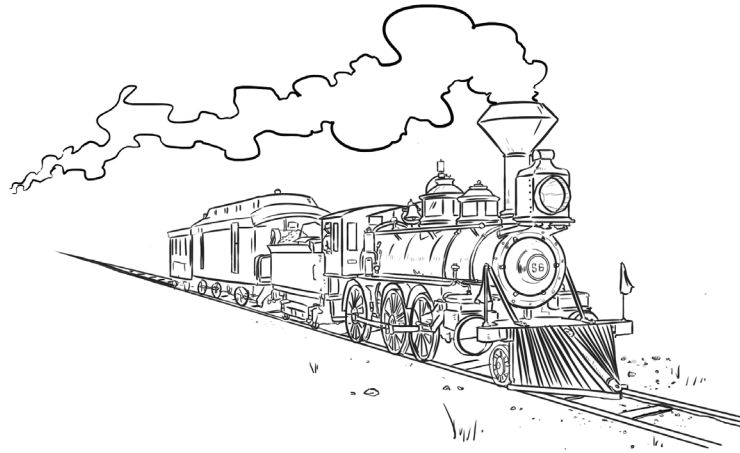


*Adventures on the American Frontier*

# Men on Iron Horses

Part Three

Captain Ayres  
and the Jumping Stick



A Royal Fireworks Production

Royal Fireworks Press  
Unionville, New York



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The railroad was born in America at the beginning of the 1830s, and it wasn't long before most cities along the Atlantic Ocean had at least the start of a railroad connecting them to other cities.



The problem was that no one had made any rules for them. Each railroad chose the size of its locomotive and the distance apart that the rails should be set. The train belonging to one railroad could not go on the tracks of another, for it most likely would not fit the rails. Something would have to be done to make the trains work together, and to make them safer as well.

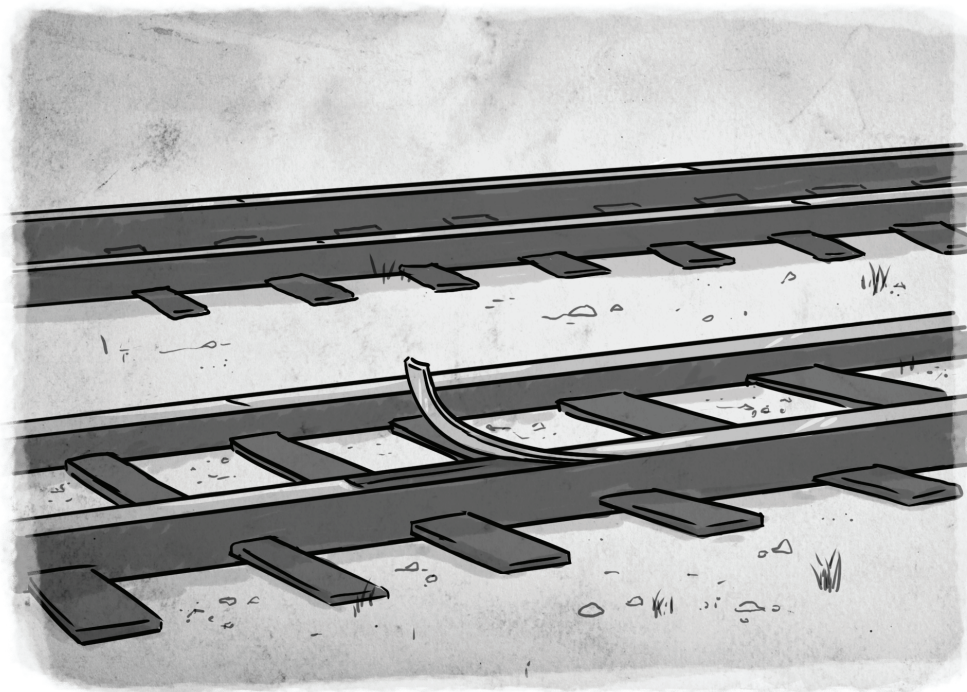
Each train had two men who considered themselves the boss. The engineer, who drove the locomotive, thought that he should



be the one in charge. But the conductor, who knew all that was happening in the cars the locomotive pulled, thought he should be the boss. Most people thought so, too, and they called the conductor "captain."

Captain Ayres was one of the first conductors on the Erie Railroad in New York state. He felt that he should be the boss because he knew when the train should be slowed down or stopped. But his engineer was a stubborn man named Mr. Hamil who was just as sure that he should be the boss.

One day something happened that had happened many times before. The iron strap that was nailed to the top of the wooden rail on which the train ran popped up as the train was running along. The curled-up end of the iron strap was known as a “snakehead.”



“A snakehead, Captain!” one of the passengers called as he leaned out the window.

Captain Ayres did not need to be told. He could hear the “snakehead” as it tore into the underside of a car. A woman fell from her seat as the little passenger cars swayed and swung. They seemed about to leave the tracks.

Captain Ayres yelled to the engineer, “Stop the train!”