Leonard Arrington
Leonard Arrington authored one of the most widely read biographies of Brigham Young (Brigham Young: American Moses) and authored one of the more thorough analyses of early economic development in the Utah Territory (Great Basin Kingdom). His term of service as Historian for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is regarded as one of the most open and intellectually stimulating periods for examination of Church history. In one of his last, far-ranging interviews for television, Arrington talked with KUED Senior Producer Ken Verdoia in 1995. Leonard Arrington passed away in 1999.

Verdoia: Leonard, I'm going to pick this story up from time to time from -- in different areas. And I'd like to start out with one putting aside the romantic notion of Brigham Young entering the valley and looking at the reality of Brigham Young dealing with a church that literally was on the run, attempting to find a homeland.
What would Brigham view as his primary mission as the Saints enter the valley in 1847?

Arrington: I think the principal goal of Brigham was to try to unify the Saints, to try to enhance the sense of community among them, to try to make a family of the Latter-Day Saints. This is reflected in the first sermons that he gave to them after they reached the valley. It's reflected in subsequent sermons, it's reflected also in policies that he adopted and institutions that he established to help them be more -- more like a family, to work together, to help each other, to -- to try to achieve Zion, the community of saints, to help build the Kingdom of God as he understood it.

Verdoia: Now, trying to set aside our 20th century reading, how would we view his vision of the Kingdom of God as the organizing motif. Again, trying to understand it from the Saints' perspective of the mid-19th century.

Arrington: Uh-huh.

Verdoia: What were they attempting to do?

Arrington: They were attempting to establish a community of worshipful people who had the privilege of worshiping the way they wanted to, who wanted to establish a community, who wanted to establish a refuge place for the Saints who were in England on the continent of Europe, eastern United States, southern United States and elsewhere. They were trying to build a community and establish the basis for supporting this community in an economic way.

Verdoia: It sounds like that that organizational concept would have a perfectblending of church and state.

Arrington: It did, there's no question about it. They wanted it that way, they expected it to be that way, they worked toward that goal.

Verdoia: Beyond having this as a society that would flourish, it would also seem, based on the experiences of Missouri and Illinois and the westward migration, but there must have been a strong aspect of survival instinct that would go into this notion of family and community turning inward and sustaining itself.

Arrington: I'm sure that's the case. I'm sure that -- that it was not only a question of building the community, but helping the community to survive. Natural problems, human problems, society problems, whatever might occur.

Verdoia: Moving forward a bit in time, towards the mid-1850's, we see the Saints, Salt Lake settlement and the Utah territorial settlement having more and more contact with outside federal officials.

Arrington: Uh-huh.

Verdoia: We're in the territorial status, Washington makes some appointments and sends them out here, and it seems from the outset as if it's oil and water, that these federal political appointees are coming in not liking what they see in the Saints; the Saints are not liking what they see in the federal appointees. Is that a fair reading?

Arrington: I think it is. There are some fine books that have been -- have studied in depth the documents from the federal side in the national archives and also from the territorial side. And they suggest the same thing.

Verdoia: How did Brigham Young then view this notion -- and -- and I'm trying to separate the notion of how he might have viewed the government as apart from how he might have viewed the constitution as being divinely inspired or a sacred document that the Saints would greatly appreciate. How did Brigham Young view the government?

Arrington: I think the -- the thing to keep in mind is the strong faith that Brigham Young had that the Lord would bless his people. I think the -- the important thing is that he did not expect the community to suffer especially from the government, from hostiles. I think he expected that if they used wisdom, the Lord would bless them in what they did and would interfere with any efforts that a hostile government or hostile politicians or pettifoggers would make to interfere with their progress.

Verdoia: So as we look at some of the increasingly strident language that's used by Brigham, this is, again, right at the time, consistent with the reformation of 1856, leading towards the showdown of 1857-58. If we look at some of the more strident language used by Brigham Young, is he using it to attack the government or to solidify the hearts and minds of the Saints?

Arrington: I would say more the latter than the former. I think he was more concerned that he strengthen the will of the people to do what he felt they had to do in building their kingdom.

Verdoia: As negotiations and interpretations break down in the summer of '57 and an army is sent to march on Utah territory, we see again some very strong pulpit pronouncement from Brigham Young.

Arrington: Not only from Brigham but also from his associates, Heber C. Kimball, George A. Smith and others.

Verdoia: What is the tone that -- that they're using to communicate the -- the leadership principle to the rank and file members of the church? Can we characterize what they're saying?

Arrington: Obviously, they're attempting to -- to fill the air with ideas that would appeal to the Saints and would suggest to them the importance of them acting as a unit, acting as a -- as a group of people who are unified, who were trying to -- to show the strength of their will in posing unfair efforts of the

government.

Verdoia: In his pronouncements and more especially in his actions, does Brigham Young show that he may view this as in fact the last struggle-- a life or death interaction for the Saints?

Arrington: I wouldn't say it was that far. I think that Brigham saw this as just another example of an impediment of an obstacle that they had to overcome. I think he had faith, had confidence that the Lord would see the Saints through. I think he didn't see this as -- as a -- an event that would ultimately destroy their society, their kingdom. I -- I think he was certain that the kingdom would survive if they were intelligent and followed what he regarded as the Lord's admonitions to them.

Verdoia: Two interventions help secure that, that it isn't going to be the final showdown. One is the winter of '57-58 closing in on the troops, and also the arrival of Dr. Osborne from California, the appearance, once again, among the Saints of Thomas Kane.

Arrington: Right. Uh-huh.

Verdoia: How should we read Thomas Kane as a figure riding into Salt Lake City in that period of the winter of '57-58? What -- what is his intent? What is he hoping to do?

Arrington: There are certainly different views of Thomas Kane. My view is that he really had a strong affection for the Latter-Day Saints. He wanted to help them. He -- he regarded the government policy as ill-advised and he, after having done everything he could in Washington D.C. to counteract the government's effort, he volunteered to come west and to attempt to prevent a collision. And he succeeded in that.

I think that he was a -- a person who demonstrated many times before 1857 and after 1857, demonstrated his strong affection for the Latter-Day Saints. He's the one who came to Utah later on in 1873 and planned to write a biography of Brigham Young. He did not do it, but he did write Brigham Young's will and did consult with him over a period of several weeks. And his wife, of course, wrote that fine book about their visit with the Latter-Day Saints.

He consulted with Mormon missionaries and Mormon delegates and others regularly in Washington D.C. and in Philadelphia and elsewhere in the east. I think the pattern of his continual efforts to improve the life of the Saints suggests the sincerity of his motives.

Verdoia: The campaign of 1857-58 does result in one substantive impact and that is the presence of federal troops in Utah territory, but it also, in effect, removes Brigham Young as territorial governor.

Arrington: Uh-huh. However, we need to remember what the replacement of Brigham Young, Gov. Cummings said, that, "It's true, I may be governor of the territory, but Brigham Young is governor of the people." And he continued to be the people's governor in a realistic sense, if not de jure.

Verdoia: The enduring role of Brigham Young -- not only for Cummings but for subsequent governors as well.

Arrington: Uh-huh.

Verdoia: Some with great frustration, some with higher degrees of accommodation.

Arrington: True.

Verdoia: Brigham Young, how -- can we kind of paint a broad picture of how he envisioned these multiple roles of church leader, spiritual leader, political leader and -- and even Indian superintendent where -- where he wore many, many important hats and that -- did he view them as being in conflict or did he view them as being harmoniously seated upon one person at one time?

Arrington: This is a question that I certainly have reflected on a great deal. I spent five years writing a biography of Brigham Young and read all of the documents. Read all of the letters that he wrote, and he wrote hundreds of letters during this -- these years. In fact, throughout his life, he dictated and signed approximately 30,000 letters that we have copies of.

At any rate, I read the diaries of people who worked with him and read his letters and read his own diaries, his own official history and so on, kept by his clerks, and it's clear to me that Brigham Young was a -- many-sided kind of personality. He was what might be called a multi-personality, a multi-person. He was a person who had many sides to him.

And it's -- it's wrong to -- it's incorrect to try to offer one interpretation of Brigham Young and say he was this, he was that. He was all of them. And these did not result in any conflict in his own mind, in his own character. He was supremely confident that the Lord had appointed him to do this work. He felt happy in doing it. He was certainly not at war with himself in any of his various activities.

Verdoia: Let me follow that up with a -- a question that kind of spans the whole story. This notion of the -- the president and the first presidency of the church as being very politically active and politically determinative seems to undergo a transformation throughout the story of the territorial years and into statehood.

Can we chart how that changes, what are the significant changing points in looking at church leadership as being quite comfortable with being overtly political and when they're less comfortable with that?

Arrington: It's partly a matter of personalities, of course. Brigham Young was a different personality than John Taylor. Both were different personalities than Wilford Woodruff. And certainly they were different than Joseph F. Smith and Lorenzo Snow and all of the leaders that followed.

So the importance of the position of prophet or president of the church is partly a reflection of the kinds of persons who had that position. I'm sure that -- that one will find a different group -- combination of forces under John Taylor than under Brigham Young and under Wilford Woodruff than either one of them, so on.

Verdoia: Can we roughly associate it, perhaps, with maybe statehood, that with the achievement of statehood, the mandate isn't -- isn't as important for the first presidency to provide that political leadership?

Arrington: A very good point. Certainly, the achievement of statehood was a goal that they'd worked hard throughout the territorial period. They applied for statehood, what, six or seven different times and hoped every time that they might achieve it, which would give them the possibility of electing their own governor and having their own supreme -- Supreme Court justices and secretary -- secretary of the

territory and so on. They hoped for that goal all along. They applied for it in 1850. And in, as I say, something like seven times through the years. And they finally achieved it in 1896.

But I wouldn't say that that means that Brigham felt any sense of failure for not realizing it. He was able to achieve most of his goals without -- within the framework of having a territorial status.

Verdoia: That brings us back, to a time with Brigham Young that I want to explore, because he seems to have a sense of economic and colonizing vision for what he hopes will be the territory of Deseret, state of Deseret and ultimately the State of Utah. But how can we understand Brigham as this colonizing factor, because, again, the vision seems to be very clear about what direction he wants to go.

Arrington: Certainly, during the early period he felt that one could build the kingdom primarily through a policy of self-sufficiency. This is true generally, I think, of underdeveloped regions and countries which need to build up their agriculture so that they produce an excess which will feed the people who are siphoned off to work in industries.

However, as it was possible to build up exports after the coming of the railroad, Brigham followed that policy of not discouraging the diversification of the kingdom. And, of course, by the time he died in 1877, he had provided the framework for perhaps as many as a hundred thousand people in a region largely regarded before that time as uninhabitable.

Verdoia: One aspect of his economic vision that's always attributed to Brigham Young is his adamance that the hard rock mining and the pursuit of precious metals was no way for the Saints to go.

Arrington: I think one has to be very careful about interpreting Brigham's policy on mining. It's true that he did not favor the abandonment of the Great Basin kingdom of -- by going to California to mine gold, nor to Vancouver and other places where precious metals were discovered. He did not favor this policy of abandonment.

On the other hand, he encouraged the discovery and mining of coal in Coalville. He encouraged the working of the resources in the region near Cedar City in mining gold and iron. He favored the development of resources throughout the region, mineral and other resources. The development of mineral resources was part of the policy of self-sufficiency. So it's wrong to assume that Brigham was against mining. He was not.

He was in favor of mining, and once mining was established in the Salt Lake Valley and elsewhere after the coming of the railroad, he encouraged this people to work in the mines, to be sure they were well paid and to sell them produce and so on.

Verdoia: 1869, you've already alluded to the transcontinental railroad completion.

Arrington: Uh-huh.

Verdoia: By then we have Col. Conner well ensconced on the east bench and encouraging his troops to go out, and the development of mining activities, and there's a boom that starts to develop in the 1870's, infusions of new faces, a diversity that the Saints initially didn't intend or maybe expect.

And part of that era is a perception on the part of Brigham and church leadership that there's going to be a need to preserve the integrity of the economic order for the Saints. That results on a couple

manifestations, the first is cooperative, the second is the more developed sense of a united order, which is a closed or communal economic system.

Let me try to consider those with you in the context of the 1870's. Did Brigham perceive threats?

Arrington: Oh, of course. He was fearful that the construction of railroads would bring in thousands of people who might disrupt the social economy of the Saints. And so he insisted that the railroads within Utah territory be built by the Saints.

And so he took contracts with both the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific to build the railroad coming from the Sierra into the Salt Lake -- into the territory of Utah, the region near Ogden, and with the Union Pacific to build it from Nebraska west into Utah.

And after the completion of the transcontinental railroad, he believed so strongly on the importance of having railroad connection with Salt Lake City, which they had avoided by going around the lake, that he organized the Utah Central Railroad Company to build a line from Ogden to Salt Lake City. Then later on to build -- he organized the Utah Southern Railroad to build a railroad from Salt Lake City south to beyond Utah County. And he organized also the Utah Northern Railroad to build a railroad from Ogden up to Montana.

All of these were efforts to preserve the local social economy by preventing the influx of large numbers of people that might have disrupted it in various ways.

Verdoia: What about the nature of the cooperatives, the cooperatives that predated, obviously, the completion of the transcontinental railroad, but they seemed to take on a different type of significance after the railroad's completion.

Arrington: Actually, I think the -- we can say that the cooperatives were -- were adopted, established in anticipation of the coming of the railroad. The railroad was heading west in 1866. It was 1867, 1868 it was nearing and they'd began organizing cooperatives on a large scale basis in 1868.

So it's in anticipation. And it was a device for assuring that the merchandising, the importing and sale of products from the east and from San Francisco would be done by the Saints not by outside enterprisers, who might work against the goals of the kingdom.

Verdoia: I want to take that to the next step then, the United Order. And we seem to have two models that emerge. You have the corporate united order in Brigham City.

Arrington: Uh-huh.

Verdoia: You have the communal united order in Orderville. For the purposes of our discussion and because you did some research in that area, let's consider Orderville. I mean, it wasn't the model for necessarily all other communities. What was the intent of Orderville?

Arrington: I think the goal was to try to preserve a family way of life. Here were a group of people who had gone to southern Nevada to build a little community near Bunkerville. They had had problems with the state of Nevada, and so they had to leave Nevada and they came back and established a -- a little community in what became Orderville. And to preserve this family way of life that they had followed initially in Bunkerville, Nevada, they established this communal united order in Orderville.

Brigham was very happy that they were able to do this, that they were be able -- were able to make a success of it. He felt very strongly that they were doing the right thing. And he attempted to do something similar in organizations that he established in northern Arizona and in a few other places in Utah. Even in Salt Lake City, they attempted to do something similar by having ward united orders. And in the case of this metropolitan community, it was better to have each ward focus on one line of industry. So one ward had a shoemaking establishment and one had a tailoring establishment, and one had a soap factory, and so on.
So it was the general principle of the Saints organizing to work for the benefit -- benefit of the community of Saints throughout the region.

Verdoia: And at the same time excluding the gentiles?

Arrington: This is not the goal necessarily. I would not say that it was the goal to exclude the gentiles. The goal was for the Saints to establish their own system, and if the gentiles could work under it, fine. Gentiles were not excluded in any community that I know of. There were no rules that says you had to be a Latter-day Saint.

However, the Latter-day Saints, in establishing this -- these different orders, did hold religious services in which they promised to work together and were rebaptized to solidify that promise, that covenant to work together.

Verdoia: Leonard, let's return to the earlier days of the westward migration. An era dawns where Brigham is looking for more efficient and cost-effective means of using the facilities they have for the transportation of this large influx of immigrants to the Utah territory.

He devises and, with others, comes up with the concept of handcart companies. What was the reason, the rationale behind the notion of handcarts?

Arrington: This was a device for making it possible for a large number of relatively poor people from Europe to come to Zion at a minimum of expense. These people were being supported by the Perpetual Immigrating Fund company that Brigham had set up in 1849. Brigham had noticed that nearly everybody walked to Zion in all of the migrations. They'd put their possessions in the wagons and they put any ill persons in the wagons, and most of them walked. We have the diaries of young people, older people, middle-aged people, nearly all of whom walked most of the distance across the plains.

If that were true, why not establish a company in which they pushed handcarts and then avoid some of the extra expense of buying wagons? You could have wagons accompany them for the benefit of sick people and old people, infirm people, and in carrying food and clothing and that sort of thing. So they established the handcart companies.

It resulted in a terrible tragedy because of a natural disaster, the early snows in Wyoming, but the system itself was sound and economical and in fact, after the handcart disasters of 1856, was continued again in '57, '58, '59 and '60. Finally, in '61, they had sufficient wagons and oxen and horses in the territory that they established the church team process of moving people west. So they organized three or four hundred people in Utah each spring to drive back to the Missouri river outfitting post and to pick up people and drive them back to Utah. And that was a very successful kind of enterprise. And under that, they brought approximately 3,000 persons each year throughout the 1860's.

Verdoia: The gathering that took place in Utah territory was really, for its time, enormous in scale, wasn't it?

Arrington: It was. Yeah, it was the biggest and most effective system of organized immigration in American history. It brought approximately 3,000 persons a year, not only during the church team period of the 1860's, but also through their various organized companies, roughly 3,000 a year through all of the 1850's. It began in 1849, continued on each year. Approximately 80,000 persons were organized and brought to Utah from 1849 up until about the time of Brigham's death in 1877.

Verdoia: Let's consider the Martin-Willey handcart disaster companies. What went wrong with those two companies?

Arrington: Well, the first thing that went wrong is they left too late. They had confidence that they would make it, and the confidence was misplaced. They didn't make it. They just left too late. If Brigham's policies of leaving by a certain time had been followed, they wouldn't have gone. They would have spent the winter back on the Missouri valley outfitting post and have come in the next spring. So that was one thing. There were other things that were noted. Some of the handcarts weren't well made, apparently, and they did have large numbers of people. I think the -- and then, of course, there was the natural strange thing that happened, the early snowfalls in Wyoming. One couldn't have predicted that they would have come so early and so strongly as they did.

So all of these things caused the disaster. It was horrible. Brigham's strong leadership is reflected in the rescue effort. It would have been terrible if he hadn't seen what needed to be done and sent back these vigorous young men to rescue the companies. And the story of the rescue effort is one that's not very often told in connection with the disaster, but it -- it was as heroic as the tragedy of the handcart companies themselves.

Verdoia: I would like to discuss the latter years of Brigham's life, specifically looking from 1870 to 1877. We've talked a little bit about seeing a changing nature in Utah. Utah is emerging as a crossroads in the west with the transcontinental railroad, the development of north and south rail lines. So there are some very positive aspects. The survivability of the Saints is far from in question now. Yet it's also a time where Brigham Young seems to live a life of a marked man, where people and governments and elected officials in Washington and judges appointed in the territory are doing their very best to hold him accountable for what they perceive as his wrongdoings.

Arrington: I think the -- I think -- we have to remember the strong self-confidence that Brigham has in himself and his role, which was a reflection of his strong faith that the Lord was behind the people and the Lord was behind him in his efforts to see the light and do what was necessary to preserve and help the Saints.

I -- I don't think that Brigham Young worried excessively about what hostile officials did. I think he regarded this as just one of the trials that he had to go through in his overall mission.

His confidence about things is reflected in the fact that he continued to send out colonizing companies, he continued to build new industries, establish new shops and factories and he -- he continued to maintain consultations with the government through representatives that he sent back east. I think he -- everybody in life has to go through certain trials and problems, personal and familial and societal, and he regarded these as -- as minor aspects of an overall program of building and of improving.

Verdoia: Did he in fact view the people that would attack him as, in effect, attacking the work of God?

Arrington: I think so. I think he regarded this as -- as an attempt to affect the work of God and that it would not be successful. I think he felt confident that the Lord would not allow His people to suffer unjustly any extended period of time.

Verdoia: You make reference, knowingly, to the familial strife that everyone might experience from one time to the next, and that, of course, is defined for Brigham Young and, well, maybe in some other respects, but most publicly with Ann Eliza Webb Young. A wife that sues him for divorce. How do you view that whole relationship between Ann Eliza Webb Young and Brigham Young?

Arrington: I think the -- the thing we have to remember about Ann Eliza is that she was put up to the writing of this book mostly by a public relations person that she eventually married and who sponsored lecture tours around the country. So one has to take much of that book with a grain of salt, because it was really written by her public relations person, not by her.

I think that -- that everybody expects to have problems with people. Brigham had several wives and had several families, and I think he expected that there might be problems with some of them. I don't think that it affected his overall confidence in doing what he thought the Lord wanted him to do in building the kingdom.

Verdoia: Didn't he have, in effect, several de facto divorces that were not public, that -- that were just more quietly handled within his family and should not become part of the record of -- of literally what is being done?

Arrington: He had one, uh-huh.

Verdoia: He did have one.

Arrington: Yeah. That's true. But it didn't result in any serious problems.

Verdoia: Let's move forward then to the late summer of 1877. Brigham Young passes away.

Arrington: Uh-huh.

Verdoia: In Washington there is this very unsavory sign of relief.

Arrington: Yeah.

Verdoia: You know, the lion is gone. Surely now the church will die because it's headless.

Arrington: Yeah.

Verdoia: What takes place in the Utah territory as such a powerful figure like Brigham Young passes from the scene?

Arrington: They had worked out, after the death of Joseph Smith, the idea that the Quorum of Twelve Apostles succeeds to the presidency of the church upon the death of a prophet. That had been something made clear to them in March in 1844 when Joseph Smith, foreseeing his own death, had

passed the keys of the kingdom, as he called them, the keys of the kingdom to the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

And so after Joseph Smith died, Brigham Young, being president of that quorum, the Quorum of the Twelve convened themselves, and they established policies and -- and governed the church as a group of people, a group of -- a quorum of twelve.

And it was finally, in 1847, three years after the death of Joseph Smith, that the Quorum of the Twelve decided that was the time to ask Brigham officially, formally to be president of the church and prophet. That same policy was followed after the death of Brigham in 1877. The Quorum of Twelve Apostles included many strong personalities who had been close associates of Brigham. And their president was John Taylor, and John Taylor was a strong personality also. Not exactly the same sort of person that Brigham was, but nevertheless, a strong person, a strong leader. And they governed for another, what, three years, until they officially asked John Taylor to be president of the church.

That same policy was followed after his death in 1887 and Wilford Woodruff was president of the Quorum, and the Quorum governed the church until, I think, 1880, when Wilford Woodruff was appointed president. That practice has become so standardized in recent years that the Quorum of the Twelve now choose the new president of the church within a few days after the funeral of the president of the church.

Verdoia: Let me ask you to reflect what might have been the view in Utah. I said that nationally there was in fact some pointed celebration.

Arrington: Yeah.

Verdoia: One need only look at the cartoons of Harper's and Puck to recognize that there was a certain vilification of Brigham Young in death. In Utah was there any sense of despair that the Saints might not endure without his leadership?

Arrington: I think none at all. I've seen no reflection of that in going through all the papers of that period. I think they all felt very confident that John Taylor and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles would take over and the leadership would be strong.
Remember also that Brigham was not his most vigorous during the last two or three years of his life. He had made every effort to try to get a temple completed in St. George before he died, and he was finally able to see the temple completed and dedicated and all of the rituals performed before his death. And so I think he would have been quite satisfied about having fulfilled his mission. And I think those around him felt in the same sense that, essentially, Brigham's mission has been completed. Now we're moving on to other goals.

Verdoia: It's 1877, the Saints have been in the Salt Lake Valley for 30 years.

Arrington: Uh-huh.

Verdoia: They've gone forth and established communities throughout the territory.

Arrington: Something like 350 different settlements were founded under the leadership of Brigham during those 30 years.

Verdoia: Yet, statehood and pure self-governance has alluded the people.

Arrington: Uh-huh.

Verdoia: There is a sense of storm clouds gathering over what the federal government intends to do to prosecute their views of what's a proper conduct --

Arrington: Uh-huh.

