



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 (including 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.

Westward view of the CM (1888), now a dirt road, with the Fryingpan River to its right (north). This location is 12 miles east of Basalt, where the CM (1888) splits (to Aspen and Glenwood Springs), and 18 miles west of Hagerman pass (both distances as the crow flies).





Eastward view of the CM (1888) at the same location as previous. Just around the bend is the dam for Ruedi Reservoir, which was built over the abandoned the CM (1888). From Basalt east to this location, the CM (1888) is under Forest Road 105, also known as Frying Pan (two words) Road and County Route 4, a paved two lane highway. At this location the highway, visible in the upper left, leaves the railroad grade to climb the slope to get over the dam.

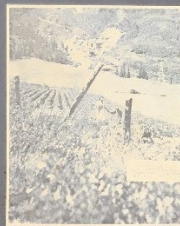




Southward view of the CM (1888) at Thomasville, 7 miles east of the previous location (as the crow flies). Forest Road 105/Frying Pan Road/County Route 4 is in the foreground and is on the CM (1888) grade. These lime kilns are all that remains of a calcium production industry that was served by the CM at Thomasville. This location is 19 miles east of Basalt and 11 miles west of Hagerman pass (both distances as the crow flies).

## THOMASVILLE & THE ROUTE OF THE MIDLAND RAILROAD

This area of Pitkin County was settled in the 1880s. The numerous settlements along the upper Frying Pan Valley area grew up around the route of the Colorado Midland Railroad. Until 1885 the valleys of the Roaring Fork drainage were accessible only by foot, horse, and mule and the mineral wealth could not be fully realized until more efficient modes of transportation could be established. In the early 1880s, two railroads were in competition to reach the valley floor first and establish themselves to claim their share of the wealth. The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, a narrow gauge railway, chose to extend its route from Leadville, through Glenwood Canyon alongside the Colorado River to Glenwood Springs. The Colorado Midland chose to extend its standard gauge line from Leadville by way of a tunnel through the Continental Divide connecting Leadville and the head of the Frying Pan Valley, then proceeding down to the Roaring Fork Valley Floor. The Denver & Rio Grande arrived in Aspen in October of 1887, ahead of Colorado Midland by only a few months.



The completed Colorado Midland Railroad was the only standard gauge route in the Colorado high country and traveled along the alignment of this road between Leadville and Basalt. The total length of the rail line was 261 miles. Depending in the era in which you traveled, it featured up to 18 tunnels of various lengths. The longest was almost 2 miles long while others were very short. The Hagerman Tunnel, which crossed under the Continental Divide, is 2,200 feet long and sits at over 11,000 feet above sea level. The construction of the route was an engineering marvel. The tunnels, bridges and the railroad bed were constructed by hundreds of men using dynamite, picks and shovels, summer and winter. Mules and wagons were the only form of transportation. Camps were established to support the workers and these camps quickly grew into established communities that lived on beyond the railroad construction.

These communities included Ruedi, which was located where the reservoir now sits, Meredith, Norrie, Sellar, and Nast, among some others. These communities had their own identities and niches, and thrived because of the Colorado Midland Railroad.

This site was originally known as Calcuim, named for the lime processing industry that was centered here once the railroad was established. The Lime Kilns, located across the road, are the last remnants of that industry. The Calcium community eventually became part of Thomasville, which still exists today.

The Railroad ran until 1921 and supported the business of numerous communities along the route. It also made the Frying Pan Valley popular for sightseers. Even when it was first being settled, tourists would ride the train up from Leadville to pick wildflowers.

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Southeastward view of the CM (1888), now Forest Road 105/Frying Pan Road/County Route 4, 2 miles southeast of the previous location.