**A Little Luck**

**by Eric Schultz (Cobblestone Magazine - March 2014)**

Most 19th-century captains of industry showed a good work ethic, a strong business sense, and a willingness to take risks. They also owed much to luck. Many of these men were fortunate to launch their careers at the start of what is referred to as America's "**transportation** revolution."

Before 1800, transporting people and goods in the **United States** was slow, dirty, and dangerous. This situation began to change in the period from 1800 to 1830, now called the "turnpike era." By 1816, Americans could travel a single interconnected route from Maine to Georgia. By 1821, 4,000 miles of new turnpike had been completed just in New York.

Next came canals. When the Erie Canal was completed in 1825, it connected Buffalo to New York City, and thus the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean. It overcame the obstacles of moving people and goods over land through interior sections of the country. Its success inspired a wave of canal building across America.

Historians call 1815 to 1860 the age of the river steamboat. It was the next important form of **transportation** in America. Men who spotted the trend, such as Cornelius "Commodore" Vanderbilt, became the industry's leaders.

Finally, the greatest of all 19th-century **transportation** innovations appeared: the railroad. Railways started to replace canals in the 1830s. By 1869, the first transcontinental railroad connected the country from coast to coast.

The result of the country's **transportation**revolution was spectacular. Each innovation moved goods and people with greater speeds and at less cost than the method that came before. They connected the growing nation physically and economically.

The **transportation** revolution also provided opportunity for the nation's captains of industry. And entrepreneurs who anticipated this national expansion became the richest people in America.

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By Eric B. Schultz

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