Verdoia: -- in various aspects of the Saints' practice of faith. And there is a sense that this kingdom of God --

Arrington: Uh-huh.

Verdoia: -- has been sullied. It has been tarnished by a divisive element that's come into the territory and is, if nothing less than a thorn in the side of what the Saints hope to build up in the kingdom of God. So there might be some that say that Brigham Young goes quietly into the night with his vision, his dreams and his faith very much in doubt because of these developments.

Arrington: I wouldn't read it that way at all. Having gone through all the literature of the period, I -- I do not see that sense of discouragement of questioning or doubt about the future. I -- I see it as more confident than that. Again, having faith that they were doing what the Lord wanted them to do and the Lord would, in essence, look after them and so, I see it -- see them as being more confident of the future and less worried about what might be happening in Washington.

Verdoia: In death, Brigham Young is still the focus of a great deal of controversy, because trying to resolve his estate after his passing is something that stretches on for quite a period of time.

Arrington: It does.

Verdoia: What was the greatest contentions associated with the settlement of Brigham's estate and what were some of the factors that made it such a -- a complex accounting?

Arrington: Brigham, when he joined the church in 1832, had given up his business, had left his business and had said, "I'm going to enroll in the Lord's kingdom and I'm going to work toward the goal of building the kingdom."
And he believed that if all the Saints were doing what they should do, they should put first the kingdom of God and their own personal careers as a secondary consideration.

When the United States Government, in 1862, passed the law which disincorporated the church and required the church not to have extensive property in its own name, Brigham and his associates in the Quorum of the Twelve assumed that the right way for Brigham to do, to carry out the goals and programs of the kingdom, was to leave some of the properties in his own name. But everybody understood that these were church enterprises, these -- this was church property, it was in his name because the government would not allow it to be in the name of the church.

And so by the time Brigham died in 1877, a lot of church property known by the apostles to be church property was in the name of Brigham.

The United States Government, the -- United States prosecutor, the attorney general, their office felt very strongly about preventing the church from becoming stronger, and so they made every effort, legally, to try to prevent Brigham Young's property that belonged to the church from going to the church.

And so the church responded by doing various things to see that it got the properties to which it was entitled. It engaged -- it responded to suits that were entered by Brigham Young heirs. It organized local ecclesiastical corporations in all the settlements, turning all the church property in those areas over to the local ecclesiastical corporation, and -- and according to the government law, a religious corporation could own up to $50,000 worth of property.

So this takes care of all the chapels and tithing houses and meeting houses and everything else that were in each of the localities.

There was such a -- a strong showing of church involvement in material that ultimately the government settled a suit with the church in which most of these properties that did belong in fact to the church were given to the church. And so the church was able to survive this settlement of the will without losing very much in the process.

It ends up that Brigham, who was thought by many people to be a very wealthy person, really was not wealthy. I think the total amount left to Brigham Young's heirs was like $236,000 worth of property. Divided among 20 families which Brigham left, that's roughly $10,000 per family. Roughly, the house they were living in, a few shares of stock, and that sort of thing.

Verdoia: I'm going to by-pass a couple other aspects and I want to spend some time on this.

Conflict is often used as the defining principle of the Utah territory for many people. They see the conflict against the elements in settling the land, the conflict with native Americans, the conflict with federal troops in '57, and so on.
From what we've talked about, it seems to be that you have a different defining principle --

Arrington: I do. I do. As a person who spent many years in a field of economics, my defining principle is economic development, economic progress. And I see the territory of Utah moving through a period of -- of -- of self-sufficiency, emphasizing agricultural development, a period of self-protection which sees the establishment of cooperatives and in -- in not only retailing and merchandising but also in industry, in cotton manufacturing and woolen manufacturing, and tanning and all sorts of industries. And finally into the modern period where we see a diversification of Utah's economy after the coming of statehood in 1896.

The emphasis has to be on people working together to achieve the goal of economic development. There was conflict of course. And people seem to be especially interested in conflict. That's why journalists pay a great deal of attention to it, and historians.

But to me, the underlying theme is working together to achieve the goal of building the kingdom. And here is a region which was not regarded as being capable of supporting very many people who, during the period 1847 to '77 ends up supporting a hundred thousand people. How did that happen? It happened with the establishment of colonies, of communities, settlements, it happened with the establishment of shops and industries, it happened with the development of resources. And this is the story of the development of Utah, the -- the programs which resulted in building an economy that was

capable of supporting a large number of people.

Verdoia: Your biography of Brigham Young carries the subtitle: American Moses.

Arrington: Right.

Verdoia: Why American Moses?

Arrington: Brigham was the same sort of a leader as Moses in serving people for a long period of time, in achieving their goal of entering into a kingdom blessed by God. It -- there's no -- no trick reason why I should have used American Moses. I thought Moses was a person understood by nearly everybody, and that Brigham was something for us that Moses was for the people of Israel. He led his people figuratively and quite literally, and they survived because of that leadership and their faith.

Michael Johnson

Michael Johnson served for a number of years with the National Park Service at the Golden Spike National Historical Monument, the preserved site of the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. He is now Director of the Mountain West Center for Regional Studies headquartered at Utah State University in Logan. He is active in developing history programs for children, as well as maintaining his on-going research interest in the histories of railroads in the West. He was interviewed in his office at Utah State University by Promontory Producer Ken Verdoia.

Verdoia: Mike let's begin with some context. If we go back to the mid 19th century and the concept of a transcontinental railroad, what is of singular importance to the American public?

Johnson: It was a great adventure for people in that time. Railroad engineers were what airline pilots are today and technology was being used to span the continent. This was cutting edge for that time period and it was great excitement.

Verdoia: So this notion of linking the nation, coming out of the ashes of the civil war, this was more than just a link by rail. This was symbolic.

Johnson: Well, this is really what it took to bring the country together from east to west. In an earlier time a country the size of the United States would have been ungovernable and it took the technology of the telegraph and the railroad to bring this country together and unify it.

Verdoia: So we begin this great enterprise of a transcontinental railroad. Obviously something that private enterprise alone could not undertake. How does the federal government enter into this to drive this project forward?

Johnson: Well the beginning of the railroad was a political process. The folks in government knew that if they waited for private enterprise would probably be another generation until the railroad would be built. It was going to take subsidies of both land and money to induce private builders to get this done.

Verdoia: So we are talking about an extraordinarily extensive undertaking for its time.

Johnson: Oh my goodness, yes. It is millions and millions of dollars and thousands and thousands of

people to build it.

Verdoia: The Union Pacific started from the position of relative geographic, geological comfort of the Great Plains and was able to build out across relatively flat train. The Central Pacific starts out with almost immediately the arduous task of battling the Sierras, and getting their way through the Sierra Nevada Mountains. By 1868 it seems like the roles are almost reversed because the Union Pacific now finds itself confronting the mountain range the Central Pacific finds itself confronting the Bonneville Salt Flats.

Johnson: They were both racing to try and control the traffic and trade of the Salt Lake Basin and so it was imperative for each company to try and build into and beyond Salt Lake to control that trade. Unfortunately for Union Pacific at that particular time they had this file to come through, the Weber and Echo Canyons which required tunneling and heavy grading. Some of the most difficult work on their route, meanwhile Central pacific had their easier part. They were coming apart the Humboldt Valley and the rolling deserts in Northern Utah. And so they actually were able to build about a mile of track per day while the UP was in some of its heaviest work.

Verdoia: You talk about being able to build a mile of track a day, can you tell a contemporary body of you know if you were talking to that classroom of school children what it was like to try to build a railroad back then? The sheer enormity of the construction effort, the hard work.

Johnson: Oh, well I think that it is almost as if we were building pyramids in the modern age. But we have to remember back in the 1860's there was very little power equipment. Just about the entire railroad had to be built with picks and shovels. The rock had to be blasted through with black powder sometimes nitro glycerin. The earth had to be shoveled a shovel full at a time and the one horse dump carts and moved out over the grade and so it literally took a multitude, a huge host to build a railroad almost 2000 miles long almost entirely with picks and shovels.

Verdoia: Maybe at this point it is important for you to draw the distinction because virtually all of the representation of the construction of the railroad seemed to involve the dropping of rails in place. And the driving of spikes and if that was the sum total of the construction effort was actually putting down the rail lines. But you pointed out to me that that perhaps an over emphasized part of the story of construction.

Johnson: Well that really is the smallest part of building a railroad. That is the part that comes along at the very end. In the time of the transcontinental railroad the men laying the grade were actually 100 to 200 miles beyond the end of track to do the heavy work of the tunneling and the bridging and the shoveling of the earth to construct the grade. So that would all be ready and in place when those track layers got there.

Verdoia: And you talked literally of thousands of people being at work. What were some of the challenges that they might face as they go across almost an untracked American west in some spots?

Johnson: Well, any kind of hand labor like that would be daunting but the supply effort was incredible. Because all of the material for the Union Pacific had to be brought over hundreds of miles of the vast desolate plains and of course to get the material into the hands of the graders you are talking 100 miles or so of wagon train beyond the end of track. For the Central Pacific people all the material, locomotives rolling, stock rails had to come across. The ocean on an ocean voyage of months to get to California before it could then be hauled across the Sierra. And so just the logistics were surely

daunting.

Verdoia: Speed and mileage. Every account of the Central Pacific or the Union Pacific makes repeated references to speed of the construction effort and that mileage was a premium. Why were these important?

Johnson: Well it had to do with the government acts that started the railroad. Each company received loans and government lands based on the miles of completed track they laid. And so the railroad it could build more miles of track, but of course reap the benefits of government subsidies and land and money.

Verdoia: So, when it came right down to it they were racing for money, but they were also in a way racing against each other, were they not?

Johnson: Well, when the railroads came close to Utah one of the few settled areas along the line of the railroads was the Salt Lake Valley. It was going to be one of the larger markets and the idea was for a particular railroad to build into and beyond that market so that it could set the rates going either direction. That way if Union Pacific could build out into the Nevada Desert they could freeze their Central Pacific competition out of that very valuable market.

Verdoia: Which, since we started talking about the Salt Lake market, let's talk about the markets most legendary figure at least during that era, Brigham Young. A man whose characterized many ways and attacked by his attitude towards the railroad. As you have studied the man and you studied the original documents what is your sense of the way Brigham Young viewed the coming of the railroad?

Johnson: Brigham Young and the Mormon hierarchy I'm sure viewed the railroad as a mixed blessing. It would bring in much of the problems they saw that came with the outside world, perhaps some of the corruption, the drinking and the gambling and those kinds of evil influences. But it would also make it quite possible to bring new converts to Utah territory at much lower expense, in a much shorter time. It would put Mormon markets in connection with the outside world so that they could export some of the goods that they produced in the territory. And so Brigham Young's challenge was to try and maximize the good the railroad could bring while creating social and economic programs that would mitigate the problems.

Verdoia: Viewed expectations of the rail line he clearly early on believed that the railroad was literally going to come to the capital city of Great Salt Lake City. How did the rail lines approach Brigham on this subject?

Johnson: Both railroad companies in 1868 decided that the preferred route would be around the north end of the Great Salt Lake and bypassing Salt Lake City. I think they left Brigham Young out of the loop as long as possible because they knew that would aggravate him. For Brigham Young it was disconcerting but it wasn't the end of the world. He was upset about it but he knew full well that the benefits of the railroad would still atrue to Salt Lake if he could build a branch line from his capital up to Ogden which he did within a years time of the railroads completion.

Verdoia: You talk about the rail lines being interested and not just in the markets of the Great Basin and Salt Lake Valley but also in the work force that was here and being important to their completion of the project. How did they view being able to take advantage of a Mormon work force?

Johnson: Well they were quite pleased to have a Mormon work force because these were people that were there in place, they were good workers, they were sober, they were industrious. Both railroads courted Brigham Young as a prime contractor and used thousands and thousands of Utahn's to build the railroad across Utah. It was a workforce that was in place, it was good and it was dependable.

Verdoia: You mentioned that both railroads employed these Mormon workers and that brings us to point of literally these workers working past one another. This notion of the transcontinental railroad almost lapping itself in a certain respect. How did that come about?

Johnson: Well it had to do with the government financing. Both railroads were trying to get as much money and land as possible for building track. The other things they were trying to keep their competition out of the Salt Lake Valley. By the time the railroad got to Promontory it was already clear that Union Pacific was going to build into and beyond the Salt Lake Valley. They were hoping to build enough track to stall Central Pacific out in the wilderness so they couldn't get in and get that trade. Central Pacific hoped to get close enough so that Union Pacific couldn't do that and so we have this phenomenon in northern Utah where both companies have their graders far flung out all the way from the mouth of the Weber River over to Wells, Nevada just playing this game of trying to bluff the competition.

Verdoia: And literally they were passing if you will within spitting distance of each other.

Johnson: Oh absolutely, you know one could chuck a rock at the other railroad grade. And I'm sure it was done.

Verdoia: How did this competition play out in areas very close to Promontory which became known as the big bill, big trust. It seems to play out in a very dramatic fashion the competition of competing grade.

Johnson: Well that is interesting because going across the same chasm in the Promontory Mountains, each railroad took a different engineering method of crossing. The Central Pacific arrived on that site earlier and so it had the manpower and the luxury of time to build a massive earthen fill that took three months to build. The Union Pacific arrived later at that chasm not having the time and the resources to build the fill which was the preferred way of crossing the chasm, they did something quick and dirty and they just built a large spindly wooden trestle bridge.

Verdoia: Now, I read accounts and I know you have read accounts of what the trestle was like to transit in a heavily laden rail train. For the average person who might find themselves on the train what kind of an experience must that have been?

Johnson: It would have been absolutely frightening. It was a narrow spindly bridge that was you know a hundred or so feet high, drop down immediately on either side, you would have felt like you were just standing on the side of a cliff as you looked out your car window.

Verdoia: One thing that a person who studies a map and the route of both the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific quickly, any observer quickly comes to understand is that the rail lines closely followed natural water ways. Why was water so important?

Johnson: Locomotives drank voracious amounts of water in the days of steam. Generally the railroad figured they needed to put a water tank about every 18 miles so that the locomotives could replenish

themselves. They might go anywhere to 20 to 40 miles without needing a drink, but the water had to be there and it had to be at regular and dependable intervals.

Verdoia: So how did that cause a difficulty when the water wasn't naturally available when they crossed a desert area. What would they have to do?

Johnson: Well, in the early days of the Central Pacific they built a fleet of huge water tanks on flat cars and when coming across the desert each locomotive not only had its own tender full of water, but pulled an entire flat car with a water tank on it to provide sufficient water. It took them months and months to bring the deep drilling equipment out to dig wells so that they would have those dependable water sources along the route.

Verdoia: You have already made reference to the competing companies passing each other in their grading work, but obviously we are nearing a time as we move in the early months of 1869 where these companies have raced far past each other perhaps overlapping by more than 100 miles even 200 miles. When is the line finally drawn, when does the company finally say enough is enough? How does that come about?

Johnson: Well, finally the government decided that there was enough of this foolishness and they brought (Colis P.) Huntington and General (Grenville) Dodge together in Washington DC and putting them in a room together said work it out. And the obvious choice was to divide the two ends of track roughly in two in that midpoint would be the completion point of the two railroads. And that completion point was Promontory Summit there at the crest of the Promontory Mountains.

Verdoia: You appropriately and with emphasis mentioned Promontory Summit. One of the great aspects that we have talked about many myths that endure about the completion of the transcontinental railroad is the notion that it was completed at Promontory Point. How did that ever come about?

Johnson: It is difficult to say because even in 1869 when newspaper reporters were covering the railroad they referred to the site as Promontory Summit, Promontory or wrongly as Promontory Point. And Promontory Point appeared in the New York Times and it seems to rule nicely off the tongue and so that seems to be the name that ended up in all the text books. Even though that is the wrong name.

Verdoia: The crew coming out of the east for the Union Pacific has earned a reputation as being a pretty hard working, hard drinking, hard fighting, carousing group. It seems that they bring their own little entourage right behind them in these construction camps as they move along. Can you tell me about hell on wheels?

Johnson: Well, the first hell on wheels was winter quarters in North Platte, Nebraska where the railroad camped for the winter. There were a lot of people with money and time on their hands and there were merchants and saloon keepers and people who ran gambling dens who were more than willing to liberate that money. And they were tough places. They were probably as tough as any of the seamy parts of the great American cities. Murder was not unknown, robbery was fairly common and these hell on wheels towns moved along with the grading gangs all across the line of the railroad. To a certain extent Utah avoided some of that but not entirely. Corinne was a rough camp and at the very end Promontory turned out to be kind of a rough place.

Verdoia: Let's consider the short-lived town of Promontory. Lets turn the clock back to the first days of May 1869. Central Pacific is getting close to being in place, Union Pacific is very close, everybody

knows that this is the designated point. If we were to go out on a morning early in May in 1869, take a look around at the place in Promontory, can you give us an idea of what we might see?

Johnson: The Promontory basin was a beautiful spot with rugged high mountains and kind of a nice place to frame this last great event. Just maybe a couple of tents, growing up the town didn't really spring up until the day of the ceremony. The day before on May 9th it was described as just about a half a dozen tents and rum holes. And there was no water there at the site and in fact there had been no settlement there during the building of the railroad because of that. And so Promontory literally rose up almost overnight before the Golden Spike Ceremony.

Verdoia: Let's discuss the notion of the Golden Spike ceremony. The established date was May 8th and from everything that I understand the Central Pacific was there and ready to complete the venture on May 8th, but the Union Pacific principle players were not. What happened?

Johnson: Well, Leland Stanford and his special excursion train arrived Friday, May 7th at Promontory and to their chagrin when they talked to the Union Pacific telegraph operator they found out the Union Pacific dignitaries were mysteriously detained. They would not be able to arrive until Monday the 10th. Well it turns out the Union Pacific vice president T. C. Durant was traveling to Piedmont, Wyoming to have some negotiations with irate subcontractors. Well, the contractors, subcontractors and workers didn't like the fact that Durant couldn't pay them off so they literally uncoupled his private car, pushed it onto a side track and chained it in place, pulled guns on the conductor and told him to move off down the line that Durant was kidnapped. Well, Durant got on the telegraph and telegraphed both east and west to see if moneys couldn't be sent out there. Eventually the ransom of $80,000 which was just a down payment on what was owed came and Durant wasn't turned loose until Saturday May 8th and he was able to go back to company offices at Echo City then. But they still couldn't get to the ceremony because between Echo City and Ogden there was a bridge at Devil's Gate that was half washed out and workers were furiously trying to shore it up and it wasn't until Sunday afternoon May 9th that they were able. Locomotives couldn't cross they were just able to push cars to roll across that and that is how Durant's private car with the dignitaries got over that gap, was that it was pushed by a locomotive and then rolled across Devil's Gate bridge and was finally picked up by the locomotive 119 that would take it to it's destiny the next day.

Verdoia: Which brings to mind the notion and the nature of the construction. Sometimes the attempt to gain mileage was so feverish was some of the construction slip shod in a desperate bid to get the rail down and log those miles as completed miles for the financial benefits?

Johnson: It was very much a temporary fix when they laid the original railroad. They fully believed that they would have to come along quickly and rebuild it and in fact by the mid 1870's the entire Union Pacific line had been relayed with new ties and new rails. It was a temporary railroad much as the railroad that had been built during the war torn areas of the Civil War. And in fact a lot of the construction and engineering expertise came right out of that US Military railroads effort of the Civil War period. And if you looked at pictures of the Civil War railroads and the Union Pacific the hand hewn ties, the uneven rail beds, it is very much the same.

Verdoia: That brings us to this morning of May 10th 1869. A moment that every American school child learns something about, but which seems to have gotten so wrapped up in shrouds of mystery or mythology that it is hard to really cut through and understand what happened. What was the nature of the event itself, the joining of the two railroads?

Johnson: In truth the actual event it was really ill planned. In fact there was almost no planning at all. This was a media event staged for the rest of the country and the people at Promontory got short shrift. The dignitaries arrived mid morning and General Dodge of the Union Pacific met with the master of ceremonies from California Edgar Mills. And for an hour and a half they tried to work out the program. And shortly before noon at the time the ceremony was supposed to take place it was still a logger head and General Dodge was threatening to hold his own ceremony, a separate ceremony for his railroad. We are not exactly sure what the trouble was but I believe it was an argument over who would actually pound the last spike. That Leland Stanford had turned the first spade full of earth from California and he and the Californians had felt that he should drive the last spike of the railroad. Well, I'm sure General Dodge felt that that didn't give the Union Pacific it's due. And so ultimately the compromise was reached just before the event took place at noon was that each railroad dignitary, Governor Stanford and vice president Durant would have their own iron spike and at a given signal from the telegrapher they would swing simultaneously.

Verdoia: So much is made of the Golden Spike, who drove a Golden Spike on that day?

Johnson: Well, nobody drove a Golden Spike, it would have turned into a squashed little nugget if you drove a Golden Spike. There is this great mythology that was perpetrated at the time and the press and continued by the historians and dignitaries who were there that the Golden Spike was pounded. Well if we read the sources closely we find out that an auger had been used to drill holes in the polished laurel wood tie and so those precious metal spikes were set in predrilled holes. And the last spikes that were actually pounded at the end of the ceremony were common iron spikes.

Verdoia: One of the stories that is told that when Stanford and Durant stepped forward to symbolically actually swing sledges and drive spikes they take up their positions, they swing and why don't you tell us what happened?

Johnson: Well, General Dodge in his reminiscences recalled that both Stanford and Durant missed their first blow at the spike and then they proceeded to tap lightly measured blows. Now one thinks that is rather humorous, you know that these people couldn't hit a railroad spike, but if you have ever used a spike maul, they have narrow little heads, and I venture to say Ken if you and I went out and tried to pound a spike, that we would have a miserable time trying to hit that thing.

Verdoia: So they step forward and as you pointed out to me there was rather a intricate plan set up so that the swinging of the hammer would actually send a signal electronically to the rest of the nation. What were they attempting to do by telegraphy to get the word out?

Johnson: Well, this was the idea of the man who donated the Golden Spike, David Hughes. His idea was that when Stanford struck the hammer it would be wired electrically to the telegraph lines so that that impulse would fire signal cannon all across the world. Well most cities found out that there were too many technical problems to use the cannons, so they wired it up to their alarm bells. Their fire alarm bells. But across the nation there was this telegraphic hook up and the various reporters in cities said there were anywhere from perhaps three to eleven blows.

Verdoia: When the word went out when the telegraph operators sent the word out it was one word. What did he say?

Johnson: Done. D-O-N-E, and that brought great celebration all across the country. In Philadelphia they lined up steam fire engines in front of Independence Hall, they blew the whistles, they rang the bell in

the tower. In Chicago they had 50 tugboats lined up on the lakeshore blowing their whistles and a massive procession. In New York there was one-hundred gun salute. You know there was just celebration all across the country. This was an event of national proportion that really, really excited the whole country was unifying the nation east to west. We were conquering the western wilderness, and also it was seen as the way of populating this great vast western country.

Verdoia: There is one person conspicuous in his absence and that is Brigham Young.

Johnson: Many people have speculated that Brigham Young still was upset about the railroad not coming through Salt Lake City. I am not one who subscribes to that. I think Brigham Young was a grown up and had long since gotten over that. But I also think that he felt he might not have been a major player at the ceremony and felt that his duties as President of the Church should take him elsewhere at that moment.

Verdoia: And that this wasn't the event of these people, and it was an event of outsiders, there would be ample enough opportunities for his people in the future?

Johnson: I think so. Brigham Young had an interesting relationship with the outside world. He dealt with the outside world but was very much a part of it. And I think staying away from the Golden Spike ceremony was a way of keeping that distance.

Verdoia: The great event is done. And then what happens? Here we've had this epic event, what happens to the workers, what happens to the railroad? I mean can you give us a sense of what the next chapter is after this, after this spike had been driven?

