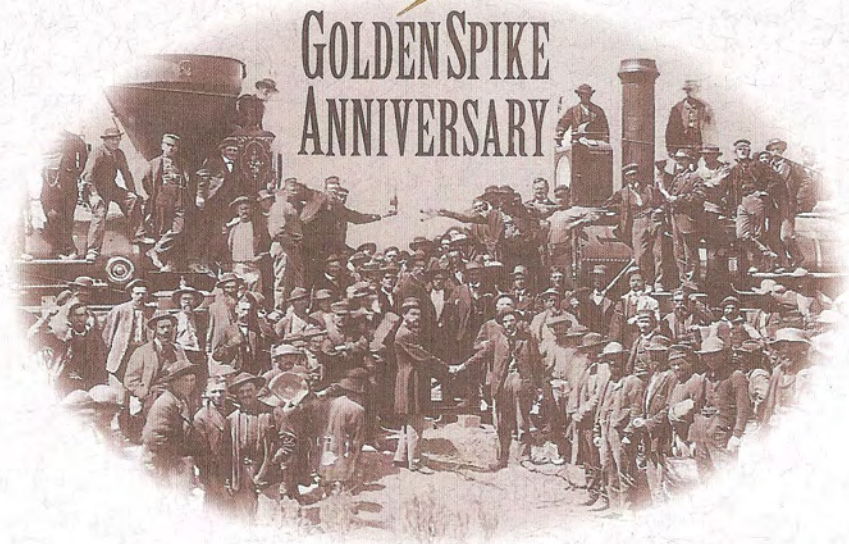


# 125<sup>th</sup>

GOLDEN SPIKE  
ANNIVERSARY



*I* was a grand Anvil Chorus

that those pounding sledges were playing

across the plains and mountains,

in triple time: three strokes to a spike,

ten spikes to the rail; 400 rails to the mile;

425 miles in 1868 on the road to Promontory

and the completion of the great work of the age...





the most  
famous date in  
Union Pacific  
history.

Yet the real significance is more symbolic than literal.

It's not the company's "birthday". President Abraham Lincoln created Union Pacific when he signed the Pacific Railroad Act on July 1, 1862. Ground was broken in Omaha on Dec. 2, 1863. The first rail was laid July 10, 1865.

Every school child is taught that May 10, 1869 is the day when the Golden Spike was driven to complete America's first transcontinental railroad. In the simplest sense that's right, but there was much more to the story. At the time of the ceremony, Union Pacific was, in reality, little more than a crude iron trail across a wilderness with few people, no industry and an uncertain future. Much remained to be done to make the line truly operational. The bridge across the Missouri River at Omaha physically linking Union Pacific to the eastern roads wasn't opened until March 22, 1872, nearly three years after the "Great Event".

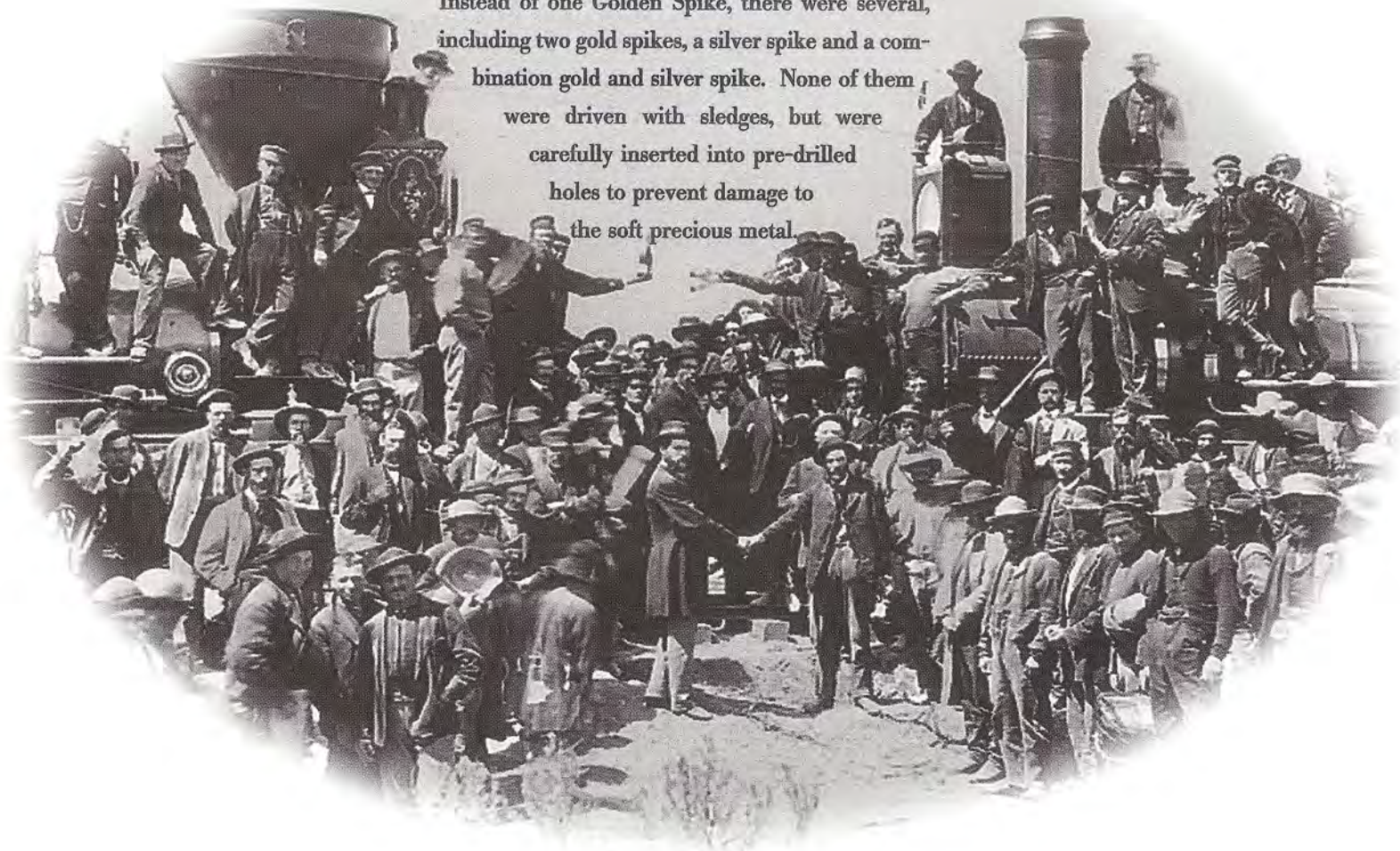
Even the name of the location of the joining of the rails remains confused to this day. Most often the site is called "Promontory Point". Actually Promontory Point is 35 miles south, where the Promontory Mountains form a peninsula jutting into the north shore of the Great Salt Lake. The name of the town that sprang up along the tracks was simply "Promontory". The actual site for the junction was the area called "Promontory Summit".

