



In 1962, US Steel extended the 12-mile-long Winton coal branch at Rock Springs, Wyoming, about 70 miles to iron deposits around Atlantic City, Wyoming, at the southern end of the Wind River Range. The line was abandoned back to a point about 6 miles north of Rock Springs in 1983.

The grade of the US Steel Atlantic City Railroad between South Pass and the end-of-line at Atlantic City.



A huge fill on the grade of the US Steel Atlantic City Railroad between South Pass and the end-of-the-line at Atlantic City. Historic South Pass City is about a half mile to the right (east) of this view.




South Pass City was a stage and telegraph station on the Oregon Trail during the 1850's, several miles from this location. In 1866, gold was discovered in the vicinity, and a year later prospecting began on what would become the Carissa Mine, visible in the upper right of this photo. Prospectors and adventurers quickly arrived and founded South Pass City, whose roofs are visible in the small valley. By the mid-1870's, South Pass City's population was reduced to about 100 people and over the next century declined even further. A few businesses continued to operate in South Pass City, with the last of the pioneer families finally moving out after the last episode of operation of the Carissa Mine in 1949. The community today has a handful of residents and the old business district is now South Pass City State Historic Site.

South Pass City's mining operations were never served by railroad. By the time the US Steel Atlantic City Railroad arrived in 1962, the mining boom had been over for nearly a century. The Atlantic City Railroad grade is barely visible below the ridgeline in the upper left, just on this side of the shack in the far upper left corner of the image.



The Carissa Mine, which was never served by rail. Ore was shipped out by wagon and later by truck.


THE CARISSA MINE: CYCLE OF BOOM AND BUST



Thousands rushed to the South Pass area following the find of substantial gold deposits at the Carissa Mine in 1867. As the boom gained steam, the Carissa sat at the center of mining development, serving as the primary economic force for South Pass City. Eventually, the gold played out and the Carissa's mining technology reached its limit. As a result, the Carissa closed, contributing to the gold bust and the decline of South Pass City in the 1870s.

Original Carissa Mine in 1905. J. S. Stimson Photographer. Courtesy of the Wyoming State Archives

Modern advances in mining technology and an influx of new money made it possible for the Carissa to reopen in the early 1900s, bringing with it a renewed boom. A large project that modernized the Carissa during the winter of 1928-29 created additional facilities that were both newly built and moved to the site. The Carissa continued to open and close with new owners, new money, fluctuating gold prices, and new technologies. It closed for the last time in 1949 and the State of Wyoming acquired it in 2003 designating it as a historic site.





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