

## 3.2 The Growing West

Who benefited from the second wave of westward expansion in the United States?

### Explore

## The Transcontinental Railroad

How did railroads expand across the continent?



### The Growing West: Cause/Event/Effect Chart

As you read pages 1–5, use the Cause/Event/Effect Chart to demonstrate how the completion of the railroad and the industries of the West affected the geography and environment in the region.

After the Civil War, the United States continued its course of industrialization. This process involved replacing products made by hand—often at home—with products made by machines in factories. The growth of industrialization required improved methods to transport raw materials and finished goods. Before long, the railroad system in the United States would expand significantly and connect distant parts of the nation.

The railroads would not have become the country's transportation backbone without massive government support and subsidy, or financial assistance. Congress enacted the Pacific Railroad Act in 1862, which gave two companies—Union Pacific Railroad and Central Pacific Railroad—the assignment of building a [transcontinental railroad](#). When completed, this rail line would cross the continent, connecting the East Coast with the West Coast. The federal government paid the railroad companies \$16,000 per mile, and sometimes more, to plan and build the track. Additionally, the government purchased or traded for the land needed to build the rail line. The government granted this land to the railroads, along with additional neighboring lands. The land grants were not so valuable at the time, but once the railroad was completed land values would skyrocket. A railroad already existed from the East Coast to Chicago. Soon, workers extended this track westward to Omaha, Nebraska.

The Union Pacific Railroad began to build track heading west from Omaha. The Central Pacific Railroad started to build track moving east from Sacramento, California. To work on these rail lines, the companies hired thousands of European and Chinese immigrants and former Civil War soldiers. The workers faced many difficulties, such as crossing rugged mountains and dealing with fierce storms. Finally, on May 10, 1869, the two rail lines connected at Promontory Summit, Utah Territory. The nation's first transcontinental railroad was complete.

With the completion of this railroad system, plenty of resources, goods, and passengers could travel coast-to-coast in 8 to 10 days. By the end of the 1900s, the United States had constructed four more transcontinental railroads. The population of cities along the railroads, such as Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Kansas City, Missouri, soared. The railroads encouraged immigration and spurred the development of mining, farming, and cattle ranching in the West.