

Transportation

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There are many different kinds of transportation. Probably the most popular method is the car. In addition to providing standard transportation, cars have been raced from the time of their invention. A second method of transportation is by train. Trains are very beneficial because they can haul everything from fruit and mail to passengers. Farm equipment is also very beneficial to Illinois. Modern farm equipment varies from large farm implements to lawn mowers.

The Chicago Times-Herald held the first motor car race in America. It was announced in June of 1895 and was more of a contest between cars than a race. Vehicles were required to have at least three wheels and to be able to carry at least two people. The racers had to run their vehicles through a preliminary test. The vehicles were placed on a machine that simulated road conditions. The Chicago City Railway Company built the machine. Officials measured and noted various aspects of the automobile performance and they also compared these findings to the horse and wagon.

The race was to be run in late October or early November. However, it had to be rescheduled for Thanksgiving Day, November 28, 1895. The newspaper held a consolation event for those people who had been ready on November 2. During this consolation race, the Duryea went into a ditch to miss a farmer's wagon. Even though the Duryea did win the consolation event, it was severely damaged and was returned to Springfield for repairs with only a few weeks before the actual race. Snow fell the day of the race. The road was deeply rutted and there were huge snowdrifts on the road. There were only six vehicles at the starting line the next morning. The six cars were two Benz automobiles, two electric vehicles, the car of H. Mueller and Company, and the Duryea. The course ran from Chicago to Evanston and back. The cold and horrible road conditions took their toll on the racers. The two electric vehicles dropped out because their batteries died. The two Benz vehicles broke down, too. The Duryea made it to the finish line after 7 P.M. Frank Duryea had been driving for over nine hours. The Mueller vehicle came to the finish line just before 9 P.M.

W.K. Vanderbilt Jr. established the Vanderbilt Cup in 1904. It was to promote the sport of racing. People lined the racetrack without any fences. This created hazards as the racers went by. Drivers began the races at timed intervals and whoever crossed the finish line with the fastest time was the winner. Louis Wagner described one of his experiences:

"On rounding the Hairpin Turn for the second time, directly in the road were at least fifty persons as we approached the turn. They swiftly made way, but my car must have brushed at least a dozen coats while taking the turn. I actually shut my eyes and piloted the machine down several lives. That no one was slain is nothing less than a miracle."

Alice Ramsey was the first woman to drive coast-to-coast in 1909. She was a 22 year-old housewife and mother from Hackensack, New Jersey. Three women went with Alice, but none of them drove. She left Manhattan in her Maxwell on June 9. It took her 59 days and 3,800 miles to get to San Francisco. Here are two of Alice Ramsey's experiences:

"Near Ogallala, Nebraska, we were halted by a nondescript sheriff 's posse on horseback. They were looking for two murderers and at first didn't believe us when we explained that we were only trying to drive from New York to San Francisco. It was not until the lawmen were convinced that no firearms or suspects were concealed in the Maxwell that they allowed us to go on."

"In Utah, we hit a prairie dog hole in the road with such force that a tie bolt came out of the tie rod connecting the front wheels. Down went the front end, wheels spread-eagled, breaking the spring seat over the front axle. We had a pilot car with us and driver Frank Irving went back to Orr's ranch where they had a forge and we were able to make temporary repairs."

Around this time trains also came in to popular use. Public land was transferred to railroad companies for building their tracks. There were 111 miles of railroad track in 1850 and it increased to over 10,000 by 1890. The Illinois Central attracted thousands of new settlers to Illinois, creating new towns in places. Some of these growing towns were Mattoon, Carbondale, Champaign, and Centralia. Chicago became a rail-transportation network. Railroads were reliable and cheap transportation for Illinois agricultural and industrial products. Railroads also brought a lot of manufactured goods to Illinois from the east.

The railroads in the early days were built in short sections. Each section was an independent company. Sometimes these sections did not connect. A stagecoach might be used to bridge the gaps. On other sections there might be an elevation too high for the tracks to climb. Again, a stagecoach might have to be used. Some of the railroad tracks were not even the same distance apart.

A railroad known as the "Big Four" ran through Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis. It came through Marshall on what is now Route I from the north. Looking east from 11th street a railroad overpass can be seen with the date of 1908. This dates the time the railroad was moved from the original location. The railroad's original depot was located on the northeast corner of what is now the Red and White grocery store parking lot.

In 1919, a big tornado hit Centralia, Illinois. Some men were working on the engine of a train that had been sitting there a while and was cooled off. The men jumped into the firebox to escape from getting hurt when the tornado went through.

Horse-drawn machinery and later mechanized tractors and implements made great changes in farming. Early horse-drawn steam engines transmitted power through an endless belt from a drive pulley on the engine to a similar pulley on the thresher, grinder, pump, or other stationary machine. Tractors today can be equipped with belt pulleys to provide stationary power.

Front-wheel-drive tractors were introduced during the early transition from horses and wagons. Sometimes the driver would use reins as though he was driving horses. These machines did not perform well.

With the self-propelled engine, power could be transmitted by traction between drive wheels or tracks and the soil. This allowed the use of implements pulled behind the tractor or mounted on the tractor frame.

The "power takeoff" was introduced in 1918. The rotary power from the engine can be transmitted through a flexible shaft to drive field implements. It is much more convenient than an endless belt and it has largely replaced the belt pulley on newer tractors. Hydraulic power is generated by oil forced through pipes or hoses by an engine-driven pump to a point of application. Forcing oil through a hydraulic motor similar to the engine-driven pump provides hydraulic rotary power for machine operation.

The tractor's electrical system is used in a very minor way to power small electric motors for special applications. The major uses of electric power are for starting the engine, for lighting, for air conditioning, and for ignition on gasoline engines.

Standard tractors were developed for pulling heavy loads. Two large rear drive wheels characterize them. There is normally a fixed width between the left and right wheels.

Row-crop tractors were developed to permit power cultivation of crops. They have two rear drives and one of three front-ends. Row-crop tractors provide high clearance under the axles and are the most popular type of tractor today.

Four-wheel drive tractors were in volume production by 1930 but never accounted for a significant portion of the market. The limited power can be transmitted through two traction wheels. Many 4-wheel drive tractors exceed 100 horsepower in size.

Crawler or track-type tractors run on endless steel tracks. These tractors are well adapted for soft, wet, or sandy soils where wheeled tractors would mire down. Crawler tractors are used for earthmoving and industrial applications.

Compact tractors are popular for lawn and garden use. These tractors are not the same as a riding lawn mower. Some have battery-powered electric motors.

There are many different kinds of transportation. Just as cars and trains changed our "settled" lifestyles, mechanized farm machinery revolutionized farm life. Travel is much more widespread since the invention of cars and trains and farmers are able to be much more productive than before. The mechanized use of cars, trains, and farm machinery has drastically changed our lives forever.