1800  First post office – Kaskaskia
1814  Post offices began to describe and number mail routes – 16 post offices in 1817
1816  Treaty with Native American groups to secure land rights along the “Chicago portage” route
1817  first upstream steamboat reaches St. Louis
1818  Illinois becomes a state with northern border extended 41 miles north, giving the state control of the Chicago River and Chicago portage

1836  Construction begins on the Illinois and Michigan Canal
1848  96-mile Illinois and Michigan Canal opened (closed officially in 1933)

1836  Galena and Chicago Union Railroad chartered (but construction issues delayed opening until 1848)
1839  First railroad mileage in Illinois – 12 miles from Springfield west to Meredosia
1848  Railroads pushed out from Chicago – by 1851 state had 45 miles of railroads
1850-1870  decades of major railroad expansion and major expansion in number of post offices
(by 1860 – 2,679 miles in the state; Chicago was served by 11 railroads and had established as the key rail center in the country; by 1870 – 4,823 miles in the state)
1850  Federal land grants for the Illinois Central Railroad, including 705 miles in Illinois for its main line from Cairo to Freeport and the “Chicago branch” from Centralia to Chicago; chartered in 1852 – completed in 1856 (first use of federal land grants as an incentive for rail construction which later was used and expanded for the construction of the transcontinental routes)
1854  Chicago and Rock Island Railroad reaches Rock Island (1856 crosses the Mississippi)
1855-64  Other railroads reach the Mississippi River at Burlington, Quincy, Clinton, E. Dubuque, and Alton)
1880  Railroads were “ubiquitous in Illinois” – most settlements of any size were within 5 miles of a railroad
1882  Peak tonnage on the Illinois and Michigan Canal
1883  Standard time zone adopted by railroads
1920  Peak railroad mileage in Illinois 12,128 miles (#2 in the country)

1863  Free home postal delivery, first in Cleveland and quickly expanded to other cities
1864  Chicago and Northwestern had the first official Railway Mail Service – “an innovation which changed American’s concept of distance and time”; by 1910 rail handled 98% of intercity mail
1870  1,494 post offices in Illinois
1882  Montgomery Ward begins mail order business in Chicago
1893  Sears Roebuck begins – becomes second major mail order company
1896  Beginning of Rural Free Delivery as an experimental service, including out from Auburn in Sangamon County); 1902 - RFD became a permanent postal service; by 1905 was implemented in most places
1913  Introduction of Parcel Post by the U.S. Postal Service

1892  Construction begins on the Illinois and Mississippi (Hennepin) Canal – extending 75 miles from Hennepin to Rock Island, 419 miles shorter that the Illinois and Mississippi River route (idea for this route dates from 1834, but action was delayed repeatedly, often a result of railroad lobbying)
1907  Opening of Hennepin Canal – officially closed in 1951 -- never carried much traffic – but the communities along it perceived some linkages – now linked by the state recreational parkway
1895  First electric interurban railroad in Illinois
1900-1912  Period of growth of electric interurbans, notably the Illinois Traction System (started in 1901) which operated 400 miles in a “reasonably connected network” in central Illinois and was the largest system under one management in the U.S.
1914  Peak mileage year in Illinois – 1,422 miles (#4 in the country) (1916 – national peak 15,580 miles)
1908  Henry Ford introduces Model-T -- revolutionizes auto production and auto sales – prices drop in each of the next 8 years – became the people’s car” -- produced the 1 millionth Model T in 1924
1910-30  Rapid increase in auto ownership in Illinois 131,000 (1910), 375,000 (1918), 1.6 million (1929)
1900-1920  Expansion of the Good Roads Movement as
1913  Tice Bill – committed state of Illinois to improving roads
1913  Founding of the Lincoln Highway Association
1914  First Lincoln Highway “seedling mile” just west of Malta, Illinois; Illinois became the first state to complete paving of its entire section – 179 miles
1916  Federal Aid Good Roads Act – provided $75 million in 50/50 matching money for states over 5 years
1918  $60,000,000 state bond issue for road improvement -- for routes 1-46
1921  Federal Highway Act – commitment to develop a large national highway system; more money
1924  $100,000,000 state bond issue for road improvement -- for routes 47 to 185
1925  4,800 miles of hard surface roads in Illinois
1925  American Association of State Highway officials unified the road numbering system
1926  Famous U.S. 66 was designated; most of its diagonal route in Illinois used already-paved state Route 4
1925-1931  Period of major decline of interurbans
1933  Opening of the expanded and deepened Illinois Waterway system as part of Lake-to-Gulf route
1938  Completion of the nine-foot navigation channel on the Upper Mississippi River from Alton to St. Paul
1956  National interstate highway bill approved -- committed country to 41,000 miles of divided highways
1968  First interstate highway completed across the state – Interstate 80

1971  Beginning of AMTRAK service in Illinois

2017  199 miles of commercial nine-foot navigation from Chicago to Grafton and from E. Dubuque to Cairo

   9,982 miles of operating railroads (#2 state in the country) – used by 41 railroad companies,
   including 7,792 miles by all seven Class I railroads operating in the U.S. (only state in the country)
Thirty cities or towns with regular AMTRAK service on one of four routes
METRA lines in Chicago metropolitan area – 11 routes, 455 miles, 94 trains each week-day
Continued operation of the 90-mile Chicago, South Shore and South Bend Railroad (interurban)

   61,822 miles of paved roads (including 2,184 miles of interstate highways on 25 routes);
   59,937 miles of “low type” bituminous pavement (bituminous and surface base of less than 7 inches); 22,440 of oil/gravel roads; and only 2,768 miles of earth roads (1.8 per cent of our total road network) (2016 data from Ill. Dept. of Transportation)
4,524,709 automobiles registered (2016) (10.4 million total vehicles)
1315 post office (#5 in the nation) and continued urban and rural mail delivery