

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 133

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
133A	From SH 92-A in Hotchkiss northeast via Somerset, McClure Pass and Redstone To SH 82-A north of Carbondale
133B	From Jct with SH 133-A northeast to Jct SH 133-A close To the Delta-Gunnison County Line

Highway Location:

Counties: Pitkin, Gunnison, Delta
 Length (Miles): 70.97

OAHP Site Numbers (for previously recorded segments, if applicable)*:

<i>OAHP Site No.</i>	<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Assessment Date</i>	<i>Site Name</i>
None	No previously recorded segments are found on or adjacent to this highway		

Discussion of Site Forms (for previously recorded segments, if applicable):

No Colorado Cultural Resources Inventory forms for previously recorded segments of this highway were identified in Compass.

The highway is near the historic districts 5PT.451 (Redstone Coke Ovens) and 5PT.553 (Redstone Townsite and Redstone Castle). The Historic Resources of Redstone, Colorado and Vicinity, a Multiple Property Listing, also includes the associated historic context, "John C. Osgood and the Development of Transportation and Coal Mining in the Crystal River Valley, 1882-1903." These sources were consulted to prepare the historic summary for this highway.

Historic Districts located within 250 feet of highway (OAHP Site Number and Name)*:

<i>OAHP Site No.</i>	<i>District Name</i>	<i>Assessment (If Applicable)</i>
5PT.451		Listed on National Register
5PT.553		Listed on National Register

*Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHP

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Historical Data:

This highway connects Carbondale with the small towns of Redstone, Somerset, Bowie and Hotchkiss, and is approximately 71 miles in length. It travels through the counties of Garfield, Pitkin, Gunnison, and Delta and is also part of the West Elk Loop Scenic and Historic Byway. A review of bridges along SH 133 showed the structures were built between 1949 and 1991. None are notable or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. In 1991, the Colorado Department of Transportation built a highway bypass at Bowie between mileposts 12 and 16 and re-classified the old highway through Bowie as SH 133B (Bowie Road on Google Earth). The old highway is on the north side of the railroad while the re-routed SH 133 A is south of the railroad and bypasses the active coal mine at Bowie.

The primary historic theme for this region is coal mining due to the presence of productive coal and coking coal deposits on both sides of McClure Pass. On the west side are the coal mine towns of Bowie and Somerset, while on the east side, are the (now) closed mines of Coalbasin and Placita, west of Redstone. Other historic themes include the development of orchards and ranches on the west side of the highway in the communities of Paonia and Hotchkiss and large cattle ranching operations on the northern end of the highway at Carbondale. Settlement of this region began after 1880 when Euro-Americans forced the Northern Utes into Utah. The discovery of silver at Aspen and coal deposits in the North Fork and Crystal River valleys drove the settlement and development of the region.

The mining of coal and coke (a product of coal with a high carbon content) are an important historic theme and this industry prominently contributed to the economy of communities along SH 133. In 1886, industrialist John C. Osgood and associates founded the Crystal River Toll Road Company to build roads through the region to support coal and coke mining. Osgood became president of Colorado Fuel & Iron (CF&I) in 1892. He founded Redstone as a model CF&I company town and a social experiment to provide improved living conditions for miners. The company built the beehive-shaped coke ovens on the west side of SH 133 in 1899 and Osgood constructed Cleveholm Manor a short distance upstream on the Crystal River now known as the Redstone Castle.

The efficient transport of the coal required a railroad, but the mine owners struggled to construct a railroad in the Crystal River Valley. In 1893, the Elk Mountain Railway Company cleared, graded, and built masonry structures for a railroad line on the west side of the Crystal River between Redstone and Carbondale, but never laid tracks or ties along the route. SH 133 occupied the same alignment as this failed railroad when it was first constructed (Simmons and Whitacre 1989, p. E-4). Osgood then formed the Crystal River Railroad in 1899 and built a line along the east bank of the Crystal River to connect the coal mines west of Redstone to railroad shipping center of Carbondale, where it met the rails of the D&RGW and Colorado Midland.

