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Photo of the Jupiter at the Golden Spike National Historical Site

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They promised visitors would flow to Utah, like what they see, and admire the people and place. Utah was told the outsiders would bring money. Money that would trickle down and touch every household. It was called an opportunity of a lifetime; perhaps the opportunity of a century. To change, yet somehow remain the same.

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[program underwriter]

[program open]

Narrator:

In the spring of 1868 invaders ripped through the farmlands of the Utah territory. Viewed by settlers as a plague of near-biblical proportions, the invaders threatened to cut the very life-line of the people. Dropping like thick blankets from the sky, swarms of grasshoppers descended on the croplands of Utah.

"Endowed with an almost incredible voracity, breeding with astonishing rapidity, and keeping together in innumerable myriads they form one of the most terrible plagues. They devour and poison, and everything green of which they eat is blighted. And where they invade a land in sufficient numbers, their presence may well be viewed as a national calamity.--The Deseret News

Narrator:

In the spring of 1868 the grasshopper invasion was a calamity for the Utah territory.

[David Haward Bain]

"They'd had three years of drought, they'd had at least two summers of either grasshoppers or locusts; they were strapped for cash; they were really strapped for food, they had their seed stores that they

could use for more plantings, but it was really a question of just how they were going to make it through."

Narrator:

Twenty years after the first permanent settlements were created by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Utah territory of the late-1860s was still living a hand-to-mouth existence.

Having sought isolation in the American West because of their strong sense of religious persecution, the people referred to by outsiders as "Mormons" focused on survival---feeding their numbers that continued to swell with European converts, and building what they viewed as the Kingdom of God on earth.

[Bain]

"The sense of isolation was profound. Newspapers were few and far between, mail was always late, and there was that sense of being despised and hated and distrusted by the outside world. And all of these things would have just increased that sense of isolation, of not being understood, and not really being wanted."

Narrator:

Isolation was a two-edged sword for the Utah territory. On one hand it largely left the people to practice their religion on their own terms, including the increasingly controversial practice of plural marriage.

On the other hand, isolation left Utah in the backwater of an economic boom in the American West. There was virtually no cash among the Mormon people, who largely lived by bartering through church organization.

Any hit to the bartering chain--such as grasshoppers destroying crops- could stun the fragile Utah economy.

Managing the balancing act of isolation for the Mormon people fell to one of the most unique figures in American history. Brigham Young had organized the Mormons when they were on the brink of extermination. . .led them west. . .and directed the settlement of a harsh land. By the late-1860s nearly 60,000 members of his church had followed his call to gather in the Utah territory.

[Michael Quinn]

"And so the Mormons in Utah, and even those who had emigrated from Europe, looked to Brigham Young as a savior. Not necessarily a religious savior, but as a cultural savior, someone who had saved their culture from utter destruction."

Narrator:

From his office in Salt Lake City, Young was the defining force of the Utah territory. He exercised a unique authority--- dictating civic affairs, defining cultural standards, planning settlements and economic policies. . .and, for his people, he was a living prophet of God.

[Leonard Arrington]

"It's incorrect to try and offer one interpretation of Brigham Young and say he was this, he was that. He was all of them. And these did not result in any conflict in his own mind, in his own character. He was supremely confident that the lord has appointed him to do this work.

[Peter Maughn]

Damage done to the crops all over this valley the last two days. Damage is very severe. Most of the oats and barley destroyed. Grasshoppers are still coming by the score. . .Peter Maughn"

Narrator:

In the spring of 1868, Brigham Young felt his God was providing an answer to the grasshopper plague and the economic drought attacking his people.

To the east and west he watched the answer race toward the place he called Zion.

(railroad whistle)

Narrator:

Two thousand miles of steel, linking American East and American West. . . a transportation marvel of its time. Like most Americans of the time, Brigham Young viewed the building of a coast-to-coast railroad as a national turning point. . . Young was so confident that the railroad would change the face of the West, that he was one of the first investors in the project.

The transcontinental railroad was romantically viewed as binding the nation together after the carnage of the Civil War. More practically, it would help the nation tap the natural resources of the West. . .and rush people in to tame the frontier.

By 1867 the line started to come to life as a unique partnership between the federal government and two private companies. Under the Pacific Railroad Act the companies were put in direct competition. Every foot of track would mean money made and public land claimed by one company. . .and lost by the other.

In the West, the Central Pacific railroad company had slowly battled its way out of California and through the Sierra Nevada mountains. By the dawn of 1868, its largely Chinese work crews were making up for lost time, racing across Nevada and eyeing the settlements of the Utah territory three hundred miles in the distance. Their final stretch would cross the great western desert of Utah. . .an area that had been survived, but never truly mastered.

In the East, the Union Pacific railroad had burst out of Omaha, survived fierce Indian attacks, and moved quickly across Nebraska and Wyoming. By the start of 1868, the Union Pacific had laid far more track than the Central Pacific, and had captured much of the attention generated by the nation's railroad fever.

But as they neared the eastern border of the Utah territory, Union Pacific engineers were faced with the looming Wasatch mountain range. The Wasatch meant blasting expensive and time consuming tunnels. . .and grading a path for the rail lines through a series of canyons.

