

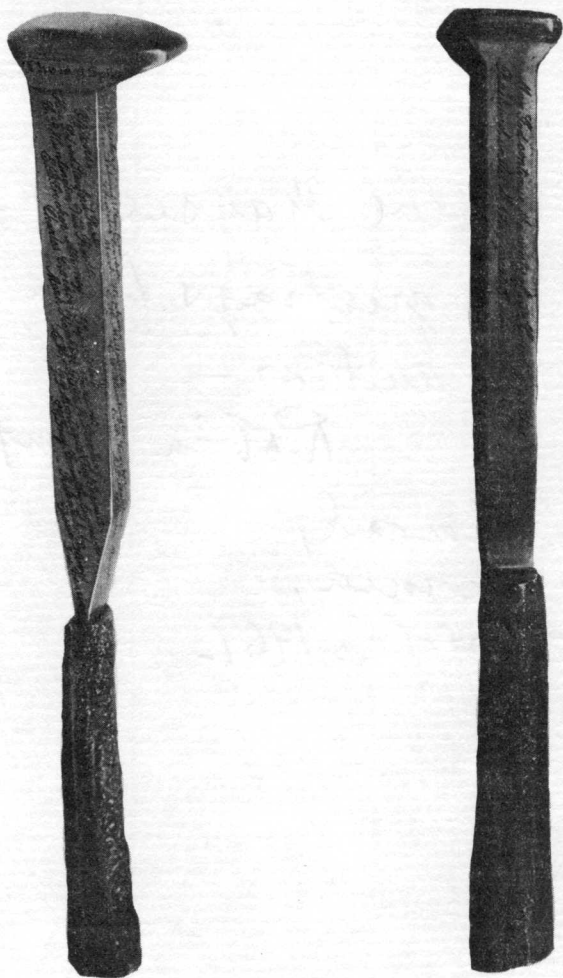
**THE MAN WHO GAVE
THE GOLDEN SPIKE**

By ROBIN LAMPSON

To Steve Maysee
with greetings from
the author -

Robin Lampson

Richmond,
California,
15 October 1969.



TWO VIEWS OF THE GOLDEN LAST SPIKE (as originally cast and engraved by the silversmiths, with the extra portion — the "second spike" of the receipted bill, but actually just the surplus gold that filled the "gate" of the mold — still attached. These two views of the Last Spike are from rare photographs which obviously had to be taken between May 4 and May 10, 1869.)

the man
who gave the
golden spike

By ROBIN LAMPSON

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FIRST EDITION

BOOKS BY ROBIN LAMPSON

On Reaching Sixteen and Other Verses
Terza-Rima Sonnets
Laughter out of the Ground
A Song of Pindar in Hades
The Mending of a Continent
San Francisco Souvenir
Death Loses a Pair of Wings

EDITED BY R. L., with preface, postscript and new title:

A Vulcan Among the Argonauts
(an abrigment of John Carr's Pioneer
Days in California.)

Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum
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TO

A. M. RICHARDS, Jr.

CREDIT FOR ALIENATION

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been granted credit for alienation under the provisions of the Act of March 3, 1907, as amended. The names are arranged in alphabetical order of the surnames. The names of the persons who have been granted credit for alienation under the provisions of the Act of March 3, 1907, as amended, are as follows:

