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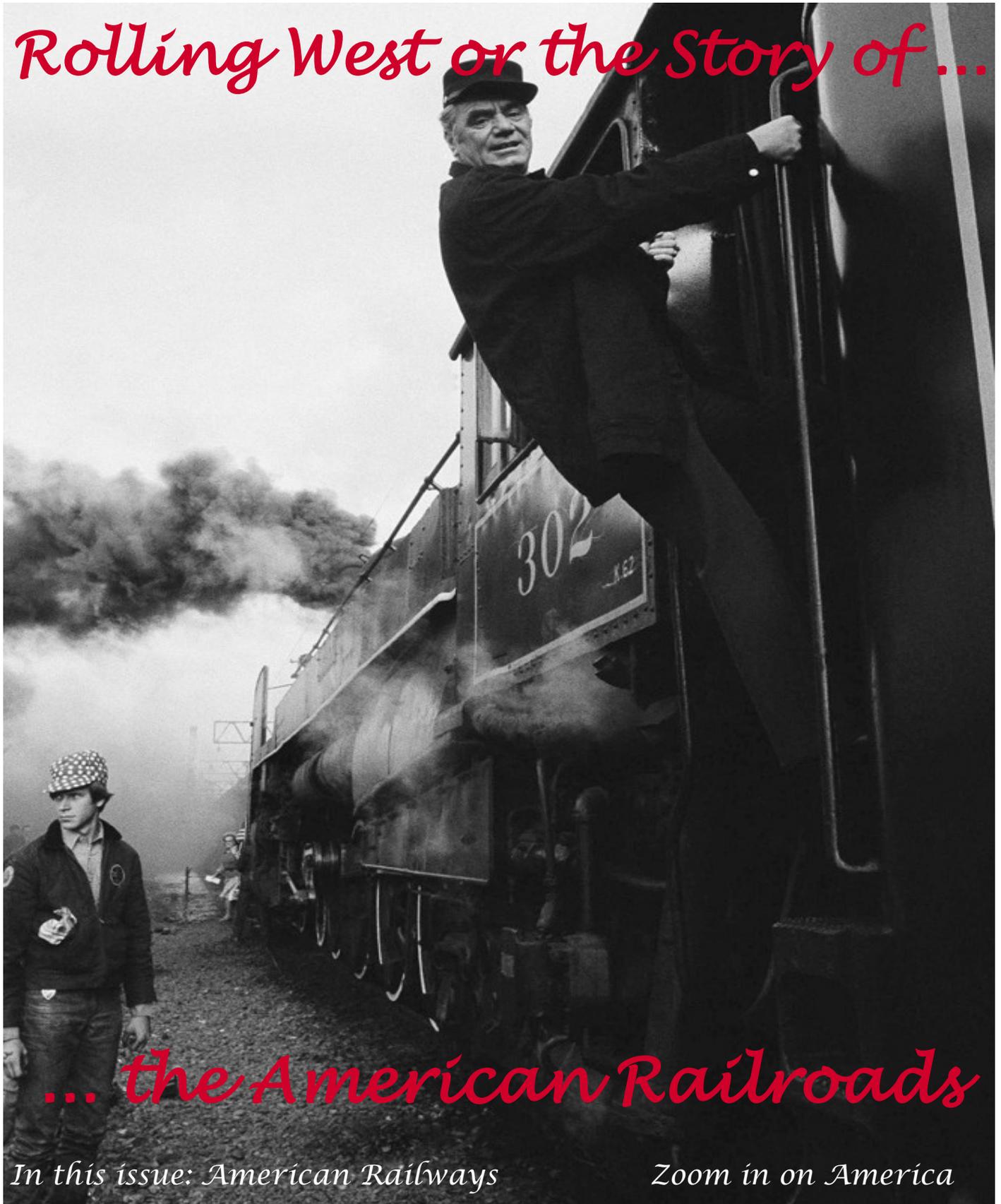
# ZOOM

in on america

By the U.S. Missions of Austria and Poland

Volume IV. Issue 5.

