

**THE OVERLAND ROUTE—THEN AND NOW.**

Forty years ago "The Overland Route" had a very different significance than it has today. Hardships untold were associated in the minds of readers, and in the actual experience of those who then crossed the "Great American Desert" and the Rocky Mountains. But in the present day and generation the hardships of overland travel have been entirely eliminated, and we have instead a pleasant ride of between two and three days in palace sleeping-cars, to cover the distance of over 1,500 miles between Chicago and Salt Lake City.

The Union Pacific railroad was the pioneer railroad across the continent, and ever since that eventful day, May 10, 1869, when the golden spike was driven at Promontory Point and the Atlantic and Pacific were joined by a line of railroad, the passenger and freight traffic of this country has gone back and forth over the celebrated Sherman Hill and Dale Creek bridge. To avoid the steep grades and more or less dangerous bridges and curves, the Union Pacific railroad, a year or two ago, began some stupendous improvements on their line between Cheyenne and Ogden. All these improvements have now been completed excepting the Aspen tunnel, and for the purpose of better acquainting the newspapers of the country with the remarkable changes, a special excursion was arranged by Mr. E. L. Lomax, General Passenger Agent, and representatives of a large number of the more prominent periodicals were invited to personally inspect the new lines. As the Union Pacific was the pioneer in adopting many of the modern improvements connected with railroad construction and equipment, including the air-brake and Pintsch light, so it has been the first to advertise throughout the country through the medium of a special train for newspaper representatives, its immense improvements in shortening distances and reducing grades.

**Through Wyoming.**

The special train, including three sleeping-cars, dining-car, observation car, and the private cars of General Passenger Agent, E. L. Lomax, and Division Superintendent, W. B. Park, left Denver on the night of July 23, 1901, reaching Cheyenne, Wyoming, the same night. We arrived at Salt Lake City on the following Friday evening, and began the return to Denver Saturday night, reaching the latter place Sunday afternoon, July 28; and the trip was finished, and what a journey it was! For three days we traveled through Wyoming, every accommodation and convenience at our disposal. Stops were made at all the interesting points on the route. Several hours were spent in the

bottom of the celebrated Rock Springs coal mines; the train was backed up to the Dale creek bridge to enable the party to get a last view of the celebrated structure, as it is now being torn down, the road taking a different route through Tie Siding, and thereby avoiding this somewhat dangerous crossing. The Aspen tunnel was another interesting point, and the party was allowed to enter it at both the east and west entrances and to witness the wonderful work of excavation. Arriving at Fish Out near Green River another wonderful feat of railroad engineering was witnessed. Here the grade was reduced very much, and in making the cut for the new line, petrified fishes were found in large quantities seventy and eighty feet below the surface.

**Weber Canon.**

From Green River to Ogden the trip is one of continuous enjoyment, and wonderment, for of all the canons between the Missouri river and the Pacific coast Echo and Weber canons stand unsurpassed in wildness and grandeur and in striking examples of western mountain scenery. Indeed, no art can picture to the mind the wonderful panorama of precipices, cascades, sparkling mountain streams, canons, massive boulders, tunnels and natural mountain gateways. Only the human eye can conceive the glories. Here we see the beautiful Castle Rock, the Hanging Rock, the Steamboat Rocks, Pulpit Rock, Witches Rock. Here also we see the Devil's Slide—two natural walls of stone running parallel with each other from the top to the bottom of a mountain, probably 800 feet high—one of Nature's greatest creations.

But of all the wild, unapproachable scenery along the line of the Union Pacific, it is generally conceded that the Devil's Gate stands pre-eminent. As its name implies, it is a gateway, the western entrance to Weber canon. The Weber river comes roaring through accompanied by a wind that never ceases and of great velocity. The train does not pass through the gate, but crosses a trestle directly in front, giving one a better view of the scene. On a stormy day the scene is more impressive and awful, though always more or less so.

Leaving Weber canon we are soon at Ogden, and a little later at Salt Lake. From Salt Lake our train was taken to Saltair, a bathing resort on the great Salt Lake, where we all enjoyed a bath. One cannot sink in the great Salt Lake, on account of the buoyancy of the water. It is the Dead Sea of America, a mysterious creation, and without a parallel in the world.

**The Improvements.**

It is not so much the object of this paper to tell of the pleasures derived by all the party on the trip from Denver to

Salt Lake and return, as to publish some facts regarding the tremendous construction improvements brought about by the enterprise and energy of the Union Pacific railroad company. This road has just completed a most wonderful undertaking, but has done it so quietly that no special notice has been given it outside of the technical publications. There have been over 158 miles of new track laid, reducing the mileage between Omaha and Ogden by 30.47 miles and reducing gradients which varied from 45.4 to 97.68 feet to the mile to a maximum of 43.3 feet, and curves from 6 to 4 feet, while a great deal of bad curvature has been eliminated entirely.

This is the tale quickly told. But the doing of it is another story. Probably ten millions of dollars was expended in the work, but its accomplishment has again proven that man, especially the modern American man, is undaunted and generally successful in his contest with obstacles placed in his path by Nature. Some mountains have been removed, huge tunnels bored through others, an underground river encountered and overcome, armies of men engaged in the work for more than a year, the track shortened, grades reduced and eliminated—and all this without the slightest interruption of traffic.

**Why the Work was Done.**

Railroads, like every other line of commerce, manufacture or industry, are built and operated for the purpose of making money for their owners. It is plain to everyone that the shortest route and the lowest possible grades figure greatly in the cost of carrying freight and passengers between two points. In these days of fierce competition between transportation companies, wherein rates are seriously affected, two ways are left open for the enterprising railroad manager to increase the earning capacity of his road. One is to haul more tons in a car, and the other is to haul more cars to the train. As railroads generally are operated to the full limit of their power, neither of these remedies is available, unless it is found possible to reduce the steeper grades. This has now been accomplished on the new line of the Union Pacific in Wyoming, and much has been gained on the side of speed and safety.

The first three cut-offs built were those between Laramie and Rawlins. This work involved the construction of about 45 miles of line and made a saving of about 19 miles. Grades were reduced from 75 to 43 feet per mile. From Bona to Bosler is a cut-off of 15 miles, reducing the distance 3 miles, from Cooper's Lake to Lookout a cut-off of 4 miles; from Lookout to Medicine Bow, another line 26 miles long was built, saving a distance of 12 miles.

Foot Creek fill, as it is known, is an embankment 40 feet high and 2,000 feet