



80 years ago, Omaha Branch staff took part in city's 'Golden Spike' celebration

by: Stan Austin

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In 1939, "Golden Spike Days" marked the 70th year since the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, which created America's first cross-country rail route.

In 1939, to mark the 70th year since completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, employees at the Kansas City Fed's Omaha Branch dressed in period costume for "Golden Spike Days."

The festival - in the headquarters city of Union Pacific Railroad (UP) - spanned April 26-29 and was a celebration of the ceremonial Golden Spike driven on May 10, 1869, at Promontory Summit, Utah, to connect the UP and Central Pacific lines. The connection of those two lines, which had been delayed in part by the Civil War, created America's first cross-country rail route and helped fuel expansion and growth in the years afterward.

The Omaha celebration drew national attention and was kicked off, via telegraph, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The highlight was the April 28 world premiere of the Cecil B. DeMille film "Union Pacific." The movie dramatized the push to connect the railroad lines. The film premiered simultaneously in three local theaters: the Omaha, the Orpheum and the Paramount. That same day, across the Missouri River from Omaha, event promoters unveiled the "Golden Spike Monument" next to UP's main rail yard in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Before the transcontinental railroad project, Council Bluffs was UP's western terminus. The 56-foot, gold-painted concrete spike still stands at South 21st Street and 9th Avenue.

This year numerous events and activities are planned to commemorate the 150th year since the Golden Spike (also known as the "Last Spike") was driven.

[Learn more about Transcontinental Railroad history and Golden Spike commemoration events.](#)

(Bank Historian and Information Specialist Cynthia Edwards contributed to this article.)