It was manpower the Union Pacific could not spare. . .time it did not have. Privately, company officers may have been aware it would require money that could not be paid. Neither company would back down from the race to complete the rail line. Too much was at stake.

At the dawn of 1868 each rail mile meant federal funds, and thousands of acres of federal land to be given to the completing railroad company. The railroad would virtually own the towns that were

already springing up. It was an untapped mother lode of financial opportunity. . .but only if they kept laying rail.

The final push across the Utah territory of the transcontinental railroad was shaping up as a desperate race driven on both sides by greed, pride and power.

[Donald Strack]

"I think they could see that Brigham Young and all of the people in Utah, because of their ties to the church, they needed an ally. There is no way that they could get the railroad built without the cooperation of the Mormons. It just would not have happened."

Narrator:

Brigham Young and his Kingdom of God in the American West found themselves between two competing forces who would do anything to gain one mile at the other's expense. Young's vision for the future of the Utah territory would turn on his confident ability to out-maneuver the forces of American progress.

The Union Pacific was actively courting the Mormon church leader. By telegram, U.P. powerbroker Thomas Durant asked Young if he could convince Mormon men to leave their farms and build the railroad line for the Union Pacific through the Wasatch Mountains of northern Utah.

[Brigham Young]

"April 22, 1868.

There will be no difficulty in getting all the hands you want from one dollar to two dollars and fifty cents a day, according to their quality--Brigham Young."

Narrator:

Without missing a beat, Thomas Durant upped the ante. . .offering to forge a direct contract with Brigham Young. . .

[Thomas Durant]

"Are you disposed to take a contract for a portion or all of our grading between Echo and Salt Lake? We propose to give you the preference on working near your settlements-- Thomas Durant, vice president."

Narrator:

By cutting a deal with Young, Durant thought he could monopolize the Mormon workforce. If Brigham Young was the contractor, the prophet of the Mormon church would be doing the Union Pacific's bidding. . . And the Mormons would help the Union Pacific, not the Central Pacific.

A contract would give Young the purse strings for thousands of jobs-- extraordinary relief for his people suffering from the grasshopper plague, and work for hundreds of Mormon emigrants resettling in Utah.

Within hours of Durant's telegram. . .Brigham Young was on board with the Union Pacific: With a signature, the contract was closed in May of 1868. Almost immediately Brigham Young used his church position to call men to do his work on the railroad.

[Brigham Young]

To all bishops south of this city:

I wish you to send me all the help you possibly can, as quick as possible, to work on the railroad. If the teams which have lately come in with the immigration will go to work, I will employ them right away. The pay will be sure, and in money at liberal rates.--Brigham Young

[David Haward Bain]

"And so it was done through a community and a church organization, and all of the farmers who really had absolutely nothing to do, at that point, because of the fact that they'd lost all their crops, just poured down from the hillsides to take advantage of this. Bringing their plows, bringing their teams of horses, and ready to show up for a good day's work."

Narrator:

Young--as prophet and leader of the Mormon people--would personally guarantee jobs and pay for his followers.

Photo of the Jupiter at the Golden Spike National Historical Site

Narrator:

Young--as prophet and leader of the Mormon people--would personally guarantee jobs and pay for his followers.

It was a guarantee that would haunt him for years to come. But in the summer of 1868 Young had little reason to question his contract with the Union Pacific railroad. Almost immediately Young sought to convince his assembling workforce that high wages were evil.

[Deseret News]

"Men should not look for the wages that were made here in 1864 and 1865. The days for such prices to be paid are long gone, and it would be beneficial that they never return. Such high rates of wages benefit neither the employer nor the employee. They only foster extravagance and other bad habits. The Deseret News, May 1868"

[Michael Quinn]

And that's what Brigham Young offered. He offered cheap labor. And he offered it at a price that would discourage the railroad from bringing in a flood of non-Mormon laborers. That was, in many ways, the worst of his fears."

Narrator:

The contract gave Young extraordinary power to take care of his people. . .and his family, giving his son's preferred positions.

[Deseret News]

Notice: Misters Joseph A. Young, Brigham Young Junior and John W. Young left this city on the eight instant for the head of Echo canyon to let contracts for grading on the Union Pacific Railroad. The Deseret News"

Narrator:

Few in the Utah territory would dare publicly question Brigham Young's management of the contract,

nor his preferential treatment for his sons and ranking church leaders. It was viewed as consistent with his unique role as the guiding force on all matters religious, economic and civic in the Kingdom of God on earth.

[Edward Tullidge]

Wherein is Brigham's power over us? In our love, and not our fear. We Mormon elders love our chief. He is our people's father, and we look upon him as such-Edward Tullidge"

Narrator:

For Young, his many hats were held forth as a defense mechanism to protect his people in a hostile world.

In 1862 Congress passed the first in a series of anti-polygamy laws aimed at the Mormon church. One key aspect of the 1862 law sought to strangle life out of the church by barring it from economic activity.

