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Ghost Dancing and the Iron Horse

Surviving through Tradition and Technology

ALEX RUUSKA

In November 1891 James Mooney, ethnographer for the Bureau of Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution, left the Indian Office and War Department in Washington, D.C., and journeyed to Nevada. He hoped to find Wovoka, the famed Northern Paiute prophet who had promised to bring order to a world fundamentally altered by westward expansionism. Equipped with little more than a Kodak camera, tripod, and a desire to know, Mooney ventured across the Great Plains, meeting with many of the Omaha, Winnebago, and Sioux of the region.¹ From there he traveled toward the Northern Paiute Walker River reservation in western Nevada by way of the Carson and Colorado Railroad (CCRR), a narrow-gauge desert line affectionately nicknamed the “Slim Princess.”² Arriving in January 1892, Mooney hoped to stand face to face with the man who was said to converse with the Creator, bring the rain at will, and call back the buffalo and even native peoples who had seemingly died too soon, often from virgin-soil epidemics like smallpox.³ Just as the new railroad bridged the far-flung areas of the North American continent, Wovoka was said to bridge the seen and unseen worlds.⁴

Alex K. Ruuska is an assistant professor of anthropology at Northern Michigan University. The author wishes to thank Michael Schiffer and Michael Hittman for their ongoing encouragement and feedback, the NMU Olsen Library staff, Kyle Wyatt, curator of history and technology, California State Railroad Museum, Lee Brumbaugh of the Nevada Historical Society, and Barbara Moss of the Laws Museum for their invaluable assistance in procuring historic images, and the anonymous *T&C* referees for their incisive comments on different versions of this article.

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1. L. G. Moses, *The Indian Man: A Biography of James Mooney* (Urbana, Ill., 1984), 63.

2. Michael Hittman, with Don Lynch, ed., *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance: A Source Book*, expanded ed. (Lincoln, Neb., 1997), 239.

3. *Lincoln County (Nevada) Times*, 20 April 1889; *Walker Lake (Nevada) Bulletin*, 12 November 1890; R. Stoffle, K. Jones, and H. Dobyns, “Direct European Transmission of Old World Pathogens to Numic Indians during the Nineteenth Century,” *American Indian Quarterly* 19 (1995): 181–204.

4. Hittman, 14; *Nevada State Journal*, 1 September 1914; F. Due, “The Carson and Colorado Railroad,” *Economic Geography* 27 (1951): 251–67, quote on 256.

Pilgrims seeking out Wovoka would travel on the southbound Bodie and Candelaria Express or on the northbound San Francisco and Virginia Express of the CCRR, extending from the Mound House station ten miles south of Virginia City, Nevada, to the Keller station in Owens Valley, California, finally disembarking at Wabuska, Nevada. Construction of the CCRR began in the summer of 1880 and reached its terminus in 1883, approximately five years before the onset of the influential pan-Indian revitalization movement popularly known as the 1890s Ghost Dance.⁵ Considered an offshoot of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad connecting the Comstock region—a central hub of mining magnates during the 1860s and '70s—with Carson City and Reno, Nevada, this railway line was nevertheless rather isolated. D. O. Mills, principal financier of the CCRR, famously quipped that they had “either built the railroad 300 miles too long or 300 years too soon”⁶ (fig. 1).

This article explores how railroad technologies, so critical in constructing the imagined nation of the nineteenth-century United States, were concomitantly being shaped by multiple social groups affected by these technologies. Specifically, it explores the Native Americans whose communities were powerfully affected by railroad expansion.⁷ This story is an account of the initial resistance of Native Americans against the forceful expansion of railroads through aboriginal territories that had been dramatically reduced in size between 1869 and the 1890s, and their later assimilation of that technology to aid their cultural survival. This period saw the completion of the first transcontinental railroad, the closure of the frontier, and the reputed end of Native American resistance with the defeat of the Lakota at Wounded Knee.⁸ In just one century the new nation of the United States more than tripled its land holdings, “from less than one million square miles in 1800 . . . [to] about three million in 1900.”⁹ With a dramatic shift in territorial land holdings and the expansion of new railroad technologies that revolutionized transportation, new immigrants flooded into the West en masse, resulting in the redistribution of as much as 60 percent of the recorded U.S. population.¹⁰ Multiple Native American communities strove to reinvent themselves at this critical historical moment by altering their collective atti-

5. Due, 255, 259; James Mooney, *The Ghost Dancing Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, part 2, 1892–93 (1896; reprint, New York, 1973), 774.

6. G. H. Smith and J. V. Tingley, *The History of the Comstock Lode* (Reno, Nev., 1998), 124; L. Beebe and C. Clegg, *Steamcars to the Comstock* (Berkeley, Calif., 1957), 65.

7. Wiebe E. Bijker, *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs: Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999).

8. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nothing Like It in the World: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad, 1863–1869* (New York, 2001), 17–18; R. M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier, 1846–1890* (Albuquerque, N.M., 2003), 248.

9. Guillaume Vandenbroucke, “The U.S. Westward Expansion,” *International Economic Review* 49 (2008): 81–110, quote on 81.

10. *Ibid.*

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FIG. 1 Northern area of the Carson and Colorado Railroad (1884). (Source: Courtesy of David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, <http://www.davidrumsey.com> [accessed 18 May 2011].)

tudes toward the railroad. Responding to the railroad’s symbolic connection to westward expansionism and the creation of a nation founded upon the separatist and often divisive discourses of social evolution, manifest destiny, and progress, two Paiute prophets led a ritualistic cultural revitalization movement known as the 1870s and ’90s Ghost Dances.¹¹ The latter spread to over thirty-two Native American groups, ranging from California

11. L. H. Morgan, *Ancient Society or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization* (London, 1877); S. Mountjoy, *Manifest Destiny: Westward Expansion* (New York, 2009).

through the Great Plains. Far from rejecting the railroad, the Ghost Dance movement's spread was facilitated by the railroad itself.¹²

This analysis explores the roles of Native Americans as users of railroads, thus interrogating and challenging primitivizing and essentializing discourses that have often positioned Native American communities apart from (or merely as victims of) emerging technologies of the period. Two critical sites of study inform this exploration of the varying attitudes of Native American peoples to railroads: the Northern Paiutes of the Walker River Indian Reservation, near the home of Paiute prophet Wovoka in Mason Valley, Nevada, and the Oglala Sioux of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, where the battle of Wounded Knee transpired. By exploring these crucial sites in the development of the 1890s Ghost Dance, I demonstrate that Native American communities' adoption of railroads as a viable means of transportation contributed to a diffusion of information, ritual practices, and pan-Indian identities.¹³ The railroads thus became a mechanism for expressing resistance and a counter-hegemonic response to the seemingly insurmountable juggernaut of westward expansion.

Both the 1870s and '90s Ghost Dances are the basis of a considerable body of scholarship. Great Basin scholars, including Hittman, Kehoe, Logan, Smoak, Stoffle et al., and Carroll,¹⁴ explore a broad range of specific dimensions of the dance, ranging from deprivation theories and encroachment to the anthropological analysis of revitalization, acculturation, and assimilation, ethnohistoric studies, and the diffusion and transformation of doctrinal and liturgical praxis.¹⁵ With the exception of Dangberg, there is a notable

12. Mooney (n. 5 above).

13. Hittman (n. 2 above); Gregory E. Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Calif., 2008); Richard W. Stoffle, Lawrence Loendorf, Diane E. Austin, David B. Halmo, and Angelita Bullets, "Ghost Dancing the Grand Canyon: Southern Paiute Rock Art, Ceremony, and Cultural Landscapes," *Current Anthropology* 41 (2000): 11–38.

