NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Smith Mine Historic District

other name/site number:

2. Location

street & number: not for publication: n/a

city/town: Bearcreek vicinity: X

state: Montana code: MT county: Carbon code: 009 zip code: 59007

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination __ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets __ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant __ nationally X statewide __ locally.

Mark F. Baumler/SHPO 8/17/2009

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency or bureau

(__ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

In my opinion, the property __ meets __ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
✓ entered in the National Register
__ see continuation sheet
__ determined eligible for the National Register
__ see continuation sheet
__ determined not eligible for the National Register
__ see continuation sheet
__ removed from the National Register
__see continuation sheet
__ other (explain): _____

for Signature of the Keeper

Edson M. Beall

Date of Action

9.30.09

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: District

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

Number of Resources within Property	
Contributing	Noncontributing
27	___ buildings
___	1 sites
12	___ structures
___	___ objects
39	1 Total

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING./EXTRACTION:
Manufacturing Facility/Extractive Facility;
Coal Mining surface processes,
Coal Mining Support Facilities, dwelling

Current Functions:
None

7. Description

Architectural Classification:
OTHER/FUNCTIONAL UTILITARIAN

Materials:
foundation: STONE, CONCRETE
walls: STONE: Sandstone, STEEL, CONCRETE BLOCK, WOOD
roof: STONE, METAL: Steel, WOOD: Shingle, ASPHALT
other:

Narrative Description

Located in south-central Montana in an arid and steppe-like landscape at the eastern foot of the Beartooth Mountains, the Smith Mine lies between a narrow deep coulee to the south and exposed sandstone rims to the north. The mine site extends across a south facing slope that consists of several levels, both man-made and natural. The Smith Mine is situated between two historic coal mining communities: the town of Bearcreek, located approximately 1½ miles to the east and the community of Washoe to the immediate west. The Smith Mine is accessed by a two-track road that departs from the north side of Montana Highway 308.

The Smith Mine industrial complex consists of a historic district of utilitarian architecture. Most buildings are primarily wood frame construction covered with corrugated metal on both wall and roofs. Even the few steel frame buildings also are clad with corrugated metal. Usage of corrugated metal dates to approximately 1916. Two powder magazines are constructed of locally quarried sandstone. The power plant displays both sandstone walls and bricks likely acquired from the Bearcreek or other Montana brick yards.

All 39 buildings and structures within the Smith Mine Historic District are contributing to the historic district and date between 1906 and 1946. Most facilities are associated with the surface operations of mining and processing coal and include the power plant, tipple, coal processing plant, boxcar loader, two substations, two water tanks, miscellaneous sheds and outbuildings, powder magazines and an outhouse. A manager's residence and miner's dwelling are situated within the district. The historic district also contains numerous aggregate concrete foundation remnants in varying sizes scattered throughout the district. Three steel frame structures (possibly for electrical transformers) stand within the district. A small collapsed historic adit pierces the hillside above the buildings.

The Smith Mine Historic District does not include any underground workings. No physical evidence remains of the mine opening for Smith Mine No. 3 vein where the Smith Mine Disaster occurred in February 1943. The re-construction of Montana Secondary Highway 308 in the 1950s and 1990s obliterated all evidence of this mine. The Smith Mine Historic District does however encompass the large reclaimed area east of the mine complex. No modern intrusions disturb this mining landscape.

(see continuation sheet)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Areas of Significance:
COMMERCE
INDUSTRY
SOCIAL HISTORY/ETHNIC HERITAGE

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1906-1957

Significant Dates: 1906, 1916, 1943, 1945

Significant Person(s): n/a

Architect/Builder: MONTANA COAL & IRON COMPANY

Cultural Affiliation:

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Smith Mine is significant under Criterion A for its association with underground coal mining in Montana and specifically the development of coal mining in the Red Lodge and Bear Creek coal fields. The Smith mine was one of the largest coal mines in Carbon County, Montana and one which was in continuous production for over a half century. It is the best representative example of the surface operation of an underground coal mine remaining in Montana.

The Smith Mine is also significant under Criterion A for its association with a significant historical event. The Smith Mine Disaster in 1943 was a central event in the history of Red Lodge, Bearcreek and Carbon County. The Smith Mine was the site of the worst coal mine disaster in Montana's history when 74 miners were killed by a methane explosion and poison gas. This tragedy affected the mining population of Carbon County where the memory of the lost is still felt today. While the Smith Mine Disaster influenced important changes in safety precautions for Montana underground mines, it also marked the beginning of the end for underground coal mines in Montana.

Although coal was discovered in the Bear Creek coal field in the 1880s, the commercial development of coal mines did not begin in earnest until 1906 with the arrival of the Yellowstone Park Railroad. Established in the 1890s, the Montana Coal & Iron Company (MCI) owned and operated the Smith Mine, which was perhaps the best financed and managed mine in the Bear Creek field with a history of continuous expansion, relatively high profits and a stable clientele through much of its history. The history of the Smith Mine also spans over half a century, and reflects the boom times of the early 1900s, two major fires in 1916 and 1945, and two world wars as well as the depressed times of the 1920s, 1930s and post-World War II era.

