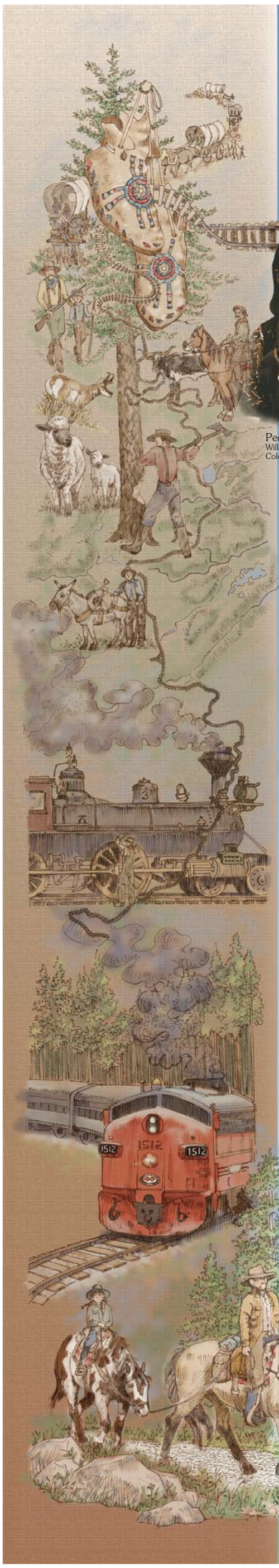
Moccasin Prints to Railroad Tracks



Pedro, a Ute brave, 1900
William Henry Jackson Collection, Colorado Historical Society

Early Trails

Long before these tracks were laid, bands of Northern Cheyenne, Northern Arapaho, Eastern Shoshone, White River Ute, and Oglala Sioux traversed the forests around you. The Medicine Bow Mountains were likely named after the place where the tribes gathered to collect wood for bows.

During the late 1860s, railroad construction gangs, miners, and settlers travelled to southeast Wyoming with the building of the Transcontinental Railroad.

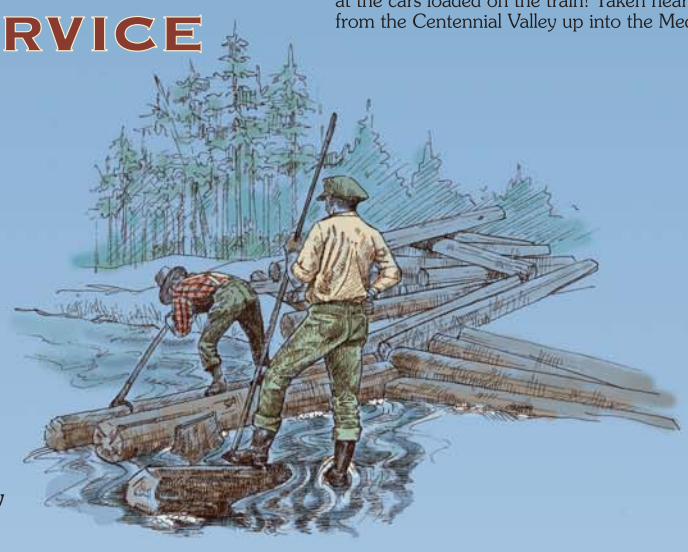
Van Horn Collection, Nici Self Museum, Centennial, WY

Laramie, Hahns Peak, and Pacific Excursion Train. Look closely at the cars loaded on the train! Taken near Albany on the climb from the Centennial Valley up into the Medicine Bow Mountains.

Creation of the Forest Service

As the contruction of the Transcontinental Railroad continued, hundreds of tie hackers cut railroad ties in this area. Ties were floated down the streams and rivers resulting in streambank erosion. The 1880s also brought a big boom to the cattle and sheep industry, with many ranchers grazing on open lands.

This unregulated use of the land and potentional damage to the resources led to the creation of Forest Reserves (later called National Forests). In 1902, the Medicine Bow Forest Reserve was established.



Kenneth Jessen Photo Collection

Coal chute at Foxpark Station.

The first locomotive of the Laramie Plains Line. Built in 1882, it was purchased second hand by the LHP&P in 1906.

Kenneth Jessen Photo Collection

ENGINE NO. 1 ON THE LARAMIE, HAHNS PEAK AND PACIFIC.

A New Railroad

By 1901, dreams for a rail line to the Gold Hill Mines west of Centennial were launched with the incorporation of the Van Horn-Miller Syndicate. When it was realized that the mines weren't producing enough gold to support rail service, the line was built to the coalfields near Walden, Colorado. Initially planned as a narrow gauge railroad due to the steep elevation gains, standard gauge was selected with the route change.

Though it would take until 1911, the Laramie, Hahns Peak, and Pacific finally made the 111 miles to Coalmont, Colorado and was one of the highest standard gauge railroads in the U.S. reaching 9,055 feet in elevation at Foxpark Station.

This trail was developed in partnership with:

- Laramie Bicycling Network (Bikenet)
- Cycle Wyoming
- Wyoming Department of Transportation
- Federal Highways Administration
- U.S. Forest Service
  Century of Service Grant