



Slavery, Scandal, and Steel Rails: The 1854 Gadsden Purchase and the Building of the Second Transcontinental Railroad Across Arizona and New Mexico Twenty-Five Years Later

David Devine

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In 1875, Charles Crocker, Mark Hopkins, Collis Huntington, and Leland Stanford of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company began taking steps to construct a southern transcontinental railroad line east from California. The implementation problems encountered over the next six years, the company's internal disagreements along with those it had with its rivals, and the anticipated regional economic benefits the tracks would bring comprise the concluding chapters of *Slavery, Scandal, and Steel Rails*. The book's beginning details how the southwestern territory those rails crossed was purchased from Mexico in 1854. James Gadsden of Charleston, South Carolina started championing a southern cross-country railroad in 1846 to improve his hometown's economy and to export slavery west of Texas. At the conclusion of the Mexican American War two years later, the United States obtained 600,000 square miles of new territory, but not enough to accommodate the southern route. That is why, at the urging of Jefferson Davis, Gadsden was appointed Minister to Mexico. Gadsden's negotiations to acquire more Mexican land were complicated by several factors, including dubious instructions from a secret messenger. He was able, however, to finalize a treaty, which was later substantially altered by the United States Senate, that resulted in the Gadsden Purchase.

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