

Chinese Immigrants and Westward Expansion

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APPENDIX A

(Historical Reading Document)

Immigrants and the Building of the Transcontinental Railroad

In 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, Congress authorized the most ambitious project that the country had ever contemplated: construction of a transcontinental railroad. The price tag was immense: \$136 million, more than twice the federal budget in 1861. The challenge was enormous; 1,800 miles across arid plains and desert and the rugged granite walls of the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains.

Two companies undertook the actual construction in return for land grants and financial subsidies worth from \$16,000 to \$48,000 a mile. The Union Pacific began laying track westward from Omaha, Nebraska. The Central Pacific lay track eastward from Sacramento, California. Which ever company laid the most track would receive the largest federal subsidy.

The Union Pacific's task was easier; two-thirds of its track was laid across plains. The Central Pacific, in contrast, had to carve out a rail bed across the Sierra Nevadas. The first year, it lay 31 miles of track; after two years, it had only put down 50 miles.

The Central Pacific also faced an acute labor shortage. In the winter of 1864, the company had only 600 laborers at work, a small fraction of the 5,000 for which it had advertised. And these workers were unreliable: "Some would stay until pay day, get a little money, get drunk and clear out," a superintendent said.

In February, 1865, the Central Pacific decided to try a new labor pool. Charles Crocker, chief of construction persuaded his company to employ immigrants, arguing that the people who build the Great Wall and invented gunpowder could certainly build a railroad.

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, civil turmoil and poverty had led many to emigrate to California, the "Golden Mountain." As early as 1852, there were 25,000 immigrants in California. Most came from the southeastern coast. The overwhelming majority were married men who planned to return to _____. In California, the immigrants established support networks, based on family ties and place of origin, and found work in agriculture, mines, domestic service, and increasingly in railroad construction.

The Central Pacific's immigrant workers received just \$26-\$35 a month for a 12-hour day, 6-day work week and had to provide their own food and tents. White workers received about \$35 a month and were furnished with food and shelter. Incredibly, the immigrant workers saved as much as \$20 a month which many eventually used to buy land. These workers quickly earned a reputation as tireless and extraordinarily reliable workers--"quiet, peaceable, patient, industrious, and economical." Within two years, 12,000 of the Central Pacific railroad's 13,500 employees were immigrants.

The work was grueling, performed almost entirely by hand. With pickaxes, hammers, and crowbars, workers chipped out railbeds. Dirt and rock were carried away in baskets and carts. Tree stumps had to be rooted out, tracks laid, spikes driven, and aqua ducts and tunnels constructed.

To carve out a rail bed from ridges that jutted up 2,000 over the valley below, immigrants were lowered in baskets to hammer at solid shale and granite and insert dynamite. During the winter of 1865-1866, when the railroad carved passages through the summit of the Sierra Nevadas, 3,000 lived and worked in tunnels dug beneath 40-foot snowdrifts. Accidents, avalanches, and explosions left as estimated 1,200 immigrant workers dead.

Despite their heroic labors, California's immigrants became the objects of discriminatory laws and racial violence. California barred these immigrants from appearing as witnesses in court, prohibited them from voting or becoming naturalized citizens, and placed their children in segregated school. The state imposed special taxes on "foreign" miners and fishermen.

APPENDIX B

(Primary Sources Guiding Questions)

Document 1- Pop Culture

1. What does the song claim is responsible for American progress?
2. How does this connect to westward expansion?

Document 2- Growth of Cities

1. What is the title of the maps?
2. Comparing the two maps, where is the map showing growth in US cities?
3. How does this connect to westward expansion?

Document 3- Picture of Chinese Laborers

1. Describe what you see in the picture? (Who do you see? What are they doing? ETC.)
2. How does this connect to western expansion?

Document 4- Newspaper Account #1

1. What is the article about?
2. Describe the labor force that is continually talked about in the article?
3. How does this connect to westward expansion?

