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Introduction

The Laramie, Hahn's Peak & Pacific Railroad was a feeder line for the Union Pacific, whose swift fleet in turn carried regional products from Laramie to destinations across the continent. These products included coal, timber, livestock, wool, hay, oil, fluorspar, and copper. LHP&P's ability to reach remote areas and provide transportation played a key role in developing isolated mining, ranching, and agricultural communities in the region.

Boston financier Isaac Van Horn chartered the LHP&P in 1901. His plan was to service new mining and other business prospects between southern Wyoming and northern Colorado (namely Hahn's Peak and Steamboat Springs), and eventually extend the line to the Pacific coast—as indicated in the railway's name. Lack of funds, however, restricted the line's service to communities on the Laramie Plains (such as Centennial and Albany) and Colorado's North Park region (Foxpark to Coalmont).



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Financial Troubles Money shortages resulted in an erratic building pace. It took six long years for the LHP&P to lay a paltry 30 miles of tracks from Laramie to Centennial. In 1911, the line had barely reached Coalmont, Colorado, a distance of 111 miles from Laramie, when owner Van Horn declared bankruptcy. The railroad continued to operate for about 80 more years (until 1996), despite poor profit margins that resulted in five changes of ownership and name. During its final 10 years, the LHP&P (renamed the Wyoming Colorado Railroad) became an excursion train carrying tourists through the picturesque landscape between Laramie and Foxpark.

West Side Roots In 1901 the LHP&P began construction immediately west of Laramie's first residential neighborhood, the West Side, which provided labor for the project. Twenty years later, the West Side neighborhood developed beyond Clark Street north of LHP&P's headquarters. By providing jobs and a distinctive way of life for its neighbors, the LHP&P contributed to the West Side's historic, economic, and industrial development.



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Wyoming State Parks & Cultural Resources

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The Laramie, Hahn's Peak & Pacific Railroad Walking Tour Map



A.



B.



C.



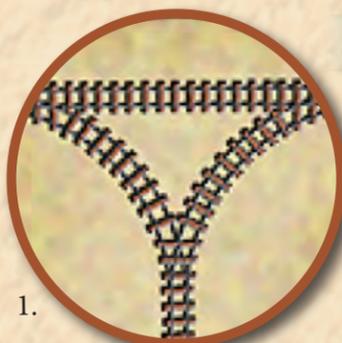
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The Laramie, Hahn's Peak & Pacific Railroad

Walking Tour Map



Tour distance: 1.8 miles



1.

Laramie, Hahn's Peak & Pacific Wye

A "wye" is a Y-shaped set of tracks that allows an engine to make a 3-point turn in order to change direction. During the early 1900s when the LHP&P tracks were laid, a wye was installed south of Flint Street that allowed incoming LHP&P eastbound trains to become westbound. Today, the roadbed is all that remains of the former wye.



2.

Railroad-Tie Barn

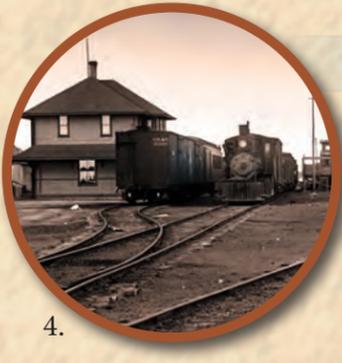
Made from railroad ties covered with wooden siding, this 1870s building was used as a carriage house and hay barn. Cheap, sturdy, and abundant railroad ties form the foundations and walls of many houses in the West Side neighborhood and elsewhere in town. One of the earliest railroad-tie buildings in Laramie was a bar on First and Garfield streets. Upended ties sunk into the dirt supported a canvas roof. It is said that lynched victims accused of violent crimes were buried under the dirt floor.



3.

