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Wedding of the Rails

Standard/Objective

- Examine and describe the influence of culture on scientific and technological choices and advancements, such as in transportation, medicine and warfare. (NCSS)
- Students will work in pairs to study a photograph showing the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad and create invitations to the celebration.

Materials

copies of both sides of the *Transcontinental Railroad* photo card; copies of the historical background information (page 16)

Discussion Questions

- What technology is shown in this picture?
- What questions do you have about this picture?
- What are the people doing in this picture?
- Would you want to be a part of this event?

Using the Primary Source

Have students look closely at the photograph. Provide enough time for students to study the photograph and create questions they have about it. Discuss the questions above as well as students' questions. Then have each student work with a partner to answer the questions on the back of the photo card. Pairs of students should then meet with at least two other groups to share and discuss their answers.

Regroup the class and discuss their questions and the historical background information. Then, have students work with their partners to create an invitation to the celebration at Promontory Summit. Their invitations should include dignitaries who will be there, events that will occur during the celebration, as well as the date and location of the event. When students have finished, provide time for them to share their invitations with the other pairs of students that have finished.

Extension Ideas

- Research the role Chinese laborers played in the building of the Transcontinental Railroad. Have students write reports highlighting the risks these people took to build the rail line through the Sierra Nevada mountains of California.
- Study the effect the completion of the Suez Canal had on the Transcontinental Railroad. Students can create a chart listing the changes that occurred in the American economy after the canal was opened.
- Study the "Rails to Trails" movement in which old railroad lines are being turned into walking and biking trails today. Have students map the locations of the trails and study their history.

Wedding of the Rails *(cont.)*

Historical Background Information

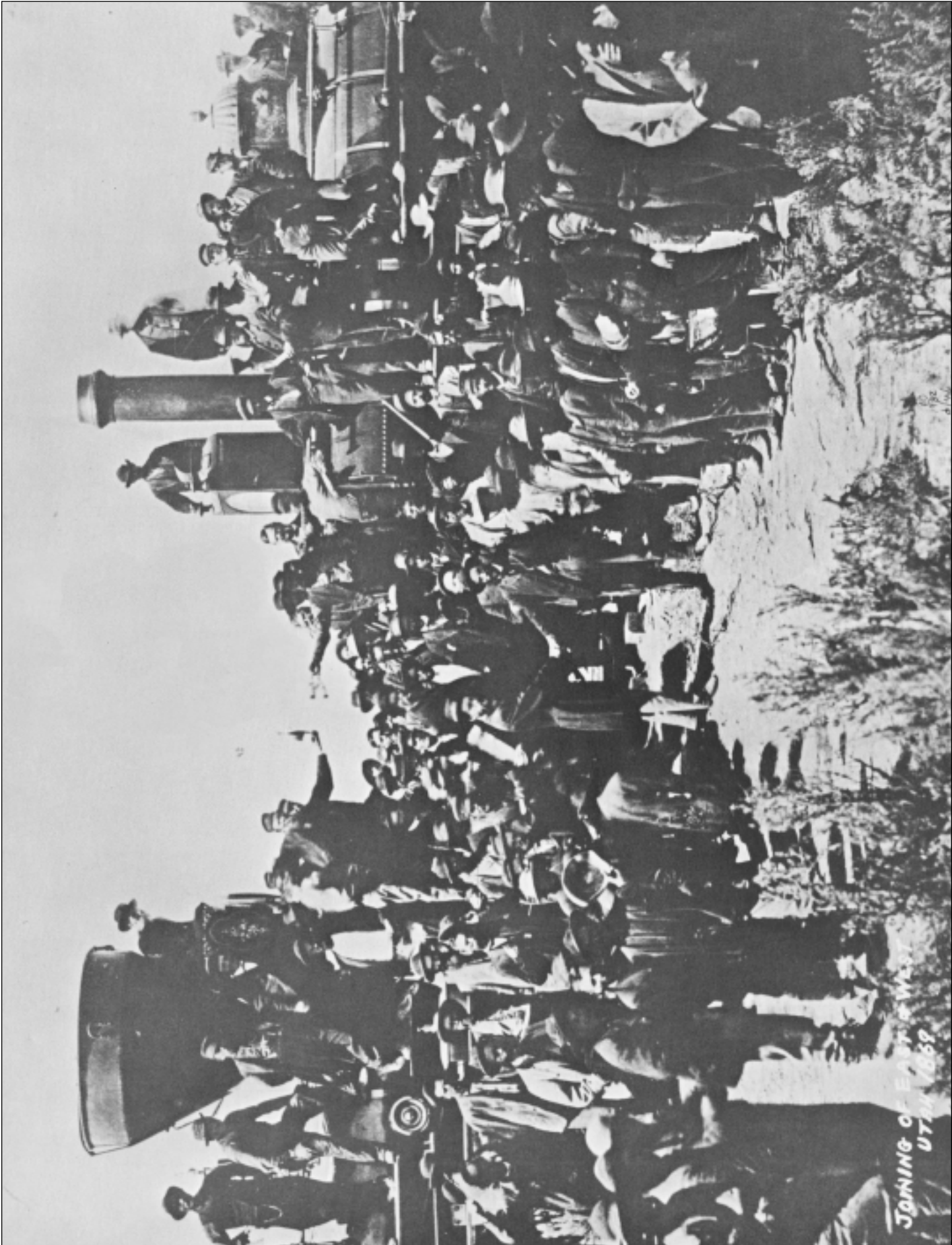
The idea of a Transcontinental Railroad was first proposed in 1830. Rail lines existed in the West and the East, but nothing connected these lines across the country. The only way to get supplies and people from east to west was to ship them around South America in boats or send them over a long land journey in wagons. The chief engineer of the Sacramento Pacific Railroad first proposed the idea of connecting the rail lines in California with those in the eastern United States. The problem was figuring out how to get track laid over the steep Sierra Nevada Mountains on the border of California and Nevada.

