

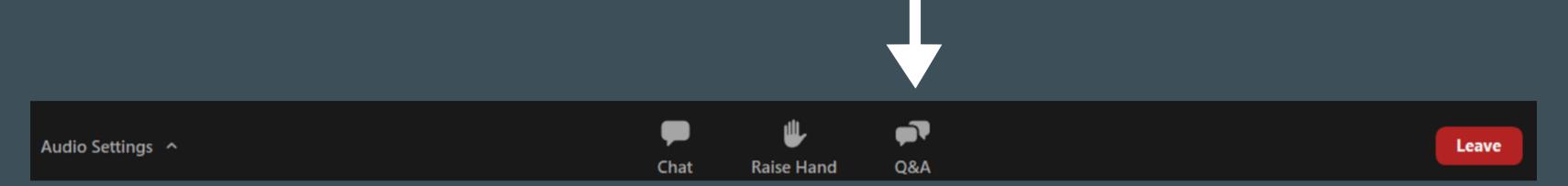
#### INSIDE THE VAULT

Building the Transcontinental Railroad
with Dr. Gordon Chang
THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 2025



#### How to Participate





- If you would like to ask a question, you can use the Q&A feature.
- We will be answering audience questions throughout the session.
- The views expressed here are those of the historian.

#### For Security and Privacy

- Your microphone is automatically muted.
- Your camera is automatically turned off.

## Today's Document



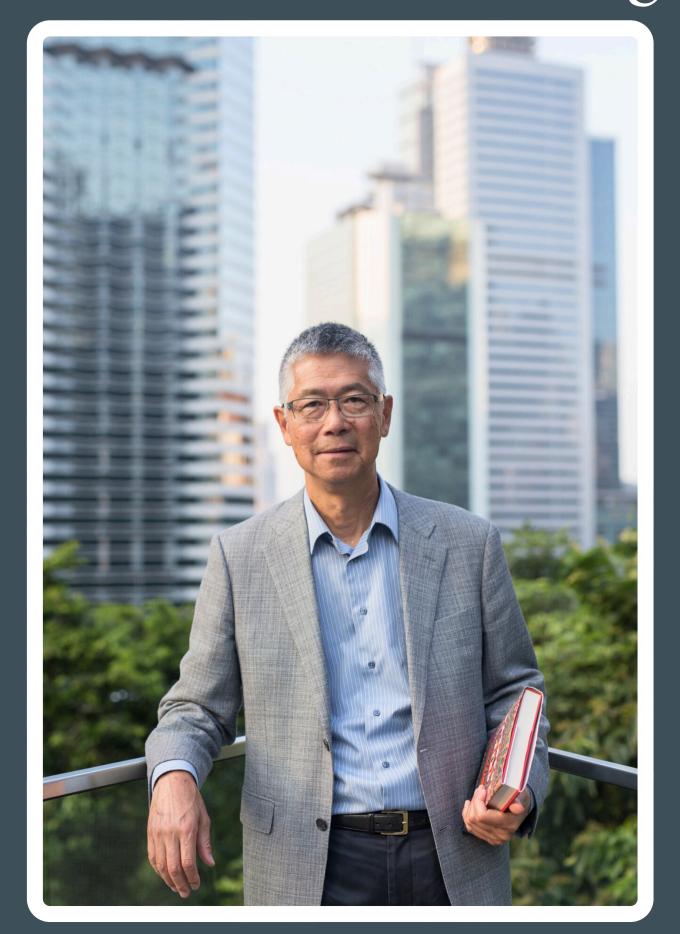


Andrew J. Russell, *East and West Shaking Hands at Laying Last Rail, Promontory Point*, May 10, 1869.

(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04481.01)

#### Dr. Gordon Chang





Dr. Gordon Chang is a professor of history at Stanford University and holds the distinguished Olive H. Palmer Professorship in the Humanities. His research examines race and ethnicity in America, with a focus on trans-Pacific relations and the historical ties between East Asia and the United States. He has written about US-China relations, the Chinese diaspora, Asian American history, and global historical movements. His acclaimed 2019 book, Ghosts of Gold Mountain: The Epic History of the Chinese Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad, recovers the overlooked stories of Chinese railroad workers and honors their contributions to shaping America. His latest book, War, Race, and Culture: Journeys in Trans-Pacific and Asian American Histories, is a career-spanning anthology that engages a range of topics, from diplomatic history and Asian American history to art history. Dr. Chang's scholarship has earned recognition from Congress members Nancy Pelosi and Anna Eshoo, the US House of Representatives, and the California State Legislature. He has also been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Society of American Historians.

#### Timeline





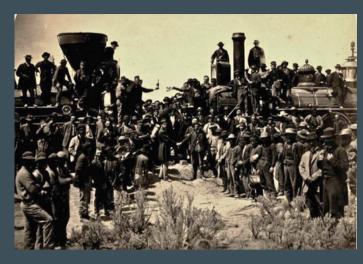
#### January 8, 1863

California governor Leland Stanford hosts the Central Pacific groundbreaking ceremony in Sacramento, California.



#### 1865

Thousands of Chinese migrants are hired by the Central Pacific Railroad Company.



#### May 10, 1869

The Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads join together at the Golden Spike Ceremony.



Lincoln signs the Pacific Railroad Act allowing the Central Pacific Railroad Company and Union Pacific Railroad Company to construct the railroad.

#### December 3, 1863

The Union Pacific breaks ground in Omaha, Nebraska.

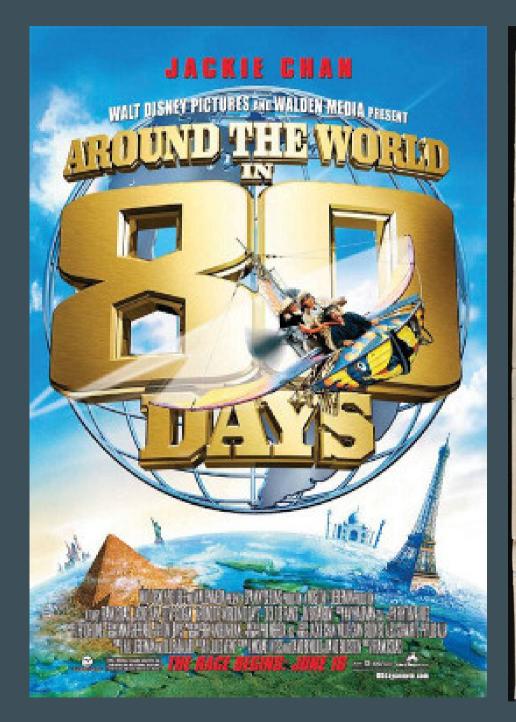


#### June 25, 1867

Chinese railroad workers go on strike for better pay and conditions, constituting the largest collective labor action in American history up to that point.

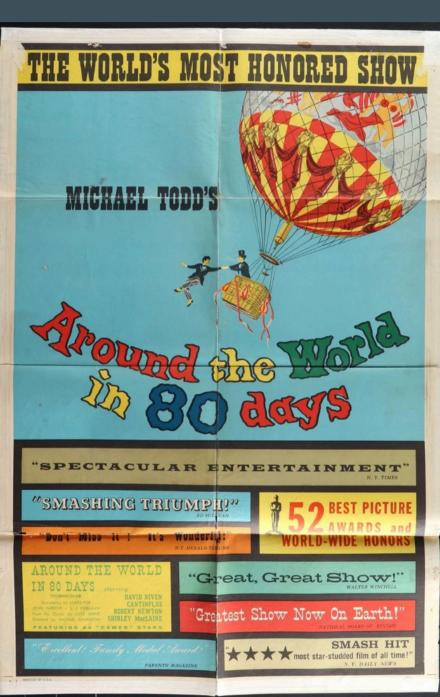
# Around the World in Eighty Days





Movie poster for Around the World in 80

Days (2004)



Movie poster for Around the World in 80

Days (1956)



Still from Around the World in 80 Days (1956)