Johnson: Well, it is almost like waking up with a hangover after a great party because the problems of railroad construction started coming home to roost after the great party of completion. The Union Pacific was in tremendous debt having difficulty paying its bills and its contractors. There was still the wrangling over where the junction point would be and the purchase by Union Pacific of the track. Central Pacific's purchase of the track.

Union Pacific was tremendously cash starved having a difficult time paying off its contractors. Brigham Young the Mormons and others of their contractors they still had to arrange the selling of their trackage to the Central Pacific. That trackage from Promontory to Ogden, Ogden being the final junction point and Huntington knew that UP was cash starved and really forced them into a deal they didn't want to make, but they needed the money. And really there were all these problems. The nation settled down to the difficult task to building a new country in a wilderness and transcontinental railroading.

Verdoia: One thing you talked about when you mention Union Pacific as a company being cash starved and literally being seiged by creditors of every size. Brigham Young, Mormon contractors, but also many, many other people who felt that their contracts were never fulfilled by Union Pacific. Yet there are those people who became incredibly wealthy through their association with the Union Pacific effort. Can you help us understand Credit Mobilier from the standpoint as we said in the other room as trying to describe it to a very young mind?

Johnson: Well the Credit Mobilier was an interesting financial device. A way of making money off of the construction railroad while really milking the parent company dry. The builders of the Union Pacific soon realized that any money that was going to be made would be not on running the completed

railroad but on building the railroad. And they formed their own construction company called the Credit Mobilier issued all of the building contracts through the Credit Mobilier and Credit Mobilier vastly overcharged the railroad. And so they got their construction moneys up front leaving the parent company Union Pacific in a virtually bankrupt position. And so Union Pacific went along for decades unable to pay off its debts and Durant, Sidney Dillon, the other builders of the Union Pacific had already reaped huge profits in the 1860's.

Verdoia: This ultimately results in a major congressional investigation does it not?

Johnson: Shortly after the completion even at Promontory just months later the information starts to leak out in dribs and drabs about bribing of congressmen and government officials and the way that the builders of the Union Pacific had taken advantage of their government trust.

Verdoia: In the final days of the construction a record is set by laying more than ten miles in one day of laying track. Again this is something that took place right in the final stage of construction but when you think of the amount of work that went into it and the extraordinary distance towards time it is an incredible accomplishment, is it not?

Johnson: It is a feat in handling of rail that hasn't been matched to this day and everything had to be perfectly choreographed. And the rails had to be set up just so and the ties laid out and everything had to fall into place just so for this event to take place. They scheduled it one day in late April and a locomotive had broken a draw bar and so the whole event had to be called off until things could be set up again. And that day April 28th 1869 was the final day when the stars align and the everything happened the way it should.

Verdoia: Now this is a matter of pride between the two railroads because and official of Union Pacific has said we have set a record that will never be broken at six miles and whatever it was, and the Central Pacific deliberately made sure that the Union Pacific made note of this record that they made.

Johnson: Indeed and in fact it is interesting that Central Pacific waited to set this record when Union Pacific was bogged down in the east slope of the Promontory Mountains and would never have a chance to answer back. And they invited Union Pacific officials out to watch so that they would be sure that there was no hanky panky that the record had indeed been met. And one small crew of Irish track layers were actually the ones that physically picked up all the iron off of the cars and laid it down. It took an army of men hundreds and hundreds of men were part of that track laying to lay out the ties and ballast the track and everything and pound the spikes but it was actually a crew of about a half a dozen Irishmen that physically laid that ten miles of iron that one day.

Verdoia: The Chinese laborers for the Central Pacific Railroad are well-documented for their contribution to the construction. They are highly regarded for the work that they did and the challenging work that they did. And most reports consider them an admirable workforce. But right at the end, just prior to completion of the transcontinental railroad an incident flares in Utah that results what many are describing as a riot even a small-scale war between factions or clans. Can you recall that?

Johnson: Yeah, it is a perfect example of the old adage that idle hands are the devil's playground. It happened immediately after the rails had been laid just about to Promontory and a large Chinese crew was laid up at Camp Victory with little to do. They got into trouble basically over controversies between two clans from the old country. These were factions that had existed in the old country and

these various political or cultural factions flared up at Camp Victory. They grabbed shovels, there was just an out and out riot. Men beating each other to death and it finally took the Central Pacific executives, James Strobridge in particular, to wade into the middle with axe handles and pistols and to try and break this thing up and they finally responded to that. It stopped.

Verdoia: From your standpoint all the time that you have spent thinking about this, how does this railroad change this nation?

Johnson: Well the transcontinental railroad can be thought of as a catalyst. Something that vastly speeds up the pace of westward expansion. Just think that coming across the west immigrants moved as fast as a covered wagon would carry them, and suddenly we have a railroad bringing not only people at maybe 30, 40 miles an hour across the west but bringing in the kind of heavy machinery that is needed to develop the country. The mines, the mills the factories, the forests and able to take out those commodities and raw materials that we processed in the east. And so there is this great quantum leap forward in the pace of western expansion. And what is remarkable is the people that built the railroad had no idea that the frontier that they traversed would be filled up in a mere 25 years or so by the early 1890's the frontier is considered to be gone. And it is that first transcontinental railroad that speeds up the practice and makes it happen in such a short period of time.

Verdoia: The Utah Territory even in the 1860's benefits in the eyes of its organizers by a buffered isolation. Arguably less so in 1867 than is experienced 1847. But still to a degree is most isolated settled area in the nation. And that tune was changed because of the railroad. What are the consequences for the Utah Territory?

Johnson: Well for Utah there is a long period of tangling with the outside world both economically and socially. Brigham Young creates a number of institutions to mitigate the railroad and its ill effects. A number of them are economic to try and keep the economic power of the territory within the domain of the Mormon Church. Things like Zions Cooperative Mercantile Institute and the School of the Prophets so that the faithful will only deal with Mormon merchants and freeze the gentile businessmen out. That is one aspect of it. The other things, like the retrenchment era, the Relief Society, you know number of social programs in the church start to try and hold off the influences of the outside world that are coming in with the railroad. Mainly those are losing battles. The economic programs though they worked valiantly for 15, 20 years to maintain economic self-sufficiency in the territory it is ultimately a losing effort because the factories in the east and west can produce finished goods much cheaper than Mormons in the Great Basin. But it is a valiant effort, everything from trying to maintain their own silk industry to building their own wagons and agricultural machinery. There is really an attempt to maintain economic self-sufficiency even in the face of the railroad and cheap goods it brings in.

Verdoia: Obviously when anyone invests their time in a subject they are drawn to that subject for certain reasons can you speak uniquely to that? What has brought you, why do you find this notion of the transcontinental railroad its construction and completion so compelling?

Johnson: I think it is the quintessential American story. You look back at the 19th century, the gilded age. This is so representative of that period. You have you know, technical triumph, you have thousands of men from all walks of life coming together to build this. You have exploitation, you have greed, you have corruption and yet you have great heroism and noble purpose all wrapped up into the same thing. And it is a great accomplishment and one that tells of the American character. I never cease to fascinate in that.

David Haward Bain
David Haward Bain is the author of Empire Express: Building the First Transcontinental Railroad. A New York Times bestseller, Empire Express has been heralded as the definitive examination of the forces behind the epic construction project that linked the nation coast-to-coast in 1869. Bain was interviewed by Promontory Producer Ken Verdoia in Middlebury, Vermont, where Bain is on the faculty of Middlebury College and directs the Breadloaf Writer's project.

David Haward Bain courtesy cspan.org

Bain: When you think about the far west as it was then, it was a vast empty space across which tens of thousands of people had mostly walked to get where they finally ended up. And so the notion of making any of that trip shorter was something that people just, they would have died for that.

Verdoia: And that would lead us to motive behind a transcontinental railroad. Because there seems to be many different motives. Can you help us understand these?

Bain: Everybody wanted the railroad to succeed, virtually everybody. I mean, from a business standpoint, the idea of being able to get raw materials in to get your products moved out quickly, from the personal point of view, virtually everybody in the west who was an adult had come from somewhere else. And just the idea of being closer, that much closer to family and friends back wherever they were in the east or in Europe, was something that they just had to have. The notion of isolation, as it was, in the far west at that time, was just a soul punishing thing.

Verdoia: Did the concept of the bonding of a nation, here we are in the years immediately after the Civil War. Certainly, the Pacific Railroad Act had been passed before, but in years following the Civil War, we see offered to the public many times that this will bind our nation together. But in a practical sense, was that one of the nation's motivating factors?

Bain: The railroad was definitely of a military necessity. We have to remember that it was virtually born in the midst of warfare. And therefore, with President Lincoln saying that we had to keep the west from leaving the union, the railroad became that much more important to everybody. And that gave them one of the largest, really impelling motions toward getting it done.

Verdoia: How would you consider these two moving forces of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific? And let's begin with the east coming to the west, the army of the Union Pacific. Who were these men who forged this iron bond?

Bain: Well the war was still raging when the railroad started in 1863, but there were large numbers of people who were coming from Europe from the cities, and then of course, as the war wound down and ended, all of these people needed jobs. And here was a good way to get a good daily wage and food and maybe some chance at bettering yourself. And so therefore, for the Union Pacific, running from Omaha westward toward the unknown middle, 10- or 12,000 people came on board. And many of them were

former soldiers, many of them spoke very little English because they had just gotten of the boat in New York or Baltimore, and then out to the first available job that they could find.

Verdoia: Very different circumstances with the workforce of the Central Pacific, which starts with an "American Workforce," or an Anglo- or a white workforce. But then changes, almost early on.

Bain: Very early on with the Central Pacific Railroad, there was a small American workforce, but you have to remember that they were in direct competition with the mining industry that was going on. And so for most of the people who were in California, why should they work for $30 or $35 a month when they could go up in some frigid stream in the Sierra Nevada, or maybe they could go over to the Comstock District in Nevada, and maybe they would strike it rich. So it was very hard to keep the labor force filled with the Californians. And so that's why they had to go and start to hire Chinese.

Verdoia: And how aggressively did they pursue a Chinese labor force? The process of bringing these workers, were they pre-existing workers in the state of California, or did they have to actively recruit them?

Bain: There were thousands of Chinese who had been left over from the Gold Rush, and they had either continued with gold mining, or else they'd taken menial jobs in the cities and towns of California. And there was an active effort to get them on board with the Central Pacific. And there were handbills that were sent out in Chinese, there were companies that were formed to go down to San Francisco and bring in as many as they could. And they hired so many, and they proved to be such workers, that they finally had to be imported from China.

Verdoia: Let's consider now the nature of the work, it was different work forces did. In the 21st century we watch one man in a large piece of machinery grade miles at a time all by himself. So this is not the nature of the labor in the mid 19th century.

Bain: Right.

Verdoia: Help an audience understand the grueling nature of the labor that went into grading the main track.

Bain: When you think about the labor that was done in California and Nevada and Utah and Wyoming, especially, and how primitive a level it was. This was the kind of work that was done with the pick ax and a shovel and some very primitive blasting powder, and was mostly moved by hand. The rock was moved by hand, the earth was moved by hand, there were many injuries.

Verdoia: The notion of injuries, that people were injured. They were pretty much on their own if they were injured.

Bain: Pretty much so, sure. I mean, it wasn't as if there were any kind of workmen's comp or anything like that. People would be injured, if they could continue to work then they would be able to work. They could bandage stuff and then keep on going. If they happened to die on the road, they were buried alongside the road, and that was it.

Verdoia: Based on your research, how would you characterize the Utah territory in the years prior to the coming of the railroad? Across the spectrum, economically, socially, politically?

Bain: I like to visualize what Utah was like, say, in the 1850s and the early 1860s as being somewhat behind what was going on in the rest of the eastern United States, for instance. These were still false front towns. These were still towns of hand made houses, some out of adobe, some out of whatever wood was available. There were factories going up, but they were small factories. There was some trade going on, but it was dependent on wagons coming in from somewhere else. And there were shortages, there were constant shortages, and almost all labor was done by hand.

Verdoia: There is also a sense if anyone considers that region at that time, it almost embodied a sense of isolation. Is that legitimate in your eyes?

Bain: The sense of isolation in Utah was profound. I mean, so many of the adults had walked there pushing handcarts or maybe in wagons. Their children had never seen any other kind of a place. Newspapers were few and far between, mail was always late, and there was that sense of being despised and hated by and distrusted by the outside world, and all of these things would have just increased that sense of isolation, and of not being understood, and not really being wanted. And you put all of these people on the edge of the Great Salt Lake doing the best they can to build their farms, to plant their orchards, to dig their irrigation ditches to survive against grasshoppers, against unfriendly army incursions and the insults of passers by. And that sense of being out there all by themselves in the middle of that unfriendly terrain, as it was then, is quite an amazing thing to contemplate.

Verdoia: Which leads me to wonder what the driving forces of the various railroad enterprises, how they would view this Utah territory, and really its central figure. This larger than life figure of Brigham Young, who used to dominate so much of the social and cultural feel of Utah. Union Pacific, driving towards Utah, irony of all ironies, how did they perceive the Utah territory and Brigham Young?

Bain: Well, this was a terrain that had to be crossed, they weren't thinking in terms of any kind of a crossroads, they weren't thinking about any commercial traffic to be had to the north or to the south of Utah. This was a place they had to get through, and the idea of working with someone like Brigham Young was a necessity. I found no scintilla of evidence that the people in the high levels of the Union Pacific respected Brigham Young as a person or as a business man, but he was the man that they had to deal with. There was one man in the Union Pacific, Samuel Reed, who was the construction engineer for the Union Pacific, and he seemed to get along with Young just fine, spent a lot of time with him, took the time with diplomacy, and really made it possible for the understandings that were done between the Union Pacific and the Mormons.

Verdoia: And as we've discussed, we have these two railroad enterprises, literally, that have been building with their own army workers. As they neared Utah you'd see both of these entities turn to Utah to provide additional workforce. Since they had done so well up to that point, why would they turn to Utah workers?

Bain: Everything in this railroad story was a race, and the most intense competition that one can imagine was going on, and if you look at what Utah represented to them in 1868, for instance, you see the Union Pacific badly wanting for cash, having government scrutiny for the first time, all sorts of problems, keeping the work going. With the Central Pacific you have the same problem. And still they had to meet somehow, somewhere in the west. And they just did not have the man power, they could not extend their supply lines so far as to leapfrog entire legions of workers to start doing the grading and the cutting and the tunneling that was necessary in Utah. So they really had to turn to Young in order to get the job done.

Verdoia: And here we have Brigham Young, who as early as the 1850s is campaigning for a railroad to serve the west, and the Salt Lake Valley. It was of essential importance to Brigham Young that the railroad come to Salt Lake City.

Bain: The decision was made for engineering reasons, the decision not to go around the south of the lake. For the technology they had then, for the money that they had then, it really seems if going north through the Promontory Mountains was the best way that was possible at the time. And I'm really confident that Young originally did want the railroad to go through Salt Lake City. I think that he felt confident that he could have contained any of the outside influences that might have done damage to his political control, or to the safety of the Latter-day Saints. I think that he felt that he could have handled all that. And so when it was finally announced to him, August of 1868, as a fact, that the railroads were not going to go through Salt Lake City, as he had been led to believe for some years, I think it was a shock. But it was a shock that he had to hide because of his position. And the notion of trying to make the best of a bad thing became the thing to do.

Verdoia: What would come with the railroad? Certainly money, but also outside influences on what had been an isolated society. So do you have a sense of Young struggling with this good news/bad news aspect of the coming of the railroad?

Bain: At the time, in 1868 and 1869, when the railroad was really approaching, when it was within 300 miles of Salt Lake City, you have to look at what the Saints had been living through there in the Utah Valley at that point. They'd had three years of drought, they'd had at least two summers of either grasshoppers or locusts; they were really strapped for cash; they were really strapped for food, they had their seed stores that they could use for more plantings, but it was really a question of just how they were going to make it through. And so just the notion of these loud, busy work gangs coming through, spending cash, the idea that there might be work to be had, was something that was tremendously magnetic to Young. And one cannot underscore how important it was to him and to his people that that railroad come in, and that they avail themselves however possible, of making some money off of it, because there weren't many alternatives at that time.

Verdoia: And the positive aspects for Brigham Young, personally?

Bain: Well, certainly, yes, that's important. With these benefits of the cash coming in, of the economic power that Young could reap from this for his people, it became acceptable, the fact that these outsiders were coming in with their licentious behavior, their rowdiness, all of the advertised things that had been showing up in the Deseret News about things going on in the Wyoming railroad towns, for instance. The notion of the outside coming in and possibly being more threats to the kingdom, all these things had to be taken for granted and just try to put one foot in front of the other and make it through.

Verdoia: This might be a good time to consider the notion of just exactly what did follow in the wake of the railroad work gangs. Specifically, men with money, out there in the middle of nowhere, and civilization, if you will, seemed to follow right behind them, both for good and for the more rambunctious types of human nature. Help me understand the notion of hell on wheels.

Bain: Think of 10,000 men with cash in their pockets, and six days of hard work behind them. And think of most of these men being uneducated, a lot of former veterans who had seen how much hell was war at that point. A lot of them former soldiers, they'd seen the wild life, they'd seen the hell of war, and they were working six days a week, and of course they were going to want to blow off some steam. . .

You have all these soldiers who are out there, ex-soldiers and rough workers, a lot of them uneducated. And of course they're going to have to blow off steam. And during the war, of course military commanders would have tried to keep under control the notion of the camp followers, the prostitutes, the gambling dens and everything. But this was out without any kind of military control. You had an army, but you had no real commanders. And no sense of what do these people do when they have their time off. And so of course the camp followers poured in, and the notion of a hell on wheels town where, as the railroad track moved on, all of the purveyors, the saloon owners, and the gambling den owners, the whiskey ranches, as they were called, would just pack up, and they'd be put on flat cars and sent off to the end of track again. That's where the notion of hell on wheels came from. And it was a place where there was a saying, "Every morning required a man for breakfast." With all of the muggings and the shootings and everything that you've seen in the wild west movies happened in those hell on wheels town, only it was worse.

Verdoia: Brigham Young signs a contract, first with the Union Pacific. We're going to provide the grading, the work force. You need workers, we can provide workers. How did Brigham Young organize the effort?

Bain: Well, Brigham Young, the first effort that was given to the Mormons was the work down through Weber and Echo canyons. It was grading and scraping, the tunneling work was given to them later. And he, Brigham Young, subcontracted to his son Joseph, and also to Bishop John Sharp. And the way that they organized it was to take advantage of the different congregations in the little towns up through the canyons. And so it was done through a community and a church organization, and all of the farmers who really had absolutely nothing to do, at that point, because of the fact that they'd lost all of their crops, just poured down from the hillsides to take advantage of this. Bringing their plows, bringing their teams of horses, and ready to show up for a good day's work.

Verdoia: They were, in fact, called from the pulpit.

Bain: Absolutely. You also have to remember something that was going on politically at that time, because just before that, the federal government had enacted an anti-bigamy law, and there was a lot more in that act than something having to do with how many wives a man could take, because there were also things about enjoining the Church from getting involved in commercial businesses and everything. So therefore, it was really important for Young at that time to make sure that his name personally, was at the head of that list, so there could be no mistaking on the part of the federal government, the federal authorities, of the fact that the LDS was getting involved in the railroad. And so therefore there was always a personal face on things.

Verdoia: For all of the optimism associated with the coming of the railroad, very quickly there is a realization that the railroad companies themselves are in deep financial trouble. When the financial difficulties of the Union Pacific railroad start to surface, what was the underlying cause?

Bain: Financial difficulties were plaguing the Union Pacific railroad from the day that it was incorporated in September of 1862. And it never left. By the time we get to 1868 and 1869, as the railroad is about to enter into Utah territory, the Union Pacific is basically completely cash strapped. The only asset that it has is its own railroad, and its rolling stock, and the amount of work that is already been done, and the promise for the future. Banks were ready to foreclose, loans were taken out to pay other loans, I mean the whole thing could have collapsed under the right circumstances. So it was just something that needed a lot of prayer and daring in order to just get finished.

Verdoia: And there are some people that have read this, that somehow the Mormon workers were uniquely targeted for the neglect of the Union Pacific when it came to the payment of bills. But you seem to think that is not the case.

Bain: People all the way across the length of the railroad were being left out in the cold as far as their payments go. The Omaha office of the Union Pacific was besieged by contractors' bills piling up toward the ceiling in 1868 and 1869. The same with the Central Pacific, but more so with the Union Pacific. They were the real distressed entity at that point. And so you had tie contractors, you had grading contractors, all of these subcontracting people, the suppliers, bridge builders, everyone was begging to be paid. Everyone was at least two months in arrears at this point. And the alarm bells were going off all over the place.

Verdoia: You've talked about the race, the speed, the need for each company to rack-up mileage. Why were mileage and speed at a premium. . .why were they so important?

Bain: When they began the whole notion of this transcontinental railroad to be build by these two entities, the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific, this sense of crazy, unbridled competition wasn't built into the thing. But because there weren't enough safeguards, because there weren't enough times and dates and rates put in for the whole bargain, it soon became that. And of course, everybody had their eye on something else, on some extra bit of money to be taken out of it. For Collis Huntington of the Central Pacific railroad, he was salivating over the coal beds in the Wasatch mountains, and so it was imperative, even though his railroaders at that point were just in central Nevada, he just pressed them on. "You've got to get at least to Ogden; you've got to get us a line up into Weber Canyon so we can get that coal. We can't just be earning trees from the Sierra Nevada for the rest of our lives. We really have to get some side industries going."

And for people like Thomas Durant of the Union Pacific, he was thinking about, perhaps, building as far as the Pacific, for heaven's sake, and he was thinking about the trade routes that were available through Nevada with all of the silver rushes that were going on. And so they were really, really meaning, almost to pass one another, such was their greed and their need at that point to survive.

Verdoia: And that starts to manifest itself concretely in the Utah territory. Survey and grading literally routes alongside and over each other. Can you describe what that was like?

Bain: Well, if you think about what the canyons are like in Echo and Weber, for instance, they are very narrow, they're very twisty, and it was very hard for even two engineers to even stand shoulder to shoulder in some places. And so, of course, the Union Pacific stakes went down both of those canyons toward Ogden. The Central Pacific had sent its surveyors ahead, and so they had laid out pretty much from the mouth of Weber Canyon up into the Promontory mountains and then all the way over to the Nevada border at Humboldt Wells. And the whole idea seems to be in their minds that whoever got the final okay for the trackage would get the money. And so it didn't matter if they graded extraneously, if their survey stakes were within inches of one another, even if they laid their railroad track over the top of the tracks of the other company, it didn't matter until they got the final go ahead from the federal government. And then they would collect all those bonds, and then they would collect all of that money. And so, therefore, you had that parallel grading that was going on.

Verdoia: There were some recollections offered many years after the completion, that this competition, this grading, actually lead to violence in the Utah territory. The allegations of rival work gangs attempting to blow up each other. I hope you might be able to set that straight.

Bain: Most of the accounts that you read about these episodes of violence between the Chinese and the Irish workers are completely fabricated by people writing a long time after it. I went laboriously through all the original letters and diaries and telegrams and local newspapers that were published, and I found not a scintilla of evidence of first hand evidence, that anything like that had happened. The other thing that one has to remember is, is that the Chinese hardly ever got into Utah territory. They got as far as Promontory, the Promontory Mountains, but they came no further. The Irish who were grading were coming down through Echo and Weber Canyon. Mostly we have Mormon subcontractors who work for Bishop Sharp and Young, and also for Farr and West. And it sounds like a band, doesn't it? So the thing that people forget in this, is that most of the workers who were busy in Utah were Mormons. And there was no reason for them to blow each other up. That kind of competition didn't exist. The only kind of story that you read about these sorts of things is really from the pens of people who really didn't do the research. And it really, just really didn't happen that way.

