



Lyons (Images of America)

Mark Athitakis

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Despite its modest size, the village of Lyons has played a key role in the growth of nearby Chicago. In 1673, French explorers Fr. Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet learned of a Native American portage route connecting the Mississippi River and Lake Michigan, and that path helped make Lyons an important stop for fur traders and other businessmen throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries. In 1834, the town boasted just "a saw mill, three houses, and a tavern," but by the 1830s and 1840s, with the construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, Lyons became a boomtown that attracted waves of immigrants from Poland and Germany. Its numerous taverns and outdoor picnics--known as "skillies"--attracted visitors from throughout the area, who also came to sites like the Cream City Amusement Park and the Hofmann Tower, now a national historic landmark. Lyons, featuring many archival photographs never previously published, explores the town's rich history from its early exploration to the present day.

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