#### Andrew J. Russell

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AMERICAN HISTORY

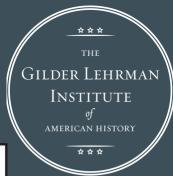
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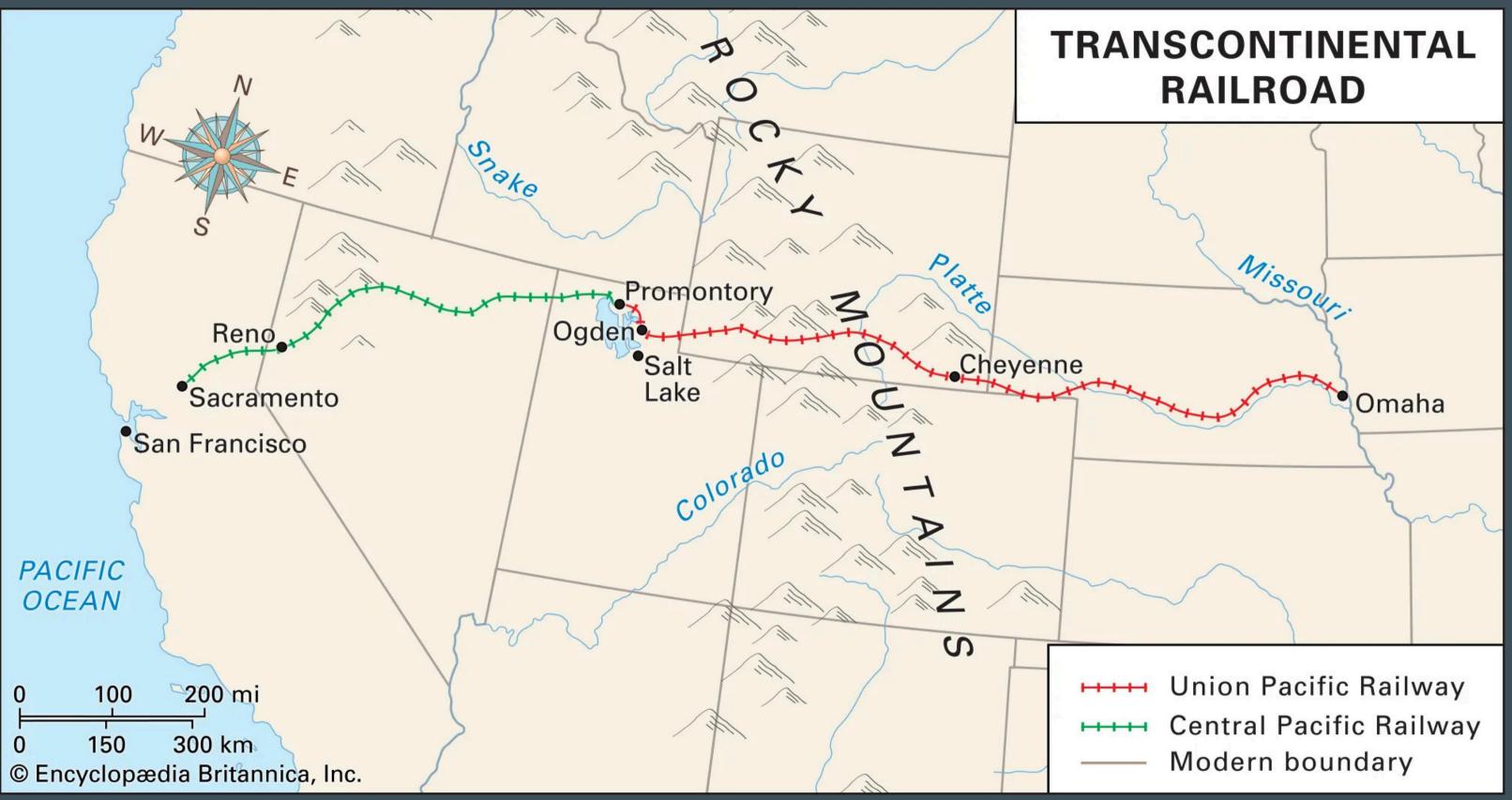
- Born March 20, 1829, in Walpole, New Hampshire
- Learned photography while serving in the Union Army during the Civil War, becoming the first official Army photographer
- After the war, commissioned by the Union Pacific Railroad Company to photograph railroad construction for investors and the general public
- During 1868-1869, traveled across the West to document engineering methods to the workers who made its completion possible



No. 162. Battery of thirty-two pounders, May 3, 1863. (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC05189)

## Map of the Railroad



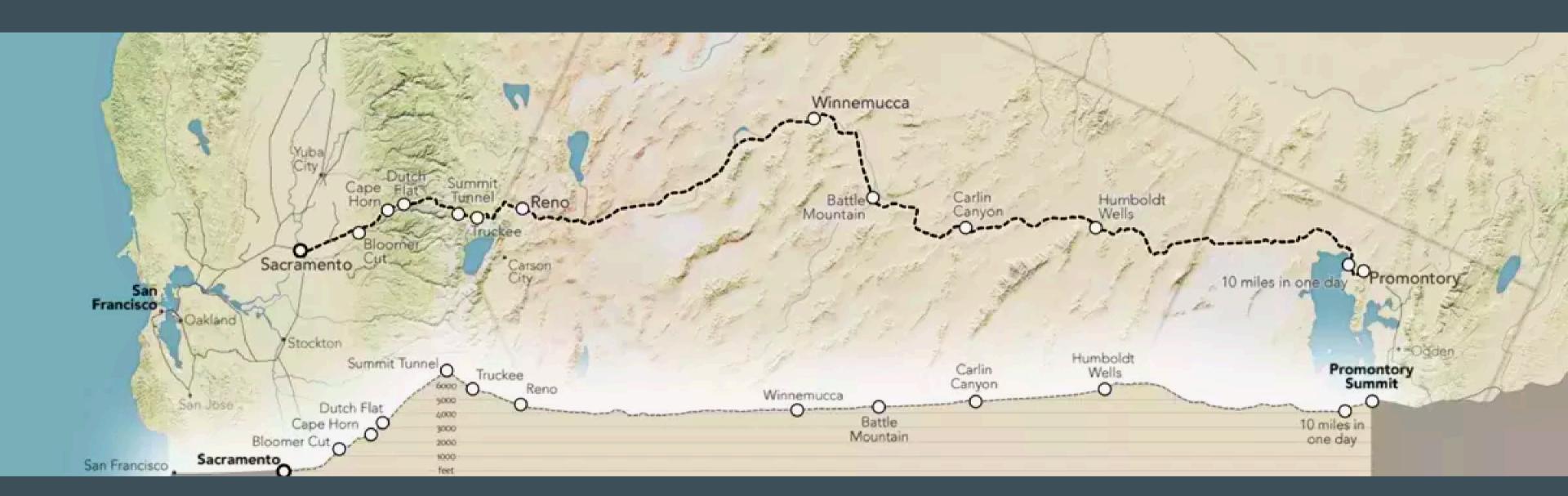


Map of the transcontinental railroad construction route.

(Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.)

### Map of the Railroad





Map of Central Pacific Railroad Company construction route. (Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project at Stanford)

#### Across the Continent





Across the Continent: "Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way," print by Frances F. Palmer, Currier and Ives, New York, 1868. (National Gallery of Art)

