

Timeline for *Railroads in U.S. History (1830 – 2010)*

1. 1825 – Englishman George Stephenson builds the locomotive *Locomotion #1* for the Stockton and Darlington Railroad in England
 - The Erie Canal is completed from Buffalo to Albany, New York
2. 1827 – Philip Evans Thomas and George Brown charter the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad to run from Baltimore Maryland to the Ohio River
3. 1829 – George Stephenson builds, the locomotive *The Rocket* for the Manchester and Liverpool Railway; it reaches a speed of 12 miles per hour
4. 1830 – Peter Cooper builds the locomotive *Tom Thumb* for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad
 - *The Best Friend*, the first completely American built locomotive is made in New York for the Charleston & Hamburg Railroad
5. 1832 – The Erie railroad is chartered
6. 1840 – The number of miles of railroad tracks reaches 3000
7. 1843 – Congress authorizes \$30,000 to string Samuel F.B. Morse's telegraph along the right of way of the B & O railroad from Baltimore to Washington D.C.; the telegraph is successfully tested the next year
8. 1846 – The Pennsylvania Railroad is founded
9. 1847 – Johns Hopkins becomes a director of the B & O Railroad
 - The Rock Island Line is incorporated as the Rock Island and La Salle Railroad Company
10. 1850 – Americans have invested over \$300 million in railroads
11. 1851 – The Illinois Central is chartered and is the first railroad in the country to receive land grants from the federal government to help build the line
12. 1853 – Erastus Corning forms the New York Central Railroad Corporation, the largest corporation in America at the time
13. 1855 – The Illinois Central, America's first railroad built with land grants, arrives at East Dubuque, Illinois
14. 1856 – The first railroad bridge across the Mississippi River is completed between Rock Island, Illinois and Davenport, Iowa
15. 1859 – The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe is founded by Cyrus K. Holliday
 - John Brown raids the military arsenal at Harper's Ferry Virginia
16. 1860 – Nehemiah Hodge, invents the first locomotive vacuum brake
 - The number of miles of railroad track reaches over 30,000
17. 1861 – Leland Stanford, Collis P. Huntington, Charles Crocker and Mark Hopkins charter the Central Pacific Railroad company
18. 1862 – President Abraham Lincoln signs the Pacific Railway Act, which authorizes the construction of the first transcontinental railroad, to be built by the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific companies
 - The Union Pacific is chartered by Oakes Ames and Tomas Durant
 - General Stonewall Jackson captures Harper's Ferry during the Civil War
 - Lincoln orders some railroads taken over by the federal government for the war effort

19. 1863 – The Central Pacific lays the first miles of track for the transcontinental railroad going east from Sacramento, California
20. 1864 – George Pullman develops the first Pullman sleeping car
21. 1865 – Under the direction of General Grenville Dodge, the Union Pacific begins laying track out of Omaha Nebraska, heading west for the first transcontinental railroad
 - Thomas Phelps launches the Southern Pacific Railroad
22. 1867 – Cornelius Vanderbilt takes control of the New York Central Railroad Corporation
23. 1868 – Jay Gould and Jim Fisk win control of the Erie Railroad from Cornelius Vanderbilt
 - Major Eli Janney invents the Janney coupler, replacing the dangerous link and pin coupler
 - The Central Pacific buys the Southern Pacific
24. 1869 – The Central Pacific and Union Pacific meet at Promontory Summit, Utah for the driving of the golden spike on May 10th
 - George Westinghouse invents the airbrake
25. 1870 – Jay Cooke launches his Northern Pacific Railway
 - General William Jackson Palmer founds the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad
 - The Central Pacific buys the Southern Pacific
26. 1872 – George Westinghouse patents the first automatic air brake, the same system used today; four years later all Central and Southern Pacific passenger cars are outfitted with airbrakes
27. 1873 – Jay Cooke loses his Northern Pacific Railway in the panic of 1873
 - James Gang pulls off the first train robbery west of the Mississippi River at Adair, Iowa
28. 1877 – The Royal Gorge Railroad War between the Denver & Rio Grande and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe begins in Colorado
29. 1879 – J.J. Hill begins building his Great Northern Railway from Minneapolis, Minnesota to Washington state
30. 1883 – The Southern Pacific is completed from California to New Orleans
31. 1885 – The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe makes it to San Diego
 - The Southern Pacific and the Central Pacific become one company, the Southern Pacific Company
32. 1886 – The first refrigerator cars go into operation on the Southern Pacific, making it possible to deliver perishable fruits and vegetables all across the nation
 - The Southern Pacific wins the landmark Supreme Court case *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad*, establishing equal rights under the law to corporations
33. 1887 – Congress passes and President Grover Cleveland signs into law the Interstate Commerce Act forming the Interstate Commerce Commission
 - The Kansas City Southern Railway is founded and is the second oldest Class 1 railroad still operating in the U.S.
34. 1888 – The Northern Pacific is completed to Puget Sound in Washington state
35. 1893 – J.J. Hill's Great Northern makes it to Seattle, Washington

