

A PLAN
FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF
GOLDEN SPIKE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
UTAH

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Rocky Mountain Region

and

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Harpers Ferry Center

1990

...The project (the transcontinental railroad) inspired such enthusiasm that Senator Andrew P. Butler of South Carolina was moved to complain: "It was said of the Nile that it was a god. I think that this Pacific railroad project comes nearer being the subject of deification than anything else I have ever heard of in the Senate. Everyone is trying to show his zeal in worshiping this great road."

John P. Davis
The Union Pacific Railway: A Study in Railway
Politics, History, and Economics. Chicago,
1894, p. 137.

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INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of this Interpretive Prospectus is to provide a framework for a total Golden Spike National Historic Site experience through park interpretation provided by National Park Service and cooperating association personnel.

The Park In Perspective

Public Law 89-102, dated July 30, 1965, set aside such lands as necessary "for the purpose of establishing a national historic site commemorating the completion of the first transcontinental railroad across the United States..." and authorizes construction and maintenance of "such facilities for the care and accommodation of visitors as the Secretary of the Interior may deem necessary."

Some 690 miles east of Sacramento and 1,087 miles west of Omaha, Golden Spike lies in the northern reaches of the Great Basin Desert and ranges from 4,300 to 4,900 feet above sea level. Located at the site of the driving of the last spike of the first continental railroad on May 10, 1869, its paramount purpose is to illustrate the social, economic, and political impacts of the transcontinental railroad on the growth and westward development of the United States. A secondary but important story is that of the construction of the rail line itself, and the intense competition and friction between the United Pacific and the Central Pacific Railroads.

The goal of the Interpretation and Visitor Services programs and facilities at Golden Spike is to offer visitors opportunities to understand and appreciate the railroad race to Promontory and the effects of the railroad's completion on the development of the West and on the social, political, and economic history of the United States. The replica locomotives "119" and "Jupiter" are used to capture visitor attention and then direct this interest to the primary story that the locomotives represent.

The Planning Context

The first and foremost of Golden Spike's planning documents, the General Management Plan (1978), and the Statement for Management (updated every two years, most recently in 1988) provide much of the background information and direction for this prospectus.

The General Management Plan calls for interpreting the effects of completion of the first transcontinental railroad under two major themes--the primary theme (the why) and the secondary theme (the how). Topics under the primary theme include: emigration; mining and the mining industry; agriculture and farmers; near extinction of the buffalo; containment of the American Indian; allocation of public lands; the rise of financial moguls; development and growth of towns and cities; transportation and freighting in support of the U.S. military; and effects on other modes of transportation (sailing ships, steamboats, wagons, and overland coaches). Topics under the secondary theme are: the race to Promontory; the engines and tenders; construction workers; life at Promontory Summit; the driving of the golden spike; the West and East Slopes leading to Promontory Summit; the telegraph; and railroad operations.

Other plans important to understanding Golden Spike and which provided guidance for detailed interpretive planning include: Amendment to the General Management Plan (1987); Environmental Assessment for the General Management Plan (1976); Housing Management Plan (1986); Land Acquisition Plan (1981), and the Revised Land Protection Plan (1990); Cultural Resources Management Plan (1983); Natural Resources Management Plan (1981); Scope of Collection (1988); Outline of Planning Requirements (1989); and the Statement for Interpretation (updated annually, most recently in 1990); plus a variety of history references listed in the bibliography of the Statement for Interpretation.

RESOURCES AND AREA SIGNIFICANCE

The park resembles a ribbon of land that can be divided into three major areas of historic interest--the East Slope, Promontory Summit (or simply, the Summit), and the West Slope. Golden Spike encompasses over 15 1/2 miles of original railroad grades and consists of 2,735 acres. It lies in the northern reaches of the Great Basin Desert, is semiarid, and ranges in elevation from 4,300- to 4,900-feet above sea level. Flora and fauna are typical of the Great Basin Desert. A wild onion, proposed for inclusion on the rare and endangered plant list, has been found within park boundaries.

Natural Resources

Golden Spike lies on the summit area of the major pass through the Promontory Range. It is located between the North Promontory and the Promontory Mountains in the northern part of the Great Salt Lake Basin. During glacial times, the summit was covered by the waters of Lake Bonneville, and today, the old lake terraces form prominent features throughout the area. Because of their Quaternary geologic history, today's surface materials consist of fine-grained lake sediments and alluvial detritus. Subsurface deposits consist primarily of Pennsylvania sandstone, shales and limestones, and Tertiary extrusive materials. Numerous fault lines run through the Promontory Range with minor tremors (2.5 to 4.0 on the Richter Scale) having been reported in the area fairly often since establishment of the park in 1965.

Temperatures range from daytime highs of 20 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter to an occasional 104 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer. July and August are the hottest months while the coldest weather occurs from late December through February. Winter nights typically are below 10 degree Fahrenheit.

Water is not readily available within the park. It is obtained from a 427-foot deep well located in the Summit area. While scarcity of water accounts for the sparse population in the area, its limited availability has not affected operation of the park at present visitation levels.

Annual precipitation averages eight to 12 inches, mostly in the form of snow. Snow depths vary, but average less than 12 to 14 inches. Flash floods from occasional severe storms and spring runoff, and aggravated by some adjacent agricultural use, cause erosion of historic railroad grades, cuts, fills, and trestles. Deterioration of Trestles Number 1 and 2, erosion of the East Slope grade below a concrete box culvert west of Trestles 1 and 2, and a threatened loss of Union Pacific grade one mile east of the Visitor Center continue to be serious preservation problems. Continued preservation work by park crews is

needed to offset these threats. Lightning from these same storms poses serious rangeland fire potential on the Promontory Mountains and in the salt flats near the west end of the park.

