

After

Promontory



Photographing 150 years of transcontinental railroads

On May 10, 1869, two railroads—built with haste, hope, and aspiration—joined in a lonely, dry desert of northern Utah, at a place called Promontory. At a small ceremony that day, dignitaries from both railroads—the Central Pacific, which had built from California, and the Union Pacific, which had built from the east—gave speeches and installed ceremonial last spikes.

The ceremonies were meant as a moment of self-congratulation, but the significance of the day's events is far broader. In the ensuing decades, railroad after railroad proposed new, competing transcontinental routes—and sometimes completed them. Their construction swept away the dominance of native tribes, ended the open range, and restructured the West into a network of resources and industries dependent upon clusters of urban centers.

After Promontory is a traveling history exhibition that examines the significance and lasting impact of the transcontinental railroads on the American West. It is curated under the auspices of the Center for Railroad Photography & Art, a non-profit arts education organization headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin. *After Promontory* is the latest in a series of exhibits that explore varying interconnections between two of the most potent inventions of the Industrial Revolution, the photographic camera, and the railroad.

Launching in Spring 2019, *After Promontory* marks the 150th anniversary of the beginning of this era. In compliment to many of the sesquicentennial exhibits and events planned throughout the West in 2019, *After Promontory* takes a far wider view, considering the events at Promontory to be the start of a larger phenomenon, an entire era of transcontinental railroad construction that stretched for nearly fifty years. At its core is the assertion that, collectively, the transcontinental

railroads profoundly reshaped the human geography of the West, giving birth to the region we recognize today.

After Promontory's literal and metaphorical lens on the transcontinental railroad boom is photography. Period photographs in the exhibit were made by some of the most accomplished photographers in the nation's history, artists such as William Henry Jackson, Timothy H. O'Sullivan, and Carleton E. Watkins. These photographs were often created with the sponsorship of the railroads, whose leaders saw photography as a medium suitable for lobbying a distant population (and distant political leaders) on the need for public support and assistance. Also included in the exhibit is later photography from artists who have explored the lasting impact the railroads have had on the landscape, both to the benefit and the costs of the region. At stake in all of these images, both period and more contemporary, is not only the railroad itself as a subject, but how photographers of different eras, with different motivations and different sensibilities, have thought of the transcontinental railroads and their legacy.

Promontory was an inflection point in the history of the American West—as well as the country as a whole—a moment that both symbolically and literally gave birth to a region of measurement, colonization, and extraction, to what historian Donald Worster has called “the engineered West.” *After Promontory* explores how photographic artists have received and represented that West both in the era of the transcontinentals, and in the region they have left us to inhabit.

On the following pages are the outlines and details of *After Promontory*, including three smaller, sub-regional variations. We hope that you will consider becoming a venue for this exhibit, and help us to mark the anniversary of this watershed moment in our collective history.



ANDREW J. RUSSELL

The Last Spike, 1869

Central Pacific Railroad,

Union Pacific Railroad

Oakland Museum of California

H69.459.2030



TIMOTHY H. O'SULLIVAN

Central Pacific Railroad
trestle bridge, 1867-1869

Central Pacific Railroad
Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley
BANC PIC 1957.027:138-ffALB VAULT

Exhibit Details

NUMBER and COMPOSITION of IMAGES

After Promontory is available in two sizes: the seventy-six-image complete exhibit, or a fifty-image, regionally focused exhibit. Each exhibit is broken down into several thematic groupings.

All sizes and versions of the exhibit include these core thematic groupings, a total of thirty images:

The First Transcontinental. Eight (8) images of the original Union Pacific-Central Pacific transcontinental railroad by the most notable photographers of the American West: William Henry Jackson, Timothy O'Sullivan, A.J. Russell, and Carleton E. Watkins.

Constructing the West. Eight (8) images showing the construction of various transcontinental railway lines throughout the American West, by a variety of commercial and artistic photographers.

Photography and the Transcontinental Imagination. Six (6) images—one drawing and five photographs—that depict the activities of photographers and artists connected with the extension of the transcontinental railroads through the West.

The Continuing Legacy of the Transcontinentals. Eight (8) images from contemporary artists showing the long-term footprint, both good and bad, of the various transcontinental railroad projects on the Western landscape.

REGIONAL GROUPINGS

Three regional stagings of *After Promontory*, each with fifty images, are available:

Central, focusing on the route of the first transcontinental (and its competitors) from the Midwest to Northern California via Utah.

South, focusing on the routes from the Midwest to Southern California via the Southwest.

North, focusing on the routes from Chicago and the Twin Cities to the Pacific Northwest via the northern tier of states.

Further details of each regional grouping, the full exhibit, and alternative stagings are on the following pages

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience for *After Promontory* is broad enough to appeal to anyone with a general interest in history. Generally, the show is targeted toward an adult audience, though many adolescences will find interest in the exhibition as well. The show is not specially targeted towards small children.

Publics that may show special interest, in our experience, would include those with a strong interest in: local history; western regional history; 19th century history; railroads; landscape and environmental history; history of art & photography.

Attendance tends to improve with complimentary programming, such as speaking events, book talks, and signings. Demographics vary, but tend to lean more towards the forty-five to sixty-year-old-range.

Region-specific stagings

SOUTH STAGING

For the South staging, the core exhibit remains at its minimum size, and an additional thematic grouping of twenty (20) images titled “The Southwestern Transcontinentals” is added. This grouping includes both historic and contemporary images, and should be displayed as the penultimate grouping:

- The First Transcontinental (8)
- Constructing the West (8)
- Photography and the Transcontinental Imagination (6)
- The Continuing Legacy of the Transcontinentals (8)
- The Southwestern Transcontinentals (20)

NORTH STAGING

For the North staging, the core exhibit remains at its minimum size, and an additional thematic grouping of twenty (20) images titled “The Northern Transcontinentals” is added. This grouping includes both historic and contemporary images, and should be displayed as the penultimate grouping:

- The First Transcontinental (8)
- Constructing the West (8)
- Photography and the Transcontinental Imagination (6)
- The Continuing Legacy of the Transcontinentals (8)
- The Northern Transcontinentals (20)

CENTRAL STAGING

For the Central staging, “The First Transcontinental” thematic grouping grows by six images, to a total of fourteen (14) images. “The Continuing Legacy” thematic grouping grows by four images, to a total of twelve (12) images.

The Central staging also adds an additional thematic group of ten (10) images titled “The Other Transcontinentals,” to be displayed immediately after “The First Transcontinental” themed grouping. This set of historic images depicts other transcontinental railroads that followed the opening of the first route in 1869.

All thematic groupings in the Central staging, in desired syntax:

- The First Transcontinental (enlarged to 14)
- The Other Transcontinentals (10)
- Constructing the West (8)
- Photography and the Transcontinental Imagination (6)
- The Continuing Legacy of the Transcontinentals (enlarged to 12)



RICHARD KOENIG

*Rim of the Great Basin,
Between Leroy and Millis,
Wyoming, 2011*

Union Pacific Railroad



CARLETON E. WATKINS

Cape Horn, C.P.R.R., circa 1878

Central Pacific Railroad

J. Paul Getty Museum

94.XA.113.23

Complete and alternative stagings

COMPLETE STAGING

For the Complete staging, “The First Transcontinental” thematic grouping grows by six images, to a total of fourteen (14) images. “The Continuing Legacy” thematic grouping grows by twenty images, to a total of twenty-eight (28) images.

The Complete staging also adds two more thematic groupings of ten (10) historic images each, “The Southwestern Transcontinentals,” and “The Northern Transcontinentals.” These should be displayed immediately following “The First Transcontinental:”

- The First Transcontinental (enlarged to 14)
- The Southwestern Transcontinentals (10)
- The Northern Transcontinentals (10)
- Constructing the West (8)
- Photography and the Transcontinental Imagination (6)
- The Continuing Legacy of the Transcontinentals (enlarged to 28)

ALTERNATIVE STAGINGS

Alternative stagings may also be possible in certain circumstances. For example, it is possible to stage only “The Continuing Legacy of the Transcontinentals,” or only the vintage images of the enlarged “The First Transcontinental.” Additionally, the Center welcomes the inclusion alongside or within the exhibit of local holdings that a venue feels would be compatible with the travelling exhibit. Often, local images enrich the show. The Center is available to consult with a venue’s curatorial staff on appropriate ways to integrate local holdings.