There's this point where Benson, Farr, and West, are working their subcontracting crews against that terrible dry desert of northern Utah, from the Nevada border to the Promontory Mountains. And you have Sharp and Young moving their contractors down through the valleys, and the canyons, and beginning to get into tunnel work. And there's a moment where Brigham Young accepts a contract, of course, and subcontracts it out, from the Union Pacific, to grade up past Ogden, toward the Promontory Mountains. And then the Central Pacific people come in, and they say, "Well, can you give us a contract too?" And all of a sudden, Young is presented with the delightful idea of playing one off against the other, and collecting money from both sides. And so yes, so he accepted it, and so therefore he could have two crews working doing two different lines of work up toward the Promontories. And if he'd actually gotten paid for that work, that would have been doubly delicious, I think.

Verdoia: Describe for someone who's not been there, this notion of the work that would have been taken place in those foothills of Promontory.

Bain: Well, you look in the foothills of Promontory, and you look down on the valley floor, and you see those two different grades going up there. And all of the rock work that was necessary, all the expensive rock work. And you think of that extraordinary waste of personnel and energy, and how much in a rush those people must have been. But it was actually more desperate than that, because within the Union Pacific there was tremendous amount of dissension, among the engineers. And so you had the lines that were laid down by the chief engineer Grenville Dodge, which went up in a good fashion up the approach of the Promontory Mountains toward Promontory Summit. But then you have someone like Silas Seymour who was the consulting engineer, who went and changed all of the grades whenever Dodge's back was turned, and ordered the railroad into nonsensical curves because, after all, they were being paid by the mile, so if they put in more miles, and cheaper bridges, and steeper grades, the Union Pacific would collect more money for it. And so there was a tremendous chaos going on from about December of 1868 to March or April of 1869, just an extraordinary confusion going on.

Verdoia: Your book indicates that dissension was an on-going, internal struggle during construction of the railroad.

Bain: Dissension was really the thing that almost killed everything at that point, because there were so many different warring interests in the Union Pacific, for instance. And there was such a sense of trying to get as much for "me" as I can, there was just this sense of, really, everybody being in for themselves. And they saw that the end was coming, the railroad would be finished after a time, and that sense of just trying to get as much money out of the enterprise as possible, became important to everybody.

Conductors were stealing from their passengers, freight agents were stealing from the railroad, and probably lifting a few pieces of boxes out of the freight cars. Contractors were grading bad grades so that the railroads could just slide right off of them. Bridge builders were putting in bridge footings with ordinary rubble and dirt behind a facing that looked very solid, and as soon as it started to rain the bridges started to crumble. It was just a disastrous kind of a period back then.

Verdoia: We've talked about the competition of them actually working past each other. Clearly it comes to a head, and it almost becomes like a super power negotiation back in Washington. Can you help us understand what was at issue and how that negotiation played?

Bain: The negotiation to decide where the railroads would meet had been going on, mostly ending in people shouting at one another and slamming doors and leaving, for quite some time. Finally it got to the point, in February of 1869, when Collis Huntington who was in Washington, and Grunville Dodge, the chief engineer of the railroad, had come to Washington to see what he could do to get this thing solved. When they realized that if they didn't come up with a meeting point themselves, the government was going to pass some really quick and dirty legislation, and make the decision for them. And they really saw that as being the first of several shoes to drop as far as the Union Pacific's future was concerned, and the Central Pacific. So they finally met in February of 1869, at the house of congressman Samuel Hooper, who had wisely invested in both railroads and in the construction arm of the Union Pacific. And they finally decided that they would meet in the Promontory Mountains at Promontory Summit, and that the Central Pacific would buy the Union Pacific trackage and grading work down to the town of Ogden. And then Ogden would become the central meeting point.

Verdoia: Was this a hard negotiation?

Bain: This was a very hard negotiation, and neither side wanted to give any kind of quarter to this whole thing. And they had their ideas about what they wanted to do and there were secrets. And you think about what Dodge, what was on the mind, you think about what was on the minds of Dodge and Huntington as they were coming to that decision. And for Huntington, he had another agenda. He wanted to seize economic control of Utah for himself and his company and his secret plan was to build a new metropolis 5 miles north of Ogden and that would become the terminus for the two railroads and he would be able to wrest control of the trails of the freight traffic and everything away from Salt Lake City and really allow them to wither on the vine and this was something that he actively pursued with Leland Stanford who was at work in Salt Lake City at that point with his other people and the cables went back to Huntington I'm sorry there's no water between Ogden and somewhere well into Nevada and he still really was thinking about this idea of this metropolis which he would call Centralia and so that's why they came to that kind of strange, intriguing decision about how everything would be done. The Central Pacific would buy the Union Pacific trackage from Promontory summit down to file miles above Ogden City and they would lease for 999 the extra miles down into the center of Ogden. And the reason they did that was because Huntington planned for his city to be north of Ogden and that would take all the control away from Salt Lake City and Ogden.

Verdoia: The compromise, the negotiation they reached dictates that the two rail lines will be joined at Promontory on May 8th, 1869. May 8 does not happen. Why?

Bain: May 8 does not happen because they were building bridges through Weber Canyon so quickly, that they didn't really pay attention to the fact that this was springtime, and the freshets were blooming, and so several of the supports that were holding up on of the bridges in the lower Weber Canyon were washed away. So all the sudden, the track was broken and there was no way for all of the celebrants to

get to the May 8 celebration. And so they had to postpone it for two days.

Verdoia: Terribly embarrassing, I would imagine, for the Union Pacific?

Bain: I should think so, although I should think it would be very embarrassing for them. The fact is is that they had been presented with snowstorms, with all sorts of interruptions in traffic. I mean, everything had been one disaster after another for them in this, so I'm sure that they were just thinking in terms of, "We've just got to get to this ceremony; we've just got to get this completed before all hell breaks loose."

Bain: Not only were they having trouble with the bridge in lower Weber Canyon, but then the vice president of the Union Pacific, Thomas Durant, the grand puppeteer behind everything, is kidnapped by his own men because they are two months without any pay. And so in the town of Piedmont, Wyoming, his train was all of a sudden put onto a siding, and masked men got onto the train and hustled him off. And they were told that they would not get their vice president back until all of their back pay had been put in. Caused a tremendous uproar in the Union Pacific director in Boston and New York, and they even tried to send the army in. But the telegraph operator who took those messages that were being sent off to the US Army, just tore up the paper and threw it away because he was on the side of the union men who wanted their money.

Verdoia: Now let's go to the day of May 10.

Bain: One might think of the celebration on May 10 as being anti-climactic in that there were perhaps 1500 people there, there were a couple of territorial governors, but there weren't any really huge dignitaries or famous people there. You basically had a lot of very, very tired people showing up in order to listen to some speeches and pound down some rail and drink some champagne, eat some oysters, and then go home and go to sleep for a year.

Verdoia: One of the people quite noticeable in his absence, Brigham Young. Here is a man who, for 20 years, nothing of note had happened in that territory, without his presence or commanding figure casting a shadow. And he says, "Thanks, but no thanks." Have you been able to figure that?

Bain: I have been trying to figure out Brigham Young's thoughts as far as the May 10 celebration for a long time. And number one, he was not present when the train came into Ogden, and he was not present at this supposedly national celebration up in the mountains. And there were some other governors there. So it isn't as if he would've been the most important personage there. And I think, really, the reason that Young did not go there, he just said basically that he was going south to visit some of the far-flung settlements. I think the reason that he didn't go was a smart one, because this celebration was not in any local control. And if Young had gone up there and been snubbed, the way that he'd been snubbed by many of the Union Pacific people over the past months, it would have been very embarrassing to him politically among his own people. And so I think he did the right thing by not going, because if they had been able to do what they'd done in Ogden where it was a local community celebration, and the railroaders come in and there are a lot of speeches and everything, I think that would have been a politic place for Young to have appeared. But there was so much that was going on that was chaotic, that was out of control, I think he was making a very smart political decision by being absent.

Verdoia: There were people who thought this was, as you say, a momentous event, commanded their attention. The telegraphic lines send out the word that the final spike is driven in; we are done praying, it is done, it's happened. How did the nation react?

Bain: You think about the 1500 people who were there in the high desert in northern Utah, and the final spike is tapped, the telegrapher sends out the message east and west, it is done, and then simultaneously a cannon looking over the Pacific and a cannon looking over the Atlantic boom out the notice to the world. Tens of thousands of people in Chicago and San Francisco and Sacramento and Washington, D.C. and New York, and all of the major towns and small towns erupt into a wild tumult of celebration. The church bells are rung; fire bells are rung. Congregations meet to pray their thanks over this great thing. And you get that sense of simultaneous action that must have happened at that moment, and the amount of energy that just went up from North America at that moment, is quite amazing. I mean, it would have buried the needle on the Richter Scale, I think.

Verdoia: But, even before the celebration has finished, there must be significant concern in the mind of Brigham Young. Young is very, very concerned that he's not getting paid. He can't pay his subcontractors, and they can't pay their laborers, and there's this real sense that all that was envisioned, over $2 million of greenbacks flowing into Utah territory, not flowing the way they thought it was.

Bain: Brigham Young had to be thinking about the amount of money that was owed to his people at that point when they were doing all of the celebrating, because there were still a lot of bills that hadn't been paid. He would have known, through the newspapers, through his operatives in the western towns, the fact that there were just hoards and hoards of people who were not being paid. Banks about to fail across the west, even as far away as New York, because of the amount of paper that they were carrying. The number of IOUs that they had from the Union Pacific railroad, and there was still a lot of money to be paid. And so I'm sure that that sense of urgency, "Okay, let's get over with the formalities of this celebration so where's my money?"

Verdoia: As Brigham Young is worrying about payment for his workers, the nation is just being introduced to the inner workings of an entity known as the Credit Mobilier, and its part in the railroad. How can we explain this complex, and arguably corrupt, Credit Mobilier?

Bain: You have to remember that when you're building a railroad, the normal way that you would be getting any profit would be when you finish the thing and when you get freight trains and passenger trains, and you start getting in receipts. There's a certain amount of money that you can make from selling land on either side of the railroad, there's a certain amount of money that you might make if you spot a place where there's a coal scene, or there's an iron scene, or maybe there's gold to be had. There are ways to make money that way. But the brilliance of what happened with the Union Pacific, and it's kind of a diabolical brilliance, is that Thomas Durant, the UP vice president, realized that you don't actually have to finish the railroad in order to make big money. And the way that he did that was to form a construction arm, a completely separate entity, which was called the Credit Mobilier of America, after a French corporation that had done the same in France. And so basically what you would do would be you would set up a dummy corporation, and you would pay yourselves to build the railroad. So if you've got $50,000 for a mile for construction and it actually cost $35,000 then you would be pocketing that difference per mile. And if you could find ways to inflate the costs, then you would do that. And you could declare dividends whenever you could get away with it, and walk away with cash in your pocket.

Verdoia: Did this become a national scandal?

Bain: It was a tremendous national scandal. What happened was is that during the Grant reelection campaign, in 1872, a rival newspaper who was backing Horace Greely as the democratic candidate,

found out about this old trial that had been fought in Pennsylvania involving this strange sounding corporation, and several of the people who had fallen out with one another over not getting enough of the spoils, and so went ahead and went public with the announcement. So the whole thing was trotted out again, but to a wildly interested America at this point. And so all of the anti-Grant press brought it out, there were congressional inquiries that ultimately touched congressmen and a senator and a vice presidential candidate and a sitting vice president. And these were all people who had approached the Union Pacific and said, "Sell me some of your securities at a discount. Lend me the money to buy your securities, and things will go easier for you in congress."

Verdoia: Which is telling, because both the Central Pacific and Union Pacific demonstrate ample familiarity with the way the political game is played back then.

Bain: Payoffs were the norm back then, I mean that doesn't excuse it, but the fact is that a government inspector, as much as a poultry inspector, for heaven's sake, demanded a bribe before sending in a favorable report. Congressmen actively demanded support.

Everyone was on the take back then. Government inspectors, poultry inspectors, for that matter, congressmen demanded money for legislation, it was just the way things were. My theory is that this was right after the Civil War, there had been murderous, murderous headlines for years and years and years. The emotional toll, the physical toll on the United States at that point is something that's hard for us to understand in these modern times. And everybody was touched in some way, personally, by the Civil War. And this notion of what happened in the gilded age, the fact that there were suddenly, America is back in business. Now it's time for us to real life. The sense of entitlement that people had, that it was their time to make some real money. It was their time to get back to business. It just permeated every level of society. And it's not surprising at all that the railroad scandals of the 1870s came forth. This was in the air back then, and one can fault people like congressman Oaks Ames of the Union Pacific railroad, for what he did to his colleagues. But the fact is, is that as soon as he became evident on the house floor, he was just surrounded. And it was like a feeding frenzy.

Verdoia: And, I guess one of the things that I ended up with a blue-green image, people profiting, but what happened to those people who had all those unpaid bills, those Mormon workers who were waiting for six months, nine months, a year? What happened to them in the wake of the Union Pacific?

Bain: At the point when the golden spike was driven in May of 1869, Benson, Farr, and West still were owed about $1 million, Sharp & Young were still owed about $1 million, and this was money that was not owed to these people personally; but this was owed to their subcontractors down to the level of the farmer who had given up his home life for three or four months and gone out to live in tent cities with his brethren, and had worked like a dog for months and months and months to help get this railroad done. And there was no cash that was coming from that. And this was just a tremendous shock to Utah, and we find by the summer of 1869, we find the territory just thrown out onto the barter system because there was no cash. And there was really no way to be seen out of that, out of that particular hole.

And then, what where they able to get? Chauncey West is an example. And the interesting thing that not a lot of people realize when Chauncey West died in San Francisco, that was the day where the Utah Central opened, had its big ceremony. Well, in January 1870, so that's a tremendous; you have a celebration on one side, and then you have, almost, a martyrdom, of this important bishop who had gone to San Francisco, pursued Leland Stanford to try to get some money for his people, and dies at the age of 43.

Bain: You have the firm of Benson, Farr, and West, who had agreed to grade between Humboldt Wells in Nevada, all the way up into the Promontory Mountains. And basically, Chauncey West was the youngest man. He was in his early 40s at that point, and he really took the brunt of the work, the supervision, he went out on the road, he made sure that all of his people were working, and made all of the arrangements. And got himself into some real hot water financially, when people were asking to be paid and he still had not been paid by the Central Pacific, he advanced his own money. And so he was virtually ruined by this whole thing with the railroad, on a personal standpoint. And you have this tragic story of him trying to get this money back so that he could pay his people, and somehow realize something out of it. And pursuing Leland Stanford to San Francisco, trying to get this million dollars that was owed, to all of these people, and dying. Just collapsing from all of the stress and the strain at the age of 43, with his immensely large family left destitute from that. And the money, the little money that they did acquire from the Central Pacific went, basically, to satisfy the lowest of the subcontractors, and in fact, all of the rest of the West money, was taken by this, too. So they were sued in numerable courts, and the family was just really destroyed economically by this. This was something that his children remembered for many years.

Verdoia: You mentioned that there was an aspect of indication of Brigham Young, that he finally negotiated, of he represented negotiation, that if not paid, then we'll take an alternative. What's the alternative?

Bain: Well, there was very little alternative. I mean, the cash would have been most important. I remember that Bishop Sharp and Joseph Young went to Boston, they went all the way to Boston trying to get this money, and they were laughed out of the boardroom by Durant and the Ames brothers. They were owed something like $1.2 million, and they were offered $700,000, and they wouldn't take it. At one point, one of the board members threatened Young that he was going to have the army descend upon Utah and take out the LDS command. And Young replied that he would go to the courts, and he said, "If it's necessary, then this will be a fight to the knife." So they were really feeling this, they were really feeling this urgency. And then, so finally, Young was the one who came up with the idea of using some of this railroad material that had been left, stacked along in the valleys, unused by the Union Pacific, that maybe he could use that to build his railroad, his railroad, from Salt Lake City up to Ogden, the Utah Central. And so they went back to Boston and made that proposition. And so, yes, some of the money that was owed them was taken out in ties and railroad iron and rolling stock. And that made the possibility of the Utah Central being built in a mere six months, possible.

Verdoia: Help me understand the role and the change, if you will, of Bishop John Sharp.

Bain: Bishop John Sharp goes to Boston trying to enact some kind of payment, some kind of cash payment. And the UP directorship says, "Well, if you go back, we know we owe you $1.2 million, but go back to Young and ask if he'll take $700,000, and we'll just call it quits." And Sharp goes and he does that, and he comes back, all the way back to Boston, and says, "Young says that this will work." And so one of the interesting things that hasn't gotten a whole lot of publicity, is that John Sharp got a $2500 finders fee, or a reward, from the Union Pacific, for brokering that deal. And he also got a lifetime pass on the Union Pacific railroad. And his connections with the railroad continued for decades after that. So it's a very interesting thing. I do not know whether Young was aware of the fact that Sharp got an extra $2500 out of that deal. But this was the era where such things happened.

Verdoia: Leland Stanford of the Central Pacific Railroad.

Bain: Leland Stanford was a politician. I mean, we have to give him credit, he was in on the ground

floor of the Republican party when it was created in California, when it was an anti-slavery, pro-union party. It was the progressive party of its era. He was a politician, but he hated to do a hard day's work, he was the kind of man, his associates complained that he like to come in late and leave early, and didn't get much done in between time. But he loved getting credit for himself, he loved to be up there in the center of publicity, being governor of California was paradise for him. But nothing compared to being a senator of the United States. And so as Stanford has gotten a lot of credit for the Central Pacific railroad, but he was basically in the background with his feet up.

Verdoia: Collis Huntington of the Central Pacific.

Bain: Collis Huntington was one of the most ruthless men that you can imagine. He was the type who could make money in the gold rush, not by standing in a frigid stream, but by selling the picks and the shovels to the miners as they went by. He loved cornering markets; he was made for this kind of work. He knew nothing about politics, he knew nothing about large business deals when he got involved in the Central Pacific railroad, but he became a genius for that. He built an empire.

Verdoia: Mark Hopkins?

Bain: Mark Hopkins was another back room man; Mark Hopkins hated publicity, he hated hard work, he was good with numbers, he was very, very shrewd, but very, very conservative. So whenever you see the Central Pacific leaders writing to one another, you see that the caution and the fear is coming out of Mark Hopkins, that we are all so close to ruin, we should not go this way.

Verdoia: How about the Crocker brothers? Two distinctly different individuals.

Bain: The Crocker brothers were two distinctly different people. Charlie Crocker was a man who fought with his fists, he was larger than life, he was brawny, he didn't believe in doing a lot of talking in order to solve a problem. His brother, Edwin Bryant Crocker, however, had been trained as a lawyer. He was more of a philosopher. And his is really the unsung story of the Central Pacific railroad. He was the glue that held the whole thing together.
E.B. Crocker was the general manager of the Central Pacific railroad, not just its attorney. So all of the day-to-day business went through his office. This was at a time when Stanford was back home with his feet up, his brother Charlie was out on the road trying to keep the workers working as hard as possible, and Mark Hopkins was basically pushing numbers around. And so E.B. Crocker was the one who would be looking out for the train dispatchers, looking for a legal loophole in order to let them buy up land. Worrying about the government surveyors who were coming in saying, "You can't put your railroad through here." It was a tremendous amount of pressure and stress, all on those shoulders. And it was no wonder that the stress finally got to him, and he had his stroke just a month after the golden spike was driven, and basically just disappeared from the history books after that.

Verdoia: A man that you document so well in the Empire Express, T.C. Durant?

Bain: Durant was a puppeteer, he was shrewd, he was made for the kind of role that he had, always in the background, always trying to figure out a secret deal that would make him a little bit of extra money. There was a common expression back then, "Make a 15 cents out of a dime." And this is the way that he was, except that he worked in the millions. And very few people who ever got close to Thomas Durant profited personally from him. Usually they felt betrayed after awhile. But he was the man who, through tremendous exercise of personality, and a certain kind of genius, really made it happen. The railroad probably would not have been built without Thomas Durant at the helm.

Verdoia: Another key figure that might also get some of that credit is Grenville Dodge.

Bain: Grenville Dodge, traditionally Grenville Dodge is the chief engineer of the Union Pacific, is not thought of as the political genius that he happened to be. He was very well connected with the Union army, such as General Sherman and General Grant, he knew Lincoln personally, he visited Lincoln every time that he was in Washington. And he was very, very deeply rooted in the Iowa politics of the time. So he became invaluable to the Central Pacific. So he became invaluable to the Union Pacific, not only in the idea of locating where the railroad was going to go, and make sure that it got there, but also all of the political things, the deals that had to be done in Washington. He was instrumental for that.

Verdoia: Certainly a legendary figure, at least from the figure that he struck, as he led the crew, Jack Casement?

Bain: Jack Casement was a former Union colonel who was brevetted in the last months of the Civil War, and so he was always called General Jack after that. And his great gift to the Union Pacific railroad was the military efficiency that he brought to trying to wield these 10,000 or 12,000 rag-tag workers into some kind of a military machine, so that they would at least keep moving forward at a fast pace. And he was a tough manager, but he was an interesting human being. He had a human side to him. The letters that he wrote to his wife back in the 1860s when he would be isolated from her for six months at a time, are really poignant, really speak of the human being who was out there.

Verdoia: The Ames brothers, Oliver and Oaks.

Bain: Oaks Ames was a congressman from Massachusetts, and his brother, Oliver Ames, was the Union Pacific president. And these two men had grown up in a family that had become wealthy selling shovels to the gold rush diggers. And the Ames Shovel Company was a very, very strong economic importance in Massachusetts. And congressman Ames was anointed, Lincoln put his hands on Oaks Ames' shoulders and said, "I want you to try and get this railroad through. It's having a lot of internal dissension, I don't know how long this war is going to go on, but this railroad is of national importance. So I want you and your friends to get involved in this and make sure that it happens." And Oaks Ames took that very seriously, and of course, that was finally to his downfall, how seriously he took the idea, and the fact that he got so many of his colleagues interested in the money that could be made from the Credit Mobilier.

Even with that anointment that Ames had had, it wasn't enough to save him. He was all on his own, after all, there in congress. And there were no rules at that point, about the fact that a congressman who's about to vote on railroad legislation should not own stock in that railroad. But ultimately that's what tripped him up, because when you get a number of congressmen and senators who are suddenly stockholders in the railroad, and the scandal comes out, they're going to be looking for a fall guy. And Oaks Ames became the fall guy. Not one of the legislators who had taken these securities was found guilty of anything, but Ames was cast out of congress and tragically died within a few months, probably of excess grief and worry and stress. And that becomes another poignant story in this large national portrait we have.

Verdoia: I'm intrigued by the figure of Sydney Dillon. What are the contexts we should consider him?

Bain: Sydney Dillon is another shadowy figure. There were a lot of very interesting people in the Union Pacific story. Sydney Dillon, Cornelius Bushnell, these were people who became immensely

wealthy with military contracts during the Civil War. Most of them had had railroad interests going back for 10 or 15 years, I mean they had really gotten in on the ground floor of the railroad business in the United States. And Sydney Dillon, he had his hands in every kind of pie, and it's hard to really, to give a thumbnail of him, it really is.
And in fact, you think of when he was actually sent out, this is just sort of colloquy here, but when he was sent out to Utah to take over things, when everything was falling apart, and he didn't manage things very well, that's for sure. But I think that he was really overwhelmed by what was going on, just the pure chaos that he found himself in when he got to Utah and found his own people warring upon one another, and everything basically falling apart.

Verdoia: So now we return to a storied figure, in his own right, Brigham Young.