1. [Name] 2. [Name] 3. [Name] 4. [Name] 5. [Name] 6. [Name] 7. [Name] 8. [Name] 9. [Name] 10. [Name] 11. [Name] 12. [Name] 13. [Name] 14. [Name] 15. [Name] 16. [Name] 17. [Name] 18. [Name] 19. [Name] 20. [Name] 21. [Name] 22. [Name] 23. [Name] 24. [Name] 25. [Name] 26. [Name] 27. [Name] 28. [Name] 29. [Name] 30. [Name] 31. [Name] 32. [Name] 33. [Name] 34. [Name] 35. [Name] 36. [Name] 37. [Name] 38. [Name] 39. [Name] 40. [Name] 41. [Name] 42. [Name] 43. [Name] 44. [Name] 45. [Name] 46. [Name] 47. [Name] 48. [Name] 49. [Name] 50. [Name] 51. [Name] 52. [Name] 53. [Name] 54. [Name] 55. [Name] 56. [Name] 57. [Name] 58. [Name] 59. [Name] 60. [Name] 61. [Name] 62. [Name] 63. [Name] 64. [Name] 65. [Name] 66. [Name] 67. [Name] 68. [Name] 69. [Name] 70. [Name] 71. [Name] 72. [Name] 73. [Name] 74. [Name] 75. [Name] 76. [Name] 77. [Name] 78. [Name] 79. [Name] 80. [Name] 81. [Name] 82. [Name] 83. [Name] 84. [Name] 85. [Name] 86. [Name] 87. [Name] 88. [Name] 89. [Name] 90. [Name] 91. [Name] 92. [Name] 93. [Name] 94. [Name] 95. [Name] 96. [Name] 97. [Name] 98. [Name] 99. [Name] 100. [Name]

FOREWORD

This chapter out of the early history of the American West was originally written for publication on the radio, and was read on Station KSFO by the author. It was one of thirteen historical sketches that made up the radio program "San Francisco Souvenir," sponsored by the Wells Fargo Bank & Union Trust Company. The present version has been completely rewritten for this publication.

CREDITS FOR ILLUSTRATIONS

The receipted bill for the Golden Spike: Stanford University archives.

Portrait of David Hewes; Hewes and the Oregon Pony: The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Hewes's Steam Paddy: The California Monthly, Berkeley.

(The 1869 photographs of the unsevered original "Last Spike," and the map — specially drawn for this story — showing the areas of San Francisco reclaimed from the Bay by Hewes, are the property of the author.)

the man who
gave the
golden spike

(Yankee David Hewes brings tin houses around the Horn for the Forty-niners, then fills in Yerba Buena Cove to round out the San Francisco waterfront — and later provides a golden memorial for the completion of the first transcontinental railway on May 10, 1869.)

The thrill which a Forty-niner must have felt just after uncovering a big nugget with his pick and shovel is something I think I have experienced.

After rescuing it from the oblivion of an attic trunk in Berkeley, California, I have held in my hand a yellowing rectangle of paper that is a pure gold nugget of the history of the West. This paper is a quaint billhead of Schulz, Fischer & Mohrig, jewelers, of 10 Stevenson Street, San Francisco, dated May 4, 1869. The bill is made out to one David Hewes, and the items charged are as follows:

Finishing 2 Gold Spikes	\$ 6.00
Engraving 381 letters at 4 Cts	15.24
1 Velvet Box	4.00
	<hr/>
	\$ 25.24

This document, duly marked "Received Payment" by a member of the firm, is none other than the original goldsmiths' bill for the Golden Spike, the famous "Last Spike" of history!

Six days after the date of this bill — on May 10, 1869 — at Promontory Point in Utah, 53 miles west Ogden and about 800 miles east of San Francisco, David Hewes's gold spike was "driven" by his brother-in-law, Governor Leland Stanford, into a railroad crosstie of California laurel. (Actually, the solid-gold spike was too soft to be driven: it would flatten and bend if hammered. So it was dropped into a hole already bored into the hardwood tie, and then symbolically tapped by the gandy-dancer's silver-headed hammer in the hands of Stanford and various other dignitaries participating.)

So, with a thousand spectators present, the Central Pacific (now the Southern Pacific) and the Union Pacific railroads were joined. At last, after two decades of imperative need and adventurous dreaming and planning — and years of construction that challenged the brains and brawn of thousands of men — the first transcontinental railway was a fact of steel and steam.

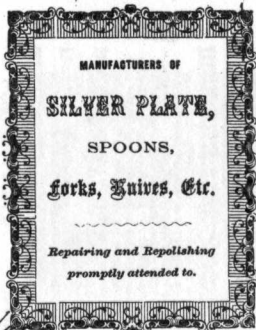
And the second gold spike of the goldsmiths' bill? It was a long rough slug of pure gold attached to the tip of the polished and engraved "last spike." The rough slug was broken off and made into souvenir rings for Stanford, president of the Central Pacific, for President Oakes Ames of the Union Pacific, and for President Ulysses S. Grant and his Secretary of State, William H. Seward. The original Last Spike and the jewelers' receipted bill for making it are both now the property of Stanford University, where visitors are privileged to see them today.