The built environment of the Smith Mine represents the coal mining process from the coal delivery to the tipple, thence to the processing plant to loading onto railroad boxcars for shipment.[1] Most of the critical support buildings are still in place in varying stages of deterioration, including car repair and blacksmith shops, heating plants, electrical substations, power plant, powder magazines and warehouses. In addition, one miner's residence still exists within the district. The Smith Mine retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic appearance and character.

(see continuation sheet)

[1] Coal extracted from the Smith Mine No. 3 vein was transported by electrical-powered mine cars across the Keucking Creek trestle (destroyed by fire in 1945) to the tipple (Building 5). Tipplemen dumped the cars into the top of the structure, which acted as a storage bin for the coal. A load-out chute at the bottom of the tipple fed the coal onto a conveyor belt that carried the coal to the processing plant (Building 9). Once in the plant, boys too young to work in the mine plucked out rocks and other impurities from the coal at picking tables before the coal proceeded to the washing plant, where it would be cleaned. The coal then moved along conveyors to a series of shaker screens that separated the coal lumps into different sizes according to use.

The larger lumps of coal were best suited for industrial purposes and separated for use by the Northern Pacific Railroad, the Great Western Sugar Company, and the Anaconda Copper Mining Company among other customers. The progressively smaller sizes of lump coal were separated and designated for use to heat commercial and institutional buildings, while the smallest size (acorn) was used for home furnaces, stoves, etc. Once the coal had been separated, it was fed by conveyor belts to the boxcar bins (Building 4) outside the plant where it was eventually loaded onto Montana, Wyoming and Southern Railroad boxcars for transportation to its connection with the Northern Pacific Railroad at Bridger, Montana. From there, Smith Mine coal was sold in markets throughout Montana, western North Dakota, and the Pacific Northwest. The coal processing system was powered by electricity as were most of the operations at the Smith Mine.

9. Major Bibliographic References

(see continuation sheet)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:
_x_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: approximately 200 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	12	642404	5001936
B	12	641998	5002110
C	12	641954	5002106
D	12	642020	5002324
E	12	642066	5002320
F	12	642131	5002198
G	12	642404	5002233
H	12	642380	5002314
I	12	642579	5002322
J	12	642650	5001870
K	12	642359	5002014

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): N1/2SW, S1/2NW and W1/2NWSE of Section 6, T8S R21W

Verbal Boundary Description
The Smith Mine historic district begins at the gate at the southeast corner of the site and proceeds in a northwesterly direction along the Right-of-Way (ROW) fence to where the fenceline turns 90 degrees to the north. From here, the boundary moves away from the fenceline and crosses the coulee to intersect with a two-track road. The boundary then turns again to the west to include the Cameron House at the far southwest corner of the property. From the Cameron House, the boundary follows the contour of the hillside to the north until it reaches the powder magazine located at the head of the coulee. From the magazine the boundary crosses the coulee eastward following the contour of the sandstone outcropping. The boundary then follows the edge of the sandstone rims in a generally easterly, then northeasterly direction until it reaches a point above the power plant. From here, the boundary follows the irregular outline of the reclaimed area to the east, then south, then west on the north side of the coulee to meet the two-track road. From here the boundary continues southeast to the gate and the place of its beginning.

Boundary Justification
The historic district boundary is drawn to encompass all of the historic buildings and structures historically associated with the Smith Mine, as well as the reclaimed waste dump area.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jon Axline and Joan L. Brownell, on behalf of
organization: Carbon County date: April 2009
street & number: 224 N. Broadway telephone: (406) 446-3667
city or town: Red Lodge state: MT zip code: 59068

Property Owner

name/title: Sunlight Ranch Company Attn: Ken Forster
street & number: P.O. Box 308251 telephone:
city or town: Salt Lake City state: Utah zip code: 84130

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Description of Resources (the numbers in parentheses after the resource's name corresponds to the numbers on the site map)

Manager's Residence (1); constructed circa 1940, one contributing building
This one-story wood frame L-shaped gabled roof building is located in the southeast corner of the site. This residence straddles the coulee and sits south of the two-track road that accesses the site. The building rests on a high concrete foundation and measures 52' x 16' with an intersecting gable measuring 24' x 6.' It is believed this building was the manager's residence and office.

All gable roofs are covered with both deteriorating scalloped asphalt shingles and rolled roofing. The main east/west gable has a metal ridgecap with end finials. Roof details include extended exposed rafters and several protruding stove pipes. The roof extends over all gable ends and exhibits curved brace supports accented with pyramidal ends.

All exterior walls are clad with narrow lap siding that extends into the gable ends. Metal clips finish all corners. An exterior baseboard with a protruding lip (water table) separates the concrete foundation from the wall.