Documents from the era show those who built the railroad carelessly used all three references for the same location, so confusion by today's scholars is understandable.

# P R O M O N T O R Y

There is some other interesting trivia.

The ceremony wasn't actually witnessed by the press, contributing to some of the more colorful if inaccurate second-hand accounts of that day. Instead of one Golden Spike, there were several, including two gold spikes, a silver spike and a combination gold and silver spike. None of them were driven with sledges, but were carefully inserted into pre-drilled holes to prevent damage to the soft precious metal.



# TRUTH MYTH

Historic refinement aside, the significance of Promontory as a glorious tribute to American engineering, politics and hard work remains untarnished. As *Trains Magazine* editorialized in its special 1969 Golden Spike Centennial edition: “The truth of Promontory may denude the myth; but truth was its redeeming quality. For as only Lucius Beebe could say it, ‘...The Gold Spike was altogether real. The elements were uncooperative...The stage management was faulty, communications defective, not all the players had identical scripts. Some of the billed performers didn’t show up at all and, as a result, Promontory was something wonderful; a great moment for Americans to look back on in affection and admiration forever’.”

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Selection of Promontory Summit as the official “connection” was made by Congress to stop parallel grading by the two competing railroads. As a railroad junction, it was a poor location. The nearest water for steam locomotives was eight miles away and there wasn’t any coal or wood for fuel.

Union Pacific served Promontory Summit for less than a year. The meeting place with Central Pacific was moved to Ogden by December, 1869.

The Promontory route itself, a subject of considerable debate 125 years ago because it bypassed Salt Lake City, withered after the Lucin Cut-off was built across the lake when Union Pacific’s E. H. Harriman controlled both railroads shortly after the turn of the century. Ironically, the new route passed through Promontory Point.



# CENTENNIAL

# THE L I N E

Trains stopped running over the historic summit by 1938 and finally, during the scrap metal drives of World War II, the track was pulled up after recreation of the last spike ceremony at Promontory Summit on Sept. 9, 1942.

Marked only by a concrete monument, the spot lingered in splendid isolation for 23 years until Congress finally established it as National Historic Site in 1965.

By the time of the Centennial Anniversary in 1969, the site featured the National Park Service Visitors Center and a short section of reconstructed track to hold two representative steam locomotives as props for the occasion.

Union Pacific Railroad led the national celebration, and among other activities to mark the occasion, debuted a series of the largest diesel-electric locomotives ever built – the 6900-series “Centennials”.

By 1979, exact replicas of the two famous steam engines from 1869, Central Pacific’s “Jupiter” and Union Pacific’s “119”, had been constructed to operate over the restored trackage at the site.





# SPECIAL EVENTS

The Golden Spike National Historic Site is now open year-around. Numerous special events are held in addition to the May 10 reenactment of the spike ceremony staged each year by the Golden Spike Association of Box Elder County, the Box Elder County Commissioners and Box Elder County Tourism Board in cooperation with the National Park Service.

