



### Interurban Traction Terminal

Passengers gather at the Traction Terminal, the interurban hub in Indianapolis. Before automobiles were readily available, interurbans were a way for people to commute from their homes in smaller towns to Indianapolis. These people may have been commuting to work, shopping, or conducting other business in the capital city.

### The Rise of Interurbans

*The interurban business has developed into a great industry in Indiana, furnishing employment for a great army of men at very good wages. It is also very advantageous to travelers. They can come or go at any hour of the day, where previously they had to spend half their time waiting for trains.*

— Fred B. Hiatt, *Indiana Magazine of History*, September 1909

After the innovation of steam-powered locomotives and railroads, the next development in transportation was the quieter electric-powered cars of the interurban. The first interurban lines opened in the 1890s and were specifically designed for the short distances between towns and cities. In 1914 there were 1,825 miles of interurban rails in Indiana—second only to Ohio.

The first interurban entered Indianapolis on January 1, 1900, and the city soon emerged as the center of the state's extensive interurban system. By 1910 thirteen lines and nearly 400 trains daily served the city. The Terre Haute, Indianapolis and Eastern Traction Company alone stretched 402 miles from the eastern to the western border of the state and linked Indianapolis with cities such as Crawfordsville, Danville, Frankfort, Lafayette, Lebanon, and Martinsville, as well as extending from Terre Haute in three directions, to Clinton and Sullivan, Indiana, and to Paris, Illinois. Most of the lines stopped at the Indianapolis

Traction Terminal, on the corner of Illinois and Market streets. Designed by the famous architecture firm of D. H. Burnham and Company, the Traction Terminal comprised two massive buildings. One was a shed for interurban cars. The other was a modern nine-story office building that provided many conveniences for travelers, including a restaurant, stores, barbershop, and a ticket office and waiting room.

### Interurbans Phased Out

The use of interurbans declined after World War I. There were many accidents on the lines. The worst occurred in Wells County in 1910 when a head-on collision killed forty-two people. Few new lines were built after 1911 because there was little potential for profit. The growing popularity of the automobile and motor buses also presented a major threat to interurbans. The electric railways limped through the 1920s until the Great Depression hit in 1929 and dealt the final blow.

In 1941 the last interurban train departed the Traction Terminal, and the majestic building became the main bus station. By the late 1960s, its train shed was destined for the wrecking ball, and in 1972, the Traction Terminal Building was also demolished. All that remains of the razed landmark are two stone eagles that once stood at the entrance to the train shed. Today, they guard the steps of the former Indianapolis City Hall, built in 1910 on Alabama Street.

## 5.2

### Changes in Agriculture

*Oh, the moonlight's fair tonight along the Wabash,  
From the fields there comes the breath of newmown hay*

— Paul Dresser, "On the Banks of the Wabash,  
Far Away" (1897)

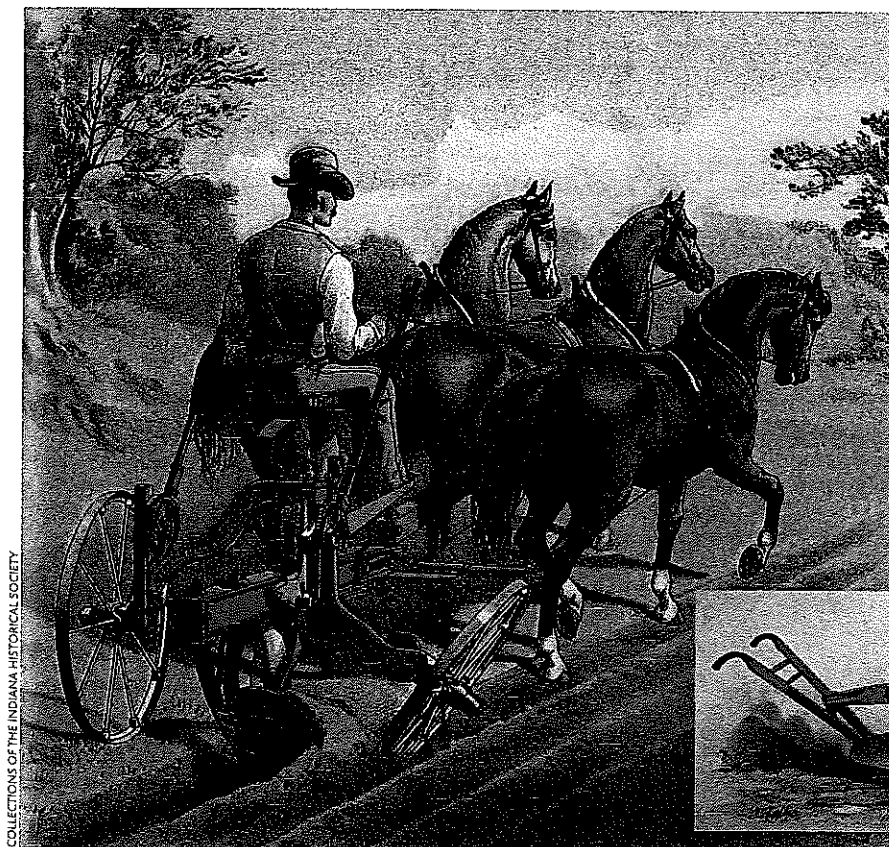
In 1913 Hoosiers designated "On the Banks of the Wabash" by Paul Dresser their state song. It was a nostalgic choice. Freshly mown hay and hog pens remained, but farming and rural life had been changing for decades.