Document 5- Chronology of Transcontinental Railroad

1. During the 1860-1870's describe what was happening to transportation in America?
2. Describe the labor force that is continually referred to on the timeline.
3. How does this connect to western expansion?

Document 6- Population of the Great Plains

1. How does population change in the Great Plains from 1870 to 1900?
2. How does this connect to western expansion?

APPENDIX C
(Worksheet for Class Presentations)

Group/Document	How does the document connect to western expansion?
Group 1- Popular Culture Song	
Group 2- Growth of Cities Maps	
Group 3- Picture of Chinese Laborers	
Group 4- Newspaper Account #1	
Group 5- Chronology of Transcontinental Railroad	
Group 6- Population Table of the Great Plains	

**APPENDIX D
(Newspaper Account #1)**

Alta, California, San Francisco, May 1 and 3, 1869

April 28, 1869, Central Pacific Railroad:

"Yesterday's failure has nerved every man to such exertion that no accident can possibly occur. Do you see that platform car, loaded with iron, coming up the track? It is wheeled along by a pair of horses, hitched in tandem, galloping at the side of the track in the manner of a two team hauling a canal boat. They are met by another car, returning after having left its burden of rails at the front. This car is bowling along the downward slope pushed by men on each side, using their feet like oars. Surely, there must be a contretemps, for vehicles cannot pass on a single track.

But wait! The downhill car is stopped in an instant. The men lift it off the track and stand it on edge, and the loaded car slips past without delay.

Arrived at the front, two men throw a wooden bar beneath the wheels to stop the car. The horses are detached and gallop to the rear. On either side of the car, four men seize hold of a rail with iron nippers, haul it forward off the flatcar, and lay it on the awaiting ties. The car moves forward. After it comes a gang of men who half way drive the spikes and screw on the fish bolts. At a short interval behind this group comes a squad of Chinamen to hammer home the spikes. Behind these is a second squad of Chinamen, two deep, on either side of the track. The outer line armed with picks, loosens the dry earth; the inner line, with shovels, scrapes up the soil and throws it around the ties.

I timed the whole movement twice. First time 200 feet of rail laid in one minute and twenty seconds. Second time, 200 feet in one minute, fifteen seconds. This is about as fast as a leisurely walk--as fast, in other words, as the early ox teams used to travel across the plains. It may seem incredible, but it is nevertheless fact, that ten miles of rails are to be handled and laid down this day by these eight white men and these crews of Chinese laborers.

But we have only taken in a portion of the scene. Along the line are overseers, galloping up and down, seeing that everything is properly done. In a carriage right at the front sits Mr. Charles Crocker, the general superintendent of construction for the Central Pacific Railroad, and Mr. J.H. Strobridge, his first officer...

By 6:00 A.M. two miles of rail have been laid. A train containing two more miles of iron is pushed forward from the rear. As it steams up to the last rail, a squad of men rushes forward, and in exactly ten minutes the train has been completely unloaded: 200 tons of iron rails and ten tons of spikes. Then the small horse-drawn cars are loaded with iron and start ahead, one after another. Meanwhile, the ties are being hauled along a parallel route on the right, while water carts and wagons move forward on the left.

By noon it begins to appear that the great feat will be successfully accomplished. In six hours and forty-two minutes, the Central Pacific has laid six miles of track. But here are 1200 to 1400 men to be fed...and they are six miles from the "house" they left at dawn. Far to the rear, one can behold a strange sight. It looks like a village in motion. It is the

boarding-house train, composed of a number of plain, wooden house cars with peaked wooden roofs. Inside are the bunks of the workers, arranged in the manner of the steerage of a ship, and also the dining rooms, where these men are fed like fighting cocks. The bread and meat are of the very best.

As soon as the boarding-house train is at hand, implements are thrown down and the white laborers retire to their dinner. The Chinamen bring their food with them to dine on the line of work..."