion, and Indianapolis on the White River, but it was never finished.

Small boats were pulled along these canals by horses that walked along the bank on a towpath. The boats did not move fast, but they carried much freight and several passengers. The canals always needed repairs after hard storms. The charges made on the boats for using the canals did not pay the cost of digging them. Within a few years railroads were built in the state resulting in the canals being used less and finally they were given up altogether.

### EARLY RAILROADS

The first railroad in Indiana was built near Shelbyville in 1834. The track was only a mile and a quarter long. The coach was drawn by a horse. People rode on it for fun, since it did not go any place, but it did show that railroads would be good for Indiana.

The first railroad with a steam locomotive was built from Madison to Indianapolis. Work was started in 1838, and six years later the tracks reached Columbus. The rail line was finished to Indianapolis in 1847, and a great celebration was held. The trains ran over the lines at a speed of ten miles an hour.

After a few years, a railroad was built from Jeffersonville to Columbus. Railroads soon connected Indiana with Ohio and places in the east. One road connected Indianapolis with Terre Haute and the Illinois border. Other railroads were built across the northern part of the state to reach Chicago. Much later Indiana was called the "Crossroads of the Nation" because so many railroads and highways crossed the state.

Large street cars, called interurbans, ran on rails to connect all the little towns with the cities. Indianapolis became the greatest interurban center in the world. By 1930, however, interurbans were out-of-date. Motor busses and trucks had taken their place.

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