



0. TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD - Story Preface

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In this artist's depiction, we see crews of the Union Pacific Railroad building grade and track through Nebraska. The illustration includes members of the Pawnee Nation who are guarding the construction crews. Image online via the Linda Hall Library (Kansas City, Missouri). Click on it for a better view.

Before the Civil War, people in America (and their government leaders) knew a transcontinental railroad was needed to better unite the country. As early as 1832, *The Emigrant* (an Ann Arbor newspaper) called for a national railroad line. But slavery issues, among others, kept North and South from agreeing on the best route. Once the Southern States had seceded from the Union, however, Congress was free to proceed as its remaining members wished.

The Railroad Act of 1862 (as subsequently amended in 1864 and 1866) chartered the Union Pacific Railroad Company. It competitively teamed with the newly created Central Pacific Railroad Company of California to lay down track from San Francisco, California (on the west end) to Omaha, Nebraska (on the east end).

Each side raced to see which company could build the line more quickly.

It would have been hard enough to build the railroad if the terrain were flat, like in the plains. But rugged territories (like the Sierra Nevada mountains) were also part of the equation, as were trestle bridges (which required exquisite planning and engineering) and Indians (who, like these Cheyenne, were *most* upset that the railroad was invading their territories):

- Union Pacific's Big Trestle, and surrounding area, including access tracks through the sagebrush.
- Detail of the west abutment of the Big Trestle.
- A view to the north-northeast along the completed Big Trestle.
- Looking southeast, toward the engine house.

Building the railroad was not the only difficulty workers faced. By today's standards, their living (and working) conditions were atrocious:

- Some of the men lived in sod-covered shelters.
- Chinese workers were a predominate factor as the rail line took shape. One of their construction camps was just west of Powder Bluff, Nevada.
- Another railroad camp was built near Victory (Rozel).

By the spring of 1869 (despite tremendous obstacles, after less than a decade of building and seven years ahead of schedule), workers on both parts of the track were about to meet.

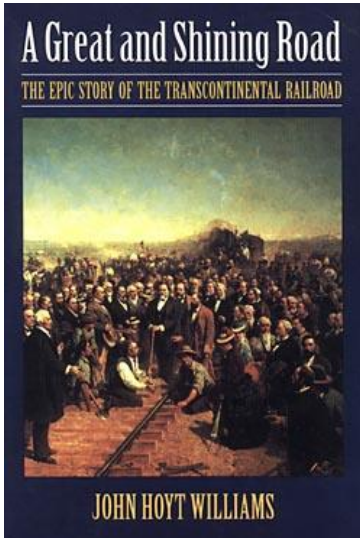
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/TRANSCONTINENTAL-RAILROAD-Go-West-U.S.-Westward-Expansion>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/TRANSCONTINENTAL-RAILROAD-Go-West-U.S.-Westward-Expansion>

Media Stream

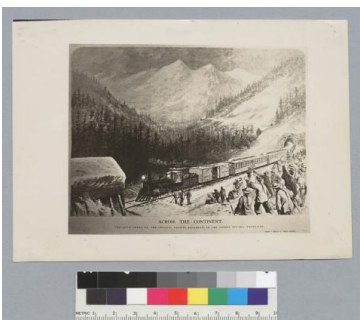


[A Great and Shining Road - by John Hoyt Williams](#)

Image online, courtesy Google Books.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/A-Great-and-Shining-Road-by-John-Hoyt-Williams>



[Railroad in the Sierra Nevada Mountains](#)

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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View this asset at:

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[Drawing of Cheyenne Attacking](#)

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Drawing-of-Cheyenne-Attacking>



[Drawing - Union Pacific's Big Trestle](#)

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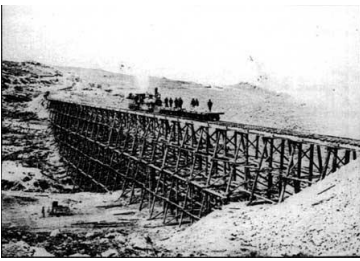


[West Abutment of the Big Trestle](#)

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Park Service [website](#).

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View of the Big Trestle

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Park Service website.

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View of a Railroad Construction Camp

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Park Service website.

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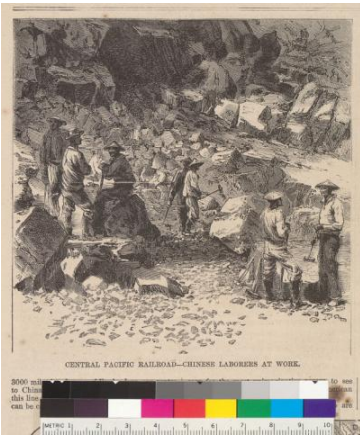


Sod-Covered Shelters for Railroad Workers

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Park Service website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Sod-Covered-Shelters-for-Railroad-Workers>



Drawing - Chinese Laborers at Work

Image, described above, online courtesy Library of Congress.

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Engine House Near the Big Trestle

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Park Service website.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Engine-House-Near-the-Big-Trestle>



Railroad Camp Photo

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Park Service website.

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TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD

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