# Gold Spike

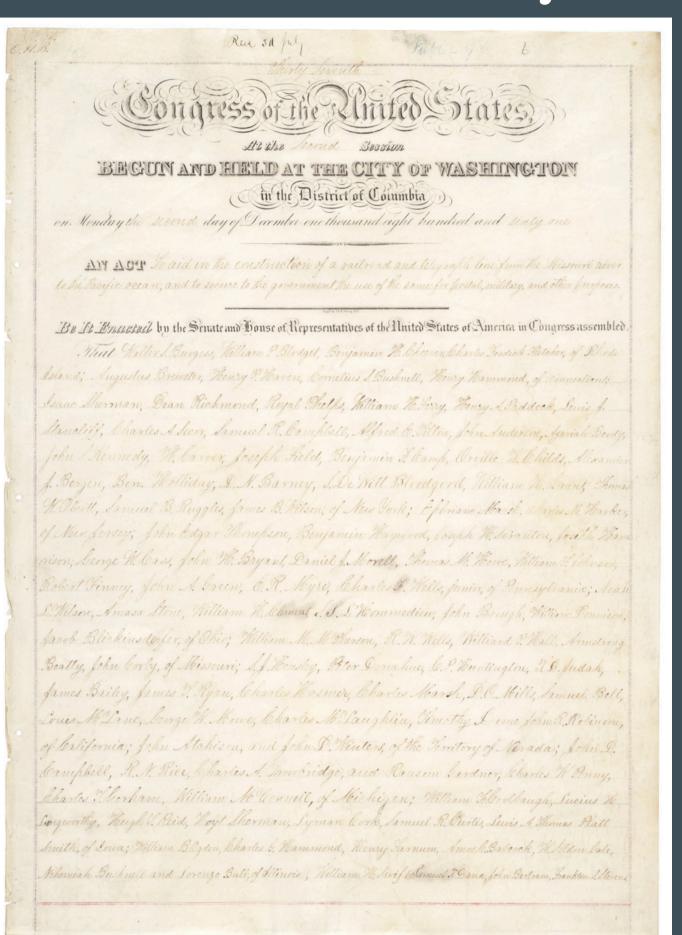




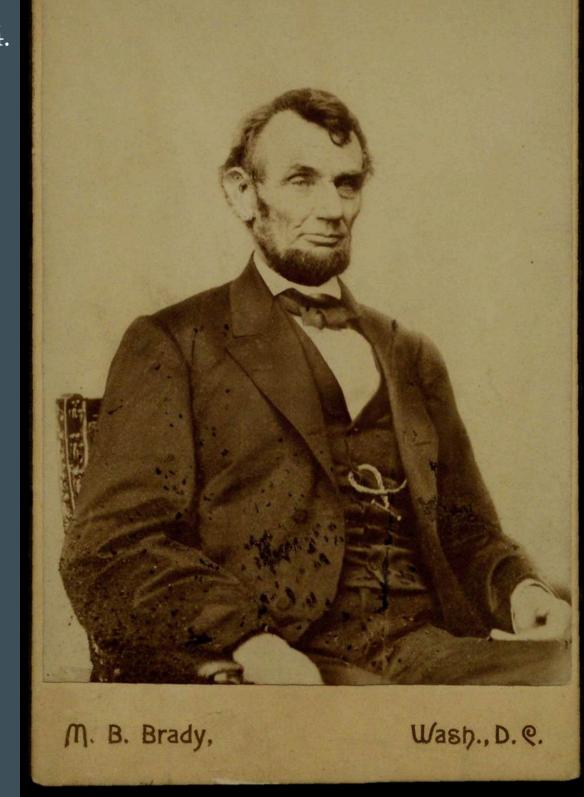
The Gold Spike, May 10, 1869. (Stanford University print collection)

### Pacific Railway Act



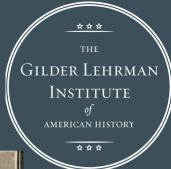


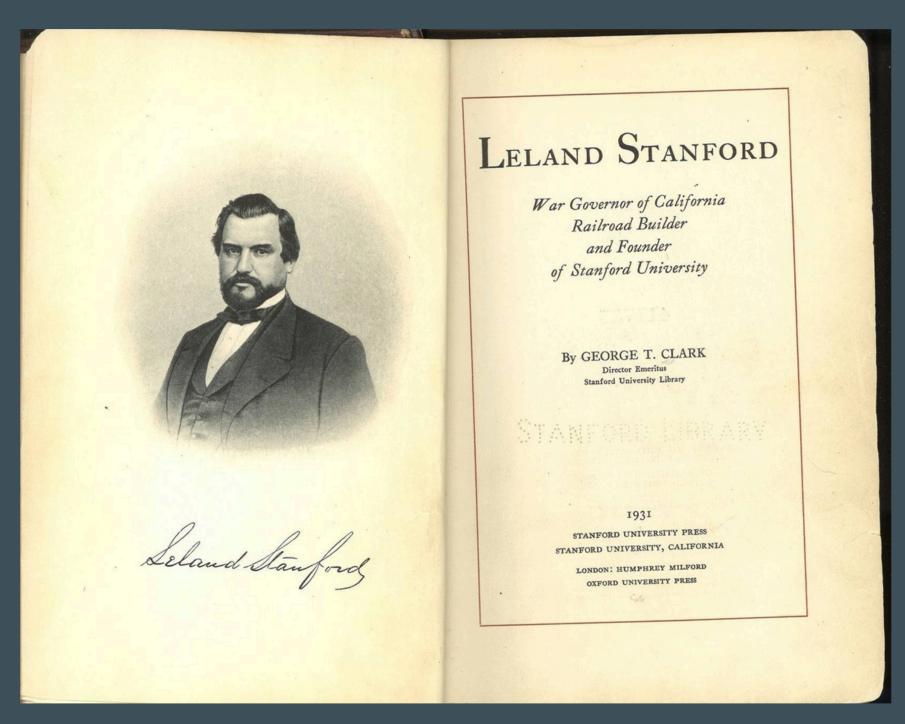
Cabinet card of Abraham Lincoln, by
Anthony Berger, published by M. B.
Brady, Washington, DC, ca. 1861–1864.
(Gilder Lehrman Institute,
GLC02910.01)



Act of July 1, 1862 (Pacific Railroad Act), 37<sup>th</sup> Congress, July 1, 1862. (National Archives)

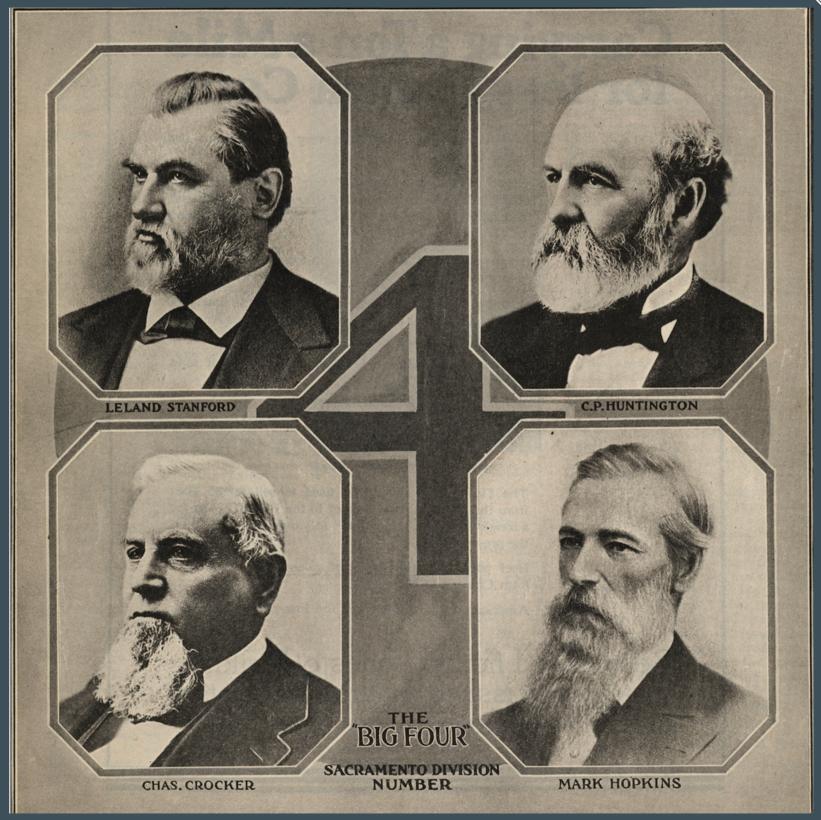
#### Leland Stanford





Frontispiece and title page of *Leland Stanford, War Governor of California, Railroad Builder and Founder of Stanford University* by George T. Clark, Stanford University Press, 1931.

(Stanford University Libraries)



Southern Pacific Bulletin, August 1920. (California State Railroad Museum Library and Archives)

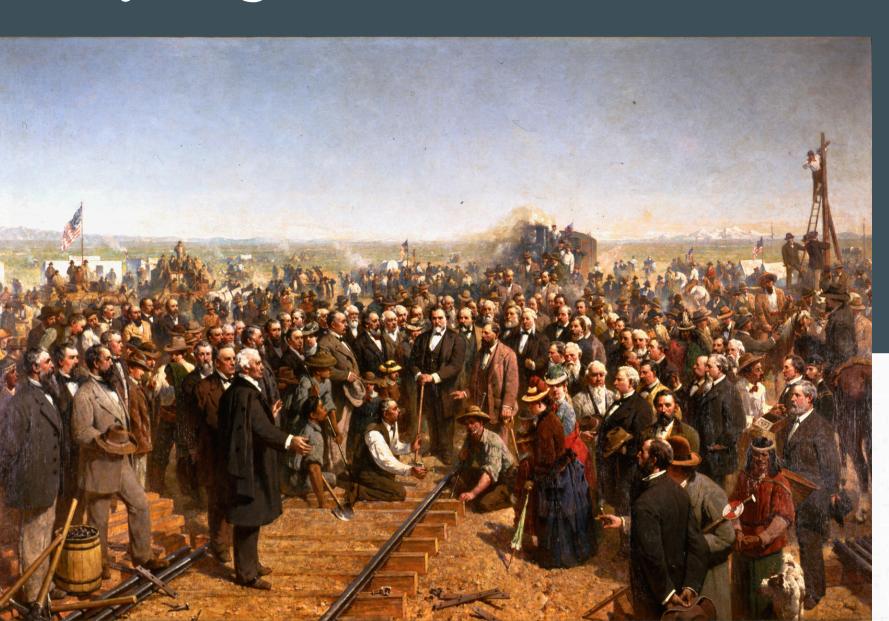
# Laying the Last Rail





Thomas Hill, *Driving the Last Spike*, 1881. (California State Railroad Museum)