Further, the Center is willing to work with venues to create customized versions of the exhibit that better focus on themes specific to that venue. For example, a venue that focuses on social history may wish to include more human subjects, and have interpretive panels that discuss the social and cultural repercussions of railroad expansion in the West, while a venue that focuses on environmental history may wish to include more images of bridges, significant infrastructure, and landscape alterations.

For any of these potential alternative stagings, please contact the Center.



ANDREW J. RUSSELL

*Trestle work, Promontory Point,
Salt Lake Valley, 1870*
Union Pacific Railroad
California State Library
1470591





DRAKE HOKANSON

*CP's "Big Fill" near
Promontory, Utah, 2007*
Central Pacific Railroad



WALLACE W. ABBEY

AT&SF freight train on Cajon Pass, California,
1970

ATCHISON, TOPEKA AND SANTA FE RAILWAY

IMAGE MOUNTING and CAPTIONS

Two mounting options are available, framed, and dry mounted.

Framed images are archival pigment prints, matted in white and framed in black metal with clear plexiglass. Hanging is typically by wall mount. Framed images are more formal, and strike a more contemplative tone suitable for honorary spaces and galleries. They also protect images for display in high-traffic spaces where supervision is low and the possibility of the images being touched is higher.

Dry mounted images are archival pigment prints, then adhesively mounted to sintra, which may be mounted directly to the venue wall with 3M Damage-Free picture hanging strips. Dry mounted images eliminate the need for glass, ensuring that viewers can contemplate every detail of the images with no reflections. They also create a cleaner, more contemporary look and allow for larger print sizes in the same space.

(Note: There are shipping and storage cost differences between the two mounting options: See further below.)

Both mounting methods are accompanied by caption panels. These panels contain:

- The photographer's name
- Image title
- Date and location, if known
- Railroad name, name of current railroad when applicable
- Archival institution

Additionally, in some cases the caption panels also contain commentary about the significance of the image or its contents.

EXTENDED COMMENTARY PANELS

The overall exhibit, plus each thematic grouping of images, comes with an extended commentary panel, containing text (and sometimes some images) that help to provide and introduction to that theme, some context, and other information that may prove helpful in orienting the viewer. These are typically twenty-two inches by thirty inches, dry mounted on sintra, and may be mounted directly to the venue wall with 3M Damage-Free picture hanging strips.

ADDITIONAL INTERPRETIVE PANELS, GRAPHICS

In some cases, a venue may wish to display a larger opening interpretive panel, or may wish to provide customized interpretive panels that vary from the norm in size, content, or both. For example, some venues may wish to have the contextual materials printed larger and mounted directly on the wall, or may wish to have an extended commentary panel customized to a regional or thematic focus more appropriate to their institution. The Center is willing to work with venues in developing such additional interpretive panels or graphics. In some cases, these may incur little or no additional expense.

SIZING

Exact dimensions are variable to specific stagings and are currently pending final curation decisions. Generally, the full show will consist of approximately 160 linear feet of images and interpretive panels, which when spaced correctly will take up approximately double that in linear wall space, for a total of 320 feet.

The regional variations are approximately 2/3rds this size, at 120 linear feet of images and panels, taking about 240 feet of wall.

PACKING and SHIPPING

The exhibit will be insulated with suitable buffer materials and packaged in one-time-use cardboard boxes.

PUBLICATIONS and COLLATERAL

Two-page Exhibit Guide. Tabloid format, full color, including several images, a short essay providing an overview of the exhibit and its constituent thematic groupings, an optional map of the space, branding areas for the venue, plus acknowledgement of key donors and supporters.

Custom Exhibit Catalogs. The Center is happy to produce a complete catalog customized for individual stagings of all or part of *After Promontory*. Catalogs include:

- Space for a one-page welcoming essay from the venue
- An overview essay by the curator
- Reproductions and captions for all images used in that specific staging of the exhibit
- Optional space for an additional essay provided by the venue, or a series of excerpts from the exhibit's companion book
- Branding areas for the venue, plus space for the acknowledgement of key donors and supporters

Exhibit catalogs will be in full color and may vary in length, but average forty pages. The default binding is saddle stitch, but additional bindings may be available for extra cost. Additional costs apply, please inquire.