Though Indiana remained a farm state, fewer men were working on farms—from 66 percent of Hoosier men working on farms in 1850 to only 31 percent in 1920. Manufacturing, transportation, trade, and urban service jobs gradually replaced farming as the main ways Hoosiers made a living.

### Mechanized Farming

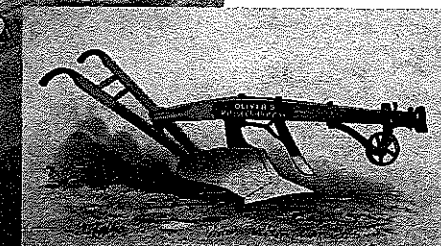
Down on the farm, pioneer methods were giving way to modern methods as farmers acquired new, labor-efficient machinery. By the 1880s farmers began replacing wooden plows with iron and steel plows, specifically James Oliver's chilled-iron plow, produced in the world's largest plow factory in South Bend. They also began using seed drills to sow seeds, mechanical mowers to cut hay, and reapers to harvest. With the new machinery, came more horses. Replacing human power with horse power meant that a single man could farm more acres. Steam power also increased productivity, especially with the massive threshing machines that separated grain from chaff.

Such changes were happening throughout Indiana, but they were concentrated in the northern and central parts of the state, where the land was flat and fertile. Farming in southern Indiana lagged behind. Due to the hilly terrain and poor soil quality, southern Indiana farmers had less money to invest in new technology



### The Oliver Chilled Plow

Early pioneer plows were made of wood and later ones from cast iron. They were heavy, often difficult to use, and the metal was subject to breakage in hard soil full of rocks, stumps, and roots. In 1857 James Oliver, a Scottish immigrant in South Bend, Indiana, patented a new kind of plow using steel and iron and a new cooling process that created a durable blade that would stay sharp over many uses. His factory in South Bend produced thousands of plows per year and sold them to farmers across the country during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In these images, ca. 1885, you can see the Oliver Chilled Plow at work.



and so used traditional methods far longer than their northern counterparts. With fewer railroads and less industry, southern Indiana grew even more distinctive.

### Farming as Big Business

At county fairs and agricultural societies, farmers learned about new farm technology and techniques. In 1852 the first state fair presented exhibits and awards for examples of new agriculture. The farming network expanded with help from media, too. Farm magazines such as the *Indiana Farmer*, established in 1866, informed farmers of new developments, as did organizations such as the Indiana Corn Growers Association and the Patrons of Husbandry, generally known as the Grange.

Founded in 1869, Purdue University was the epicenter of formal agricultural knowledge. Researchers there experimented with new farming methods, published bulletins, and worked with the federal government and farm organizations. In 1913 the Indiana General Assembly began to fund a statewide network of county agents—full-time resident advisers to local farmers—to spread Purdue’s innovative knowledge and methods about agriculture that enabled more food to be grown on less ground.

### Threshing, 1910

After harvesting wheat or other cereals, farmers had to thresh the plants—meaning that they had to separate the edible grains (seeds) from the inedible stalks. Steam machines like those shown here sped up and simplified the process that previously had been done by hand. The machines blew the leftover stalks into large piles for future use and collected the grain in wagons or bags to be sold at market.

By World War I, the typical Hoosier farmer was part of a complex national, even international, economic system, dependent on railroad agents, elevator operators, bankers, agricultural implement manufacturers, and market conditions. In 1919 the Indiana Farm Bureau formed to lobby state government for farm interests. Since weather and market economies made farming risky, farmers pleaded for government safety nets, such as those that would eventually be provided by the New Deal agricultural programs in the 1930s. In subsequent decades, federal farm subsidies included loans, disaster relief, price supports, and insurance. Critics argued that government subsidies helped the biggest farms and wealthiest farmers and neglected those who needed help most.

By the end of World War II, Indiana farms were increasing in size while declining in number. The traditional 160-acre farm had not been profitable for some time. As smaller farms failed, their land was absorbed by larger farms. In 1950 the U.S. census counted only two hundred Hoosier farms of more than a thousand acres. By 2007 there were almost four thousand farms in Indiana with more than a thousand acres. The number of small farms continued to decline. The federal

agricultural census of 2012 showed that Indiana lost 2,200 farms between 2007 and 2012.

