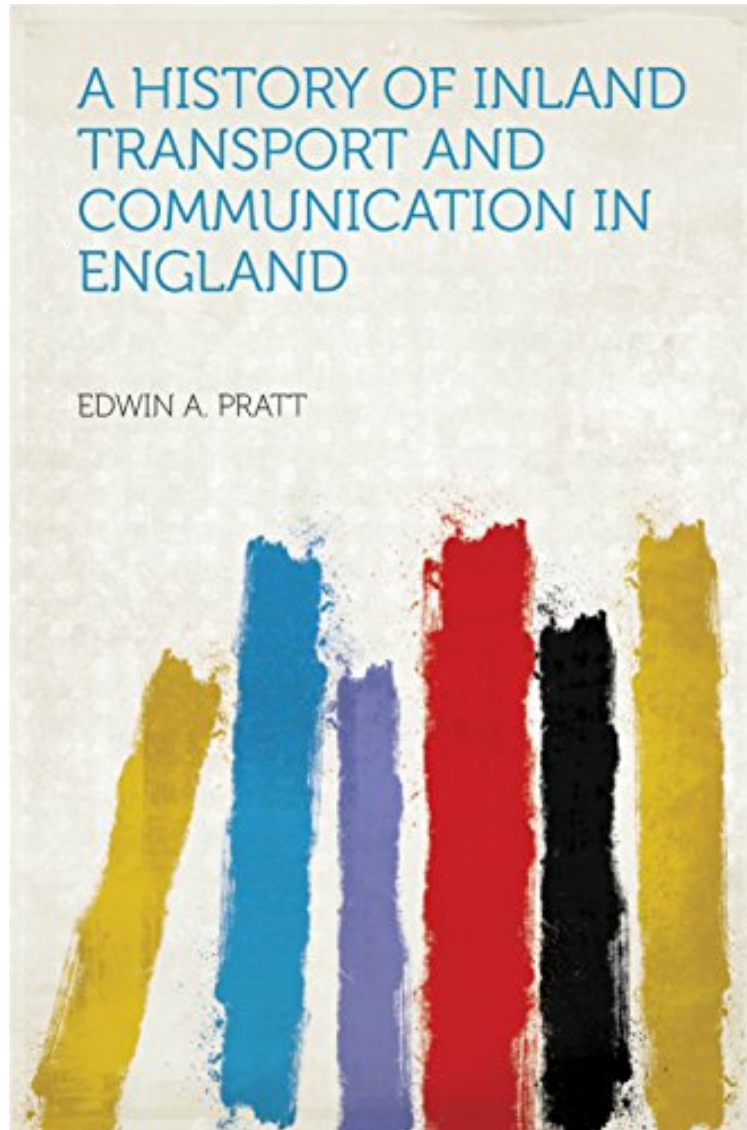


(Download) A History of Inland Transport and Communication in England

## A History of Inland Transport and Communication in England

*Pratt, Edwin A.*

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**Pratt, Edwin A. : A History of Inland Transport and Communication in England** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A History of Inland Transport and Communication in England:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Inland transportation in industrializing Britain By James Hoogerwerf Originally published in 1912, the respect given this work is highlighted by the fact that it was reprinted fifty-eight years later, in 1970. Pratt brings together in a single volume a discussion of the various modes of British transportation up to the time it was written. He argues that transportation held up industrial expansion because canals

were too slow and inefficient to meet the demand. Still he acknowledges that, because industrial expansion preceded the advent of the railroads, "it would be going too far to say that the Railway Age inaugurated the Industrial Era." (385) It appears that based on available sources he was unwilling to ascribe to either the canals or turnpikes the importance they deserved. In this regard Pratt most likely represents the prevalent attitude of the time. A broadly written synthesis of inland transportation and communication, industrial development, was gradual and progressed through two stages. In the first stage limited transport restricted industrial development to "domestic" industries. In the second, transportation improvements to interior regions contributed to the growth of "national" industries. Taking each of these in turn, Pratt discusses the turnpike system, rivers, canals and the railroads, all of which influenced industrialization. It is useful to take a moment and briefly discuss each of these separately, beginning with the turnpike road system. The turnpike road system evolved from the common law requirement that each parish was responsible for maintaining the roads under its jurisdiction. As could be expected the quality of roads was inconsistent and they were not conducive to travel. After Parliament permitted the imposition of tolls to maintain the roads, beginning in about 1767, turnpike roads became more general. Imperfect as they were, the turnpike system nonetheless improved trade and transport. Road conditions were further improved by Thomas Telford and John Loudon McAdam. Telford cut through hills to reduce grades, built up the roadbed and improved drainage. McAdam strengthened and smoothed the road surface by using broken stones, whose angles interlocked under the pressure of traffic, instead of round stones which were just pushed away by wheels. Rivers determined settlements and trade in early civilizations. A heavy cargo could be borne by water in even very primitive watercraft. Britain was fortunate to have many navigable rivers at different points along its coastline around the island. For example, the Severn river between England and Wales permitted ships to navigate 160 miles upstream without use of locks. By 1758 some 100,000 tons of coal and other goods were being carried by river boats. Channeling and other river improvements opened up new markets. Once the river Mersey was made navigable under the Act of 1694, Liverpool gained access to the sea. However rivers were not altogether dependable. River transportation was plagued by irregular flows, silting, winding courses, unreasonable costs, and pilfering of cargo. These disadvantages were mostly overcome when canals were constructed. In about 1720 the Sankey Brook Canal to Liverpool pioneered the canal era. Not only did it bring coal to the city, it also expanded the Cheshire salt industry; albeit to the disadvantage to Newcastle-on Tyne salt trade. The advantages of canals were obvious. They could go where rivers did not. They had more reliable flow and were not prone to silting. However costly and difficult obstacles had to be overcome. Engineers accounted for changes in elevation by tunneling and building aqueducts and locks. The growing pottery industry exemplified the market benefit of canals. By 1785 Joseph Wedgwood's innovations had boosted employment in this one industry alone from 8 to 13 thousand more workers than it had twenty-five years earlier. As great was the improvement afforded by the canal system, Pratt argues that because the canal era occurred contemporaneous with the Industrial Revolution, it was inadequate to transportation needs. Indeed he goes so far as to say "England was on the eve of the greatest industrial expansion of any country in Europe; but she was starting thereon with probably the worst means of inland transport of any country in Europe." (192) Since canals were developed in a piecemeal fashion and canal companies were unable to harness mechanical power, they therefore served to foster the development of railways. Railroads evolved from tracked carts used in coal mines and, ironically, were initially adopted by the canal companies to feed their systems. The Surrey Iron Railway was the first public railway created by the Parliament Act of 1801. About nine and a half miles in length, it was propelled by horses, donkeys or mules until the Stephenson "Rocket" introduced the steam engine as a replacement to animal power. Unlike with the canals, managers readily applied mechanical adaptations to the railroads.

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