[Leonard Arrington]

"When the United States government in 1862 passed the law which disincorporated the church and required the church not to have extensive property in its own name, Brigham and his associates in the Quorum of the Twelve assumed that the right way for Brigham to carry out the goals and programs of the Kingdom was to leave some of the properties in his own name."

[Michael Quinn]

". . .he began mixing the technical accounts of the church with his accounts as trustee in trust, the legal term giving him sole trusteeship over the financial assets of the LDS church. But then he also mixed his own accounts with his accounts as the trustee of the church, his personal accounts. . ."

Narrator:

In short, it was virtually impossible to separate the financial assets of the Mormon church from the assets of Brigham Young.

And it would prove to be a critical part of the story of the transcontinental railroad in Utah. Confident in his contract, Brigham Young time and again offered his personal guarantee for the work and the pay, as he urged men to leave their families and head to the work sites in Weber and Echo canyons.

By mid-summer, thousands of Mormon men were carving a railroad bed through the canyons of the Wasatch Mountains.

The Union Pacific felt it had beaten the Central Pacific to the punch in taking advantage of a Mormon workforce.

In the summer of 1868 the Central Pacific dispatched partner Leland Stanford to the Utah territory to try and wedge a foothold between Brigham Young and the Union Pacific.

[Leland Stanford]

"June 9, 1868

We have been pretty industrious, and it appears we may get help from President Young, without waiting until he can man the work he has undertaken for the Union Pacific. Brigham has not got his men yet. The price he pays is not satisfactory. But he will get what he wants, and his followers will not work for

any one else. -Leland Stanford"

Narrator:

Brigham Young started playing the Central Pacific against the Union Pacific. . .deftly reading the heated competition, and the willingness of both companies to strike back room deals to advance their cause.

The leading figures of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific were familiar faces in Washington. . . Passing around cash and railroad stock as they competed for an advantage.

[Donald Strack]

. . .they spread around a lot of money. That is just the way the government worked. Everyone benefitted. The Congressmen themselves, they benefitted personally. They were sometimes given shares of the company and personal financial benefit is a tremendous motivator for anybody."

[Charles Crocker]

"We have always been on the defensive. . .and have sought no particular legislation more than to sometimes endeavor to obtain the repeal of the obnoxious. If legislative bodies had let us alone, we would have been glad to stay out of politics.-Charles Crocker."

[Donald Strack]

". . .The interest of the government was pretty much the interest of the railroad, and vice versa. The capitalists pretty much ran the government, and that is what made America America. You can have whatever political thoughts 150 years later that you might want, but the reality is the railroad would not have been built if not for the interests of the capitalists."

[David Haward Bain]

But the brilliance of what happened with the Union Pacific, and it's a kind of diabolical brilliance, is that Thomas Durant, the up vice president, realized that you don't have to actually finish the railroad in order to make big money. And the way he did that was to form a construction arm, a completely separate entity, which was called the Credit Mobilier of America, after a French corporation that had done the same thing in France. And so basically what you would do would be you would set up a dummy corporation, and you would pay yourself to build the railroad. So if you've got \$50,000 for a mile of construction and it actually costs \$35,000, then you would be pocketing the difference per mile. . .and walk away with cash in your pocket."

Narrator:

The warnings of corruption and financial mismanagement were largely brushed aside by the anticipation of the railroad nearing completion.

Central Pacific crews were on the Utah-Nevada border, ready to make quick work of the flattest stretch of the Great Basin.

Before them was the Great Salt Lake. . .and a critical decision affecting the people of the Utah territory.

From the moment the transcontinental railroad had been approved by Congress, Brigham Young had lobbied hard for the rail line to pass through Salt Lake City.

After he signed his railroad contract, Young told a large audience in the Salt Lake Tabernacle that going

south of the Great Salt Lake was the only route that made sense.

[Brigham Young]

"If I could direct the route they should take, I should have it come down Echo and Weber canyons, and from there through the lower part of Salt Lake City. It would be the height of folly for the managers of this great enterprise to pass by what has been accomplished in this territory for the past twenty years.

(applause)

[Mike Johnson]

"Both railroad companies in 1868 decided that the preferred route would be around the north end of the Great Salt Lake, and bypassing Salt Lake City. I think they left Brigham out of the loop as long as possible because they knew it would aggravate him.

[Leland Stanford]

"He and everybody here was dead set for the southern route. How to meet this bothered me a great deal. There does not seem any of them to be aware of the location to the north end of the lake. I have thought it not advisable to enlighten them-Leland Stanford"

Narrator:

Secretly, Union Pacific and Central Pacific surveyors had agreed that the best and shortest route to complete the railroad would skirt the north end of the Great Salt Lake, and completely bypass Salt Lake City.

Young had no influence, and the decision was kept from him to assure Mormon work crews for the railroad.

[Bain]

And so when it was finally announced to him, August of 1868, as a fact that the railroads were not going to go through Salt Lake City, as he had been led to believe for some years, I think it was a shock. But it was a shock that he had to hide because of his position. And the notion of trying to make the best of a bad thing, became the thing to do."

Narrator:

Young said he was insulted by the railroad shunning his capital city, and vowed to build his own rail line to link the saints to the world.

It was one of many downsides that were starting to present themselves to Brigham Young.

Nationally, the railroad was being championed as a means of breaking apart the Mormon Kingdom of God through a mass in-migration of the type of non-believer that the Mormons called "gentiles":

[Chicago Republican]

These gentiles will swarm into every part of Utah by the thousand as actual settlers, while thousands of others will constantly pass and repass through the territory. A free press will be set up in the territory, and open its batteries daily upon the iniquity of harem life. Various religious sects will soon erect church edifices, and from these pulpits will go forth mighty influences to destroy Mormonism..
The Chicago Republican, May, 1868"

[Brigham Young]

"We want the railroad. We are not afraid of its results. We know the better the truth is known, the more it will be loved by the good, the virtuous and the noble. And when this road is finished our friends can come and see us, and witness the peace, the order, the freedom from crime that possesses our cities of Zion, and they will compare them with the sinful, depraved cities of our neighbors, and we shall lose nothing in the comparison."

Narrator:

But Young's optimism was tempered by the wild side of life that was following just behind the railroad construction camps.

Narrator:

Portable saloons, dance halls, gambling tents, and lean-to houses of prostitution were always one small step behind the army of workers converging on the Utah territory.

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Portable saloons, dance halls, gambling tents, and lean-to houses of prostitution were always one small step behind the army of workers converging on the Utah territory. The enterprises earned the nickname of "hell on wheels":

[David Haward Bain]

". . .As the railroad track moved on, all of the purveyors, the saloon owners, and the gambling den owners the whisky ranches as they were called, would just pack up, and they'd be put on flat cars and sent off to the end of the track again. That's where the notion of hell on wheels came from."

[Samuel B. Reed]

"The first place we visited was a dance house where a fresh importation of strumpets has been received. The hall was crowded with bad men and lewd women. Such profanity, vulgarity and indecency as was heard and seen there would disgust a more hardened person than I--Samuel Reed"

[Mike Johnson]

"And they were tough places. They were probably as tough as any of the seamy parts of the great American cities. Murder was not unknown, robbery was fairly common, and these hell on wheels towns moved along with the grading gangs all across the line of the railroad."

[St. Louis Missouri Democrat]

"I verily believe that there are men here who would murder a fellow creature for five dollars. Nay there are men here who have already done it! The St. Louis Missouri Democrat"

Narrator:

By January of 1869 the hell on wheels caravan had camped for the winter in the Utah territory. . .at the newly created rail town of Wasatch."

[J.H. Beadle]

"During its lively existence of three months it established a graveyard with 43 occupants, of whom not one died of disease. Two were killed by accident, three got drunk and froze to death. . .three were hanged. . .and many were killed in rows or murdered.-J.H. Beadle, The Salt Lake Reporter."

[Deseret News]

"It is a capital idea for citizens to have loaded firearms in their dwellings where there is the least reason to expect visits of such characters-
The Deseret News, April 28, 1869."

Narrator:

For Brigham Young, "hell on wheels" was only the most obvious symptom of a greater disease. Left unchecked, the railroad would carry the corrupting viruses of money and outside culture into the Utah territory.

[Michael Quinn]

"The problem was that Brigham Young recognized that you could not separate the economic life of Utah from the social and political life. They all were linked, and so if you welcomed in with open arms the economic powers of the national culture, you would also be welcoming in its social structure and its political power. And Brigham Young was unwilling to do that. And he said, 'No we will not. We will resist to every degree that we can the influence of Babylon,' which is how they typically referred to states east of the Mississippi."

[Young]

"The only thing for you and me to fear is whether we will build up the Kingdom of God. Whether our souls are in the Kingdom or not. The doctrine we preach is pure and holy, and if we will abide by it, it will make us pure and holy."

[Michael Quinn]

"The first stage was to announce a boycott of all, first of all, hostile merchants. And then in 1867, that became all non-Mormon merchants, became the subject of the boycott. This draws many of them out of business, and merchants sold their remaining inventories and left Utah, which is exactly what Brigham Young wanted."

Narrator:

In 1868 Brigham Young extended his economic defense plan even further when he assembled business leaders and directed formation of the Zions Cooperative Mercantile Institution.

[Leonard Arrington]

And it was a device for assuring that the merchandising, the importing and sales of products from the East and from San Francisco would be done by the saints, not some outside enterprisers who might work against the goals of the kingdom.

[Michael Quinn]

"And this moved beyond simple boycotting the non-Mormons to requiring Mormon merchants to either join and turn over all of their inventories to ZCMI in exchange for ZCMI stock, or if they didn't they would be publicly identified as the enemy, and they would be subject to boycott."

[Martha Bradley]

"The all seeing eye, holiness to the Lord was recognition that this was a member institution in the ZCMI operation. That meant that if you went inside that door that you were a loyal member of the church who was supporting a church business. And if you went in a different business next door that didn't have that kind of logo over the door, then you were essentially a traitor."

[Brigham Young]

"We asked the people, were not those who sustained such characters virtually traitors to the cause and the God they covenanted to obey? The conference unanimously voted that they would no longer fellowship those who would persist in trading with such characters."