CF&I suddenly closed the Coalbasin mine in 1909 due to economic conditions and the miners left Redstone (Simmons and Whitacre, 1989, p. E-3). The railroad continued to operate due to an extension to the Yule Quarry in Marble, Colorado. When the Yule Quarry closed in 1941, the railroad line was abandoned and scrapped by 1943, leaving SH 133 on the east side of McClure Pass as the primary transportation corridor. On the west side of McClure Pass, in 1902 the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad built the North Fork Branch to connect the freighting center of Delta with the communities of Hotchkiss, Paonia, and the active coal mines at Bowie and Somerset. Northeast of Somerset, the change in elevation presented by McClure Pass (elev. 8763 feet) on the Pitkin/Gunnison county line prevented the railroad from crossing the higher terrain. This rail line through the North Fork valley is still active (Denver & Rio Grande Western 2015).

Mid-Continent Resources revived mining at Coalbasin in 1956 and used the coke ovens at Redstone until 1960 when a modern coke processing facility built in Pueblo processed all of the coke from Coalbasin. The company moved the coke on trucks on SH 133 between Redstone and Carbondale during these years. The manager of the mine described this section of the road as "primitive...winding, rocky, and extremely bumpy," until the Department of Highways improved and paved the section in 1964. The presence of the coal trucks continued to be a source of controversy and safety for travelers on SH 133 between Carbondale and Redstone until a disastrous underground fire in 1990 eventually closed the mine in 1991 (Aspen Times 2012). While the coal mine at Bowie is still operating, the Elk Creek coal mine at Somerset closed in 2012 after an underground fire and hasn't reopened since that time (Healy 2015).

When the first federal aid system of highways in Colorado debuted in 1923, the southern part of SH 133 was part of No. 135 that included Crested Butte and Gunnison and connected to Somerset via Kebler Pass. State highway maps that predate the 1923 federal aid system also show that SH 133 was one of the state's earliest roads within this system, originally known as Highway 64. The 1935 state highway map removed McClure Pass from SH 133, and the

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highway instead connected Redstone, Marble and Crested Butte over Schofield Pass. The same map showed SH 135 connecting Crested Butte and the coal towns of Somerset, Bowie, and Paonia via Kebler Pass. In 1940 a change in the route occurred with SH 133 continuing south of Redstone through Placita (another CF&I coal mine town) and Marble but terminating at Crystal City. Another change occurred in the state highway map of 1947 which re-established McClure Pass as the connection between Carbondale and SH 135 at Bardine, east of Somerset. In 1954, except for a few miles south of Carbondale, the Department of Highways downgraded SH 133 to the jurisdiction of the counties, along with the road between Crested Butte and Somerset via Kebler Pass. By 1958, the SH 133 designation extended further south from Carbondale to Redstone, still excluding McClure Pass. McClure Pass returned to the SH designation in 1963. The designation also brought much-needed improvements to the road, which was finally paved between Carbondale and Redstone. By 1968 the Department of Highways (DOH) realigned SH 133 to the north side of McClure Pass, and finally paved the pass in 1978 (Salek).

This route was an early state highway and provided direct access (along with railroads) to coal mining communities in the North Fork and Crystal River valleys and facilitated the development of the industry in this region. It helped open previously inaccessible areas of the state for settlement based on the economies of coal and coke mining, orchards, and cattle ranches from Carbondale to Hotchkiss.

(Unless otherwise indicated, sources used in the preparation of this section included state highway maps, the Highways of Colorado by Matthew Salek, Highways to the Sky: A Context and History of Colorado's Highway System, Colorado State Roads and Highways, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Submission, plans in the Online Transportation Information System (OTIS), and site forms for previously surveyed resources in Compass when available.)

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Not Significant - No historical significance identified

Significant - Historical significance identified (see details below)

Property Type and Areas of Significance:

A detailed explanation why this highway possesses historical significance is provided in the Significance Statement below.