The park is included in the shad scale--kangaroo rat--sagebrush biome of the northern Great Basin. The major flora found at Golden Spike consist of sagebrush, rabbit brush, Indian rice grass, and a variety of other grasses. A few Utah Junipers and one historic box elder tree grow in the park.

The Passey Onion, Allium passeyi, occurring only in Box Elder County, has been located on a rocky knoll on the east slope of the park. It is a candidate species for future study and possible inclusion on the list of rare plants in the United States. There are no plant or animal species resident to park lands that are listed as either rare or endangered.

Wildlife is varied and consists of the larger mammals such as the coyote, mule deer, bobcat, badger, and jack rabbit. There are also smaller mammals, reptiles, insects, and numerous species of birds.

The Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge lies in the fresh water marshes at the north end of the Great Salt Lake, some 12 to 15 miles east of the park. Recent rises in the water level of the Great Salt Lake have inundated much of the marshlands managed for ducks, geese, and swans. But large numbers of waterfowl are still common along the Utah Route 83, and Interstate Highways 15 and 84 approaches to the park. In addition, large numbers of raptors inhabit this same area and are commonly seen by visitors. Accipiters, falcons, buteos, and gold and bald eagles are particularly common during winter months.

Historic Resources

Some 15 1/2 miles of the historic railroad grade are protected within the park boundary. In addition, several hundred cultural sites, mostly the remains of construction worker camps and historic culverts and trestles, have been identified. These are collectively recorded on the List of Classified Structures for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, there are some early 20th-century ranch buildings, a schoolhouse, and a windmill contained on private property within the park boundary near the engine house.

The Summit

The Summit area is the primary focal point of the park. It was here on May 10, 1869, that the final spike (an iron spike in an ordinary tie) was driven to complete the nation's first transcontinental railroad. Only traces of the railroad grades remain in the Summit area. Subsequent alteration and developments have destroyed much of the original evidence of 1869 Promontory.

Promontory survived as a small railroad support town until 1942 when the operations through the Summit when shut down completely and the rails were removed and donated to the war effort. The Southern Pacific Railroad erected a monument in 1919 at the approximate point where the railroads first met. A plaque, added to the monument in 1958, indicates that the area has been designated a National Historic Site.

The East Slope

Remains of building maintenance features of the railroad stretch across the Promontory Range from its eastern base at Blue Creek to the Summit. They include: Union Pacific and Central Pacific parallel grades; parallel rock cuts; Union Pacific trestle footings; major Central Pacific earth fills; stone culverts; two surviving Central Pacific wooden trestles (Trestles 1 and 2); and numerous remains of construction camps, workshop areas, and "Hell-on-Wheels" towns associated with the final days of construction. The grades, cuts, fills, and trestle footings represent every variety of heavy construction work undertaken except tunneling.

The West Slope

From the Summit area southwest, the parallel grades follow the gently sloping floor of Promontory Hollow. This segment includes a 3.2-mile segment of the Central Pacific grade on which its renowned ten miles of track were laid in one day. When the April 1869 order establishing Promontory Summit as the meeting point came, all Union Pacific work to the west stopped. The incomplete rock cuts, partially built fills, uncovered culverts, and generally unfinished nature of the grade, provide excellent examples of railroad construction processes, such as the stockpiling and reuse of size-graded stone material for grade foundation and the stairstep type of construction undertaken at the long rock cuts. And as with the Eastern Slope, the Western Slope contains spectacular evidence of construction campsites.

Scenic Resources

The major land uses along the Golden Spike Historic Site's right-of-way are agricultural, consisting of cultivated winter wheat and grazed sagebrush--native grass communities. Easements across the right-of-way have been granted for access to adjacent agricultural lands. Dryland farming practices around the park, which allow fields to lie fallow for one-year periods, intensify problems with dust and dirt at Visitor Center facilities and can contribute to severe erosion and silting problems along the historic railroad grades as well as some flooding occurs in the vicinity of the engine house.

PUBLICS AND VISITOR USE

Golden Spike National Historic Site, remote from food and gasoline services, is located in western Box Elder County, Utah, some 32 miles west of Brigham City, and 88 miles northwest of Salt Lake City. Paved two-lane State Highways 13 and 83 from Brigham City lead to the area. Interstates 84 and 15 serve Brigham City and other Wasatch Front communities.

Utah is one of the fastest growing states in the nation. The Wasatch Front (the Brigham City-Logan-Ogden-Davis County-Salt Lake City area) accounts for 1,001,500 people. Golden Spike lies within 70 miles of this center of population. Box Elder County's population totals 33,000, most of which is in the county's eastern communities.

General Considerations

The largest percentage of visitors to Golden Spike, 58 percent, are from outside the state of Utah. Some 25 percent are from within the state while nine percent originate within a 40-mile radius of the park. A small group of visitors, eight percent, are from outside the United States. Fully one-fourth of visitors to the park are considered railroading enthusiasts. Three percent are disabled.

Approximately 75 percent of Box Elder County's population is native to Utah, while the non-natives are primarily from other western states. The county's major economic base and stimulus is manufacturing by the Thikol Corporation, the single largest civilian employer in Utah. However, agriculture still is a significant source of income and employment. The county ranks first in crops and fourth in livestock and poultry products.

Approximately 75 percent of park use occurs in the seven months running from April through October. June, July, and August remain the traditional heavy-use season, with Saturdays and Sundays accounting for 43 percent of weekly visitation levels. During the peak summer months, 84 percent of visitors view the films shown in the Visitor Center Auditorium, 56 percent attend ranger talks, and 21 percent avail themselves of the introductory slide program in the "black box."