Several heads of railroad companies became interested in this idea and began lobbying congress to provide funds to help. However, it wasn't until 1862 that congress passed a bill to construct the railroad. From 1863–1869 men worked to build the long line. The Central Pacific Railroad built track west from Sacramento. The Union Pacific Railroad built track east from Nebraska. Each company was paid according to how many miles of track the men built, so it was a race to build the fastest and make the most money.

Many problems, including wars, labor shortages, and fighting with Native Americans, slowed progress on the huge project. The work on the railroad was very difficult. The Central Pacific Railroad company had the hardest time because the technology wasn't yet available to build tracks over the rough, steep Sierra Nevada Mountains. Tunnels had to be bored and the work was very slow. The railroad company faced many problems getting workers to do the life-threatening job. Eventually, they decided to allow Chinese laborers to help. Initially, they felt the Chinese would be too small to do such hard work, but, as it turned out, the Chinese were the heroes of the project. They were able to be lowered by ropes tied at their waists to chisel away at rock below. They worked long hours and were paid very little. However, the rail company leaders were very pleased with their work because they worked very hard and never complained.

The Union Pacific Railroad company was able to build track at a faster rate, but they also had problems. They had to deal with attacks from some Native American tribes who did not want them to bring the "Iron Horses" through their land. The Native Americans called the trains "Iron Horses" because they were used by white people to travel across the land like horses were used by Native Americans.

On May 10, 1869, at Promontory Summit, Utah, the Central Pacific Railroad met the Union Pacific Railroad to complete the United States' first Transcontinental Railroad. The Central Pacific's Jupiter engine met the Union Pacific's Engine Number 119. The tracks had actually met three days earlier, but they waited to drive in the last spike until all of the leaders could get there. A band played as a Chinese construction crew from the Central Pacific and an Irish crew from the Union Pacific laid down the last rails. When a sledgehammer drove in the final spike, a telegraph message was sent that said, "Done." The engines inched forward and lightly touched. The engineers of the trains broke champagne bottles on each other's engines. After a series of speeches, an elaborate lunch was served on Governor Stanford's private car for all the dignitaries while the crowd ate bison steaks and drank whiskey all provided by the Central Pacific. As dusk fell, the two trains backed away from each other. The Jupiter headed to San Francisco and the Number 119 went to New York. That night a torchlight parade, a banquet, and a grand ball were held at Promontory Summit.



Transcontinental Railroad

Historical Background Information

The idea of a transcontinental railroad was first proposed in 1830. However, it wasn't until 1862 that Congress passed a bill to construct it. From 1863–1869 men worked to build the long line. Many problems, including wars, labor shortages, and fighting with Native Americans, slowed progress on the huge project. The work on the railroad was very difficult. Crews from two different railroad companies worked laying track from the east and west. They met at Promontory Summit, Utah, on May 10, 1869. This photograph shows the celebration that took place when the two lines met and train travel was then available all the way across the nation. This technological advancement led to large migrations of people to the West and opened up trade from coast to coast.