14. Hittman; A. B. Kehoe, *The Ghost Dance: Ethnohistory and Revitalization* (New York, 1989); B. Logan, "The Ghost Dance among the Paiute: An Ethnohistorical View of the Documentary Evidence, 1889–1893," *Ethnohistory* 27 (1980): 267–88; Smoak; Stoffle, Loendorf, Austin, Halmo, and Bullets; Alex K. Carroll, "Place, Performance, and Social Memory in the 1890s Ghost Dance" (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 2007).

15. Michael Hittman, "The 1870s Ghost Dance at the Walker River Reservation: A Reconstruction," *Ethnohistory* 20 (1973): 247–78; Hittman, *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance*; Logan; L. G. Moses, "The Father Tells Me So! Wovoka: The Ghost Dance Prophet," *American Indian Quarterly* 3 (1985): 335–57; Mooney, 657; D. Aberle, "The Prophet Dance and Reaction to White Contact," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 15 (1959): 74–85; A. Lesser, "The Pawnee Ghost Dance Hand Game: A Study of Cultural Change," in *Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology*, vol. 16 (New York, 1933); Kehoe; B. Bernard, "Acculturation and Messianic Movements," *American Sociological Review* 6 (1941): 663–69; M. J. Herskovits, *The Study of Cultural Contact* (Gloucester, Mass., 1958); R. H. Lowie, *Indians of the Plains* (New York, 1954); Russell Thornton, *We Shall Live Again: The 1870 and 1890 Ghost Dance Movements as Demographic Revitalization* (Cambridge, 2006); C. Du Bois, "The 1870 Ghost Dance," *University of California Anthropological*

absence of scholarship articulating native attitudes toward railroads during this period.¹⁶ This article therefore explores how railroads, so often conflated with nineteenth-century nation-making tropes of progress and manifest destiny, served as tools of resistance and adaptation in the hands of Ghost Dance participants.¹⁷

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Railroads and the Ghost Dance

The Ghost Dance was a pan-Indian ritual response to the cultural losses that emerged in the wake of westward expansionism. Compulsory boarding schools and the establishment of reservations quickened language loss and the attenuation of traditional knowledge practices. The Ghost Dance provided fragmented communities with a ritual mechanism to rebuild *communitas* through a syncretic religion that blended traditional animistic worldviews with messianic Christian ideals. In response to expansionism, Native Americans employed a wide range of survival strategies, ranging from physical resistance to assimilation. These diverse responses represented an even wider range of Native American perceptions of westernizing influences, including powerful though largely mysterious technologies like the railroad.

Among the Northern Paiutes, attitudes toward the advance of railroads are evidenced as early as the late 1860s. After the Central Pacific Railroad construction crews crossed the California–Nevada state line on 13 December 1867, many Paiutes turned to indigenous ritual specialist Wodziwob of Fish Lake, Nevada, for spiritual guidance.¹⁸ At the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation Wodziwob preached: “Our fathers are coming, our mothers are coming, they are coming pretty soon. You had better dance.”¹⁹ In Wodziwob’s vision dead Indians would ride from the east on a train. He claimed that “[t]here are a lot of people telling this news [of the 1870s Ghost Dance] but they are not telling it right. What I said was that a train was coming from the east.”²⁰

Records 3 (1939): 1–148; A. H. Gayton, *The Ghost Dance of 1870 in South-Central California*, University of California Publications in Archaeology and Ethnology, vol. 28 (Berkeley, Calif., 1930); Leslie Spier, *The Ghost Dance of 1890 among the Klamath of Oregon* (Seattle, 1927), 39–56; Spier, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and Its Derivatives: The Source of the Ghost Dance*, General Series in Anthropology, no. 1 (Menasha, Wis., 1935).

16. G. Dangberg, “Wovoka,” *Nevada Historical Quarterly* 11 (1968): 1–53.

17. See, for example, R. V. Francaviglia and J. L. Bryan, “Are We Chimerical in This Opinion? Visions of a Pacific Railroad and Westward Expansion before 1845,” *Pacific Historical Review* 71 (2002): 179–202.

18. Museum of the San Ramon Valley, Danville, California, available at <http://www.museumsv.org/> (accessed 5 November 2009); David Myrick, *Railroads of Nevada*, vol. 1: *The Northern Roads* (Berkeley, Calif., 1962), 18–19; Hittman, “The 1870s Ghost Dance”; Dangberg, 23.

19. Du Bois, 4.

20. *Ibid.*, 5.

Wodziwob and numerous followers from Oregon, California, Nevada, and Idaho tribes adopted the Ghost Dance soon after the completion of the Central Railroad. According to oral traditions, Wodziwob prophesied that death would accompany westward expansionism. Fearing extinction, the Western Shoshone and Northern Paiute neighbors reportedly preemptively and collectively performed the Numic mourning rituals known as “the Cry.”²¹ The purpose of this song and dance-centered ritual is to help the soul of the deceased relative to journey spiritually through the traditional territories of the Numic-speaking people toward a sacred location, where it is believed that the soul will jump off into the afterlife.²² An analysis of pandemics in the Great Basin reveals the presence of smallpox from 1860 to 1867 (California and Nevada), 1868 (Austin, Nevada), and 1871 (Ruby Valley Shoshone Agency, Nevada).²³ Some elders relayed that Wodziwob’s Ghost Dance was a modified Cry ceremony that aimed at providing funerary preparations for people who anticipated their imminent demise via such virgin-soil epidemics.²⁴

Twenty years later, the 1890s Ghost Dance movement spread to the Great Plains under the leadership of Northern Paiute prophet Wovoka.²⁵ (fig. 2). Some of the earliest information about the Ghost Dance is recorded in Arthur Chapman’s 1891 “Report of the Secretary of War.” In the report, Wovoka discloses that: 1) he “went to heaven” and learned how people are supposed to conduct themselves; 2) “God had given him great power and authority to do many things . . . caus[ing] it to rain or snow at will”; 3) approximately 1,600 native people had gathered for a single Ghost Dance in western Nevada; and 4) natives reported using the Central Pacific Railroad and the Wabuska cars (aka CCRR) to meet Wovoka.²⁶ A free rendering of “The Messiah Letter,” orally transmitted by the leader of the 1890s Ghost Dance, provides an introduction to this influential and, at times, contested revitalization movement.²⁷ Known as the “Prophet of the Ghost Dance,” Wovoka, alternately known by the English name Jack Wilson, instructed his followers:

21. Carroll (n. 14 above), 237.

22. Alex K. Carroll, “Cry Ceremony” and “Great Basin Dance,” in *Encyclopedia of American Indian Religious Traditions*, ed. Suzanne J. Crawford and Dennis Francis Kelley (Santa Barbara, Calif., 2005), 193–95, 197–202.