Poster Designs. The Center is happy to work with venues on the development of promotional posters. The Center can provide digital files for poster development, as well as a set of graphic standards for consistency across the travelling exhibit. Final printing of the poster is up to the venue, and the Center requests two complimentary copies of each poster design produced.

Brochures and other collateral. The Center is happy to provide, at a reasonable cost, brochures or other paper collateral that may be helpful to the venue's staging of *After Promontory*. If there are specific requirements or requests, please inquire.

SALABLE ITEMS

In conjunction with the exhibit, the Center is producing a book titled *After Promontory: 150 Years of Transcontinental Railroading*, available from Indiana University Press in Spring 2019 (MSRP TBD). Available directly from IUP and through major wholesale book distributors, the book contains over 200 images, essays about the impact of the transcontinental railroads by three eminent historians, plus an essay on the relationship between photography and the expansion of railroads by contemporary photographer Drake Hokanson. The book makes for a good addition to venue gift shops.

The Center is also happy to assist your venue in developing other gift shop items, on request.

OPTIONAL INTERACTIVE EXHIBITS

In addition to the main exhibit components of *After Promontory*, the Center is developing small, robust, interactive components that may be of interest in dedicated museum spaces. These include the following two components:

Wheel of Stereographs. One of the most popular formats for photographic consumption in the 19th century was the stereograph, a pair of photographs made from slightly different positions, then printed side-by-side onto a small piece of cardboard. When viewed through a set of special goggles, stereographs gave the illusion of three dimensionality.

The Wheel of Stereographs is a large but light disc that mounts on a vertical surface (such as a wall) and has reproductions of stereographs mounted on it. In front of the wheel is a set of lenses like those used in stereograph viewers. A visitor will be able to stand at these lenses, spin the wheel, and then view a random stereograph in three dimensions. The display thus helps visitors to understand how stereographs functioned, while also providing the excitement of seeing a random image.

The Wheel of Stereographs has additional shipping and storage requirements, and should only be displayed in controlled spaces.

Mock View Camera. Many of the great images of the 19th century were made using what is called a "view camera." In these cameras, the lens projects an image of the subject onto a large glass panel at the camera's back, but due to the nature of the optics, the image is presented upside-down and backwards. Further, because the optics were rather dark, the best way for the photographer to see the image was to operate under a black fabric hood attached to the camera back. This sort of camera is extremely rare in the present day, although some artists still work with them.

The Mock View Camera is a partially functioning view camera constructed of light but durable materials, with inexpensive but functional optics and a black fabric hood. The concept of the Mock View Camera is to allow visitors to look at a scene within the venue and experience how photographers looked at the landscape. At a more sophisticated level, it highlights how photography privileged abstraction and selective composition, rather than being a neutral way of recording the world.

The Mock View Camera has additional shipping and storage requirements. It also requires a mounting surface—ideally a camera tripod—to support it. It should be displayed only in controlled spaces.

COMPLIMENTING PUBLIC PROGRAMS

The Center can provide speakers in many regional locations across the country, who can deliver public talks of about forty-five to eighty minutes in length, including images. There is a minimal honorarium for these talks, although in some circumstances the Center would be willing to waive these fees. Such talks vary in subject, including but not limited to:

- History of the development of the railroads
- Local connections to the transcontinental story
- Railroad architecture and infrastructure
- 19th century photography methods
- Overview of the After Promontory project and the significance of the transcontinental railroad

The Center is willing to work with hosting venues to plan and implement these events, and is flexible to meet venue's specific interests.

JOHN F. BJORKLAND

Tunnel No. 1, Alray California, 1972

ATCHISON, TOPEKA AND SANTA FE RAILWAY



DRAKE HOKANSON

Union Pacific, east of North Platte, Neb., 2013

Union Pacific Railroad



Venue Expectations

DURATION

The Center expects a staging of After Promontory to last approximately three to six months. Shorter or longer durations may be considered if circumstances warrant; please reach out to the Center in such cases.

HANGING the EXHIBIT

The exhibition requires a smooth, dry vertical surface, such as a wall, a series of walls, or a series of temporary partitions. Display on easels is discouraged.

