HISTORY OF THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD: ISSUED BY THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION AT OGDEN, UTAH, MAY 10TH, 1919, IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DRIVING OF THE GOLDEN SPIKE

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UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

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Trieste

Union Pacific railroad company,

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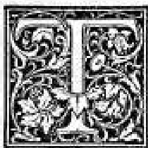
INTRODUCTORY

HISTORY OF THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD



HE purpose of this paper is to review briefly the history of the Union Pacific Railroad. The narrative has been confined to the simplest recital of events, and dates surrounding them, with passing mention of a few prominent characters.

Limitation of space has made it necessary to exclude from these pages deserved mention of many thrilling events of early frontier experiences, giving only such retrospection as will quickly recall the circumstances prompting the promotion of the Pacific railways; dealing as impressionably as we are able with the construction, completion and opening of the line for business.

It is, therefore, not a treatise but a paper, not a polar, solar glare, but a flash-light, not a bridge, but the first stepping-stone; more concise than complete, more prosaic than scintillating, more of the why than the what;—it is not the sum but the substance of what should first be known.

In its preparation, we have been taken directly and appreciably to the source of historic truths by reference to the research of others who have written carefully and interestingly on this subject, and have been helped by privileged access to the private papers and bound volumes that have been preserved and published, for which grateful acknowledgment is hereby made.

For description of "The Great Railroad Wedding—Driving the Golden Spike," see Appendix "D," page 39.

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HISTORY OF THE UNION PACIFIC

THE "Louisiana Purchase" of 1803 seems to have been the first awakening of the people of that day to the importance of the great Trans-Mississippi country. An investment of fifteen million dollars (the price paid the French Government), had brought them to a feeling of direct personal interest in this vast, unexplored territory.

Under the encouragement of President Jefferson, and the authority of Congress, the Lewis & Clark Expedition was authorized and made ready in the spring of 1804. The alluring reports made on their return, two years later, prompted public men, press-writers and adventurers to further exploitation of this "frontier."

Very soon the cupidity of men in commercial life—always responsive—was touched; John Jacob Astor associated with Wilson Price Hunt and Donald McKenzie in a fur-trading expedition, called the "Pacific Fur Company." This Astor party left Montreal on July 15, 1810, proceeding up the Ottawa River, via Lake Huron, to Mackinaw, where Ramsey Crooks, the future president of the American Fur Trading Company, joined them. Their route took them to Green Bay, down the Fox River and across to the Wisconsin, down t, via Prairie du Chien and the Mississippi River, to St. Louis, where they were joined by Robert McClellan, a business partner of Crooks', and by John Day. Their party of about sixty people, then complete, moved up the Missouri River to "The Land of the Dakotas"; thence westward overland to a tidewater terminal called Astoria, founded by Duncan McDougal, on April 12, 1811.

McDougal had sailed from New York with Captain Jonathan Thorne, commander of the "unfortunate Tonquin," on September 8, 1810. After a voyage of more than twelve thousand miles around Cape Horn, they arrived at the mouth of the Columbia River nine months ahead of the McKenzie branch of the overland party, which did not reach Astoria until January 18, 1812; Hunt and his division, on February 15, 1812; the belated party of John Day and Ramsey Crooks brought up the rear on May 11, 1812, after a bitter experience, privation, suffering and banditti abuse.

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While a band of French Canadians had, during the closing years of the eighteenth century, preceded westward as far as the foot hills of the Rockies, the assertion is still safe, we think, that these returning "Astors" made the first careful observations of the Platte Valley Route

during the spring of 1813, having traversed the Platte River district from eastern Wyoming through to Plattsmouth, on the Missouri River.

