

about 1954 when the site was visited by historian John Littleton (1954), who reported that its significance merited greater recognition.

In 1957 Secretary of the Interior Fred Seaton designated seven acres of railroad right-of-way as a National Historic Site in non-federal ownership. After ten more years of negotiations and machinations, in 1967 the area was made a National Historic Site to be managed by the National Park Service. Lands were purchased, remains of Promontory Station were eradicated, and by the 100th anniversary of completion of the world's first transcontinental railroad the new park was dedicated. At the 100th anniversary celebration, the "Joining of the Rails Transcontinental Railroad" was designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark (May 10, 1969 press release by the American Society of Civil Engineers, New York. The Golden Spike was established to commemorate completion of the first Transcontinental Railroad across the United States on May 10, 1869 and to recognize the tremendous historical consequences of this act. Completion of the railroad is among the most significant events in American history because it:

1. Signaled the end of the western frontier
2. United the east and west
3. Forever changed Native American lifeways
4. Opened the great western lands to settlement
5. Changed the means of settlement and the cultural patterns of the west
6. Achieved a major engineering and construction feat with significant economic and political ramifications

Development of the Site

The development of the site by the National Park Service was accomplished in a brief two years – 1967 to May 10, 1969. The entire focus was to reconstruct the historic, May 10, 1869 scene, provide visitor services, and develop adequate administrative/maintenance capabilities in time to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the joining of the rails. As a result, the few vestiges of the town of Promontory Station were eradicated, the road system was altered and redesigned, the May 10, 1968 historic scene was partially reconstructed, and visitor service/administrative/ maintenance facilities built – all on the site of Promontory Station (Figure 10.2). All of these features are modern, non-historic in nature. Through the years, however, some of the modern features have been altered and/or removed, leaving archeological signatures. These include portions of the altered road system, the NPS's 1969 reconstruction of the May 10, 1869 scene (portions were found to be erroneous and were redone in 1979 anticipatory to the arrival of the working locomotives), gravel walkway to the now-removed picnic area by the historic Box Elder tree, and various locations of the historic commemorative obelisk (Figures 10.3 and 10.4). It is important to document the existence of these features, even though they are recent and non-historic in nature, to avoid confusion in the future.

Much of Promontory Station that was south of the tracks is underneath the park visitor center, administrative facility, and parking lot. Only the footprint of the Houghton store area