GOLDEN SPIKE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE (GOSP)

Size 1,107 hectares (2,735 acres)

Park Legislative History The establishment of Golden Spike National Historic Site followed a 20-year effort by local citizens who believed the spot where the transcontinental railroad was completed on May 10, 1869 had tremendous historical significance. The original site which consisted of approximately 3 hectares (7 acres) around the Promontory town-site, was designated as a National Historic Site on April 2, 1957. However, initial designation was in non-Federal ownership. Thus, the Site existed in name only and lacked a protected land-base, staffing, and NPS administration. Subsequently, Public Law 89-102, signed into law 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." This law provided for an authorized boundary, staffing, a development authorization, and oversight and management by the NPS. At this time, the Historic Site extended over 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) of original railroad grades and consisted of 892 hectares (2,203 acres).

Following the completion of a general management plan for the Historic Site in 1978 (NPS 1978), boundaries were expanded by an act of Congress on September 8, 1980. This public law expanded the boundary by 215 hectares (532 acres), though none of these additional lands have been acquired.

Park Mission and Purpose Mission statement from the 2000-2005 Strategic Plan for the Historic Site (NPS 1997b):

Golden Spike National Historic Site was established to commemorate the construction and completion of the first transcontinental railroad, and its tremendous historical consequences for our nation.

Dedicated to commemorating this historic work, Golden Spike National Historic Site preserves and interprets historic resources and values for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

The following three purpose statements further articulate the legislative intent and the fundamental reasons for the existence of Golden Spike National Historic Site:

- To commemorate the completion of the first transcontinental railroad across the United States as a public national memorial.
- To preserve the resources, historic sites, and knowledge for public use, enjoyment, education, inspiration, appreciation, and benefit.
- To provide and maintain markers, buildings, facilities and other improvements for the care and accommodation of visitors.

Building on these statements of purpose, significance statements for Golden Spike National Historic Site have also been developed and refined in the 1997 Comprehensive Interpretive Plan for Golden Spike National Historic Site. This effort produced 18 significance

statements that summarize and capture the essence of Golden Spike National Historic Site's importance to our cultural and natural heritage.

Park and Area Description Golden Spike National Historic Site currently has 18 NPS employees and an annual operating budget of $650,000 for Fiscal Year 2001. Annual visitation to the Historic Site has ranged from 48,000 to 64,000 in recent years.

Presently, GOSP extends over 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) of original railroad grades and consists of 1,107 hectares (2,735 acres). Much of this acreage is contained within a 400-foot wide right-of-way obtained from the Southern Pacific Railroad. Of the total acreage, 895 hectares (2211 acres) are in Federal ownership, and 212 hectares (525 acres) remain in private ownership.

The Historic Site can be divided into three major areas of historical interest, The Summit, the East Slope, and the West Slope.

The Summit At Promontory Summit on May 10, 1869, the final spike was driven to complete the nation's first transcontinental railroad. This is the point where the Central Pacific Railroad from Sacramento, California, and the Union Pacific Railroad from Omaha, Nebraska, joined, making cross-country rail travel a reality. Only traces of these first railroad grades remain. By May 1, 1869, anticipating the joining of the rails, the summit tent-village of Promontory was born. It subsequently survived as a small railroad-support town until 1942. Archeological investigation yielded many traces of Promontory's occupation and use. Some time between 1916 and 1919, the Southern Pacific Railroad erected a monument in the area where the railroads first met. A plaque, added to the monument in 1958, indicates the area is a National Historic Site. After being moved on two occasions, this monument now stands just east of the visitor center.

The East Slope Spectacular remains reflecting railroad building and maintenance stretch across the Promontory Range from its eastern base at Blue Creek to the summit. These consist of Union Pacific and Central Pacific parallel grades; parallel rock cuts, including the Union Pacific's "false cut" just west of the Big Trestle/Big Fill area; Union Pacific trestle footings; major Central Pacific earth fills; stone culverts; a number of former-trestle locations; and two wooden trestles. The grades, cuts, fills, and trestle footings represent nearly every variety of the heavy work undertaken by the railroad workers except tunneling. Drill marks are visible in rock cuts, and borrow pits remain beside railroad grades. The basal portions of telegraph poles march up the east slope of the Promontories on the historic Union Pacific grade. Numerous stone foundations and rock walls, leveled tent platforms, remains of pit houses, dugouts and basements, fireplace chimneys, and hearth areas parallel the railroad grades on the east slope of the mountains. These indicate railroad construction worker camps, workshop areas (such as black-smithing), and one of the "Hell-on-Wheels" towns associated with the final days of construction (Camp Deadfall).

