



David H. Moffat and his business associates established the Denver, Northwestern & Pacific Railway. It originated in Denver, and was planned to terminate in Salt Lake City, Utah. Construction began on December 18, 1902. The climb to the Continental Divide required 33 tunnels that are closer together than any other tunnels on any other line in the US. The continental divide was crossed at Rollins Pass at an elevation 11,680 feet. The DNW&P came out of receivership on April 30, 1913, as the Denver & Salt Lake Railroad, by which time the tracks had reached Craig, Colorado, which was its final terminus, less than half the distance toward its goal of Salt Lake City, Utah. In 1931, the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad acquired the D&SL, and in 1932 began construction of the Dotsero Cutoff. The Cutoff extended from Dotsero, where the D&RGW tracks from Tennessee Pass encounter the Colorado River, up the Colorado River to Bond, Colorado, also called Orestod (Dotsero spelled backward), where the D&SL tracks leave the Colorado River to continue westward. Construction was completed in 1934, giving Denver a direct transcontinental link to the west.

This westward view of Osterod on the Colorado River shows the original DNW&P grade, constructed through here in 1906-1909, in the foreground and in the right distance, where the grade begins its northwestward ascent out of the Colorado River canyon. The grade that continues down the Colorado River in the distance is the northern terminus of the D&RGW's 1934 Dotsero Cutoff.



The D&RGW's 1934 Dotsero Cutoff crosses the Colorado River a few miles downstream from Bond. The Mesozoic red beds cut by the river were tilted during the Laramide Orogeny, about 60 million years ago.