

Colorado Historic Highway Inventory - Historical Summary and Evaluation of Significance

Highway Name: State Highway (SH) 317

CDOT Route Nos. and Milepost (MP) Limits:

<i>CDOT Route</i>	<i>Route Description</i>
317A	From SH 13-A at Hamilton east To County Road 29 at Pagoda

Highway Location:

Counties: Moffat, Routt

Length (Miles): 12.018

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.

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 317 begins at the junction with SH 13 at Hamilton, south of Craig in northwest Colorado, and travels east for 12.018 miles to the junction of CR 29 at Pagoda. It is entirely within Moffat County.

SH 317 entered into the State Highway system in 1939. State highway maps show that the route originally extended from Hamilton at SH 13 along the Williams Fork River to Pagoda and then north to Hayden and U.S. Highway (US) 40. By 1954 the route terminated at Pagoda and the segment between Pagoda to Hayden turned over to Routt County. The entire route was not paved until 1992 (Salek). The addition of this highway to the state system occurred during the administration of Charles Vail, State Highway Engineer from 1930 to 1945, when Vail added more than 3600 miles to the 533-mile system. Some of the miles came from converting abandoned railroad lines to highways, and others were associated with New Deal programs in rural parts of Colorado, where the poor condition of roads required major improvements (Autobee and Dobson 2000: E-34). The addition of SH 317 appears to have been part of Vail's efforts to improve rural roads and increase the overall mileage of the system. According to a review of ROW plans for this highway in OTIS, no work relief programs were associated with the road in the 1930s or 1940s. Slight realignments occurred east of Hamilton in the 1950s to reduce or eliminate curves.

The westernmost third of Colorado is dominated by the Colorado Plateau, which stretches from western Colorado into eastern Utah, northern Arizona, and northwestern New Mexico. The Colorado Plateau is a high desert with scattered forests and mesas (or tablelands), including the forested Flat Tops and Grand Mesa, the desert buttes of the Bookcliffs and Roan Plateau, and the juniper studded canyons and red sandstone formations that include Colorado National Monument. The region is also characterized by broad swaths of federally-owned land managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service (Routt National Forest, Flat Tops Wilderness, and Grand Mesa National Forest), with lesser amounts belonging to the National Park Service (Colorado National Monument and Dinosaur National Monument).

Before the establishment of Colorado Territory in 1861, this area was part of Utah Territory (1854), reinforcing the physical connection between western Colorado and eastern Utah. Similarly, the land in the northwestern part of Colorado resembles southwestern Wyoming and there are strong economic and social connections as ranchers from southern Wyoming often owned land in northern Colorado, and vice versa. The Colorado River and its major tributaries, including the Colorado (Grand), Uncompahgre, and Gunnison are the major sources of water. Up north, the Yampa and White rivers feed into the Green River before it joins the Colorado in Utah and are the lifelines of the region. As with other parts of the arid state, the rivers dictated the location of settlements, railroads, agriculture, and the state's roads.

After the Utes were removed in 1880 to reservations in Utah (leaving only two small Ute reservations in the extreme southwest corner of Colorado), the railroads quickly mobilized to provide transportation and economic opportunity for farmers, ranchers, and other businesses. The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad built the first lines into the San Juan, Gunnison, and Colorado (Grand) River valleys between 1881 to 1883 and helped develop the towns of Grand Junction, Montrose, and Delta, among others. The railroad to Steamboat Springs and Craig was slower to develop, however, given the isolation of the area and issues with winter travel. David Moffat's Denver, Northwestern & Pacific Railroad entered Steamboat in 1909. After Moffat's death in 1911, the railroad was bought by the Denver and Salt Lake, and it continued to its termination point to Craig in 1913. The railroad stimulated the development of coal mining in the Yampa River Valley which required a reliable source of freight transportation.

Agriculture in the Grand and Gunnison river valleys started with experimentation on the best crops suited for the environment. Farmers in the early 1880s discovered the river valleys ideal for fruit growing due to the lower elevations, long growing seasons, and potential for large irrigation systems such as the Grand Valley Canal on the north side of the Colorado in the 1890s. The fruit growing region stretched from Fruita, Grand Junction, and Palisade along the Colorado River to Delta, Hotchkiss, and Paonia on the North Fork of the Gunnison. Peaches thrived near Palisade, while apples and pears did well near Cedaredge and areas of Hotchkiss and Paonia. Farmers also had success with sugar beets, corn, wheat, barley, millets, and potatoes (Wyckoff 1999: 227-231). Settlements clustered near river bottoms at Parachute, Rifle, Meeker, Steamboat Springs, and Craig, where large ranches grazed cattle and sheep on higher benches above the river bottoms, much of it leased from the federal government for grazing. Brown's Hole, in the far northwest corner of the state, shared borders with Utah and Wyoming and was known as a good winter range for large cattle herds from Wyoming (Wyckoff 1999: 244).

In northwest Colorado, energy-related resources such as coal, oil shale, oil, and natural gas have been important to the economy of the region since the late 1880s although the industry was slow to develop along the Yampa until

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railroad lines provided transportation after 1909. Coal deposits are located in the Yampa Valley west and south of Steamboat Springs, the Danforth Hills northwest of Meeker, and the Grand Hogback (near New Castle) north of Glenwood Springs. Oil and gas are found near Rangely and Craig, and oil shale has been a boom and bust commodity in the Pieance Basin, northeast of Grand Junction, since the turn of the twentieth century. While trains are still used to haul coal through the area, trucks became increasingly more important to the industry after World War II and the improvement of the area's highways.