The west gable end holds an entry with a five panel solid door (missing several panels) and a one-over-one double-hung window immediately adjacent to the door. A platform, porch or stairway that would have fronted the door and allowed egress/ingress to the building is missing. The east end wall holds the primary entrance although the door itself is missing. To the south (left) of the door is a one-over-one double-hung window presently boarded over with plywood. There is a framed square opening in the apex of the gable end (presumably for a vent).

The north wall contains four window openings across its length, including paired one-over-one double-hung windows, two one-over-one double-hungs that are boarded shut, and one opening missing its window unit. The south wall has paired one-over-one double-hung windows missing all glass panes, and one boarded shut window.

The south intersecting gable has an entrance on the south end of the east wall. This entry holds a wood door with two upper panels and glass center. The east wall also contains wide paired one-over-one double-hung windows. The opposite wall (west) is symmetrical with paired one-over-one double-hung windows. The gable end exhibits a centered window opening boarded shut and a wood louvered vent centered in its apex. The gable end also displays the same shaped braces as the main gable.

The building's interior consists of finished rooms: two rooms in the main gable and one in the intersecting gable. All interior windows exhibit molding and are painted black. Interior details include wood flooring, fiberboard wall panels and 6" x 6" ceiling tiles laid in a diagonal pattern. A stairway with a half landing leads to the partial basement. Two framed openings pierce the foundation walls to provide light for the stairway: a sliding window on the south wall and a hinged opening on the west wall. The basement contains an iron door that opens into a vault where an old safe still sits. A toilet sits underneath the stairway.

Car Repair Shop (2): constructed 1913, one contributing building
The car repair shop, built in 1913, originally functioned as a carpenter shop until 1924 when the company designated it for use as a warehouse. In 1930, it became the car repair shop. Mine cars damaged during the transport of coal were repaired in this building.

The farthest building to the east at the Smith Mine, the car repair shop measures 38' x 115' and has no discernable foundation. The wood frame rectangular plan building is covered by a gable roof. The roof is deteriorated with sections of the original corrugated metal missing revealing the wood decking underneath. The rafter ends are boxed in.

The walls are clad in corrugated metal. The north and south elevations each have ten windows that have been boarded over. The windows were originally four-light fixed units. Bay entries, both with diagonal tongue-in-groove doors, are off-set near the centers of the north and south walls. Horizontal and standard window openings are situated on the east portion of the north wall.

A bay entry is central to the west façade of the building. It had a door (now missing) mounted on exterior wood tracks. A small man-entry is located on the south façade. It has a vertical tongue-in-groove door that is partially detached from the hinges. A bay entry is central to the east façade. A window opening is located to the south of the bay and two window openings are located to the north of the bay; all are boarded over.

The interior of the building has a dirt floor and the ceiling joists and rafters are exposed as is the wood framing for the walls. A small office is located in the northeast corner of the interior and there are storage bins at the southeast corner and adjacent to the office. A raised platform is located near the northeast corner of the building.

Shed (3): constructed 1910-1920, one contributing building
This building reportedly stored feed when horses were still used in the mines. It appears that it was later used for storage since the floor is covered with scattered invoice sheets and payroll stubs dating (from cursory observations) from 1924 to 1937.

Located west of the car repair shop (Building 2), this two-story gable roofed building is built into a south facing slope and has no visible foundation. It is presently leaning heavily to the north and a portion of its gable roof is collapsing inward. The gable roof runs east/west, has slightly extended enclosed eaves and is covered with corrugated metal. The building measures 30' x 80' and is constructed of 2" x 6" boards. All walls are clad with corrugated metal. The south wall holds two entries: a wide door opening covered with corrugated metal and a five panel wood door missing its lower panels.

The interior of the building displays a wood floor in poor condition. The west one-third of the building has an upper level supported by a centered vertical post. The upper level was not accessible but displays shelving on three walls and a suspended single bulb light centered over the space. The interior metal walls also exhibit some stencil signage, reading "MONT COAL & IRON CO/BEAR CREEK MONT" and "Smoke & Sootless Coal Co/Bear Creek, Mont."

Box Car Loaders (4): unknown construction date, one contributing building
Boxcar loaders have been part of the Smith Mine since the mine first opened after the arrival of the railroad in 1906. The two boxcar loaders still extant are positioned approximately 31' south of the coal processing plant (Building 9). Although the railroad grade is no longer discernible, these boxcar loaders, which originally straddled the line, indicate the original rail alignment.

A double conveyor belt extends from an opening in the south wall of the coal processing plant. The dual conveyor belts allowed for simultaneous loading of railcars. The paired conveyors exhibit only their flared iron supporting idlers and are missing their belts. The conveyor is supported on vertical steel I-beams resting on concrete pyramidal piers.

The conveyor enters a wood frame shed-type building. This building encloses the two steel plated hoppers that dump the coal into the railcars. Corrugated metal covers the walls and roof of the building. The south end wall is open and a single opening pierces the east wall. The hopper orifice is supported by horizontal wood beams and the framework of the building is supported with vertical steel I-beams resting on aggregate concrete piers.