The West Slope From the summit area southwest, the parallel grades follow the gently sloping floor of Promontory Summit. This segment of the park includes a 5 kilometer (3.2 mile) portion of the grade on which the Central Pacific laid its renowned "ten miles of track in one day" and those portions of the Union Pacific grade that were never completed or used. 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 unfinished grade provide excellent examples of railroad construction processes, such as the stockpiling and reuse of size-graded stone material for grade foundation and the stair-step type of construction undertaken at the long rock cuts. Drill marks, stone culverts, and wooden box and stave culverts also occur along the west slope. Like the eastern slope of the mountains, the western slope contains spectacular evidence of construction worker campsites such as pit house remains, lean-to shelters, rock walls, trash pits, and rock chimneys perched against prominent limestone outcrops.

Location In Northern Utah, 52 kilometers (32 miles) west of Brigham City, 86 kilometers (55 miles) north of Ogden, and 145 kilometers (90 miles) north of Salt Lake City in Box Elder County.

Elevation Elevations range from 1,329 meters (4,360 feet) to 1,609 meters (5,280 feet).

General Description GOSP contains hillsides, mountains, and plains at the summit of the Promontory Range in the northern basin of the Great Salt Lake and is in the Upper Sonoran Life Zone. The Historic Site lies in the northeastern reaches of the semiarid Great Basin Desert.

GOSP lies between the North Promontory and the Promontory Mountains in the northern part of the Great Salt Lake basin. During glacial times the summit was under ancient Lake Bonneville. As a result, old lake terraces form prominent features. 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 dating from the latter time run through the Promontory range. Minor earth tremors (2.5 to 4.0 on the Richter Scale) have been reported in the vicinity fairly often since 1965. No springs or travertine deposits occur although such features are found at Rozel Point, 24 kilometers (15 miles) to the southwest of Promontory. Also, at Rozel Point is an asphalt seep that was discovered before the first organized oil exploration in the early 1900s.

Annual precipitation averages 203 to 305 millimeters (8 to 12 inches), mostly as snow. Temperatures range from highs of 20 degrees in winter to an occasional 104 degrees in summer. July and August are the hot months, while the coldest weather is from late December through February. Winter nights are typically below 10 degrees Fahrenheit. Spring and autumn months are generally mild, although vary widely from day to day.

Snow depths vary considerably, but average less than 305 to 356 millimeters (12 to 14 inches), with occasionally 152 to 203 millimeters (6 to 8 inches) falling per storm. Historical

records for Promontory indicate that one snowfall of 94 centimeters (37 inches) in the late 1940s.

Flash floods from occasional severe storms and spring runoff, aggravated by adjacent agriculture land use, cause erosion of historic grades, cuts, fills, and trestles. As a result, the Historic Grade and associated features have been damaged. Yet damage also occurs on a more gradual basis from natural erosion. Over the years water erosion deterioration has been documented at Trestles Number 1 and 2. Also, water erosion has impacted the east slope of the grade below a concrete box culvert west of these trestles. And the loss of a segment of the Union Pacific grade 2 kilometers (1 mile) east of the visitor center was a serious preservation problem because of water erosion, but seems to have been alleviated with the installation of water control gabians. Flooding between the visitor center and Kings Pass was a serious problem in 1983. Severe erosion occurred at the burned-out-trestle, but this area has stabilized with the installation of water control gabians.

Thunderstorms also concentrate lightning strikes on the Promontory Mountains and salt flats near the west end, creating serious rangeland fire potential. Occasional prolonged windy conditions in this semiarid rangeland hasten the weathering of facilities and equipment.

Flora Today the region is semiarid to arid and is included in the shad scale-kangaroo-rat-sagebrush biome of the northern Great Basin. The major flora consists of sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), rabbit brush (*Chrysothamnus* spp.), broom snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), Indian rice grass (*Stipa hymenoides*) and a variety of other grasses. A few Utah Junipers and one historic box-elder tree grow on park lands. Non-native vegetation includes tumble mustard, cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron desertorum*), and other species.

The vegetation is different from what existed 130 years ago at Promontory Summit. There is a much greater concentration of non-native species and noxious weeds. As a result, the vegetative landscape has changed in GOSP as well as on adjacent lands. However, the visual appearance of vegetative changes does not appear to have significantly altered the cultural landscape.

The Passey Onion (*Allium passeyi)* has been located on a rocky knoll on the east slope. It occurs only in Box Elder County and is a candidate species for future study and possible inclusion on the list of rare plants. There is no known plant or animal species listed as rare or endangered.