Analyzing History

Knowledge

What event is depicted in this photograph? Who are the people shown in the photograph?

Comprehension

What was happening in the rest of the country around the time this photograph was taken? Why was this such an important event?

Application

This was a great technological advancement at the time. What technological advancement could it be equated to in the 20th century?

Analysis

What might the people have done with the two trains after the ceremony was over considering both trains were facing each other?

Synthesis

What do you think would have happened if Congress had not passed the bill for the railroad to be built? How would it have affected westward expansion?

Evaluation

Does this photograph appear to be staged or was it spontaneously taken? Provide reasons from the photograph to support your answer.

Historical Writing

Fiction

Imagine you were one of the men at the celebration in Promontory Summit, Utah. Write a letter to your family describing your role in the celebration and your feelings about being a part of this momentous event.

Nonfiction

This famous photograph was described as, "One of the classic icons of American imagery." Write a position paper explaining your agreement or disagreement with this quote. Support your example with evidence.

History Challenge

Several golden spikes were used in the ceremony. Research the golden spikes and find out what role they played in the ceremony. A good place to start is the Golden Spike National Historic Site. Their website can be found through the National Park Service's website.

San Francisco: Forming an Instant City

Standard/Objective

- Describe the ways that historical events have been influenced by and have influenced, physical and human geographic factors in local, regional, national, and global settings. (NCSS)
- Students will analyze a panoramic map and determine the elements depicted on the map as well as the story the artistic panoramic map tells about the area.

Materials

copy of the facsimile *San Francisco Panoramic Map*; copies of the historical background information (page 48); copies of the student activity sheet (page 49); copies of the panoramic map on legal paper

Discussion Questions

- What groups of people can you identify in the panoramic map?
- What physical characteristics can you identify in this panoramic map?
- How is this map different from ones you usually study?
- What might be the purpose of this map?
- Why is this lesson called *Forming an Instant City*?

Using the Primary Source

Divide your class into groups of three. Photocopy the panoramic map on legal paper, making one copy for each group of students. Show students the large facsimile. Have students list some initial observations. Next, begin group work by giving each group of students one of the photocopied legal map sheets. Have each group fold the map in thirds and then each student chooses one third of the map to analyze by listing the components of that section. On the board, draw lines to make a large three-sectioned grid. Each group then lists its observations for each section on the board. If someone has previously listed an item, students should simply put a check mark by it to show agreement. Discuss the results of the groups' reporting.

Discuss the questions listed above. Then have students read and discuss the historical background information. Finally, discuss the questions once again and see if students' ideas have changed regarding their answers.

Extension Idea

- Have the students write group stories about one of the three sections of the panoramic map. Students should include from where the individuals had migrated, what they were doing, and why.

San Francisco: Forming an Instant City *(cont.)*

Historical Background Information

This view of San Francisco was taken from the Western Hill, at the foot of Telegraph Hill, looking toward Rington Point and Mission Valley. The view was drawn from nature by Henry Bainbridge and George W. Casilear and was printed as a two-part lithograph by Sarony & Major.

This artistic-style map is an illustrated view of San Francisco, California, in a panoramic format. The view looks southeast across the Bay, with Yerba Buena Island on the far left. This panoramic map also shows camps and travelers in the foreground and includes a key to numbered locations. The map was printed in 1851.

Gold was discovered on January 24, 1848, at John Sutter's sawmill in an area near the American River, just 100 miles northeast of San Francisco. Sutter tried to keep his discovery secret, but President James Polk's announcement to congress 12 months later launched a worldwide migration called the 1849 Gold Rush.

San Francisco was a tiny settlement before the Gold Rush of 1849. Almost overnight, eager, ambitious people from around the world poured into San Francisco by sea and land to prospect the gold fields. In 1849, 38,000 men arrived by the sea and 42,000 across the ground. These men were called "The Forty-Niners" because of the date of gold discovery in California. This map shows the variety of travelers coming into the city.

In 1849, a total of 549 ships entered the Golden Gate, 316 of them from foreign ports. In addition to the passengers exiting the ships, sailors abandoned ships in search of gold. So, the bay was often left with a mass of deserted ships. Some were beached, but some became hotels.