Front-Gable House

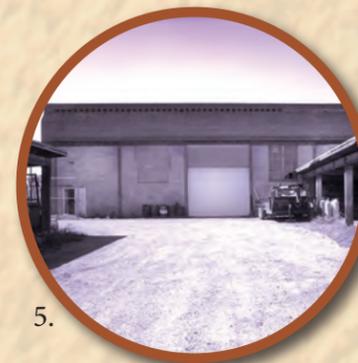
Many West Side houses are simple, front-gable buildings. Similar to "shotgun" houses found elsewhere, they are one-story, wooden frame, pier-and-beam buildings that are one-room wide and several rooms deep. They have front and back stoops that provide spaces for sitting and socializing, and many have bathroom additions at the rear, near the kitchen. This house type was cheap, quick, and easy to build, which is what railroad companies looked for when providing worker housing.



4.

LHP&P Depot Site

The LHP&P depot was known locally as the "Fremont station" due to its location near the western end of Fremont Street. Built in 1903, the two-story structure functioned throughout numerous railroad owners, bankruptcies, and name changes. Although the depot was torn down in 1951, the track continued to be used by Union Pacific and became known as the Coalmont Branch.



5.

LHP&P Engine House

The LHP&P's first engine house was wooden and burned in 1922. In 1924 a brick engine house replaced it at the western end of University Avenue. Today, this building is being used as a cabinet shop.

Union Pacific Wye

Laramie's snowy, icy winters often immobilized the Union Pacific's original 60-foot manual turntable. To address this problem, UP constructed a wye, which allowed trains to change directions unhindered by snow. Located east of the old stockyards and N. Railroad Street, it also served as the point of connection with the LHP&P.



6.

The House in the Wye

Standing in the middle of the UP wye, this house is known as the "House in the Wye." Early photographs show a barn next to the house. Both buildings may have belonged to the Fee Ranch, which originally occupied this site, the LHP&P right of way, and the West Side. Expanded over time, the simple frame building has housed railroad workers much of its life, including John H. Schenck, a UP watchman.



7.

166 N. Railroad Street

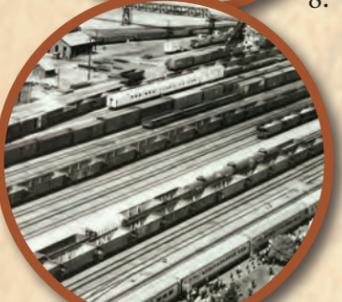
This stately 1886 sandstone structure stands apart from modest neighbors. It was built by the Bath brothers, local stonemasons whose skill is evident in the structure's elegant details that combine a large bay window, arched openings, and a gable-hipped roof. During its long history, the house was often rented to UP workers. Records from 1911 show Charles Erdmann, a UP pipe fitter, as owner with railroad boarders.



8.

1868 Union Pacific Track

Viewable from the Garfield Street footbridge, the original Union Pacific track, which arrived in Laramie in May 1868, is now the seventh track counting from the east. Laramie was created by the railroad to serve as a depot center. Town lots went on sale in February 1868, and by May Laramie had 500 houses and 2,000 citizens. Early homes were built west of the train yard with businesses established to the east.



9.

Garfield Street Footbridge

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the Garfield Street footbridge was built in response to the 1929 Federal Railroad Safety Act. It continues to provide safe passage for pedestrians and bicycles crossing Laramie's railyard. Previously, pedestrians and vehicles crossed the tracks at designated streets where deadly accidents commonly occurred. The three-block-long iron bridge had a staircase for railroad workers to descend safely to the shops below. Look for the remaining stair gate on the west side of the bridge.



10.

Union Pacific Depot

Laramie's extant Union Pacific depot was built in 1924 after the first depot (pictured here, including its hotel and restaurant) burned in 1917. It carries UP's architectural signature of decorative "Overland Route" medallions and handsome interior woodwork. Serving passengers until 1983, it became a museum and cultural venue in 1985. Of the many UP buildings constructed in Laramie, this depot is the sole survivor and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



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