

# *West*

NOVEMBER 1942

LAST SPIKE

COMPLETING FIRST  
TRANSCONTINENTAL  
RAILROAD  
DRIVEN AT THIS POINT  
MAY 10TH 1869

PUBLISHED BY

**Southern Pacific**

UNDRIVING THE GOLDEN SPIKE



## May 10, 1869

**T**HE photograph above, by a pioneer photographer, records a famous and historic event—the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in America. It was a joining of *two* railroads. The Central Pacific (now Southern Pacific) built eastward from Sacramento, California, and the going was plenty tough. With no tools but wagons, shovels and wheelbarrows, and no explosives but black powder, they pushed the line over the High Sierra at an elevation of 7,000 feet, chipping tunnels through solid granite and fighting annual snowfalls that averaged *thirty-six feet*.

Meanwhile the Union Pacific was building westward from Omaha, across the plains of Nebraska, over the Rockies and through Wyoming, trying to outrace the Central Pacific. Early in 1869 the two lines approached a meeting place in Utah, and for miles the rival grading crews worked within

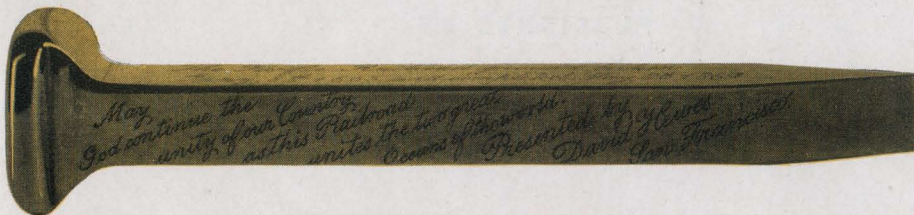
shouting distance of each other, preparing the roadbed for the track-layers. The entire nation thrilled at the performance. Track-laying records were made one day and broken the next. The Central Pacific record of ten miles of track in one day (April 28, 1869) has never since been equaled.

Finally, the meeting point of the two roads was set at Promontory, Utah, on the northern end of Great Salt Lake. The date May 10, 1869.

Special trains brought officials of both railroads with statesmen and other dignitaries from the east and west. Gold and silver spikes were presented by delegates from the western states. Telegraph connections were made so that the taps of the hammer on the last spike would send clicks over the wires to the entire nation. Leland Stanford, president of the Central Pacific, tapped the golden spike home at 12:45 p. m., Promontory time.



**These** are actual photographs of two sides of the original golden spike. The spike is now the property of Stanford University and is preserved in the vaults of the Wells Fargo Bank in San Francisco. Notice the date engraved on the spike—May 8, 1869. The celebration was originally scheduled for that day, but inclement weather postponed the ceremony until May 10. Golden spike was presented by David Hewes of San Francisco—a man unrecognized by history, who did much to build San Francisco. He died in California in 1915.



**Premature** celebration in San Francisco on May 8, 1869, was something like the famous false Armistice on November 7, 1918. Crowds jammed Montgomery Street (above). Last spike was not driven until two days later.



## September 8, 1942

**T**HE original transcontinental line went *around* Great Salt Lake to the north (see map below). In 1904, Southern Pacific completed a causeway across Great Salt Lake and abandoned the original line for all but local use.

When this war came, with its tremendous demand for steel, the Government requisitioned the historic line around the northern end of Great Salt Lake and started to tear it up. Though every mile of this track is a thrilling chapter in the saga of the West, nobody questioned the necessity of making the steel available for the war effort. Both Southern Pacific and Union Pacific felt, however, that a tribute should be offered to the pioneers who suffered untold hardships to build this line. So the ceremony pictured above

was staged on September 8, 1942, at the exact point where the last spike was driven nearly three quarters of a century ago.

The golden spike "undriven" from the rails was not the original, but a gilded replica. The spectators were not the same men who fought nature over hundreds of miles of mountains and desert to build the first transcontinental railroad, but their spirit was just as determined as that of the pioneers.

The men pulling up the spike in the photograph above are (left to right): L. P. Hopkins, Superintendent, Southern Pacific; Herbert B. Maw, Governor of Utah, and E. C. Schmidt, Assistant to the President, Union Pacific. Southern Pacific's Hopkins presented the gilded spike for the ceremony.

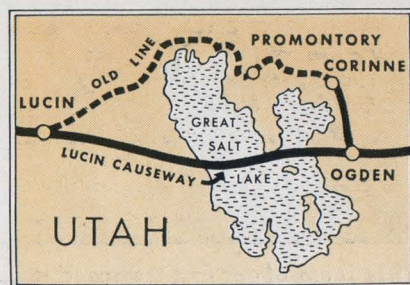


**Historic** rail is being removed by Hyman-Michaels, salvage contractors, who were awarded the job by the Government. The 120 miles of line will yield about 13,000 gross tons of steel rail for the war effort.



**A close-up** of the dignitaries "undriving" the last spike. If the rugged pioneers who built the line were here today, we know they would heartily approve.

**Dotted line** on map below shows the original transcontinental track being torn up for the war effort. Southern Pacific's main line now crosses Great Salt Lake on the spectacular Lucin Causeway, more than 30 miles from shore to shore.

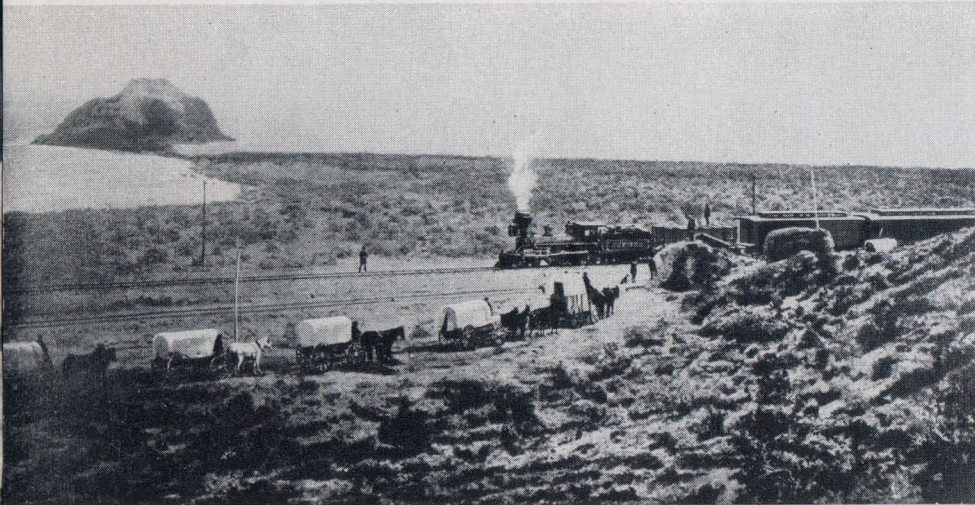


CENTRAL PACIFIC RAILROAD.			
NO. 1, TIME CARD NO. 1.			
To take effect Monday June 6th, 1864, at 5 A. M.			
TRAINS EASTWARD.		TRAINS WESTWARD.	
Trains and Passes	STATIONS.	Trains and Passes	STATIONS.
No. 1	Sacramento.	No. 2	Sacramento.
No. 2	Junction.	No. 3	Junction.
No. 3	Rocklin.	No. 4	Rocklin.
No. 4	Pino.	No. 5	Pino.
No. 5	Newcastle.	No. 6	Newcastle.
Trains No. 2 and 3 east, and 1 and 3 west, daily, except Sunday.			
Trains No. 1 east and 2 west, daily.			
LELAND STANFORD, President.			

Central Pacific's first time table was notable for its brevity. Today, Southern Pacific's 15,500 miles of line require a time table of 56 pages!