23. María Nieves Zedeño, Alex K. Carroll, and Richard W. Stoffle, eds., *Ancient Voices, Storied Places: Themes in Contemporary Indian History* (Tucson, Ariz., 2003), 54. Report prepared for Science Applications International Corporation Nellis Airforce Base and Range Complex and Nevada Test and Training Range.

24. Dangberg (n. 16 above), 23; Myrick (n. 18 above), 171.

25. For more on the relationship between the 1870s and ’90s ghost dances, see Thornton (n. 15 above) and Smoak (n. 13 above).

26. Arthur I. Chapman, “Report of the Secretary of War,” vol. 1 (1891), 191–94, reprinted in Logan (n. 14 above), 284–88.

27. Mooney (n. 5 above), 764.

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FIG. 2 Portrait of Wovoka. (Source: Courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society, Reno.)

When you get home you must make a dance to continue five days. . . . You must all do it the same way. . . . I want you to come again in three months, some from each tribe there [the Indian Territory]. . . .

Do not tell the white people about this. Jesus is now upon the earth. He appears like a cloud. The dead are all alive again. I do not know when they will be here; maybe this fall or in the spring. When the time comes there will be no more sickness and everyone will be young again.²⁸

Wovoka served as an emissary prophet, who assumed the role of helper for Native American struggling with the adverse impacts of westward expansionism.²⁹ Such assistance was instilled through instruction in religious rituals involving earth-centered cosmological tenants alongside more recently introduced maxims of Christianity. Promises of healing corresponding to the cyclical return of the spring and the acquisition of acculturation strategies characterized this prophetic movement.

28. Ibid., 780.

29. G. E. Kessler, *Studying Religion: An Introduction through Cases*, 3rd ed. (Boston, 2008), 93, 132.

Westward Expansionism: Pressures on Native American Lifeways

Westward expansionism directly impacted the lifeways of many Northern Paiute, including Wovoka. With the discovery of gold in California and the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848, the numbers of people moving into and through the Great Basin multiplied. Utah Territory Indian agent Jacob Holeman, who served during the years from 1851 to 1853, estimates seeing roughly 300 wagons a day along the Humboldt River in Nevada.³⁰ Following the discovery of the Comstock Lode near Virginia City in 1859 these numbers escalated. Due to growing pressures upon native lands and resources, the new Indian agent, Frederick Dodge, in 1859 proposed the establishment of two Northern Paiute reservations. Despite these early overtures, President Ulysses Grant did not sign the executive orders for the founding of the Walker River Indian Reservation until 19 March 1874, and for the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation on 23 March 1874.³¹

On 10 May 1880 the CCRR was officially incorporated to build a narrow-gauge railroad from Mound House station ten miles south of Virginia City to Candelaria, approximately thirty-five miles southeast of Schurz, Nevada, on the Walker River reservation. By 1883 the line extended to Keller in southeastern California.³² Initially, settlers from Mason Valley feared that the railroad might diminish the demand for agricultural produce, and Paiutes from Schurz expressed concern over passage of the railroad through aboriginal lands and the increased competition for limited natural resources, particularly fish.³³ Despite uncertainties, the CCRR's promise of "\$750 in coin . . . [and] the privilege of free transportation for themselves, their fish, game, and products to and from all points on the road operation" softened peoples' opposition.³⁴ At a council meeting held on the Walker River reservation on 10 April 1880 that included Chief Wasson, Captain Sam, Quartz Charley, Big Mouth Bob, Doctor Tom, Doctor Sam, and "Wilson," twenty-six Paiute men "signed" the right-of-way agreement.³⁵ Although not specified, this document raises the compelling question of whether Jack Wilson was among the signers of the agreement. With the \$750 the Walker River Paiutes bought a cattle herd, and by 1886 the origi-

30. Jacob Holeman, "Observations of Jacob Holeman Indian Agent in the Utah Territory, 1851–1853," in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, D.C., 1852), 439–45.

31. C. J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, vol. 1: *Laws: Compiled to December 1, 1902* (Washington, D.C., 1904), 869.

32. Myrick (n. 18 above), 166; Due (n. 4 above), 256.

33. E. C. Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes: A Tribal History* (Schurz, Nev., 1975), 60.

34. Vine Deloria Jr. and Raymond J. DeMallie, *Documents of American Indian Diplomacy: Treaties, Agreements, and Conventions, 1775–1979*, Legal History of North America, vol. 4 (Norman, Okla., 1999), 548.

35. CCRR Records NC71/3/1, Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno Library.

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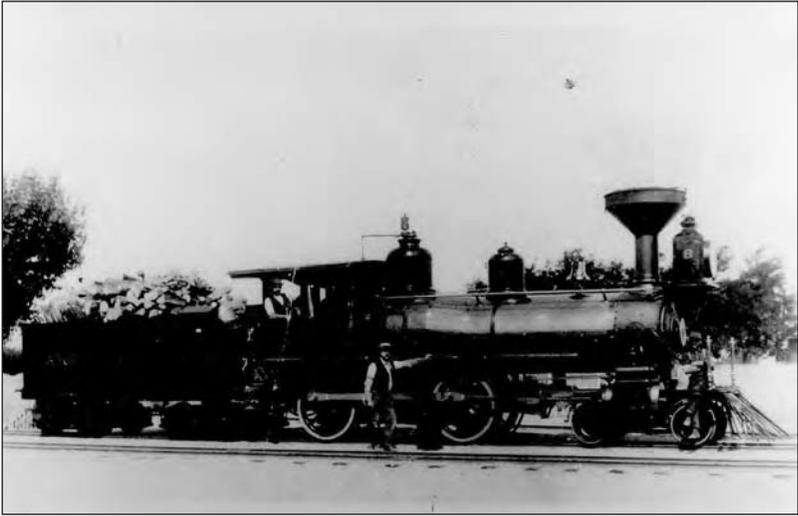


FIG. 3 The Carson and Colorado Railroad (1890s). (Source: Courtesy of the Laws Railroad Museum, Bishop, California.)

nal herd of thirty had increased to a hundred head. In 1880 the CCRR began grading and laying track, for which Chinese crews were employed despite the strong protests of Nevadan labor leaders, who have been described as the “leading merchants of race hatred of the era.”³⁶ Beginning at Mound House station, the crews built a line to Wabuska, then along the eastern shore of Walker Lake, and from there heading south to Hawthorne. By 7 April 1881 the first 100 miles of track had been laid³⁷ (fig. 3).