Bain: I find Brigham Young so fascinating, because we have to remember that he was a politician, he was a gifted politician, he didn't go to school for that, he didn't go to school for organizing a community, taking them halfway across the country, and creating this new community. And I think of what Young was going through, as the outside world began to pour in, in 1869, when the railroad came in. And I know that he lost a lot of money on this whole notion of the railroad, he thought of it as his railroad, even though there was a lot of insulation between him and the actual work. And I just find him so poignant and so interesting a character, and somewhat harder to get into his thoughts, than some of the other characters for whom I had more letters and more diaries and more expressions of human emotions. Young is just a fascinating character. I've read a lot about him, and I'll never get tired of reading about him.

He's an enigma because historians and anyone who's truly serious about history, try to understand these people on human terms. And we use their words and their letters and their diaries, the memories of people who knew them well. To try to figure out an approximation of what was going on, not to put words into their mouth or thoughts into their heads. And there is just something so relentlessly interesting about that man, at the head of a community the way that he was, and all of the motivations, but we can't forget the fact that number one he was a gifted politician, he was a gifted businessman, he was a serious community leader, he believed in community values, and there may be controversy about the total control that he had in Utah at that point, but that was more than 100 years ago, and it's important to judge people, let's not forget, on the standards that they lived by. And not by the standards of today.

Of course Brigham Young's world was changed by the completion of the railroad, with five or ten railroads coming through every day. But I think that it was for the good. I mean, modernity came to Salt Lake City. Trade came, and was possible. I think that the notion of that fragile community out there on the edge of the desert, surrounded by mountains, and really subject to a winter storm or a plague of locusts or grasshoppers or draught, that those kinds of really primitive forces became lessened somehow with the reassurance of trade, with the reassurance of new brethren who were coming in from Europe at that point, manpower would increase, the community would increase, they could look elsewhere to just build Utah up. So I think that there was a vast benefit, and you really see changes that were enacted in the 1870s, and you have to draw that directly, that these changes came in on the train.

Verdoia: And beyond the immediate impact to Salt Lake City, Utah territory, how did the transcontinental railroad change the face of the American west?

Bain: The transcontinental railroad really did knit the country together. I mean, you do think about

those vast spaces that had to be connected in the way that they did. So it became not just the outer lying communities that would suddenly have commerce with the outside world again, but all of the little station towns that would be planted along the road, and then the side railroads that would go off into other places, and the connectivity of the wagon roads that would appear, the commerce that would go over there. The fact that education became more of a common thing for common people. Universities were created, great businesses were created. The west began to be transformed because of the railroad.

D. Michael Quinn, PhD

For more than thirty years Mike Quinn has conducted ground-breaking research and written extensively about the early history of Utah and the origins and development of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A former university professor in Utah, he presently is a Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Southern California. He has been a frequent contributor to public television history programs examining Utah and the West.

Verdoia: Let's pick a place to begin, and let's begin with this notion, Michael, of the Civil War. The people in the Utah territory, leadership of the Mormon Church, how they viewed this rather extraordinary conflict between North and South. Do we have a clear sense of what the perspective might have been?

Quinn: Well, initially they saw it as a faith-promoting event, they saw it as a fulfillment of a prophecy of Joseph Smith, even a revelation of Joseph Smith that he had given in 1832, and that the Mormons in Utah had published in 1851. And so when the Civil War began with secession, the leaders of the Church and most Mormons heralded this as a faith-promoting event. And in that sense, they regarded it as wonderful. In the sense of awe-inspiring, not necessarily that it was a great thing. But that it was great in the eyes of God because it was part of His purposes.

The other side of it is that Utah was pro-Confederate. Most people don't recognize Utah was a slave tolerating territory. Most people don't recognize that proven aspect of the state's past. And when the Mormons came to Utah, in the very first pioneer train that Brigham Young led, or pioneer company, there were three slaves, and their names are inscribed on the monument that is down at the center of Salt Lake City, and I think there's another version of it up at the Pioneer Park. And in 1852, Brigham Young instructed the Utah legislature, as Governor of Utah, to pass a bill legalizing, formally, slavery of African-Americans in Utah, which the Utah legislature did. And when the abolitionist newspaper man, Horace Greeley, came to Utah to visit and interview Brigham Young several years later, he asked Brigham Young, "What do you think about slavery?" And Brigham Young's words were, "We regard it as of divine institution." He believed, and most Mormons agreed with him that God had instituted slavery for a purpose. And so when the secession occurred of the southern states, Utah was in a very strange situation of being north of the Mason-Dixon line, and yet being a slave territory. And in 1860, there were about 50 slaves in Utah. Because of the harsh, severe winter, it did not have a sustained cotton culture, as was true south of the Mason-Dixon Line. But Utah was a slave territory. And so because of conflicts with the national government prior to secession, prior to the Civil War, and because of the slave culture of Utah, Utah was pro-Confederacy. So you have this very interesting thing, which you can see in the official Church newspaper, the Deseret News, is that there were just summary reports of sermons, or rather, talks by Abraham Lincoln. There were full text discourses of the Confederate leaders of the statements by the Confederate Congress. Those were given full publicity

in the Church newspaper at that time, the Deseret News. So there was a very strong pro-Confederacy feeling. The irony, though, is that the leadership of the Church, Brigham Young in particular, was astute enough to know that there was no way that they could survive if they announced that they were in sympathy with, or that they had essentially joined, the Confederacy. And that would not be something that would be responded to in a way that would be survivable for Utah.

And so what they did was they bided their time. And every time there was a Confederate victory, they gave a big, big headline in the Church News, or the Deseret News at that time. And there was a real hopefulness that the Confederate armies would win, in particularly in their battles in the West, and that's the ones that the Church leaders were most interested in.

Well, what happened was that the Confederacy lost in the West, and by the end of 1863, the Confederate forces had been defeated throughout the West, and so that was no longer an option. And so from 1863 on, what leaders said was somewhat different. John Taylor, for example, when he was talking about the Civil War, he said he hoped both sides won. And really, what they really were hoping for, since Confederate victory was something that did not seem possible, they were hoping that the war would so weaken the North that they would not be able to create problems for the territory of Utah. So that continued to be the attitude.

Now during this time, there were Federal forces stationed in Utah because Washington recognized, despite the lack of a formal announcement in favor of the Confederacy, Washington recognized that the Mormons were pro-Confederate. And they had been regarded as disloyal for years, and now they were perceived as in addition to being that, as being "pro-Confederate." So Federal forces were sent here to suppress what Washington felt was a potential rebellion by the Mormons against the Union. That did not, of course, occur, because Brigham Young was too astute to do something that suicidal. But it was a very tense situation here, because the Federal troops literally had their guns trained on Brigham Young's home, that if there was going to be a civil uprising, his home would be the first to receive cannon shots. And there was a very tense environment between the soldiers and the Mormons. Not only on the issue of loyalty, and this being an occupying force, the Mormons regarded it, as an occupying force, but also because of the camp followers who came with the military. The prostitutes, and the drinking and the saloons that catered to the soldiers, was something that Brigham Young and other Mormons condemned.

So there had been a very tense situation. And it was a deeper thing than simply Mormon vs. non-Mormon. It was also an issue of pro-slavery, people living in the north who were confronting anti-slavery people, many of them non-Mormon, who had come to Utah, and then of course, with the military, the military is pro-Union and anti-Confederacy, and you have a population that, for the most part, is pro-Confederacy. So lots of conflicts during that period in the years before the beginning of the transcontinental railroad.

Verdoia: With the end of the Civil War in 1865, can you characterize it for me economically, culturally, socially, politically? What type of a place is this territory by the end of the Civil War?

Quinn: Well, it's about 95-98% Mormon. Very few non-Mormons, maybe even a bit higher than that, I don't remember the statistics. But it was in the very high 90s of Mormon. And not all Mormons were participating, that's a bad characteristic of Mormon experience from the beginning, is that one can define oneself as Mormon but not attend church necessarily.

You had a small group of non-Mormons, primarily merchants, and they were there with families. And

most of the merchants were not single individuals. So the non-Mormon population of Utah in the cities was family-oriented primarily. But you had a mining population, as well, which had been growing since the early 1850s, and the mining population of non-Mormons was primarily single males.

So you had a combination in the gentile population, so to speak, of wild single males as well as family, church-going families who were Protestants, some Catholics, some Jews, but for the most part Protestants. And there was a huge polarization wherein, over the pulpit, and in the Church newspaper, there were all of these condemnations of the non-Mormons who were almost routinely called gentiles. And it was one of the ironies of the period. The Jewish population of Salt Lake City, primarily at that time, were lumped in the category of being gentiles. So you had that, but in the 1850s, you had also had a very internal conflict within Mormonism, and that internal conflict was not an obvious conflict in the sense that what you had was the leaders of the Church in general, from the pulpit, attacking sin in general. And you had this great period that was called the Reformation, where rank-and-file Mormons were told to report on one another if they were perceived as being a non-devout or sinful Mormon, the family members or neighbors were to report on them. And there was this sense of conflict, this sense of retribution. And many of the sermons that were published during that time period, spoke of a literal blood atonement of execution of the sinners. And this extended, as well, to non-Mormons, who felt overwhelmed numerically, and then were hearing, and in many cases seeing, in the Church newspaper, in print, this advocacy for violence against those who were regarded as sinful in the community. So there was a real tension in the years before the Civil War, and then the Civil War added another layer of tension.

Now economically, you had a very unusual situation in that the Mormon population, to a degree that was not true throughout the west, in a degree not true throughout the eastern states, the settled part of the United States, there was a very equalitarian character to economic life among the population of Utah, among the Mormon population. So that there were not the huge disparities in wealth that you found in other frontier communities, that you found in the states whether it was Masschusetts or New York, southern states. There were huge disparities between the haves and the have nots, and if we exclude the free blacks and the African-American slaves, there were still huge disparities between the white population, in terms of wealth. That wasn't the case to the degree it was nationally, in Utah. In Utah there had been a tremendous emphasis on cooperation, on helping one another out. And in helping one another to have opportunities to progress within the community. And so the ranges of wealth were far narrower within Mormon population.

Now a large part of that was because Brigham Young had discouraged taking advantage of cheaper prices for goods that were being imported into the Utah valley area, or the Utah territorial area, by non-Mormon merchants who had become more common within Salt Lake, primarily Salt Lake, but also Ogden after the 1850s. Brigham Young made it a kind of test of faith for Mormons to only buy home, and that was the term that they used, and so that meant that instead of buying dresses that had been manufactured in New York, or factory-produced items such as agricultural equipment, that was actually cheaper, even after it had been imported, to Utah, it was cheaper than the material such as agricultural equipment that had been made. Brigham Young said, by this, "By what we have made, do not become slaves to gentile culture."

So Mormon economy, really through the end of the Civil War, was really very self-sufficient. Very little of the local population was dependent upon imported goods. Most of the Mormon population, the vast majority, were using goods manufactured by other Mormons. Now this infuriated that small minority of the non-Mormon merchant class, because they were losing sales, and so some of the merchants left because this was not a boom economy the way Denver, the way San Francisco, the way other

economies were. Which, for a variety of reasons, had these huge disparities as well, but also were tremendous kind of cash cows for the merchant class who came in and brought in these manufactured goods from the east and people would pay for them and it was a very profitable experience for both the merchant class and those were the haves in these other western territories.

Utah that in a degree is part exceptional in the American territorial experience, but also exceptional in the American United States, up until the late 1860s, was very equalitarian in its social structure.

Verdoia: Which brings to mind the first grumblings that start to manifest themselves in the 1860s, of those within the Church, who start to question Brigham Young as leader in economic issues, social issues, as well as theological issues. One of the names that comes to mind is William Godbe. The man comes to symbolize, perhaps a challenge, or at least a question, of the direction. In fact, those who side with Godbe become known as Godbeites.

Quinn: Well there are two groups, two major factors. And the one is the one that you mentioned, which is the better known, and that is, and I'll step back actually before discussing that, two one event that became crucial. There had been, since the 1840s, proposal for a transcontinental railroad to its newly acquired territory in California. And as the California gold mines mushroomed, it would be the gold rush of the 49ers, and the developments in California as a state, those cries became more insistent within congress. However, congress was at a stalemate, because in the senate in particular, there were equal number of slave states and an equal number of non-slave states, and the northern states wanted a northern route for the transcontinental railroad. The southern states wanted a southern route. And their votes cancelled out one another. And so prior to the Civil War, it was impossible for the various proposals to work, of those who wanted a transcontinental railroad. So they could never agree, there was no way to compromise. Do you have a northern route or a southern route? It's one or the other. And northerners and southerners simply would not vote for the alternate possibility.

But when secession occurred and the Civil War began, you no longer had the Confederate states in the south. You did have the border states in the south, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, but they were outnumbered by the northern states. And so what happened is, in 1862, simply and really only because of the Civil War, the congress passed a transcontinental railroad act which made it obvious that as soon as the Union was able to expend the money and the manpower for transcontinental railroad, that would occur, and it was going to be a northern route. So that was a given from 1862 on. But as long as the Civil War was going, until 1865, nothing really was being done about that proposal. But it had been enacted, it was going to happen.

Well, when the war ended in 1865, a couple of things occurred. Brigham Young becomes a director of the Union Pacific railroad in 1865 because at that point, construction began. And you had two separate lines, one coming from the east, the Union Pacific railroad, and one coming from the west, from San Francisco initially, called the Central Pacific. And their intent was to meet somewhere in the middle of the territory of the United States. And Brigham Young, because the assumption would be that if it didn't occur in Utah it would occur near Utah, Brigham Young was the focal point in terms of the interest of the Union Pacific railroad in obtaining his cooperation. Because Union Pacific felt that this was going to be very important.

So he was advanced as a director. That did not give him veto power, but it gave him input. And his point of view was listened to, not always followed, but the big money powers with the Union Pacific railroad, were influenced by the Mormon point of view because they felt this was going to be eventually important in the completion of the railroad.

Then from 1865 onward, you had voices within the Mormon community who, some of whom themselves, had been merchants. Who had seen the equalitarian, who had experienced themselves, the negative effects for merchants of the Mormon determination to buy only local goods. And so Godby was one of these merchants, he was linked with others, so their interests were not without self interest, they had self interest in promoting what they promoted. And what they promoted was that since it was going to be inevitable that the railroad came through Utah, and since it was going to be inevitable that goods would be cheaply produced, even more cheaply than they had been able to bring them to Utah before, why not take advantage of this, and welcome with open arms the economy of the United States of America and all of the benefits experienced to Utah?

Verdoia: Hardly sounds controversial.

Quinn: No. In strict economic terms, it was not. It made sense, not only for self interest on the part of merchants, but for the consumer. They would be able to get goods much cheaper than they could be produced locally. The problem was that Brigham Young recognized that you could not separate the economic life of Utah from the social and political life. But they were all linked, and so that if you welcomed in with open arms the economic powers of the national culture, you would also be welcoming in its social structure, and its political power. And Brigham Young was unwilling to do that. And he said, "No, we will not. We will resist to every degree that we can, the influence of Babylon," which is how they typically referred to the states east of the Mississippi. That was Babylon, and they were free of Babylon, and sins, and the fleshpots of Egypt, that's another way they referred to it Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible terms. And they wanted to be like the Puritans, they wanted to be a city on a hill, but their challenges were greater because the Puritans didn't face the transcontinental railroad from an alternative culture, and Mormons did. And so it was a question of what to do.

And eventually these disagreements became very sharp. And they were no longer friendly, and Brigham Young made them a test of faith. He said, "If you continue advocating what you're advocating," and Godbe and his associates began advocating this publicly, Brigham Young said, "We cannot tolerate this. This is contrary to the best interests of the kingdom of God," which is the common way that Mormons referred to their commonwealth in Utah. Which had by this time extended into what is now southern Idaho, and extended into the eastern boundaries of what is now Nevada. And so Brigham Young said that if you continue this, you are going to be an apostate. And Godby and his associates continued to advocate what they felt was the sensible approach to the new economic world, that the transcontinental railroad would bring. Eventually they were excommunicated because of that, and formed a new church. And it became, they formed a new newspaper as well, that was the ultimate origins of the Salt Lake Tribune, which continues to exist as a non-church, a secular newspaper, in Utah.

But there was another factor behind what Godbe and his associates were doing. And that was, that for decades they had been quiet religious radicals. Which Brigham Young did not realize, very few people recognized that. These were all practicing spiritualists, and they had in their world view, a different theological set of assumptions that was linked with their economic. And so their proposal to welcome with open arms, the culture, the economics, of the United States, there was an unspoken agenda behind that, because they wanted to release the grip of Utah orthodoxy, Mormon orthodoxy on Utah, because they were quiet, religious radicals. And so the new church that they formed, after they had been excommunicated from Brigham Young's point of view, for economic disloyalty, which he had defined as religious disloyalty, when they formed their new church, their new church was spiritualist church, and they finally became open. And the religious agenda, that had also been motivating them.

So it wasn't simply a contest between forward-looking economic visionaries and Brigham Young, the backward looking kind of Mormon provincial leader. There was a religious motivation behind it, as well, that Brigham Young didn't recognize at the time. He soon did.

Verdoia: Brigham Young. In the annals of American history, he is almost virtually unmatched in terms of the authority he has in an area during a fairly sustained era. Can you help a contemporary audience understand the realm of authority that Brigham Young had?

Quinn: I think it's difficult to look at that without saying what Brigham Young brought the Mormons from. The Mormons had experienced, about 14 years of persecution before Brigham Young became the highest leader of Mormonism, and that persecution culminated with the murder of Joseph Smith, the president and in the Mormon view, prophet of the world. And his brother, who would have been the next in line to be the prophet. And when those two were killed, that was a huge emotional shock for Mormons who never thought that was possible. And then, not long after that, the non-Mormons surrounding the Mormon headquarters in Illinois, began attacking outlying Mormon settlements. Mormons saw themselves under siege.

Brigham Young came in. I mean, the cliché is really applicable there. He brought order out of chaos. There was institutional chaos within the Church, there was chaos of being threatened by Mormon mobs, and Brigham Young brought order out of that chaos, brought stability to the LDS church, and he negotiated with anti-Mormon mobs, brought a very tenuous truce, it was a truce in which there were attacks on both sides. But nonetheless a truce that allowed the Mormons to prepare to move the entire population of the headquarters city, which had swelled by that time, to about 15,000 people. And to allow them to lead an orderly retreat, without being driven out violently by mobs, which would have been the alternatives.

And so he took these people across the Mississippi River, and his intent was to move to a place that no one else would want. And so he brought them to Utah, and one of the leaders of the Church named George Albert Smith, was the Church historian. And he really said it well, he said, "The Mormons came to Utah willingly because we were forced to." And that was the situation. And so the Mormons in Utah, and even those who had emigrated from Europe, looked to Brigham Young as a savior, as a, not a necessarily religious savior, but as a cultural savior, someone who had saved their culture from utter destruction. And in the process, that link was linked with saving the religion. And so they saw him as a divine savior in the sense that he had preserved a religious community, not just a community of social interaction.

So when he was president of the Church here, and then was appointed governor, this gave a kind of awe to his position, that almost all Mormons felt. Now Brigham Young was a down to earth person, he spoke in an earthly way, he usually swore in front of the pulpit, but most of the people he spoke to were equally earthy. They were down to earth, very few of them were highly educated. There were a few, even Mormon leaders, who had college educations, but they were very few. And so Brigham Young represented their kind of person, the mass of Mormons' kind of leader. So he had this tremendous sense of devotion, that Mormons looked to him to perpetuate their protection. And the thing about Brigham Young is that he was astute. And basically I don't think there is any exception to this. Of all the non-Mormon observers, many of them very sophisticated from Richard F. Burton who came, to Horace Greeley, a number of presidential candidates who came to Utah, people who were not awed by religious leaders in general, and not easily fooled by somebody who was just a blow hard political leader. Without exception, they looked to Brigham Young and felt a sense of awe. That here is this

leader who is truly shrewd, who knows how to deal with the federal government and with the various issues he faced.

Verdoia: How did these people perceive Brigham Young?

Quinn: Well, these leaders who visited, they were leaders in various areas. Many of them are newspaper reporters, some of them either had been political leaders or were going to campaign for political office. Some are world travelers who had been in many cultures, such as Richard F. Burton, who came to Utah and visited with Brigham Young. And without exception, they all expressed a sense of admiration. Sometimes it was uncritical, and when I say uncritical there were no negative things that they said, other times they put in critical jibes about Brigham Young, about his unlettered kind of speech, his rough hewn speech, they would make comments about that. But the overwhelming assessment was, in spite of those things that they might take pot shots at and maybe laugh at in print, these very sophisticated readers all stood in awe of what a shrewd leader he was. That he was very well informed about the issues of the day, internationally as well as nationally, and they asked him questions to test him on that. And they were amazed to find how well informed he was. He was not some country bumpkin, which they had assumed. And he was not provincial in the way they had assumed. He was provincial in the sense that all his focuses and energies were directed at this Utah commonwealth that the Mormons called Zion. But, he was very well informed about wars that were occurring, about conflicts, diplomatic issues involving Britain, with other states, involving Europe, involving the United States. And this quite amazed them.

Brigham Young really made Utah survive. Utah could not have survived the various challenges, both naturally and militarily, politically, that it faced, had it not been for Brigham Young and his leadership during that pioneer period. And those who visited with him before his death in 1877 who had no reason to praise him, who were in fact prepared to make fun of him, instead had to acknowledge that this was an unparalleled leader, somebody that they had no expectations of meeting in a religious commonwealth.

Verdoia: Zion is the great organizing Mormon commonwealth, as you phrased it. After 20 years, from the first days of July 1847, after 20 years you talked about a number of terrors or challenges, at least, that appear in the fabric. Is Zion, from Brigham's perspective, is Zion in danger as we move to the latter half of the 19th century?

Quinn: Zion was under pressure, is the best way to think of it, from different factors. And Brigham Young recognized these and responded to them in different ways. One was the increase of the non-Mormon population, which would change the character of at least a part of the experience of Mormons in Zion. And Brigham Young wanted to limit the non-Mormon population to the degree that he could. He did not want to encourage non-Mormons to come to Utah. And in some ways I think that's why Mormons sent copies of their sermons, which were very hostile, which were in many ways created an image of Mormonism as being very odd environment. I think that's why they sent copies of them to congress, because they wanted the national leaders to think of Utah as this strange place, who would want to live there? And I think that was one of the tactics that Brigham Young made, or he was conscious.

But the other challenge was that economically, even from the early 1850s, after the gold rush in California made shipping goods to the west profitable for western manufacturers, it was a fact that you could buy almost everything cheaper, even after paying the import costs for transporting it, than it would be to manufacture it locally. This applied to dress items, it applied to manufactured items,

agricultural implements, and Brigham Young told the Mormons, "Do not be untrue to the kingdom of God. Buy locally." And that's a phrase that we, in modern society, have heard in a number of ways, particularly buy U.S., in terms of, but not buying cheaply manufactured international products.

Well, that's really how Brigham Young saw Utah. Brigham Young saw Utah surrounded by, or at least easily affected by, an alien manufacturing power. Now the curious thing is that with this alien manufacturing power was the United States, which controlled Utah politically. But that's how Brigham economically saw it. So he urged Mormons to buy the locally manufactured items.

Now this was more than an economic policy, because Brigham saw that the economic and the social lives were linked. And that if Mormons bought outside Mormon manufacturers, if they bought imported goods, that would encourage non-Mormon merchants. It would encourage the entire infrastructure of manufacturing and trade and commerce, to come to Utah, and to establish themselves in this very profitable market. And Brigham Young did not want that to happen, because that was going against the discouragement of non-Mormon population. So there was a far greater motive than economics in Brigham Young's urging Mormons to buy only Mormon-made or Utah made products.