Tipple (5): constructed 1942, one contributing building
Previous to the 1945 fire, the tipple was a part of a complex of buildings that processed coal for different market usage. An early 1940s historic photograph shows the tipple connected to this larger complex via a rail track supported by a trestle emerging from the top level of the tipple. Today, only the tipple stands with rail tracks still visible in its south opening.

The tipple is situated near northeastern portion of the mine complex and is built into a side hill. The tipple consists of three sections vertically arranged in levels: the head house, the hopper and the transfer mechanism to the conveyor system. The tipple's skeleton frame of steel supports is constructed of I-beams and channel sections. The south side exhibits four steel columns supporting the top-

most level of the building. The tipple displays a height at the south face approximating a four-story building; it approximates the height of a two story building at the north face at the top of the side hill.

The tipple's overall shape is rectangular and is topped with a wood frame gable roofed head house. This head house overhangs the hopper structure on three sides. Corrugated metal covers the walls and the roof (sections missing). It has two framed window openings on the east and west side walls. The north end is open to allow passage of rail cars into the rotary dump. The south end is also open where it previously connected to the more extensive tipple complex.

Originally approached from the north, the rail cars crossed a small wood trestle-like structure to reach the head house where the single car rotary dump is located. The rotary dump turned the coal car upside down and emptied the coal into a receiving hopper. From the bottom of the tipple, the coal was then fed onto a conveyor that carried the coal to the coal processing plant (Building 9). Below the upper level at the north end, metal stairs approach a small compartment where the engine and gear box for the rotary dump sits.

The receiving hopper sits below the rotary dump and occupies the second level of the tipple. It is a simple steel plate structure which works similarly to a funnel; it is wide at the top and narrows at an approximate 45 degree angle to a smaller outlet concentrating the coal for movement to the processing plant. A wood bridge approaches the tipple from the east terminating at an open hopper that presumably allowed coal to be dumped into the tipple from trucks. This bridge is supported by vertical timbers and horizontal wood beams projecting off the tipple's steel frame. This feature is not present in the early 1940s historic photograph of the tipple suggesting it is a later accommodation made to receive coal transferred by non-rail transportation from mine mouth to processing.

The lower south end of the tipple has a small shed roofed compartment contained within the steel framing. This compartment has corrugated metal for its walls and roof. The compartment contains a pulley system of unknown function that appears to have transferred coal from the hopper to the conveyor to the processing plant.

Conveyor (6): constructed circa 1930; one contributing structure
An early 1940s historic photograph shows a covered conveyor structure extending from the tipple (Building 5) to the coal processing plant (Building 9). The 1945 fire apparently destroyed the enclosure and most of the coal processing plant but the conveyor survived.

This elevated conveyor extends approximately 188' from the bottom of the tipple (Building 5) to the top of the coal processing plant (Building 9). The conveyor passes over the roof of a concrete block building (Building 8). The conveyor framework is a combination of steel channel and angle sections. Vertical wood columns and cross braces support the conveyor as it rises from ground level. Sets of three iron pulleys or rollers (called idlers) along the length of the conveyor originally supported the belt. The outside pulleys flare upward forming a trough. The pulleys are secured to a cross angle bar by four metal shafts.

A long fragment of the conveyor belt is hanging from the structure near its highest point. The motor that possibly ran the conveyor is located where the conveyor enters the processing plant.

Platform (7): unknown construction date, one contributing structure
This platform is situated immediately adjacent to and north of the conveyor as it begins its ascent from the tipple (Building 5) to the coal processing plant (Building 9). The platform consists of two parts: an L-shaped steel frame and concrete structure and a block-shaped concrete mass located within the angle of the L. The steel frame stands approximately 6' high and the top of the platform is approached by metal stairs with a pipe railing. The steel structure's surface is composed of aggregate concrete between horizontal I-beams and is approximately 21' east/west by 15' north/south with widths approximately 3' and 9' respectively. Within the angle of the L-shaped steel structure stands a nearly 12' square aggregate concrete block which abuts the platform I-beams. Metal bolts protrude vertically from the perimeter of the concrete block. The function of the platform is unknown but is possibly associated with the operation of the conveyor.

Concrete Block Building (8): constructed 1946, one contributing building
This concrete block building is presumably the "washery" built in 1946 that replaced the older original washery destroyed in a October 1945 fire. The plant measures 33' x 43' and the conveyor passes over the top of the building. The building is covered by a gable roof sheathed in corrugated metal. The roof has a gable roofed dormer that projects off its west roof slope. The building has a concrete foundation and is built into the south facing hillside. The lower zone walls are comprised of concrete blocks with a large section of the north wall removed (presumably to salvage the equipment inside). The upper zone is wood frame and sheathed in corrugated metal.

An entry is located on the west of the south wall of the structure. A bay entry is located on the south of the east wall and a paired window opening to the south of the bay. An entry is centrally located on the south façade of the building and is flanked by paired window openings. A bay opening is on the south façade of the basement. There are nine concrete pier footings arranged in a circular pattern that once supported heavy machinery inside the building.