[Martha Bradley]

"It was a line. It was like drawing a line in the sand along main street if you will. . .and those who chose to cross it often did it at their own peril."

Narrator:

Brigham Young's determination to hold off outside influences was evident when a handful of Mormons resisted centralized church control of their businesses. William Godbe and others argued for a free-market economy and open doors to outside investment and ideas. They urged other Mormons to challenge Brigham's grip on Utah society. Godbe wanted the railroad to swing open the door of change.

[Michael Quinn]

"...and Brigham Young made them a test of faith. He said, 'If you continue advocating what you're advocating,' and Godbe and his associates began advocating this publicly, Brigham Young said we cannot tolerate this."

Narrator:

When Godbe refused to drop back in line, Brigham Young excommunicated him from the ranks of the Latter-day Saints, branding Godbe and his followers traitors to the cause.

[Brigham Young]

They have failed. And yet they have added another proof of the truth of the saying of Jesus that those who are not for us, are against us."

Narrator:

But there was new fuel being added daily to the fire of challenge facing Brigham Young.

The Union Pacific railroad was slow in paying for the Mormon work being done in Weber and Echo canyons. Brigham Young's personal guarantee to his people of getting paid well and in cash was in jeopardy of falling apart. Missing pay days with regularity workers were sometimes paid in food from church storage. Workers started to walk off the job.

[C.A. Madsen]

"October 11, 1868

Dear Brother Musser:

People are leaving their work on the railroad, and are complaining of not getting their payment in cash. This is not agreeable to the progress of work on president Young's contract.

C.A. Madsen"

[Brigham Young]

"October 8, 1868

There is much dissatisfaction among the men. The monthly payments have only been one-third or one-half of the value of the work. Very many of the men are unpaid, and numbers are compelled to leave the work to provide for their families"-Brigham Young

[David Haward Bain]

By the time we get to 1868 and 1869, as the railroad is about to enter into Utah territory, the Union Pacific is basically completely cash strapped. The only asset that it has is its own railroad and its rolling stock and the amount of work that has been done and the promise for the future. Banks are ready to foreclose, loans were taken out to pay other loans, I mean the whole thing could have collapsed under the right circumstances."

Narrator:

By the end of November, 1868, Brigham Young. . . as primary contractor. . . owed his fellow Mormons well over one hundred thousand dollars for work already completed. He had tapped personal and church cash accounts believing repayment from the Union Pacific was imminent.

When it did not arrive, Young sent a personal plea to Thomas Durant of the Union Pacific:

[Brigham Young]

"The total due me through November 30, 1868 is \$130,605. I have expended all my available funds in forwarding the work. If I had the means to continue I would not now ask for assistance.

Very truly yours, Brigham Young"

Narrator:

Knowing that Mormon labor would be critical for a final push out of the canyons, Durant convinced Young to keep Mormon labor on the job, building a railroad bed through the town of Ogden. . .to the north of the Great Salt Lake. . .in the direction of the Nevada border. Young told associates that Durant had promised to pay any cost. At the same time, Leland Stanford appeared in Salt Lake City representing the Central Pacific. Stanford wanted the same number of Mormons to aid his railroad's drive from Nevada to the Wasatch front. Again, Young would confide that Stanford had agreed to pay any price.

[Bain]

And there's a moment where Brigham Young accepts a contract of course and subcontracts it out from the Union Pacific to grade up past Ogden toward the Promontory Mountains. And then the Central Pacific people come in and they say, well can you give us a contract too? And all of a sudden, Young is presented with the delightful idea of playing one off against the other, and collecting money from both sides.

[Leland Stanford]

"November 8, 1868

Today I had a talk with Brigham Young. He will do our grading, and will not make our work secondary to the Union Pacific. He will put plenty of men to work on both lines, and I am satisfied he can do it. This is our policy. We can't keep the Union Pacific from grading their line, but through Young we can have our own graded to lay track on when we can reach it.-Leland Stanford"

Narrator:

Already hip-deep in debt, Young decided to wager the economic future of thousands on the cut-throat competition between the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific. Young believed the demand for labor

was certain to ensure Young and the men would be paid.

At first, it seemed to pay off. Soon Mormon crews were simultaneously working for the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific, grading rail lines east and west in northern Utah. Mormon subcontractors soon got into a bidding war for local workers as manpower was in short supply in the face of the head-to-head battle.

[Joseph A. West]

Competition for men and teams became so great that companies began to bid off each others men by increasing wages. And the construction cost became enormously heavy-Joseph A. West"

Narrator:

Brigham's contractors ratcheted up wages. . .confident that their costs would be met by the railroads. And Brigham Young urged the work forward. . .confident in his agreements with both companies that any price would be paid to keep the workers on the job

[Brigham Young]

"Dear brethren:

It is my wish and council to all the brethren working on my contract to push the work ahead with all possible dispatch. Therefore brethren, work at it until the job is completed-Brigham Young."

Narrator:

Completion seemed to be at hand. But if the nation had expected the two railroad companies to gently stop when they reached each other. . . Most observers were stunned when the two companies kept right on going.

