

MP 249 – 250: Berthoud Falls

Within this section is the community of Berthoud Falls, a possible camp site of Jim Bridger and Captain Berthoud and two avalanche chutes.

Route	Mile Marker	X	Y	Longitude	Latitude
¹ U. S. Highway 40	249	430545.47	4402619.15	-105.810957	39.770673
	250	432043.07	4403211.11	-105.793534	39.776127

The Stanley Avalanche Slide can be seen between these two mileage posts. Information about this slide is found under the avalanche information found in this section. Additional information can also be found in the section for MP 247-248.

Berthoud Falls is not an incorporated community and does not have a Post Office of its own. The town’s elevation is almost 10,000 ft. and it has a good deal more snowfall than the town of Empire and it lasts much longer.

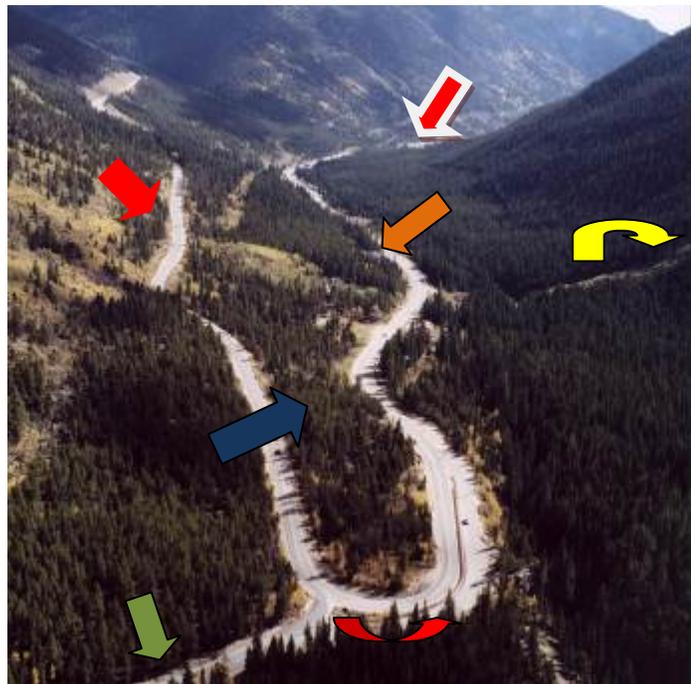
U. S. Highway 40 – red arrow

Berthoud Falls – blue arrow

CDOT Shop – orange arrow

Berthoud Falls slide – yellow

Henderson Mine and Jones Pass Road - green



The Big Bend/ Henderson Curve looking at
Berthoud Falls
Date: 2007
Photo provided by and used with permission from
Gregg Gargan: Colorado Department of Transportation Photographer

¹ Taken from the Colorado Department of Transportation’s website:
<http://apps.coloradodot.info/dataaccess/Highways/index.cfm?fuseaction=HighwaysMain>

Somewhere near here was the location of Camp Bridger, named for the mountain and Indian scout Jim Bridger¹. William Russell (see MP 243-244 Pumphouse Curve) hired Fred Emory, Tim Goodale, and Jim Bridger as his trail blazers. They left Empire on May 10, 1861 with the Empire City band playing. Berthoud in his report wrote the following:

“Organizing and mustering our party, which consisted of Messrs. Hamilton, and Edwards of Nevada Gulch, T. Hoopes of Idaho, Thomas Moses of Spanish Bar and Messrs. Wright and Dennis of Empire city, we proceeded on Friday, May 10th, 1861, in company with Messrs. Emery, Bridger and Goodell (Tim Goodale) up the valley of South Clear creek, about nine miles by an almost unbroken trail to camp Bridger, about two miles east of the last forks of Clear creek. Our camp, named after the veteran mountaineer who accompanied us, was at the side of an enormous avalanche of snow which had rushed with irresistible violence into the neighboring valley of Clear creek.”

Two avalanche paths are listed in this section and there are several others in the area that do not hit the highway. Butler Gulch drains into the West Fork of Clear Creek about two miles from Berthoud Falls which makes this area a possibility for Camp Bridger.

This is also the location of the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) shop on the east side of the Pass. A note from the author: the CDOT crew at the Berthoud Falls Shop has always been a great resource and help for the author in collecting the history of Berthoud Pass. Their love of Berthoud Pass and their dedication for keeping the travelers of the Pass safe is greatly admired and appreciated.



¹ Harrison, Louise C. Empire and the Berthoud Pass Pages 53 - 56

The photo below was taken from Ben Dugan's book: *Images of Berthoud Pass* and used with permission from the publisher: Arcadia Publishing. The caption reads: "The Bureau of Public Roads offices at Berthoud Pass Road Camp are pictured in the early 1920's at Berthoud Falls."



The information for the history of Berthoud Falls was taken from *the Berthoud Pass East Environmental Assessment Project*¹ Berthoud Falls was platted and planned by the Berthoud Pass Mining and Construction Company in November 1925. The purpose of the company was to build a hydro-electric power plant and engage in mining. An additional purpose was to operate a mountain resort with a hotel and summer cabins. The resort was built in the late 1920's and early 1930's. In time some of these cabins were sold or rented to Denver-area residents. The mining proved to be unsuccessful economically and a notice of dissolution was filed on March 20, 1957.