### Laying the Last Rail

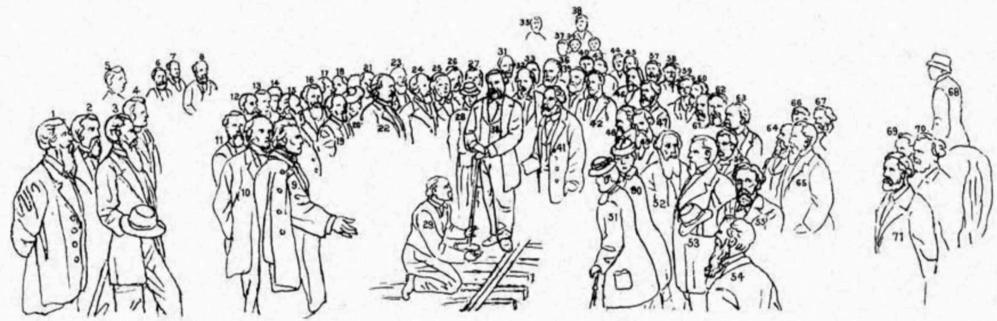


Thomas Hill, Driving the Last Spike, 1881. (California State Railroad Museum)



#### Key to the Portraits. (Courtesy of Gordon Chang)

KEY TO THE PORTRAITS.



I. STEPHEN T. GAGE. 2. A. P. STANFORD. 3. F. A. TRITLE 4. HON. JOHN CONNESS. 6. BENJAMIN WELCH 7. E. F. GERALD. g. REV. DR. TODD.

14. BISHOP J. SHARP.

15. WM. SHERMAN. 16. CHARLES MARSH. 18. LORENZO SAWYER 19. E. BLACK RYAN. 22. JOHN CORNING.

31. H. NOTINGHAM 32. C. P. HUNTINGTON 24. THOMAS P. DURANT. 25. DR. J. D. B. STILLMAN.

29. F. L. VANDENBERG.

34 F. D. RICHARDS 38. J. R. ADAMS. 40. JUDGE GALWOOD. 41. J. H. STROBRIDGE.

44. GEN. COGSWELL. 45. GEORGE F. PARSONS. 46. EDGAR MILLS. 47. GENL. GEO. W. DODGE. 50. MISS EARL.

48. HON. MILTON S. LATHAM. 51. MISS ANNIE REED. 53. CHARLES CROCKER. 55. T. D. JUDAH. 56. L. M. CLEMENT.

57. ELI DENNISON.

67 CEO. E. GRAY. 68. JOHN CASEMENT. 70. CAPT. FRANKLIN. 71. HON. A. A. SARGENT.

## Chinese Laying Last Rail





Thomas Hill, *Driving the Last Spike*, 1881. (California State Railroad Museum)



Andrew J. Russell, *Chinese Laying Last Rail*, 1869. (USU Digital Exhibits)



Chinese Railroad Workers at Ogden Golden Spike Parade, May 10, 1919. (Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives)

#### Guangdong, China to the Sierra Nevada





Kaiping Diaolou and Villages. (Courtesy of Gordon Chang)

Andrew J. Russell, *Summit of Sierra Nevada*, California, Donner Lake, 1868. (Library of Congress)

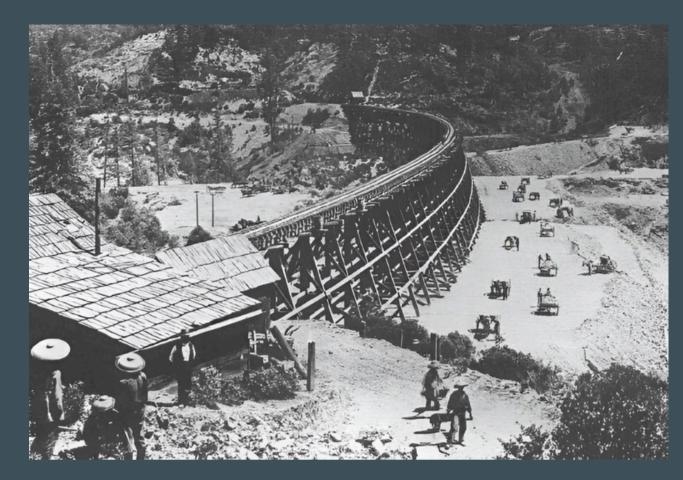


#### Railroad Builders

"It is a significant fact . . . that at the laying of the last rail on the Pacific Railroad, John Chinaman occupied a prominent position. He it was who commenced, and he it was who finished the great work; and but for his skill and industry, the Central Pacific Railroad might not now have been carried eastward of the Sierras.

The experience of this undertaking has proved that the Chinaman is an admirable railroad builder. His labor is cheap, his temper is good, his disposition is docile, his industry is unflagging, his strength and endurance are wonderful, and his mechanical skill is remarkable. The Chinaman is a born railroad builder, and as such he is destined to be most useful to California, and indeed, to the whole Pacific slope."

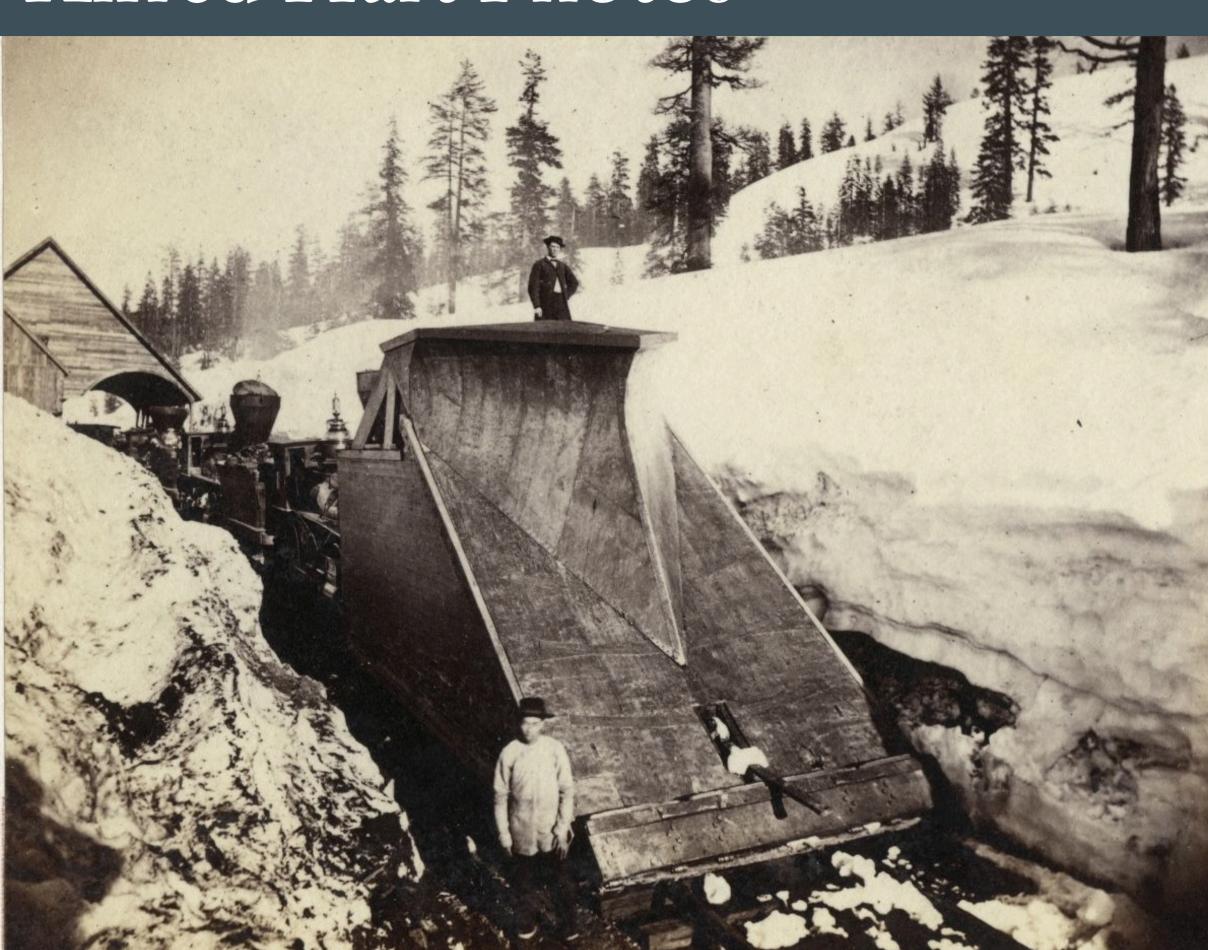
- "The Chinaman as a Railroad Builder,"The Scientific American, July 31, 1869