Beginning on April 1, 1987, an entrance fee of \$3.00 per vehicle was charged for those who entered the park headquarter/visitor center complex. The fee is collected from April 1 through October 31 each year, or approximately 75 percent of the park's annual visitation.

Some Conclusions for Interpretation

- Primary emphasis of interpretive facilities, media, and programs should be information and orientation.
- Programs must recognize the nationwide visitor use character of the majority of park users, yet accommodate local and regional repeat visitors interested in special events and railroading history in general.
- Programs must remain flexible and responsive to visitor needs in the face of extremes in weather conditions.
- The scope and quality of development should reflect the highest NPS standards.

Special Populations

All interpretive programs and media, to the extent possible and reasonable, will be accessible to the disabled. All general public information, contact points, and interpretive areas, personal services, self-guiding programs, exhibits, signs, labels, publications, and audiovisual programs should be evaluated

periodically for accessibility using the Interpretive Program Accessibility Checklist in Interpretation for Disabled Visitors in the National Park System (1984).

INFLUENCES AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The following is a discussion of those influences and considerations which have a bearing on interpretive development and programming.

The Management Mosaic

The park is managed according to National Park Service historic preservation policies and legislative directives. The 160-acre Summit area contains most park development (Visitor Center, paved parking lot, reconstructed rail line segment, Engine House, park housing, etc.).

Except for enlargements in the park boundary for these modern developments and to protect the historic remains of construction worker camps both east and west of the Visitor Center, the park is the 400-foot right-of-way and grade of the historic railroad. This land was deeded to the National Park Service by the Southern Pacific Railroad, and by legislative agreement, the Southern Pacific retains perpetual right to reclaim its donated portion of the right-of-way.

There are 16 parcels of land in non-Federal ownership held by 12 owners. Of these, 10 are ranchers and farmers and the other two are the Thiokol Company and the Southern Pacific Railroad. In all cases, the land is either under cultivation, is rangeland, or is not used and is returning to sagebrush and grasses.

This potpourri of land ownership gives the park its long, narrow configuration with its enlarged bulges. About half of the park's 15 1/2-mile long railroad right-of-way is maintained as a self-guiding, one-way traffic, auto tour. In spite of this adaptive use, the entire grade is to be managed as historic, rather than as a developed area subzone.

Other Internal Influences and Considerations

County Road FAS 504 enter the park from the east and ascends Promontory Summit through the East Slope area. FAS 504 was paved as far as the Visitor Center in time for the Golden Spike's dedication during the 1969 centennial celebration. It provides access for 99 percent of visitors to the park. The road has received little maintenance over the years and will require substantial rehabilitation.

The county road continues west of the Visitor Center with a gravel surface, inside or adjacent to the park boundary, to the western limits of the park and beyond. Besides providing access to the West Slope self-guided trail (automobile access), this segment of the FAS 504 is used primarily by local ranchers in western Box Elder County.

Another gravel road, the Poulson Road, also crosses park property on the east side of the park. Visitors to the East Slope tour use a short portion of it, but again, primary use is by local land owners. Within the park are several access roads off the FAS 504 to privately owned agricultural lands both inside and outside the boundaries. These are insignificant and pose no special management problems.

External Influences and Considerations

Wildlife hunting and artifact collecting are popular activities on adjoining Bureau of Land Management and other range lands. These activities and vandalism to signs (particularly from hunters shooting into and across the parks mostly narrow, ribbon-like configuration) continue to be management problems at Golden Spike.

Such farming practices on adjoining lands as fall plowing and lack of contour plowing are contributors to erosion problems. Cooperative efforts with these land owners are needed to minimize this impact on park resources.

The Thiokol plant, some six air miles east of the Visitor Center, manufactures rocket booster engines for the United States' space shuttle program. It also produces the less publicized automobile airbag passenger restraint devices. Its 6,000 employees commute to work along Utah Highway 83 from the nearby bedroom communities of Tremonton and Brigham City, a twice-daily occurrence that creates serious traffic congestion and hazards for arriving and departing park visitors. Many of Thiokol's business people come to the park as part of their trips to the plant. They make up a significant portion of winter weekday visitation.

Approximately four to six times each year, Thiokol test fires a rocket motor. In the past, these tests have attracted up to 6,000 observers from the surrounding counties. Park visitation increases dramatically for several hours after each test firing.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Overview

Golden Spike National Historic Site is not a park that anyone can stop by on the way to another location. People must make a great effort to get there. In addition, it is not a destination park since there are no camping or lodging facilities. Some 30 miles off the beaten path, Golden Spike is accessible from the north, south or east by way of Interstate Highways 15 and 84, or by State Highway 83. Interestingly enough, the area is not accessible by rail.

After traveling west out of Brigham City along Highway 83 through salt flats and sage plains interrupted by an occasional farm and cross-roads town, visitors enter the piedmont leading to the saddle between the North and South Promontory Mountains. These are rocky hills, not scenic peaks.

Directly across Highway 83 from the space technology related Thiokol Plant, is the entrance road to Golden Spike. Visitors must pass sections of the Thiokol Plant to reach the park. The plant is the second largest employer in the state of Utah, and if visitors travel in the area during shift changes between 2:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m., considerable travel time is added to the trip.

No eye catching entrance signage or displays attract the visitor--only increasing bewilderment over the lack of evidence for a transcontinental rail line and its commemorative national historic site. No information (brochures, trail guides, radio broadcast, etc.) is available at the entrance. No telegraph poles have

been installed along the old rail alignment, as called for in the General Management Plan, nor are there waysides to guide the visitor. Thus, for the untrained and untutored eye, there is little or no evidence of the almost insurmountable East Grade that slowed progress of the rail line to the Summit. Not until the visitor catches that first glimpse of the Visitor Center does a suggestion of the rail line's route through the Summit area form. And at this moment is formed the misperception of Golden Spike as an island, a distortion that for many visitors skews their conceptualization of the place where the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads joined.

