

ditches, noted above, as well as a Central Pacific spur to the north of the main tracks (Figure 8.2). The picture also shows the Central Pacific gallows turntable well to the west of the spike site. An A. J. Russell photograph in late 1869 (or possibly 1870-71) shows the town at what probably was its peak as a transfer station, with a long row of commercial tent and false front establishments as well as a railroad depot and platform, a dining facility immediately adjacent to the track, and several additional sidings. The gallows turntable appears in the far distant west. These and other photographs suggest that the early commercial Promontory sprung up on the north side of the tracks while the railroad-related facilities were adjacent to the south side of the tracks. Many tons of freight passed through the depot during its years of operation. By the end of 1869, approximately 30,500 passengers had also made their way through the station in Promontory (Carr 1972:10).

In addition to being the transfer location, Promontory Station immediately became a focal point for serious upgrade and maintenance of the hastily constructed railroad on the east side of the Promontories. Even before the railroad was completed, portions of the grade were determined to be substandard (Williams 1988:220-225). An 1868 inspection report indicated that the Union Pacific had “permitted too many curves, curves that were too sharp, substandard embankments, cuts too shallow (upon portions of the road Ballasting is entirely wanting), shoddy, impermanent bridges, excessive grades, and other defects, *ad nauseam*” (Williams 1988:223). In fact, Secretary of the Interior Orville Browning declared that until the Union Pacific upgraded its road, no further bonds would be released (Ames 1969:251 referenced in Williams 1988:221, 224). This created a problem during construction, but was eventually sufficiently rectified to enable the road to be completed.

There was much criticism during the later stages of railroad construction activities about whether the work done by the two railroads was commensurate with requirements set forth in the Congressional Acts of 1862 and 1864. Specifically, there were complaints that the UP was building a substandard railroad and receiving unjust compensation for it from the U.S. Government (Athearn 1976:115). In response to the mounting criticism, President Grant appointed a special commissioner, Isaac N. Morris, to inspect the reportedly unacceptable parts of the UP. His report was quite unfavorable and called the railroad the worst over which he had ever traveled, and actually dangerous in places. As part of his inspection tour, he described the condition of the line between Corinne and Lampo Junction:

The Union Pacific road-bed[‘s] ... width ... is only the width of the tie, or 8 feet, sometimes a little over and sometimes a little under, ... the road-bed ... is a mixture of dirt and sand ... places are found where it is mostly dirt, and then portions are met which are chiefly, if not entirely of gravel (U.S. Congress, House of Representatives 1876:7).

Another commission of “Eminent Citizens” later inspected the route and found it acceptable as a first class railroad (U.S. Congress, House of Representatives n.d.). Nevertheless, CP apparently found it necessary to essentially rebuild the route after it acquired it in late 1869. This is partially supported by Morris’ description of the railroad grade between Lampo Junction and Ogden (U.S. Congress, House of Representatives 1876). A 1920 bridge report from the