Fauna Wildlife is varied and consists of larger mammals such as the coyote, mule deer, bobcat, badger, and jackrabbit. There are also smaller mammals, reptiles, insects, and numerous bird species. Large numbers of raptors inhabit the area. Accipiters, falcons, buteos, and golden and bald eagles are particularly common during winter months.

Aquatic Features Except for the Blue Creek, which bisects the northeastern end, water is not available in stream or spring. The park receives water from a well (130 meters/427 feet

deep) at the summit. Water is scarce in this semiarid region, which accounts for sparse population. The water scarcity has not affected operations at present visitation levels.

Description of Cultural Resources
GOSP was administratively listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1966. The National Register of Historic Places registration form was approved by the Utah State Historic Preservation Office and submitted to the Keeper of the National Register in 1987. Additionally, in 1969, the historic railroad grade was designated as a National Civil Engineering Landmark.

Presently, cultural resources at GOSP can be best organized in the following categories identified in NPS-28, Cultural Resources Management Guidelines (NPS 1999b).

Historic Structures Beginning in 1995, a comprehensive Grade Resources Study was initiated by Historic Architect A. Sayre Hutchison and Chief Ranger Rick Wilson. This effort is well underway and will ultimately result in the preparation of a historic structures report. In 1996 and again in 1998 and 2000, the List of Classified Structures for the Historic Site was updated. It presently identifies 37 separate structures (though more will be added following an inventory of vanishing treasures resources). The majority of structures currently listed are historic railroad culverts. Two railroad trestles are listed and also the grades themselves. The Last Spike Site is listed as a composite structure, though the white obelisk is listed separately. At least three archeological structures, related to initial railroad construction, have significant standing walls and are identified on the List of Classified Structures.

Archeological Resources Archeological resources have been identified and documented in three primary efforts. Between 1974 and 1978, Archeologist Adrienne Anderson completed a reconnaissance level inventory, mapping 340 separate features. These resources were grouped into 16 sites and were identified on 13-sheet series of maps, entitled *Cultural Resources Bases Map* (1978). Between 1976 and 1982, James E. Ayers completed a more-detailed inventory of archeological resources around Promontory. This work led to the 1982 report: *Archeological Survey of Golden Spike National Historic Site and Record Search for Promontory, Utah*. More recently, between 1995 and 1999, Byron Knudson compiled documentation on archeological features (his work has resulted in the discovery of numerous additional features and the reclassification of site boundaries). This effort has resulted in the documentation of 332 features. Beginning in 1999, the Historic Site was funded for a complete survey, and this project is underway.

Cultural Landscape In 2000 a cultural landscape inventory was completed (Homstad, Caywood and Nelson 2000) . This work confirmed the existence of a cultural landscape. A cultural landscape inventory and a cultural landscape report exist.

Museum Objects The Historic Site has 9,762 objects in its collection. A Scope of Collections Statement was approved in 1988 and needs to be updated. A review of archives was completed, but additional archival survey work and evaluation is needed.

Historic Studies The following historic studies are complete: 1960 *Special Report on Promontory Summit, Utah (Golden Spike National Historic Site);* 1969 *Historical Base Map, 1869, Golden Spike National Historic Site, Utah;* 1989 *Promontory Station, An Industrial Outpost in the American West;* 1996 *The Development of Golden Spike National Historic Site: A History of its Creation.*

Ethnographic Resources GOSP is in the midst of the Fremont-Promontory prehistoric culture group area. The Paiutes were here when the region was first settled by Anglos. Currently, four American Indian tribes have some level of association or linkage to GOSP lands including the Paiute Indian Tribes of Utah Tribal Council, the Shoshone-Bannock (Fort Hall Business Council), the Skull Valley Goshute General Council, and the Uintah & Ouray Tribal Business Committee.

Interrelationship Between Management of Cultural and Natural Resources
Many resource management activities involve both cultural and natural resources.

- Management of the cultural landscape involves the cultural imprint on the natural landscape.
- A major objective of the fire management program is to re-establish natural vegetation regimens and reduce sagebrush, which covered less ground in 1869. Sagebrush is responsible for long-term degradation of cultural features. Aerial photographs from 1938 to the present also indicate vegetation changes.
- Preservation of grade resources is related to hydrologic runoff during storm events, effective erosion control, natural deterioration, and vegetation root systems.
- Many historic photographs show natural landscape features such as hillsides, mountain peaks, and vegetation along with human-built features such as tracks, construction materials, trails, and structures.
- Location of archeological sites is highly related to geologic terrain.