Cultural:

Criterion A specific requirements

- Early and/or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (Transportation)
- Association with a significant event (If applicable, the Area of Significance is indicated in the statement of significance below)
- Association with federal work relief programs (Politics/Government)

Criterion C specific requirements

- Representative example (Transportation)

Engineering:

Subtypes

- Farm-to-Market Road
- Limited Access, Multiple-Lane, Divided Highway/Freeway
- Highway Bypass

Criterion A specific requirements

- Early and/or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (Transportation)
- Association with a significant event (If applicable, the Area of Significance is indicated in the statement of significance below)
- Association with federal work relief programs (Politics/Government)

Criterion C specific requirements

- Representative example (Transportation)
- Engineering achievement (Engineering)

Aesthetic:

Criterion A specific requirements

- Early and/or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (Transportation)
- Association with a significant event (If applicable, the Area of Significance is indicated in the statement of significance below)
- Association with federal work relief programs (Politics/Government)

Criterion C specific requirements

- Representative example (Transportation)
- Engineering achievement (Engineering)
- Landscape architecture (Landscape Architecture)

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Historic periods of highway construction:

- Pre-territorial (pre-1861)
- Territorial and pre-automobile state roads (1861-1890)
- Automobile age (1890-1930)
- Depression and World War II (1930-1945)
- Postwar Interstate Era (1945-1973)
- Completion and Augmentation of Interstate System (1973-2000)

Level of Significance:

- Local
- State
- National

Significance Statement:

SH 133 is classified as an Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS and has significance at the local level under the National Register themes of Transportation and Industry (coal and coke mining).

Criterion A

SH 133 is an example of an early or prominent project of the Colorado Highway Department (CHD) and provided a critical connection to larger markets for the coal mining communities of Redstone, Somerset, and Bowie. Under Criterion A the road possesses significance under the areas of Transportation and Industry at the local level. Under Transportation, the highway represents the efforts of the CHD to provide all-season transportation to the isolated mining and agricultural communities south of Carbondale and east of Delta. Under the theme of Industry, the highway is associated with the development of coal and coke mining on both sides of McClure Pass beginning in the 1890s which predates the road's state highway designation. The interest of industrialist John C. Osgood to provide a model community for his miners at Redstone also contributes to the historic significance of the highway.

Criterion B

Research did not reveal this highway to be directly associated with the events or work of a person important in history, nor does research indicate the highway represents the efforts of a specific individual to secure construction of this highway for the economic development of a community or area of the state. Therefore, this highway does not possess significance under Criterion B.

Criterion C

The literature review and research conducted for SH 133 did not result in any direct association under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as an engineering achievement at the local level. However, further research should be done to determine if there are segments with road specifications designed and constructed to meet coal transportation demands, and if these segments are still able to convey that significance. The author did not find any defining characteristics to illustrate this significance during the preparation of this site form, but this possibility should be considered in the event more in-depth research is undertaken for specific segments, particularly between Redstone and Carbondale, and between Bowie and Somerset.

Additionally, a highway might also be significant as a representative example under the theme of Transportation, but SH 133 is not known to be an important representative example of an engineered route. However, there might be structures between Carbondale and Redstone (i.e., masonry rubble retaining walls or culverts) that date from the attempt to construct the Elk Mountain Railway in the early 1890s. This potential should be considered when in-depth research is undertaken for the segment between Carbondale and Redstone.