The best known building was the Berthoud Pass Inn which was started by Gil and Eula Hankel. In the beginning it had only a small café and a few tourist cabins. Three years later they had added a bar and motel to the mountain lodge. This was a place enjoyed by those using the recreation opportunities found on Berthoud Pass. The Inn burned down in July 1987 and was never rebuilt.

¹Sato, J. A. and Associates and Dames and Moore Berthoud Pass East Environmental Assessment Project # FR 040-3 (16) prepared for the Colorado Department of Transportation, Region 1 and U. S. Forest Service November 1997 Pages 4-55/56



Berthoud Falls Inn - 1947



Berthoud Falls Inn - 1947

Berthoud Falls Inn
 Photo provided by and used with permission from The Grand County Historical Society

The Berthoud Falls Inn

“The Berthoud Falls Inn and Italian Restaurant was at the bottom of Berthoud Pass until it burned in July 1987. It featured gables, decorative gable board, horizontal log walls, rough-cut stone chimney and balconies in front of the guest rooms.”

Photo provided by and used with permission from the Denver Public Library



**Avalanche Path:
 Berthoud Falls**

Location: Mile 249.2 (south side of highway)

Terrain Specifications:

Starting Zone elevation: 12,240 ft.	Vertical fall to roadway: 2,500 ft.
Runout Zone elevation: 9,740 ft.	Maximum vertical fall: 2,600 ft.
Length of path: 5,615 ft.	

Avalanche Data:

Length of road affected: **400ft**
 Average avalanche activity/year: **N/A**
 Average avalanche activity affecting road/year: **0.02**

Control Methods:

Static Control: **None**

Mobile control: **None**

Comments: The only known avalanches to reach the highway occurred on April 30, 1984 and January 28, 1998.



**Avalanche Path:
Stanley**

Location: Lower road crossing: 249.8 Upper road crossing 247.7

Terrain Specifications:

Starting Zone elevation: **12,400 ft.** Vertical fall to roadway: **2,700 ft.**

Runout Zone elevation: **9,660 ft.** Maximum vertical fall: **2,740 ft.**

Length of path: **6,145 ft.**

Avalanche Data:

Length of road affected: **1,200 ft. upper roadway - 700 ft. lower roadway**

Average avalanche activity/year: **8.00**

Average avalanche activity affecting road/year: **Upper roadway: 4.20**

Lower roadway: 0.18

Control Methods:

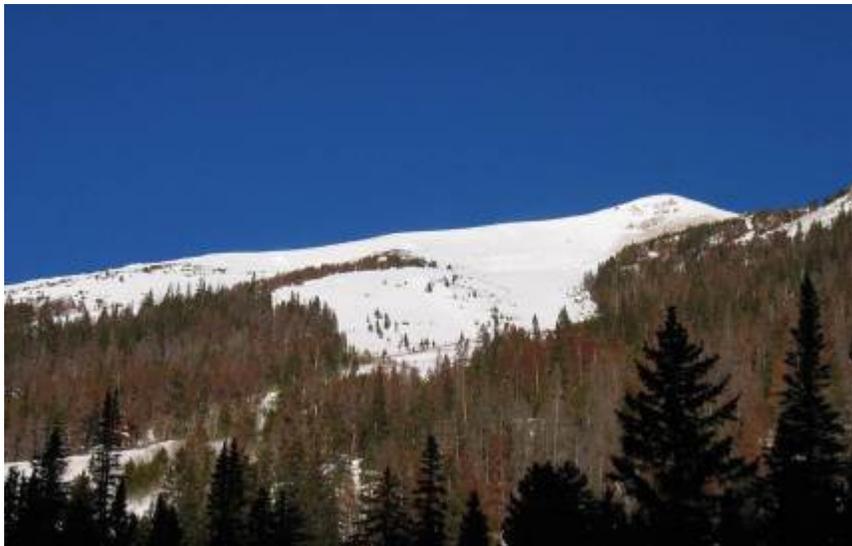
Static Control:

Mobile control: **105mm Howitzer, Helicopter bombing**

Comments: Because the entire avalanche path can be seen at the lower road crossing, the Stanley avalanche path will be discussed within the lower road crossing mile points. The Stanley avalanche path is listed as one of the most hazardous avalanche paths that cross a highway in Colorado. Factors used to arrive at this rating is the number of vehicles that cross under the path daily, the number of times an avalanche impacts the highway, the potential volume of snow that could reach the highway and the destructive potential if an avalanche strikes a vehicle.

When a large avalanche occurs within the Stanley path, the debris can reach the lower roadway and has done so at least 5 times since 1973. The earliest avalanche known to reach the roadway in a season occurred September 26, 1959 and the latest occurred June 6, 1996 when it deposited 20 ft. of snow on the upper road. An avalanche from the Stanley on February 16, 1945 claimed the life of Harold Willis when the avalanche swept the car he was driving off the upper road. Four more vehicles have been hit by avalanches from the Stanley, one in 1973, another in 1989 and the last time occurred January 6, 2007 when an avalanche swept two vehicles carrying 8 people off the road. All four of these vehicles were destroyed by the avalanche, but luckily the vehicles' occupants were not seriously injured.

The highway will cross under the Stanley Path again at mile 247.7. Even though there is a wide pull off area there, please do not stop under the path during the winter months.



**Photo of the Stanley avalanche area taken from the lower run out area
Taken by Raymond T. Mumford - 2011**