Coal Processing Plant (9): constructed 1928, one contributing building
The coal processing plant was likely built in 1928 and remodeled in 1933. The building was badly damaged in a fire in 1945 and rebuilt to its present configuration that year. The shaker screens and other equipment involved in the coal separation process are still located in this building. Coal slack was also removed from the coal at the plant and deposited in piles that were once located to the east/northeast of the plant (they were reclaimed in 1990). The building is oriented east and west and is the center of the mine's above-ground operations.

The coal processing plant has a poured concrete foundation and the walls of the primary structure are comprised of concrete blocks. The building has a combination shed and flat roof sealed in asphalt. There are window openings on the north and south walls. A small vertical opening is located between the window openings on the north wall and an entry is situated on the west. A small wood frame structure is located on the northeast corner of the roof. It has corrugated metal siding and metal sheathing over the shed roof. There is a metal conveyor belt frame projecting from this small structure to the northwest. The structure opens to the east toward the tipple. The roof between the structure and the tipple at the northeast corner has a duckboard floor and wood railings. A badly deteriorated duckboard cat walk is located adjacent to the conveyor on the south. The structure is associated with a tipple on the east end of the structure. The east end of the building has window openings on the east and north walls. The window frames indicate they once had single fixed lights flanked by three fixed lights on either side. An entry pierces the foundation on the east of the north wall. It has a wood paneled door.

A flat roof addition attached to the west end of the building also functioned as a tipple. Vehicles backed into the structure and coal was unloaded from the tipple into the vehicle. The addition has steel walls supported by steel I-beams resting on a concrete foundation. The bay entry opens to the west. The tipple is comprised of sheet metal with a steel I-beam frame. Some of the I-beams are in poor condition. The addition rests on a concrete pad, while the I-beams are supported by concrete piers. There is an opening on the upper west corner of the north wall. A duckboard platform projects from the opening. There is no window or other openings on the south wall of the addition. A small corrugated metal addition is attached to the west wall. It has a bay entry with two vertical wood doors with vertical braces.

A loader is attached to the east end of the building. It is vertically oriented with a shed roofed man-house located at the top. The main frame is comprised of vertical steel I-beams manufactured by Bethlehem Steel at an undetermined time. The bases of the I-beams rest on concrete piers and there is a concrete foundation underneath the load-out chute of the frame. The frame sheathing is comprised of sheet steel supported by steel railcar tracks. The tracks are not industrial size indicating they may have been salvaged mine tracks. The tracks were manufactured by Illinois Steel Company South Works, a company based in Chicago, and stamped "7201." The rail tracks are welded to the vertical supports.

The frame empties onto a steel frame conveyor system that extends to the southeast. The conveyor is comprised of steel channel sections and angle sections with rollers; the southeast end of the conveyor rests on a concrete pier foundation. The conveyor extends out over a bluff and possibly emptied onto a railroad siding. The man-house is comprised of a wood frame sheathed in corrugated metal with a window opening on the south wall and an entry centrally located on the rear (west) façade. The entry leads onto the roof of the main processing plant. The roof has exposed rafters and swallows have built nests under the eaves. The man-house has a wood floor. The east wall of the tipple has an opening to allow entry of the conveyor belts from the main tipple (Building 5) to the east.

A partially collapsed vertical bucket chain conveyor system is located near the northeast corner of the structure. The structure is wood frame and rests on a concrete foundation. The conveyor is connected to the conveyor systems on the roof of the main building. The buckets either collect or empty from or into a concrete-lined pit adjacent to the structure on the north.

Scale House (10): constructed 1930, one contributing building
The scale house is located south of the west section of the coal processing plant (Building 9) and box car loaders (Building 4). The building was constructed in 1930 to house the scales that had been on-site since sometime between 1906 and 1909. The scales were replaced in 1935 and placed on a new foundation in 1949. The scale house is oriented north and south and faces north toward the boxcar loaders (Building 4). The building rests on steel I-beams with I-beam stringers that are supported by concrete piers. The wood frame building has a shed roof. The roof and walls are clad in corrugated metal and the floor has wood decking. There is a large bay on the façade that reveals the steel weighing machinery inside the building. On the south wall are two window openings and a hole cut into the wall near the floor to accommodate the machinery inside the building. There is also an entry on the south of the east wall of the building.

Steel Frame Structure (11): unknown construction date, one contributing structure
This steel frame structure stands northwest of the north end of the tipple (Building 5). It measures 8' x 6' at its concrete base and is formed of steel I-beams and channel section. One informant indicated it possibly served in the operations for the dumping of mine cars.

Power Plant (12): constructed 1914, one contributing building
Situated northeast of the mine complex are the remains of the Power Plant originally built in 1914. Power plants generally were erected at a distance from the main operation for safety. MCI built this power plant in 1914 after the Montana Power Company failed to honor an agreement to supply power to the Smith Mine. A 1916 historic photograph of the power plant shows a large gable roofed building with two very tall stacks located northeast of the building complex. The power plant burned in 1926 but was rebuilt and expanded. The 1927 Sanborn map shows a nearly square building covered with corrugated metal on its walls and roof. The wall construction incorporates wood framing, locally quarried sandstone and local and regionally made brick. It is unknown when the MCI stopped using this power plant, but by 1942, Montana Power Company provided electric power to the Smith Mine.