A review of sources did not reveal that this route represents important road engineering achievements, an important road type or subtype identified in the MPS, or that served to provide an important connections to markets or facilitated development related to agriculture, transportation or industry. SH 317 is a minor connector route between Hayden, Meeker and Craig that is secondary to transportation corridors such as US 40 and SH 13. The route traverses sparsely populated ranching areas along the Williams Fork River.

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

Criterion A

As an Engineered Route, State Highway 317 does not possess significance under Criterion A. The present day route only connects to SH 13. The route connected Hayden and Meeker but was not considered a primary or significant route because of its late addition to the state highway system in 1939. Research failed to indicate this highway has a direct association with a historical theme important in Colorado history, or that it represents an early or prominent road construction project of the Colorado Highway Department (CHD), or the connections it provides from any subsequent highway improvements. As such, the highway 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

As a representative example, a state highway that exhibits physical features indicative of an important type or subtype identified in the MPS reflecting its original design or important variation may possess significance. A state highway may also possess significance for particularly important engineering achievements.

SH 317 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.

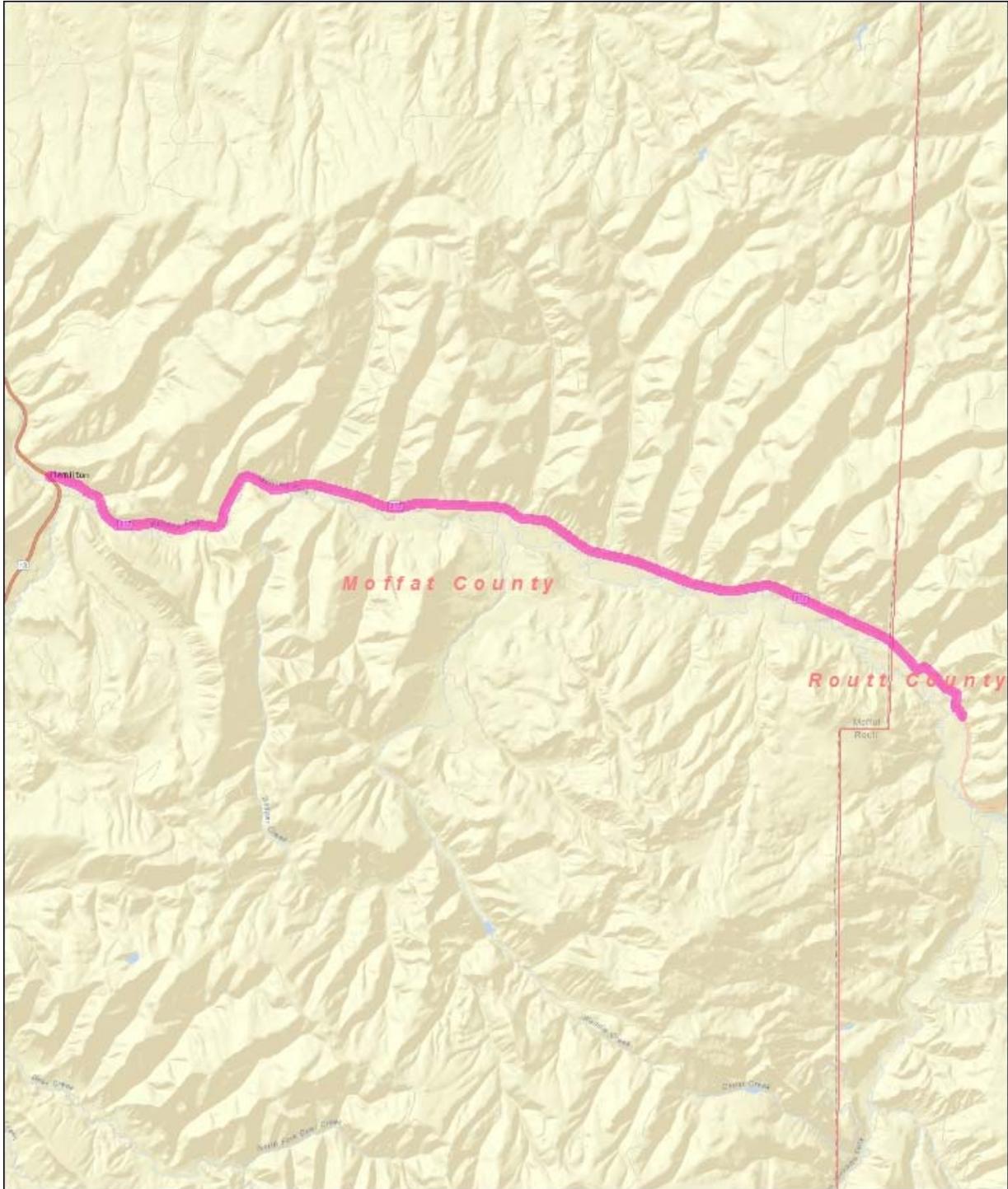
Criterion D

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.

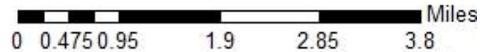
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- SH 317
- County Boundary

SH 317



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