In 1883, the Colorado Midland Railway was founded to build a standard gauge line across the Rockies to compete with the narrow gauge Denver & Rio Grande. The CM plan was to link Colorado Springs with the mines of Leadville and with the national rail network at Ogden, Utah. In 1886, construction started on two segments of the route. One segment started at Colorado Springs (where it connected with the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific 1888) and headed west over Ute Pass then down to the Arkansas River, where it crossed the tracks of the Denver, South Park & Pacific (1882n), and turned north to follow the Arkansas River and parallel the Denver & Rio Grande Leadville Branch (1880n) to Leadville, where the CM arrived in 1887. The other segment started at Leadville, using both DSP&P and D&RG trains to haul CM rails to Leadville; from Leadville, CM construction headed west over the Continental Divide at Hagerman Pass, then down the Fryingpan River (this location) to the confluence with the Roaring Fork River at Basalt. At Basalt, CM construction headed in two directions: a branch line was built southeast along the Roaring Fork River and parallel to the D&RG Aspen Branch (1887n) to reach Aspen in early 1888, and a mainline was built northwest along the Roaring Fork River and parallel to the D&RG Aspen Branch (1887n) to reach Glenwood Springs in 1887, 2 months after the D&RG arrived. In 1888, the CM continued westward along the Colorado River toward Utah but with the line only 12 miles west of Glenwood Springs the CM decided to not fund the route to Utah and the CM stopped building. In 1890, the CM and Denver & Rio Grande Western cooperated to build the Rio Grande Joint Railway along the Colorado River to Grand Junction; using this shared line and trackage rights over newly standard-gauged D&RG tracks, the CM reached Ogden, Utah, via the newly standard-gauged D&RGW (1883n). In 1900, the D&RGW gained control of the CM, which was difficult to operate because it had little level track and crossed three summits with grades up to four percent. CM business dropped off toward the end of World War I so the CM ceased operations in 1919 and was scrapped in 1921.

Northward view of the CM (1888), now a paved road known as Forest Road 105 and also known as Frying Pan (two words) Road and County Route 4. The CM (1888)/Frying Pan Road is the cut grade on the slope. This location is 21 miles east of Basalt, where the CM (1888) splits (to Aspen and Glenwood Springs), and 9 miles west of Hagerman pass (both distances as the crow flies). At an elevation of 9,402 feet, the aspens are turning yellow in early September, but this is only the beginning of the climb to Hagerman Pass. The lake is Chapman Reservoir, a scenic impoundment of the Fryingpan River. As seen here, this is the point at which the railroad alignment, having followed the Fryingpan River for 21 miles from Basalt to here, leaves the river to gain elevation to the pass. The route from here to Hagerman Pass has many curves including three horseshoe bends to gain elevation.

Southeastward view of the CM (1888) 2.5 miles southeast of the previous location. Forest Road 105 is now an unpaved road. The first of three horseshoe bends is just beyond the visible area of this photo. The bend is to the left (northeast) and the alignment continues up the slope such that it takes 1.5 rail miles to reach a point 0.2 miles to the left of this location and higher up the slope.

Northwestward view of the CM (1888) 2.75 rail miles upgrade from the previous location. The lower part of the CM (1888) is only 0.4 miles to the left (southwest).

Northwestward view of the CM (1888) 1.25 rail miles upgrade from the previous location. The well graded road in the distance that goes out of the frame on the right is the CM mainline. We are looking downgrade, having made another U turn since the previous location (there, northwest was upgrade). The gravel opening in the foreground is the west branch of a wye.

Southeastward view of the west branch of the wye from the same location as previous.

Northward view of the tip of the wye 400 feet southeast of the previous location; the west branch is on the left and the east branch is on the right.

Northward view of the tip of the wye a few steps south of the previous location.

Southward view of the tip of the wye at the same location as previous. The creek is Sellar Creek and we are 500 feet southeast of the CM (1888) mainline via the west branch of the wye. A 1911 topo map shows no east branch and thus no wye. Instead, in 1911 the west branch was a single spur track that extended another 1,000 feet southeast from this location at the tip of the wye. The 1911 topo map shows some buildings along the CM mainline and one building along the spur track, which constituted a settlement called Sellar. According to internet sources, there are ruins of coke ovens down this spur track and the settlement was also a logging center. I could find no information as to whether the east branch of the wye was original and the tracks removed prior to 1911 (and thus don't appear on the 1911 topo map) or were added after 1911 but prior to the 1921 abandonment of the line.