A little over 30 years ago, when the Last Spike reposed in the vault of the Wells Fargo Bank in San Francisco, I went there and

DeRebach & Co's Print.

San Francisco, May 4 1869

Mr David Hewes



Bought of **SCHULZ & FISCHER,**
MANUFACTURERS OF *Mohrig*
SILVER WARE,

10 Stevenson Street, near First.

1869

May 4	Finishing 2 Gold Spikes	\$ 6. "
	Engraving 381 letters i. 4 Cts.	15 25.
	1 Silver Spoon	4. "
		<hr/>
		\$ 25. 24



Received Payment
Schulz, Fischer & Mohrig

SILVERSMITH'S RECEIPTED BILL FOR THE LAST SPIKE

(Probably in Mohrig's handwriting, for the two other partners' names are misspelled below. Note the Civil War revenue stamp, which was still required at the time on any legal or commercial document, including receipts and bank checks.)

was granted permission to examine the original heavy spike of pure gold. I saw that finely engraved near its tip was the legend, "Presented by David Hewes of San Francisco."

David Hewes — who was he? As a test at that time I questioned at least two score of alert, well-informed older persons — and the name *David Hewes* was always either unknown or at best remembered but vaguely and for nothing outstanding.

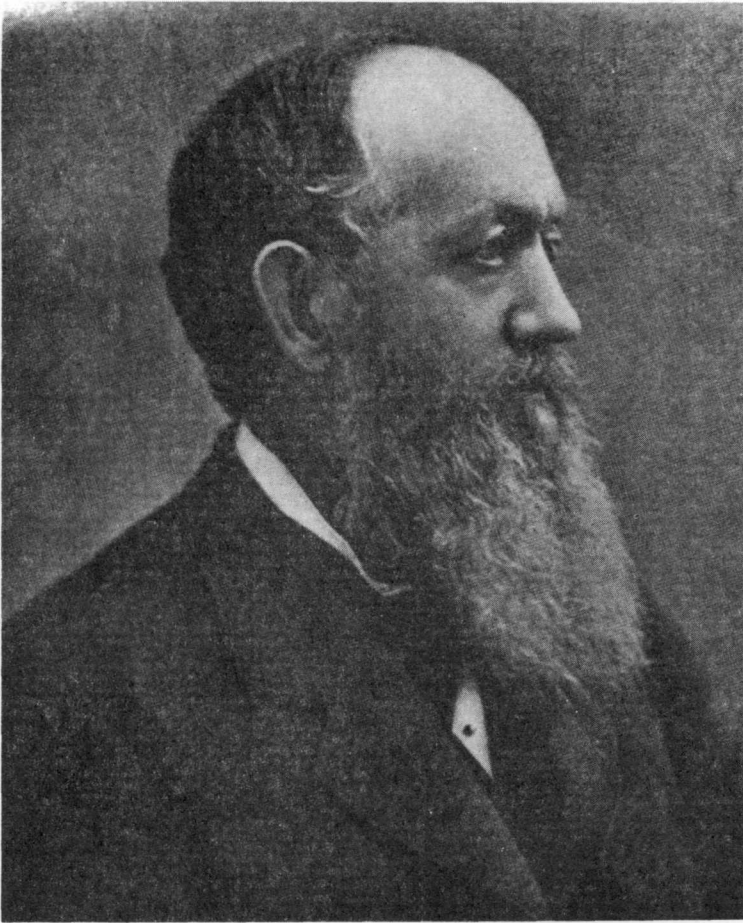
Then I searched the great libraries — but found no title about him. However, from that same attic trunk, a heavy green volume, a genealogy of the Hewes family, gave me much information — though all too little — about this remarkable man. I knew that he married the sister of Governor Stanford's wife; now I learned that David Hewes was a veritable Titan among the Argonauts.

He was born in Lynnfield, Massachusetts, in 1822, the fifth son of the ten children of a poor farmer. When David was five, his father died of tuberculosis, and the boy soon had his tender young muscles hardened by the chores of the farm.

