BUILDING THE IRON ROAD

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF CHINESE RAILROAD WORKERS IN UTAH

中國鐵路工人在猶他州的考古
Acknowledgements

Utah Division of State History

National Park Service

Dr. Mike Sheehan
Salt Lake Field Office
Bureau of Land Management

Kathy Selman
Kassidy Price
USUAS Volunteers
HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

• Study of cultures and people, places, things, and issues from the past when written records and oral traditions can inform and contextualize cultural material.

• These records can both complement and conflict with the archaeological evidence found at a particular site.

• Studies often focus on cultures or peoples who were not a part of the dominant culture.

• These people typically did not leave a written record.

• Archaeology can provide information that can help tell their stories.
Environment and Working Conditions
Previous Research
Wherever we put them, we found them good... and they worked into our favor to such an extent that if we found we were in a hurry for a job of work, it was better to put Chinese on at once.

-Central Pacific Railroad contractor Charles Crocker
Chinese construction camp at end-of-track, eastbound construction train just west of Powder Bluff, Nevada.

“...their workday is from sunrise to sunset, six days a week. They spend Sunday washing and mending, gambling, and smoking” (from the Alta Californian as quoted in Kraus 1969).
Bovine

- Served as a Section Station from 1869 to about 1905.
- In 1869 the facilities included a section house, train car body, Chinese bunk and cook house.
- 1880 census indicated 2 white foreman and 17 Chinese sections hands were in residence.
Ombey

- Served as a Section Station from 1878 to about 1910.
- Also had a wye constructed in 1900 to turn the newer heavier locomotives.
- 1881 records indicate the presence of a section house, tool house, Chinese bunk and cook house.
Terrace

- Served as CPRR maintenance and repair headquarters for the Salt Lake Division from 1869-ca. 1910.
- Extensive facilities existed to service the railroad, but also to support a community that at its height may have included 1000 residents.
- After completion of the Lucine Cutoff and the movement of the maintenance shops to Carlin, Nevada the town faded.
Descendants Of Chinese Laborers
Reclaim Railroad’s History

Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project at Stanford University