Narrator:

Soon the railroads were passing each other's work crews. . .crossing each other's survey stakes. . .building competing bridges to cross the same gully.

Narrator:

Soon the railroads were passing each other's work crews. . .crossing each other's survey stakes. . .building competing bridges to cross the same gully.

[David Haward Bain]

"And the whole idea seems to be in their minds that whoever got the final okay for the trackage would get the money. And so it didn't matter if they graded extraneously, if their survey stakes were within inches of each other, even if they laid their railroad tracks over the top of the tracks of the other company."

[Stanford]

"At one point they are probably within two hundred feet of us. From Bear River to the Promontory, we are so close that the U.P. cross us twice. In other areas their line occasionally runs within a few feet!"- Leland Stanford

Narrator:

The nation that had struggled to get the railroad started, now realized it had not created a mechanism to make the railroad companies stop building.

[Bain]

When they realized that if they didn't come up with a meeting point themselves, the government was going to pass some really quick and dirty legislation and make the decision for them.

So they finally met in February of 1869, at the home of Congressman Samuel Hooper, who had wisely invested in both railroads and in the construction arm of the Union Pacific. And they finally decided that they would meet in the Promontory Mountains at Promontory Summit.

Narrator:

But even with the final meeting place set at Promontory Summit, there was one final act of competitive pride in Utah that the Central Pacific railroad considered unfinished business.

The Union Pacific had set what it claimed was a world record for laying track when it spiked eight miles of rail into place on one day.

Union Pacific executives claimed the record demonstrated their line's superior planning and skill. They dangled a \$10,000 bet before the Central Pacific that the record could not be beaten. On April 28th, 1869 Charlie Crocker of the Central Pacific dramatically called their bluff.

[Michael Johnson]

Indeed, and in fact it is interesting that the Central Pacific waited to set this record when the Union Pacific was bogged down in the east slope of the Promontory Mountains and would never have a chance to answer back. It took an army of men, hundreds and hundreds of men were part of that track laying to lay out the ties and ballast the track and everything and pound the spikes, but it was actually a crew of about half a dozen Irishmen that physically laid ten miles of iron that one day.

Narrator:

Thirty-five hundred rails were laid in place. Twenty-eight thousand spikes were driven by hand. The Irish track layers lifted the equivalent of 125 tons of steel during the 12 hour day. Charlie Crocker and the Central Pacific had their record.

[Crocker]

"We got our forces together and laid ten miles, 185 feet in one day, and that did not leave them enough room to beat us! But they couldn't have done it anyhow-Charles Crocker."

Narrator:

By the first week of May, 1869 the rail lines of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific were face-to-face on the wind-swept rolling hills of Promontory summit in Utah. May 8 was set as the date to link the two lines. And then disaster struck.

[David Howard Bain]

May 8 doesn't happen because they were building bridges through Weber Canyon so quickly that they really did not pay attention to the fact that this was springtime.

[Deseret News]

"The bridges in Weber Canyon are on the rampage. The past few days sun has sent liquidizing snows in torrents, gathering force and assailing the most stupendous railroad crossings. The bridge at devil's gate commenced giving way last night.-The Deseret News, may 5th, 1869."

[Bain]

Not only were they having trouble with the bridge in lower Weber canyon, but then the vice president of the Union Pacific, Thomas Durant, the grand puppeteer behind everything, is kidnapped by his own men because they are two months without pay. And so in the town of Piedmont, Wyoming his train was all of a sudden put onto a siding, and masked men got onto the train and hustled him off. And they were told that they would not get their vice president back until all of their back pay had been put in."

[Michael Johnson]

Eventually the ransom of \$80,000, which was just a down payment on what was owed, came, and Durant wasn't turned loose until Saturday, May 8, and he was able to go back to company offices at Echo City then.

Narrator:

The short-lived kidnapping gave crews enough time to jerry-rig a passage at the washed out bridge of Devil's Gate in Utah. The Promontory ceremony was re-set for Monday, May 10th.

One of the most anticipated events in the nation. . .had received virtually no pre-planning at Promontory.

[Michael Johnson]

In truth the actual event was really ill-planned. In fact, there was almost no planning at all. This was a media event staged for the rest of the country, and the people at Promontory got short shrift."

Narrator:

On the morning of May 10th an estimated 1500 people assembled on Promontory Summit. The vast majority were rail workers, but some local citizens made their way to the site, joining a military detachment bound for San Francisco. All gathered under a flag that featured thirty-six stars. At this moment of moments, Utah's leading citizen and primary railroad contractor was nowhere to be found.

[Bain]

"Brigham Young had to be thinking about the amount of money that was owed to his people at that point when they were doing all of the celebrating, because there were still a lot of bills that hadn't been paid. I think the reason that he didn't go was a smart one, because this celebration was not in any local control. And if Young had gone up there and been snubbed, the way he'd been snubbed by many of the Union Pacific people over the past months, it would have been very embarrassing to him politically among his own people."

Narrator:

Brigham Young had turned his back on the ceremony and traveled to settlements in Southern Utah. By his reckoning the railroad companies owed him over one million dollars as they gathered at Promontory.

