

***Miner's Cabin Ruin***  
***Site 5ST1172***

Site 5ST1172 encompasses the collapsed ruins left from a log cabin most likely associated with the early 1860s Parkville gold rush. The site lies at 10,400 feet elevation on American Gulch's north rim, which features an abrupt cut-bank created by placer mining. American Gulch (5ST1170) was recorded as a placer mining landscape, but the workings postdate the cabin ruin. A steep slope ascends northwest and its area features a thick forest of young lodgepole pines. The site retains a high degree of archaeological integrity.

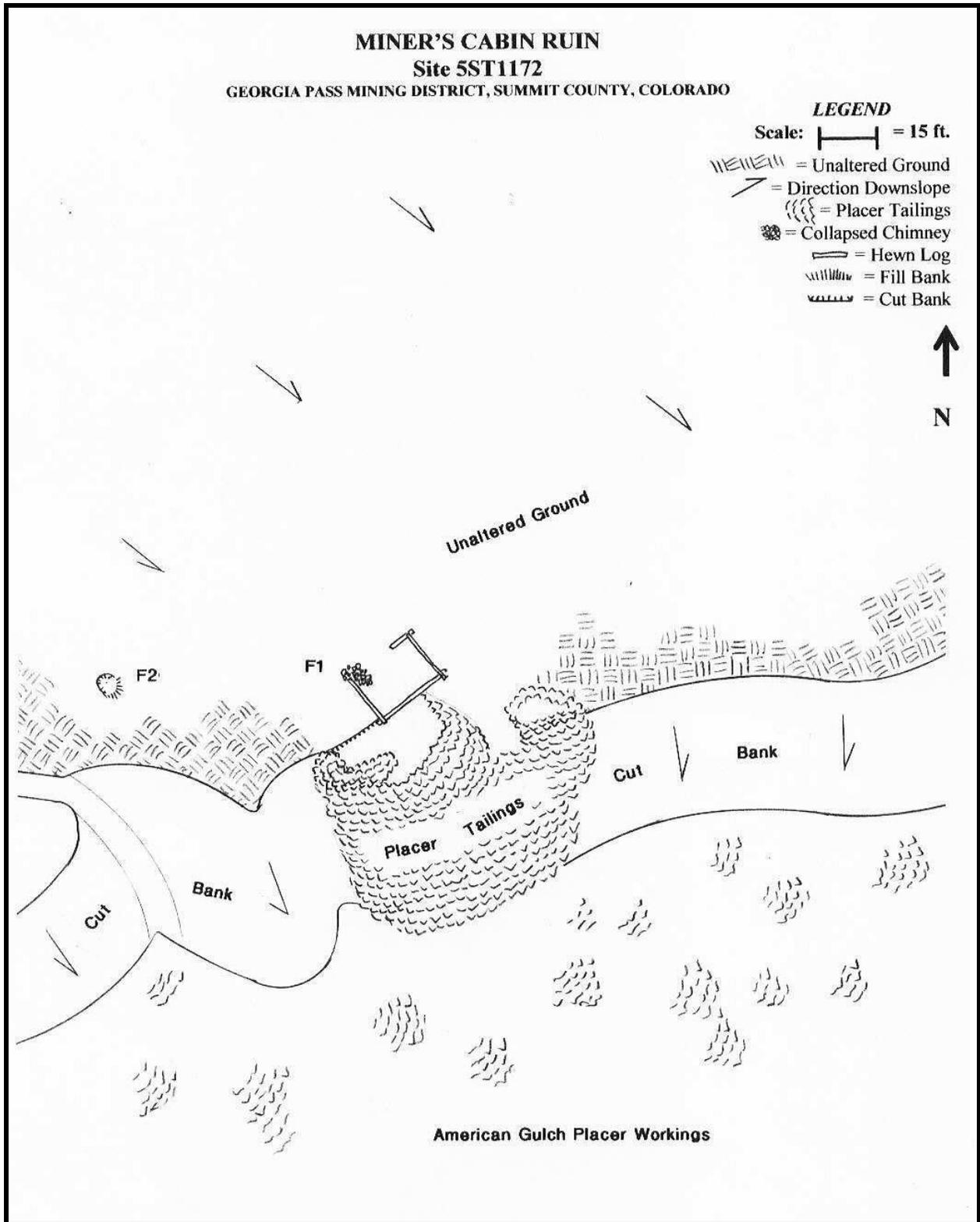


Figure 2.67: Plan view of Miner's Cabin Ruin site

### Miner's Cabin Ruin Site Description

The cabin stood on the north rim of American Gulch's placer workings, and the ground downslope and south was mined away probably after the cabin was abandoned. A small pile of placer tailings extends downslope, and miners graded its head, near the cabin, into a flat terrace.

The cabin, 16 by 21 feet in area, stood on a cut-and-fill platform (F1) just large enough for the structure. Workers constructed the walls with V-notch joints on a foundation of logs, and incorporated log floor joists into the foundation. A rock masonry fireplace and chimney, now collapsed, stood in the platform's west corner and outside the cabin's northwest wall. The masonry was constructed with mud mortar. The cabin currently stands in ruins, and several dead trees toppled across the remnants. The walls have been reduced to several courses of logs, the fireplace collapsed, and the platform's cut-bank slumped in. Most of the walls and the roof collapsed into the cabin which, combined with eroded earth, buried the interior. Given this, important buried deposits are possible in the interior. Buried deposits are, however, unlikely around the exterior due to the steep mountainside.

The cabin residents relied on a privy for their personal use, and the pit currently remains. The pit (F2) manifests as a depression 3 by 4 feet in area and 6 inches deep. A considerable pile of backdirt extends downslope, and duff coverage probably conceals artifacts, none of which are currently visible. Buried deposits are possible.

The site possesses a limited artifact assemblage probably because most items were destroyed by placer mining. A combination of structural debris and domestic refuse extends downslope from the ruin.

### Miner's Cabin Ruin Site Interpretation

It is almost certain that the cabin was built during the Parkville gold rush of the early 1860s. Dateable artifacts are limited to cut nails, heavy and irregular bottle glass, a crude applied bottle finish, 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. 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.

### Miner's Cabin Ruin Site Significance

The site features a cabin ruin that apparently dates to the Parkville rush of 1860, and it retains archaeological integrity relative to this timeframe. The site possesses ambiance relative to early placer mining and lies in an excellent setting of placer workings. The cabin ruin is likely to offer buried archaeological deposits that may contribute important information regarding Colorado's early mining history and its participants. 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.

In terms of Criterion A, the cabin ruin is associated with and 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 and privy pit are 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 Breckenridge area's historic resources. It already has been suggested that American Gulch (5ST1170) should be closed to motorized use because of its importance as a historic resource. The benefits of doing so would then extend to the cabin ruin site.

Second, the site should be developed as a heritage resource. The site can be linked to a recreational trail network that management recommendations suggest for American Gulch. Signage and pamphlets can explain to the public the history of the Parkville gold rush and the lifestyles of its participants. Doing so will also encourage the site's protection and stewardship.

Third, 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. Poorly understood topics regarding 1860s miners include socioeconomic status, education levels, gender, ethnicity, diet, health, and substance abuse.