*Rolling West or the Story of ...*



*... the American Railroads*

*In this issue: American Railways*

*Zoom in on America*

(photo on the cover) Actor Ernest Borgnine climbs aboard an old steam engine in Hoboken, New Jersey on May 26, 1973 at the start of a two-day trip sponsored by railroad enthusiasts. The trip included stops in Binghamton, New York and Scranton, Pennsylvania. for the 23-car train of steam age vintage cars. Borgnine was starring in a film which deals with hobos riding freight trains in the 1930s, "Emperor of the North." Photo AP Images

# To Connect East & West

## Westward Rush

When Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were sent to explore the American West in 1804, they went on horseback. It took them two years to reach America's Pacific coast. Their expedition was scientific in nature, and there was no rush to reach their destination. Just forty years after Lewis and Clerk, thousands of travelers started to flood in to the American West on a different kind of expedition. These were gold diggers who poured into California from all over North America and beyond during the biggest gold rush in history. Over time, the gold diggers established mining towns throughout the American West. These settlers wanted to receive letters and news from the East as quickly as possible but this was difficult when the primary means of transport were horses and wagons. Navigable rivers were of some help, but they could take travelers to a limited number of destinations. Canals were also built to ease travel on waterways, but they could not satisfy the demand for fast and efficient transportation. But did anyone expect the great boom for railroads at that time?

## In Search of an Efficient Propeller

The first railroad tracks were made of wood. The first railroad track in America, the so-called "gravity road," was built for military purposes in 1764 at the Niagara portage in Lewiston, New York. The first commercial train track was constructed in 1826 at Quincy, Massachusetts. This line was used to haul granite, not passengers, and the cars were pulled by horses.



As soon as the first spiking is finished on the new rail, other workmen in the steel gang follow the main crew and secure the rail to the ties. Photo AP Images



Track work takes place in Nevada as Central Pacific forces build the western link of the first transcontinental railroad. Rail layers in the foreground were followed by Chinese laborers who spaced and spiked the rail to the ties. Photo AP Images



The heavy 112-pound rail is swung into position by a crane while a track gauge is used to determine the proper spacing between the rails. Photo AP Images

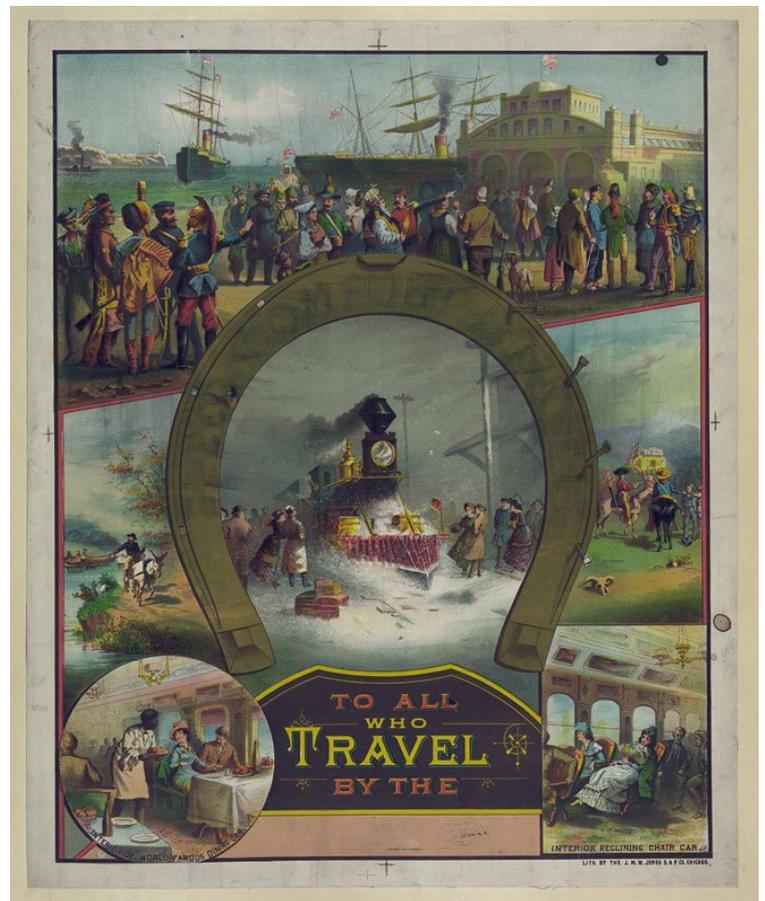
The railroad boom could not have happened without the invention of steam power. Two men: an English civil engineer, George Stephenson, known as the “Father of Railways”, and an American inventor and engineer, John Stevens, helped to usher in the era of the steam engine. Stephenson built the first intercity railway line between Liverpool and Manchester. Stevens demonstrated the possibilities of steam locomotion on a circular track he constructed in his home in New Jersey. The development of the steam engine ushered in a new era of transport, but it took many years and effort to connect the American East and West with railway tracks.