The ceremony had moved to its final stage and a rail spike of pure gold was presented. But counter to folklore, it was never hammered as the final spike. Instead, it was slipped into a pre-drilled hole for show, and quickly pulled out. Officials from the Central Pacific and Union Pacific swung heavy

hammers at a final iron spike. . .and missed. But it was enough to trigger a one word message from the telegraph operators:

[Michael Johnson]

"Done. D-o-n-e. And that brought great celebration all across the country."

[David Haward Bain]

". . .and then simultaneously a cannon looking over the Pacific and a cannon looking over the Atlantic boom out the notice to the world. Tens of thousands of people in Chicago and San Francisco and Sacramento and Washington and New York and all of the major towns and small towns erupt into a wild tumult of celebration."

[Leland Stanford]

"To his excellency, General U.S. Grant, president of the United States. Sir: we have the honor to report the Pacific Railroad is finished.-Leland Stanford"

Narrator:

Souvenir hunters dropped on the track, prying up dozens of spikes and splintering the last wooden rail-tie to pieces until it disappeared into a hundred different hands. The race was over. . .symbolically, a new race was beginning as many were left scrambling for a piece of the moment.

[Michael Johnson]

Well it's almost like waking up with a hangover after a great party because the problems of the railroad construction started coming home to roost after the great party of completion. The Union Pacific was in tremendous debt having difficulty paying its bills and its contractors.

Narrator:

In April. . .before the line was completed. . .Brigham Young had dispatched his son to Boston to confront the Union Pacific board of directors and demand payment of close to one million dollars.

[Joseph A. Young]

"April 3, 1869 - The affairs of the Union Pacific are in a muddle. Credit is weak and there is a general apprehension that they will not meet their obligations. If the money is ever collected from them, it will be in the next world. Your son, Joseph A. Young"

Narrator:

From his earliest pronouncements from the pulpit, Brigham Young had staked a personal claim to the railroad work that he said had been divinely inspired. It was Brigham's contract. His negotiating skills that would secure the best deal for Mormon workers. It was his plan to keep out the evil influences, and extract the good.

[Michael Quinn]

"He hoped it would bring cash revenues, and the Union Pacific was notoriously corrupt, resulting in Congressional investigations, and so the result was that virtually no cash came in terms of what had been promised and contracted. In some ways the contract almost brought Mormons to the brink of bankruptcy because the cash flow did not come in as promised."

[David Haward Bain]

"And this was a tremendous shock to Utah, and we find by the summer of 1869 we find the territory

just thrown out onto the barter system because there was no cash."

Narrator:

Mormon workers had signed IOUs to local businesses for food and clothing. . .businesses had borrowed money to stay in business. The territorial economy was failing because of the unpaid railroad work. Brigham Young attempted to remind the Union Pacific of T.C. Durant's promises.

[Brigham Young]

When you were present you were pleased to make a promise to my sons Brigham and John W. That if we would keep on a large work force you would pay what it is worth.

Narrator:

Durant would not respond. Instead, the letters Young received were from destitute fellow church members who begged for their pay. One--Bernard Snow--had served as a subcontractor, hiring hundreds of men to work on the rail line for up to one year.

[Bernard Snow]

"July 26, 1869

May God bless them, for they have suffered severely. Most have suffered sore deprivations. They are exasperated, and deal out threats of violence. It is of vital importance to me to know what I can depend upon, for the ruinous interest daily swelling my already too-heavy liabilities makes financial ruin inevitable. I must ask you. What will be done to satisfy their claims? They have not been paid one cent!--Bernard Snow."

Narrator:

But for others, the losses were measured in more than money,

[David Haward Bain]

You have the firm of Benson, Farr and West who had agreed to grade between Humboldt Wells in Nevada, all the way up to the Promontory Mountains. And basically Chauncey West was the youngest man. He was in his early forties at that point, and he really took the brunt of the work

And he got himself into some real hot water financially, when people were asking to be paid and he still had not been paid by the Central Pacific, he advanced his own money. And so he was virtually ruined by this whole thing with the railroad.

Narrator:

Brigham Young tried to intervene in West's behalf with Leland Stanford, reminding Stanford of the promises that had been made during the fierce final stage of competition.

[Brigham Young]

You promised me that if I telegraphed Bishop West to take charge of the work and crowd it through, you would see that he was made whole or indemnified to the full extent. It was no matter what the work cost, the object was to have the work done!"

Narrator:

Chauncey West, polygamist husband to several wives and father to more than two dozen children, pursued Stanford in California.

In a San Francisco hotel he dropped dead of a stroke at the age of forty-three. His partner, LDS church apostle Ezra Taft Benson, died the same week. In Boston, Brigham's son Joseph made one final head-strong push on the Union Pacific board of directors, recounting his confrontation in a letter home to his father:

[Joseph Young]

"I wish to know whether it is the intention of this company to keep President Young out of three-fourths of a million dollars. If so, the Union Pacific will swindle the very men who built the railroad. Remember, the road is out in our country, and I think we can pull hard enough so you can feel it on the other end!"