The other issue, the other challenge that Brigham Young faced, was the rising generation. Young people growing up who had no direct experience with the world outside Utah culture. Those who had not had a persecution heritage, who could not in themselves think of reasons why they should stay in Utah rather than go somewhere else, why they should marry a Mormon rather than marry somebody else. And that was a huge issue, because it related to the survival of Mormons as a religion, and to the survival of Utah as a commonwealth, of expressing that religion. And so Brigham Young was very concerned with all the influences that might affect, either positively or negatively, the young rising generation, those who were in their 20s, those who were in their 30s, who either had no memory at all because of birth, or had maybe only the most distant memory of young childhood, of what it was like to live as a persecuted minority.

And so part of his indoctrination was the continual invoking over the pulpit of the persecution heritage of Mormonism. And that created an "us and them" environment, it perpetuated those feelings that their parents and grandparents had had, toward the persecutors, among young people who had never had direct experience for it. And so this "us and them" attitude continues, and Brigham Young encourages it to continue, not simply to put off non-Mormons, but also to, as part of the indoctrinations of the rising generation.

Verdoia: When we look at the role of Brigham Young and this notion of the transcontinental railroad, some people characterize him as being a railroad advocate, and some people as being a railroad opponent.

Quinn: I don't think there's any question was a railroad advocate. He saw the railroad as fulfilling the initial goal of Mormonism, and of his goal, of building the kingdom of God. And it would do it in one direct way, and that is that it would speed emigration. It would make it so that emigrants from Europe who were Mormon, would not have to have a three-month trip with as many hardships and some dangers by wagon train. The railroad would make that a memory, a memory of hardships that those who went through it would always treasure, but it would not be an impediment to emigration of Mormons in Europe and in the eastern states.

So he saw the railroad as serving that primary purpose of building the kingdom of God by encouraging Mormons in the eastern states of the United States and in Europe, to emigrate. But, he wasn't negative

about the railroad, but he was cautious, and worried about its consequences. Things that he knew would happen, that just as Mormon converts could take the rails to Utah, so could non-Mormon merchants. So could non-Mormon settlers. And what to do about that situation? He couldn't prevent them from buying a train ticket. But his purpose was to somehow make Utah less inviting to that flood, potential flood, of non-Mormon culture, and non-Mormon population. So he wanted the benefits of the railroad, but he did not want the secularization process that he knew the railroad could bring. And if he couldn't stop it, he wanted to slow it down as much as possible for the succeeding generations. And Brigham Young certainly was looking far beyond his own lifetime. He wanted Utah to be a Mormon commonwealth forever.

And so the railroad threatened to change that drastically. And he would not oppose the railroad because he wanted the emigration benefit for Mormon converts. But he did everything he could to forestall the secularization effect of the railroad.

Verdoia: And he had no reluctance whatsoever to strike financial deals that would bring money to his people in the conception of the railroad.

Quinn: Exactly. He was very astute in that regard. And so he made agreements with the money people who were in charge of the railroad, and made agreements for the Mormons to provide, basically the day laborer kinds of things. There were not very many Mormon surveyors who could have provided the highly technical work of surveying for the railroad, and those who had been hired, he knew the railroad wasn't going to fire them when it got into the area where Utah train surveyors would work. So he didn't hold out any hope for the highly trained Mormons to benefit the railroad. But Mormons could swing an axe, they could dig, they could help to grade the path of the train. And that's what Brigham Young offered. He offered cheap labor. And he offered it at a price that would discourage the railroad from bringing in a flood of non-Mormon laborers. That was in many ways the worst of his fears. It's one thing to have merchants who have ties to the community who are non-Mormon, but it's another thing, quite another thing, to have day laborers who may be uneducated, who come in and have no ties to the community, and no ties to what most people would regard as the trappings of civilization, and then have them come in and maybe stay in Utah. That was the last thing he wanted.

So he offered, at a bargain price, Mormon cheap labor, to the Union Pacific railroad, and they took it. They took the offer. And in that way, he did two things: he discouraged non-Mormon immigration of cheap day labor, and he gave an economic benefit to the Mormons. It didn't turn out that way that he'd hoped. He hoped it would bring cash revenues, and the Union Pacific was notoriously corrupt, resulting in congressional investigations, and so the result was that virtually no cash came in terms of what had been promised and contracted. And so there was, in some ways, the contract almost brought Mormons to the brink of bankruptcy because the cash flow did not come in as promised. But he made these arrangements, initially, for the dual purpose of keeping out non-Mormon undesirables, and to benefit economically the Mormon kingdom.

Verdoia: We find an enormous gray area surrounding the personal finances of Brigham Young. It's almost impossible to separate Brigham Young from the holdings of the Church. Can you speak to that issue of this intermingling of interest and assets and ownership?

Quinn: There was a legal reason why Brigham Young intermingled his private accounts with those of the Church as an institution, and that goes back to the subject of polygamy. The Republican party, which came to power with the election of Abraham Lincoln, had announced in its initial platform, national Republican platform in 1856, that it was dedicated to the destruction of what it called the twin

relics of barbarism. First, slavery; and second, polygamy. And the polygamy reference was a reference, they actually used the term bigamy, and the bigamy reference was a reference to Mormon polygamy. And Mormon polygamy was an assault on traditional marriage. And although it was a ridiculous argument, it was really believed by the majority of people in the United States, that if they allowed this tiny group to practice non-traditional marriage, that it would threaten the institution of marriage generally.

And so in the period of the early year, first year of the Civil War, congress passed a law in 1862, and the law made bigamy a crime. It was the first time congress had ever passed a law relating to sexual conduct, and it was directed against the Mormons of Utah. And then to put teeth, so to speak, in this creation of a new category of criminal offense, congress disincorporated the LDS Church and said that it could not hold more than $50,000 worth of property, either real property or actual liquid property.

And so after that law was enacted, and a new president, Abraham Lincoln, signed it into law, the Church faced a reality that it could, at some point, have its assets confiscated by the federal government. And so for that reason, Brigham Young, even before 1862, in anticipation that this law might be passed, he began mixing the technical accounts of the Church with his accounts as trustee in trust, and the term of the legal term giving him sole trusteeship over the financial assets of the LDS Church, but then he also mixed his own accounts with his accounts as the trustee of the Church, his personal accounts.

And so it became kind of a Gordian knot of possible conflict of interest. And in the 1860s, Brigham Young publicly said that his personal wealth was the equivalent of the wealth of the entire Church. So he had a proprietary, personal sense that his contribution to the Mormon Church was such that its wealth was his wealth, too. And that he saw his personal wealth as equal to the wealth of the LDS Church itself.

And so there have been Mormon apologist efforts to say that this intermingling was only because of the federal law. His statement publicly would indicate that's not the case. He really felt that the laborer is worthy of his hire. He had preserved Mormonism, he was its president, he was the one who was battling with the federal government and with all of the forces seeking to undermine the kingdom of God, and therefore he felt his personal financial reward for that should be the equivalent of the wealth of the Church itself.

And so when he died, the Church leaders were faced with this huge problem: how to undo a Gordian knot. And essentially, like the old story, the Gordian knot, the new president of the Church, John Taylor, who had never liked Brigham Young, who had been at odds with him about financial matters for 30 years, basically did what happened anciently with the Gordian knot, and that is he took a sword to it. And what he did was, he simply defined arbitrarily, that certain issues that were of the presidents of the Church that had been defined as Brigham Young as president of the Church or Brigham Young as a sole individual, not necessarily the trustee, the legal name, but these in fact were really, the Church's, that that's had been intended.

Now John Taylor knew what Brigham Young intended, that his wealth should be the equivalent of the Church's, but that's not what his successor felt was in the interest of the kingdom of God. And he was not about to let that money to go to the heirs of Brigham Young. And so there was a huge conflict, and at one point several member of the Young children were excommunicated because they refused to accept the settlement of the Brigham Young estate. There were three apostles who were appointed as trustees by Brigham Young's will. And at one point John Taylor, who was Brigham Young's successor,

privately disfellowshipped them, and said he would excommunicate them, if they did not agree to sign a document which said that all of these properties of Brigham Young were in fact the properties of the Church. And they said that was not what Brigham Young intended, and John Taylor said, "I don't care what Brigham Young intended, I'm the prophet of the Church. You will sign this, or you will lose your apostleship and you will be excommunicated." And so they signed, as trustees of the Brigham Young estate. They obviously had conflict of interest in the position that they held.

So it's not an easy resolution, and the one who has written most about it in the past was Leonard Arrington. And Leonard Arrington tried to put the best footing that he could on the situation, and he pointed out almost in passing, that the auditors for the Church made a clerical error of hundreds of thousands of dollars as they were adding up this information, and Leonard tried to present it as inadvertent. Well, it was a piece of a pattern, and what the pattern was, that John Taylor was absolutely not going to accept Brigham Young's position that Brigham Young's personal wealth was the equivalent of the wealth of the Church itself. And so the result was redefinitions and some fancy bookkeeping.

Verdoia: But in Brigham Young's mind, there's no doubt that he said, "Whether the dollar comes to the Church or the dollar comes to me, it's all the same thing."

Quinn: That's right.

Verdoia: Another institution that seems to have one name but many practical realities is something known as the School of Prophets.

Quinn: Well, it was a reinvocation. The school of the prophets was originally established in 1833 by a revelation to Joseph Smith in 1832. And initially it was an adult education program for men only. It was not a society in which women were given the same considerations as men. But it did provide something quite unusual in the society at the time, and that is that the Mormon Church, even in its very early period, and it was only a few thousand members, had access to some very highly trained people. And Joseph Smith as first prophet brought those in to the school of the prophets and they lectured. One of the most prominent of those was a Hebrew lecturer who was a Jew, Sephardic Jew, and lectured the Mormon men who were interested in learning Hebrew. He lectured them in Greek as well, but primarily Hebrew.

And then others who had had formal educations in the early years of the Church, they lectured on geography, they lectured on history, on civil government, on a variety of topics. It was a broadly-based adult education program. Although it was called school of the prophets, it didn't mean that the education was exclusively religious. It was that those who were being trained were potential prophets in the Mormon sense. They were the priesthood bearers and so had this responsibility of God.

Now what happened in Utah is that Brigham Young reinstituted that in 1867 as the transcontinental railroad is underway. And he changed its purposes. Although there were theological discussions that occurred in the school of the prophets, it was not, strictly speaking, an adult education center the way that it had been under Joseph Smith, that was 35 years before. What happened is that there were lectures that were given on religion, and then the secular things, rather than being a school of instruction, it became a work house of politics, a work house of economics, and financial activity.

So that Brigham Young used the school of the prophets to carry out political activities. For example, the school of the prophets functioned as a caucus in the traditional sense, that American political life defines the caucus, it was a nominating body for the Church-approved candidate. And the candidates

were nominated in the meetings of the school of the prophets, and then they were publicly presented on the ballot box, and voted for in elections.

The school of the prophets campaigned, but usually it wasn't necessary, all that was needed was a notice in the Church newspaper, and Mormons knew how to follow orders, and then they would vote. And during this period of time, about 98% of all votes cast in the Utah territory went for the Church approved candidates. And in the one dissenting election occurred, and there was only one where there was a significant dissent, only 4% of the voters went to non-Church candidates, 96% of the votes went to Church-approved candidates. So we're talking about a highly cohesive political commonwealth. And the school of the prophets was the caucus for that.

In political activity, excuse me, in economic and financial activity, Brigham Young gave to the school of the prophets the opportunity to carry out financial operations. So the school of the prophets often time became an initial meeting, some kind a mass meeting, but it had no religious Catholic meeting, it had meaning of mass in the sense of large public event. But really it wasn't public, it was limited to men, and it was limited to men who were Mormons, and it was limited to Mormon men who had passed an interview that allowed them to have a ticket to go to the school of the prophets.

And yet these men were involved in devising financial properties. So that the school of the prophets meetings became the mass meeting for organizing canal companies, became the mass meetings for organizing a variety of new corporations or companies that were started during this period of time. And then as the railroad became nearer in actual physical terms, as the tracks are being laid closer and closer to Wyoming, just one step away from the Utah border, Brigham Young instructed the school of the prophets to begin what has been called a cooperation program. And the intent of this was to minimize, although Brigham Young knew he could not stop completely, the economic freedoms that would come with the arrival of the railroad. And so it was to re-invoke cooperation among Mormons and to emphasize Utah industries and Utah manufactured goods, and the result of that was that the school of the prophets made two stages, two steps, in that direction.

The first stage was to announce a boycott of all, first of all, hostile merchants. And then, in 1867, that became all non-Mormon merchants, became the subject of the boycott. This draws many of them out of business, and merchants sold their remaining inventories and left Utah, which is exactly what Brigham Young wanted. He wanted the non-Mormon population to have disincentives and to leave.

And then in 1868, the school of the prophets became the first known organizing structure to propose the establishment of a physical, and an institutional form of cooperation, which became known as Zions Cooperative Mercantile Institution. And this moved beyond simply boycotting the non-Mormons to requiring Mormon merchants to either join and turn over all of their inventories to ZCMI in exchange for ZCMI stock, or if they didn't, they would be publicly identified as the enemy. And they would be a subject to a boycott. And as a result, all of the Mormon merchants turned over the inventories except those who were willing to be excommunicated. And there were a few of those who were.

But what happened is that it essentially was, the foundation of ZCMI, as the oldest department store in the American west, was based first on a religiously based boycott, and then on strong army among Mormons, to make them either turn over their inventories or be excommunicated.

Verdoia: The Zion Cooperative Mercantile Institution would physically represent member shops with a prominent seal on the outside of a business. Tell me about that seal of approval.

Quinn: Well, the seal of approval was "Holiness to the Lord" signs. And it went over the front of each store, the Cooperative, and those stores that didn't cooperate in the sense of either being non-Mormon or being Mormon merchants who did not turn their inventories over to the Church, then they didn't have that seal of approval. And it was a double kind of boycott, because if you were a Mormon and went into a store that did not have the "Holiness to the Lord" over the doorway, then you were subject to social ostracism. There was a price to pay if you did not support the boycott. So it was a symbol, but it was definitely a symbol with substance.

Verdoia: There is another manifestation of this cooperative spirit, and it takes place in an entity known as the United Order. Again, this is something that had moved deeper in Mormon history, but manifests itself in the 1850s in a very tangible form. Is it just a sheer coincidence that it plays up when the railroad comes to Utah?

Quinn: Well, actually, the cooperative movement preceded the railroad and continued after the railroad arrived. The United Order movement, which was an intensification of this economic cooperation, began five years after the railroad arrived here. It began in 1874, and it was essentially a step up of cooperation based on what had been, really, quite a very successful experience of Mormons with the cooperative movement. ZCMI was not simply a Salt Lake City store, there were cooperative efforts in nearly every community of Mormons, there was an Arizona Cooperative Mercantile Institution for the Mormons living in Arizona that was highly successful. And so based on these successes, Brigham Young taught that there was a need to return to the revelatory provisions for a United Order of economic cooperation that actually gave the ownership of one's belongings to the Lord. And that was the next step that Brigham Young announced in 1874.

And the most thorough-going of those United Orders was in a southern Utah town called Orderville. And in Orderville, the people who entered this United Order and lived in this community, signed a document in which they said there is no such thing as private property, that God owns all property. And so when they signed the document and joined the United Order, they gave all of the private property into the United Order, they owned no private property, they even wore the same kind of clothing that had been manufactured within the community, they lived in homes that had been built by the community on a standard format, they ate at a common table, dining hall, their food was cooked in a communal way, it was thoroughly communal, and that was the most thorough-going version of the United Order.

Other United Orders were less communal. They didn't involve the communal dining hall or the regulation kind of clothing. But what they did is they essentially took over the economic lines of the community which had voluntarily accepted them. And so the United Orders in other cities such as Brigham City in the north of Utah, essentially the United Order, which was a religious organization, performed all of the civic structures, economic structures, of the community. All roads were built by the United Order. All public work projects were projects that were performed by the United Order. And so they were very successful, in particular Brigham City and in the one in southern Utah, Orderville.

Now the one in Brigham City actually began during the period before the railroad. And it was established by an apostle of the Church, Lorenzo Snow. And it was at a cooperative order or local cooperative movement, that became so thorough-going in its activities that it inspired Brigham Young, encouraged him to announce this more in-depth nature of cooperation, which he called the United Order Movement. It was somewhat different from the way Brigham Young learned the United Order movement from the founder, but it had adapted to the Utah situation of where Mormons were the vast

majority of the population.

Verdoia: Was the United Order a defense mechanism?

Quinn: It was. It was among several of the defense mechanisms that Brigham Young inaugurated. Some of them were not economic. For example, to encourage home consumption of locally produced goods, he created the various auxiliary programs for women. He created one for the young women of the Church beginning with his own daughters, and he announced that this Young Womens program would be, had an economic purpose, that the young women would learn to be frugal in the clothing they bought, and to buy Mormon made clothing. And so even though it was a social organization for the women of the Church, it had a clear economic purpose. And that was to encourage the consumption and purchase by young women of locally produced dresses, which was an obvious appeal of these cheap manufactured goods that were coming in. There were cheap dresses which were better quality and lower prices than the locally produced kind. But Brigham Young organized this social religious organization for young women.

He also, in 1867, two years before the arrival of the railroad, encouraged his wife, one of his plural wives, Eliza R. Snow, to re-establish the women's organization, which was called the Relief Society organization. And although it had public charity as one of its main purposes from its beginning when Joseph Smith initially organized it, under Brigham Young it had another purpose, and that was to encourage the women to have home manufacturers. To encourage them to support home manufacturers. To buy their dresses from Mormon merchants and to make sure that these were Utah made dresses. And Brigham Young, over the pulpit, encouraged this by ridiculing the fashions of the women of the east, and encouraging the local fashions that were manufactured in Utah.

So the effort of Brigham Young to encourage economic independence, went beyond the cooperative movement, beyond the school of the prophets, he went also to the organizations which are called auxiliary organizations in the Mormon church for young women and for the women of the Church.

Verdoia: In 1870, the Church develops what some people would view as another defense mechanism, and that is the power of the vote, more broadly applied. Do you accept that premise that women's suffrage, as enacted in Utah, is another defense mechanism?

Quinn: Yeah, this is one of the ironies. Utah, in 1870, adopts legally the right to vote for women. A right that women in Boston did not have. A right that liberal, modern women in New York did not have. And they had it in Utah. And in one sense you can say this is a manifestation of the social life of the American west. Wyoming also passed a law for women to vote. But the interesting thing is, that there was not a motive for Brigham Young. And there was another motive for the non-Mormon governor who signed the law into, the bill into law. They had different assumptions. The non-Mormon governor of the state, or rather, the territory of Utah, appointed by the federal government, the non-Mormon governor assumed that if Mormon women had the vote, they would vote out of office all these polygamist men. And they would, therefore, make Mormon Utah more American.

Brigham Young, knowing the loyalty of Mormon women being no different from Mormon men, knew that if you give Mormon women the vote, this doubles the power of the Mormon vote. And that's what happened. Mormon women were given the vote, and this wiped out immediately the population game of non-Mormons who had been coming into Utah during the previous years since the completion of the transcontinental railroad. And Mormons maintained the power, politically, in Utah, until the federal assault of the 1880s against Mormon polygamy. Which in fact, ironically, although by necessity, one of

the activities of that assault was to disfranchise the women of Utah, because congress finally got it, that if you allowed the women of Utah to vote, you're doubling the power of the Mormon hierarchy, because Mormon women will follow the instructions of the Mormon hierarchy on how to vote.

And so they lost the right to vote 15 years after they gained it, because of the federal campaign against polygamy, which was also a campaign against Mormon theocracy.

Verdoia: May 10, 1869, arguably the most important event in some 22 years plays out in Utah territory. And that is the ceremonial joining of the transcontinental railroad line in the territory of Utah Promontory Summit. Now I am one of those who subscribes to the notion that nothing in this area took place without Brigham Young's involvement. And here we have, perhaps the most important ceremonial event in Utah's young history playing out, and Brigham Young is not present. What are we to read?

Quinn: Well, Brigham Young was very, very unhappy that the transcontinental railroad was not joined in Salt Lake City. And he thought that this was a slap in the face against the Mormons who had done all the grading work from the Wyoming border to assist, and to make it possible, for the Union Pacific railroad to go the direction. And at one point, when he learned that despite the contracts with the Union Pacific to provide the grading of the road and for the track, when he learned that Union Pacific was going to choose Ogden instead of Salt Lake City, he behind their backs went to the Central Pacific trying to encourage the Central Pacific to take a southern route that would end up in Salt Lake City and would force the Union Pacific to lay tracks to join the Central Pacific in Salt Lake City. And the Union Pacific found out about this behind the scenes effort, and the moneyed men who were in charge, made an agreement that they would ignore this offer.

Brigham Young was willing to sweeten it with money, but the Central Pacific financiers had a lot more money than he did, and they were interested in getting as much money as they could from the federal government with as little layout as possible from their own funds, and that meant taking the shorter route. And the shorter route ended in Ogden.

But Brigham Young was so angry about what he saw as an intentional affront to Mormon effort and cooperation that he would not participate. There is an interesting symbolic difference, too, in the laying and the joining of those rails. When you see the photograph of the two trains, the train coming on the Central Pacific route from California meeting the locomotive of the Union Pacific at the point where the golden spike was drilled. There are two major symbols in that event. One of them is that men on, holding onto the smoke stacks of the two locomotives, are reaching out to one another, holding bottles of whiskey, which was a very non-Mormon symbol captured by the photographer on the site. The other symbol was that the joining of the rails was made by the driving of a golden spike. Now Brigham Young had, for decades, preached against, and done everything he could to discourage the mining of gold in Utah, because he felt that would be a get rich kind of environment and culture that would attract a mass of non-Mormon miners to Utah. So he had done his best to discourage Mormons from getting involved in the gold mining business, which basically left it, the gold extraction business, to non-Mormons.

So there were these two very non-Mormon, gentile, Babylon, symbols connected with the joining of the rails in Promontory, Utah. First, the two men are reaching across with bottles of whiskey, and second, the final spike being driven being a gold spike, which was a symbolic enemy that Brigham Young had been fighting against ever since the gold rush occurred in California.

When Brigham Young created an independent railroad to bring a spur line down to Salt Lake City, it was called the Central Pacific railroad, and it joined in Salt Lake City it had its final spike driving. And Brigham Young was the one, again with symbols, Brigham Young is there, he is the one who uses the sledge hammer to drive the spike, the spike is not gold, because that would represent what he had been fighting against. The spike was iron, from the Church-owned iron mines. Non-precious metal that Mormons had been involved in since the 1850s, and then finally the spike, the last spike that he drove, had the words "Holiness to the Lord" inscribed on them. So you have these three symbols, Brigham Young, an iron spike, and the words "Holiness to the Lord" being his symbol that this is the Lord's railroad, not the gentile railroad that was joined in Promontory.

Martha Bradley, PhD

Historian Martha Bradley has written on a broad spectrum of issues, ranging from Utah's early economic development to plural marriage to the Women's Movement. In recent years she has spent considerable time exploring the architectural history and urban development stages of Utah. She has served on the faculty of Brigham Young University and the University of Utah. She was interviewed by Promontory Producer Ken Verdoia in Salt Lake City.

Verdoia: Let's begin with this notion of trying to understand the era between 1860 and 1870. A marketplace and an economic center. If you could take someone by the hand and take them back to that point in time and try to describe what the economic activity of Salt Lake City and the Utah Territory was like. How might you see it?

Bradley: There are some wonderful photographs of main street from the 1860's and the thing that strikes you when you look at them is that most of the buildings were one or two stories tall. They were relatively small businesses that were run by families or individual entrepreneurs. They specialized in a particular type of product that might be sold or service that might be given but there was a whole line of services available in Salt Lake City as early as 1860.