In South Dakota the land hunger and a desire for a railroad line extending westward from the Missouri River to the Black Hills also catalyzed congressional legislation aimed at breaking down the barrier between the putatively “civilized groups east and west” of the Sioux reservation.³⁸ For the Plains Indians, the native efforts of the 1860s and ’70s read like an epic of heroism and futility, each move of resistance being countered by government responses that were increasingly more incisive and resolute. In 1864 Colonel Chivington and the Colorado volunteers attacked Chief Black Kettle’s Cheyenne band in what become known as the “Sand Creek Massacre.” Four years later George Armstrong Custer killed Black Kettle, launching himself into the next chapter of the Indian Wars as the “Great Indian Killer.”³⁹ Despite

36. Beebe and Clegg (n. 6 above), 68.

37. Myrick, 171.

38. Utley (n. 8 above), 175; Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York, 1971), 264, 391.

39. J. Welch and P. Stekler, *Killing Custer: The Battle of Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians* (New York, 2007), 11, 64.

mounting pressures, it appeared that a successful armistice had been achieved with the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, which recognized the Black Hills as part of the Great Sioux reservation, which was set aside for the exclusive use of the Sioux tribe.⁴⁰ This reservation encompassed present-day South Dakota west of the Missouri River, and reserved the Sioux's right to hunt along the North Platte and Republican rivers.⁴¹ In exchange the federal government reduced the boundaries of the Sioux Nation as specified by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 and received promises that railroad construction south of the Platte River could move forward without fear of reprisal.⁴² By 1873 the federal government sent Custer to guard the Northern Pacific Railroad workers in Montana.⁴³

With the 1874 discovery of gold in the Black Hills, the U.S. government demanded that the Sioux relinquish their rights and hunting privileges in these territories.⁴⁴ This demand led to military confrontations, culminating in Custer's defeat at the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876 and the subsequent confiscation of the Black Hills by 1877.⁴⁵ In that same year Congress approved the construction of railroads through the Sioux reservation, but granted no right-of-way privileges.⁴⁶ Three years later, efforts to make the Black Hills more accessible led to a right-of-way agreement between the Dakota Central Railroad Company (DCRR) and the Sioux.

In 1880, on 12 June and 23 and 31 December, members of the Sioux Nation signed articles of agreement granting the DCRR permission to build a railway through Sioux territories, commencing on the west bank of the Missouri River near the mouth of the Bad River and from there moving west in surveyed lands along the North Fork River, Lead Gap Creek, Cheyenne River, and Sioux Indian Reservation.⁴⁷ Ironically, the great Sioux leader Sitting Bull had publicly denounced the whites in a speech celebrating the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad only six months earlier.⁴⁸ Despite his courage, it appeared that even Sitting Bull was powerless in the face of the railroads.

40. M. Gonzalez and E. Cook-Lynn, *The Politics of Hallowed Ground: Wounded Knee and the Struggle for Indian Sovereignty* (Urbana, Ill., 1999), 258.

41. Donald R. Hickey, Susan A. Wunder, and John R. Wunder, *Nebraska Moments* (Lincoln, Neb., 2007), 65.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Welch and Stekler, 12.

44. U.S. Supreme Court, *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians*, 448 U.S. 371 (1980), available at <http://laws.findlaw.com/us/448/371.html> (accessed 23 December 2009).

45. Chet Brokaw, "Lawsuit Would Let Sioux Take Money for Black Hills," Associated Press, in *Rapid City (South Dakota) Journal*, 21 April 2009, available at http://www.rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/top-stories/article_a062dee8-6792-5710-91b6-b8cba0457f3d.html (accessed 24 December 2009).

46. George P. Sanger, ed., *The Statutes at Large: Treaties and Proclamations of the United States of America from December 1865 to March 1867*, vol. 14 (Boston, 1868), 683.

47. Deloria and DeMallie (n. 34 above), 536.

48. Brown (n. 38 above), 401.

The final blow to the Sioux Nation did not come until 1889, when the Crook Commission persuaded the Sioux to part with an additional nine million acres. The 2 March 1889 act “divided the 1868 treaty reservation into six smaller reservations. Indians living on each reservation could not leave their reservations without a pass from the Indian agent.”⁴⁹ R. M. Utley has argued that “[t]he experience badly shook the Indians and, with other setbacks, made them receptive to the teachings of the Ghost Dance religion.”⁵⁰

From the perspective of cultural ecology, the reduction of aboriginal lands and the influx of émigrés overtaxed environments with limited carrying capacities.⁵¹ Confined to small and often unproductive lands, traditional subsistence measures proved increasingly inadequate. This situation was further exacerbated by the behaviors of the itinerant immigrants; in less than ten years railroad workers, traders, tanners, and buffalo soldiers decimated the principal food source of the Great Plains—the buffalo. During the fall of 1883 the Sioux participated in their last buffalo hunt.⁵² Several factors led to the buffalos’ rapid demise: being hunted by railroad workers for food,⁵³ the laying down of the Union Pacific Railroad’s tracks, which divided buffalo herds,⁵⁴ and the discovery of tanning technologies that accelerated their killing, causing Sioux leader Red Cloud to lament: “Where the Indian killed one buffalo, the hide and tongue hunters killed fifty.”⁵⁵ Despite these extraordinary circumstances, Sitting Bull surprisingly persisted in his belief of a revitalized habitat and wore red-dyed buffalo hair upon his head to represent the promised return of White Buffalo Calf Woman⁵⁶ (fig. 4).

From the 1850s through the ’70s the Northern Paiutes also experienced radical alterations to their traditional subsistence systems. Following President James Polk’s exuberant declaration of California’s “abundance of gold”⁵⁷ and Nevada’s Comstock silver rush of 1859, thousands of miners moved into the heart of Northern Paiute traditional lands.⁵⁸ Miners and ranchers requiring wood, water, and land soon laid waste to piñon groves,

49. Gonzalez and Cook-Lynn (n. 40 above), 293.

50. Utley (n. 8 above), 236.

51. Robert M. Netting, *Cultural Ecology*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, Ill., 1986).

52. Gonzales and Cook-Lynn, 292.

53. Brian Schofield, *Selling Your Father’s Bones: America’s 140-Year War against the Nez Perce Tribe* (New York, 2009), 223.

54. Ambrose (n. 8 above), 173.

55. Schofield, 223.

56. Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (Cambridge, 2004), 129.

57. J. S. Holliday and W. Swain, *The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience* (Norman, Okla., 2002), 48.

58. Russell R. Elliot and William D. Rowley, *History of Nevada*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln, Neb., 1987), 93; Ferol Egan, *Sand in a Whirlwind: The Paiute Indian War of 1860*, 30th anniversary ed. (Reno, Nev., 2003), 26.



FIG. 4 Bison on rails (1871). (Source: Courtesy of Getty Images, Hulton Archive.)

thereby undermining Numic hunting and gathering activities.⁵⁹ With the destruction of natural resources, accompanied by the harsh winters of 1858–59 and 1859–60, many Paiute experienced starvation, leading one reporter to urge leniency with those who purloined cattle as a desperate means of survival.⁶⁰

After the alleged rape of two Paiute girls, the Northern Paiutes and their Bannock allies waged war against the immigrant populations, culminating in the deaths of seventy-six Euro-Americans and unknown numbers of Paiute, in what became known as the Paiute War of 1860.⁶¹ Following the summoning of 549 volunteers under the command of Colonel Jack Hays and 207 soldiers of the California militia under the leadership of Captain Joseph Stewart, the colonists experienced a more decisive victory. In the wake of a cease-fire in 1860 the federal government shifted its policy from one of extermination to that of assimilation, by endeavoring to transform the “partially civilized tribes” into subsistence farmers and wage laborers via the establishment of reservations and compulsory education.⁶² Soon, however, drought, disease, loss of subsistence resources, and the land’s limited carrying capacity magnified the need for a dramatic solution; by 1871, at the time of the first Ghost Dance, a drought caused massive starvation