And once there, Golden Spike can be very inhospitable--searing heat in the summer and piercing cold in the winter. The Visitor Center provides the sole source of basic comforts. Once visitors leave its shelter, they are subject to the vagaries of weather and the area's rather bleak landscape. Weather extremes often result in visitors staying at the Visitor Center and not traveling out to the East and West Grades.

Personal Services

Present levels of personal interpretation should continue, to both adequately explain the primary theme of the transcontinental railroad's effect on the American West and the secondary theme of the story of the railroad's construction. These personal services also will provide for visitor safety around the area, particularly near the live steam locomotives. Current personal services in interpretation reach approximately 20 to 25 percent of the visitors to the park.

The busy season at Golden Spike, from Memorial Day through Labor Day, accounts for approximately 50 percent of the total yearly visitation. It is during this time that the majority of personal interpretation takes place.

Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, staff interpreters present approximately 25 programs weekly, each some 20 to 30 minutes long. During the spring and fall when the park is open fewer hours and the staff is smaller, programs are presented as determined by the number of visitors and staff available. The summertime programs are published under general terms in a "Visitor Activities Schedule," with specific events and times posted in the Visitor Center. Press releases are also sent out to announce the summer season and the activities schedule.

Interpretation also is provided at the Visitor Center information counter where at least one uniformed Park Ranger always is on duty. At times, there will be more than one ranger augmented by an employee of the Southwest Parks and Monuments Association (SPMA). These employees provide interpretation as well as information to the visiting public.

Roving interpretation takes place whenever possible, but primarily during the locomotive demonstrations which occur four to six time daily during the summer, and three to five time daily in the spring and fall. Park Rangers are required to be at the site of the demonstrations to provide safety as well as interpretation.

Visitor Center

Information Counter

The appearance of the information counter has been changed and future, more subtle changes will be made. The appearance is now that of a railroad ticket counter complete with barred sections and replica railroad tickets for use during the fee collection season. This will continue to be one of the primary focal areas for informal interpretation.

Cooperating Association Sales Area

Directly across from the information counter is the sales area for the Southwest Parks and Monuments Association. It has almost doubled in size during the past 1 1/2 years to accommodate new titles. It will continue to grow, but probably at a slower rate. Book shelves and racks are conveniently located near the cash register and in view full of personnel working the counter. The most pressing need in the book display area is better lighting to offset the glare that presently comes through the northeast window.

Audiovisuals

The Black Box

As visitors enter the building, the first thing they see of interest is the information panel (including the Junior Engineer program) on the left. Straight ahead is the semi-automatic, four-projector slide program, designed to set a mood for the visit. The room (or Black Box) in which the program is located is dark most of the day, but at times in the morning, sunlight reflected off the entrance walkway makes it difficult to view the slides. The entrance area inside the building leading to the Black Box is wide open and the screen is high on the wall. If visitors don't step forward, they may not see what is being shown, and thereby miss the program.

The four-minute program consists of close-up shots of the replica locomotives as well as historic photographs. Appropriate background music is employed. Used more in the off season when the room can better accommodate smaller groups, the black box has never been able to hold its own against the spectacle of the replica steam locomotives recreating their role in the last spike ceremonies of 1869.

The room has undergone some changes to make it more inviting and attractive to visitors. A wood pellet burning stove and wooden benches have been installed. Caboose wall lamps set on a dimmer and railroad broadsides from the transcontinental railroading period also have been added. A rather non-descript exhibit of a section of railroad track will be developed into a more attractive

exhibit on historic railroad equipment. Three small display cases have been donated to the park and will be used in the room to display some of the artifacts from the park's collections.

The warmer or friendlier atmosphere of the room should attract more visitors. The slide program will continue to be the primary interpretive tool, but the room

also will be used during the slow winter months for "fireside chats" on various interpretive topics.

Theater Films

--"The Golden Spike" was produced by Harpers Ferry Center in 1969 and is the oldest of three films shown in the Visitor Center Theater. It is a dramatization of the construction of the nation's first transcontinental railroad and the effects of that railroad on American society, politics, and economics. During the summer months, the 20-minute film is shown 12 times daily. It is the core of the park's efforts to fulfill its primary interpretive goal, ie., increasing visitor awareness of the impacts on the railroad on the American West, etc.

--"Jupiter and No. 119, Locomotives of the Golden Spike" is a 25-minute film recounting the manufacture of the replicas of the two steam locomotives that were at the Last Spike Ceremony Promontory Summit in 1869. During the busy summer season, the film is shown four times daily.

--"The Photography of Andrew J. Russell" is 25-minute documentary on the works of the photographer of the famed "champaign celebration" at the driving of the last spike ceremony in 1869. Russell was hired by the Union Pacific Railroad to photographically record construction of the rail line. Before that, he had been a photo chronicler of the American Civil War. This film also is shown four times daily.

Exhibits (Inside the Visitor Center)

--A section of railroad track shows the various stages of completion and some of the most prominent tools used in the railroad's construction. The exhibit was produced by the park staff.

--A Harpers Ferry Center produced exhibit on the effects of the railroad on nationalism, military, Indians, communications and the rise of financial moguls.

--The sign emplaced by workers at the end of a record 10-miles of hand laid track completed in one day.

--A Frank McCarthy painting, "East Meets West," enclosed in a glass case.

--A large bas relief of the town of Promontory as it appeared at the completion of the railroad.

--An exhibit of a "link and pin" coupler, like those used on 1869 locomotives and passenger and freight cars.