By the time that David was ten, his stepfather — in accord with the severe but approved custom of the time and community — harnessed him to the work of a man. The youngster was required to get up before daylight, milk the cows, then toil through the long days clearing the peat land of its boulders or plowing the heavy soil. His only release was a few bittersweet hours at school in the village, and this for only a niggardly few weeks of the year.

When he reached the age of fourteen he was "bound out" to a brother-in-law who treated him kindly, paid him an allowance, and continued to send him to school.

When his indenture was finished, David ambitiously worked his way through academy, and then entered Yale in 1847. Short of funds for pursuing his studies in college, he energetically began taking subscriptions for a children's magazine quaintly entitled *Peter Parley's Merry Museum* and a companion publication called *Mother's Assistant*.



DAVID HEWES, 1822 - 1915.

His success was heroic: in one month his commissions netted him \$400. (Remember, this was 1848, a troubled year throughout the world, when most Americans, if they worked at all, were paid only a few dollars a month!)

The publisher soon wanted to make David a partner; but the youth rejected the offer and stuck to his studies — and to soliciting subscriptions. By the spring of 1849, when the Gold Rush was shaking New England and lifting it from its ruts and grooves, the student entrepreneur, thrifty with his magazine earnings, had accumulated nearly \$3,000!

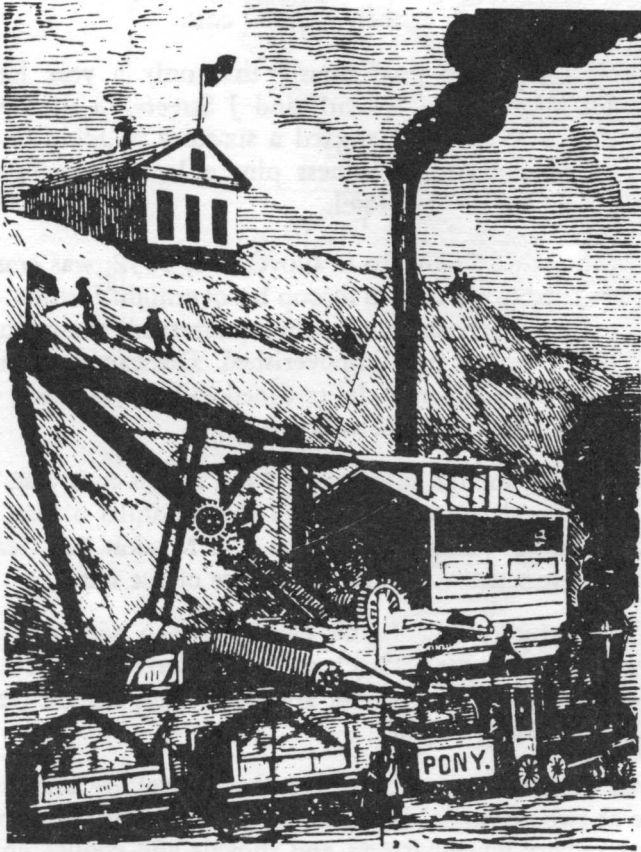
But David, attracted more by the hearth of education, resisted the lure of western adventure and hills gilded with gold. Yet, hearing that the shortage of houses was acute in San Francisco and Sacramento, he boldly invested his \$3,000 in sheets of galvanized iron which he shipped to San Francisco by way of Cape Horn.

Half a year later, in December, fearful for his venture, and unwilling to risk all his savings with a distant commissioner, he hastily left Yale and followed his houses to the land of gold. To gain time, he hurried to California by the shortcut of the Isthmus of Panama.

But nearly a week was sweatily consumed in crossing that pestilent hyphen of the continents, and when he arrived at Panama City, the regular steamer for San Francisco had already sailed. Obligated otherwise to lay over for nearly a month, he accepted the only passage immediately available — on an ancient tramp steamer.