It appears that the power plant was originally divided into two sections with the boiler house to the east. Two of three original water-tube boilers are still in place although components from each are missing. They were built on-site with all the components brought in. The steel plate boilers stand in a row along the east section of the power plant. The boilers framework is supported by I-beams. The exterior brickwork displays common bond brick with cement mortar. Interior walls exhibit fire brick on all surfaces that were exposed to heat. The interior boiler wall is doubled walled. Along the base of the interior wall is a row of air spaces with brick headers, possibly to prevent cracking.

On the east end of the boilers are the stoker ports that open into the fire box. A fairly complete set of boiler water tubes still exist in one boiler, while tubes have been removed elsewhere. On the side walls of the boilers are cast-iron circular access ports used to view the flames. Lower on one brick wall are three apparent ash pit openings.

It is unclear how the water was introduced to the boilers or how the coal was loaded into the ports. The tubes would be filled with water and the boilers heated to temperature to create steam. The steam would pass through the steam headers consisting of large horizontal steel drums and curved piping still intact at the top of the boiler. The steam headers were then regulated by gate valves to different zones. Other elements associated with the boilers include valves to release pressure, a vertical baffle or infuser, and miscellaneous gauges. A McClure's Armand furnace blower remnant lies immediately south of the boilers.

The west portion of the power plant has a thick concrete floor with a crawlspace. It appears that pipes from the boilers passed beneath the floor. Partially collapsing sandstone walls with irregular coursing and cement mortar stand at the west, north and east sides of this portion of the plant. All walls exhibit openings with concrete lintels. The floor is covered with miscellaneous debris including bricks, machine parts and scrap metal. It is presumed that this section of the power plant contained an engine room.

Shed (13): unknown construction date, one contributing building
This small, approximately 6' square wood frame building stands immediately above the power plant on the side slope. Corrugated metal covers its gable roof and most of the side walls. It has an unknown function.

Shed (14): unknown construction date, one contributing building
This small wood frame shed measures approximately 10' x 8' and sits east of the blacksmith and repair shop (Building 15). The shed reportedly housed the air compressor for the shop. It is not known when it was built. It is oriented east and west and faces south. The entry is central to the south façade. The gable roof has exposed rafters and is badly deteriorated with much of the wood decking exposed. The walls are sheathed in corrugated metal.

Blacksmith and repair shop (15): constructed 1912, one contributing building
The blacksmith and repair shop and geology assay lab was constructed in 1912 and expanded in 1928. The boiler building attached to the east end of the building was built in 1932. The wood frame building rests on a concrete pad foundation and measures 49' x 154.' The blacksmith shop has a rectangular plan covered by a gable roof. Both the roof and the walls are clad in corrugated metal. Loft entries are located on both east and west gable-ends. A gable-roofed cupola is centrally located on the roof of the building straddling the ridge. The cupola has wood louvers on all sides.

Windows throughout the main building are four-light casements except where noted; the glass has been broken out of all the windows. Windows on the south side of the building are in single, paired and tripled openings. A gable-roof vestibule that probably functioned as an office is centrally located on the south elevation of the building. It rests on a concrete pad foundation and has a window opening on the south side. The vestibule gable roof and walls are clad in corrugated metal and the vestibule is only accessible from the interior of the main building.

A bay entry with double doors is located on the west of the south side. A bay entry is also centrally located on the west end of the shop building. It has double wood doors mounted on exterior tracks. The entry is flanked by the remains of single one-over-one double-hung windows. A shed roof addition runs the length of the building on the north and faces west. It housed the electrical shop in 1927. The wood-frame addition is clad in corrugated metal and has a corrugated metal roof. There are paired window openings on the west end of the addition while the north wall holds single, paired and tripled four-over-four and six-over-six double-hung windows. Currently the windows are all in a state of disrepair. An entry containing a wood paneled door is located in the north wall.

A gabled roof addition is off-set to the north on the east end of the building. The walls are clad in corrugated metal, while the badly deteriorated roof consists primarily of exposed wood decking and rafters. This addition still houses three boilers and furnaces installed in 1932 and utilized for the blacksmith and repair processes. The largest boiler reads "ERIE CITY IRON WORKS/ERIE PA/40 E" on its north end and displays Morrison boiler tubes. The steel smokestacks associated with the boilers still pierce the roof and are in various stages of collapse. A pressure release pipe is extended to the southeast off the southeast corner of the building.

Garage (16): circa 1916, one contributing building
This garage is located adjacent to the blacksmith and repair shop (Building 15). The garage is a wood frame rectangular building that measures 24' x 14'. It is oriented east and west and faces west. The bay entry is central to the façade with one of the two wood doors still hanging from its hinges. A gable roof with exposed rafters and walls sheathed in corrugated metal covers the building. Much of the corrugated metal on the roof is missing revealing the wood decking underneath. There is no discernable foundation.

