

Mono Mine ***Site 5ST1166***

The Mono Mine was a simple, short-lived operation developed during the 1880s. Currently, the site encompasses a collapsed tunnel portal, a shop ruin, an ore bin ruin, and a waste rock dump. The site lies on the north side of French Gulch upslope from the Wellington Mine and Mill, in the McKay Mining District. The steep wall of French Gulch, stripped of soil by hydraulic mining, surrounds the site, and the area features a young aspen forest. The site possesses archaeological integrity and is a contributing element of French Gulch's historic landscape.

Mono Mine Site History

The Mono Mine was a relative late operation in terms of French Gulch's history. Frank M. Wilson owned the Mono claim during the 1880s and developed it with a short tunnel late in the decade. Probably because the property was not destined to be a significant producer, he sold the mine to George Bressler in 1889. Bressler, who arrived in Breckenridge with the gold rush of 1859, conducted underground exploration and struck ore in the bottom of a shallow shaft. After exhausting most of the pay rock, he sold the Mono around 1894 to F.M. Brown and J.T. Miller.¹

Brown and Miller invested a small amount of capital to formally develop the property in hopes of finding more ore. By 1896, the partners proved successful and brought the mine into minor production. The vein they found offered enough ore to keep a small crew employed for several years. By 1900, the Mono featured 1,200 feet of horizontal workings, four shallow shafts, and a frame shop building. In 1901, miners made a rich strike that sustained production for at least a year. When the ore was exhausted, the partners closed the mine.²

Mono Mine Site Description

The Mono Mine site currently features the remnants of the surface plant that Brown and Miller built during the 1890s. The tunnel (F1) manifests as a linear area of subsidence, and the waste rock dump (F2), 70 by 120 feet in area, extends downslope. The dump features two lobes radiating outward from a central pad, and they represent dead-end rail lines used to dump the waste rock.

Ruins of the frame shop building lie on the waste rock dump's surface near the tunnel portal. The ruin (F3) manifests as a collection of lumber and industrial refuse scattered over a 15 by 18 foot area. An anvil block extends out of the ground along the east side, and a forge bellows assembled with cut nails lies nearby.

Workers constructed an ore bin at the toe of the waste rock dump to store pay rock between shipments. Miners placed ore into the structure via a chute that descended the flank of the dump. Both the chute (F4) and the bin (F5) have been reduced to remnants. The bin was an open, flat-bottom type 10 by 20 feet in area, and it was elevated above an adjacent road to facilitate transferring ore into wagons. The floor consisted of two layers of planks nailed to log joists, and the walls were also of planks and around 4 feet high.

¹ "Mining News" *Mining Industry* 10/4/89 p142; "Mining News" *MIR* 5/7/96 p528.

² Colorado Mine Inspectors' Reports: Mono; *Colorado Mining Directory*, 1901:120; "Mining News" *Mining Reporter* 12/7/99, p345; "Mining News" *Mining Reporter* 9/5/01 p181.

