

## Traveling to the Distant West

**Cross-Curricular Focus: History/Social Sciences**



In the early days of America, the original colonies were fairly close together on the east coast. **Travel** was by foot, or by horse. If goods had to be transported over land, a horse and wagon was often used. As more and more settlers arrived, transportation expanded to include a few tracks of railroad service. Travel to known areas was not very difficult.

When America began to expand toward the west, it was not as easy to get by with walking, riding a horse, or using a wagon. The lands in the west were unknown, and many settlers had long distances to go in order to claim land for their own. Oregon territory offered rich land for those who would travel there. The California gold rush of 1849 gave many people dreams of becoming rich, so they decided to travel there. Many families stayed behind while husbands and fathers set out alone to make a home where their families could join them later.

Theodore Judah saw that people needed a faster way to travel in this new **direction**: west. It was his dream to unite the east and west with the first transcontinental railroad, a train system that would reach from one side of the continent to the other. Thousands of workers came to California to help build the tracks going east from Sacramento. Many others started building west from Nebraska. In 1869, the tracks met in Promontory, Utah. Suddenly, the parts of our nation that had seemed so distant were joined with our early settlements by the tracks. Our country became one again.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

1) When the colonies were close together, how did most people travel? \_\_\_\_\_

2) What two things made a lot of people want to move west to settle? \_\_\_\_\_

3) What was Theodore Judah's dream?

4) Why do you think that workers built the railroad from both sides at the same time?

5) How did the new railroad make the country feel more united? \_\_\_\_\_