Shed (17): unknown construction date, one contributing building
This outbuilding is located just north of the west end of the blacksmith and repair shop (Building 15). It is oriented east and west and faces west. The wood frame building is partially collapsed, but it is still possible to determine that it had a gable roof that was covered by corrugated metal. The original function and construction date of this building are not known.

Pumphouse (18): constructed pre-1943, one contributing structure
A 1943 historic photograph shows a concrete building in the approximate location of this pump house. This nearly square, 9'x 8', pump house is partially buried and situated approximately 41' from the southwest corner of the blacksmith and repair shop (Building 15). Only the flat roof and 4' of the south wall is visible. It is an aggregate concrete structure with 10" thick walls. The south wall is partially exposed and has a wood framed opening. The interior reveals pipes extending from a pump that sits on a concrete slab.

Substation (19): constructed pre-1943, one contributing building
This one-story, rectangular, 16' x 12', wood frame building sits along the coulee edge south of the blacksmith and repair shop (Building 15). This building is clearly visible in a 1943 historic photograph. The gable roof is covered with corrugated metal and has extended exposed rafters. A long ventilation cupola straddles the center of the roof ridge. The cupola has louvered wood vents on all four sides with corrugated metal below the vents. The cupola has extended exposed rafters and vertical boards in the gable ends. High-voltage line conduits are secured at the roof ridge.

Two tall four-over-four double-hung windows (with missing panes) are symmetrical on both the east and west walls. The facade (north end wall) holds a wide opening that originally held vertical lap wood double doors (the west door is presently laying on the ground outside the opening). The interior has a concrete floor with a separate concrete pad centered in the floor. The ceiling is open into the cupola. Corrugated metal also covers the interior walls.

Lying outside this building is a motor with a name plate reading "Westinghouse Electric & MFG Co. Pittsburgh/Induction Motor/225 H.P. 400 volts 60 cycles 9 ph Serial No. 692898."

Parts and Supply Building (20): constructed 1914, one contributing building
The Parts and Supply building is oriented east and west and faces south. This building is possibly Carpenter Shop #2 constructed in 1914 later becoming a supply building. The interior is filled with shelving consisting of bins and compartments (many still labeled) utilized to store parts and supplies. Of wood frame construction, it has a rectangular plan measuring 36' x 62' and is covered by a gable roof with loft openings in the gable ends. The corrugated metal and decking that once comprised the roof is mostly gone exposing the roof joists and rafters. The building has exposed rafters on the eaves. The walls are clad in corrugated metal. The building rests on a concrete pier foundation.

Windows throughout are one-over-one double-hung though all have been boarded over. A bay entry that once held a double door is centrally located on the south façade. The entry is flanked by two window openings on each side. There are no window openings on the rear (north) façade of the building. A window opening is centrally located in the south of the west wall. A gabled roof addition is attached to the east wall of the building. The addition rests on a concrete foundation and the roof and walls are clad in corrugated metal. An entry with a modern hollow-core door is located on the right of the south façade of the addition. A horizontal window opening is located left of the entry. Paired one-over-one double hung windows are centrally located on the east wall of the addition; the left (south) unit is partially boarded-over. There are no window openings on the rear (north) façade of the addition.

Powder Magazine (21): constructed circa 1906-1909; 1937; one contributing building
Located north of the Parts and Supply Building (Building 20), this building consists of two powder magazines that share a common sandstone wall. Both have dirt floors. The approximate east half is one of the earliest buildings remaining at the mine site. This sandstone magazine once housed detonators for the black powder used in the mine. This powder magazine is built low into the hillside and measures approximately 10' x 10.' Sandstone walls have cement mortar and the roof has deteriorated but appears to have been flat covered with aggregate concrete. The south wall holds a central entry with a steel door.

The western portion of the building is concrete and measures approximately 15' x 10.' It is presumably Powder Magazine #3 that was built in 1937 to store detonator caps. Built partially into the hillside, the walls are approximately 5' in height at the façade and taper to the north where they are about 1.5' in height at the point the wall enters the hillside. The entry is central to the south façade although the door is missing. The concrete magazine is covered by a concrete slab that is sealed with tar and a vent pipe pierces the roof in the northwest corner. A structure comprised of steel angle sections projects off the south wall. The angle sections are riveted together with triangular gusset plates. The structure's roof is composed of evenly spaced 2" x 4." The structure's function is unknown.

Garage (22): unknown construction date, one contributing building
This one-story, rectangular, gable roof wood frame garage is situated west of the parts and supply building (Building 20) and has no visible foundation. Corrugated metal covers all walls and the roof. A large framed opening fills the south end wall with its collapsed wood board door lying in the interior of the building. The interior has wood flooring of varying sizes, a low ceiling of 1" x 6" boards and walls covered partially with horizontal redwood boards. Stenciling on one interior wall reads "Bear Creek Coal."

