

Transportations effect on social and economic change in america between 1820 and ...

[Transportation](#)



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In what ways did developments in transportation bring about economic and social change in the United States in the period 1820 to 1860?

Between the 1820s and the 1860s, advances were being made in leaps and bounds, especially in transportation. From the invention of the cotton gin to interchangeable parts, mechanical advancements began to take effect.

However, Americans were still walking on unprepared ground and taking longer to reach from point A to point B. Because of this boom in technology, in order to get material from one place to another, transportation innovations needed to take place. Thus sprang canals and steamboats to navigate these canals in a timely manner.

Roads were created to make travel on horseback or horse-drawn chariots much faster and smoother. Railroads and the train were used to make interstate travel fast and efficient. However, these innovations in transportation did not just affect how fast an American got from point A to point B. Transportation developments also affected our country in other ways, such as economically and socially.

Innovations in transportation such as canals, railroads and roads, had a major effect on United States. The Philadelphia Lancaster Turnpike was the first important road in America. It connected Philadelphia with rich farm lands in Lancaster. Because of the success of the turnpike, other states were more inclined to do the same. Cumberland Road was built which connected Maryland to Illinois. Canals impacted the US as well. In 1825 the Erie Canal was opened starting in Albany by the Hudson River to Buffalo (Great Lakes). This enthused economic growth.

Tolls were placed along the length of these turnpikes and canals in order to repay construction costs. Railroads changed small rural towns to commercial metropolises. Railroads began developing in the 1830s and it connected water routes when it was first created. By the 1860s there was approximately 30, 000 miles of track. Capital to financerailroads came from private investors, abroad, and local governments. Fed government gave public land grants to railroads. These transportation developments have great economic and social change in the United States.

When it comes to the economic aspect of the country due to the innovations in transportation, we really see a tremendous amount of growth in the North. Due to many Englishmen who brought their blueprints and ideas along with themselves and who settled mostly in the North, manufacturing and industry began to spread throughout the Union. North and South began to cooperate more in industry, the South providing “ King Cotton” and the North turning that cotton into textiles, the first industry in America.

Because westward expansion was now beginning, the problem on conveyance of goods from East to West and vice versa was presented. Therefore, canals, railroads and roads were necessary, the most effective of the three being canals; railroads were used carriage of large amounts of goods, which is still the case today. The ability to get goods from one location to another in a matter of days rather than weeks increased supply and capital.

There were also social changes that took place due to transportation. Exploration was easier and the grip of the government was more extensive.

Also, because of the economic changes, changes in the social ladder also
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took place. In the North, the wealthy upper class owned the factories while the lower class worked “ on the floor”. Because of this, the middle class began to shrink until there was a very few amount of Americans that could claim to be middle class. In the South, the same could be true, in a different sense though. Rather than the wealthy owning factories, they owned land, where they grew their precious cotton. The lower class either worked as servants or in the fields, however, the latter was uncommon due to slavery.

Due to the advances in transportation, these changes took place. Whether they were for good or bad is up to us to decide. In my opinion, the economic changes were beneficial to America as a whole. Goods were transported quickly and effectively which increased the total revenue for the nation as a whole and more money means funding for other projects that will eventually benefit the country even more. However, the social changes really affected the country in a negative way. Because of the division of classes, people were treated inferior to others and from there sprang grudges and disputes. Slaves were treated as animals and this lead to the Civil War. Sadly, many of those feelings have continued down to this day. Nevertheless, between 1820 and 1860 transportation shifted the infrastructure and economy of the USA.