

“The Completion of the First Transcontinental Railroad”

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975 words

Lauren Hughes

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DAR

May 9th, 1869 8:00am

Dear Diary,

We have been traveling for a while now and I haven't had much time to write. I never knew traveling from New York to Utah would take so long or that it would be such a great relief when we arrived. I am here at Promontory Point, Utah with my fiancé, Charles, who is a successful reporter. We are moving across country to Sacramento for his job, and then we will wed in June. We are in Utah for a couple days; everyone is waiting for the moment that the country will be one, and the ceremony of the Last Spike. I am tired; we have just arrived and there are many others here too, from all over the world. Charles and I have traveled here with his best friend Brian O'Malley's family. Brian died last year; he was an Irish immigrant who died in the building of the railroad. His wife, Betty, has been quiet the whole trip, not that I have been too talkative myself. Betty has two boys and a little baby girl. The boys are rowdy and loud and the girl cries a lot. I feel bad for them they are so young and with no father. I must go help unpack the wagon now so we can move our things into the inn.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Rogers

May 9th 1869 8:00pm

Dear Diary,

It has been quite a busy day I have been busy setting up camp all day. I was so looking forward to sleeping in an actual inn but the inn was full so I am camping, again. It is about 50 degrees outside, much too cold for a city girl like me. I have grown up in New York City. My parents were immigrants from England and I miss them terribly, but hopefully this railroad will bring the whole country together. I had an interesting conversation with Betty; she seemed rather bitter towards the railroad and I asked her why. She looked at me with such shock and replied "Isn't it obvious the greed these people have, the way they treated Brian. It just isn't right; it is their fault that he died." Then I asked, "Well then, why are you coming to the Last Spike Ceremony?" She replied "For my husband. He would have wanted me to see what he built, what he died for, and the sacrifice he made." I looked at her in a new light. She was so strong and brave, and I admire her. The fire is fading and I am exhausted.

Goodnight,

Elizabeth Rogers

May 10th 8:00am

Dear Diary,

You wouldn't believe how many people have come today. It's completely over whelming. I am sitting outside the wagon. I have just awoken and I am putting my hair up and putting on my Sunday dress. The ceremony isn't until this afternoon; there is so much to do. Charles is meeting with some other reporters to discuss today's events and then interviewing a couple of people for the paper. I must go now, but I will write later this afternoon.

Yours Truly,

Elizabeth Rogers

May 10th 1869 4:00pm

Dear Diary,

This day is one the country will remember forever, and I am so proud to have witnessed it. The sun shown so brightly as hundreds of people gathered for the ceremony; there wasn't a cloud in the sky. There was a person sending out telegraphs, and Governor Stanford was there rambling on with his speech. I couldn't help but day dream as I realized how this will affect me. Suddenly moving to California didn't seem so bad after all. I could visit my family more often and they could visit me, and Charles wouldn't have to leave for such a long time anymore. This railroad is such a good thing for me, for us, for the country. Then I overheard some columnists from Nevada and New York discussing how horrible this is and how the greedy railroads used poor people as slaves and mistreated them. The tall bearded one went on to say ". . . and how they all get to go sit on piles and piles of money." The shorter black haired man agrees and returned with, it just ain't right; people sweat and bleed for minim wage, and they get to go swim in money. Haven't they got any decency?" I immediately thought of Betty and her children. How could I be so selfish? I am only curious of how wonderful my life will be when this has ruined so many other people's lives. After the many speeches, the last spike was driven. At first, both Mr. Mills and Mr. Durant missed the spike while trying to hammer it in, until a Chinese immigrant railroad worker nailed the spike in him. I knew at this moment the country had changed forever; that now two oceans were linked and a was country united. The telegraph was sent out, and the crowd erupted with cheers. The moment seemed so surreal. I realized many things today this railroad has changed the country and many lives forever: it brought people together, but tore people apart. I also realized today that my future is awaiting me, and I must go to it. This railroad changed my life and it made me realize that I should not do anything about the changes in my country, but that I should stand up and do something for the people who don't have a voice like Betty. I decided that I will be a reporter and travel all over so that people's voices can be heard. The last spike not only brought me hope, but hope to the entire country.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Rogers