After the Astors came Alexander Henry; then Major Long, with his "scientists," who left Kanesville (Council Bluffs), in June, 1820, and pushed through to the mountains. Comes now Captain Bonneville, rescued from the "wide-spread, insatiable maw of oblivion" by the facile pen of one of our country's greatest historians, Washington Irving, who was resourceful enough to build up a volume concerning this profitless and unimportant expedition, dealing with it more generously and ingeniously than will be ever attempted again,† for Bonneville's trip was fifteen years too late to discover anything new or particularly interesting about the Rocky Mountain region. Long since, the country had been conquered and occupied by the Pacific Fur Company, the American Fur Company and the Missouri, Rocky Mountain and Hudson Bay Fur Companies, who had established themselves advantageously over its richest fur furnishing fields; they penetrated to the Salt Lake Valley, and in 1826, Jedediah S. Smith, prominent in the western affairs of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company of St. Louis, had already connected the "Oregon Trail" with the Salt Lake Route via the Colorado River, across the Mojave Desert to the lower coast, and later, with a more direct route to San Francisco across the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Then came America's most observing pathfinder, John C. Fremont, in 1842. All of these attracted the country's further attention to the Central Railway route, the national highway which serves the present and commemorates the past.

The hardships, dangers and distances of these expeditions reminded the people of the East again of the remoteness of their new purchase, the circuitousness of inland waterways, and turned their thoughts to some sort of transcontinental transportation.

Travelers and traders of the earlier years of the old century had been in search of an easier pass through the mountain region, somewhere south of the Lewis & Clark trail of 1804-5. Andrew Henry and William H. Ashley, founders of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, at St. Louis, were the first to carry their fur trading operations to the Pacific Coast.

To William H. Ashley and his lieutenant, Entienne Provost, stands unmistakably the credit of the discovery of a southern pass, later known as the "South Pass," in the fall and winter of 1823-4, while exploring along the Sweetwater Trail. It opened the Continental Divide, near the source of the Sweetwater River in Fremont County, western Wyoming; it marked the opening of, and made permanent, the mountain crossing

†Why Washington Irving should have paused so long at this Bonneville shrine is beyond the discernment of his present-day readers.

route of the famous "Oregon Trail." It has been to the Rocky Mountain country all that the Cumberland Gap ever meant to the people east of the Alleghenies.

So much for the South Pass Route, which attracted the locating parties of the Union Pacific Railroad Company in later years.

With the Oregon controversy over, and its boundary dispute with Canada settled, the acquisition of California from Mexico, in 1848, the Mormon settlement of Utah, and the discovery of gold on the Western Coast, the demand for quicker communication than then possible, around the Horn, across the Isthmus, by overland freighting, staging or pony-express, was intensified, and Congress was urged to greater activity.

As far back in our history as 1819, Robert Mills, of Virginia, is found pressing the necessity of a cross-country railway to the attention of the people of that day, and later to Congress. He suggested the use, if practicable, of land-steamers, or "steam propelled carriages for quickened service across the continent, to run from the head-waters of inland navigation westward over a direct route to the Pacific."

This, please note, was eight years before the successful application of steam power to carrying-use anywhere in this country.

Then followed what was known as the "Western Movement," toward the "Back-lands," or the "Indian Country," narrowed down now to an area of less than sixty-five thousand square miles, or to the Indian Territory of today; all this, too, within a brief period of eighty years, or less, under the civilizing influences of rapid transportation and communication.

One promoter's proposition after another followed and failed. While citizens John Plumbe, of Dubuque, Iowa, Asa Whitney, a merchant of New York, the Honorable Butler S. King, General Robinson, of Pennsylvania, Hosmer, of Ohio, Pierce, of Indiana, Thomas H. Benton, and others had pioneered in this project for a Pacific railway, the consistent and persistent pursuit of such men as Senators Salmon P. Chase, and Wade, of Ohio, Gwin, McDougal and Latham, of California, Harlan, of Iowa, Lyman Trumbull and Stephen A. Douglas, of Illinois, and many others, prominent in the councils of both the Senate and Lower House, working together, brought this splendid enterprise to a point of Government initiative.

Congress had been frequently memorialized, but what Stephen A. Douglas had previously done to encourage the building of the Illinois Central Railway, seemingly, prepared the public mind for the provisional measures to follow and served as a solvent of difficulties, many and

multiform, to be met with in promoting the necessary land and bond-aiding measures of succeeding years.

