

C. The “Age of Steam” or “Proto-Industrial” Phase of History (1769-1869)

1. The Watt Steam Engine is the invention that triggered the “Age of Steam.”
2. Steam engines were used to create machines like the power loom, which allowed much more clothing to be made.
3. A steam engine could also be paired with a paddle wheel to make it turn and propel a vessel up stream or across oceans.
4. Somewhat later, steam engines were paired with very basic carriages, of the same kind that were pulled by horses, and soon steam “locomotives” were operating on “railroads.”



A factory with steam powered looms could produce thousands of times more clothing than traditional “cottage” industries.



Early steam “locomotives” did lose the first races against horse-drawn carriages, but advancements in steam power soon proved the worth of the new technology.

5. Progress in this area was slow. That’s why I call it the “proto-industrial” phase of history. In the *pre-industrial* era, there was almost *no* progress. In the *proto-industrial* period, there was progress—but it was slow compared to today’s rate of change.
6. Also this phase of industrial history is “proto-industrial,” because all the inventions of this period are now obsolete. We don’t use steam engines in cars and planes.
7. The Age of Steam or Proto-Industrial phase of history is almost exactly **one century**. That’s handy, especially when trying to remember the dates. C. 1769, the Watt Steam Engine was invented, and in 1869 the greatest accomplishment of the era, the construction of the first *transcontinental railroad* was completed, linking California to the East Coast.
8. Just as steam technology was peaking, it was already becoming obsolete. In 1870, the Standard Oil company of John D. Rockefeller was formed. This company would propel a whole new industry forward, and make Rockefeller possibly the richest man in all of history. The “*Industrial Revolution*” was truly beginning.
9. We can show the Age of Steam and the anchor fact of the Transcontinental Railroad (1869) paired with the creation of the Standard Oil Company (1870) on our anchor fact timeline as follows:

