

Volume 1

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Promontory Point

Lead: With thousands of acres of land and millions of dollars at stake, two great railroads rushed across the flat, barren Utah plains toward their marriage of iron.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: At 11 in the morning May 10, 1869, the Central Pacific's Jupiter pulled up to its assigned position just feet away from the Union Pacific's Number 119. It was a bright but cold day, about 1500 people were gathered including the president of the Central

Pacific, Leland Stanford and the Union Pacific's Thomas C. Durant.

Only one pair of rails had to be placed and eight Chinese workers in new blue jackets stood proudly there to lay it. One lone tie remained; it was a link of beautifully polished laurel with silver straps. After a series of mercifully short speeches and a benediction, Stanford and Durante stepped forward to seat the last spikes. One of them was 18 oz. of pure gold, was 5 1/2 inches long and 1/2 inch thick, topped by a large nugget of gold.

At 12:30 Stanford and Durante stepped into place. The spike was positioned in its hole, Stanford raised his hammer, brought it down and

missed. Durante stepped up, raised his hammer and missed it too. Both of them hit the rail, not the spike. The crowd loved it and enjoyed a great laugh at the expense of two men. If the truth be known, both were pretty good business men, knew the value of 18 oz. gold spike and avoided smashing it on purpose. Then special tie was taken out, the precious spikes were extracted and the rail was laid correctly. A message was then flashed to President Grant. It read "Promontory Summit, May 10, 1869. The Last rail is laid, the last spike is driven, the Pacific Railroad is completed. The point of junction is 1,886 miles west of the Missouri River and 690 east of Sacramento City." The nation was united, however tenuously, by a thin band of iron.

**At the University of Richmond, this
is Dan Roberts.**

Resources

Brown, D. Alexander. *Hear that Lonesome Whistle Blow: Railroads in the West*. New York, NY: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1977.

Silver, John F. *Iron Road to the West: American Railroads in the 1850s*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1978.

Williams, John Hoyt. *A Great and Shining Road, the Epic Story of the Transcontinental Railroad*. New York, NY: Times Books, 1988.

<http://www.blm.gov/education/railroads/trans.html>

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