Ideally, all images in the exhibit will be viewable in one contiguous space. The exhibit may be broken up into its thematic groupings, with each of these in a separate but adjacent space, so as to create a contiguous flow; Thematic groupings, however, must be displayed within the same room, alcove, or other consistent space.

The Center is available to consult on space planning. Further, the Center must receive and approve of a basic schematic from the venue, showing how the venue plans to stage the exhibit.

Venues with unusual physical conditions are encouraged to consult with the Center.

RENTAL FEES

Rental fees serve primarily to help defray production, shipment, and insurance costs. Please inquire with any questions.

The Rental Fee for the exhibit is as follows:

76 Image Full, Framed	\$4000
76 Image Full, Dry	\$3000
50 Image Regional, Framed	\$3000
50 Image Regional, Dry	\$2000

LIGHT LEVELS

All images are archival quality reproductions made specifically for exhibition. The Center considers them to be only moderately light sensitive. The venue should keep them out of direct sunlight, and display them under artificial light of three-foot candles for a maximum of ten hours per day. These are rough guidelines; if the venue believes they are out of variance please contact the Center so we can make a case judgment.

SECURITY

Images need to be displayed in a secured environment. Visitors must pass a security or ticketing facility prior to access, or images must be under regular surveillance from guards or cameras. No additional security precautions are necessary, as the images are exhibition prints.

The Center does require venues to have insurance against loss or damage. If an image is lost or damaged, we will bill the venue for replacement, which averages \$350 per print.

STORAGE

When not on display, all items in the exhibit must be stored in a dry environment with a stable temperature somewhere between fifty and seventy degrees Fahrenheit.

RETURN SHIPMENT

The venue is responsible for repackaging the exhibit when returned, including securing adequate buffer material and new cardboard boxers. Return shipment must be made via either United Parcel Service or Federal Express, and the return shipment must be insured by the venue at a total (divided among all packages) of \$30,000



BEN WITTICK

Building the A&P Railroad
Canon Diablo Bridge, Ariz, 1882
Atlantic & Pacific Railroad
Palace of the Governors
neg 015449

FRANK J. HAYNES

*Cut through Eagle Butte,
N.P.R.R. (Looking along
railroad through rocky cliffs.
Near Yellowstone River,
Montana Territory), 1881*
Northern Pacific Railroad
Montana Historical Society
H-703



Afterword



FRED H. KISER

Train station and hotel, Belton, Montana, 1911
Great Northern Railway
Oregon Historical Society
ba021212

IN 1893, NOTED HISTORIAN FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER declared that the American frontier was closed. Citing statistics from the 1890 census, he argued that there was now sufficient population between the Middle West and the Pacific shore that there was no longer a “safety valve” of open land upon which the nation’s population could re-settle. Called the “frontier thesis,” Turner’s assertion long held sway among historians, and was not meaningfully challenged for nearly a century.

After Promontory joins with those challenges. It argues that the West’s two periods should not be divided between “frontier” and “settlement.” Instead, the history of the Western region of the United States is better divided along different lines: Native and colonized, emptiness and resource, barrier and opportunity space, enigmatic and quantified, unclaimable and owned, free and controlled, potential and harnessed.

The division point between these periods is not a census enumeration in 1890, as Turner would have it, but the driving of the final spike of the first transcontinental railroad more than twenty years before. With the last hammer blows of the great Union Pacific–Central Pacific route from Omaha to Sacramento, the West entered the industrial, urban world. The railroad—like the revolver, the telegraph, and paper money—was a tool whose application on the region left a geographic imprint that is felt everyday and thus, paradoxically, often escapes notice.

As an exhibit, *After Promontory* is meant to challenge that unintentional blindness. It looks towards the eyes of photographers—artists whose medium demands a careful, thoughtful visual engagement with the world—to help us see the ways that the transcontinental railroads—not just one company, but an entire movement taken as a whole—have produced the West that we live in day-to-day.

If you would like to host *After Promontory*, please reach out to us. Any questions about the project may be directed as below.

For questions regarding exhibit scope and content:
Alexander Benjamin Craghead
alex@railphoto-art.org
503-347-4059

For questions regarding scheduling the exhibit at your venue:
Hailey Paige
hailey@railphoto-art.org
608-251-5785

After

Promontory

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Center for Railroad Photography & Art

EXHIBIT PROGRAM COORINATOR

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