



In February 1904, a Cheyenne newspaper reported that the Union Pacific Railroad had appropriated \$6 million to construct a branch line from Walcott, Wyoming, south through the Encampment, Wyoming, copper and gold mining area, to coal deposits near Craig, Colorado. The original promoter of the railroad was E. H. Powers, who called it the Denver, Yellowstone Park & Pacific Railroad, and surveyed a route from Denver through Craig (which became the western terminus of the Denver, Northwestern & Pacific) to Walcott. In September 1905, the Saratoga & Encampment Railway incorporated and purchased Powers' interest. Grading began the following year and the first locomotive load of ties and rails arrived in Walcott on the UP mainline in May 1907. The 25 miles of track from Walcott to Saratoga was completed in July 1907, where the engineer delighted the large crowd with prolonged tooting of the engine whistle. Further celebrations included free trout dinner with an estimated 3,500 trout and 1,000 loaves of bread served. Governor Bryant Brooks, Senator Clarence Clark, and Congressman Frank Mondell rode a special train from Rawlins, entertained by the Elks band, to take part in the festivities.

Construction slowed considerably as workers laid the 20 miles of track from Saratoga south to Encampment. The terrain was more rugged and severe weather further hampered their efforts. The first S&E passenger train reached Encampment at noon on July 18, 1908, completing the 45-mile line. But copper prices had fallen and instead of huge loads of ore, the S&E hauled lumber, cattle, agricultural products, and passengers. In 1928, a group of citizens formed the Platte Valley Railroad Committee and raised \$100,000 to purchase the S&E, which was in receivership. The group incorporated the line as the Saratoga & Encampment Valley Railroad and gave it to the UP to operate. The arrangement worked for decades, but in 1976, the UP, despite protests from local citizens, removed the tracks from Encampment to Saratoga. In 1987, the UP sold the remaining line to the Wyoming & Colorado Railroad. The Louisiana-Pacific lumber mill in Saratoga shut down in 2003, and in 2004, the W&C filed for abandonment with the Surface Transportation Board, but was denied the request. A year later the W&C successfully resubmitted and the railroad was abandoned back to Walcott. The last train left Saratoga in 2007. All that remains now of the S&E, which locals sometimes called the "Slow and Easy," is the railroad grade.

Northward view of the S&E grade at Walcott, where it joins the UP mainline in the distance. The UP line follows Saint Marys Creek, a tributary of the North Platte River.