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Writer

This story is dedicated to all those who bent a nail while hammering. I'll bet your nail never made it into a museum or history. There is one exception of course.

Donald A. Smith did just that. Smith was 65 years old when he struck the last spike on November 7, 1885 which completed the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) when the west rail line met the rail line moving east.

Canadian Pacific Railway was completed before a huge crowd at the Eagle Pass Craigalachie in BC.

Before the last spike was thrust into ground and history, Smith bent the spike. The bent spike is now in the Glenbow-Alberta Institute in Calgary.

It was here, before the excited on lookers, that Sir William Cornelius Van Horne (1843-1915) CPR president, made his 15-word speech. "I can all say is that the work has been well done in every way."

The next day, the CPR special transcontinental train arrived in Port Moody at Pacific Tidewater, 4,800 km away from Montreal.

## It's Our History, Our Country

It Was the Second and the Last Spike That Made History

November 7, 1885

So, the next time you bend your next nail think of the second last spike and may all your bent nails be made of steel.

Remember, it's our history, our country.  
Other Facts:

*-Canadian Pacific Railway was completed before a huge crowd at the Eagle Pass Craigalachie in BC. -*

- History will describe the weather as a dull day and the event took place before "cash starved CPR" who couldn't afford a fancy party. It was Albert Bowman Rogers who held the last spike in which Smith bent. Rogers (182-1889), commonly known as Major A.B. Roers, was an American surveyor best remembered for his discovery of the Rogers Pass in British Columbia, Canada.

- On October 21, 1880 a contract was signed between Hugh Allan (1810-1882) with Canada's first Prime Minister John A McDonald (1815-1891) to build the CPR railway for \$25,000,000 (approximately \$625,000,000 in today's money) and a grant of 25,000,000 acres (100,000 km<sup>2</sup>) of land.

- Allan was a Scottish-born Canadian shipping magnate, railway promoter, financier and capitalist. He became the richest man in Canada with a personal estate estimated at about \$8 million.

- At least 6000 workers (making between \$.75 and \$1.25 a day) were shipped from Hong Kong.

- Non-Asian workers made between \$2.00 to \$2.50 a day, which was good pay for the time.

- The CPR started its westward expansion from Bonfield, Ont. (previously called Callander Station) where the first spike was driven into a sunken railway tie. Bonfield, Ont.

For more information on this exciting Canadian adventure, visit the links below.

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[http://www.railfame.ca/sec\\_ind/leaders/en\\_2003\\_SmithD.asp](http://www.railfame.ca/sec_ind/leaders/en_2003_SmithD.asp)

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