

***Miner's Cabin Ruin***  
***Site 5ST1173***

Site 5ST1173 encompasses the collapsed ruins left from a log cabin most likely associated with the early 1860s Parkville gold rush. The site lies at 10,450 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.

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. Decayed elements of a log foundation indicate that the cabin was 15 by 18 feet in area, and workers excavated a shallow ditch upslope to divert snowmelt around the structure. The cabin had a rock masonry fireplace and chimney in the west corner, and it collapsed and now manifests as a jumble of rocks. A section of the base, however, remains visible in the platform's cut-bank. A handful of artifacts extend downslope. Most of the domestic refuse, however, was destroyed when the area south of the cabin was mined away in subsequent years. The platform's surface is blanketed with soil eroded from upslope and probably also generated by the cabin's decayed walls. Meaningful buried deposits are likely under the material, and shallow deposits are possible along the platform's downslope edge.

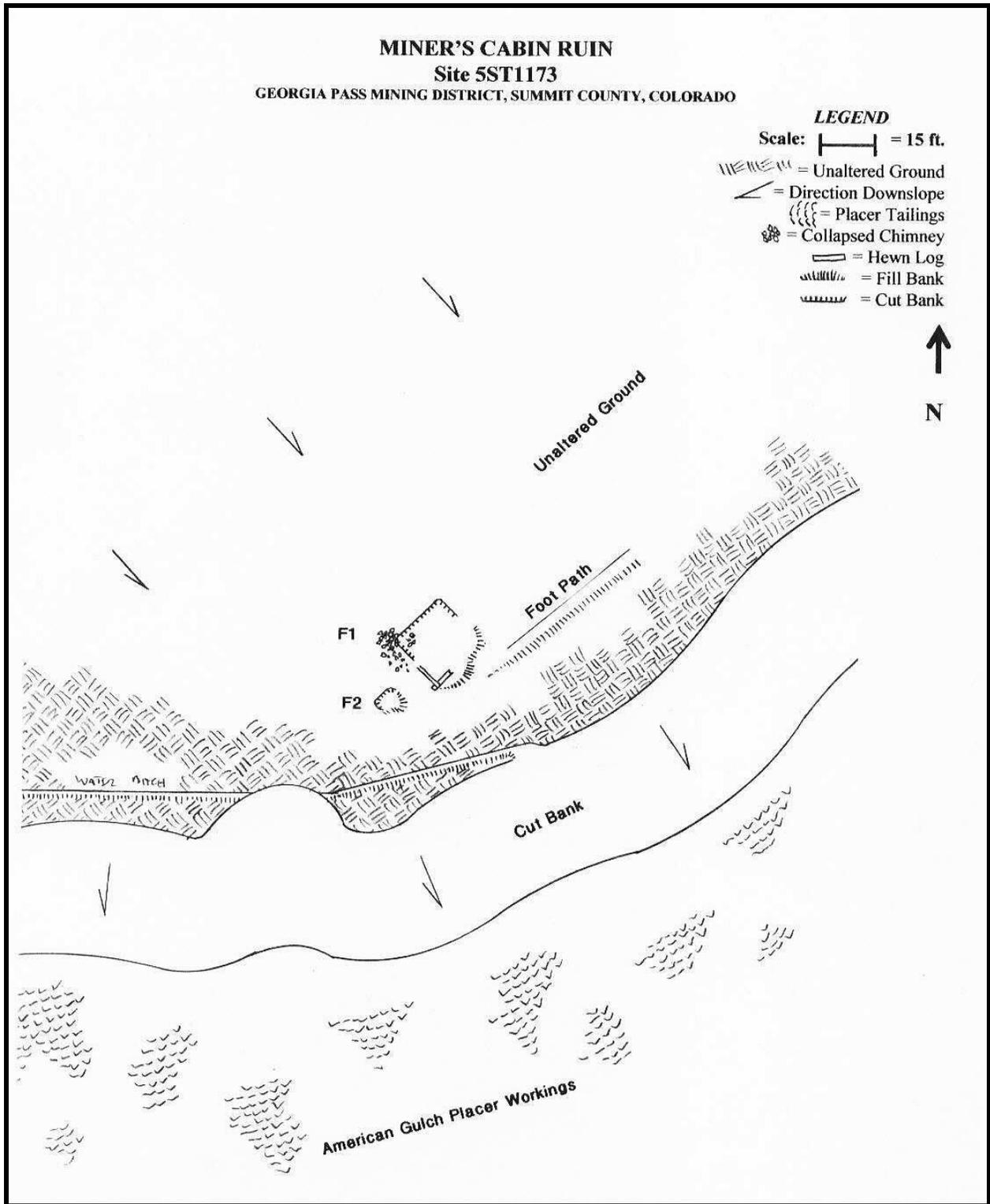


Figure 2.68: Plan view of Miner's Cabin Ruin site

The cabin residents relied on a privy for their personal use, and a possible pit currently remains. The pit (F2) manifests as a depression 3 feet in diameter and several inches deep. What may be 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, 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. Workers employed by the Fuller Placer Company or the Victoria Mining Company occupied the cabin during the 1870s or 1880s. This is suggested by a bottle finish made with a lipping tool and a cup constructed from a machine-soldered hole-in-cap can.

### 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 possible privy pit are likely to yield important information in the form of 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 has already 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.