

AMERICA COMES OF AGE 1870 - 1910

Fall, 2024

Session 2

Building Transcontinental Railroads

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Review: Session 1

- ❑ The characteristics of the “reconstruction” of the seceding Southern states evolved as the conflict wore on, and the war aims of the Union evolved.
- ❑ The post-Civil War Reconstruction period began with the surrender of confederate armies in the field and the surrender of members of the civil government of the Confederate states in the spring of 1865.
- ❑ Federal policies on what reconstruction meant, what should be done in reconstruction, who should be responsible for doing what should be done, were varied through the so-called reconstruction period.
 - “Presidential Reconstruction:” April 1865 through March 1866.
 - “Congressional Reconstruction:” April 1866 through April 1869
 - “Consensus Reconstruction:” May 1869 through April 1877
- ❑ Popular support for continuing Federal efforts to enforce civil rights, broadening education and welfare of all residents of the returning states, and maintenance of civil order began to weaken in the 1870s, especially after the panic of 1873.
- ❑ The consensus in the Northern states by 1876 was that the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the Constitution were sufficient to complete the assurance of the “blessings of liberty” to all formerly enslaved people, and reconstruction had gone on long enough.

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Review (Cont.)

- ❑ The reconstruction era did fail to achieve full economic and civil rights for formerly enslaved people; but the simple act of ending slavery and establishing constitutional ground rules for their rights and liberties was a great step. The lack of popular support and transformational leadership at the time limited further progress.
- ❑ The concurrent “reconstruction” of the western territories of the U.S. was also catching the attention of the people and competing for economic and human resources.

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Building Transcontinental Railroads

Introduction:

“ The Track that Built America”

Simon Whistler

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnSdRgdHYqU&t=394s>

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Development of the Idea

- ▣ Thinking and discussions began in the 1830s
- ▣ Limitations
 - Technological innovation
 - Geographical information
 - Capital
- ▣ Governmental interest
 - Republican Party's interest (1856 and 1860)

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Idea to reality

Pacific Railway Act 1862:

- ▣ Authorized a transcontinental railroad following a central route to California.
- ▣ Possible to pass without Southern opposition after secession.
- ▣ Included creative economic incentives:
 - Land grants
 - Construction performance bonuses

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Lincoln and the Transcontinental Railroad

Union Pacific Railroad production

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmdTq9x-naE>

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Getting the project underway

- ▣ Choosing the builders:
 - Union Pacific to start from the East end.
 - Central Pacific to start from the West end.
 - Obviously very political.
 - Both groups had an interesting cast of characters.
- ▣ Scouting and selecting the final route.
 - Army provided security and engineering assistance.
- ▣ Labor and logistics
 - Men had to be recruited to do the building
 - Materials had to be moved to the ever-changing work sites, one a long distance away.

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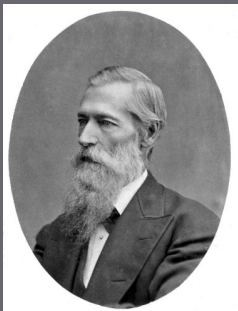
Building the railroad 1865-69

- ▣ Better terrain worked in UP's favor: level ground fewer tunnels meant more miles completed.
- ▣ Problems with native Americans.
- ▣ Considerable political (*and financial*) interest.
- ▣ Incentives for making money by hook or crook – or both.

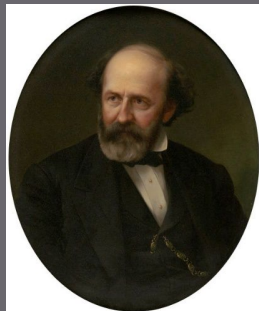
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Central Pacific Leaders

“The Big Four”



