

THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD

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Hello, my name is Seamus C. O'Donnell. It is May 10, 1869. The First Transcontinental Railroad has just been completed. Mr. Leland Stanford, president of the CP, just drove the last spike into the ground. 'Twas a golden spike it was. Everyone's cheerin'. The UP, which I worked for, and the CP are all happy that the railroad has just been completed. No more tirin' work.

Let me tell you why I came to America. I'm from a city called Donnelly, County Tyrone, Ireland. I arrived in America in, oh... about 1850, escaping the Irish Potato Famine. Coming to America, I escaped the harsh treatment of the English rule. For twenty years I worked in a brutal factory, with one meal per day. I hated the name the English gave us- the Navvies. In America, I could find decent work. I have freedom. I own a house with some land, and a number of cattle. I have a farm, and a great family. What more can I want?

During my work here in America, however, I also had a rough time. I lifted over five hundred rails in harsh weather conditions. I've had at least five fights with Chinese laborers, yet I won them all. (There was this one time when I took on four Chinese workers. One, I broke his arm, another, his nose, and the other two, well I punched them and kicked them to a pulp.) The rest of my work crew consisted of mostly Irish, a few Mormons, some Germans, and some ex-soldiers.

The UP and the CP are different. For one, the UP has mostly Irish people working for them, whereas the CP has many Chinese laborers working for them. The Chinese workers were at first thought to be unproductive, but after their first work day, the employers were astonished by their progress and wanted to hire as many Chinese workers as they could. The Central Pacific Railroad got its Chinese workers from the mines in California. They also got other Chinese workers from shops that the independent Chinese own, like laundry shops or kitchen.

The CP stands for the Central Pacific Railway, but the UP stands for the Union Pacific Railway. The CP was actually the first to complete their portion of the railway, and arrive at Promontory Summit even though they were farther away. The Union Pacific started at Council

Bluffs, Nebraska, and lost the bet. We laid about one thousand eighty-seven miles of rail. The Central Pacific laid only about six hundred miles of railroad track but arrived at Promontory Summit first.

Sadly, the Big Four- Leland Stanford, the president of the CP; Collis P. Huntington, the vice -president; Mark Hopkins, the treasurer; and Charles Crocker, the construction supervisor; only supported the CP. Thomas Clark Durant was the main investor in the UP.

When Mr. Stanford drove the last spike in the ground, connecting two rails laid by the UP and the CP, a telegraph signal ran through wires in the track announcing to the United States that the First Transcontinental Railroad had just been completed. While I worked, my friends and I sang song that goes like this,

"Then drill, my Paddies, drill,

- Drill my heroes, drill,

Drill all day, no sugar in your tay,

Workin' on the UP Railway

The song was actually called "Poor Paddy, He Works on the Railroad". The fragment of the song I just stated was only just the chorus. I forget the rest, though.

I am glad my work is over. Now I have the privilege of seeing my family for the first time in seven years. Working in the harsh conditions of mountainous trails, snow, rain and rocks, I am finally finished. I want to leave and rest at my home in the foothills of the Colorado Rockies. I am Seamus Colum O'Donnell and I worked the Union Pacific Railroad.

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