

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received **JUL 19 1983**
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Royal Gorge Bridge and Incline Railway 5FN687^e

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number 5 miles northwest of Canon City, CO n/a not for publication

city, town Canon City vic, vicinity of

state Colorado code 08 county Fremont code 043

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> object	n/a in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
	n/a being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of Canon City, Colorado

street & number c/o George Turner, Mayor Box 711

city, town Canon City n/s vicinity of state Colorado 81212

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk

street & number Fremont County

city, town Canon City state Colorado 81212

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Colo. Inventory of Cultural Resources has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date Ongoing federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Officer, 1300 Broadway

city, town Denver state Colorado

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Royal Gorge Bridge property includes 360 acres on the north and south bank of the Arkansas River, ca. 5 miles west of Canon City, Colorado. It is located at the top of a large mesa overlooking the Royal Gorge of the Arkansas River to the southwest. On the other three sides there is a pinon juniper forest.

The portion of the property as nominated includes the two historic elements: the Bridge and the Incline Railroad. The remaining structures (Picture 1), e.g., the visitor center, a water treatment plant etc., are all modern and are not nominated. Yet because of the care taken in the design, they compliment the historic structures.

1) The Royal Gorge Suspension Bridge (Pictures 2-5) [1929]

The bridge is eighteen feet wide, has a main suspended span of 880 feet and a total length of 1,220 feet. Wind cables were installed to increase stability of structure and reduce movement of the bridge for the comfort and safety of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

The bridge is supported by two cables, each containing 2,100 #9 cold-drawn galvanized steel wires spun in parallel strands. The cables are anchored at each end by trenching the rock at either end to a depth of 25 feet. One hundred holes were drilled in the bottom of the trench and three foot sections of two inch pipe were grouted in over 3/4 inch reinforcing bars. Twenty-one wires were attached to each pipe and then the trench was filled with concrete.

The legs on each tower are constructed of six 8 x 8 3/4 inch angles. The south tower is 110 feet tall to the center of the 5 inch steel rollers at the top which support the saddles that in turn carry the bridge cable. The north tower is identical except that because of the terrain, the legs are unequal. The longest is 150' high. The bridge deck is wood planking, 3 inches by 12 inches by 18 feet. About 20% of the decking is replaced annually.

Maintenance and repair, a responsibility of the operating company, has been excellent. The bridge has retained its original design and configuration.

2) Funicular Railway, [1931]

The Funicular Railway consists of two elements: the upper and lower terminals [1931], and the three-rail track. The upper terminal consists of two buildings; a small two-story stone structure which houses the cable equipment (photo 6) and a small frame structure (photo 7) for the operator. The lower terminal consists of a number of interconnected sheds (photo 8).

The track which connects the terminals and runs from the top to the bottom of the Royal Gorge utilizes Telephone Gulch. The track is 1550 feet long. The grade is 45° the full length of the track. The trip, made in enclosed cars (photo 10), takes five minutes to complete.

The condition of the Incline Railway is excellent. It is intact. The only alterations have been minor and usually for reasons of safety. On the railway, the original cars were replaced by present cars which increase carrying capacity and efficiency of operation. The Incline Railway is under the jurisdiction of the Colorado Tramway Safety Board.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1929-1931 bridge **Builder/Architect** George Cole

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) 1931 railway

The Royal Gorge Bridge property possesses engineering and commercial significance. As a suspension bridge it is unique in Colorado. The property, beginning with the opening of the bridge in 1929, and the Incline Railway in 1931, quickly developed into a major tourist attraction for southern Colorado.

The history of the Royal Gorge property begins in 1906 when the U.S. Congress gave the Royal Gorge and the surrounding land to the city of Canon City, Colorado. This grant would remain valid as long as the property was used for recreational purposes.

In 1929 work began on the construction of a suspension bridge across the canyon with George F. Cole serving as engineer and general superintendent of the project. The purpose of the bridge was to make automobile travel possible across the Royal Gorge. Work was initiated June 4, and the bridge was opened on December 8. The next year Cole began work on an Incline Railway the purpose of which was to carry train passengers from the top of the gorge to the bottom. This was opened in 1931. With its completion visitors could get off the train at Canon City, be bussed to the property and, after touring the bridge, ride the Incline Railway to the bottom of the gorge in time to board their train.

The Royal Gorge is significant in Colorado in being the only suspension bridge in the state.¹ * Supported by two steel cables hung from two towers, the bridge spans 800 feet.² Its construction is unique since no stiffening trusses were utilized under the roadway.² Instead, wind cables were utilized to add stability.

From its beginnings, the property has been a major tourist attraction for southern Colorado. Attendance in the early years, except for the Depression and World War II years, has been estimated to average over 50,000 a year.³ Today annual attendance has passed the 500,000 mark.⁴ This figure can best be understood by comparing it with the total state tourism figures. In 1974-75, the most recent state figures available, annual attendance at the Royal Gorge equalled 7.4% of the total state tourism.

*Built at 1,053 feet above the Arkansas River, the bridge is also thought to be the highest above water level.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 6.88 acres

Quadrangle name Royal Gorge

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	3	4	7	1	5	0	0	4	2	5	7	0	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

1	3	4	7	1	8	7	0	4	2	5	7	0	5	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

1	3	4	7	1	5	2	0	4	2	5	6	7	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

1	3	4	7	1	7	7	0	4	2	5	6	9	9	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

1	3	4	7	1	5	0	0	4	2	5	7	9	8	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

1	3	4	7	1	5	0	0	4	2	5	7	0	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	n/a	code	county	code

state	n/a	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Walter Jenks, President

organization Royal Gorge Company of Colorado date 2/4/83

street & number P.O. Box 549 telephone (303) 275-7507

city or town Canon City state Colorado 81212

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Barbara Sudler

title State Historic Preservation Officer (Acting)

date July 11, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Linda McClelland
Keeper of the National Register

date 9-2-83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration