



Downtown/Franklinton Transportation, Civil War and Urban Growth

Historical Context and Overview

Throughout the 19th century, many American leaders supported the development of “internal improvements”— primarily the formation of a transportation infrastructure: roads, turnpikes, and canals. The construction of the Ohio and Erie Canal began in 1825. The canal passed through Central Ohio at Winchester and Lockbourne. The fourteen mile connection from Columbus to Lockbourne was completed and the first boat arrived in Columbus in 1831. The canals, along with the National Road completed around the same time, made the transportation of goods more efficient, and led to a wave of migration to Columbus. European immigrants from various countries settled throughout the Downtown and near north side, while many Americans from Appalachian regions came to live in the Franklinton area.

As Americans moved westward along new transportation systems, the challenges of frontier life led to a spirit of democracy, equality, and reform. Early 19th century reformers wanted better schools, prisons, and hospitals. They wanted equal opportunity and promoted social welfare for those who were suffering. Hannah Neil, wife of Columbus entrepreneur William Neil, founded one of the first social welfare institutions in the city, the Female Benevolent Society.

During the Civil War, the federal government financed the expansion of railroads. By the 1870s railroad expansion contributed to rapid industrialization across the United States. Iron, steel, lumber, and glass industries expanded to keep pace with the railroads’ demand for materials. Railroad lines also linked previously isolated towns and cities, creating a nationwide network of producers and markets for products.

Standards Alignment

Ohio’s New Learning Standards: K-12 Social Studies

Grade 3, Content Statement 5: Daily life is influenced by the agriculture, industry and natural resources in different communities.

Grade 3, Content Statement 7: Systems of transportation and communication move people, products and ideas from place to place.

Grade 4, Content Statement 8: Many technological innovations that originated in Ohio benefited the United States.

Grade 4, Content Statement 13: The population of the United States has changed over time, becoming more diverse. Ohio’s population has become increasingly reflective of the cultural diversity of the United States.

Grade 4, Content Statement 14: Ohio’s location and its transportation systems continue to influence the movement of people, products and ideas in the United States.

Grade 5, Content Statement 1: Multiple-tier timelines can be used to show relationships among events and places.

Grade 8, Content Statement 23: The Industrial Revolution fundamentally changed the means of production as a result of improvements in technology, use of new power resources, the advent of interchangeable parts and the shift from craftwork to factory work.

HS American History, Content Statement 10: The rise of corporations, heavy industry, mechanized farming and technological innovations transformed the American economy from an agrarian to an increasingly urban industrial society.

HS American History, Content Statement 12: Immigration, internal migration and urbanization transformed American life.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the effects that the improvements in transportation technology had on the growth of the city of Columbus.
- Analyze the impact of the internal improvements on the city of Columbus.
- Discuss the early reform movements and efforts to improve social welfare in Columbus.
- Explain the factors that contributed to industrial growth in Columbus.
- Explain the importance of transportation technological advances in American industry.

Discussion Questions

1. What was the impact of canals and the National Road in the 1830s?
2. What new groups arrived in Columbus following the construction of canals and the National Road?
3. What factors contributed to the increase in the number of orphans in Columbus? How did Hannah Neil address this problem?
4. What other reform movements emerged in 19th century Columbus?
5. How did the Civil War impact industrial growth?
6. What was the impact of railroad growth in Columbus?
7. Why was the Columbus Buggy Company significant in American Industry?

Extension Activities

Give students a blank Ohio map. Guide them through creating a map that shows Native American trails, then the National Road, the canal system, then railroads, and finally the freeway system, all in different colors. A multi-tiered timeline could be built simultaneously, showing the time frame of each of these transportation developments. Students then can use the map as a basis for a poster advertising Columbus as the crossroads of the state / the country.

Use one of the assembly line lesson plans listed in “Additional Resources” to guide students through a simulation activity demonstrating the pros and cons of an assembly line.

Have students research all of the inventions and technological advances that originated in Ohio. They should create a picture book on Ohio showing inventions and technological advances in chronological order.

Additional Resources

Teaching Columbus: Transportation -
<http://teachingcolumbus.omeka.net/items/show/168>

Assembly Line Lesson from Innovative Classroom -
<https://www.innovativeclassroom.com/Lesson-Plans/Assembly+Line>

Try Engineering Lesson -
<http://www.tryengineering.org/lessons/assemblylines.pdf>

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