

The Village of Trask
Grant County
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Marker Text

Trask, like other pioneer villages, served an important commercial, social, and educational role for early settlers. The post office (1846-1901) marked the start and end of Trask's official existence. As travel improved, such villages disappeared or remained as residential communities like Trask.

Report

The village of Trask in and of itself is not that important. However, the marker text is broad, so that this marker does not just commemorate Trask, but also the hundreds of other villages and small towns across Indiana that ceased to exist in the twentieth-century as commercial, educational, and sometimes even social or residential centers.

This marker's text is more about context, and less about Trask content. The best support for this marker text can be found in *The American Midwest: An Interpretive Encyclopedia* (2007). An essay from this encyclopedia by John A. Jakle, "Economic Structure," stated, "Today, most of the region's hamlets and villages...have become little more than dormitory places where people live but do not work." Another essay, "Central Market and Mercantile Service Centers," by William Ferraro added, "The goal of most any small town was to establish a good mix of shops and services. In the early days, a general store, a blacksmith, a barber, a lawyer, and a doctor would be considered desirable." From what we know of Trask it had most of these businesses and professions. Ferraro continued, "The advent of automobiles and highways gave local customers even more freedom to choose where to buy goods or seek services....As spending patterns became more dispersed, small towns lost their prominence as central market and mercantile service centers."

Regarding the demise of the village post office, Peter Hoehnle in his encyclopedia article, "Rural Free Delivery," explained, "The new rural free delivery system, or RFD, meant the end of the old fourth-class post offices," which were often "located in rural

stores and homes,” as was the case in Trask. He continued, “Many storekeepers depended on the presence of a post office in their establishment to draw customers, and they protested, but to little avail. Conversely, the [RFD] system helped to destroy the little communities that had formed around the old rural post offices.” According to J. David Baker’s *The Postal History of Indiana* (1976), Trask post office established in 1846, closed when mail began to be distributed from Fairmount in 1901.

While Trask may not be that important, this marker does an excellent job of contextualizing the end of the rural Indiana village. It is this context that commemorates an important part of Indiana history.

For further information see: Ethlyn Carter Gadbury, “History of Trask, Indiana” (not published). This source is located in the Village of Trask historical marker file at IHB. Mrs. Gadbury, who was the marker applicant, was born in the village. Her history mentions Jim Lambert who operated the general store, and Elijah Carter the blacksmith. The village took its name from a local doctor, Ezra S. Trask. Mrs. Gadbury also recalled a church, mill, and school, in or near the village.