

Name _____

Date _____

Transcontinental Railroad History

The Transcontinental Railroad was built between the years 1863 and 1869 and it was 1,912 miles long (3,077 km). It connected Omaha, Nebraska and Council Bluffs, Iowa with initially Sacramento, CA, and eventually the Pacific Coast in San Francisco Bay.

The United States government helped pay for the construction of the railroad as did different companies such as The Western Pacific Railroad Company, who built a part of the railroad from Oakland, CA, to Sacramento, CA.

Because of the Transcontinental Railroad, the western settlements of the United States changed significantly. The western states now could have access to the same goods in stores that the eastern states had. Travel became easier and faster for the people living in the western states. Those in the eastern states could travel to the west in one week instead of six or more months.

Six years after the start of the Transcontinental Railroad, there was a ceremony on May 10, 1869 to celebrate its completion. The Last Spike (or golden spike) that joined the rails of the transcontinental railroad was put in place in Promontory, Utah.

It was 10 more years before Idaho's northern section (along the Northern Pacific Railway) was connected to the southern section by railroad. Because of this railroad and the Transcontinental Railroad, towns started to grow or spring up every 10 or 15 miles around the train stations or "depots." These new towns were called "depot towns" and had fast growth of houses and businesses like hotels, restaurants, and general stores (like grocery stores). Towns such as Pocatello were settled because of the railroad. Pocatello's original depot is still there today.

The railroads also led to more investment in other infrastructure: the construction of better bridges and roadbeds for example, which employed many.

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Highlight two ways that life changed for homesteaders. Write a paragraph explaining how these changes impacted their daily lives.
