



In 1881, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad's narrow gauge San Juan Extension reached Durango, Colorado, and in 1882 was completed to its final terminus at Silverton. During 1899-1900, the Pagosa Lumber Company built the narrow gauge Rio Grande, Pagosa & Northern Railroad under contract from the D&RG. The route connected the timber industry around Pagosa Springs, Colorado, with the narrow gauge D&RG San Juan Extension (1881n) at Pagosa Junction. The 31-mile line followed Cat Creek from Pagosa Junction northward to a drainage divide near Dyke, about 15 miles north of Pagosa Junction, then turned east along Stollsteimer Creek over another divide to Pagosa Springs on the San Juan River. The route was steep and curvy with logging spurs all along the line (amounting to about 25 miles of additional trackage). The line was operated under the name Rio Grande, Pagosa & Northern until 1903 or 1906 (the exact year is unclear) when the D&RG assumed control of the 31-mile mainline, which then became the D&RG Pagosa Springs Branch. The Pagosa Lumber Company retained ownership of all of the logging spurs. By 1916, the Pagosa Lumber Company largely moved on to new forests, but the branch hung on until the Depression. The line was abandoned and the tracks were removed in 1936.

The lightly built RGP&N (1900n) has left little trace of its existence, but this fill grade located 10 miles west of Pagosa Springs is in fairly good shape. In this southwestward view, a fill grade for the RGP&N (1900n) is on our side of the newer road (which has two small structures next to it). The RGP&N (1900n) grade runs from the lower left foreground to the right distance and is breached just below the two structures next to the road. The breach is a small tributary of Stollsteimer Creek and a 1924 topo map shows the railroad crossing this tributary at this location; the breach must have once been a bridge or culvert.





The same southwestward view as previous showing rockwork on the viewers side of the breach (for the crossing of the small tributary of Stollsteimer Creek).





Southward view at the same location as previous, showing some rockwork that supports the grade as it climbs eastward to the divide between the Stollsteimer Creek and San Juan River drainages. For reference, one of the two small structures in the previous photo is visible at the far right.