

0. THE RAILROAD IS FINISHED - Story Preface

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Alfred A. Hart was the official photographer of the Central Pacific Railroad from 1864 to 1869. His work documents construction of the railroad from Sacramento (California) to Promontory Summit (Utah). In this image, we see Hart's 1869 photo of Central Pacific's crews at Camp Victory. Image online via the Linda Hall Library (Kansas City, Missouri). Click on it for a better view.

As the completed tracks neared each other, Union Pacific workers made their "Last Cut" while Central Pacific workers had their "Big Fill."

On May 10, 1869, the last spike, a ceremonial golden one, was set into the tie at Promontory, Utah. (There were actually five spikes, although the one which was actually driven into the tie was made of iron.)

With that historic action, supervisors from both companies shook hands and America's east and west coasts were connected for the first time. A telegram was sent to let the nation know. It contained one word:

Done.

A.J. Russell, the official photographer for the Union Pacific, stood atop Central Pacific's locomotive "Jupiter" to capture the Last Spike Ceremony. Before long hotels, including those owned by railroad companies, were built along the transcontinental route.

After the rail lines were connected, new commercial opportunities also dotted the landscape at Promontory:

- A tent city, just north of the tracks, was quickly erected at Promontory Summit.
- So was a ticket/telegraph office plus a school and wind mill.

After the track was joined on that spring day in 1869, people seeking a new life in the West were about to dramatically transform the country. As a consequence:

- The Navajo and Apache would lose their homes and be forced to live on reservations.
- Formerly proud Shoshone would soon beg at train stations.
- Native-American cliff dwellings, like those at Mesa Verde (in Colorado), were now a thing of the past.

The same was true of the Prairie Schooner since families had a faster, more-comfortable and less-arduous travel option.

Let's take a look at the trains which carried Americans, and recent immigrants, West.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-RAILROAD-IS-FINISHED-Go-West-U.S.-Westward-Expansion)

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

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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

Media Stream



Last Cut for Union Pacific

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

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Last-Cut-for-Union-Pacific>



Big Fill for Central Pacific

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

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Big-Fill-for-Central-Pacific>



Meeting at Promontory, Utah

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

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Last Spike Monument

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

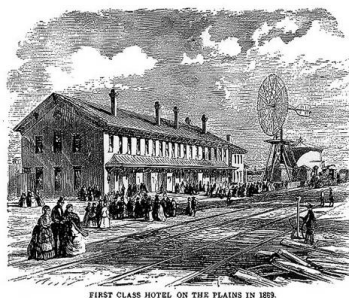
View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Last-Spike-Monument>



Promontory Meeting Photo

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives website.

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Drawing - First Class Hotel on the Plains in 1869

Online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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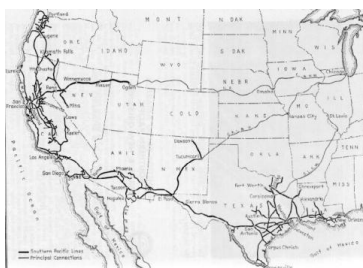
Last Spike Ceremony Photo - by A.J. Russell

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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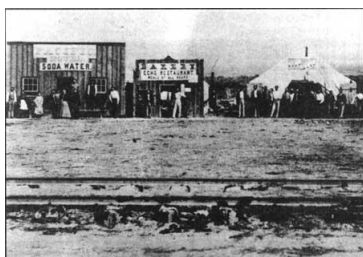


Map: Railroad Lines in the Western United States

Image online, courtesy the Pacific Southwest Railway Museum website.

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Tent City Photo at Promontory Point

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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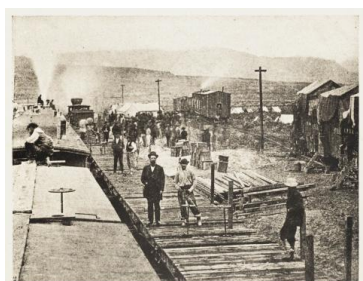
Railroad Ticket Office at Promontory, Utah

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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