In 1985 Hoosier rock-and-roll legend John Mellencamp and fellow musicians Willie Nelson and Neil Young organized the first Farm Aid concert to raise awareness that the traditional family farm was endangered, not only in Indiana but throughout the Midwest. By 2013 the organization had raised more than 43 million dollars to help small farms in crisis. At that time, Mellencamp said, “We’re still doing Farm Aid because it is contributing. It’s doing a job.”

### Changes in Rural Life

As farming changed, so did life on the farm. Railroads, interurbans, and automobiles, along with telephone lines, lessened the isolation of rural living. Farm families were now able to enjoy the best aspects of urban society. By 1920 almost half of Indiana’s farm families had a car and two-thirds of them had a telephone.

Farm women especially welcomed the changes brought by modern transportation and communication. Their lives had been more isolated and lonely than those of their husbands because they had been spending long hours cleaning, cooking, and sewing without the aid of technology such as washing machines, dryers, electric stoves, and ready-made clothing. Mail order companies such as Sears, Roebuck, and Company and mass-produced consumer goods alleviated some of the drudgery of rural living for many farm women and lessened their workload. With free time that their mothers and grandmothers could only have dreamed of and the ability to visit by phone or

### The Purdue Extension Bulletin

The *Purdue Extension Bulletin* was issued by the Purdue University Department of Agricultural Extension. In this 1929 issue the focus was on building practical hog houses. Farmers could read this for tips, measurements, and sketches that would help them build a better hog house. This and other issues of the bulletin informed farmers about topics ranging from soybeans to insects to keeping their cows healthy.

car, farm women were able to have a social life off the farm, joining women’s clubs, volunteering at churches and libraries, and enjoying other activities.

Like their mothers, farm children and teenagers enjoyed the expanded social and cultural opportunities. Many young men and women left family farms for towns and cities and never looked back—either because they preferred city life or because there was not enough work available in rural areas as the number of farms declined and mechanization took the place of many farm workers. This rural to urban migration was so large that it became a subject of discussion for farm groups. The 1910 census underscored this concern when it showed that the number of rural Hoosiers declined for the first time. By 1920 Indiana’s urban population surpassed that of its rural population.

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## PRACTICAL HOG HOUSES FOR INDIANA



The modified gable individual hog house.

### Essentials of a Good Hog House

**Warmth.**—A reasonably warm hog house saves feed. The sow and the pigs should not be required to apply any more of their feed to warming the body than necessary.

**Dryness.**—A well drained floor, a tight roof and proper ventilation are essential to dryness. A damp house is usually cold, and it provides excellent conditions for harboring disease germs.

Purdue University Department of Agricultural Extension  
J. H. Skinner, Director, Lafayette, Indiana  
Co-operative Agricultural Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914

In the late nineteenth century, some people in Indiana worried that modern advances were tilling under Hoosier pioneer traditions and modest values, along with rural life. But the majority saw a better future coming through steady but gradual progress and adaptation. One historian called this a “bifocal vision of progress” wherein “Those who criticized Indiana’s slowness to change blamed farmers,” and “those who boast[ed] of the state’s stability praised them.”

### Farm Hicks No More— The Era of Modern Farming

*Brainpower has replaced horsepower as the central ingredient of success on our farms.*

—Earl L. Butz, “Agriculture—  
An Industry in Evolution” (1966)

By the end of World War II, most Hoosier farmers had moved toward sophisticated agricultural practices. They could no longer be stigmatized as farm hicks. New farm equipment, seeds, fertilizers, and methods would prevail on Indiana farms into the last decades of the twentieth century.

Agricultural change improved the state’s and the nation’s general welfare—for the most part. There was more food, cheaper food, and a greater variety of food. But by the late twentieth century there was also a growing concern about food production methods. As studies showed that chemical fertilizers and pesticides were harmful to the environment, there was a backlash against them and against biotechnology, due to fears that it would prove harmful as well. Some favored organic foods and locally grown foods cultivated by traditional methods of crop rotation and use of manure.

• Rachel Peden, a Hoosier farm wife and author whose work appeared in the *Indianapolis Star* and *Muncie Evening News* from the 1940s to the 1970s, once described a pitch-in dinner at her beloved Maple Grove Church in Monroe County that would make any reader hungry. Peden wrote that the church ladies brought “fried chicken, baked ham, chicken and dumplings, beef and new potatoes, new peas, tomatoes, tossed salad, coleslaw, green beans, baked beans, butter beans,” and “at least ten kinds of pies and cakes.” All the food was home-grown and homemade. Many twenty-first century Hoosiers, whose diets mainly consist of factory-processed food and fast food, can only imagine the tantalizing smells and tastes at that pitch-in dinner at Maple Grove Church.



### Canning

With the widespread availability of canned food, beginning in the 1880s, the eating habits of Americans changed. By 1900 home canning was also becoming commonplace. Farmers and home gardeners could now grow more crops and not worry about waste, and they could eat vegetables and meat all year long.