

## Transcontinental Railroad Fact Sheet

Prior to the opening of the transcontinental railroad, it took four to six months to travel 2000 miles from the Missouri River to California by wagon.

January 1863 – Central Pacific Railroad breaks ground on its portion of the railroad at Sacramento, California; the first rail is laid in October 1863.

December 1863 – Union Pacific Railroad breaks ground on its portion of the railroad in Omaha, Nebraska; due to the Civil War, the first rail is not laid until July 1865.

April 1868 – the Union Pacific reaches its highest altitude 8,242 feet above sea level at Sherman Pass, Wyoming.

April 28, 1869 – a record of 10 miles of track were laid in a single day by the Central Pacific crews.

May 10, 1869 – the last rail is laid in the Golden Spike Ceremony at Promontory Point, Utah.

Total miles of track laid 1,776: 690 miles by the Central Pacific and 1086 by the Union Pacific.

The Central Pacific Railroad blasted a total of 15 tunnels through the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

It took Chinese workers on the Central Pacific fifteen months to drill and blast through 1,659 ft of rock to complete the Summit Tunnel at Donner Pass in Sierra Nevada Mountains. Summit Tunnel is the highest point on the Central Pacific track.

The Central Pacific built 40 miles of snow sheds to keep blizzards from blocking the tracks.

To meet their manpower needs, both railroads employed immigrants to lay the track and blast the tunnels. The Central Pacific hired more than 13,000 Chinese laborers and Union Pacific employed 8,000 Irish, German, and Italian laborers.

In 1870 it took approximately seven days and cost as little as \$65 for a ticket on the transcontinental line from New York to San Francisco; \$136 for first class in a Pullman sleeping car; \$110 for second class; and \$65 for a space on a third- or “emigrant”-class bench.

Source: Union Pacific, <http://www.up.com/timeline/index.cfm/>