On this overcrowded tub, David Hewes — in company with hundreds of conglomerate Argonauts — suffered from the half-rotten food and vile water; and he vowed, by his outraged nostrils and palate, that *he'd never return to the East by sea.*

In San Francisco, he expected to dispose of his houses at a fabulous profit, then return overland to the East to study medicine or the law. But the ship with his "tin houses" (as he called his galvanized sheets) was disabled en route, and was two months late



THE STEAM SHOVEL — NICKNAMED THE "STEAM PADDY" — INTRODUCED TO THE WEST COAST BY DAVID HEWES. (Here one is tearing down a San Francisco hill, with the aid of his steam "Pony" railway.)

in arriving. In the meantime, he journeyed to Sacramento and employed the delay zestfully in the mercantile business — richly to his purse's advantage.

When the galvanized iron finally arrived, he transshipped it to Sacramento, set up the buildings, and instantly rented them all for as much per month as their original cost.

Hewes prospered so prodigiously that only a year later he purchased a large site at Seventh and J Streets, in the heart of the booming new city, and erected a six-story building to house his land-office mercantile business plus a large hostelry which he named the Queen City Hotel.

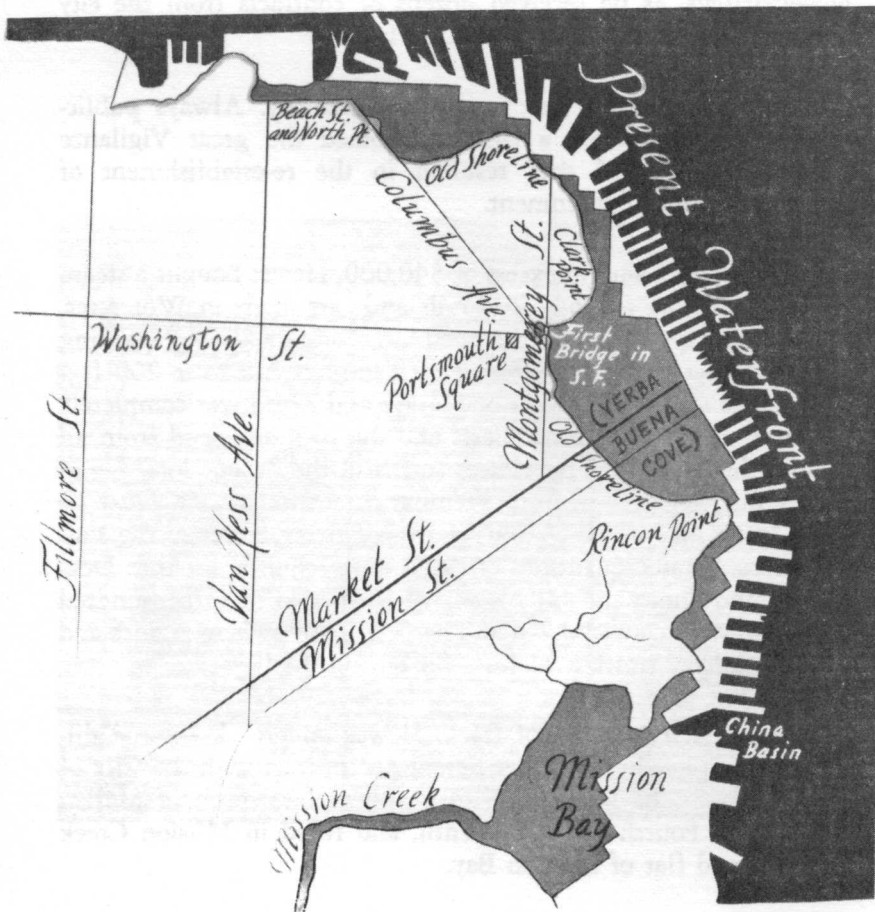
But downtown Sacramento in November, 1852, was erased by fire. Hewes tried to rebuild, to recoup his overnight fortune — but floods all that winter, and rioting by squatters all the spring and summer of 1853, left him impoverished. Disheartened, but not disillusioned with California, he returned to San Francisco, toting all his possessions in a single valise.

David Hewes, though now without the means to invest, was a born lover of real estate. He studied the sandhills of San Francisco surrounding Yerba Buena Cove and Mission Bay, learning the values of lots and weighing the future of the city.