59. Egan, 68.

60. Sally Zanjani, *Sarah Winnemucca* (Lincoln, Neb., 2001), 52.

61. Elliot and Rowley, 93.

62. *Ibid.*; Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year of 1874* (Washington, D.C., 1874), 5–6.

among the Paiute, contributing to an estimated 40 percent decrease in population between the years 1868–74.⁶³

Native American Responses

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During the nineteenth century, Native Americans experienced radical transformations within virtually every realm of life. Under such circumstances they alternately felt compelled to maintain traditions and reinvent themselves in order to survive in the new worlds that emerged in the wake of railroads and westward expansionism.⁶⁴ When Paiutes and Lakota first came into contact with the railroads, there was a nearly wholesale rejection of them and their associated activities. Initially, both native groups viewed the railways as a symbol of the destruction of traditional lifeways, consequently they endeavored to destroy these artifacts of westward expansionism. Following the discovery of the Comstock Lode, for example, physical confrontations between Northern Paiutes and immigrants escalated; Paiutes raided Pony Express and stagecoach stations, overran railroad stations, drove off livestock, and occasionally killed station agents.⁶⁵ In response, the government built forts along travel routes throughout Nevada.⁶⁶ Despite this conflict, within ten years miners had infiltrated even the most remote regions of Nevada.⁶⁷ The Paiute War ended in 1860, although the nativistic period did not officially end until the passage of the first transcontinental railroad through Nevada in 1869.⁶⁸ Physical resistance continued on a smaller scale into the 1870s, and by 1874 the Northern Paiutes were confined to reservations at Pyramid Lake and Walker River.

During the 1860s the Lakota were equally, if not more, fervent in their efforts to stop the railroads from being built, and by extension to break the momentum of westward expansion. At this point many of the Native Americans of the Great Plains viewed the railroads as a bad, powerful medicine designed to destroy the world as they knew it. Some perceived their resistance to railroads as spiritual warfare, thus shooting at surveyors'

63. Zanjani, 105, 116.

64. The theoretical frameworks of SCOT (social construction of technology) and behavioral archaeology provide additional parameters for considering the historic interface of Paiutes, Lakota, and railroad technologies. Accordingly, the social meanings and behavioral-performance characteristics attributed to the railroads by indigenous communities served as critical factors in anticipating how these groups engaged this technology over the life history of the artifact.

65. Elliot and Rowley (n. 58 above), 94–95.

66. Ibid.; H. S. Carlson, *Nevada Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary* (Reno, Nev., 1974), 27.

67. Julian H. Steward, *Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups* (Salt Lake City, 2002), 7.

68. Ibid.

stakes in the hope of killing the “bad medicine”;⁶⁹ others sought more direct means, as James Macfarlane notes:

Common external threats such as settlers, military expeditions, or exploratory surveys for the Northern Pacific Railroad, caused tribes to come together to meet the shared danger. The Northern Pacific Railroad threatened to cut off Lakota access to the Canadian plains and thus “four different bands of Sioux with their respective chiefs” joined to attack Colonel David S. Stanley and his military escort for the surveying party.⁷⁰

Other strategies of resistance included pulling up surveyors’ stakes, killing railroad workers, and wrecking trains. One railroad worker reportedly went to sleep with “a loaded revolver at [his] head [and] had an escort of about 30 soldiers, well-armed and equipped” during the day.⁷¹ These grass-land warriors removed bolts and fishplates, pried rails apart, and tore down telegraph poles.⁷² So effective were these native saboteurs that Indian agent Dodge declared: “We’ve got to clean the damn Indians out or give up building the Union Pacific Railroad.”⁷³

If the 1860s and ’70s were decades remarkable for native *physical* resistance, the 1880s and ’90s were equally so for *ritualistic* resistance. By the 1890s Native American peoples had either willingly or grudgingly crossed into the new world in which many aspects of life were increasingly tied to railroad technologies. With the collectivization of identities and the selective use of such technologies, over thirty-two North American native groups developed a counter-hegemonic movement characterized by the fostering of pan-Indian identities, the expansion of mixed economies, and the embracing of both ritualistic and political resistance. This shift in attitudes and a growing fascination toward modern material culture are partly reflected in the names of the Lakota signers of the right-of-way agreements, among whom were Iron Wing, Iron Horse, Iron Tail, Flat Iron, Iron Horn, Iron Shield, Four Horns, Iron Heart, and Iron Nation.⁷⁴

Among the Paiutes, permission to ride the rails first appeared after the completion of the CPRR lines in 1869:

It was “Chief” [Collis] Huntington’s personal pow-wow with an old

69. M. J. Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke’s Gamble: The Northern Pacific Railroad, the Sioux, and the Panic* (Norman, Okla., 2006), 127.

70. James Macfarlane, “‘Chief of All the Sioux’: An Assessment of Sitting Bull and Lakota Unity, 1868–1876,” *American Nineteenth Century History* 11 (2010): 299–320.

71. John Hoyt Williams, *A Great and Shining Road: The Epic Story of the Transcontinental Railroad* (New York, 1988), 101.

72. Ambrose (n. 8 above), 266.

73. *Ibid.*, 223.

74. Deloria and DeMallie (n. 34 above), 524–27.

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Paiute chief that set up harmonious relations. The great white chief told his Indian brother that they must take care of the railway and the railway would take care of them. In a like manner, Crocker arranged a treaty with the Shoshones. Passes were given to the Indian chiefs to allow them to ride in the coaches, while the rest of the tribes were given to understand that they could ride on freight trains without question.⁷⁵

Thereafter the Paiutes were reportedly very accommodating and warned the CPRR on several occasions about potential washouts.⁷⁶ Wovoka was among those who used the CCRP-pass system to travel from Nevada to California and perhaps even to Oregon, where Smohalla had assumed the ritual leadership of another revitalization movement.⁷⁷ Wovoka's personal secretary, Edward Dyer, recalled that as a young man, Wovoka "did considerable wandering about this state [Nevada] and neighboring California. . . . Walker River Pahutes [*sic*] were in the habit about that time of making seasonal trips *en masse*, perched atop the railroad's hand boxcars to northern California for the purpose of picking hops."⁷⁸

With the establishment of mining, farming, ranching, and railroads in western Nevada, many Paiutes progressively integrated the new transportation technologies into their everyday activities. In 1877 Indian agent A. J. Barnes reported that the Indians who could "ride the Central Pacific at will" had begun to congregate at small towns all along the rail, especially in Winnemucca and Reno, where they lived through "begging and labor."⁷⁹ Among those who embraced the new way of life, some worked for the railroad or as farm- and ranch-hands; others farmed individual plots of land, fished in Walker Lake, gathered critical foods like pine nuts, and even cut down piñon forests for charcoal smelting and the fence poles required for mining, farming, and ranching.⁸⁰ Wovoka worked for a farming family in Mason Valley, where he developed a working knowledge of English and Christianity.⁸¹

In addition to traveling for work, many Paiutes seemed to genuinely enjoy riding on trains to visit friends or family. As David Myrick notes:

75. Myrick (n. 18 above), 19.

76. *Ibid.*

77. P. D. Bailey, *Wovoka: The Messiah Indian* (Los Angeles, 1957); Bailey, *The Ghost Dance Messiah* (Los Angeles, 1970).