This influx of people made the population of San Francisco soar from 2,000 to 20,000 inhabitants in a few months and to more than 55,000 by the end of the 1850s. After the rush was over, many prospectors returned from the gold fields and settled in the city. They began to realize that fortunes could be made in the cities—instead of the gold fields. Business establishments, shipping companies, small industries, and retail shops brought prosperity to the newcomers. San Francisco grew rapidly and attracted a vast variety of individuals. By 1852, a publishing company had printed a city directory listing thousands of businesses and individual residents. A sleepy port had become a bustling city in only three years!

Source: American Memory, Library of Congress; San Francisco Chamber of Commerce statistics



Name _____

Studying the San Francisco Map

Background Information

This map of San Francisco shows geographic features and immigrants coming into the region. This is called a panoramic map because it spans a large area and shows map features as if one were able to view for miles and miles. This panoramic map also shows camps and travelers in the foreground and includes a key to numbered locations. The map was printed in 1851. Such a map, showing the diversity of the settlers, the prosperity of the city, and its shipping industry, would have been an excellent propaganda tool.

Activities

Directions: Use the photocopies of the panoramic map and the historical background information to complete these activities.

- Using Internet resources, the panoramic map, and the historical background page, develop a six-year time line for San Francisco from 1849–1855. Include population growth, business development, and change in costs.
- List the groups of people you see in the panorama. How do they reflect a varied population?

- With a partner find all 22 locations on the panorama that are listed in the key. (**Note:** The key is divided into two sections)
- How is the wording under the panorama colorful and not just factual.

- Describe how the following design elements enhance the panorama: the sky, the seacoast, the costumes of the people, and the overall layout of the presentation.

Challenge

Using large sheets of white construction paper, create a panoramic map of the history of your region. Or if you are really adventurous, create a panoramic wall mural of the history of your region.

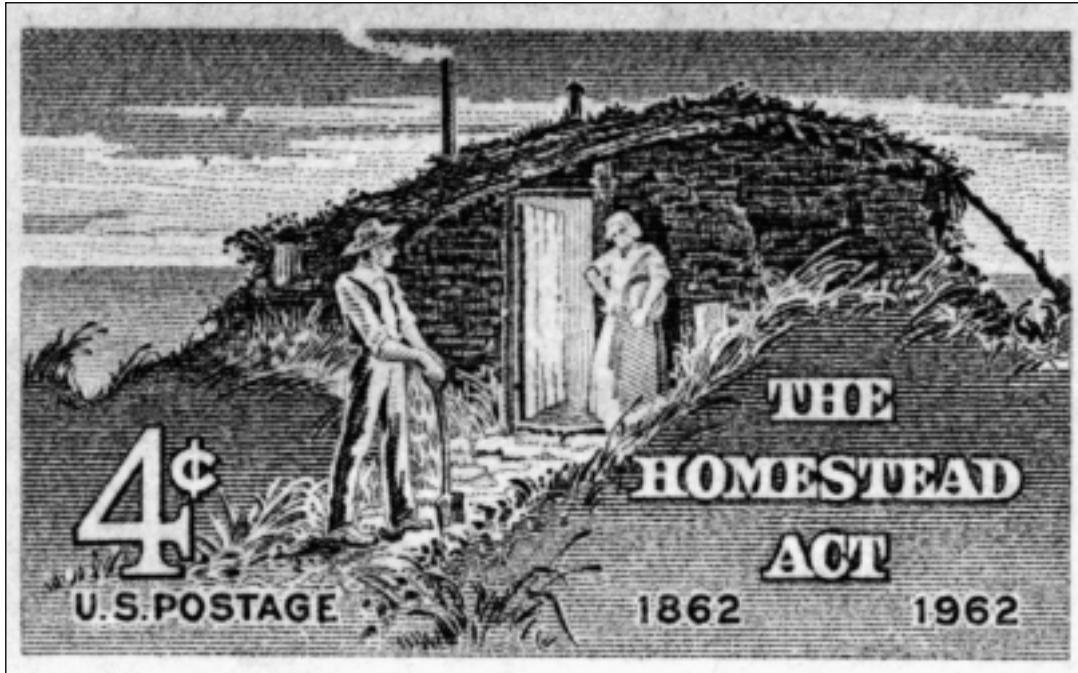
Panoramic Map of San Francisco



Library of Congress

Name _____

Homestead Act Stamp



Fred Hultstrand History in Pictures Collection, NDIRS-NDSU, Fargo

1. What is depicted in this image?

2. How does the creation of this item reflect the importance of the event?

3. This image originally included children. Why might they have been removed from the image in this case?

4. What other time period in history might be commemorated in this way? What image might be used to commemorate the event?
