

EARLY TRANSPORTATION

The area from Lake Michigan to the Des Plaines River was one great swamp, and was known as the "dismal nine-mile swamp." There were so many wrecked wagons, broken wheels, and bones of dead horses that it was also referred to as the "slough of despond." Farmers hauling their produce the 25 miles to Chicago by wagon expected to be gone several days. If the weather was favorable, the driver would stay overnight near a creek where he could water his horses, tether them so they could eat some grass by the roadside together with some oats he brought along. The driver could then eat his lunch or supper and then sleep on the wagon or probably on the grass. Having sold his produce he might purchase some needed supplies and hopefully have some cash left to take home to pay taxes and make payments on his farm. Hold-up men were a constant menace.

In January 1850 the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad was completed from Chicago to Elgin. In those days the lot of the railroad passenger was not always one of ease. Sometimes the engine ran out of water and the passengers trudged back and forth with pails between the train and the nearest creek, or he might be pressed into service helping to fill the tender at a wooding station. All in all, the railroad proved a boon to the settler, but there was no control over rates. In 1880 it cost less to ship wheat from Chicago to England and then to ship it from Bismarck, North Dakota to St. Paul, Minnesota. Farmers united and formed the Grange to fight these inequities. Teddy Roosevelt broke the trusts, and competition loomed on the horizon when in 1903 the horseless carriage came into being. As transportation improved, dairying became a principal industry near metropolitan areas, and in the early 1900's some farmers turned to growing vegetables for the expanding Chicago market. At one time Cook County, Illinois was the largest onion producing area in the world.

About 1920 the first concrete pavement in Schaumburg Township, and for many miles around, was poured. Extending about 3 ½ miles from Nebel's corner on Higgins Road (Illinois Route 72) south through Schaumburg Center, to the south boundary of Schaumburg Township on the northern edge of the town of Roselle. This is also the Cook-DuPage County line.

The early stage coach traveled a little more than a hundred miles a day. In 1830 railroads traveled 15 miles per hour and were laughed at. By 1850 trains were quite dependable and displaced the stage coach and the Pony Express. But there were 12 different widths, and it was necessary to change trains six times to travel from the east coast to the midwest. The Civil War brought conformity of widths.

In 1905 two Oldsmobiles made the trip from Detroit, Michigan to Portland, Oregon, across the prairie and the mountains in 44 days, which inspired the song, "In My Merry Oldsmobile." In 1907 there were 120 miles of paved roads in the entire U.S. In 1909 the first Model T Ford sold for \$850.00; in 1925 for \$260.00.

National auto races were held in Elgin, Illinois from 1910 to 1920. World War I interrupted the annual event for three years. Winning speed in 1910 on the 8 ½-mile gravel track was 62 ½ miles per hour. The southeast corner of this 305-mile race was at McLean Boulevard and Business U.S. Route 20. Racers from all over the world drew audiences of thousands. At some time or other nine different makes of cars were built in Elgin. Not the Elgin - this was built in Summit, Illinois.

By 1930 there were 20 million autos in the country and it was cheaper to travel by car. Airplanes were also coming along fast.

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