[Bain]

"At one point one of the board members threatened Young that he was going to have the army descend on Utah and take out the LDS command. And Young replied that he would go to the courts, and he said if its necessary, then this will be a fight to the knife."

Narrator:

Brigham Young viewed the threat of military intervention as an excuse for anti-Mormon forces to destroy the Kingdom of God in the American West. "He put John Sharp. . . a lawyer, Mormon church leader and railroad contractor. . . in charge of negotiations with the Union Pacific. Brigham also worked to quell the fears of financial panic in the Utah territory. He suspended church tithing payments by indebted members. . . used church food storehouses to feed the hungry. . . and urged his followers to put cooperation above profit and debt."

[Brigham Young]

"The embarrassment caused me by the failure of the company to pay me as per contract means the whole business of our territory is suffering greatly, and our merchants are severely cramped having advanced means to the graders of the road, who are unable to pay because the company has not kept their engagements with me."

Narrator:

It soon became clear that a handful of well-connected deal makers had made millions in building the transcontinental railroad by being on the inside, skimming profits and walking away when they could. Despite being one of the earliest investors in the Union Pacific, Brigham Young had been one of the many left on the outside. So obvious was the economic slight that another unpaid contractor actually took pity on Young:

[William Davis]

In the distribution of immense gains, certain stockholders have been excluded, among them Brigham Young. It is clear there is an attempt to defraud Brigham Young."

Narrator:

In Boston, John Sharp was making little progress in getting money out of the Union Pacific.

[John Sharp]

"May 5, 1870

I presented a bill for 198-thousand dollars. . . which was met with a grand laugh."

Narrator:

Several U.P. leaders grumbled that Brigham Young was trying to gouge the company for money he did not deserve. But a deal was cut to allow Mormon emigrants to ride the rails west, with the fare being credited against the debt. Brigham Young was also interested in using the Union Pacific as a primary supplier for his plan to build a railroad from Salt Lake City to the transcontinental line. Somewhere it was proposed that the Union Pacific transfer \$700,000 worth of rail cars and supplies to Brigham Young to close out the debt.

[David Haward Bain]

"We know we owe you \$1.2 million, but go back to Young and ask if he'll take \$700,000 and we'll just call it quits. And Sharp goes and he does that, and he comes back all the way back to Boston and says 'Young says that this will work.' "

Narrator:

Brigham Young knew railroad supplies would not pay the men, and would not settle the i-o-us with local merchants.

[Brigham Young]

"January 28, 1870

Dear brother:

I wish to have a meeting of all those of the brethren to whom I am indebted for work on the Union Pacific railroad, to talk the matter over, relative to the indebtedness. . ."

Narrator:

Young called the meeting for the Salt Lake Tabernacle. Closed to the public, the content of the meeting never made the newspapers. Years later, a rail worker said Brigham confirmed the obvious-the railroad money was not coming. It was a loss they would all have to endure. . . Another test of faith. He invoked images of earlier Mormon suffering, and said this, too, would be overcome.

The scandal of an unpaid Utah debt was lost in a sea of Union Pacific red ink and Congressional investigations into political corruption surrounding the railroad. Of more lasting consequence, within months of its completion, the transcontinental railroad was changing the face of the American West. Nowhere was the change more profound than in Utah. The population of the territory more than doubled between 1860 and 1870. Mormon emigrants could now travel across the plains to their new American Zion in a matter of days. But in the first year of the rail line, an equal number of non-Mormons flowed to the Utah territory. They encouraged a mining boom. . . Started new businesses. . .and populated new rail towns like Corinne.

An attempt to have Corrine and the transcontinental railroad seceded from Utah and grafted on to Idaho was approved by a Congressional committee, but ultimately died. Missionaries started appearing in the Utah territory. Methodists, Catholics, Presbyterians. . .all creating school and medical missions in an effort to convert members of the Mormon church. . .with little success. Political parties appeared in the territory. The Liberal Party's platform was simple and direct: it was the non-Mormon party. Mormons responded with their own "People's Party". . .and the Utah territory took on a unique brand of two-party politics.

In 1870, the politics became even more unique for the time when the territorial legislature granted women the right to vote. Some hailed it an act of enlightened suffrage. Others labeled it a cynical maneuver by Brigham Young to assure his political control as the Utah population became more diverse. Both Mormon and non-Mormon would debate if all this represented progress. In one version,

Brigham Young would be portrayed as politically blind and intransigent. . .steamrolled by shrewder men. . .leading his people down a path of economic ruin.

In the other version, Young had done all he could. . .protected local control of the economy. . .and secured the future of Utah by working to bring the railroad to life. In 1868 Brigham Young had forecast the railroad would mean prosperity and a golden era of appreciation for his vision of the Kingdom of God:

[Brigham Young]

"And when the road is finished, our friends can come and see us, and witness the peace the order the freedom from crime that possesses our cities of Zion."

Narrator:

But rather than confirmation, the most anticipated event in Utah's short history would bring change. The isolation that was both shield and challenge would evaporate in stronger, complicated ties to a nation marching westward. Expectations were replaced by realities. The ceremony at Promontory had appeared to be an end. . .in reality, Promontory would prove to be a beginning.

THE END