

A Revolutionary Time

Conquer It — The Industrial Revolution and Other Improvements

The Industrial Revolution in the textile industry led to other industrial improvements. Rather than relying on a water source for power, alternative sources were developed. By the year 1774, James Watt developed the steam engine as a convenient source of power. Later, Robert Fulton took the steam engine and used it to propel a boat. As a result, the invention of the steamboat improved transportation for shipping goods and passenger transportation. With innovations in the steam engine on wheels, the steam locomotive further improved transportation. In 1825, the first British railroad line was 27 miles long and used to haul coal from the coal mines to a port on the North Sea. The success of this first railroad led to further innovations in the locomotive steam engine and the building of more railroad lines. The building of the railroad lines spurred industrial expansion by providing manufacturers a cheap method of transportation to send their goods to market. The new form of transportation also created new jobs for railroad workers -- and since the steam engines were powered by coal, there was an increased demand for miners. The agriculture and fishing industries also benefitted and expanded because they could now reach a larger market for their products.

By the 19th century, the working class gained better working conditions, shorter hours and better wages. The overall result of the Industrial Revolution was increased employment, production of more and cheaper goods, and a general increase in the standard of living. With the improvements in housing and diet, life expectancy also increased.