Exhibits (Outside the Visitor Center)

The two most important drawing cards in the park are replicas of locomotives "119" and "Jupiter." Delivered to the park in 1979, these two full-size operating locomotives were constructed to exact standards at a cost of 1.5 million dollars. Each day, from May through mid-October, the locomotives are

driven under their power from the engine to the Last Spike Site in front of the Visitor Center. They form the core of the park's visitor services/interpretive program and require ongoing care and preventative maintenance.

Along the paved walkway leading from the Visitor Center to the Last Spike Site are two commemorative monuments. Attached to one are plaques listing those individuals responsible for the dedication of the site in 1969, honoring the Chinese laborers who helped build the railroad, and designating the site a National Engineering Landmark. The second monument was originally erected by the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Sons of the Utah Pioneers in 1919. This second monument has been moved several times before its present location.

The Last Spike Site

The Last Spike Site is the dominant feature of Golden Spike National Historic Site, particularly between May 1 and early October when the replica locomotives are on display. Visitors, when leaving the Visitor Center or walking around the Visitor Center toward the Last Spike Site, encounter two wayside panels and two monuments before they arrive at the actual site. The two panels display copies of A.J. Russell's famous "Champagne" picture taken at the last spike ceremonies on May 10, 1869, and a layout of the rail yard as it appeared in 1869. One of the two monuments, referred to earlier, is dedicated to the people involved in the building of the railroad and its centennial in 1969. The second, a white structure, at one time marked the location of the final spike.

The Last Spike Site consists of: a replica of the ceremonial last tie marking the exact location where the rails joined; four photographic panels (wayside exhibits) showing what Promontory looked like in 1869; three replica period wagons; and several benches made from railroad ties for visitor seating during interpretive programs at the reconstructed rail line.

Wayside Exhibits

Six photographic exhibit panels (wayside exhibits) at the Last Spike Site display reproduced photographs of the last spike ceremony and the town of Promontory in 1869. They are set at various angles to duplicate the location of the camera in 1869. A seventh wayside panel shows the layout of the rail lines in 1869.

On the West Grade is a replica of the "Ten Mile Sign" commemorating the hand laying of 10 miles of track in one day by Central Pacific workmen. The grade is open to self-guided auto tours except during the snow season.

Two waysides on the East Grade assist hikers interested in the Big Fill--Big Trestle Site. One, providing visitor information, is emplaced at the trailhead. A second, at the Big Fill--Big Trestle overlook, details construction features of the two structures.

Interpretive Trail

Golden Spike NHS has one self-guided auto tour divided into two sections--the West Grade and the East Grade. The West Grade tour consists of driving on the actual grade of the Central Pacific Railroad. The tracks were removed in 1942.

A self-guiding booklet is sold at the Visitor Center. When the Visitor Center is closed, a loan copy is available in the VC breezeway and can be left in a return box at the end of the tour.

The West Grade

The self-guiding tour of approximately seven miles of original railroad grade (facilitated by a guide book cued to numbered markers along the railbed) is available to almost everyone. It is along this grade that the Central Pacific laid its track and its alignment parallel to the grade built by the Union Pacific. For those willing to take the time, the auto tour underscores the effort that went into building the transcontinental railroad. The west tour includes a portion of the famous "10 miles of track in one day" segment. The area's broad vistas also facilitate telling the story of the routing of the rail line around the north end of the Great Salt Lake.

The East Grade

On the East Grade tour is a trail or walking tour known as the Big Fill Walk. The 1 1/2-mile loop trail follows portions of both the Union Pacific and Central Pacific grades on the east side of the park.

Publications

The park brochure produced by Harpers Ferry Center and the locally produced "Visitor Activities Schedule" are excellent introductions to the historic site. The schedules are available inside the Visitor Center during the day and in an overnight box in the Visitor Center breezeway when the building is closed. Also available at the Visitor Center are three site bulletins on various aspects of the transcontinental railroad.

Factors Affecting Interpretation

Weather and Insects

During the summer months when the highest levels of visitation occur, climatic conditions are the hottest and windiest. Cloudless skies produce temperatures in the upper 90's and low 100's for extended periods. Winds are constant in the afternoons with speeds of 15 to 25 miles per hour common. There are no ramadas or shelters along the rebuilt rail line so that a great many park visitors are unwilling to sit through 20- to 30-minute interpretive programs given in the hot sun.

At those times when the weather is warm and the wind is calm, thousands of mosquitoes concentrate in the grassy areas around the Visitor Center and along the Big Fill Walk. This adversely affects some interpretive programs and make walking and stopping along the Big Fill Trail almost impossible.

THEMES, GOALS, and OBJECTIVES

...the paramount historical significance of the first transcontinental railroad lies in its effect upon the Far Western frontier. It made the first serious and permanent breach in the frontier, and established the process by which the entire frontier was to be demolished. As the site where the Central Pacific and Union Pacific united to inaugurate cross-country rail travel, Promontory Summit best illustrates the historical meaning, as well as the dramatic construction story, of the first transcontinental railroad.

Robert M. Utley
Special Report on Promontory Summit, Utah
February 1960
The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings
National Park Service

Themes

--The first transcontinental railroad is of paramount historical significance to the American experience.

The railroad tied the West politically, socially, economically, and culturally to the East, and set in place the process that led to the demise of the Western Frontier and the subjugation of the Indian Tribes.

--Promontory Summit best illustrates the dramatic story of the actual construction and completion of the first transcontinental railroad.

Construction of the transcontinental railroad represents the cutting edge of engineering and construction technology, much as the work of the Thiokol Plant near Golden Spike represents the cutting edge of American know how in space travel today. The story of men and machine against mountains, deserts, and extreme weather conditions is a riveting one that still captures today's imagination. The major characters (General Dodge, Leland Stanford, etc.) as well as the Irish and Chinese workers, make for a fascinating and totally captivating saga.

