



The original Denver & Rio Grande Railroad was chartered in 1870 to construct southward from Denver to El Paso, where the route would connect to a Mexican sister railroad. The preferred route was south from Denver to Pueblo, then west along the Arkansas River, south across Poncha Pass through the San Luis Valley, joining the headwaters of the Rio Grande, which it would follow south to El Paso and Mexico. (This line was later partially built as the D&RG Valley Line and Chili Line.) In October 1871, the D&RG narrow gauge tracks reached what would become Colorado Springs, and in June 1872 reached Pueblo and the railway officially opened for operation. In 1888, the D&RG Denver-Pueblo segment was converted to dual gauge (three rails) and in 1890 the center (narrow gauge) rail was removed and conversion to standard gauge was complete.

This northward view of the D&RG (now Union Pacific) line is near Wigwam, Colorado. The track was narrow gauge from 1872 until 1888, dual gauge from 1888 to 1890, and standard gauge from 1890 to the present.



This small culvert on the D&RG is work of art in itself.



In 1888, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe completed a standard gauge line between Denver and Pueblo, paralleling the D&RG but crossing it at least three times. In 1918, the United States Railway Administration, to boost efficiency to support the World War I effort, turned the parallel D&RG and AT&SF mainlines between Pueblo and Denver into a directional running double track. Both railroads would operate their trains over the same, optimized route, a practice that remained even after the lines were handed back to private hands after the war. This northward view of the AT&SF (now BNSF) line is a quarter mile west of the parallel D&RG (now UP) line in the previous photo, which is present but not discernable in the upper right of this photo.