But it would have looked like any dusty frontier town. Main Street itself was not paved, there were wood sidewalks that ran along the side of it. Wagons and horses and people would have been walking up and down the street. During the daylight hours that the street would have been busy. It would have been filled with people talking and conducting business. The streets immediately to the east and the west would have already have some sign of industry or small warehouses and so there was already a diversification of the main street itself and the streets pushing in both directions. These primarily residential areas, but to the west increasing industry and warehouses. Already in the 1860's Brigham Young was encouraging the members of his church to be involved in home manufacture of goods. I think he could anticipate the changes that would occur in Salt Lake City when the railroad came and so he encouraged his people to be self-sufficient. And he would frequently take time in general conference addresses to talk about the importance of everyone producing products that could be sold to one another and to markets outside of the state. He promoted the production of hats and shoes and brooms, clothing. He gave the Relief Society the special commission to engage in the Sara Culture movement, the production of silk, silk products so they wouldn't be dependent on silk dresses or silk fabrics that they would have to import from outside of the state. The home manufacturer was an early way that Brigham Young started addressing the dependence that he saw too many of his people having on outside markets. By the end of the 1860's the discussion started to be conducted about joining together in some sort of cooperative organization and in the mid 60's the group of very prominent businessmen in Salt Lake City joined together and came up with the idea of Zions Cooperative Mercantile Institution

which was the same sort of thing. Let's join together to create some sort of economic opposition to outsiders so that we can take care of our own.

Verdoia: You say that by 1860 Salt Lake City looked like many other frontier communities. And yet there is something uniquely different about the Salt Lake Valley as a primary settlement to the Utah Territory and that is the fact that it is organized around theological or spiritual organizing principles. How did that influence the nature of economics, economic interaction in the marketplace, did it influence it?

Bradley: Well, let me talk more broadly about that settlement pattern and maybe inch my way towards that, but the when Salt Lake City was originally platted and people were given their individual family lots, it was based on the idea of the plat of the city of Zion that had been a revelation given by Joseph Smith in 1833 when the Mormons were living in Kirkland. And so the streets are laid out according to the cardinal directions of the compass north, south, east, west. And they are very regular, they are very wide and there is this very strict sense of the appropriate distance a building should be located from the street. So that is what dictates the original platting of the city, but very quickly within a decade the Mormons start to build other types of buildings that sort of pull them away from that original theological idea about what a city should be, the plat of the city of Zion. And you see it in a couple of different ways. First of all and just using Brigham Young's estate as an example, Brigham Young starts to build for his family sort of family kingdom and it includes houses for his various wives and children, eventually a school house and a whole bunch of other out buildings that provide all the basic services and resources that his family requires. But then very close to his home located in the very center of downtown Salt Lake City the Mormons start to build a number of other buildings that really don't have anything to do with the basic survival, but create certain amenities that bring the city up to a different level. Richard Bushman describes this new type of city as the gentile city, a city that is not necessarily based on a theological idea, but a city that is beautiful, that is about civility and about the gentile life. Which means you have access to certain cultural amenities. The Salt Lake Theater for example, the Social Hall, those are buildings that aren't necessary for the physical survival of the people but very much about the cultural and intellectual survival of the people. So within a decade after that original settlement those types of structures and institutions are established and that creates a very different kind of a city from that original intent as determined by the plat of the city of Zion. And so that rising level of sophistication which doesn't mark that of other urban areas on the East Coast but certainly important in terms of the western experience is also running parallel to a similar growth in economic life. And economic life up until the coming of the railroad that is largely based on the internal trade or exchange of goods and increasingly after the coming of the railroad the exchange is good with state's markets in the rest of the United States as well.

Verdoia: Which brings me to the consideration of Brigham Young. Often associated with extraordinary planning power, social power, political power, theological power, economic power. Brigham Young seems to be a man that encourages those interests such as the theater, recognizing the need for social, eventually for parks, but at the same time while he encourages this he also wants to have a certain confined aspect of Salt Lake. Do you see that playing out the dichotomy or this dichotomy if you will, the man's interest.

Bradley: Some of the reasons why Brigham Young is so incredibly interesting to study because he is so enigmatic. He is very broad-minded and recognizes the importance of culture. You know he travels widely in Europe before the Salt Lake Temple is built for example and the influence that he sees in Gothic architecture from England for example we see materialized in the temple itself, so he is experienced. He sees the value of cultural influences from outside of Utah, but as you say in terms of

economic life he also sees those outside influences as a great threat. And he wants above all else to maintain the stability and the security of his people and so he develops economic programs that will guarantee that type of economic security.

Verdoia: What external forces started to influence the Utah marketplace in the 1860's.

Bradley: Well, in the aftermath of the Utah War (1857-1858) I think there is a growing suspicion of anything that has to do with the federal government and so the presence of representatives of the government is a continual irritant and always a reminder that there is some sort of outside force that can interfere with the internal affairs of Utah Territory. The Utah Territorial legislature from the very first asserted its independence and wanted to maintain that independence, but the presence of those federal officials was a reminder that that was largely an illusion and that they always has this sort of superior ability to interfere when they felt the need, there was a need for that kind of interference.

Verdoia: You started seeing people like Patrick Edward Connor. (A controversial U.S. Army office headquartered in Salt Lake City starting in 1862.) How are these outside inquisitors, these outside settlers, if you will, economic settlers viewed within the community?

Bradley: Connor is an interesting figure because he comes and in 1862 his manner a little bit restless, a little bit bored, they really don't have anything to do and so he allows some of them to do some prospecting and they make some of the earliest discoveries of the rich mineral deposits in the mountains around the Salt Lake Valley as well as in other parts of the state. And that really stirs things up. Brigham Young up until that time had had a sort of tentative interest in mining particularly up in Summit County. He had funded some initial exploration of the mineral deposits in those mountains before, even before Connor's men discovered these deposits. But after Connor who is an outsider establishes that mining will be a concern that he and his men will pursue, Brigham Young takes a very different stance on that. And he starts to encourage his people to stay away from the mining enterprises. Not to interfere, not to be seduced by the lure of riches. He is particularly concerned about the moral impact of mixing with the prospectors and the miners in the mining towns.

Verdoia: The enigmatic Brigham Young. The man who could welcome cultural influences. He at the same time could be extraordinarily sensitive to how those influences might in fact corrupt the enterprise of building the very special places.

Bradley: And he goes back and forth you know, you can find statements in General Conference addresses where he is totally opposed to the idea of mining for example. And then you can find others where he is talking in support of mining efforts, telling the people the various ways he sees that kind of wealth building up the kingdom. So he goes back and forth on many of those issues even to the point of creating policies that might either facilitate some sort of economic exchange or absolutely prevent it. So you know he is all over the board.

Verdoia: How do his followers react?

Bradley: With prettymuch unquestioning loyalty. But they also try to work around of his hard stands on economic issues. You really see that in the mining history of central Utah. Originally Brigham Young is so opposed to having any kind of interaction between mining, miners, prospectors and his people, but there are many people down for example in Beaver County who stand to make a great deal of money if they put their resources into a mining enterprise. And they, as you say, they solicit some sort of official approval from Brigham Young so that they can feel comfortable in going forward in that kind of action.

So you see that kind of effort more outside of the Salt Lake Valley and central Utah and southern Utah you see this effort of various individuals trying to solicit some sort of support from Brigham Young on issues that he apparently has made some sort of official proclamation about like mining and I think it is in hopes that it will be some sort of wiggle room so that they can make money that would actually help the kingdom be built up.

Verdoia: Okay, so here we are at this point when the 1860's are progressing, the railroad is not here yet. But there is sensitivity on the part of Brigham Young and other leaders of the Utah Territory. That there must be some mechanisms in place to protect the integrity of the marketplace, of the people who settled this territory. And this starts leading in the direction of the cooperative move. Let's begin with this concept of Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution. What is its genesis? What is its reason for being brought into existence?

Bradley: I think that in the earliest discussions about the potential for forming this kind of an alliance under the cooperative umbrella it was in reaction to the perception of an economic threat from outsiders and particularly those non-Mormon businessmen who were already in Salt Lake City and who were already very successful who were making a lot of money off of the saints themselves, so it wasn't just the perception of new comers coming in and additional businesses being formed. But these were successful businesses that were already making money off of the Mormon people. So it was partly in reaction to that. I think it was also a reaction in terms of fear. The fear that this threat could become even greater and that they wouldn't be able to stand up against it. I think it also was a recognition of the growth of the Utah Territory that there were many communities throughout the Utah Territory throughout the Mormon corridor who had gone beyond the settlement stage. Who were now in this formative stage where if they needed products from outside of the state of Utah some sort of store was going to have to be established and it could be a store that was owned and operated by an outsider or it could be a store that was run by a cooperation, a cooperative of stockholders of people from that community itself. So the alternative was we can do it for ourselves and we can keep control over it or we can give control over to someone else. We will economically benefit if we control it ourselves whereas the benefit will go to someone else if we don't.

Verdoia: But he also sees the opportunity of this specter of non-Mormon businessmen doing good business and making money. He also sees there and opportunity to chastise his flock for following fashion. As being lured or seduced if you will by current trends.

Bradley: And he calls those "fashionable goods" or "states goods". . .and that was a very loaded term. It wasn't just things that were imported from outside of the state but it was those kinds of things that you probably ought not buy. The many of the cooperatives throughout Utah Territory sold these kinds of products that were produced at home, the brooms, the straw hats, the dresses, the cloth that was woven by pioneer women. Those kinds of materials that were produced at home were frequently sold in the local cooperatives as well as cast iron stoves and a variety of other products that were considered to be essentials, you know essentials for the frugal housewife rather than the sort of frivolous goods that he would have called states goods.

Verdoia: So this notion of the cooperative as we considered the ZCMI, starts to physically manifest itself in Salt Lake City where there is a symbolic if you will seal of approval that starts to appear.

Bradley: I love to imagine main street during that first few years after the ZCMI cooperative institution was first organized because businesses that became associated under that umbrella which were the first departments of department store would put the logo of ZCMI over their door. The all seeing eye, more

holiness to the Lord was recognition that this was a member institution in the ZCMI operation. That meant that if you went inside that door that you were a loyal member of the church who was supporting a church business. And if you went in a different business next door that didn't have that kind of logo over the door then you were essentially a traitor. And these wonderful narratives about people in Logan or in Ogden or wherever who chose not to buy their new stoves at a ZCMI cooperative business and were called in by there bishop and scolded for not supporting the company stores. So there is this really obvious physical way of establishing your loyalty to this economic system.

Verdoia: In other respects the cooperative movement takes on community wide characteristics and that plays out in dramatic fashion in places such as Porterville or Brigham City and this seems to be more as I say community wide in nature. Can you help characterize that movement?

Bradley: Even today in Brigham City there are physical remains of the widespread community nature of the cooperative movement up there. Brigham City's experiment in cooperation was one of the most successful. And besides the cooperative dry goods store itself there are a number of other associated industries where cloth and clothing and shoes and other kinds of products were produced. And so it was a more diversified economy based on this center connection back to cooperation.

Verdoia: Was it a finger in the crack in the dike. . .or was the economic challenge the whole dam destined not capable of holding back the tide of economic enterprise that would eventually envelope Utah?

Bradley: Absolutely, I think that because of the growth that continued at a rapid pace throughout the 60's and 70's and 80's in Utah, you know more and more people just kept flooding Utah Territory. There was no way that Brigham Young could prevent his people from engaging in commerce with outsiders. You know that was, that became a pipe dream right from the very first. But, perhaps more important than that the cooperative movement created a mechanism for people in these various communities you know more than three of four hundred communities had some sort of cooperative enterprise of one kind or another. It provided them with a mechanism for joining together in terms of economic life. And so it was just another agent of community. It was another way that people could come together besides their association they felt in their ward which is a religious kind of community that is created. This economic cooperation was proof to them that Mormonism permeated all aspects of their lives and that felt good to them. Now they believed they were a community of saints and this was just yet another manifestation of that kind of community ethic.

Verdoia: Was the goal of the cooperative movement communalism or was it control?

Bradley: I think it was both. That is a very difficult question because it depends on how far you back up. Perhaps when Brigham Young and the various businessmen that he first talked about these ideas with maybe they thought of it as control but it very quickly became something far larger than that. And it was I like to think of it more as a community mechanism. It was another way that people in communities could join together to create a stable base for yet another aspect of their lives.

Verdoia: Circling the wagons economically?

Bradley: Absolutely, yeah, it was another line that divided them, insiders from outsiders. You know every bit is important as polygamy or any of the other distinctive beliefs of the Mormon Church. If you were in a community with a Mormon cooperative, a very small community of say 500 people and you were an outsider that would be something that would disadvantage you. Because you would not be a

stockholder in that cooperative and you wouldn't have access to goods in the same convenient and efficient way and so it would impact your life. That was very much a benefit to members of the church and a disadvantage to people outside of the church in the smaller outlying communities.

Verdoia: You talked about the physical manifestation the all seeing eye, holiness to the Lord and almost an unspoken sense that your neighbors were watching as you entered these stores. Did this have a chilling affect on non-Mormon businessmen that were in the community at the time ZCMI was organized?

Bradley: Oh, I think it must have. I think it must have been incredibly upsetting to them because this was essentially a way of dividing the customers up into sort of convenient lumps. And those individuals who weren't necessarily loyal or active members of the church would of course continue to conduct business with them. But those who were many of them would never have disobeyed the advice of their president and crossed that line. It was a line, it was like drawing a line in the sand along main street if you will, and those who chose to cross it often did it at their own peril.

Verdoia: In 1868 Brigham Young signs a contract that provides labor support for the construction of the railroad through the Territory of Utah. Do you have any sense of how that news was received? Was it cause for celebration, cause for concern? What is your understanding of that?

Bradley: In each of the northern counties of Utah Territory as the railroad would come through their county the building of the railroad, the gathering of resources whether it be wood for the ties or metal for aspects of the building of the railroad it added greatly, it benefited greatly each of those counties as it came through. It provided work for men who might be farmers or who might be engaged in all kinds of different enterprises. It was a ready source of work and economic benefit for the people in those counties. So whether the original news of it was well received or not it was a benefit to the Territory of Utah. And it sort of crept its way through and when you study the records of the individual counties you can see the way, they always talk about it in their county commission minutes. For example they will talk about the call for workers, the call for lumber or whatever it is but it is seen as an economic benefit to each of the Territories or each of the areas that it moves through.

Verdoia: Let me ask you to take a kind of a longer view. How successful was specifically the ZCMI nature of the cooperative move?

Bradley: Well, yeah, the parent operation of ZCMI was never a true cooperative it was essential a wholesale entity that sent goods out to the local cooperatives. The local cooperatives were in some cases very successful and lasted for a decade or two decades sometimes three decades I think there are a couple of them that are still in operation today. But for the most part they were very beneficial.

The local cooperatives were particularly beneficial during the formative stage, the stage after the first decade of settlement. When the community was becoming more stratified when more people were moving in with special talents or skills it helped them to get over that hump. And in many cases the cooperative would close down after a decade or two because of that, because then the community had other business that were competing and that more efficiently or more appropriately met the specific demands of the population. So they really helped in that first formative time period but didn't necessarily help so much in the long run or have an enduring impact in the long run. In the more isolated communities the cooperatives lasted longer and that is because they continued to address the very specific demands of the people who continued to live there.

Verdoia: Is there a physical impact on the appearance of Utah with the coming of the railroad?

Bradley: I know it changes dramatically the built environment so I can react in terms of that. In 1869 the built environment changes dramatically and it changes very quickly and the reason for that is not necessarily the free marketplace, but the introduction of new products. Before that time the tools that were used to build buildings were relatively primitive, you know they were ones that have been carried into the west in wagons so they are not necessarily large tools, but they were relatively primitive. But after 1869 more sophisticated tools, parts of buildings, building materials can be shipped in and so in terms of the physical environment you start seeing some pretty important changes very quickly in that first decade. We also become exposed to outside styles and outside building technologies and influences and so you start seeing that kind of an influence in a physical sense as well. And so the market in terms of materials that are used in the physical environment explodes. You know it is so incredibly different from the time period before that that we have a very different look to the city within a decade and it is all tied to the coming of the railroad.

Verdoia: So in effect what you are saying is this is in fact the change.

Bradley: I am really interested in another aspect of the coming of the railroad in terms of the physical layout of Salt Lake City. After the railroad comes to Salt Lake City and they start building industrial complexes and associated businesses near the railroad depots they are also is this immigration of an increased number of immigrants who come from places in Europe besides Great Britain and many of those ethnic populations start to locate near the railroad depots on the west side of Salt Lake City. And in particularly the last two decades of the 19th century, and they gather in ethnic enclaves. And the reason why I think that is so interesting is because it really challenges the homogeneity of the way we tell the story of Salt Lake City. Right to the west of main street and very much tied to the story of the coming of the railroad is a diverse ethnic group of men and women who worship in very different churches, a variety of different religions who eventually move to other parts of the state perhaps to engage in mining or you know in agriculture or whatever. But there is this sort of secret side of the city forgotten in official narratives of the city and it is located in the proximity of the railroad. It is the gateway as it is called now to Salt Lake City. But it is interesting that the places they lived, that the places they gather are close in proximity to the railroad depots.

Verdoia: One of the primary reasons that Brigham championed the transcontinental railroad was the increased ease of bringing immigrants of his church to Utah Territory. Yet, if you look at the passenger manifests in the first five years of operation from 1869 to 1874 there is a majority of non-LDS travelers coming into the Territory.

Bradley: Right, and the Greeks and increasingly after the railroad is finished there are also Orientals. And those ethnic populations are reluctant to move into the east side of Salt Lake City with the dominant Mormon population that is Anglo-Saxon and largely of British decent so they settle on the other side and they gather together with people of their own faith or their own language group or whatever. But there is very much this division between, again between insiders and outsiders, but it becomes east and west and the location of those neighborhoods is related to the placement of, or proximity of the railroads.

Verdoia: You have already made the statement about the 1860's as an extraordinary decade of transformation in Utah. For you how does that most clearly manifest itself?

Bradley: In a physical sense, is that what you mean? By the end of the 1860's the avenues have been

plotted and many middle class families or blue collar working families would have moved into the avenues. The avenues would have been physically different from the center part of Salt Lake City. The roads would have been more narrow, the lots were smaller, the houses were located closer to the street and they started to be oriented around a different type of almost public transportation. This was the distance from the place that those people most likely would have worked and I think that changes that results in a different sense of connection to the community itself the people in the avenues might have been more connected to their neighborhood itself rather than the larger community of Salt Lake City. So there starts to be divisions between different zones and neighborhoods and parts of the city, partly about economic levels, ethnicity and proximity to place of employment. But there is this shifting in terms of zoning there was by the end of the 1860's there was a part of Salt Lake City where cultural buildings were built. There seemed to be a growing awareness of where civic or governmental buildings would be built. So there was this sort of shifting and rearrangement of spaces in terms of zones.

Verdoia: This takes place in effect one generation after the first white settlement in the Salt Lake Valley. And so this relatively short period of time they were entering this new era. And certainly many of those original pioneers are still very much alive as this decade of the 1870's is prepared to dawn. To them as they were one of the originals or one of the early arrivals would the future appear secure or uncertain?

Bradley: You know I think in terms of their relationship with the country at large it might have seemed really uncertain and that is because of the increase of tension over the issue of polygamy. But in terms of their own personal success, the money that they were making off of their businesses or the sale of their land or whatever I think they would have been very optimistic because growth was very much, how would I say that, yeah. The decade of the 70's is one when another hundred settlements are organized from Salt Lake City and so the state or the Territory of Utah is still being settled and the colonies are being established. And so growth is very much the focus of the day. You see that in the records of ZCMI. You know you can track the growth of that one particular entity but its connection to larger entities throughout the rest of the state. Many of those men who are involved in ZCMI are also involved in other business. Men like Horace Eldridge become very, very wealthy, in fact Brigham Young holds out Horace Eldridge in a conference address as an example of a good rich man. You know we should look to his lead because he knows how to deal with wealth and still be a man of God. And so those men who, who we give credit to for turning over their, let's see, I guess another way of saying that would be, the men who were involved in the initial organization of ZCMI gave the products, the inventory of their individual businesses to ZCMI but they also were involved in other enterprises that continued to grow and continued to bring them monetary success. And so into the next decade those men became key figures in the economic commercial life of Salt Lake City and of Utah Territory in general. So they are very much marked by success and optimism about their economic futures.

Verdoia: So in a very simple sense the years of isolation are over.

Bradley: Right, absolutely, with the coming of the railroad but also this attitude that perhaps we should be open to some sort of relationship, partnership with businesses outside of the state. Because the Territory stands to benefit by those kinds of associations.

Donald Strack

Donald Strack is an historian and writer whose work is motivated by a life-long love affair with American railroads. He has written numerous articles about the origins and construction of rail lines in the American West, and maintains his own web site on the subject. Don was interviewed in Salt Lake

City by Promontory Producer Ken Verdoia.

Verdoia: Let's try and take this 21st century audience back in time to the mid-1860's and the way the concept of the transcontinental railroad might have been viewed. It's importance literally to the heart and soul of America.

Strack: It would have enhanced the transportation possibilities for the people coming to Utah tremendously because most people who came to Utah in the previous ten years would have at least ridden, or at least seen one of the railroads east of the Mississippi River. So a lot of them would know what a railroad was and the ease that the transportation brought for getting from one point to the next. So the way they came west from the Mississippi River by wagon, or by handcart or whatever method was available to them, a lot of them would have wished for a train. So when the word reached them, probably in 1864 or 1865, that the railroad was definitely coming to Utah and going through Utah headed for California, they would have been quite excited.

Verdoia: So that explains how it might affect the people that were interested in immigrating to Utah, but what did a transcontinental railroad mean for this nation especially in light of the fact that it is coming out of epic conflict that had torn the fabric of the nation?

Strack: The railroad was planned long before the civil war was. There were several individuals in Congress, in Washington, and lobbyists from California, I think Asa Whitney, if I pronounce his name properly from Wisconsin, he'd been working on trying to get a transcontinental railroad for quite some time. David Bain covers it quite well in his Empire Express book. But the effort to get the railroad built started long before the civil war. There were conflicting ideas of which route to take, a northern route, a central route, or a southern route. Having the civil war start kind of took the southern route out of consideration. So it made it easier to get the central route through. There was a lot of consideration being built to building the railroad before the war.

Verdoia: It really begins to take light in many respects in terms of the actual construction. The notion of laying tracks and some people viewed this as a tangible bond that is A) helping to heal the nation in the years after the civil war and B) helping in the fullest expression of manifest destiny. A nation that is practically ungovernable without that communication ability through the telegraph and the transcontinental railroad can you consider that for me.

Strack: There was a pretty high level fear that because California was becoming so economically powerful because of the minerals, the gold and silver and the potential agricultural growth. I think there was a fear in the eastern states that California was going to leave the Union because there was really no benefit for California to remain with the Union. So there is a desire to tie the nation together. Unfortunately there is 1500 miles of what many people determined to be nothing between California and the Mississippi River, so there were a lot of interests. The capitalists got involved and saw a chance to make some money. The politicians got involved and saw a chance to enhance their own standing. I think it all came together in the mid 1860's.

Verdoia: So as we begin with these two great enterprises coming from the west, the Central Pacific, coming from the east, the Union Pacific, how did Utah come into the mix? When does Utah start to become a figure in the discussion of the railroad?

Strack: Everyone agreed that the central route had to go through Utah. Of course, with Salt Lake City being the largest city between the Mississippi River and San Francisco or any of the other California

cities, it was a foregone conclusion that it would come through Salt Lake. But when the engineers and the surveyors explored the various routes through Utah they unfortunately went on the north end of the lake instead of the south end. But Utah was seen as a kind of a resupply point to buy supplies, water, a place to maintain the equipment once you got there. There was a general feeling that Ogden would be the junction city. The dual interests of the Central Pacific wanting to go east and the Union Pacific wanting to go west that kind of fell by the wayside for a brief period of time. But then Ogden obviously became the only choice because that was where the settled part of Utah was.

Verdoia: Now, Union Pacific, the engineers, vice president Thomas C. Durant, they viewed Utah as almost a necessary aspect of their plans for construction.