--The natural history of the Golden Spike area, interesting in its own right, was a major factor in the selection and subsequent abandonment of Promontory Summit by the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads.

The area was once part of the ancient Bonneville Lake. Geological formations and deposits give evidence to this feature and to the continuing fluctuations of the Great Salt Lake. These fluctuations led to the decision to build the rail line north of the Great Salt Lake through Promontory. However, the lack of potable water resources at the Summit led to its abandonment as a transshipment point and marshalling yard early on. The area's unique salt marshes provide habitat for a large number of bird species and other wildlife.

Goals

- To increase visitor understanding of the importance of the first transcontinental railroad in American political and economic history.
- To enhance visitor appreciation of the race to Promontory Summit by the Central Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads.
- To provoke visitors into wanting to learn more about the first transcontinental railroad.
- To increase visitor understanding of the geology, plants, and animals of the region.
- To increase visitor awareness that Promontory one of many major events in the settlement and development of the West.
- To generate visitor interest in the cultures and lifestyles of the people in the region from historic times to the present.
- To help visitors understand that the historic site's resources do not end at its boundaries.
- To stimulate visitor and local citizen understanding of external threats to monument resources.
- To reduce visitor injury and hazards related to monument uses.
- To help visitors understand and appreciate their role in maintaining Golden Spike's cultural and natural resources.
- To foster visitor enjoyment through awareness of available activities and services and time needed for each, both at Golden Spike and on other public lands in the region.

Objectives

We use objectives to measure our achievements. As we learn more about our visitors and our capabilities, these objectives may be modified. The following list constitutes only a partial inventory of the objectives of Golden Spike's interpretation program. Any necessary modifications and additions should be placed in the Annual Statement for Interpretation.

Of the visitors leaving Golden Spike National Historic Site:

- 80 percent will confirm that they received adequate information for well informed, safe, efficient, and enjoyable visit.
- 100 percent will know that they have visited "the place" where the first transcontinental railroad was completed and the last spikes driven.
- 100 percent will state that Golden Spike is a unit of the National Park System.

--80 percent will be able to describe the primary resources that warrant the area's designation as a national historic site.

--60 percent will be able to describe at least three significant changes to American society brought about by completion of the first transcontinental railroad.

--60 percent will know why the northern route through Promontory around the Great Salt Lake was chosen.

--50 percent will know at least two of the major ethnic groups that made up the construction crews.

--50 percent will be able to identify at least one thing they can do to prevent degradation to Golden Spike National Historic Site.

INTERPRETIVE MEDIA PROPOSALS

Interpretation at Golden Spike National Historic Site will improve the Visitor experience by:

--Providing interpretation of all park resources--human history, natural history, and the National Park System.

--Providing interpretive programs and facilities that meet National Park Service standards for accuracy and quality.

--Fostering the development of appropriate media technology and content.

--Nurturing cooperative interpretation efforts involving the Southwest Parks and Monuments Association and the National Park Service.

Road Leading to the Visitor Center

Between the Big Fill Trail and the Visitor Center, visitors cross the original Central Pacific railroad grade four times. There is a need to identify the first three crossings of the historic grade. A park logo has been developed and plans call for its incorporation into signing throughout the park where any segment of historic railroad grading either intersects or parallels park roads. The interpretive message transmitted over the park's Travelers Information Station (TIS) will be augmented to explain the significance of the signing.

The fourth crossing, near the Visitor Center, is marked with modern railroad crossing signs (there were no such crossing signs in Promontory in 1869) primarily for safety reasons. However, one of the logos should be added to each of the crossing signs.

Visitor Center

The Visitor Center will continue to support three primary functions in Golden Spike's program:

--It will be the central place where people will be directed and given basic park orientation and information, and various support services.

--An overview of interpretation of park resources will be presented, showing visitors where the various stories and features to be interpreted in the field fit into the overall picture of the Golden Spike area.

--It will serve as a meeting place and activity center for group interpretation or activities. The Visitor Center's Theater will continue as a multi-purpose room, its primary purpose remaining the showing of three park films. Additionally, it will continue to house photography exhibits, special lectures, film showings, etc.

Audiovisuals

The theater's audiovisual equipment is outdated. The park needs to install the latest video projection devices available to eliminate the film tree and its attendant recurring problems.

The 20-minute film, "The Golden Spike," will remain the centerpiece of the national historic site's interpretive effort to impart to visitors the primary theme of the effects of the first transcontinental railroad on the socio-economic history of the United States. While the film succeeds in treating all aspects of this primary theme, it is weak in some areas (such as the effects of the railroad on the Indian Tribes), it needs updating.

The Last Spike Site

Still needed at the site is shelter to protect visitors from the elements. During the summer heat, there is little that can be done to shield people from the heat and still participate in the interpretive programs. Although several proposals have been made over the years, nothing has been done. Possibilities include the addition of a room on the north side of the Visitor Center and either screening it in or enclosing it with glass and installing air conditioning. A wooden shelter just east of the Visitor Center would provide some shade. Another possibility is the erection of two white canvas tents that replicate the tent town that stood in the area when the rail line was completed. The tents not only would simulate the area as it looked in 1869, but also would provide summer shelter for visitors during interpretive programs.

The reconstructed rail line and replicas of locomotives "119" and "Jupiter" are the primary destination point within the park for most visitors during the summer months. Even in summer's heat, visitors will go outside to see the replicas make the 10-to 15-minute run on the 1 1/2 miles of track between the Visitor Center and Engine House. Weather permitting, visitors can take in interpretive talks at the Last Spike Site given by period costumed or NPS uniformed interpreters. Together, the replica locomotives and the interpretive programs remain the heart of the Last Spike Site's interpretive services.