Trans-Missouri tribes were being rapidly dispossessed, displaced, and replaced on reservations; Indian wars among the tribes and with the whites were nearing an end; the public domain was fast falling under private control and cultivation; the arid, inhospitable, desert reclaimed under an easy arrangement of purchase—the "West" had become a relative term, and the whole country was restive over its inaccessibleness.

The initial step in the direction of Pacific railway building was the success of a bill submitted to Congress in 1853, by Senator Salmon P. Chase, of Ohio, providing for a survey of four routes to the Pacific Coast, then under serious consideration:

First: A line from the Upper Mississippi to Puget Sound—Major Stevens in charge of the survey.

Second: A line along the 36th parallel, through Walker's Pass of the Rocky Mountains, to strike the Coast at San Diego, Los Angeles or San Pedro—under direction of Lieutenant Whipple.

Third: A line through the Rocky Mountains near the head-waters of the Rio del Norte and Hueferno River, emerging at Great Salt Lake Basin—Captain Gunnison in charge.

Fourth: A line along the 32d parallel, via El Paso and the Colorado River, to strike the Pacific somewhere in lower California.

Jefferson Davis, then Secretary of War, evidently on his own motion, sent five other engineering corps into this field; their reconnaissance to cover, first, the "Northern Route" of the 47th to the 49th parallel, north latitude; the second, an "Overland Route," between parallels 41 and 42—also known as the "Central" or "Mormon Route." The third was along the 39th parallel, called the "Buffalo Trail." The fourth was along the route of the 35th parallel, and the fifth, along the 32d parallel, or the "Southern Route."

Secretary Davis made a complete report to Congress of all this exploitation under date of January 27, 1855.

This brings us to the bill Stephen A. Douglas proposed and promoted in the 34th Congress in January, 1855; sustaining it he said, among other good things, "If we intend to extend our commerce, if we intend to make the great ports of the World tributary to our worth ****** we must penetrate to the Pacific."

The Douglas Bill proposed three routes to the Coast, one via El Paso and the Colorado River, to be called "The Southern Pacific;" another from the Iowa border to be called the "Central Pacific;" another to the north to be called the "Northern Pacific."

It is well worthy of note that the terms he used, descriptive of these three routes, endure and stand today as titles for the three trunk lines finally built.

Subsequent surveys were to determine the most acceptable route of the three suggested.

His measure found the approval of a joint committee of both houses, succeeded in the Senate, but failed of passage in the House.

The distinguishing feature of the Douglas plan was that it not only proposed, but liberally *provided* for what was to be undertaken.

The years between 1850 and 1860 "marked a period of storm and stress in which sectionalism and localism were engaged in drawing and quartering Pacific railway measures."†

The accomplishment of a transcontinental railway, however, seemed predestined to await the emergencies of civil war, which soon came.

The ordinance of secession, done at Charleston, South Carolina, on December 20, 1860 and the retirement of its several sister states that quickly followed, silenced further sectional opposition.

Congress, then freer to act, and supported by declarations of all party platforms favoring transportation development in the West, was brought to a serious consideration of the Enabling Act, remembered as House Roll 364—a blend of all the better features of bills proposed by Senators Stephen A. Douglas and Washburn of Illinois, Congressman Samuel R. Curtis of Iowa, Rollins of New Hampshire, and others. "364" passed the United States Senate, as amended, on June 20, 1862, Senate's amendments concurred in by the House on June 25th, and became a law over the signature of President Lincoln on July 1, 1862. (Congressional Globe says July 2, 1862.)

This act created the "Union Pacific Railroad Company," which corporation was "authorized and empowered to lay out, locate, construct, furnish, maintain, and enjoy a continuous railroad and telegraph, with the appurtenances, from a point on the 100th meridian of longitude west from Greenwich, between the south margin of the valley of the Republican River and the north margin of the valley of the Platte River, in the Territory of Nebraska, to the western boundary of Nevada

†Davis on "Union Pacific Railway."