78. Edward A. Dyer, "Wizards: The Jack Wilson Story Manuscript" (1965), in Special Collections, University of Nevada Library, Reno.

79. Office of Indian Affairs, "Pyramid-Lake Reserve," in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year of 1877* (Washington, D.C., 1877); A. J. Barnes, Indian Agent, 22 August 1877, U.S. House of Representatives, Executive Doc. 1, pt. 5, 45th Cong., 2nd sess., serial set 1800 (Washington, D.C., 1877), 546–47.

80. Elliot and Rowley (n. 58 above), 396; Hittman, *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance* (n. 2 above), 49.

81. Hittman, *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance*, 52; Dyer; Dangberg (n. 16 above), 27.

“Indians continued to ride the freight trains almost incessantly. Their families would scramble up to the top of the boxcars for a free ride to some place or other, the destination largely unimportant.”⁸² E. C. Johnson reports that this was fairly dangerous and many Paiutes received burns from the hot coals, and sometimes the baskets the women were taking to market would blow away.⁸³

Despite these dangers, however, the railroads provided a loophole through which Native Americans could bolster their rapidly diminishing rights.⁸⁴ Because of the railroads, native peoples could temporarily remove themselves from unwanted surveillance, traverse greater distances, increase their work opportunities, and expand their social, political, and ritualistic connections. The railroad companies, of course, also benefited from such a truce situation. Railroad executive Charles Crocker boasted that “he kept all the Indians along Central Pacific’s right-of-way pacified by giving the tribal chiefs lifetime passes for free rides in day coaches”⁸⁵ (fig. 5).

But despite the railroads’ growing popularity among native communities and its concomitant benefits to the companies themselves, not everyone was equally enthusiastic. One Indian agent complained that

[t]he Carson and Colorado Railroad passes through this reservation, and up to recently there was a constant coming and going of these people, with no object whatever in view. This practice has been discouraged as much as possible, and the railroad has been instructed not to carry them unless they are provided with a proper pass, signed by either the farmer in charge or myself.⁸⁶

Governmental and railroad employees justified their interventions on the basis of a paternalistic legal conception of Native Americans’ status as wards of the federal government. In the court case of *Dobbs v. United States*, the Court of Claims characterized natives as “little better than prisoners of war.”⁸⁷ Within this context, the Indian superintendent acted as a virtual “csar within the territorial jurisdiction prescribed. . . . He is *ex-officio* both guardian and trustee.”⁸⁸

A common treaty stipulation read that “[n]o member of said tribe shall leave said reservation for any purpose without the written consent of the

82. Myrick (n. 18 above), 179.

83. Johnson (n. 33 above), 75.

84. Deloria and DeMallie (n. 34 above), 515.

85. R. W. Howard, *The Great Iron Rail: The Story of the First Transcontinental Railroad* (New York, 1962), 162.

86. Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year of 1897* (Washington, D.C., 1897), 186–92.

87. Felix S. Cohen, *Handbook of Federal Indian Law, with Reference Tables and Index* (Washington, D.C., 1942), 176.

88. *Ibid.*, 175.

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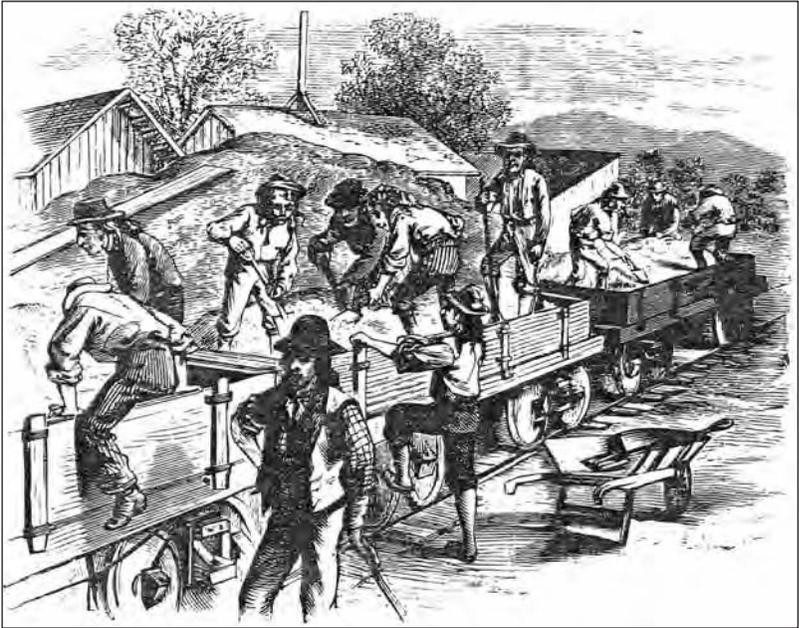


FIG. 5 Central Pacific Indian workers from Frank Leslie's 1876–77 transcontinental tour. (Source: Courtesy of Kyle Wyatt, curator of history and technology, California State Railroad Museum, Sacramento.)

agent or superintendent having jurisdiction over said tribe.”⁸⁹ Typical conditions of governance included:

not go[ing] from said country for hunting or other purposes without the consent in writing of their agent or other authorized person, such written consent in all cases specifying the purpose for which such leave is granted, and shall be borne with them upon their excursions as evidence that they are rightfully away from their reservation, and shall be respected by all officers, employees, and citizens of the United States.⁹⁰

As early as 1888 the CCRR began curtailing its right-of-way agreements. The *Walker Lake Bulletin* reported that “an order has been issued by the C & C Railroad prohibiting Indians from riding free on the cars of that company. The Paiutes are very indignant over the order, as it is the delight of an ordinary Indian’s heart to straddle a boxcar.”⁹¹ While Native Ameri-

89. Sanger (n. 46 above), 683.

90. *Ibid.*, 718.

91. *Walker Lake (Nevada) Bulletin*, 19 September 1888.

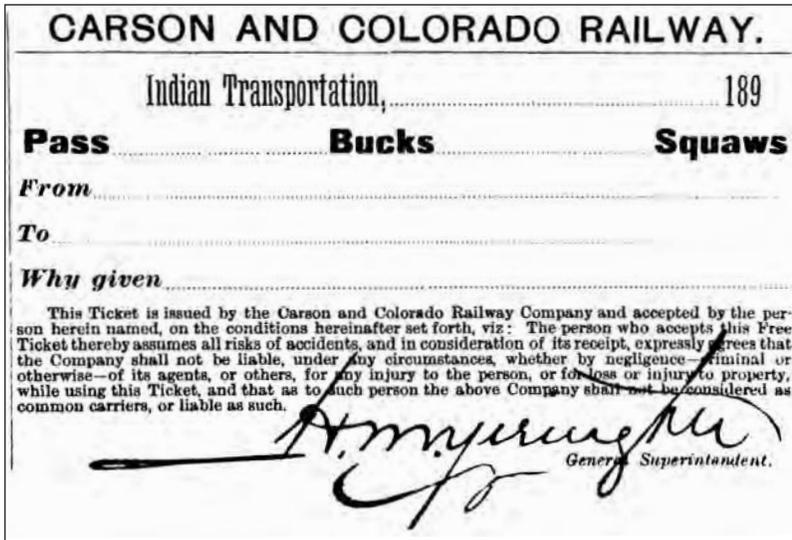


FIG. 6 Carson and Colorado Railroad pass (1890s). (Source: E. C. Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes: A Tribal History* [Schurz, Nev., 1975], 81.)

