

FACT SHEET

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Giant Golden Spike Monument Will Honor Unsung Heroes Who Built Transcontinental Railroad



Purpose & Commissioning of the Monument

- The Golden Spike Foundation commissioned sculptor Douwe Blumberg in 2021 to create a public art piece to celebrate the power and diversity of those whose labor and sacrifices contributed to the creation of the nation's first transcontinental railroad.
- Blumberg was one of 229 artists who responded to a request for proposal (RFP) from the Golden Spike Foundation, in consultation with the Utah Division of Arts & Museums' public art staff. Artists from France, Canada, Japan, Spain, and 39 states and territories in the U.S., expressed interest in the project.

About The Monument

- The Golden Spike Monument measures 43.3 feet tall, a seemingly random number that happens to be the square root of 1869 – the year the transcontinental railroad was completed in Promontory, Utah.
- The Monument weighs about 8,000 pounds. It has an aluminum interior structure, making it lightweight and strong. The outside of the Monument has been carefully covered in gold decorative material and then overlaid with a thick layer of wax so its appearance can be maintained.

- It took 25 people to create the Monument, including casters, welders, sandblasters, and artisans who applied the gold decorative material and wax.

Giving Faces to The Faceless

- The Golden Spike Foundation's Spike 150 celebration on May 10, 2019, marked the 150th anniversary of the driving of the last spike that joined the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads to form America's first transcontinental railroad. Events focused on telling the **complete story** of the railroad's construction by recognizing and honoring the thousands of workers whose back-breaking efforts, sacrifices, and ingenuity made the railroad a reality. Before the Spike 150 celebration, their stories had gone untold, their contributions glossed over, and their faces not shown.
- This monument **gives "faces to the faceless"** and truly celebrates the building of the Transcontinental Railroad. The Golden Spike Monument is a lasting legacy that will continue to tell the **whole story** to the world so it can be remembered and honored. It offers a timely and lasting message about the power of diversity and inclusion.
- One side of the Monument acknowledges the impact that the railroad had on both the environment and the Native American people, whose land the railroad crossed. The railroad forever changed the landscape and the lives of those who were displaced.
- To accurately portray individuals from the various worker groups or peoples impacted by the railroad, Blumberg consulted with historians and representatives of various railroad worker groups in addition to conducting his own extensive personal research. The sculpture includes images of 74 people from diverse backgrounds in addition to numerous others representing other aspects of the Transcontinental Railroad effort. The Monument took one year to sculpt and 28 months to complete.

Railroad Laborers

- The laborers that came together to build the transcontinental railroad included Chinese, Irish, and other immigrants; newly freed slaves from the southern states; veterans who had recently fought in the Civil War; and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who were trying to settle in the harsh land of Utah.
- Estimated laborers working on the railroad included: Chinese (15,000 – 25,000), Irish (10,000 – 12,000), members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (3,000 – 4,000), Civil War veterans (2,000 – 3,000), African Americans (uncertain due to lack of records.), and other nationalities (500 – 1,000).

The Famous Four Spikes

- On May 10, 1869, four special spikes (two gold, one silver, and one silver and gold) were presented at the celebration of the transcontinental railroad's completion. During the celebration, the gold and silver ceremonial spikes were placed in a polished laurelwood tie to signify the completion of the railroad. Where are the four spikes today? Two are at Stanford University, one is owned by a private collector, and one has been lost.

Where The Monument Will Be Permanently Placed?

- Following the #119 and Jupiter tours, the Golden Spike Monument will be installed at 2000 W. Forest Street, Brigham City, Utah, on an 8-acre park purchased by Brigham City in Box Elder County. The park will be known as Golden Spike State Monument. The foundation, with the generous support of public and private donors, is undertaking the construction of the park. The park will include walking paths, an observation deck, and informational signage. The site also includes a bust of President Abraham Lincoln, sculpted by Daniel J. Fairbanks and commissioned by the Golden Spike Foundation. President Lincoln signed the 1862 Pacific Railway Act that determined the 41st Parallel or Central Route was the preferred transcontinental railroad route, paving the way to begin its construction.
- A portion of the original 1869 transcontinental railroad grade passes through the property where the monument will be installed.
- Golden Spike State Monument is adjacent to Interstate 15 at exit 363 and is 36 miles from Promontory, Utah, which is home to the Golden Spike National Historical Park.
- Golden Spike National Historical Park preserves sections of the original railroad grade, the “Last Spike” site, and operates the historic steam locomotives Jupiter and #119 to help preserve and tell the important story of the transcontinental railroad.
- Once the Golden Spike Monument is installed, Box Elder County will be home to four impressive public art pieces as lasting legacies of the Spike 150 celebration and the Golden Spike Foundation to help capture the transcontinental railroad’s pivotal impact:
 - *Golden Spike Monument* by Douwe Blumberg
 - *Distant Thunder* by Michael Coleman
 - *Monument to their Memory* by Ilan Averbuch
 - President Abraham Lincoln bust by Daniel J. Fairbanks.
 - In addition, Box Elder County is home to art pieces, the Sun Tunnels, and Spiral Jetty. This is the largest concentration of public art in Northern Utah.

About Artist Douwe Blumberg

- Blumberg has completed more than 200 private and public commissions and has won numerous awards for his work. His work includes the Las Vegas Veterans Memorial, and the “America’s Response” Special Operations Monument to be placed near Ground Zero in New York City.
- Blumberg was born in Los Angeles. He attended California’s prestigious Idyllwild School of the Arts and Music. This was followed with four years of sculpture/metal working education and capped by an apprenticeship at a California art foundry, where he mastered the technical aspects of creating bronzes.
- Blumberg now lives in Kentucky and is quoted as saying “When I do a piece, my goal is to capture something special in it. I’m not interested in ‘pretty.’ I want a spark of life: movement, drama, that something that will make you look twice. That power.”

About The Golden Spike Foundation

- The Spike 150 celebration started as a dream of what could be — a celebration of the sesquicentennial anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad as a way of uniting, educating, and inspiring people far and near. The dream was realized when a group of dedicated individuals came together and worked hard to create a statewide celebration that culminated on May 10, 2019. People traveled to the events from 49 of the 50 states, and from China, Japan, Switzerland, Canada, and Germany. Spike 150 organizers estimate that the three-day event at Promontory Summit attracted around 38,000 people. In addition, hundreds of other events spurred by the organizers took place across the state of Utah to commemorate the historic feat of building the world’s first transcontinental railroad. Nearly 85 news media outlets received credentials, and news stories about the 150th celebration appeared throughout Utah, the nation, and the world. And, critically, set the record straight by educating the world about the dedication and hard work of tens of thousands of railroad workers.
- The Golden Spike Foundation, a Utah-based non-profit organization, continues to inspire people to learn from the past and honor the memory of the railroad workers through a series of legacy public art and educational outreach.
- The Golden Spike Foundation embraces the idea that telling stories through public art is an accessible means of creating a lasting narrative.

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