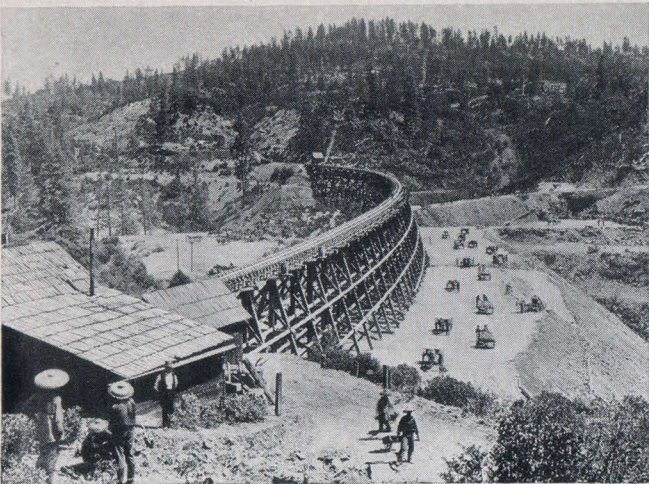
One of a railroad's biggest problems is the weather. To cope with High Sierra snowdrifts, Central Pacific used a wedge-shaped plow pushed by a long line of tiny locomotives. Today, Southern Pacific's powerful rotary snowplows cut through these drifts like a hot knife through butter.



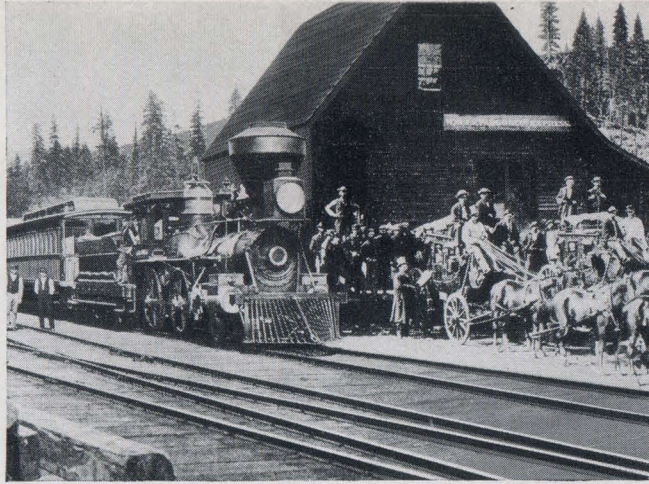
This rare old photograph shows Governor Stanford's special train, en route to the Golden Spike ceremony at Promontory, meeting a covered wagon train on its way to California's gold fields. Photo from S. P. historical collection.



After laying ten miles of track in one day, Central Pacific workmen named their rail-head camp "Victory" (above). This railroad was a pioneer national defense project, designed to unite the nation. Today, Southern Pacific is carrying on the work.



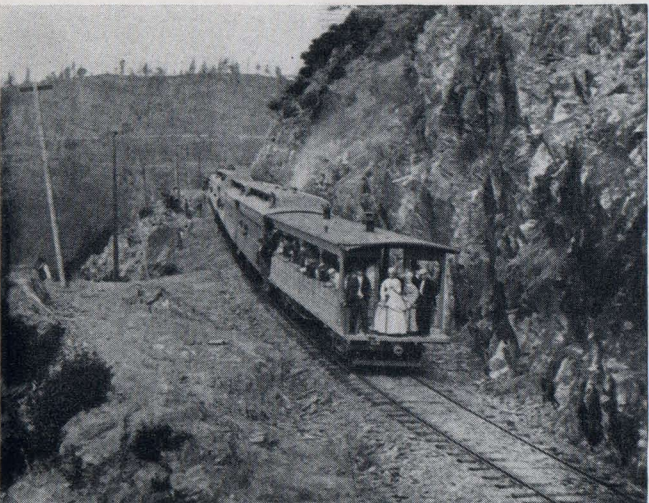
This early photograph shows Chinese workmen filling in the Secrettown trestle near Colfax, Calif., in 1877. Notice primitive grading equipment with which the line was built.



Here an early Central Pacific train meets a stagecoach at Cisco, on the slope of the High Sierra, in 1865. These tiny wood-burners came around the Horn in sailing ships.



This sign speaks for itself. The track-laying record made this day by Central Pacific workmen has never been equaled.



This is one of our first transcontinental trains. It ran from Sacramento, Calif., to Ogden, Utah, in about 40 hours. Streamliners today speed more than twice as far in less time.



At the left in this photo is original rail line of the C. P. At right, one of the old cuts made by U. P. grading crews when they were racing miles ahead of their track layers.