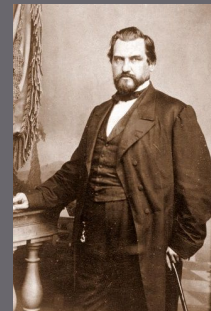
Mark Hopkins



C.P. Huntington



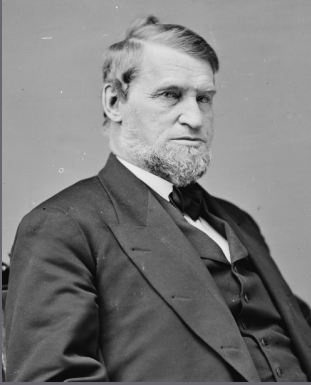
Charles Crocker



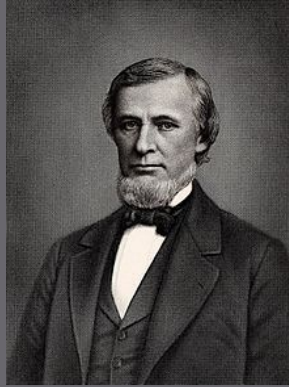
Leland Stanford

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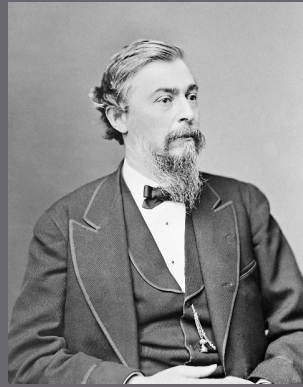
Union Pacific Leaders



Oakes Ames



Oliver Ames



Thomas Durant



Grenville Dodge

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Assessing the impact

“How the Transcontinental Railroad changed America”

History Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUmD0jFTnCA>

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Central Pacific obstacles



The Summit of the Sierra Nevada

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Union Pacific in Wyoming



The Continental Divide

The current Right-of-Way

The original Right-of-Way

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Southern Transcontinental railroads

- ▣ **Southern Pacific-Texas and Pacific**
 - Slowed down by financial difficulties until Jay Gould bought in (1879).
 - Southern Pacific (created by the Central Pacific "Big Four") built eastward from Los Angeles and San Diego. Reached Tucson in 1880; bought another railroad to reach El Paso; and linked up with the T&P east of El Paso in 1882.
 - T&P reached Galveston in January 1883, other spots later through mergers and acquisitions.
- ▣ **Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (ATSF)**
 - Started in Topeka, built eastward to Atchison (on the Missouri River) and westward toward New Mexico.
 - Slow Progress: due to lack of capital. Colorado state line in 1872, Pueblo Co. in 1876, Albuquerque in 1880, Deming, NM in 1881 (Southern Pacific junction).
 - Through acquisitions, land deals, etc. built the more direct line from south of Albuquerque to Los Angeles by 1887.

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Northern Transcontinental railroads

- ▣ **Northern Pacific**
 - Chartered in 1864 to run from Lake Superior to the Puget Sound
 - Financial problems delayed construction until 1870.
 - Construction continues slowly westward across Minn. and Dakota territory reaching Bismarck in 1873, eastern Montana in 1881, and Livingston MT in 1883, and joined with western lines in 1883 at the Columbia River. Final rail connections with Puget Sound did not come until 1888.
 - The 7th Cavalry Regiment was in North Dakota and Montana in 1876 to protect NP construction crews from tribes upset with the railroad's invasion of their tribal lands.
- ▣ **Great Northern**
 - Started at St. Paul on Mississippi River as a small local railway. James J. Hill and partners acquired it in 1878, and started building westward across Minn.
 - Slow progression westward across northern Dakota territory, North of the NP. Reached Minot in 1886. Steady growth by helping settlers acquire land and learning how to make it profitable (economic development). No access to federal land grants.
 - GN engineers discovered Marias Pass in 1890 and building of the final link to the Puget Sound began in 1891 and completed in 1894.

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Marias Pass



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Economic-political-social impacts of the transcontinental railroads

- ❑ Put existential pressure on the way of life of Native American tribes of the Great Plains and the mountain areas.
- ❑ Opened large domestic markets for manufactured goods (easy transportation to emerging western markets)
- ❑ Increased demand for western products
 - Food products (meat and grain) from the great plains
 - Minerals and precious metals
 - Timber from western forests for building construction
- ❑ Provided economic opportunity for immigrants from Europe
- ❑ Land-linked the growing Pacific coast with the rest of the nation as settlement of the Great Plains and mountains took longer

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