



South Pass is a 35-mile-long low region on the Continental Divide (lowest elevation is 7,412 feet), between the Wind River Range to the north and the Oregon Buttes and Great Divide Basin to the south. South Pass is a natural crossing point of the Rockies and became the route for emigrants on the Oregon, California, and Mormon trails to the West during the 19th century. The Union Pacific Railroad could have used South Pass for its transcontinental line, but a more southern route across the Great Divide Basin, with two summits instead of one, as overall a better railroad route, whereas South Pass was a better wagon and animal route. It was not until 1962 that South Pass was crossed by rails, when US Steel extended the 12-mile-long Winton coal branch at Rock Springs, Wyoming, about 70 miles to iron deposits around Atlantic City, Wyoming, at the southern end of the Wind River Range. The line was abandoned back to a point about 6 miles north of Rock Springs in 1983.

Westward view of the grade of the US Steel Atlantic City Branch at South Pass.





A concrete support structure for some sort of a tank along the grade of the US Steel Atlantic City Railroad at South Pass.





Westward view of the grade of the US Steel Atlantic City Railroad at South Pass. The distant hills are the Oregon Buttes, which mark the triple point where the two continental divides on either side of the Great Divide Basin merge into a single divide, which is crossed by South Pass.