



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 narrow gauge D&RG built quickly up the Arkansas River and reached Leadville in the same year of 1880. Also in 1880, the D&RG built a line west from Salida over Marshall Pass on the Continental Divide and in 1883 connected with the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad at aptly named Grand Junction, Colorado, completing a narrow gauge mainline to Utah. In 1890, the D&RGW and Colorado Midland cooperated to build a standard gauge line, the Rio Grande Joint Railway, to complete a line to Grand Junction which, together with standard-gauging the Leadville Branch (1880n) and Aspen Branch (1887n), which crossed the Continental Divide at Tennessee Pass and included this location at Wolcott, completed a new standard gauge line that supplanted 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 (Denver, Northwestern and Pacific 1913) as the D&RG mainline. The Marshall Pass Route was abandoned in 1955 and the Tennessee Pass Route, including this location, became inactive in the late 1990's.

Westward view of the D&RG Aspen Branch (1887n) at Wolcott, Colorado. This line was standard gauged in 1890 and began to decline in 1934 when it was bypassed by the Moffat Tunnel route via the D&RGW's Dotsero Cutoff (1934).



Westward view of the D&RG Aspen Branch (1887n) a few steps north of the previous location. The track in the foreground is the Wolcott siding; the mainline, seen in the previous photo, is barely visible in the dry grass. The low point between here and the cliff in the upper left is the Eagle River, which the D&RG Aspen Branch (1887n) follows all the way from Tennessee Pass to its confluence with the Colorado River at Dotsero.



Eastward view of the D&RG Aspen Branch (1887n) at the same location as previous. The track in the foreground is the mainline and the Wolcott siding and an old trackside facility are on the left. The Eagle River is in the upper right.