Criterion D

For a property to possess significance for information potential, the information yielded by the property must answer specific important research questions that cannot be otherwise answered. The technology of highway construction is well understood and documented. As such, this highway is unlikely to yield important information that cannot be discerned from archived plans and other records. Therefore, this highway does not possess

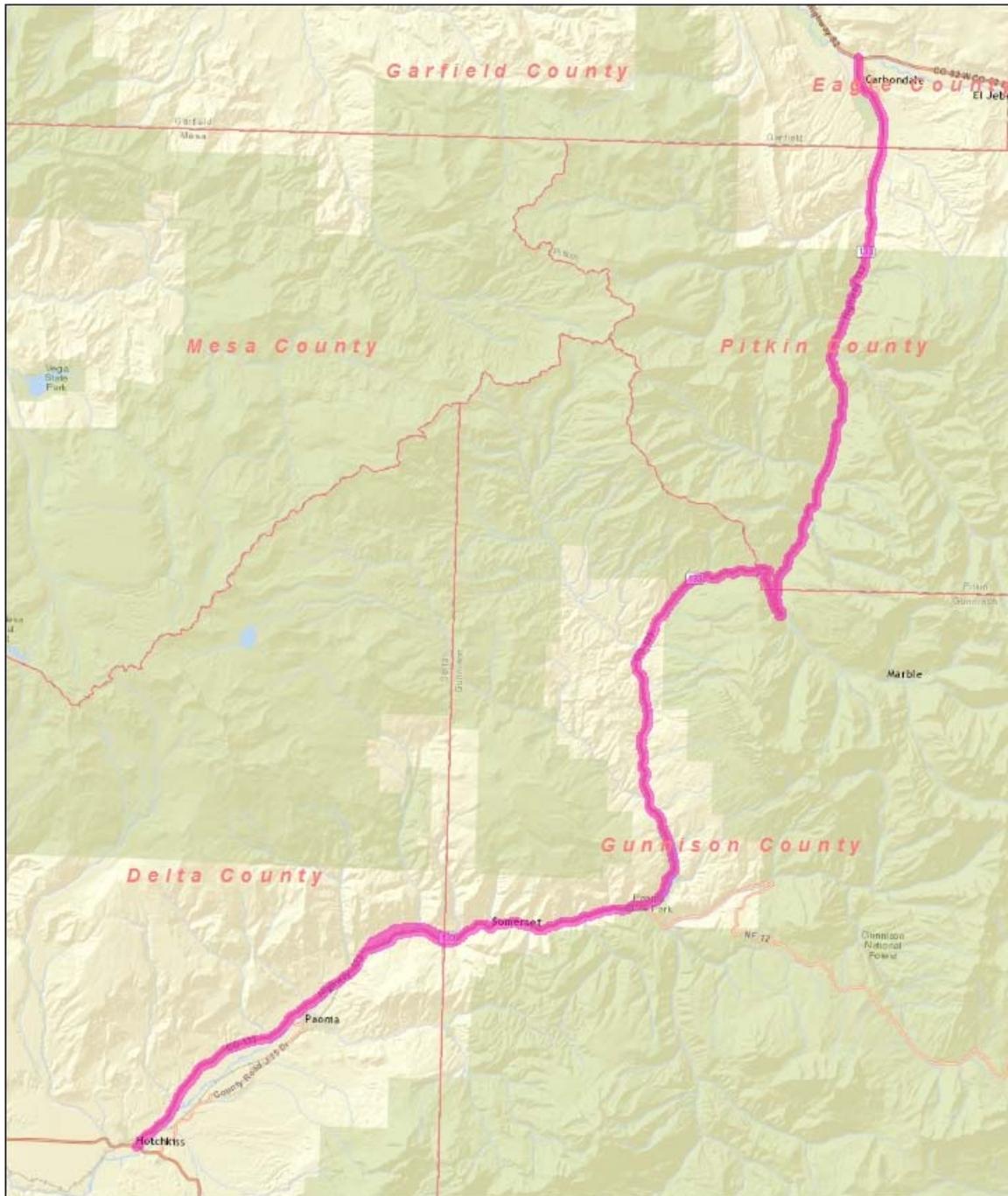
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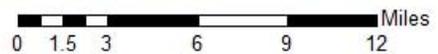
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significance under Criterion D.

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- SH 133
- County Boundary

SH 133



Map indicates the extent of the highway based on CDOT GIS data; portions co-signed with other highways may not be indicated.