Then opportunity touched his elbow: a man with a large lot on the northeast corner of Stockton and O'Farrell Streets wanted the sandhill removed and the lot leveled — and offered Hewes a good sum for doing the job.

Hewes bought a wheelbarrow and a shovel — and hired a Chinese at two dollars a day to do all the sweating. Soon he had ten, then twenty wheelbarrows and shovels and coolies gnawing on the hillside — and without any callouses he netted a delicious \$600 from the contract!

His first project of considerable magnitude was a contract with the city government for grading and leveling Bush Street from Kearny to Mason — a terrain four blocks long, with hollows 40 feet deep and sandhills 60 feet high, and with cuts to be picked through clay and blasted through rock. He soon added many



DAVID HEWES FILLS IN YERBA BUENA COVE (also Mission Creek and Mission Bay, and the tidelands of North Beach, plus other sections of the present Embarcadero or waterfront of San Francisco. The shaded areas show the parts of the city reclaimed from the Bay through his operations. From a drawing researched by and made for the author in 1939.)

horses and mules and carts and pieces of grading equipment to the wheelbarrows, as he received dozens of contracts from the city and from private persons for leveling land.

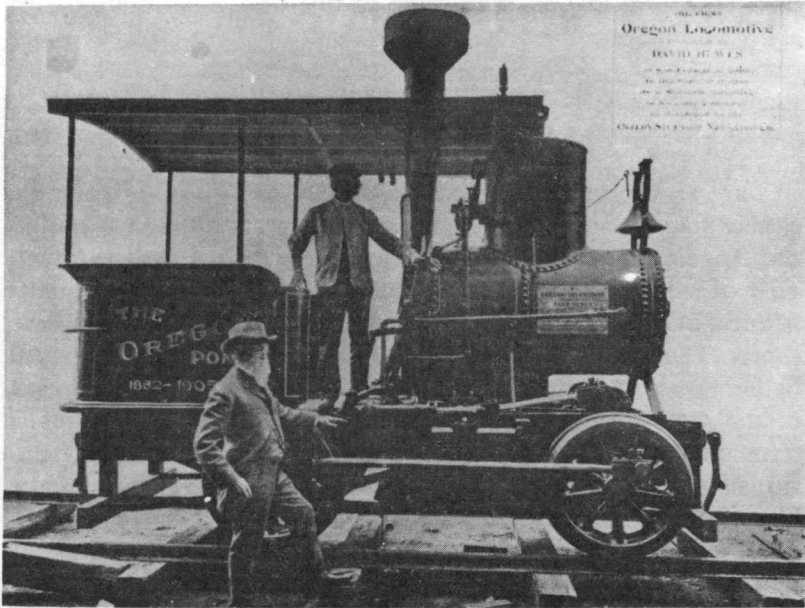
In a few years he was moderately wealthy. Always public-spirited, he shouldered a rifle and joined the great Vigilance Committee of 1856 that resulted in the re-establishment of decent municipal government.

In 1858, for a sum in excess of \$40,000, Hewes bought a steam shovel, switching engines, iron rails and cars made in Worcester, Massachusetts, and began the then-huge undertaking of grading Market Street from Third Street to Tenth. A hill over 200 feet high at the southwest corner of Market and Third was completely pulled down by "steam paddies," and the rock and sand from all this leveling was used by Hewes to fill in the "water lots" — in Yerba Buena Cove — from Fremont Street to Steuart. Next he filled in the bay north of Market from Battery Street to the Embarcadero. Titanic quantities of earth were required for this. Dozens of sand dunes and hills, some of them two or three hundred feet high, were clawed down and hauled off by switch-engines and cars on railway trestles reaching far out on the bay.

Then, with two miles of track, Hewes undertook — and diligently completed — another herculean contract with the City of San Francisco: he leveled the hills and valleys south of Market Street from Fourth Street to Tenth, and filled in Mission Creek and the mud flat of Mission Bay.

His final municipal job was the grading of the site of the present City Hall at Market and McAllister Streets. Then he sold his engines and cars and rails, in 1873, to Henry Villard, who was building the Northern Pacific Railroad.

David Hewes's labors and prophetic investments in land had made him a rich man. He spent the remainder of his 93 years in living and giving. His generous hand was especially felt by the founders of the University of California, Mills College, and Stanford University.