Strack: They could see that Brigham Young and all of the people in Utah, because of their ties to the church, they needed an ally. There is no way that they could get the railroad built without the cooperation of the Mormons. It just would not have happened.

Verdoia: And that leads me to the consideration of Brigham Young. How is he involved in this?

Strack: There are some quotes from some of the early pioneers that were with him on that first trip in 1847. There was a constant source of discussion, we will put the railroad through this pass, we will put the railroad, we will cross this creek here. I think President Young was fully aware of the potential route for the railroad 25 years before.

Verdoia: But as we rolled into the early months of 1868 there is a call that starts to come out for an involvement of his people and the possibility for a rather extraordinary undertaking by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From that standpoint Brigham Young as business leader as a powerful figure marshaling the work force. His interactions to be specific.

Strack: Leonard Arrington wrote about the School of Prophets, where the church leaders got together and decided that if they didn't do this economic development, or provide for or at least plan for it, someone else would. And they did not want to keep the foreigners out. They wanted to at least have some control over how it was developed and where the various lines went. How the development took place.

Verdoia: So tell me what kind of work these Mormon laborers undertook for the Union Pacific. Was it easy stuff, walk in the park stuff?

Strack: Oh, no. If you've driven up Weber Canyon or Echo Canyon, there is some pretty rough country up there. You can drive it now at 70 mph on Interstate 80 and Interstate 84, but it was a much rougher trip in those days. Probably the biggest obstacle would have been Devil's Gateway, right there about two miles up Weber Canyon. That was a tremendous geographical block. When Hastings did his original guide for immigrants in 1846 he had yet to travel his projected route. He rode that route on horseback that summer of 1846 and he discovered the difficulty of going through it; that the gorge right there where the Weber River is, is about the only thing that would be able to go through it. He hurried to try to meet the Donner-Reed party and other parties that were on their way to California. He didn't get to them in time. He left a message for them to not go through that route because you couldn't get a wagon through there. So they went over Big Mountain Pass and Little Mountain Pass with the subsequent delays, but bypassing the difficulty of the route through Devil's Gateway. Also down in Echo Canyon itself, because you are not really following a river, you are following a creek, and there is some big sandstone crests that are so scenic nowadays, would have been tremendous difficulties for

travel down the canyon.

Verdoia: Now, I want to ask you most specifically, what were these workers charged with doing? What was their job?

Strack: Build the railroad, on contract. There was a gray area about who the contract was with and who benefited financially from the contract. There was probably several contracts involved. That is one of the things I would really like to research and nail down with comments from diaries and journals and Brigham Young papers, and other papers that might be available. Because it really is a gray area depending on whether or not you want to prove something against the Mormons or in favor of the Mormons, different people tell the story from different angles. And I do like to find out exactly what really happened. It is very possible we will never know.

Verdoia: I want you to try to help a viewer understand the nature of the work that the Mormon people did in Weber and Echo Canyon, literally what were they asked to do, asked to knock holes in the side of the mountain drilling tunnels, whatever.

Strack: First they would have to survey it and decide on some sort of even grade, which is the grade of ascent, the grade of climb. Most railroads would prefer to stay less than one foot of rise for every hundred feet of length. That is called a one percent grade. In Weber Canyon and Echo Canyon the maximum grade is about one and a quarter foot for every hundred feet, so you can imagine a railroad car that is about a hundred feet long. If you take one end and raise it up a foot, or fifteen inches, and then you can basically see that. That is quite bit of rise.

Verdoia: And tell me what difference that makes, why that grade is so important.

Strack: It makes it easier for the locomotives to work. The locomotive can pull a longer train, it can lift more commodities, more people on passenger trains. As a matter of fact the grade in Weber Canyon and in Echo Canyon is such a significant part of the Union Pacific construction that every locomotive they purchased up until probably the mid 1960's was designed specifically to be able to climb Weber and Echo Canyon without helpers.

Verdoia: And I would imagine this notion of a grade influences the direction that Union Pacific chooses to come into Utah.

Strack: Definitely. Any railroad surveyor will also try to follow a water course or creek or a river because that is much more of a normal flow decent down towards a larger body of water. There are a couple gorges in Weber Canyon, there is one that we know today as Taggart and there is another at Gateway, where there is a rest today. Of course it was a small obstacle for the Interstate 80 constructors, but in the 1930's 1940's when the built the US Highway 30, they went through the Devil's Gateway gorge and it was a tremendous difficulty. If you are able to look, there is a concrete retaining wall that keeps the highway from falling into the river. As to the construction in the earlier years, it is just a matter of moving dirt, using two horses hitched to what is called a tip scraper. I think most scrapers were about a half of cubic yard capacity and the people who knew how to operate them, they were to furnish the horses and the railroad would have furnished the equipment. They would scrape a small amount of dirt that we would see nowadays just like a pile, maybe a foot high and two feet around. That is as much as that scraper would hold. They would scrape that up and then they would have the horses move to a different location and they would dump that. And then they would just turn around and come back.

Verdoia: I would imagine to affect the nature of the grade all the way through Echo and Weber Canyon there must have been an army of workers.

Strack: There is some estimates of five to eight thousand men. I am sure the number fluctuated daily depending on the circumstances of each individual involved. But the contracts would have called for a certain number of cubic feet to be moved within a certain period of time. The high spots you scrape off to fill the low spots. It's just a process that you have an army of men and an army of horses and you just work at it. There is a part in a Laura Ingalls books where her father takes her out to the one point where the railroad is being constructed there in Minnesota and they just watch this army of men and horses. And the description of it, when my daughter had me read it, I immediately thought of the grading that took place here in Utah.

It was a tremendous effort. So when you see comments that two grades were constructed side by side, I doubt the fact that there two hundred miles of parallel grade. I know a couple of people who are in the engineering departments of the railroad, and they tell me that you would try to locate the grade at the strategic spots, the narrow spots. You wouldn't be able to construct a complete parallel grade. There is some out at near Promontory, but that is about the only spot to where they really exist.

Verdoia: Well, there are those spots out in Promontory that speak to this notion of the race that was affected in the final months of construction of the transcontinental railroad. Can you describe what went into that because it sounds like a fascinating time when both these competing interests literally are racing as fast as they can to the future of the nation?

Strack: I don't want to diminish it but the race was to get the railroad competed. A completed railroad meant the bonds, the government bonds, the land grant bonds, would be available for use as collateral to borrow money to build more railroad. It simply meant more money for the coffers of each of the corporations.

Verdoia: That did not diminish it by the way, because what you are alluding to is this, this delicate balance that exists, maybe so indelicate at times between the driving commercial interests that exists on the hands on the parts of financiers and this romantic national interest of joining a nation together. And those two things really do coexist, don't they?

Strack: Oh yeah. While researching the book that I wrote about the railroads in Ogden, I found a quote from a historian Wallace Foreman. He talks about how the race for Promontory didn't really end at Promontory. It didn't really end at Ogden. It ended at Samuel Hooper's house in Washington DC where Dodge for the Union Pacific and Huntington for Central Pacific were in some very serious negotiations to decide where the meeting point would be. Because even though each company was frantically trying to get as much land as possible, as much route as possible, as much railroad completed as possible, they saw the reality. They didn't want to spend any money more than they had to, because it would just be wasted money. They saw the reality of it. I think I did find in my research a quote that Grenville Dodge, the chief engineer for the Union Pacific, had a friendship with President Grant and Grant had just been sworn into office in March of 1869. Grant probably told him on a personal basis if you guys don't find a meeting point, we will decide it for you. And anyone involved in that realized that neither side would want that. So they went into some serious negotiations at Samuel Hooper's house in Washington DC on April 8th and they came out the next morning with an agreement and Congress approved it in a non-binding resolution the next day. There is some comments that the Congress decided the meeting point on April 10th through that same resolution. That is not true. The meeting point was decided the day

before by the parties themselves, it was not forced on them at all.

Verdoia: You talk on the website and in your book about the notion of what takes place as the construction crews move ahead. I find this very interesting of what follows the railroad. It's cities almost spontaneously first on the scene as this rail line is coming from the east. Sometimes new business, sometimes bringing railroad supplies, sometimes catering to the more rambunctious side of human character.

Strack: The construction crews were likely paid on a daily basis. The numbers of people involved in the construction crews would fluctuate daily. Some guy would say I don't want to this anymore and he just takes his horse and leaves, or his horses and his scraper, whatever tools and implements he may have come with, and just simply leaves. So the construction forces could have changed daily. So there would have been a lot of cash in those camps. And there is always an entrepreneur who takes advantage of people with cash in their pockets. The businesses that came along were unique in that they used sawed lumber. And there were saw mills every place cutting lumber in the Uintah Mountains and the Wasatch Mountains. The sawmills stayed in place. They had the ability here in Northern Utah to acquire sawed lumber, and its use jumped considerably. The improvement in construction materials followed the railroad. The ability to work stone masonry. There was a lot of masonry work for the bridge abutments and so part of the contracts with Brigham Young included masons. They would have honed their skills and other projects later would have benefited from that. Those masons being out of work and available after the railroad was constructed.

Verdoia: What about the wild side. People make references to hell on wheels and the recreational attributes that would follow behind the rail.

Strack: It makes for an exciting story. Very romanticized. I don't pay attention to that kind of thing because it is mostly gee whiz stuff. You know it's lawlessness, gambling, prostitution. All kinds of things were going on and it is all temporary and goes away very quickly. All these camps that were hell on wheels, they didn't stick around very long because the construction forces left within days of the Golden Spike ceremony. So there was no source of income for them. So they just went some place else. There were other railroads under construction in other parts of the country so they just lifted up their roots and left.

Verdoia: I want to back track a little bit because you make reference to following water as kind of a means of maintaining the grade but water is critical in this era of the locomotive. Speak about that the critical nature of water and having fresh water available.

Strack: A railroad needs water for its locomotives. The locomotives are steam locomotives and in those days they used wood and coal to make fire, then fire to make steam, and as you boil water the minerals come out of it. So there is a tremendous need for fresh clear water, with as low as mineral content as possible. Because as you boil the water, the minerals come out and they tend to plug up the boiler. Every time a railroad route is surveyed, water is a major consideration, the availability of clear fresh water. Not necessarily water out of wells, because anyone who has drank water out of a well will know that very seldom does it tastes clear and fresh. You want a free flowing mountain stream if at all possible for water. And the railroad builders soon discovered that the water routes were beneficial also, because water very seldom falls rapidly, unless you come to rocks. Then you get rapids and white water. There is only two spots in Weber Canyon where there is white water: at Taggart and and at Devil's Gateway.

Verdoia: We are at the point let's jump into this where the railroads agree on the joining spots and move close into position then when we come into those early days of May of 1869. The eighth, ninth and tenth. First people are setting their sites on May 8th, Central Pacific is there but the Union Pacific dignitaries are not there on the eighth can you tell me why.

Strack: There are different stories that they were detained. The Union Pacific train that the dignitaries were on was detained, I don't recall exactly where right now, by some wood cutters men who wanted their wages. By this time Union Pacific had basically stopped paying on their contracts because they were simply out of money. So these construction forces detained Thomas Durant and the other dignitaries that were on the train. There were some feelings in the book that Charles Ames wrote defending the Ames brothers. Because his ancestor was Oliver Ames was one of the major financiers behind the Union Pacific railroad. Oliver Ames kept a pretty good diary and at the time when he wrote this in his diary, he thought that Durant was being a scoundrel, and that Durant had arranged for this delay because he was probably in cahoots with the construction crew. Nobody really knows because people didn't write anything down, so it is hearsay and assumptions from people who knew the people involved.

Verdoia: May 10th is the day when the ceremony is completed. Is May 10th a day of great significance.

Strack: The completion of the transcontinental railroad changed the west. It had to. You could get from Omaha to Sacramento in ten or twelve days. It used to take six months. It is a tremendous national significance. I did some research on the movement of fresh fruits I included in my book about Ogden. I was surprised at how soon fresh fruit started moving east, right away, immediately. Strawberries and pears and obviously those fresh fruits wouldn't have weathered the trip very well, but they kept shipping fresh fruits. One of the first private car companies that you could see was called the California Fast Fruit line. And that was in 1870. They were moving fruit right away because the potential market in the east.

Verdoia: The final act of completing the transcontinental, the so-called Golden Spike ceremony seems to be wrapped in a great deal of romanticism and at times even out right mythology. What are some of those great misunderstandings?

Strack: That the ceremony took place at Promontory Point. The ceremony did not take place at Promontory Point. Promontory Point is 30 miles south. The ceremony took place at Promontory Summit, actually about a mile west of Promontory Summit. Just a large open area. It's Promontory Summit that was used in the joint resolution in Congress, and in the agreement between Dodge and Huntington that they agreed to meet at the summit of the Promontory mountains. It is a very common mistake made by people who write about the transcontinental railroad, and who talked about. They make the mistake quite easily. Some people try to get kind of arrogant, saying, he didn't even know where it took place, Promontory Point is 30 miles south. But you have to be careful because even in the early writings they used the term Promontory Point.

Verdoia: I know your focus is mostly been on Union Pacific but Leland Stanford seems to be a a central figure in the railroad history in Utah. When you are reading what type of image do you take away of Leland Stanford?

Strack: A powerful man who had a vision. Of course for his own career also, but it wouldn't be incorrect to say that he changed California with his vision. Between Huntington and Stanford. I'm sure there are other individuals involved, I don't know California history that well. But between the

personalities of Huntington and Stanford, they got the railroad built across the Nevada as rapidly as they did. And then they also built the Southern Pacific railroad which was designed specifically to stay away from government funding. They did not benefit from the government land grants. And they did that on purpose. They wanted to control the destiny of their own railroad. Central Pacific was the subsidiary of Southern Pacific in later years.

Verdoia: Is this private enterprise, is this public enterprise, is this governmental enterprise, how do we try to explain this specifically from the Union Pacific standpoint?

Strack: As I understand politics in those years, the interest of the government was pretty much the interest of the railroad and vice versa. The capitalists pretty much ran the government and that is what made America America. You can have whatever political thoughts 150 years later than you might want but the reality is the railroad would not have been built if not for the interests of the capitalists. The only way to get the railroad built was to get the land grants from the federal government giving each of these corporations large amounts of land. And it wasn't all land. It was just an alternating pattern of land where the federal government kept the other half. And the federal government kept half of the mineral rights of all the land, and whoever was involved got to keep the other half, or a fourth of the full amount. The precedent was set years before the transcontinental railroad, and the land grants stayed in place for another twenty years.

Verdoia: You made reference earlier to as they neared these last days of construction of the transcontinental railroad the Union Pacific as a company the Union Pacific railway company is strapped for money.

Strack: They just simply overspent themselves. Building the railroad, 1085 miles from Omaha to Promontory. It is a tremendously expensive enterprise of which they defaulted a lot on the contracts. They defaulted and there was corruption involved at all levels because entrepreneurs take advantage as they see opportunities to make money, and they take their opportunities. That is one of the reasons that the railroad, the corporation itself, went through so many reorganizations. It was reorganized twice before Harriman took control at the turn of the century in 1900. You really can't fault for a corporation for over extending themselves because I think most of the people involved in enterprises of that magnitude realize that it is not going to last very long. The emphasis would have been to get the railroad built and we will take care of the financial stuff later. The individuals involved, of course they benefited individually in their own wallet and that was the motivation. That still happens nowadays. A current example would be the satellite telephone. The corporation that put up all of those satellites. They really did not take consideration for the corporation, they are now bankrupt. They have been bought out and reorganized, but the reality is the satellites are still there. The satellites are not coming down. You just have to do some financial shuffling and get on with it. That is what they did with the railroad. They did some financial shuffling to everyone's satisfaction and they got on with it. And they continued on. Harriman rebuilt the railroad in 1898 to 1905. It became the largest money making organization in the world. The rebuilding of the Union Pacific. It was a good thing.

Verdoia: How would you explain the role of the Credit Mobilier?

Strack: Credit Mobilier was the name of the construction company that built the Union Pacific railroad. Central Pacific organized, well, Leland, Huntington, Crocker and Hopkins, they organized the Construction & Finance Corporation for the same reason. One of the major reasons that we know so much about Credit Mobilier is that we were able to get at some of the records of bribery and corruption. On the other hand, the Central Pacific counterpart construction company mysteriously lost all of its

records in a questionable fire, just as the Credit Mobilier investigation was underway. So the Central Pacific was spared the embarrassment. That is why you hear much more about Credit Mobilier than you do about construction and finance on the Central Pacific corporation. The same individuals involved in the organization of the railroad organized the construction company for their own benefit without the government strings attached. As soon as the route was completed, or the route was graded, or track was laid, different levels of completion was allowed later as the route progressed to this meeting point. They were allowed to take these government bonds and they could borrow money on these bonds and the money they borrowed was passed directly to the construction company as payment for the construction of the railroad. But the same people, the same individuals benefited. That is where the corruption comes from. You know there is definitely a link of interest, or what we would call conflict of interest today, which troubles a lot of people nowadays, but you have to keep in mind that we are applying modern morals, modern ethics to a situation that existed 150 years ago.

Verdoia: One of the things that existed back then, too was the overt influencing of Congress. You say that the interest of the capitalists were the interests of the government of the United States and sometimes that meant financial incentives for reaching certain decisions in the.

Strack: Ii has been recorded by other people's research that Oakes Ames was censured. He was a congressman. I am unsure as to which state, I'm sorry, but he was censured from Congress because he accepted bribes, quote unquote. And they spread around a lot of money. That is just the way government worked, everyone benefited. The congressmen themselves benefited personally. They were sometimes given shares of the company and you know, personal financial benefit is a tremendous motivator for anybody.

Verdoia: In the months and years following the completion of the railroad there is a great body of correspondence and financial records that indicate that many of the people in Utah, especially the laborers that labored on the contracts, had gone unfulfilled in their pay. Their contracts were not honored and money didn't get down to the worker. As you understand this was Utah taken for a ride by the construction of the transcontinental railroad, were they victimized or ultimately was their involvement vindicated?

Strack: When the whole thing started, when the contracts were first signed in April of 1868, I really don't believe that the Union Pacific organizers really intended to really bilk the Utah people out of their money. I think that they intended to definitely benefit themselves personally as did all the people who took contracts. That was why Brigham Young organized the School of Prophets to better keep a handle on who would benefit and how the development would take place. I don't know that they really intended to take advantage of the situation financially. By late 1869 when Brigham Young started negotiations with the organizers of the railroad back in Boston, he sent both his son and Bishop John Sharp back to do the negotiations. The railroad basically said we don't have any money, you can't get money out of a turnip. The money was expended. We spent the money building the railroad. Of course you turn that coin over right away and the Credit Mobilier is involved and they are the people who received the money. Maybe the construction company charged too much for its services. That is probably pretty well documented because there are cases where the railroad itself would pay a certain price per cubic yard of dirt moved and the construction company would have paid considerably less to the actual contractor that moved the dirt. Reality being what it is, the railroad was out of money. And so Brigham Young made a settlement that took all of the construction materials that were sitting on the ground at Echo. They took it for the benefit of Utah and the church, which was pretty much the same thing at the time, and they built a railroad from Ogden to Salt Lake City with the materials.

Verdoia: The transcontinental railroad would go north of the Great Salt Lake rather than down to the major metropolitan area for its time, the area of Great Salt Lake City. And that Brigham was furious and. . .

Strack: No he wasn't furious.

Verdoia: Can you address that for me, the relation of where the railroad went and the local reaction?

Strack: The chief surveyor of the Union Pacific railroad was a man named Samuel B. Reed. He first came down Echo Canyon, he went down Weber Canyon, he and his surveying parties. They traveled all the passes of the Wasatch Mountains and it soon became obvious that Echo Canyon and Weber Canyon was pretty much the only route they could use. Anyone who drives out of Weber Canyon now realizes you have to follow the river into Ogden, where you sit with the route going south being quite a length from Ogden to Salt Lake City. You are not going south from the mouth of Weber Canyon to Salt Lake City, because you are blocked both north and south, all the way to Riverdale by the way the river eroded the mouth of the canyon. From Ogden, they surveyed south to Salt Lake City and they found that along the south shore of the lake there was no water. Simple as that, there was no water. And the road bed along the south shore, especially further west, is mud, salt crust and mud, and there is even less water out there. They discovered through their surveys that if they went on the north side of the lake, they would go through from Ogden to crossing the Bear River where Corinne is now, and up over the Promontory Mountains. Further west on the north side of the lake there is Monument, and there is what is now called Locomotive Springs, there is Kelton, all of those pioneer towns that are deserted now. But they were important stops in the railroad because of the water that was available. So the route from the north side of the Great Salt Lake to the next major water source, being Humbolt Wells, which is now Wells, Nevada, was much shorter than going on the south side. And Dodge himself told Brigham Young in August of 1868 that they were going the north route. Brigham Young was disappointed, I think is a proper term. He obviously wanted the railroad to come through Salt Lake City, but 20 years before, he had himself scouted it out for the railroad. He understood construction techniques, the realities of engineering and that kind of thing and I think he just accepted it. I don't think he made an effort to snub the ceremony because I personally believed that it just wasn't important to him. It was a national event. It was not an event for Utah. I think he saw the benefit as the railroad coming to Ogden, to Salt Lake City. The benefit was fulfilled in March of 1869 when the railroad arrived in Ogden.

Verdoia: Brigham Young is notable in his absence when the railroad is completed in May, 1869.

Strack: Yes, that's right. He couldn't control the event, and so he just decided to visit the southern settlements.

Verdoia: When it is all said and done, we have the benefit of hindsight, perfect hindsight. So, using that perfect vision, what is the significance of building a transcontinental railroad.

Strack: Almost every town in the western United States is located where it is because of a railroad, except for maybe the mining towns. A railroad can only operate to a certain distance before the locomotives need water, or they need fuel. The men get tired, they need to stop and rest, so they change crews. If you start looking at maps, it is remarkable here in the Intermountain west and in the north through Montana, through Wyoming and through Arizona and New Mexico and across Colorado. It is remarkable that the towns are usually spaced between 90 and 110 miles apart. 100 miles is the distance that a locomotive can travel before you have to refuel it or do some sort of maintenance. The most

common example that you really see is that the distances across Wyoming. From Cheyenne to Laramie, which is both sides of a hill, Sherman Hill, and then from Laramie you go to Rawlins and then you go to Green River and you go to Evanston, and you are down the grade to Ogden, about every 100 miles or so. Every place where the railroad had to stop for its maintenance reasons, or rest and relaxation, the towns grew up, and ranches grew up around the towns, and agriculture areas grew up around the ranches. It is a self feeding economy. You know it is wonderful to be able to become aware of the features and watch it happen over history. I really enjoy reading old newspapers because they tell the story.

Verdoia: And this is the story of settling the American west.

Strack: The American west would not have been settled without the railroad, simple as that. So you look back with your perfect hindsight and I'm willing basically forgive the railroads for what they did. There are a lot of people who dwell at great length on the corruption and other negative aspects of the railroad. You just can't because the reality is that the west would not have been if it wasn't for the railroad. You can ponder sometimes how Utah would be without the railroad. Brigham Young didn't die until 1877, so with his interests and his desire to help Utah grow, but still with a theological base, he probably would have been a little bit more successful. General Connor and his men discovered precious metals in 1862 and 1863, but there was really no danger from that until the cheaper transportation of the railroad came along. I've done quite a bit of research in the history of Bingham Canyon and although the mines themselves were organized in 1863, nothing really happened for another six years until the railroad came. Some of the first shipments east for the railroad was ore from Bingham Canyon, copper ore, precious metal ore. They needed to ship it out of Utah because they didn't have a smelter here. Of course the level of mining activity here in Utah was such that Salt Lake City soon became the smelting center of the United States. There was so much mining activity here and the railroads couldn't handle it all. So they had to build smelters here.