



In 1880, a legal settlement with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe gave the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad the right-of-way to build west from Pueblo up the Royal Gorge of the Arkansas River, which provided a steady grade to the Continental Divide and, co-incidentally, to the Leadville mining area, which had just been discovered the year before and had no rail service. The D&RG quickly built its narrow gauge line along the Arkansas River to Leadville, where the D&RG Leadville Branch arrived in 1880. At the same time, the D&RG started its mainline west from the Leadville Branch (1880n) at Salida, over Marshall Pass on the Continental Divide through this location at Sargents in 1881, and in 1883 connected with the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad at aptly names Grand Junction, Colorado, completing a narrow gauge mainline to Utah. In 1887, the D&RG extended the narrow gauge line north from Leadville over Tennessee Pass on the Continental Divide to the Aspen mining area. The route was converted to standard gauge around 1890 and connected to Grand Junction (with help from the Colorado Midland), supplanting the narrow gauge Marshall Pass Route as the D&RG mainline across the Rockies. In 1934, the D&RGW's Dotsero Cutoff was completed and the Tennessee Pass Route was supplanted by the Moffat Tunnel Route over the Continental Divide (Denver, Northwestern and Pacific 1913) as the D&RG mainline. The narrow gauge Marshall Pass Route west of Poncha Springs, including this location at Sargents, was abandoned in 1955.

Eastward view of the D&RG (1883n) at Sargents. The creek in the foreground is Tomichi Creek, which the D&RG (1883n) follows from here westward for 32 miles to Gunnison. The creek that flows into Tomichi Creek at the far right edge of the photo is Marshall Creek, which the D&RG (1883n) follows all the way up to Marshall Pass on the Continental Divide. The curved fill grade changes the railroad alignment from northeastward as the D&RG (1883n) came down along Marshall Creek to southwestward to follow Tomichi Creek down to Gunnison.



Southeastward view of the D&RG (1883n) and Tomichi Creek at the same location as previous. The fill grade alignment is straightening out, and at the far right edge of the photo the fill is starting to get eroded by Tomichi Creek (the cut grade at the base of the distant hill is a road).



Eastward view of the D&RG (1883n) 1,500 feet south of the previous location. The pilings do not cross Tomichi Creek, which runs just in front of the pilings and is marked by gravel but the water cannot be seen in this view. The pilings may have been a bridge to carry the railroad over a former course of the creek or it may have supported a trackside facility.