Expansion and Development of Western Railroads

The Pacific Railroad Convention

- In the mid-nineteenth century, the railroad industry was booming, particularly in northern California.
- In 1859, a Pacific Railroad Convention was convened in Sacramento, CA.
  - Attended railroad industry
  - Proposed that the state of California contribute $15 million to fund railroad via amendment to the California Constitution.
- Reconvened in 1860,
  - Attended by California state legislature
  - Further discussed proposal for state funding of railroads.

Pacific Telegraph Act

- As the railroad industry began to flourish, communication emerged as a major frontier for innovation.
- Electronic telegraph machines were able to transmit messages almost instantly, but the popularity of these machines had not yet caught on.
- Thus, Congress passed the Pacific Telegraph Act of 1860.
  - Approved the construction of an electronic telegraph line from Missouri to the West Coast.
In 1862, the United States Congress passed the Pacific Railroad Act, which was signed by President Lincoln.
- secured the building of a railroad to stretch from the East to the West coasts of the U.S.
- allowed for the issuance of U.S. Government Bonds to the Union Pacific Railroad Company and the Central Pacific Railroad Company to build the transcontinental railroad
- called for significant land grants to be awarded to the railroads

The Pacific Railway Act promised both land and money to the builder of a transcontinental railroad.
- sparked competition between the Union Pacific Railroad Company and the Central Pacific Railroad Company.
- both companies raced to construct a railroad to span the country.
- Benefits to the companies came in many forms, including the towns that would spring up around the newly constructed tracks.

United States land grants issued to railroads
Local and regional railroad companies also competed.

The cartoon represents a conflict among railroad companies on the East Coast of the U.S., particularly in New York.

Completion of the Transcontinental Railroad

- The race to complete the transcontinental railroad found the Central Pacific Railroad Company building East from Sacramento and the Union Pacific Railroad Company building West from Omaha.
- In 1869, the two companies met in Promontory Summit, Utah and the first transcontinental railroad was completed.
- A grand ceremony was held in Utah to commemorate the event.

The Railroads and the Civil War

- The Pacific Railway Act of 1862 sparked a race to complete the first transcontinental railroad.
- Other railway lines were also being envisioned, particularly in the Southern states.
- The Civil War, however, proved an obstacle to the construction of railroad lines.
Citations
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