

Union Mine: Shaft No.1
Site 5ST1155

The Union Mine featured two shafts on the rim of French Gulch, a tunnel on the gulch floor, and a mill adjacent to the tunnel. The tunnel and mill have been completely destroyed, leaving the shafts as the principal representations of the mine. The shafts were adjacent to each other but sunk at different times. The Montgomery Shaft (Site 5ST1141) was the original sunk in 1879, and Shaft No.1 (5ST1155) was sunk to the east in 1904. Shaft No.1, currently an archaeological resource, lies on the top of a southwest spur of Prospect Hill at around 10,270 feet elevation. French Gulch is to the south, and a combination second- and old-growth lodgepole pine forest grows throughout the site. A road passes through the site's south portion and extends to other mines. The site lost most of its integrity to a mine closure project.

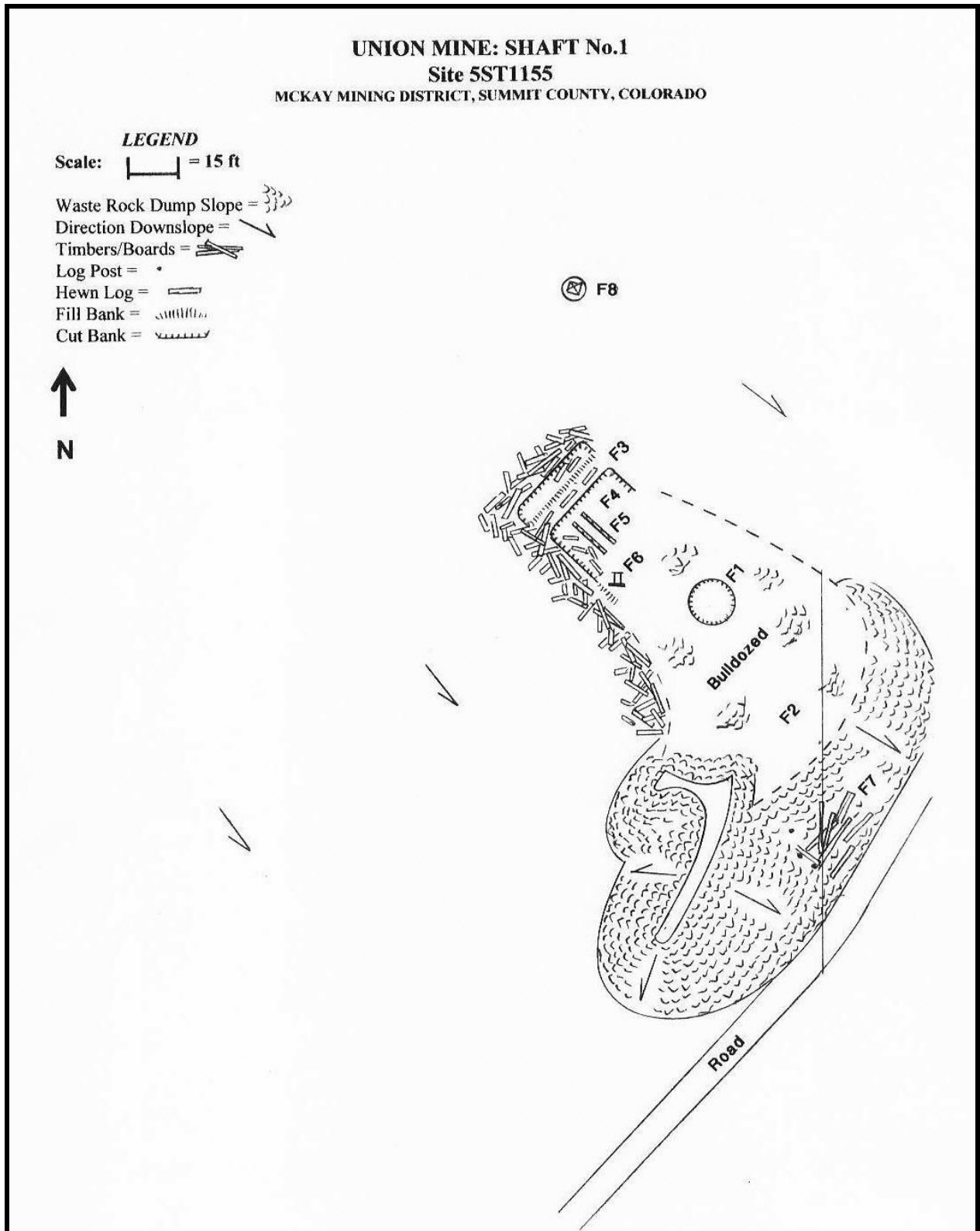


Figure 2.10: Plan view of the Union Mine: Shaft No.1 site.

Union Mine: Shaft No.1 Site Description

The site encompasses the archaeological remnants of the Shaft No.1 complex, which suffered extensive disturbance when the shaft was capped. Specifically, the property owner bulldozed most of the waste rock dump and surrounding ground into the shaft, damaging nearly all the site's features. When intact, the dump (F2) was 98 by 140 feet in area, 12 feet thick, and featured a lobe extending southwest from a main pad.

A frame shaft house extended northwest from the shaft and enclosed the mine's hoisting, compressed air, and steam systems. The building (F3) stood on a platform graded with a combination of cut-and-fill methods and waste rock. When the shaft was bulldozed closed, the platform's southeast portion was destroyed and remnants of the shaft house pushed to the west. The platform was 25 feet wide and has been reduced to a length of 36 feet. The mine's hoist was located on a pad of earth (F4) 5 by 12 feet in area. Broken pieces of a rock masonry foundation and several pipes currently represent the machine, which has been bulldozed to the south. An air compressor, now gone, was anchored to a timber foundation (F5) near the center of the shaft house. The foundation consists of parallel 10x10 timbers, and its footprint indicates that the compressor was a 4½-by-11 foot, straight-line steam unit.

Workers erected an ore bin at the southeast base of the waste rock dump to store pay rock between shipments. The structure (F7) was an open, flat-bottom bin 12 by 34 feet in area with a plank floor. Log posts, several of which currently stand, supported the walls, which are gone. Most of the bin was damaged when waste rock was bulldozed into the shaft.

Union Mine: Shaft No.1 Site Interpretation

When perceived in the context of its 1900s timeframe, Shaft No.1 was a typical moderately sized operation. The surface plant was equipped with a steam hoist, a steam-powered air compressor, and a boiler. The hoist was a small unit and the boiler was an inefficient portable model. Engineers deemed such appliances suitable for deep prospecting and not ore production. In general, the surface plant was capable of limited ore production and reflects minimal capital investment. The waste rock dump contained a substantial volume of material, indicating that the underground workings were somewhat extensive.

Dateable materials clearly reflect the 1900s timeframe. Items such as hand-finished bottle fragments and a hole-in-cap can assembled with an inner-rolled and soldered side seam predate the 1910s. Overall, the volume of industrial and domestic refuse is limited, which suggests that the Old Union company used Shaft No.1 for a relatively brief time and conducted most of its work in the Union Tunnel, on the floor of French Gulch.

Union Mine: Shaft No.1 Site Significance and Management Recommendations

Between 1904 and 1909, the Old Union Mining & Milling Company ranked among the Breckenridge area's important operations. Today, the Shaft No.1 site retains little historical integrity due to extensive bulldozing. For this reason, the site is no longer a viable entity and contributes little to French Gulch's historic landscape. Management recommendations suggest no further consideration as a cultural resource.