Andrew J. Russell, *A trestle east of Sacramento*, ca. 1866. (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology)



Chinese laborers shoveling snow for Northern Pacific track-laying crews near the summit of the Cascade Range, 1886. (University of Washington Libraries)





Alfred Hart, Snow Plow at Cisco, #239, ca. 1862–1869. (Stanford University Libraries)





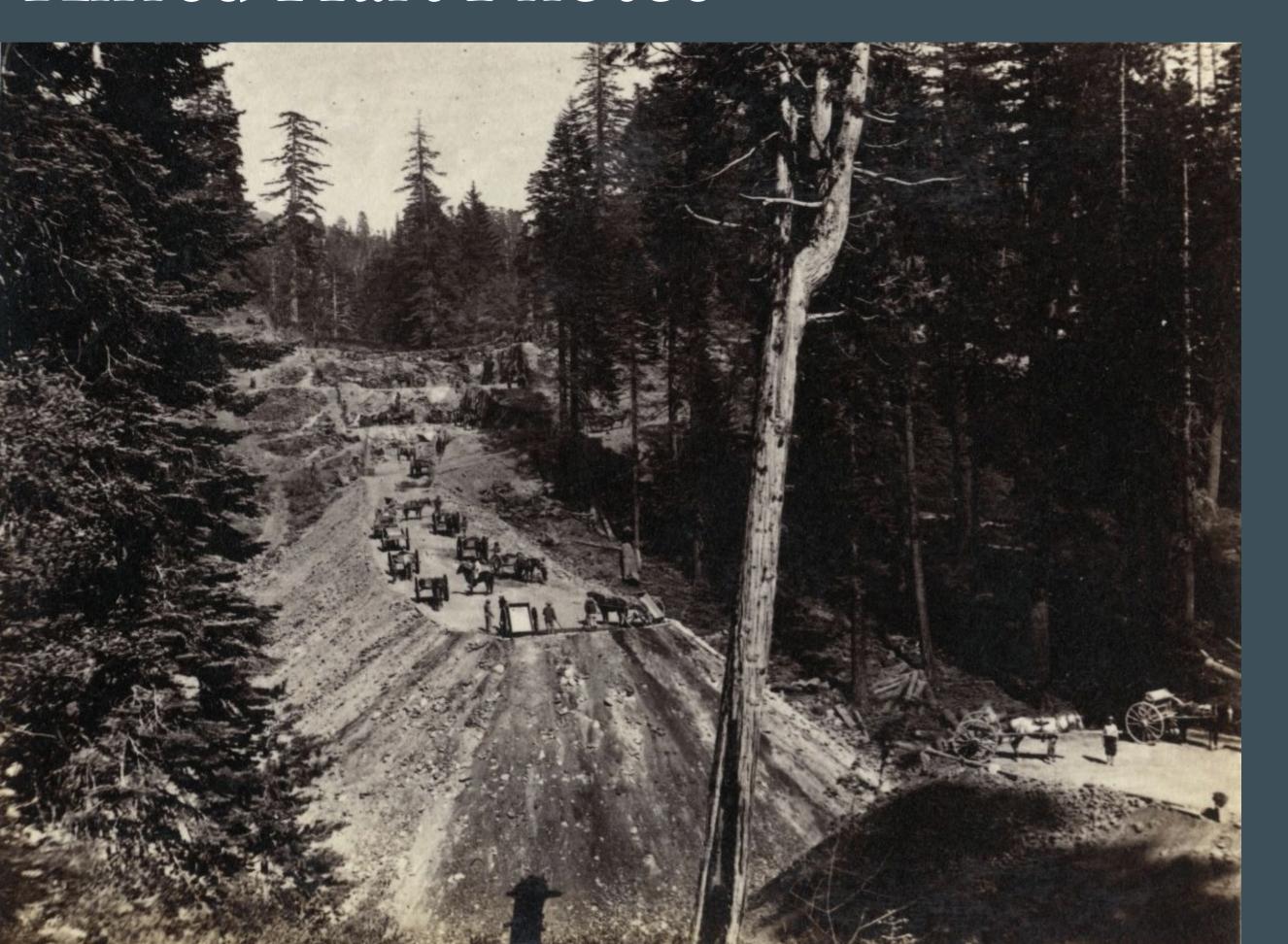
Alfred Hart, Untitled, ca. 1862–1869. (Nevada Historical Society)





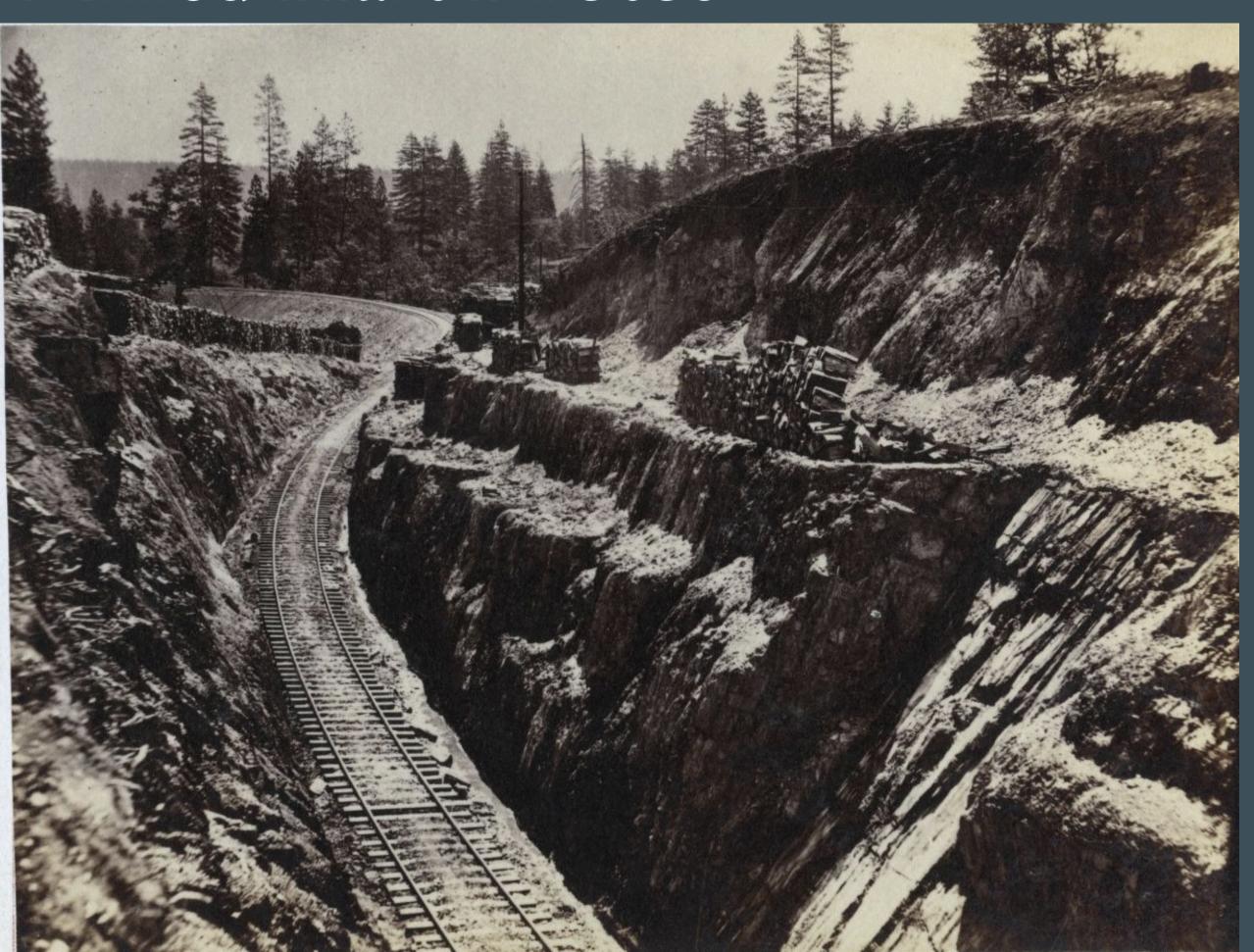
Alfred Hart, Blasting at Chalk Bluffs Above Alta Cut 60 Feet Deep, #70, ca. 1862–1869. (Stanford University Libraries)