Presently, visitors are not allowed to ride the steam locomotives for safety and space considerations. It is the intention of the park staff that this policy continue even though Mr. Chadwell O'Connor, the man whose company built the

replica locomotive, plans to build and donate two replica passenger coaches to the park. The coaches will offer another facet to the interpretive programs, but they will not provide rides for visitors. If additional trackage is laid at some future date, the possibility of offering interpreted rides might be considered.

For the foreseeable future, the locomotives will be operated on a daily basis from May 1 through early October, weather permitting. For most of the summer, there will be two steam locomotive demonstrations daily--a recognition by the NPS of the "star quality" of the impressive replicas. The park staff will continue to use the draw of the locomotives to tell the larger and primary story of the impact of the first transcontinental railroad on U.S. history.

Near- to long-term plans call for adding up to two miles of track on the Central Pacific grade immediately west of the Visitor Center. This additional trackage would allow the steam locomotives the chance to "exercise" each day, and would provide a excellent photo and interpretive opportunity for visitors and staff. Construction of the additional trackage could involve the park's own work train. The long-term project could serve as an interpretive device in which visitors could witness historically accurate construction techniques being used. In so doing, visitors would be left a greater appreciation for the time and effort that went into the building of the original railroad. The need for additional wayside exhibits along any additional trackage should be evaluated as part of the overall planning process.

Exhibits

Exhibits are limited due to the nature of the area and the resource. The primary themes of the park deal with the effects of the railroad on the American West. However, the most available artifacts that can be used in exhibitry deal with the construction phase of the railroad, a secondary theme. The current exhibits deal almost exclusively with the latter theme. The primary effort in the near future will concentrate on small, changeable exhibits dealing with the construction of the railroad, exhibits that can be developed using non-consumptive artifacts from the museum collection for placement in glass cases in the Visitor Center.

The most challenging exhibit proposal will be a fiber-optic relief map showing the progress of the transcontinental railroad and the effects of the rail line on the small towns and villages that sprang up only because the railroad had come their way. This exhibit will replace one presently in the back room of the Visitor Center. While this back room is off the main flow of traffic, it still gets a good deal of attention. However, it needs to be redesigned. Optimum space requirements would necessitate removal of a portion of the south and west walls of the Visitor Center, and in so doing, nearly double exhibit space.

The exhibit case containing the historic "10 mile" sign needs improvement. The sign was placed at the end of the 10 miles of track completed in one day in April of 1869. Lettering needs to be restored. Once this is completed, the sign will be placed in a sealed display case for better protection.

Interpretive Trail

As mentioned previously, there is only one trail, divided into two sections-- the West Grade and the East Grade. Due to the nature of the park, this is probably all that will be developed. A trail guide should be developed for the East Grade or Big Fill Trail. First efforts will be in-house, using the site bulletin format.

West Grade Auto Tour

For interpretive purposes, it is intended that the historic railroad grade be maintained as close to its original condition as possible. It will be more effective if the grade looks like it is ready for the track rather than a country road complete with windrows and a center row of grass.

As an interpretive tool and to increase the sense of riding in a locomotive, the park should pursue developing an audio tape that carries narrative and locomotive sounds. The tape would be available to those with audio cassette or disc players in their cars on a loan, rental, or purchase basis.

East Grade (Big Fill/Big Trestle Sites)

The Big Fill Trail, a 1 1/2-mile loop trail, was expanded to include a portion of the Union Pacific grade to the Central Pacific grade already in use. A sheltered, interpretive wayside exhibit and two picnic tables were installed in 1989 at the entrance to the trail next to the parking area.

Improvements to interpretive services for this area of the park include a trail guide or brochure and ranger guided walks. The latter was undertaken on three separate occasions and was well received by the public. Such guided walks should be expanded, weather permitting and the availability of personnel.

Publications

Publications will continue to interpret in the greatest depth, and will serve at the opposite end of the spectrum from the "at a glance" overview exhibits, waysides and interpretive signs. Publications also will continue to give the visitor "take away" information and/or a means of "do-it-yourself" interpretation in the field. They too will provide an important source of illustrating the totality of the monument. They will continue to be used in presenting changing information such as monthly schedules or seasonal variations of resources. To the degree feasible, the publications developed by the monument will follow the Unigrd/Site Bulletin format developed by Harpers Ferry Center.

Publications either planned or in production include:

--A second booklet (in addition to the handbook) will cover the entire story from the development and building of the railroad through the present day.

--With the new computer equipment, some 10 to 15 site bulletins will be developed. For the visitor, particularly during after hours, site bulletins will become a more important element of the interpretive effort.

Signing

Improvements need to be made at the entrance. Logo signs should be developed to place along the county road to indicate locations of the original railroad grade. Permission will be sought from the county to paint trackage across the entrance road at the crossover points so that visitors can locate the original railroad grade. It also would be a good reminder that this was, indeed, a railroading area. A park entrance sign/kiosk providing hours of operation and distances to park features and services also should be designed and installed. However, before designing, fabricating, and installing these various signs, the park would do well to devise a parkwide wayside exhibit plan. In so doing, the park would guarantee continuity in design and thoroughness in coverage of major park resources.

PERSONAL SERVICES PROPOSALS

Personal services will continue to play a vital role in the interpretation of Golden Spike National Historic Site, both on- and off-site. The Visitor Center will continue to be staffed at a full-time level and will receive highest priority in competition for available human resources. Volunteers will continue to play a vital role in the park's historic re-enactments and in assisting at the VC information desk.