### For & Against Railroads

Turnpike operators, canal and stagecoach companies, and wagon drivers all opposed the construction of the first railroads. They were joined by tavern owners and innkeepers. All of these groups feared that they would lose business because of the railroads. Even some religious leaders proclaimed trains as sacrilegious. Asa Whitney, on the other hand, was a great advocate for the construction of a railway that would connect America’s Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Whitney was a New York merchant who was active in the trade of goods with China. It was also his idea to use immigrant laborers to help construct the railroad. He wanted to pay workers in the form of land so that areas along the train route would be settled.

### Transcontinental Railway

Whitney failed to convince Congress to adopt his plan for a transcontinental railroad but he succeeded in popularizing the idea among the American public. The acquisition of California as the re-



A print showing, around the outer rim of a horseshoe, immigrants from many nations arriving by steamship, a man with a mule pulling a canal boat, two bandits on horseback robbing travelers, and within the horseshoe, a locomotive arriving on snow-covered tracks, tossing snow onto the clothing of waiting passengers. At the bottom of the print are two vignettes, identified in the color print as, on the left, “interior of world famous dining car” and on the right, “interior reclining chair car.” Text (not printed on the b&w impression) on the horseshoe “Speed Comfort & Safety” is largely obscured by the coloring. Horseshoe may suggest, good luck! “to all who travel.” (Library of Congress)

sult of the Mexican War, the gold rush of 1849, and the need to improve the postal service were all factors in popularizing the idea of a railroad across the United States. The Railroad Act of 1862 finally put government support behind the transcontinental railroad.

The Transcontinental Railroad was created and work



Locomotive with train of 12 cars (1907)  
(Library of Congress)



General view of locomotive heading onto turntable East Broad Top Railroad & Coal Company, Roundhouse, Rockhill Furnace, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania  
(Library of Congress)

was started on the Central Pacific railroad from San Francisco, California and the Union Pacific railroad from Omaha, Nebraska. The work involved laying tracks, digging tunnels and crossing mountains. The Transcontinental Railroad was completed on May 10, 1869 with the driving of a last, golden spike into the completed railway.

*Text by AIRC Krakow*

More on the History of American Railroads  
Useful Links:

Amtrak: <http://history.amtrak.com/amtraks-history>

The Pullman State Historic Site:  
<http://www.pullman-museum.org/>

*(below) New York Central's modernized New York-Chicago 20th Century Limited streamliner steams out for a test run at La Salle Street Station in Chicago, Illinois. Regular service on the 1938 Century streamliner began on June 15, 2000. The 1938 Century, the first all-private-room train in America, is styled using Pullman car designs. The towering structure in the background at right is the Chicago Board of Trade building. Photo AP Images*



*Old Dinah (1894) steam tractor at Furnace Creek Resort, Death Valley, California*



# Railroad Vocabulary

A **railroad car** (or simply “**car**” when implicit): The expression used in the American English denotes a vehicle for carrying passengers or cargo. There are “**passenger cars (coaches)**” and “**freight cars (wagons or trucks)**”;

An **aisle** - the passage between rows of seats in cars. Seat rows may be arranged in such a way that they face the same direction or may be grouped with twin rows facing each other. In some cars seats are positioned with their backs to the side walls leaving a wide aisle for standing passengers and luggage. In some cars the aisle is at the side and the car is divided into small compartments with six to eight seats;

There are special cars that offer various facilities for train passengers:

**couchette cars** that have sleeping accommodation (more basic than **sleeping cars**);

**baggage cars** for luggage;

**observation cars** which were built on many famous trains allowing passengers to admire the passing landscapes, and which were put in the rear of the train, and later the so called “**dome cars**” with a higher glass-enclosed level that extended above the normal roof;

**A sleeping car** with small bedrooms;

**A dining car** where meals and refreshments were served;



*In this 1864 photo made available by the Library of Congress, Gen. William T. Sherman's Union troops use a lever especially designed by his engineers to tear apart train rails as they march through Georgia during the American Civil War. The rails were half the weight of modern-day rails and were pried up easily. (AP Photo/Library of Congress)*

**A parlor car** for day travel with reserved seats;  
**Single and double deck** train cars, with the latter type very popular with the Amtrak superliner;

Passenger cars are usually linked with a **walkable gangway**.



*Detail view of original doorway opening, south side. - Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, Roundhouse & Shops, Broadway & Spring Streets, Aurora, Kane County, Illinois. (Library of Congress)*



*Locomotive no. 17 over ash pit at East Broad Top Railroad & Coal Company, Roundhouse, Rockhill Furnace, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania. (Library of Congress)*



*The lookout Lounga in the observation car (1948).  
Photo AP Images*



*A dining car (1948). Photo AP Images*

There are many different types of **freight cars** depending on the cargo shipped. Just to mention a few there are:

**A stock car:** for transporting livestock;

**A tank car** for liquids or gases;

**A mine car** (or a mine cart) for transporting excavated natural resources such as coal or different ores;

**A hopper**, in which there is a bottom dump door useful for unloading shipped materials;

**A flat car** for big and oversize items often shipped in containers;

**An autorack** (or auto carrier) is a multi-level car for transporting automobiles;

**A boxcar** is a car with roof and side or end doors.



*This rear view of the streamlined 20th Century Limited shows the multi-windowed lookout lounge of the observation car (1948), near Garrison, New York. The modern steam locomotive, left, pulling fast freight, is similar to the type of engines which hauled 20th Century Limited before the day of the diesels. Photo AP Images*

# Activity Page

## EXERCISE 1: READING COMPREHENSION

Read the main article on pp. 2-4 and answer the following questions:

1. What were the names of America's most famous explorers who set off an expedition to get to the Pacific shore at the beginning of the 19th century?
2. How long did it take them to complete their expedition?
3. When was gold discovered in California?
4. What kinds of transportation existed in America before the railroads?
5. What crucial invention made it possible for railroad transportation to develop?
6. Who is known as the Father of Railways? Who was he?
7. How did John Stevens demonstrate the possibilities of steam locomotion?
8. What groups were against the construction of railroads and why?
9. Why was Asa Whitney a great advocate of building a railway that would connect the Atlantic and Pacific coasts?
10. When was the Transcontinental Railroad completed?

## EXERCISE 2: WRITING

The picture on the right shows a hobo on a "free" ride. Write a little paragraph on who hobos were and how and when the term originated. What was the difference between a hobo and a tramp? Have you watched any movies which featured hobos?



Photo AP Images

## EXERCISE 3: SPEAKING: TOY MODEL RAILROADS AND TRAINS

Work in small groups of 3-4 students. Talk about the reasons why making/collecting toy model railroads and trains is such a popular hobby. What does this hobby consist of? Is it more popular with men or women? Is it an expensive hobby?

Then find out from your colleagues what their hobbies are and whether they devote a lot of time and money to it.

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About ZOOM

Contact us at  
[arc@usembassy.at](mailto:arc@usembassy.at)

American Reference Center  
U.S. Embassy Vienna  
Boltzmannngasse 16  
1090 Vienna

[http://  
austria.usembassy.gov/  
arc.html](http://austria.usembassy.gov/arc.html)



*Duluth & iron range railroad locomotive (built in 1888) with log train at Endion Depot in Duluth, Minnesota. (Library of Congress)*



*Railroad officials and employees celebrate the completion of the first railroad transcontinental link in Prementory, Utah on May 10, 1869. Photo AP Images*



*Rusting ore train, once part of New York elevated line (two locomotives, showing railroad tracks lin foreground) - Council City & Solomon River Railroad, Alaska (Library of Congress)*