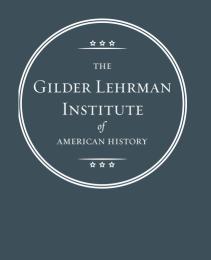


Alfred, Hart, Bank and Cut at Sailors Spur 80 Miles from Sacramento, #90, ca. 1862–1869. (Stanford University Libraries)





Alfred Hart, Deep Cut at Trail Ridge Length 1000 Feet, #46, ca. 1862–1869. (Stanford University Libraries)





Alfred Hart, Horse Ravine Wall and Grizzly Hill Tunnel 77 Miles from Sacramento, #88, ca. 1862–1869. (Stanford University Libraries)

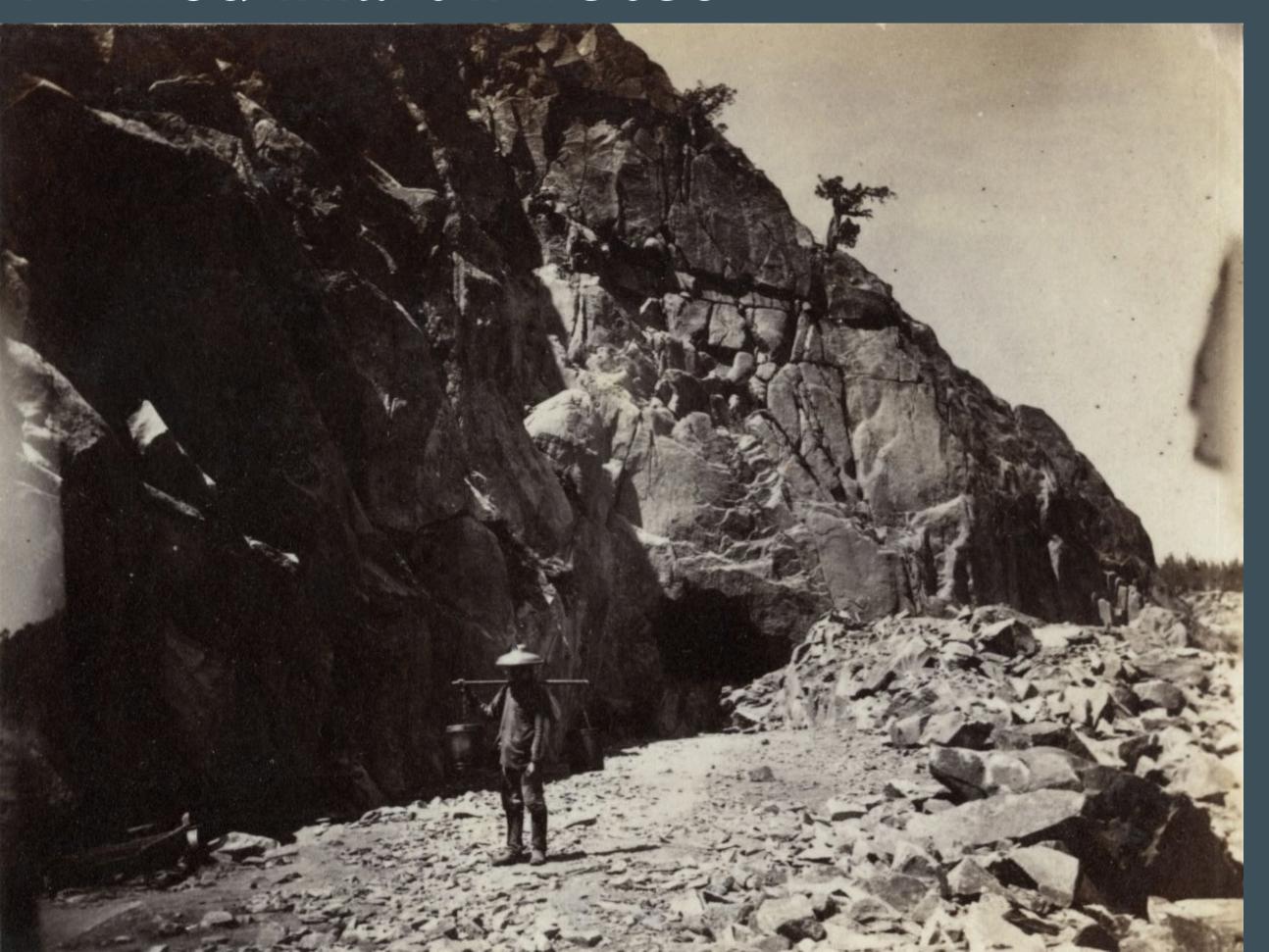




Alfred Hart, Coldstream Eastern Slope of Western Summit, #207, ca. 1862–1869.

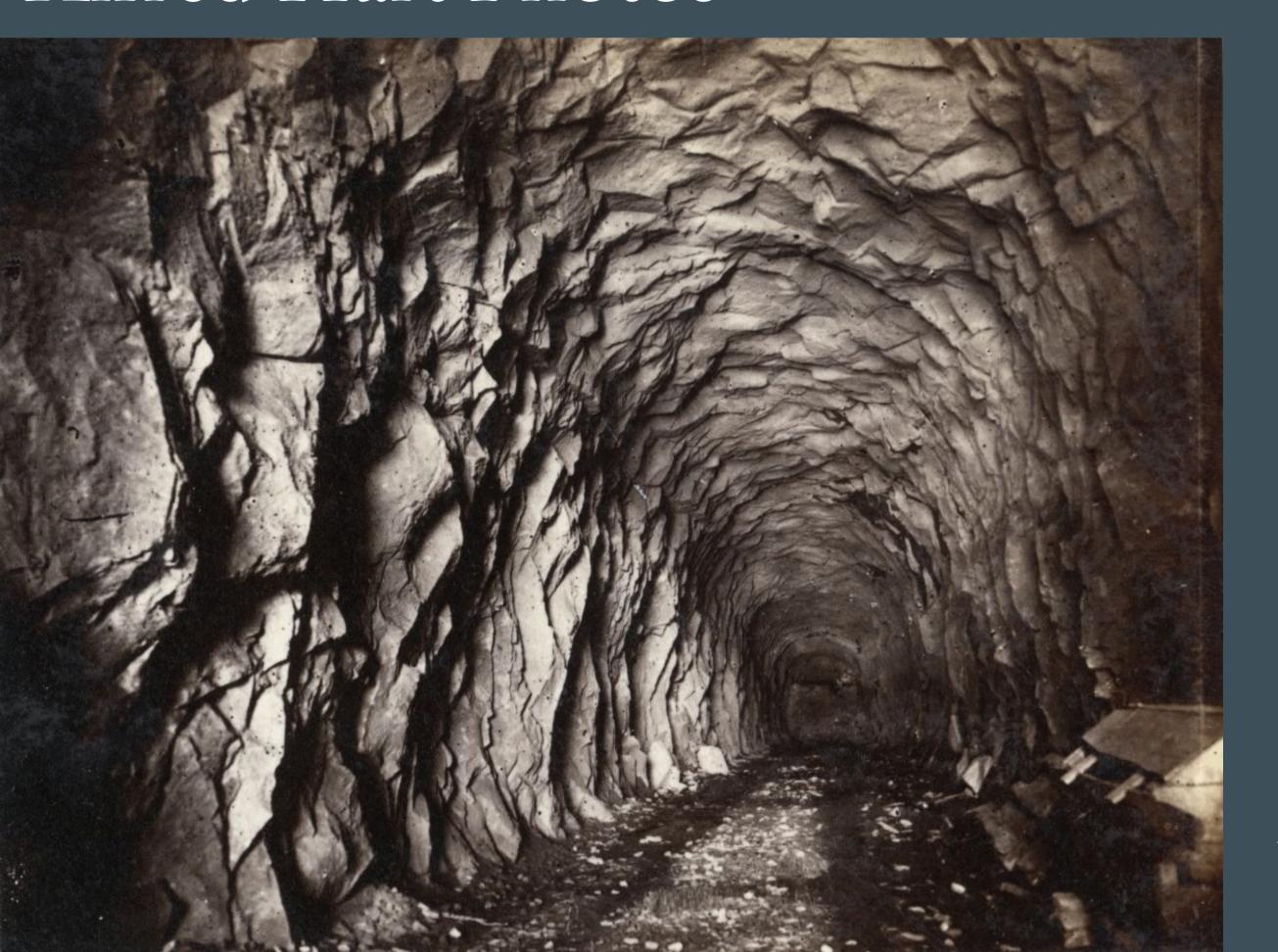
(Stanford University Libraries)





