



The Chili Line, officially known as the Santa Fe Branch, was a narrow gauge branch of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. It ran 126 miles from Antonito, Colorado, south to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and was nicknamed for its freight of prominently New Mexico chili peppers. The D&RG began construction of the line in 1880 from Antonito, Colorado, and in the same year completed the line to Española, New Mexico, only 35 miles shy of Santa Fe. However, the D&RG could not build any farther because of an agreement with the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. Española was the end of the line until 1886, when the Texas, Santa Fe & Northern Railroad completed the line from Española to Santa Fe. The D&RG acquired the TSF&N in 1895. In 1903, the D&RGW and the standard gauge New Mexico Central Railway opened the Santa Fe Union Station on a site adjacent to the AT&SF depot. The D&RGW closed the Chili Line in 1941 and proposed reusing some of the line's infrastructure for use on a railroad along the Burma Road in Southeast Asia to support the World War II effort. The narrow gauge Chili Line/Santa Fe Branch was dismantled in 1942.

A water tower on the D&RG Chili Line/Santa Fe Branch, built through this location in 1880 at Embudo, New Mexico, where the line rejoins the Rio Grande south of the Cañon del Rio Grande, a difficult part of the river for railroad construction.



Closer view of the Embudo water tower. The grade is not discernable.



The cut grade on the other side of the Rio Grande is the D&RG Chili Line/Santa Fe Branch one mile down-river from Embudo. Note the cactus at the lower elevations along the river.