

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 231

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
231A	From SH 50-C at Vineland North To SH 50-B at Devine

Highway Location:

Counties: Pueblo
Length (Miles): 2.032

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>
5PE.X	Field not eligible		State Highway 231

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. However, a draft form a segment of SH 231 was prepared in March 2014 and the road was preliminarily assigned site number 5PE.X. The National Register of Historic Places eligibility recommendation at that time based on a literature review and historic mapping was not eligible since the highway served as a minor road for local traffic.

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>
None	No historic districts are found on or adjacent to this highway	

*Information based on data from Compass provided by OAHP

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Historical Data:

SH 231 is approximately two miles long and extends north from the United States (US) Highway 50 Business Route (BR) intersection at Vineland to the intersection of US 50/SH 96 at Devine. The highway is located in the Arkansas River Valley, just east of Pueblo, and travels through rural areas on both sides of the Arkansas River.

Historically, a number of trails and roads made up the transportation network in the area through which the highway passes that facilitated travel and the distribution of the region's agricultural and industrial supplies and products. Settlement in this part of the state occurred in the early 1800s in part as a result of regional trade along the Santa Fe and Cherokee Trails, whose routes generally followed the Arkansas River Valley and subsequently formed portions of the route of present-day US 50. Located at the confluence of the Arkansas River and Fountain Creek, Pueblo was established in 1870 and became a regional center of trade and industry due to its proximity to mining, agricultural areas, and New Mexico. William Jackson Palmer, an influential developer and railroad expansionist, platted another town, South Pueblo, on the opposite side of the Arkansas River, as a stop on the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad in the early 1870s. Palmer extended rail connections from the Pueblo area to the coalfields around Walsenburg and Trinidad by 1876, to the San Luis Valley by 1878, and to Leadville in the central mountain region by 1881. Combined with the entry of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad in Pueblo in the mid-1870s, rail connections solidified Pueblo as an important regional trade center in southern Colorado leading to increased settlement and industrial growth of the area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Wyckoff 1999: 144-145; Pueblo.org 2014).

Palmer also established the Colorado Coal & Iron Company (CC&I) in 1879. The company's first plant, the South Pueblo Ironworks, was located southeast of South Pueblo on a large tract of company-owned land. CC&I produced rails for the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad and by the early 1880s was producing coal, pig iron, iron ore, rolled rails, and steel ingots. CC&I also operated mining camps in the region and in 1886 platted Bessemer, a company town for those working at the South Pueblo Ironworks plant. Also in 1886, South Pueblo and Pueblo consolidated into a combined city government (DeHerrera et al 2011: 19-25).

By 1890 CC&I had numerous smelters and factory complexes along the southern periphery of the consolidated city of Pueblo, generally located northeast of the present-day intersection of Interstate (I)-25 and SH 45. CC&I was reorganized as Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I) in 1892 and purchased by John D. Rockefeller in 1903. Mining activities in this region were focused primarily in the foothills and mountains south and southwest of Pueblo with the smelters and industrial complexes located along the southernmost periphery of the city connected to the mining region by rail. According to historic maps from 1866 and 1916, the corridor that eventually became US 85 and I-25 was one of the earliest road corridors to directly link the southern mining region and Pueblo's industrial areas.

CF&I experienced several booms during the early twentieth century and as the nation's defense and military programs expanded in the mid-twentieth century, iron and steel production and profits rose dramatically. Wartime improvements included the Pueblo Ordnance Depot, later renamed the Pueblo Chemical Depot, which is located on the east side of the city along SH 96 and was constructed in 1942 for the storage and supply of ammunition in support of World War II. This facility remained active throughout the late twentieth century. The Pueblo Memorial Airport also on the east side of the city, built as the Pueblo Army Airbase, was constructed in 1941 and trained B-24 bomber pilots from 1942-1945. US 50/SH 96 provided access to the Ordnance Depot and Army Airbase (Deherrera et al 2012: 3-6; Harvard Business School, Colorado Fuel and Iron Corp 2012; U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency, History of the U.S. Army Pueblo Chemical Depot"; Pueblo.org 2014; Pueblo Weisbrod Aircraft Museum website).

Agriculture was also an important theme. The region boasted the largest cattle industry in the state during the late nineteenth century. In the late nineteenth and twentieth century irrigation canals were constructed to facilitate the production of wheat, hay, oats, corn, sugar beets, watermelon, cantaloupe, and other field crops. The entry of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad into Colorado during the late nineteenth century resulted in the settlement and growth of additional towns along the rail line such as La Junta, Las Animas, Lamar, Granada, and Holly. These towns prospered due the connections the railroad provided and access to convey commercial and agricultural goods to larger markets. During the early to mid-twentieth century, numerous farm-to-market roads were constructed and improved as part of a larger transportation network to transport goods and people in and around Pueblo (Noel et al 1994: 25, 29; Wyckoff 1999: 167-170; Colorado State Planning Commission 1941: 306).

Historic mapping shows a road following the general alignment of SH 231 in place by 1904 crossing of the Arkansas River (Nationwide Environmental Title Research, LLC, Historic Aerials). Literature review and historic state highway maps indicate that SH 231 was designated in 1939. Historic mapping indicates the original designated route

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extended south from US 50 to SH 228 and did not cross the Arkansas River. By 1942 the route is shown extending between SH 228 and SH 96 (its present northern terminus). Historic state highway maps indicate that by 1955 SH 228 was decommissioned and SH 231 extended between SH 96 and US 50 with a small spur extending south to the previous junction with SH 228. US 50 was rerouted through Pueblo by 1958 and the old US 50 was converted to a business route while SH 96 became US 50. According to CDOT plans, the bridge over the Arkansas River was replaced in 1965. The current extent of SH 231 between Vineland and Devine was in place by 1968. State highways, farm-to-market roads, and small local connector roads like SH 231 served to link major regional transportation corridors, towns, and cities; however, research and review of historic mapping does not indicate that this highway provided direct access to destinations related to important historic themes. SH 231 served as one of several local connector roads within the area that linked current US 50 and SH 96 to form the regional transportation network providing connections to other roads and common local destinations.