Alfred Hart, Heading of East Portal Tunnel No. 8 from Donner Lake Railroad, #204, ca. 1862–1869. (Stanford University Libraries)

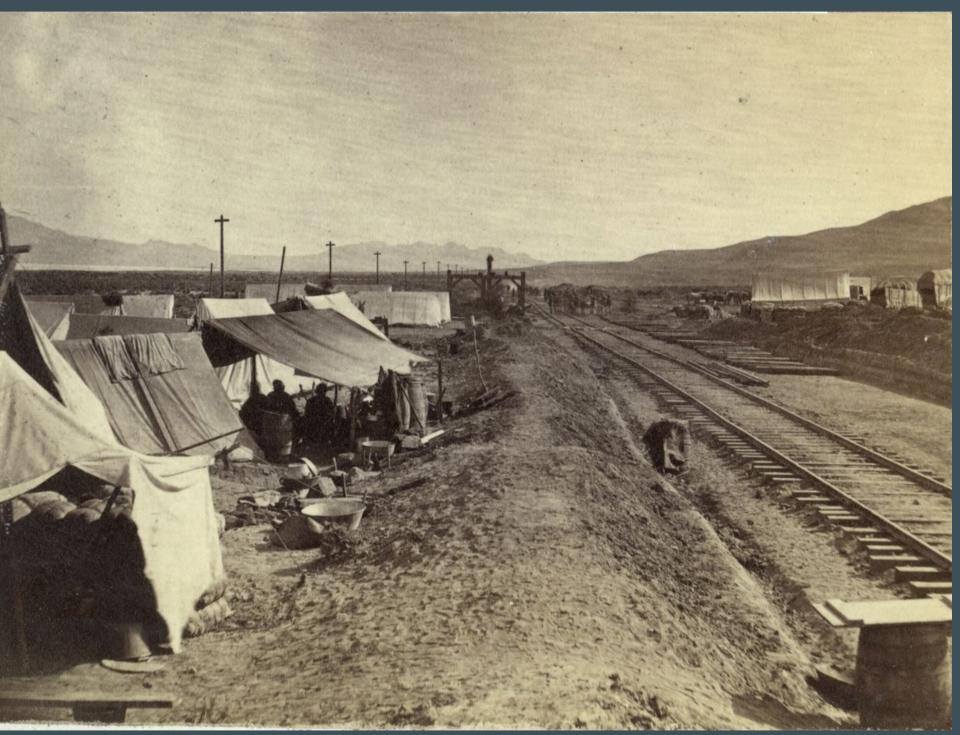




Alfred Hart, Summit Tunnel Before Completion Western Summit Altitude 7042 Feet, #197, ca. 1862–1869. (Stanford University Libraries)

### Chinese Camps





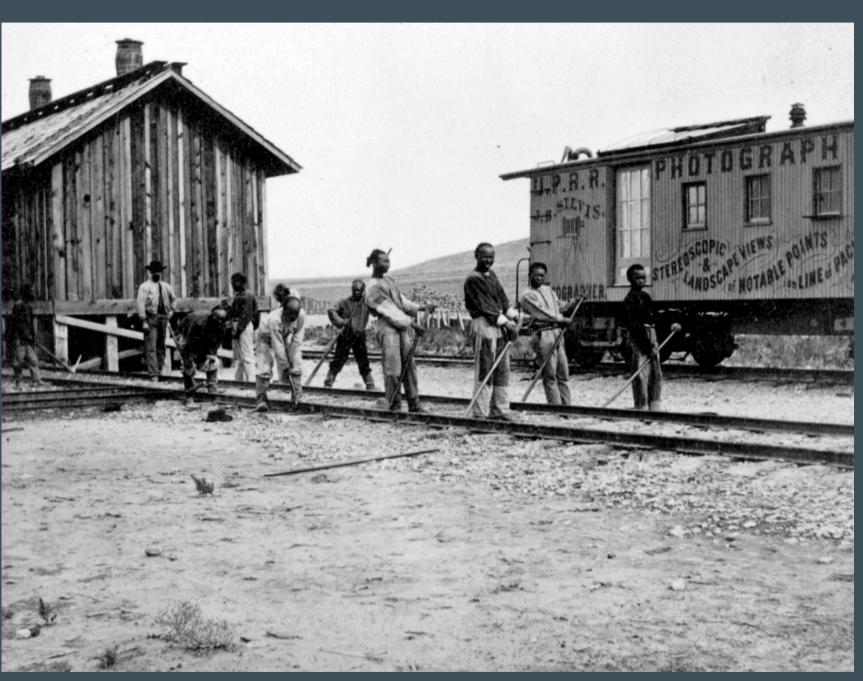
Alfred Hart, Chinese Camp Browns Station, #313, ca. 1862–1869. (Stanford University Libraries)



Alfred Hart, Chinese Camp at End of Track, #327, ca. 1862–1869. (Stanford University Libraries)

#### Work and Death





China Section Gang at Promontory, Utah, 1869–1870. (Denver Public Library Digital Collections)



Group of Chinese immigrants performing a ceremony in Wood River Valley, 1884. (The Community Library Collections)

# Payroll



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C.P.R.R. pay roll no. 304 for the month of October 1866, Camp #36. (Stanford University Libraries)

# Westward Migration



- Transcontinental railroad reduced travel time from several months to several days.
- Western settlement rapidly accelerated, leading to displacement of Shoshone people.

"Skin teepees, Shoshone Indians," ca. 1908–1919. (Library of Congress)

### Buffalo Hunting

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- Devastation of the buffalo population followed the completion of the transcontinental railroad.
- Hunting parties formed since railroad transport facilitated access to Idaho and Utah.
- Shoshone people experienced starvation as a result.

Engraving showing hunters shooting at a herd of bison from a train and along the tracks, [Albert Berghaus], "The Far West.—Shooting Buffalo on the Line of the Kansas-Pacific Railroad," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, June 3, 1871. (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)



#### Chinese Railroad Workers Oral History Project





Russell Low, September 18, 2018. (Chinese Railroad Workers Oral History Project)



Maxine Hong Kingston, November 4, 2013. (Chinese Railroad Workers Oral History Project)



Sandy Lee, July 17, 2023. (Chinese Railroad Workers Oral History Project)

When did he come to the US? I 他到达美国的时间? In 1850s

Did he come with any other family members or friends? If so, who? I 他是否与家人或朋友一同达到美国?若是,请提供他们的情况。 He came with a group of young men from the same village or nearby villages, some people were relatives, but not from the same family.

Any information regarding the passage experience? Name of sailing vessel? I 您是否了解他的行程情况?如航船名称等。 He first took a river ferry to Hong Kong, then took a 3 masts sailboat to San Francisco. There was no steamships running this route at that time.