DAVID HEWES, THEN WELL INTO HIS EIGHTIES, STANDS BESIDE THE OREGON PONY, FIRST OREGON LOCOMOTIVE, WHICH HE PRESENTED TO THE STATE OF OREGON AS A SOUVENIR OF ITS EARLY COMMERCE AS DEVELOPED BY THE OREGON STEAMSHIP NAVIGATION COMPANY. (The diminutive old locomotive is the type used by Hewes in leveling many of San Francisco's hills, grading its streets, and filling in Yerba Buena Cove and other parts of the present waterfront.)

Some years ago I stood on the top floor of the Russ Building in San Francisco and looked out of the windows to the east. Thirty-one stories below me lay historic Montgomery Street. In the distance, eight blocks away, stood the Ferry Clock Tower fashioned after the Giralda of Seville in Spain. Beneath me was a forest of buildings, some squat, some towering, on the flat earth floor of downtown San Francisco. I marveled, gazing from this skyscraper summit, remembering the young Yankee, the forgotten pioneer, David Hewes, who came to this city in its infancy with a few tin houses to rip a quick profit from the Forty-niners — and remained to lay down the very earth-foundations under most of those buildings between me and the bay. A job for a Titan — or a man with brains and energy and few steam shovels!

The vision of a railroad connecting California with the eastern states, leaping the Rockies and the Sierra Nevada as well as the Appalachians, and binding the Pacific to the Atlantic with rails of steel, was probably as old as the second hour of homesickness in the breast of the first marveling American to visit these shores. The men and women of the covered wagons who trudged beside faltering horses and oxen in the deserts and up mountains, might well have been tantalized by bittersweet visions of a transcontinental railway — of locomotives loping over their painful, slow trail. And the sea-weary Argonauts who froze at Cape Horn and sweltered in the jungles of Panama and rotted through miserable months on shipboard — out of their impatience, also, arose the demand for speed and safety and comfort on an overland highway of steel.

Not the weakest of these voices of vision and prophecy was David Hewes. Five years before Leland Stanford and Mark Hopkins, Collis Huntington and the Crocker started construction of the Central Pacific, Hewes had had imprinted on his letter-heads: "The Atlantic & Pacific Railroad, the Immediate Want of the Age and the People."

When at last the transcontinental railway was on the eve of completion — one day in San Francisco in April, 1869 — Governor Stanford was telling David Hewes of his plans to drive the last spike with appropriate ceremony.

"I suppose," said Hewes, with a canny, ironical smile, "that the Comstock millionaires of Nevada have donated a couple of solid silver rails for uniting the two railroads?"

"You suppose too well," answered Stanford. "They've offered us nothing of the sort."

David Hewes then opened his mouth — and his heart. "The completion of the overland railway," he declared, turning solemn, "is the greatest event in the history of California since the discovery of gold. It cancels our remoteness, and changes San Francisco from a distant cousin to a neighboring sister of Boston and New York and Philadelphia. San Francisco and California have been generous to me. Now I want to contribute, as my token gratitude, a last crosstie of California laurel and a last spike of pure Mother Lode gold for the ceremony in Utah. Will you accept it?"

"Will we!" replied Governor Stanford. "You bet we will!"

So David Hewes carried \$400 worth of virgin gold nuggets to his jewelers, and the Last Spike was cast and engraved and then carried in its velvet box to its immortal hour at Promontory Point.

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Incidentally, David Hewes lived up to his resolution *never to return to the East by sea*. It took 20 years of waiting, but only three months after the Last Spike was driven, he triumphantly traveled by overland train to visit his birthplace in Massachusetts.

When in 1906 the earthquake and flames destroyed all his buildings in San Francisco, David Hewes — still youthfully resilient at 84 — telegraphed to relatives in the East: "Safe. Destroyed today. Rebuild tomorrow."

With indomitable energy, he proceeded to rebuild at Market and Sixth, erecting a structure 15 stories high — the first thoroughly fireproof and earthquake-proof modern skyscraper to arise from the ashes, and still occupied today.

David Hewes died in California in 1915, in his 94th year.