cans were still allowed to ride on the boxcars and flatcars if they had passes, increased authority had been given to Indian agents and railroad officials to determine the conditions under which native passengers were allowed to travel⁹² (fig. 6). Similar efforts to control transportation rights were evidenced in other parts of the country; for example, the Northern Pacific Railroad issued Indian passes “good for one passage on car platforms, the drafty and dangerous open spaces between enclosed passenger cars. Furthermore the railroad segregated its Indian riders to the platforms of head-end cars that carried mail, baggage, and express, but no other passengers”⁹³ (fig. 7). Likewise, Congress indicated that the Spokane Falls and Northern Railway Company “should prohibit the riding of Indians of the Colville Indian Reservation upon any of the trains unless they were provided passes signed by the Indian agent.”⁹⁴

Such regulations extended particularly to Ghost Dance travelers. Indian agents were split in their opinions over whether or not Native Americans should be permitted to visit the leader of the movement. According to one viewpoint, they should be allowed to go to determine for themselves the

92. Johnson (n. 33 above), 80.

93. Carlos A. Schwantes and James P. Ronda, *The West the Railroads Made* (Seattle, 2008), 101.

94. *The Statues at Large and Proclamations of the United States of America from December, 1889, to March, 1891*, vol. 26 (Washington, D.C., 1891).

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FIG. 7 Indians riding on the Carson and Colorado Railway (1890s). (Source: Courtesy of Kyle Wyatt, curator of history and technology, California State Railroad Museum, Sacramento.)

veracity of Wovoka's message: "I would recommend that all the Indians be permitted to visit . . . as I am satisfied they will only send delegations from each tribe for the purpose of ascertaining the truth of the Prophecy. . . . the Indians of Nevada expect delegations from most of the tribes north and northeast—and Sitting Bull is expected."⁹⁵ Similarly, Frank Campbell of American Falls, Idaho, advised "that delegations be forwarded to Walker Lake reserve to see for themselves."⁹⁶

But other Indian agents refused to sign papers giving their "wards" permission to travel. For example, Captain C. C. Warner, agent at the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation, wrote that "I have since learned that their sole mission was to visit the 'Messiah,' and if I had known this in the beginning would not have permitted them to go to Walker River reserve, or at least would not have given them any recommendations."⁹⁷ Some Indian agents employed more draconian measures by imprisoning delegations upon their return. For example, James Mooney writes that "[t]he [Sioux delegation members] were confined in prison for two days and upon their prom-

95. John Mayhugh, "Letter of ex-BIA official to Hon. T. J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 24, 1890, Letters Received, G.D. 36853, RG 75" (Federal Archives, San Bruno, California), reprinted in Hittman, *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance* (n. 2 above), 270.

96. Frank Campbell, "Letter of Frank Campbell, American Falls, Idaho to Hon. Commissioner Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C., September 5, 1891, Letters Received, RG 75" (Federal Archives, San Bruno, California), reprinted in Hittman, *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance*, 275.

97. C. C. Warner, "C. C. Warner to S. G. Fisher, U.S. Indian Agent, Letters Received, G.D. 33874, RG 75" (Federal Archives, San Bruno, California), reprinted in Hittman, *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance*, 274.

ising not to hold councils about their visit they were released.”⁹⁸ Similarly, Kuwapi, a Sioux leader from Rosebud, was arrested for teaching the Ghost Dance to Sioux at the Yankton reservation.

Certain early settlers in Nevada also censured the gathering of Ghost Dance participants. The *Elko Independent* wrote that

[t]he Railroad Company, in our judgment, is wrong in permitting Indians to ride on the trains at this time, as *without that means of conveyance they could not possibly assemble in such multitudes on so short notice*, and especially at this time, owing to the severe weather, there would be little danger of any assembly large enough to do any damage, even if they felt disposed to make trouble.⁹⁹

Although divided in their opinions regarding Ghost Dancers’ use of the railroads, none of the Indian agents disputed the necessity and legitimacy of constant surveillance—“a subtle technology of subjugation”—that had replaced actual war after the establishment of reservations.¹⁰⁰

Despite these concerns, multiple delegations of Native Americans repeatedly made the journey to meet with Wovoka. Such travel is documented in Indian agent reports, newspapers, ethnohistoric accounts, ethnographic sources, and oral histories. All of these sources indicate that the travel of delegations corresponded directly to the height of the Ghost Dance movement’s popularity during the years 1887–90. Many native delegations traveled to western Nevada during this time, further substantiating the claim that the railroads served as a critical component in helping spread the 1890s Ghost Dance.¹⁰¹

En route to see Wovoka, delegates frequently passed through the Shoshone–Bannock reservation at Fort Hall, Idaho, located fourteen miles north of Pocatello “at the junction of the Utah Northern and Oregon Short line Railroads and [only a day’s ride] to the main line of the Union Pacific” in Ogden, Utah.¹⁰² Due to this prime location and railroad access, the Shoshone–Bannock groups served as mediators of the Ghost Dance between Great Plains tribes and those located west of the mountains.¹⁰³ Indian agent John Mayhugh recognized Fort Hall’s special role in the diffusion of the Ghost Dance, maintaining that “[t]here is a great deal of uneasiness and an unusual number of dances—this has been caused more or less by visiting delegations of Indians from several tribes, particularly Fort Hall.”¹⁰⁴ During the spring and summer of 1889 alone, over a dozen tribes reportedly passed

98. Mooney (n. 5 above), 798.

99. *Elko (Nevada) Independent*, 10 January 1891 (emphasis added).

100. Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York, 1984), 206; Dangberg (n. 16 above), 33–34.

101. Du Bois (n. 15 above), 135–38.

102. Smoak (n. 13 above), 6.

103. Mooney, 807.

104. Mayhugh (n. 95 above).

through Fort Hall.¹⁰⁵ Over the next decade delegations regularly boarded the railways to make their journey to Mason Valley via the CCRR. From Wabuska and Schurz, Nevada, representatives from over thirty native groups descended upon this Paiute “Mecca,” including Utes from Utah, Shoshones, Cheyenne, Arapahos, Lakota, Bannocks, Mojaves, Kiowas, Apaitans, Navajos, and Nez Perce.¹⁰⁶ Among these, five Shoshone delegates and one Arapaho reportedly traveled by railroad for much of their journey.¹⁰⁷ In the fall of 1889 Porcupine (Cheyenne), Sitting Bull, and several other Sioux leaders traveled from Fort Washakie, Wyoming, to Fort Hall, after which they boarded the railroad in Nevada, where they first encountered the Northern Paiute *Cuicui* Fish Eaters of Pyramid Lake. The Indian agent at Pyramid Lake reported that more than thirty-four Indians from different tribes traveled through during the spring of 1890.¹⁰⁸

Porcupine’s own account of this journey was recorded by Major Carroll of the Camp Crook Tongue River Agency in Montana on 15 June 1890:

In November last (1889) I left the reservation with 12 other Cheyennes. I went through Washakie and took the Union Pacific railroad to Rawlins. We got on early in the morning about breakfast, road [*sic*] all day on the railroad, and about dark reached a fort (Bridger). I stayed there 2 days, and then took a passenger train, and the next morning got to Fort Hall. . . . The agent sent for me. . . . I told him I was just traveling to meet other Indians and see other countries; that my people were at peace with the whites, and I thought I could travel anywhere I wished. He asked me why I did not have a pass. I said because my agent would not give me one. Then he asked me where I wanted a pass to. I told him I wanted to go further and some Bannocks and Shoshones wanted to come along. He gave passes—five of them—to the chiefs of the three parties. We took the railroad to a little town nearby, and then took a narrow gauge road. We went on this, riding all night at a very fast rate of speed and came to a town on a big lake (Ogden or SLC). We stayed there one day, taking the cars at night, road [*sic*] all night.¹⁰⁹

105. S. G. Fisher, “U.S. Indian Agent, S. G. Fisher, Correspondence, November 26, 1890,” Doc. 37097–1890. Documentation of the Ghost Dance and Sioux Outbreak of 1890, reprinted in Mooney, 1106.

106. See, for example, Dangberg (n. 16 above), 30, 34; A. Gatschet, “Report of an Indian Visit to Jack Wilson, the Payute Messiah,” *Journal of American Folklore* 6 (1893): 108; Lesser (n. 15 above), 57; Mooney (n. 5 above), 805–7, 817–19; D. B. Shimkin, “Dynamics of Recent Wind River Shoshone History,” *American Anthropologist* 44 (1942): 353–74; *Walker Lake (Nevada) Bulletin*, 20 December 1890.

107. Mooney, 807.

108. C. C. Warner, Indian Agent, Ghost Dance Document 37260. Documentation of the Ghost Dance and Sioux Outbreak of 1890, reprinted in Mooney, 818, 1106.

109. Porcupine’s own account of this journey was recorded by Major Carroll of the

According to Chapman's 1891 report, this account is considered accurate:

In regard [to] the Cheyenne Indian, Porcupine, who gave an account of his visit to the Piute camp at Walker Lake, I will say that it is wonderfully correct . . . that on his visit he first met with the Piutes [*sic*] . . . and then at Wadsworth, on the Central Pacific Railroad, where he fell in with Capt. Dave, of the Piutes [*sic*], . . . [after] several days . . . they took the [CCRR] cars for Walker Lake.¹¹⁰

It is worth noting that even powerful Native Americans had to constantly negotiate with agents for the right to travel. As Mooney writes: "He [Black Coyote] has repeatedly asked me to get for him a permanent license from the government to enable him to visit various reservations at will as a general evangel of Indian medicine and ceremony."¹¹¹ Even Wovoka's right to travel on the trains was not guaranteed. According to a letter from the superintendent of the Walker River School dated 28 November 1922, "Jack Wilson is not entitled to a pass. He neither lives here nor is on our Roll. The fact that his wife is interested [in living?] here does not give him any rights here so far as passes are concerned and you may so advise him. The agreement which these people have with the railroad company provides that only these Paiute Indians resident here are entitled to passes."¹¹² Despite the restrictions placed on railroad use, native people continued to travel to and from Mason Valley for many purposes, including meeting with Wovoka, participating in Ghost Dances, learning the ritual liturgy associated with this dance, and sharing ideas and material culture.

Following the tragic deaths of Ghost Dancers at Wounded Knee, ceremonial participants from the Great Plains continued to correspond with Wovoka and exchange material goods, particularly ceremonial paint, ask for guidance, and urge Wovoka to visit them. Although initially uncertain about their intent, Wovoka eventually traveled by train to Oklahoma to meet with some of his admirers.¹¹³ Chester Smith, who stayed with Jack Wilson when he was eight or nine years of age, noted that

[t]hen he [Wovoka] used to get lots of letters, they called for him to come to Oklahoma. So he'd pack up his suitcase and we'd take him to the railroad back here in Mason—the old Copper Belt to Wabuska, and from there he'd go to Hazen, near Fernley. He didn't

Camp Crook Tongue River Agency in Montana on 15 June 1890, and is reprinted in Mooney, 793.

110. Chapman (n. 26 above).

111. Mooney, 898.

112. "Letter from the Superintendent of the Walker River School dated November 28, 1922, Letters Received, RG 75," Walker River Agency, box 303, correspondence 1922 and 1923 (Federal Archives, San Bruno, California), reprinted in Hittman, *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance* (n. 2 above), 295.

113. Dyer (n. 78 above).

have to pay anything, either. Schurz prearranged for all that free transportation.¹¹⁴

Over the next several decades Wovoka and his followers continued to use two modern technologies, railroads and the post office, to maintain contact and perpetuate Ghost Dance practices.

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Conclusion

During the latter half of the nineteenth century over thirty-two North American indigenous communities experienced a revolution in their attitudes toward the railroads. From destroying surveyors' stakes and the trains themselves, to traveling atop railroad cars behind coal-belching and steam-blowing engines, and finally to experiencing the well-deserved dignity of sitting inside passenger cars alongside other travelers, the native communities of North America reinvented their relationship with the technology most closely associated with westward expansionism.¹¹⁵ This article has explored how railroad technologies, so critical in constructing the imagined nation of the nineteenth-century United States, were simultaneously shaped by the native communities of North America. From the initial heroic resistance against the forceful expansion of railroads through aboriginal territories to the closure of the frontier and the reputed end of physical resistance with the physical defeat of the Lakota at Wounded Knee, this story explores the courageous efforts of multiple native communities to reinvent themselves and their collective attitudes toward the railroad—a technology that had become a multi-vocal symbol of westward expansionism. Under the leadership of two Paiute prophets, harkening from the ranks of one of the reputedly least advanced of the native groups of North America, over thirty-two native groups, ranging from California through the Great Plains, collectivized in their efforts to revitalize their cultures and protest against westward expansionism and the culture of capitalism driving the massive reconfiguration of the landscape, cultures, and peoples of North America.¹¹⁶

Using the railroads, which were arguably the quintessential symbol of nineteenth-century U.S. colonialism, diverse native communities of the Great Basin and Great Plains waged a counter-hegemonic response that included the creation of a unified pan-Indian ritual movement, the extension

114. Chester Smith, "I Remember Jack," remembrances of Wovoka by Yerington Paiute tribal members, reprinted in Hittman, *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance*, appendix K, 342.

115. Ambrose (n. 8 above), 17.

116. Julian H. Steward, *Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution* (Urbana, Ill., 1972), 101, 113–14.

of travel outside of regions under the surveillance of particular Indian agents, and the growth of markets for both finding work and selling the products of their labor. The very technology that caused so much upheaval in the lives of these communities during the 1860s and '70s was turned into a strategic mechanism to ensure their survival from the 1880s onward. In response to the presence of such new technologies, Sitting Bull advocated selective appropriation, saying that “[i]f you see anything good in the white man’s road pick it up and keep it. But if you find something that is not good, or that turns out bad, leave it alone.”¹¹⁷

117. Stanley Vestal, *New Sources of Indian History 1850–1891: The Ghost Dance, The Prairie Sioux—a Miscellany* (Norman, Okla., 1934), 273–74.