# Archaeological Record



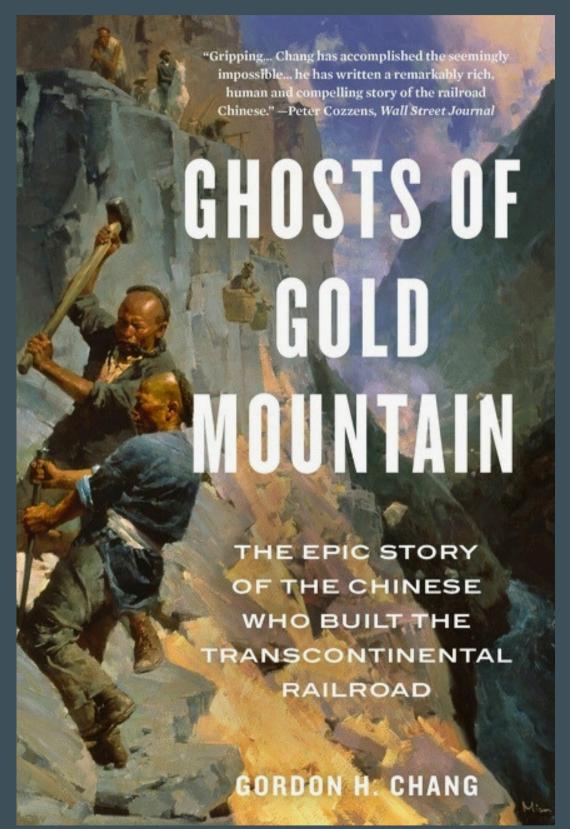




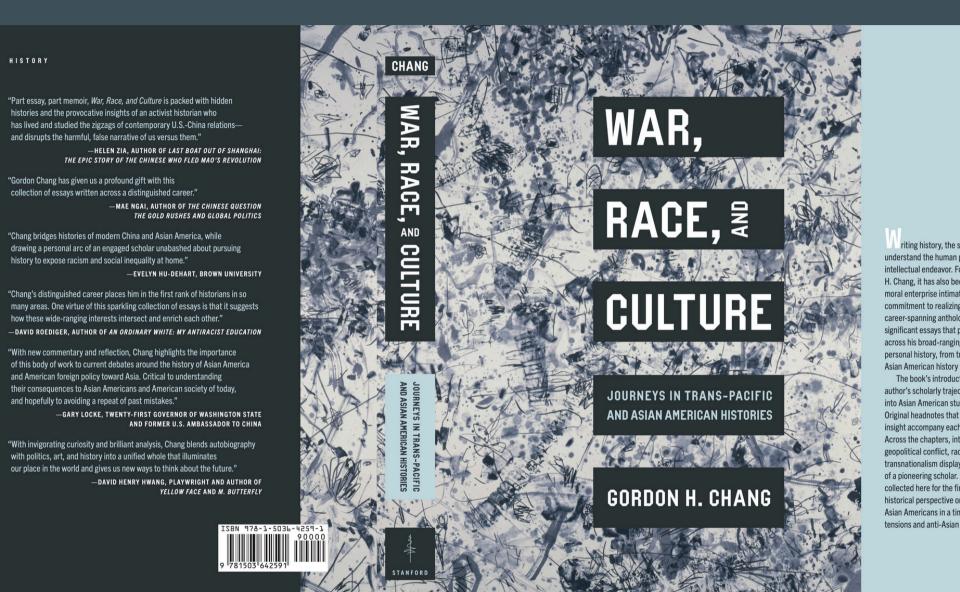


## Dr. Chang's Books







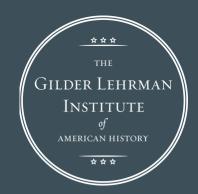


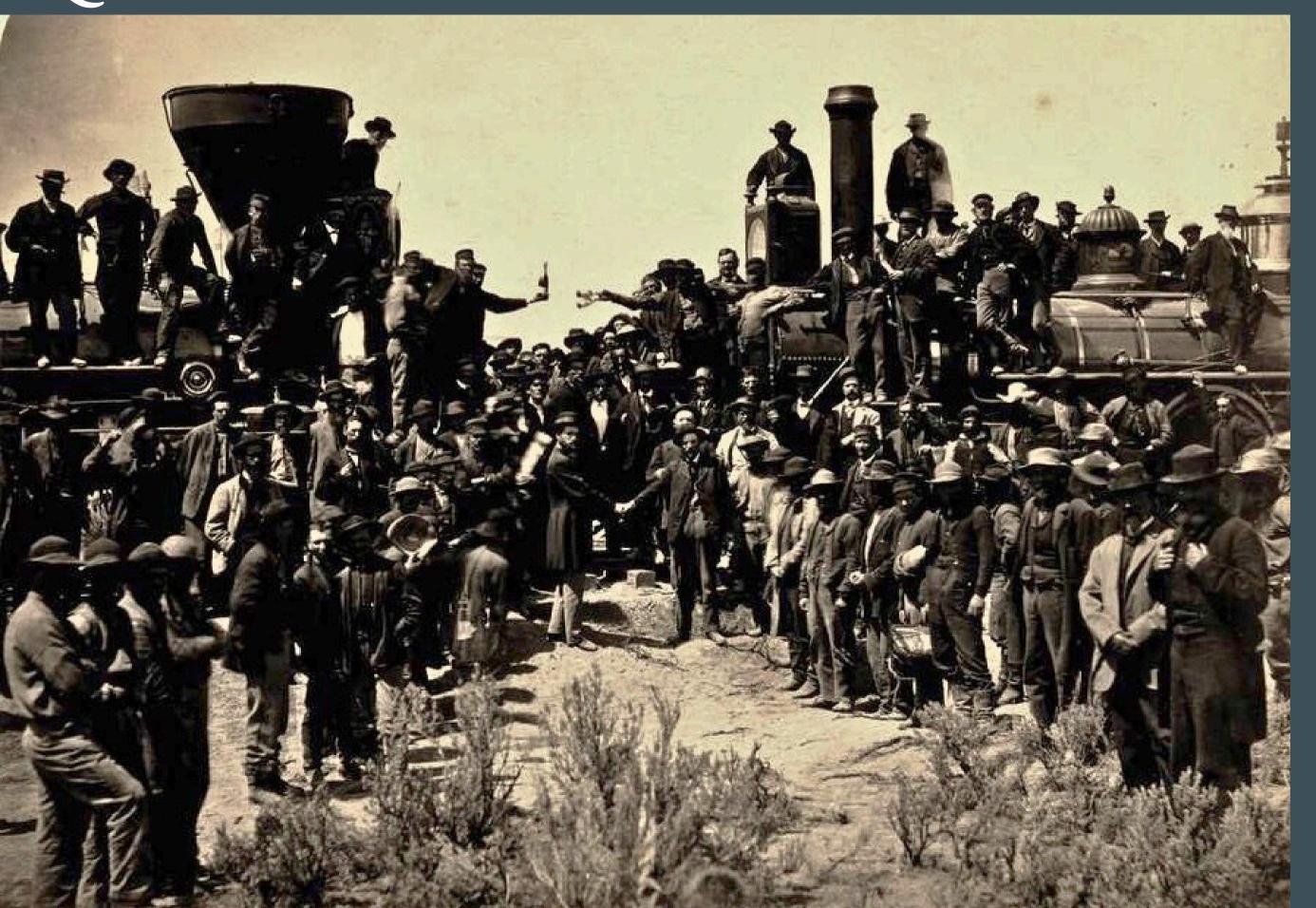
riting history, the systematic effort to understand the human past, is a demanding intellectual endeavor. For historian Gordon H. Chang, it has also been a personal and moral enterprise intimately connected to his commitment to realizing a better world. This career-spanning anthology brings together significant essays that prompt conversations across his broad-ranging research interests and personal history, from trans-Pacific history and Asian American history to art history.

The book's introduction reflects on the author's scholarly trajectory and his journey into Asian American studies as a field of study. Original headnotes that provide new context and insight accompany each of the fifteen essays. Across the chapters, interconnected themes of geopolitical conflict, racial thinking, identity, and transnationalism display the arc of the career of a pioneering scholar. These enduring essays, collected here for the first time, provide crucial historical perspective on urgent issues facing Asian Americans in a time of rising international tensions and anti-Asian sentiments at home.

Stanford University Press (2025)

## Q&A





Andrew J. Russell, *East and West Shaking Hands at Laying Last Rail, Promontory Point*, May 10, 1869.

(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04481.01)

#### Upcoming Free Programs



#### Inside the Vault:

July 3 at 7 p.m. ET (4 p.m. PT)

• We will discuss the Olive Branch Petition with Dr. Denver Brunsman, the department chair and an associate professor of history at George Washington University.

August 7 at 7 p.m. ET (4 p.m. PT)

• We will discuss the Manhattan Project with Cynthia Kelly, president of the Atomic Heritage Project.

#### BOOK BREAKS:

• June 8 at 2 p.m. ET (11 a.m. PT): Rick Atkinson discusses *The Fate of the Day:* The War for America, Fort Ticonderoga to Charleston, 1777–1780