Southward view of the east branch of the wye 200 feet north of the previous location. The west branch of the wye is visible just in front of the bushes in the right and center distance. The tip of the wye is in the upper left.

Southwestward view of the east branch of the wye 250 feet northeast of the previous location. The flat area in the immediate foreground is Forest Road 105, i.e. the CM (1888) mainline, and there was once a switch in this view.

Eastward view of the CM (1888) at the same location as previous. The CM (1888) crosses Sellar Meadow via a significant fill grade. The continuation of the route is visible as the cut grade that climbs the wooded slope beyond the meadow.

Southwestward (downgrade) view of the CM (1888) 2,500 feet northeast of the previous location. Sellar Meadow is visible beyond the trees on the left.

Eastward (upgrade) view of a significant cut grade for the CM (1888) 1.5 rail miles southeast of the previous location.

Westward (downgrade) view of a cut grade for the CM (1888) 4 rail miles southeast of the previous location. The valley to the left is the Fryingpan River; from here it is easy to see how much elevation has been gained.

Westward (downgrade) view of a cut grade for the CM (1888) 3,500 rail feet east of the previous location. The valley to the left is Ivanhoe Creek, a tributary of the Fryingpan River.

Southeastward (upgrade) view of the CM (1888) 3.5 rail miles southeast of the previous location. The distant ridge is the Continental Divide. The dirt road is the CM (1888) grade but is now Forest Road 527; Forest Road 105 left the railroad alignment between here and the previous location and heads over the actual Hagerman Pass, where no railroad ever ran; Hagerman Pass is the low point in the ridgeline on the left side of the photo. The railroad once continued straight in this view, but after abandonment this small dam was built to raise the level of a natural lake, Lock Ivanhoe according to a 1911 topo map, at the headwaters of Ivanhoe Creek. Just in front of the dam, Forest Road 527 leaves the railroad alignment and turns to the left to circumvent the dam. Note for reference the small brown structure on top of the dam.

The CM built two summit tunnels for its crossing of the Continental Divide at Hagerman Pass. The first tunnel was the Hagerman Tunnel, completed in 1887 during the original construction of the railroad. In 1891, this tunnel was replaced by the lower and longer Busk-Ivanhoe Tunnel. From this location, the route to the lower, newer Busk-Ivanhoe Tunnel is easy to follow as we will see. However, the route to the higher, older Hagerman Tunnel is harder to follow. It appears from satellite imagery and historical topo maps that this is the point at which the routes to the two tunnels split and the route to the Hagerman Tunnel follows Forest Road 527.

Westward view of the CM (1888) 3,000 feet southeast of the previous location. The grade in the lake is a fill grade that, when it was built, was on the north shore of Lock Ivanhoe (according to a 1911 topo map). In the distance, the grade disappears under the current Lake Ivanhoe, whose level is raised by the dam (the same dam with the structure on top as in the previous photo), and runs under the dam to the alignment in the previous photo. The viewer is standing on Forest Road 527, which was the 1887 original route to the Hagerman Tunnel. The fill grade in the lake is a newer (1891) route to the lower Busk-Ivanhoe Tunnel (not shown separately on the Southwest Railroad History Map).

Southeastward view of the CM (1888) at the same location as previous. The fill grade in the lake is the 1891 re-routing to the Busk-Ivanhoe Tunnel, whose west portal is the vegetated area just to the left of the far end of the fill grade. The viewer is standing on Forest Road 527, which was the 1887 original route to the higher-elevation Hagerman Tunnel. That original route continues to the left and then makes a U turn and climbs the slope over the Busk-Ivanhoe Tunnel and continues to the right in the distant low area. Then it makes another U turn to climb the slope and is barely visible on the slope below the ridge in the upper left. From there, the 1887 alignment continues to the left to the west portal of the Hagerman Tunnel, which cannot be seen from this location. The Busk-Ivanhoe Tunnel is at an elevation of 11,000 feet and the Hagerman Tunnel is at an elevation of 11,500 feet.