This year the 43rd annual reenactment by the association will be part of the expanded celebration marking the 125th Golden Spike Anniversary.

Union Pacific again is proud to be a part of this monumental achievement.





A locomotive was designed to help Union Pacific celebrate its 100th anniversary in 1969. The locomotives were dubbed "Centennials" and numbered in the 6900 series. They were the stars of the railroad's high-speed freight service for many years.

# SPECTACULARS

A traveling museum car was part of Union Pacific's 1969 Centennial. The car traveled the system during the year with special historical displays. Today, Union Pacific operates a similar museum car named "Promontory".



The special train bringing dignitaries to the Golden Spike National Historic Site is, in itself, part of the company's continuing effort to preserve and recognize its heritage. The cars and locomotives are from Union Pacific's "Streamliner Era". They have been carefully preserved to serve the company in today's business environment for customer specials and for civic purposes.

Included in this train's consist is Union Pacific's traveling exhibit car, appropriately named "Promontory", which is displaying artifacts from the construction era never seen in public or seldom shown outside the company's headquarters museum in Omaha.

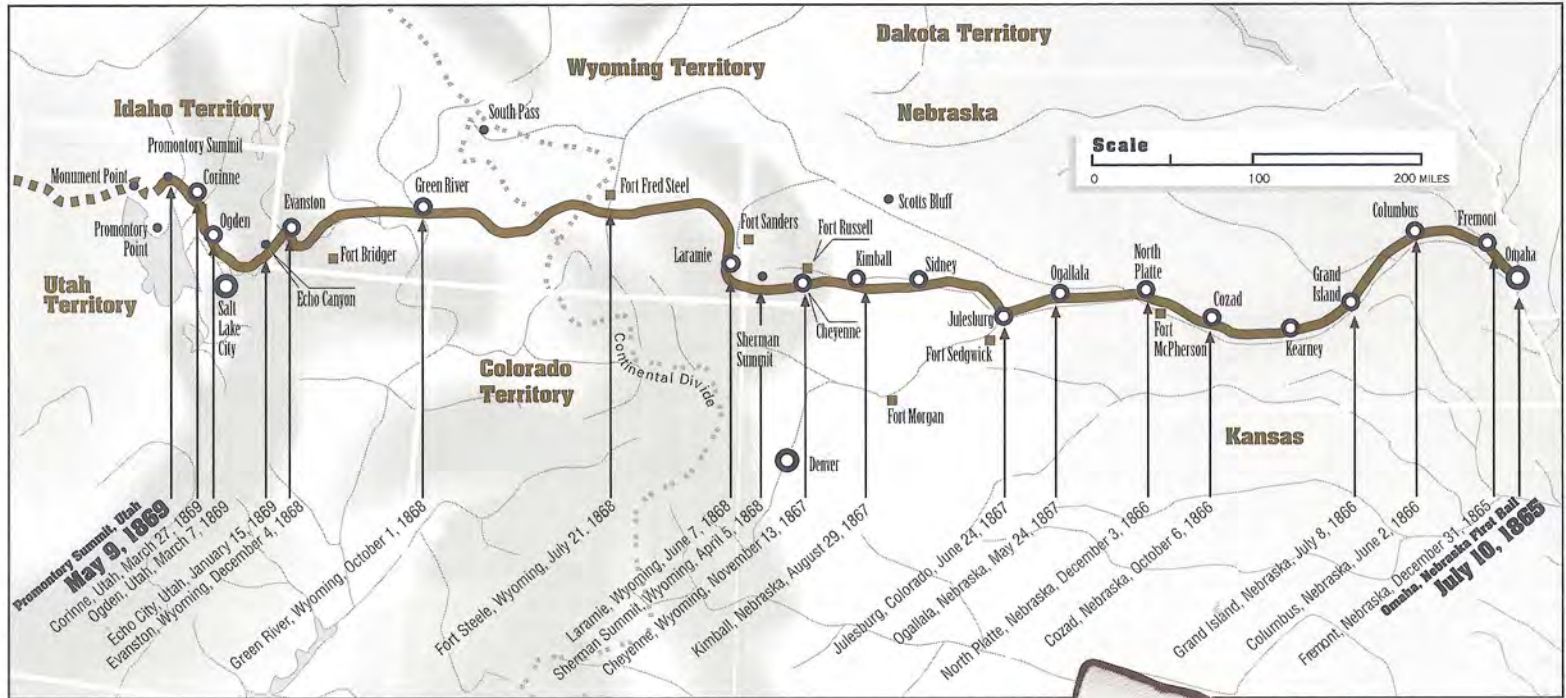
A second special Golden Spike train, powered by Union Pacific's restored

Challenger steam locomotive, is pulling a public excursion train across the original Union Pacific route.

The locomotive, the largest operating steam engine in the world, will be on display at Ogden Union Station during the Golden Spike 125th Anniversary celebration.



# Union Pacific Construction Dateline



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