

Miner's Cabin Ruin
Site 5ST1171

Site 5ST1171 encompasses a collapsed ruin and a platform left from two residential buildings. The ruin was a log cabin most likely associated with the early 1860s Parkville gold rush. The other building's origins remain unknown, although it was almost certainly occupied during the 1930s. Today, the site lies at 10,200 feet elevation and at the confluence of Monitor and American gulches. The gulch floor, blanketed with placer tailings, lies on the site's north edge, and the surrounding ground ascends gently southeast. The area features a thick forest of young subalpine firs, which was logged within the last fifty years. The site retains archaeological integrity, and the cabin ruin is recommended eligible while more data is needed to assess the other building platform.

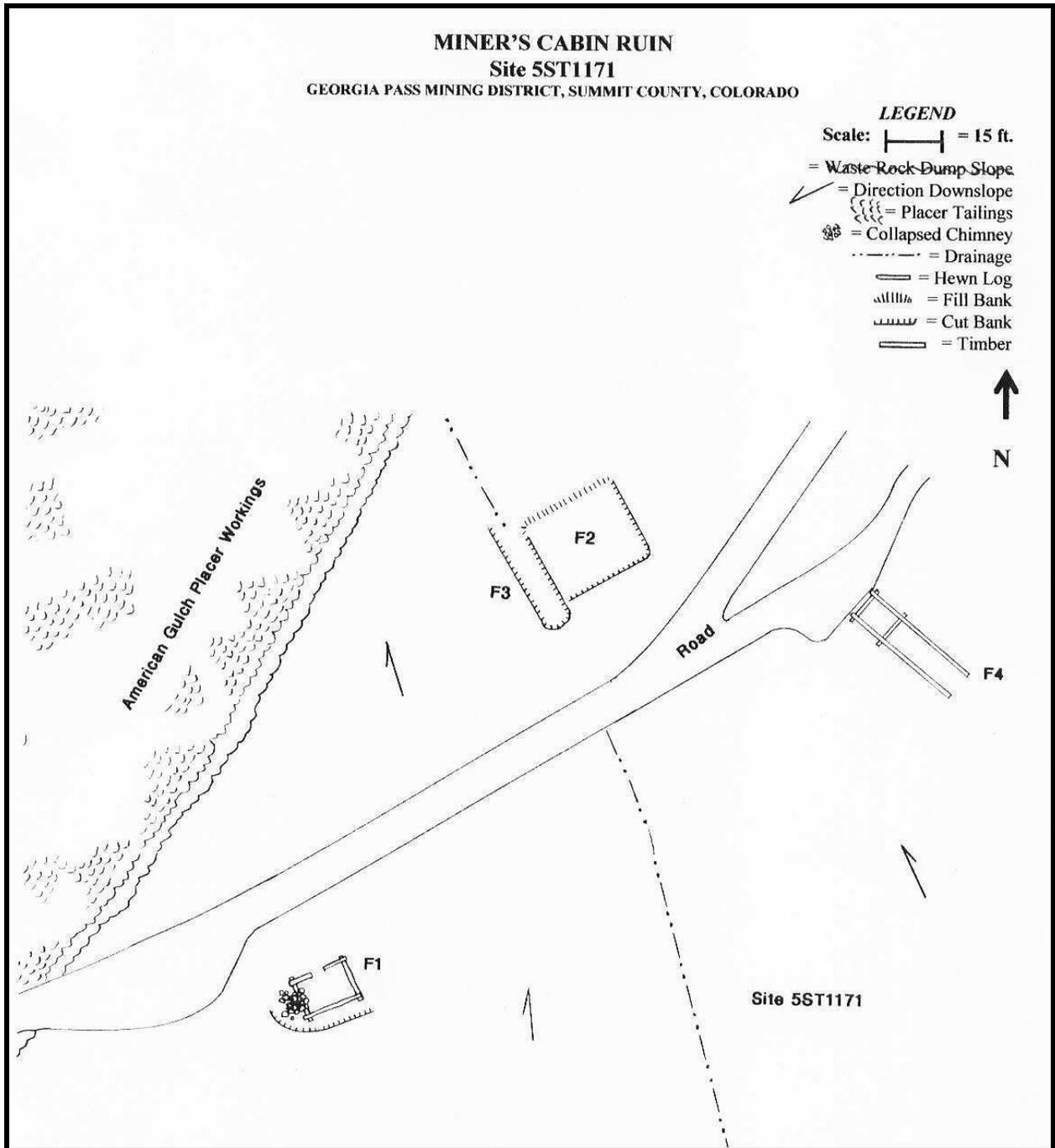


Figure 2.66: Plan view of Miner's Cabin Ruin site

Miner's Cabin Ruin Site Description

The site's southern building, reduced to a ruin, was a log cabin (F1) 12 by 15 feet in area. Workers assembled the walls with V-notch joints on a cut-and-fill platform. A doorway three feet wide breached the northwest wall, and a drainage ditch was excavated around the upslope edge to convey snowmelt around the structure. The cabin ruin currently consists of partial walls,

four logs high, and a collapsed stone chimney at the southwest wall. Workers used cut nails to assemble the woodwork, and no wire nails were obvious. Open meadow surrounds the ruin, and the ground cover conceals most artifacts, as well as shallow, buried deposits. Few artifacts are otherwise visible.

The site's northern building, now gone, was most likely a frame structure 25 by 30 feet in area. A platform (F2) currently remains, and it was graded with cut-and-fill methods in a marshy area. Workers excavated a shallow drainage ditch immediately upslope to convey snowmelt. They also shoveled a deeper ditch (F3) along the southwest side either as a root cellar or to drain the marshy ground. The platform is blanketed with sod, which obscures most artifacts and probably buried deposits, as well.

As noted, the site was logged within the last fifty years. During the timber harvest, loggers built a loading dock to transfer cut logs onto a truck. The structure (F4) is 9 feet wide, 36 feet long, and consists of saddle-notched logs three courses high.

Due to its early timeframe, dense ground cover, and marshy ground, the site possesses a limited artifact assemblage. Nearly all the structural debris was associated with the southern cabin ruin and most of the domestic refuse was scattered around the northern building platform.

Miner's Cabin Ruin Site Interpretation

The southern cabin and the northern building were occupied and probably existed at completely different times. It is almost certain that the southern cabin was built during the Parkville gold rush of the early 1860s. Dateable artifacts are limited to cut nails, a crude hand-finished bottle panel, and primitive hole-in-cap cans assembled with lapped side seams. The cabin also possessed a stone fireplace and chimney, which was an early feature suggesting that woodstoves and stovepipes were unavailable. During the 1860s, Summit County lacked road connections with the Front Range, which discouraged importing such heavy and cumbersome goods such as cast iron stoves. While the cabin could have been built as late as the 1870s, this is unlikely because nearly all the area's population left when the Parkville boom collapsed around 1865.

It remains unknown when the northern building was constructed, but evidence indicates that it was inhabited between the 1930s and 1950s. Dateable artifacts include vent-hole cans, tobacco tins, and sanitary cans opened with a rotary opener. The 1930s is the most likely timeframe because the dismal economic climate of the Great Depression caused a widespread return to old placer mines in the area.

Miner's Cabin Ruin Site Significance

The site has two residential features that include a cabin ruin and a building platform. The cabin ruin apparently dates to the Parkville rush of 1860 and retains archaeological integrity relative to this timeframe. Further, the cabin ruin is likely to offer buried archaeological deposits that may contribute important information. For these reasons, the cabin ruin is recommended eligible for the NRHP under Criteria A and D and for the SRHP under Criteria A and E.

The northern platform's historical associations, however, are unclear. The platform possesses an artifact assemblage suggestive of the 1930s, although this remains uncertain due to a lack of clearly dateable items. Like the cabin ruin, the platform probably offers buried archaeological deposits, but their importance is unknown. For these reasons, the platform's eligibility status is recommended as "need data." Testing and/or excavation of buried deposits is required to establish the platform's timeframes and, hence, its historical associations. The same

is also required to determine whether the buried deposits are important. Deposits that date to the Parkville rush are probably important while later deposits may not be.

In terms of Criterion A, the cabin ruin is associated with and is a product of several events and trends important to Summit County, Colorado, and the American West. Specifically, the cabin was inhabited by individuals who directly participated in the Parkville gold rush of 1860. The rush was Colorado's first significant mining event west of the Continental Divide, and it was of major proportion in Colorado and the greater West. Parkville drew wealth seekers from points across the nation and became so large that it rivaled Denver in terms of population, culture, and size. The rush set precedent by proving that gold lay in the deep mountains and brought the first prospectors who thoroughly explored inner Colorado. On a local scale, Parkville was the seed for Summit County's mining industry.

In terms of NRHP Criterion D and SRHP Criterion E, the cabin ruin is likely to yield important information. Specifically, the interior and surrounding ground almost certainly possess shallow, buried deposits. Testing and/or excavation will probably shed light on the current, dim understanding of the placer miners who were among the first to penetrate the Rocky Mountains. Recovered materials may reflect aspects of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, diet, health, and the consumption of substances of pleasure.

Miner's Cabin Ruin Site Management Recommendations

Management recommendations suggest several actions. First, the site should be protected. Motorized recreation has proven to be one of the most destructive forces among the area's historic resources. Currently, a road used by off-road vehicles passes through the site, and it should be closed to motorized use. The site should then be developed as a heritage resource with signage. Official recognition of the site will educate the public regarding the site's importance and encourage protection and stewardship. Topics for signage can focus on the Parkville gold rush and the lifestyles of its participants.

Second, the cabin ruin's buried deposits should be tested and/or excavated as part of an academic study. Colorado currently offers relatively few historic mining resources associated with the gold rushes of the 1860s, and studies of buried materials may contribute to the current understanding of the participants. Topics that are currently poorly understood of 1860s miners include socioeconomic status, education levels, gender, ethnicity, diet, health, and substance abuse.

Third, the northern building platform's buried deposits should be tested and/or excavated to determine their age. If the platform dates to the Parkville rush, then it should be included in a study similar to the cabin ruin.