



The only major drainage divide in Utah is between the Great Basin and the Colorado River drainage. The only place a railroad ever crossed this divide in Utah was in the area of Soldier Summit, crossed first by the narrow gauge Utah & Pleasant Valley Railway in 1879 from Provo, on the Union Pacific Railroad-controlled, standard gauge Utah Southern Railroad, to the coal mines in the Pleasant Valley (present-day Scofield). The narrow gauge line crossed the drainage divide between the Great Basin and Colorado River about 10 miles south of the later D&RGW crossing at Soldier Summit, completed in 1883, from a connection with the U&PV about 10 miles west of the summit at Tucker to Grand Junction, Colorado (to connect with the D&RG). The western part of the U&PV became part of the D&RGW mainline, and the eastern part a coal branch of the D&RGW. The eastern part was partly abandoned (the part over Great Basin - Colorado River drainage divide) and replaced by a standard gauge route from the D&RGW mainline east of Soldier Summit to maintain access to Pleasant Valley coal.

In 2011, a mixed freight consist works up the western approach to Soldier Summit east of Tucker. This grade, originally built by the D&RGW around 1882, leaves Spanish Creek to gain elevation to Soldier Summit, the only place in Utah where a railroad crosses this divide since the nearby U&PV crossing was abandoned.



Two helper locomotives, one in BNSF and one in Sana Fe liveries, push a mixed freight consist up the western approach to Soldier Summit. Note riparian growth on Spanish Creek in foreground.