

Clues Sheet

After the first transcontinental railroad was built in 1869, two decades of railroad building filled in the national network and connected American communities. America's railroads were built by thousands of migrant and immigrant workers. In the West, the labor force was predominantly Chinese, while in the East, many Irish men were employed to lay the tracks, clear the right-of-way, and blast through natural obstacles. Food and manufactured goods could now be transported more easily across the nation. New cities flourished beyond the waterways that previously served as the transportation network. These new urban centers became dependent on faraway farms and trains to transport food.

Farms, both large and small, began to grow crops based on which would be most profitable. Large farms depended on immigrant and migrant workers to harvest their crops. Railroads charged lower fees to the larger farms. Independent smaller-sized farmers, many of them in the South and West, became angry and created a political group that attempted to break railroad monopolies, regulate railroad rates, and help smaller farmers. This force grew into the Populist movement.

The town of Watsonville was served by the largest railroad in California, the Southern Pacific, and shipped out food grown in the fertile Pajaro Valley. The people of nearby Santa Cruz struggled to obtain a railroad connection to their town. After years of politicking, a 15-mile "short line" from Watsonville to Santa Cruz was completed in 1876, helping to make the seaside town a more popular tourist destination.



1-1 Locomotive "Jupiter," 1880s (Smithsonian Institution #74-8184)

This steam locomotive was used in Santa Cruz, California. Built in Philadelphia in 1876, it ran on narrow-gauge tracks (3 feet apart). Santa Cruz community leaders built their own railroad to connect their town to the rest of the national rail network, and built it narrow-gauge to save money. Just 7 years later, the Southern Pacific Railroad bought this line and switched the tracks to broad-gauge (4 feet, 8½ inches apart). The Jupiter was sold to Guatemala, where it hauled bananas for 60 years. In 1976, the Smithsonian Institution collected and then restored the Jupiter.



1-2 Chinese railroad workers, 1880s (Courtesy of Pajaro Valley Historical Association)

Seeking cheap labor, the town of Santa Cruz hired Chinese workers to build the railroad. They constructed bridges, laid wooden ties, and spiked the iron rails into place, all for \$6 a week. As this work ended, the Chinese looked for other employment opportunities, and a number of them went to work in the state's rapidly changing fields and orchards. Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. This law barred new Chinese from emigrating to the United States.



1-3 Railroad advertisement, 1880s (Courtesy of Palo Alto Historical Association)

This Southern Pacific advertisement highlights the “broad-gauge” train, meaning the standard-width track used by most railroads. The Southern Pacific switched the tracks to broad-gauge so customers would not have to change trains in Watsonville. The company promoted Santa Cruz as a vacation resort. The Southern Pacific bought other railroad lines and soon monopolized much of California.



1-4 Fruit-crate label, 1900s (NMAH Transportation Collections)

Packing labels helped railroads keep track of which box belonged to which company, a necessity when refrigerated or ventilated railroad cars delivered crops to national markets. These cars contained ice, cut from the Sierra Mountains and loaded onto trains for transportation to icehouses near the California farming regions.



1-5 Izumizaki family in strawberry field, 1890s (Courtesy of Watsonville Public Library Collection)

After the Chinese Exclusion Act, Chinese workers were in increasingly short supply. Without large numbers of new immigrants, growers began to look for other sources of labor. In the 1890s, Japanese men began working in and around Watsonville. Japanese migrants began to form families, since U.S. law did not exclude Japanese women from immigrating into the country, as it had with Chinese women. But by 1924, the Japanese, like the Chinese before them, were no longer allowed to immigrate. Again, growers looked elsewhere, to immigrant laborers from nearby Mexico and from the U.S. colony in the Philippines.



1-6 Street vendors on Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C., about 1900 (Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)

As urban centers grew, they depended on daily deliveries of food. Washington, D.C.'s Center Market was the largest public market in the city, and was close to the train station. Residents who shopped there could buy local and regional produce as well as foods shipped from around the nation and the world. Trolley riders came in from the new suburbs to shop in the city markets.