**The revolution begins in earnest**

The simultaneous perfection of the steam engine and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution is a chicken and egg scenario that historians have long debated. The world was becoming an industrialized place before the advent of steam power, but would never have progressed so quickly without it, they argue.

Factories that still relied on wind or water power to drive their machines during the Industrial Revolution were confined to certain locales; steam meant that factories could be built anywhere, not just along fast-flowing rivers.

Those factories benefited from one of the world's greatest partnerships — that of Watt and Matthew Boulton, a British manufacturer. Together, they tailored Watt's steam engine to any company that could use it, amassing great fortunes for themselves but also sharing research over vast distances.

Transportation was one of those important beneficiaries. By the early 1800s, high-pressure steam engines had become compact enough to move beyond the factory, prompting the first steam-powered locomotive to hit the rails in Britain in 1804. For the first time in history, [goods were transported](http://www.livescience.com/4823-ancient-trade-changed-world.html) over land by something other than the muscle of man or animal.

The United States was the pioneer in shipping, putting a passenger steamship on the water in 1807.

That landmark trip, a 150-mile journey from New York to Albany on a ship called The Clermont, took 32 hours to complete. Perhaps it was the reason for the ensuing boom in rail travel.