



The Kansas Pacific began in 1855 as the Leavenworth, Pawnee & Western Railroad and in 1863 was reorganized as the Union Pacific Eastern Division. The UP Eastern was authorized by the United States Congress as part of the Pacific Railway Act to create a southerly branch of the planned UP transcontinental railroad; the government's interest was to project Northern rail transportation into Kansas to support the Civil War effort there. The company began construction westward from Kansas City in September 1863 and the first 40 miles to Lawrence, Kansas, was in operation the following year. Although the railroad had intended originally to build only as far west as Fort Riley, Kansas, citizens in Denver in the Colorado Territory lobbied to extend the UP lines to their city. In 1868, the Congress enacted a law to build an extension of the UP Eastern to the Rocky Mountains, with the intention of continuing past Denver through the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific, to compete with the UP main line; by law, the new line was named the Kansas Pacific. With the backing of German investors, the railroad began construction on the KP in October 1869 and in March 1870 reached eastern Colorado (east of map area). During the construction, the KP famously employed William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody to shoot buffalo to provide meat for the KP construction crews.

At the same time, the KP began building east from Denver and in August 1870 the two branches met at a location 10 miles east of the above photo, a place that was named Strasburg in honor of a KP engineer. The arrival of the first trains to Denver in August 1870 was two months after the completion in June of the Denver Pacific Railway linking Denver with the UP transcontinental railroad at Cheyenne. The KP and DP lines intersected 3 miles north of downtown Denver. In 1874, UP investor Jay Gould gained effective control of the KP, which he consolidated with the UP and DP under the UP name.

In this eastward view near Bennett, Colorado, of the KP (now UP) mainline (welded track on the left) and a siding (bolted track to the right).



Westward view of the KP mainline and siding at the same location as previous, as clouds gather over the mountains and block a late June sun.