Natural History

Personal services will fill in the gaps and expand on interpretive media treatment of the natural history of Golden Spike. These services will enable visitors to discover and learn about subsets of the bigger picture presented by the media, thereby providing a greater in-depth integration of geology, geography, climatology, etc., into the Golden Spike story, past and present.

Human History

As with natural history, personal services will serve to fill in the gaps, highlight and treat in more detail, the human history of the area. Interpreters will continue to present interpretation in uniform and in period costumes. Formal programs will continue at the Last Spike Site, weather permitting, and under tents when needed. Programs occasionally may be presented in the Visitor Center auditorium, particularly during inclement weather.

STAFFING NEEDS

SPECIAL PROGRAMS/COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

The park already offers special educational and cultural programs, three special events each year--the May 10th anniversary of the driving of the last spike, the annual Railroader's Festival in August, and the Winter Film Festival during the Christmas-New Year holidays.

The May 10th celebration is organized by the Golden Spike Association of Brigham City, Utah to honor the anniversary of the completion of the railroad. The Railroader's Festival consists of period railroad games, reenactments of the last spike ceremony, professional and amateur spike driving contests, and hand car races. The Winter Film Festival and Locomotive Demonstration involves bringing the replica locomotives out on the track for visitors to see (normally the engines are not run during the winter) and a showing of old railroad movies (both documentary and fictional) in the Visitor Center.

New special programs developed by park interpretive staff will be identified in the Annual Statement for Interpretation.

INTERPRETIVE RESEARCH NEEDS

A pressing need is a thorough study of visitor use of Golden Spike and the study of user market demographics and needs. Without these, interpretive management of the monument is forced to use "best guesses" in determining visitor needs and marketing the interpretive program to the public.

MUSEUM COLLECTION

The museum collection will be maintained at its present size unless some site specific artifacts are acquired within the parameters established in the Scope of Collection. The collection currently includes approximately 550 artifacts of which 200 are not catalogued. In order for it to be available for interpretive purposes, the most pressing need is the reorganization, accessioning, and cataloging of the entire collection.

LIBRARY

The small but well-used library is being reorganized under the Dewey system. New titles should continue to be added as necessary and as funding permits. Of particular need are volumes relating specifically to Golden Spike. A limiting factor for future acquisitions is space, adequate now, but getting close to the maximum.

ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT AND FUNDING STRATEGIES

Given the ongoing economic realities which will continue to influence the Federal budgeting process, Golden Spike most probably will not receive adequate funding to optimize its interpretation program. Therefore, it is imperative that the park seek alternatives to restricted Federal sources and processes for accomplishing its programs. Creative initiatives will pay large dividends in accomplishing interpretive development and operations.

To direct management efforts in achieving alternative management objectives, an Alternative Management and Funding Strategy and Plan might be prepared and appended to this prospectus as time permits. Such a plan will prescribe in greater detail which developments and services might be accomplished by which alternative management and funding sources. It should consider the following:

- Cooperative Agreements
- Memoranda of Understanding
- Memoranda of Agreement
- Fee Interpretation
- Cooperating Association Programs
- Gift Catalogs
- Foundation and Corporation Grants
- Individual Donations
- VIPs
- Friends Organization

CONCLUSION

Golden Spike National Historic Site's interpretive story is double layered. One--construction of the transcontinental railroad as exemplified by the reconstructed rails and replica locomotives, is the most obvious and exciting to park visitors. The other, the impacts of the first transcontinental railroad to American politics, economics, and society, is far more significant, of less general interest to the park visitor, and therefore, far more challenging to impart to the public. Therefore, the goals of the interpretive program and media development are to reveal the real meaning of Golden Spike National Historic Site by accurately portraying its significance and value. In so doing, this interpretation effort will help the public develop, through awareness and understanding, a greater appreciation and commitment to the preservation of Golden Spike's resources and values.

OUTLINE OF MEDIA AND COST ESTIMATES

[A] - Audiovisual
 [P] - Publications
 [E] - Museum Exhibits
 [W] - Waysides

<u>Priority</u>	<u>Media Proposals</u>	<u>Plan</u>	<u>Produce</u>	<u>Equipment</u>
	[A] Plan/produce/ install interpretive messages for park's TIS. [p. 15]			
	[W] Plan/produce/ install Entrance Road sign/kiosk. [p. 19]			
	[E] Plan/produce/ install new displays for VC. [p. 17]			
	[E] Design/produce/ install fiber-optic relief map. [p. 17]			
	[E] Feasibility study for additional exhibit space extending beyond present south and west wall of VC. [p. 17]			
	[E] Prepare feasibility study for adding room on north side of VC. [p. 16]			
	[W] Design/produce/ install tent(s) at Last Spike Site. [p. 16]			
	[W] Plan and design parkwide Wayside Exhibit Plan. [p. 19]			

[E] Plan and design two-phase plan for interpretive uses of passenger coaches. Phase 1--stationary use. Phase 2--as rolling stock after construction of 2-mile segment of trackage west of VC. [p. 16]

[A] Plan/produce audio cassette/disc for West Grade auto tour. [p. 18]

[P] Write/design/publish official NPS handbook on history of Promontory from 1869 to the present. [p. 18]

[W] Install telegraph poles along alignment of historic railroad grade through the Summit Area. [p. 8]

[A] Install state-of-the-art replacement audiovisual equipment in VC Theater to include 16 mm. movie projector, 35 mm. slide projectors with dissolve, sound reproduction and amplification systems; and remote start from screen area. [p. 16]

[A] Update/produce 16 mm. film, "The Golden Spike," for use in the VC Theater. [p. 16]

[E] Plan/install improved lighting in book display area of the Visitor Center. [p. 9]

PARTICIPANTS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Planning Team

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