(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 231 is classified an Engineered Route under the classification system in the MPS.

Criterion A

Research did not indicate that this highway is an example of an early or prominent project by the Colorado Highway Department (CHD). Although a road crossing the Arkansas River at this location was established by 1904, there were other crossings of the river within the region and no evidence suggests that the crossing at this location possessed particular significance. No evidence suggest that this highway was built or improved as part of a Depression-era federal work relief project. Present-day SH 231 is a short connector route and historically served to provide a connection between two major regional transportation corridors, SH 50 and SH 96, and SH 228 historically. Although located within an agricultural region, this highway did not function as a main transportation route for providing direct connectivity as a farm-to-market road between an important agricultural region and its market. The highway was established prior to construction of the Pueblo Ordnance Depot and the Pueblo Army Air Base and does not possess an important association with development of those facilities. Moreover, this highway is located some distance from the industrial core of Pueblo and no evidence suggest that it played an important role in the transportation of industrial goods. As such, it does not possess significance under Criterion A.

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

This highway is not considered to be an early or prominent project of the CHD. Research and literature review yielded no evidence to indicate the use of innovative or important engineering design or construction techniques that serve to distinguish this highway from other roads and does not appear to exhibit important engineering innovations or important later modifications. The highway's design and construction appear to fall within the established standard practices of state highway design and construction of the time and the highway does not possess significance under Criterion C.

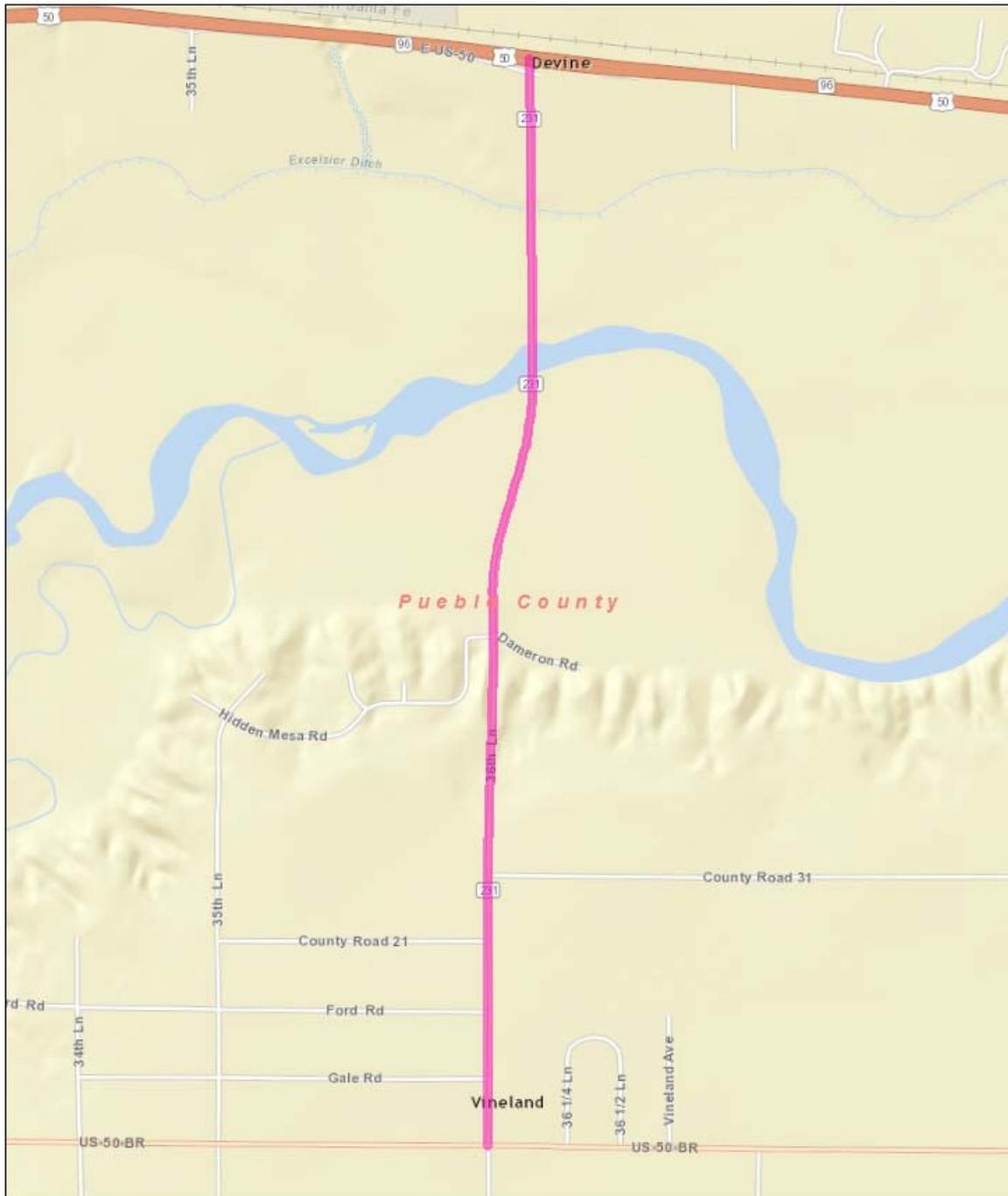
Criterion D

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 significance under Criterion D.

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- SH 231
- County Boundary

SH 231

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