- Federal Railway Safety Appliances Act institutes mandatory requirements for automatic air brake systems and automatic couplers
36. 1897 – E.H. Harriman takes control of the Union Pacific and reorganizes it
 37. 1900 – Casey Jones drives the "Cannonball Express" into history with his famous wreck on the foggy morning of April 30th
 - The number of miles of railroad track reaches over 200,000
 38. 1901 – The Union Pacific gains control of the Southern Pacific, implementing Union Pacific operating procedures and cost savings plans implemented by Union Pacific owner, E.H. Harriman
 39. 1905 – Montana Senator William Clark turns Las Vegas, Nevada into a railroad division town
 40. 1913 – The U.S. Supreme Court disbands the merger of the Union Pacific and the Southern Pacific
 41. 1917 – The federal government takes over the railroads during WWI
 - General Electric Company builds the first Diesel-electric engine prototype in the U.S.
 42. 1925 – The American Locomotive Company builds the first Diesel-electric locomotive
 43. 1934 – The Pioneer Zephyr, the first diesel locomotive for passenger service arrives at the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad
 44. 1941 - 1945 – American Railroad ridership reaches its highest level as U.S. trains ferry soldiers across the country to fight in the European and Pacific Theaters of war
 - Ridership begins to decline after the war as the automobile takes the place of trains
 45. 1949 – The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, and the Western Pacific Railroad launch the California Zephyr from Chicago, Illinois, to San Francisco, California; it is the first passenger train to regularly offer the Vista Dome Cars
 46. 1950 - 1970 – Railroad passenger travel declines drastically as more and more Americans take to their cars and begin to use air travel
 47. 1953 – The first of the 'piggyback' semi-trailers hauled by trains on flat cars is implemented
 48. 1957 – The last of the Southern Pacific's steam operated locomotives are replaced by diesel, making the SP a completely dieselized railroad company
 49. 1959 – Interstate Commerce Commission approves the Virginian Railway merger into Norfolk & Western as modern railroads begin a period of merger and consolidation
 50. 1967 – New York Central's Twentieth Century Limited makes last run
 51. 1968 – Pennsylvania Railroad and New York Central merge to form Penn Central
 52. 1970 – Penn Central declares bankruptcy
 - Congress passes and President Richard Nixon signs the Railway Service Act creating Amtrak, providing passenger service throughout the U.S.
 - The California Zephyr makes its last run when it arrives in Oakland, California from Chicago, Illinois

53. 1971 – Amtrak goes into service; eventually Amtrak will take over the California Zephyr route
54. 1976 – The U.S. government forms Conrail as a freight railroad to restore the Penn Central and several other bankrupt railroads in the Northeastern U.S.
55. 1980s – Railroads are deregulated and the Interstate Commerce Commission loses its power
56. 1982 – The Norfolk and Western Railway and the Southern Railway Company merge to form the Norfolk Southern Corporation, primarily hauling coal in the eastern U.S.
57. 1986 – The CSX Transportation Company is formed
58. 1995 – Congress abolishes the Interstate Commerce Commission, transferring its powers to the Surface Transportation Board
59. 1996 – The Union Pacific and the Southern Pacific successfully complete the merger that began in 1903
60. 1999 – The CSX Transportation Company and the Norfolk Southern gain control of Conrail
61. 2009 – Financier Warren Buffet purchases the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway for \$44 billion