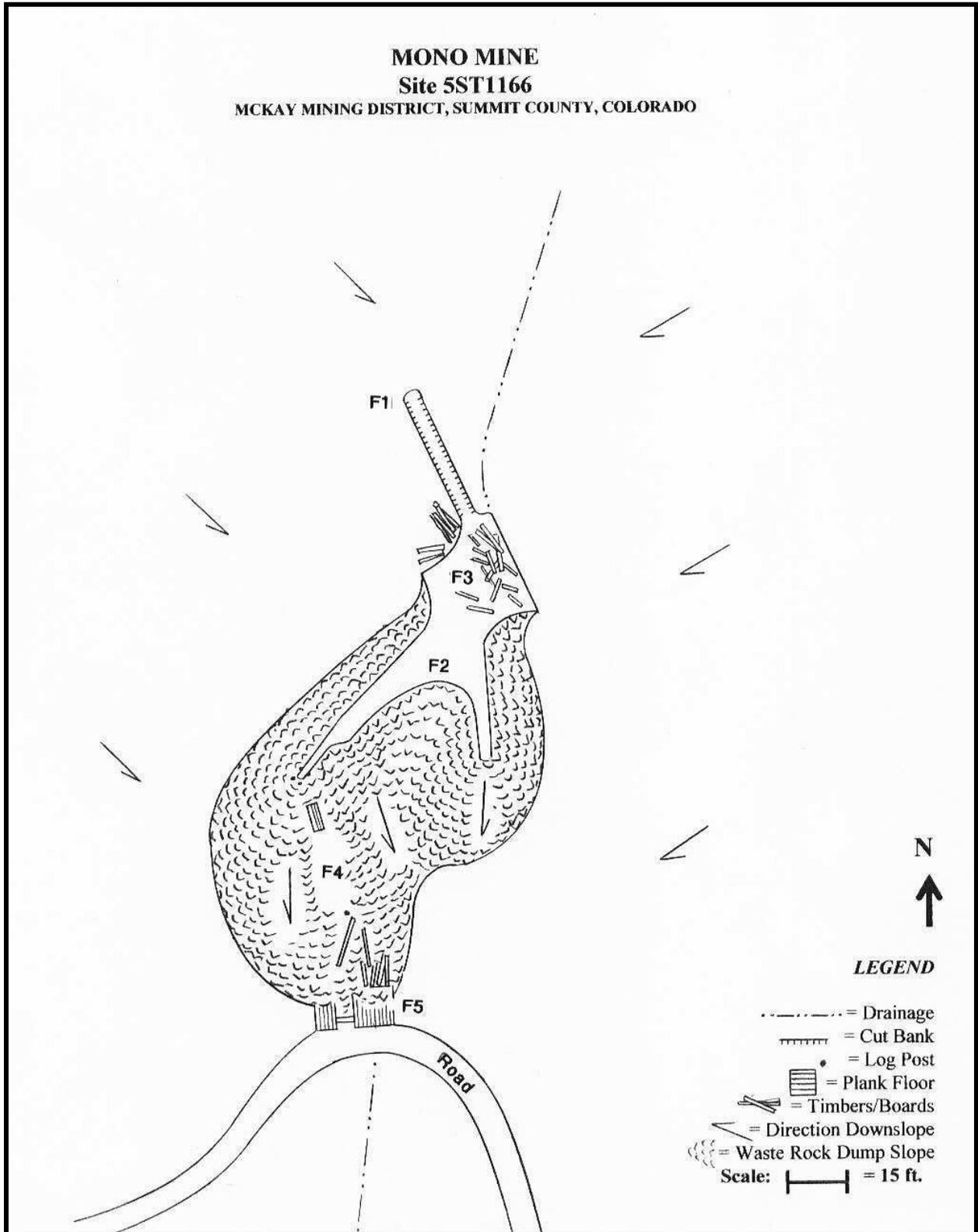


Figure 2.11: Plan view of the Mono Mine site.

Mono Mine Site Interpretation

The Mono Mine exemplifies the type of small and simple tunnel mine that was common in Summit County. The waste rock dump indicates that the workings were relatively shallow, and the open ore bin reflects limited production. The surface plant was remarkably simple and consisted of little more than a basic blacksmith shop, which represents a minimal capital investment. According to numerous ventilation tubes, the surface plant also included a ventilation blower to force fresh air underground. Since no evidence of motive power exists, the blower had to be powered by hand. The light artifact assemblage reflects the conservation of materials and a relatively brief occupation by a small crew.

The site possesses few clearly dateable artifacts, and those that are present fall within the mine's operating timeframe as indicated by archival records. In general, all woodwork was assembled with wire nails, which postdate 1890, and aqua window glass associated with the shop ruin predates 1915.

Mono Mine Site Significance

The Mono Mine was too small and unimportant an operation to have contributed much to the Breckenridge area. The site, however, exemplifies a small and simple tunnel mine. The site also lies in a sound setting evocative of Rocky Mountain mining. The Mono is recommended eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C.

In terms of Criterion C, the Mono is a sound archaeological example of a small and simple tunnel mine. At one time common, these types of mines constituted the bulk of Colorado's hardrock mining industry and greatly outnumbered the prominent, major operations. The site's archaeological features clearly convey the characteristics of these tunnel mines and the simplicity of their facilities.

The site is also recommended eligible because it is a contributing element of French Gulch's historic landscape. The waste rock dump is distinct and can be seen from afar.

Mono Mine Site Management Recommendations

Because the site is remote, difficult to access, and stable, management recommendations suggest no further cultural resource work.