Substation (23): constructed in 1942, one contributing building
In 1942, the mine inspector reported that "a new substation is being installed north of the shop building. The wooden frame and sheathed building is covered with composition roofing paper, and the floor is constructed of concrete. The 150-kw set will generate power at 250 volts direct current; it is equipped with a 150-h.p. 440-volt motor."

This one-story, rectangular wood frame building is built into a side hill above the blacksmith and repair shop (Building 15). The building has a gable roof that extends over the walls with exposed rafters and only decking remaining for roof covering. Tarpaper remnants cover the walls. The east wall contains a large framed slightly off-center opening missing its door and a wood louvered vent centered in the east gable end. The south wall holds one centered framed window opening and the west wall also has a single framed opening, both missing window units. The north wall has no openings.

The interior exhibits deteriorating lath and plaster walls. The north wall supports shelving built of rebar. An electrical panel stands within this building but no make or model information was observed. The building has a concrete floor that extends beyond the wall to the east (a possible addition to this building).

Outhouse (24): unknown construction date, one contributing building
This two-seater wood frame outhouse is located on a side hill north of the blacksmith and repair shop (Building 15). The outhouse sits on wood beams, indicating it was moved to this location, presumably from somewhere else within the complex. Corrugated metal covers the gable roof and all walls. The roof has exposed rafters and a metal ridgecap. The entrance is centered on the south wall but is missing its door. The interior of the outhouse has redwood walls and a wood floor.

Adit (25): constructed circa 1906; one contributing structure
A 1906 historic photograph shows an adit opening at this same approximate location in the hillside above (north) the mine complex. A 1943 historic photograph shows the same adit but with a gable roofed entry. Today, this collapsed adit reveals dry-laid sandstone placed at the corners and side walls, with some worked stones visible. Logs, wood boards and poles are incorporated into the side

walls. The framing still retains a partial gable roof of pole rafters covered with large boards. Behind the adit is a large collapsed slump area.

Storage Building (26), unknown construction date, one contributing building
This rectangular concrete block storage building measuring 20' x 18' is situated northwest of the main complex and near the mouth of a dry coulee. Built into a south facing slope, this gable roofed building has a concrete foundation and floor. The gable roof has exposed decking, eaves with extended open rafters and gable ends partially covered with tarpaper remnants. Openings are found on all but the north wall. A wide framed opening is centered on the east wall minus its door. The west wall has a slightly off-center framed opening and the south wall is symmetrical with two framed openings. No windows are evident. The interior is an open room.

Stable (27): constructed circa 1917-1922, one contributing building
This long rectangular one-story building measures approximately 16' x 41'. It is located in the southwest portion of the district and may have been used as a stable. Vertical 4" x 12" timbers frame the walls and are bolted to substantial rafters. Corrugated metal covers the building on three sides while the south wall is open to its framing. Corrugated metal also clad the shed roof. The building is built into the side hill with the north wall partially below ground level. The north wall contains a small rectangular opening in the northwest corner that appears to have been used to dump coal into a small coal bin, and a framed opening lacking its door. Across the top of the east half of the north wall are three vent openings.

The interior of the stable has a dirt floor. Scattered bricks and a caste iron stove top were observed, indicating a stove stood inside the building. A porcelain switch by the entry indicates the building had electricity.

Shed (28): constructed 1911, one contributing building
This shed is a 13' x 23' outbuilding that was used as a sand house (sand provided traction for underground tracks) and constructed in 1911. It is oriented east and west and opens to the east. The wood-frame, rectangular plan building is covered by a gable roof and rests on a concrete foundation. The roof is clad in rolled asphalt and is missing several sections, exposing the wood deck underneath. The eaves have exposed rafters. The walls are clad in corrugated metal. The entry on the east is offset to the north and there is also an entry on the west of the south wall. There are no entries or windows on the rear façade or north wall.

Cameron House (29): constructed circa 1906-1909, one contributing building
The Cameron House is the farthest building to the west at the Smith Mine. The Cameron House was built by the Montana Coal & Iron Company between 1906 and 1909 and was rented to employees of the mine. During the days immediately after the 1943 explosion in the mine, the house was the base for relatives waiting for news of the trapped miners and also where rescuers took time to rest before resuming their mission in the mine. The house is named for William and Mary Cameron. William worked for the Smith Mine. The house was abandoned in 1953 when the mine ceased operations.

The residence consists of a core section and an addition on the north. It faces east toward the mine buildings. The property is badly deteriorated with the roof partially collapsed. The No-Style core residence has a gable roof that is badly deteriorated with the remains of wood shingles on the south side of the gable and rolled asphalt on the north side of the gable. Corniced fascia is located under the eaves of the east and west gable ends as are loft openings. The front and rear façade of the core section is clad in asphalt siding manufactured to mimic random ashlar pattern brick. It covers the original novelty siding.

An open-air side porch is attached to the south elevation. It has a hip roof supported by square and turned posts and exposed rafters. It is partially enclosed by a low wall that is clad in asphalt siding. The entry to the porch is central to the elevation and corresponds with an entry into the residence. The walls of the residence underneath the porch roof display the original novelty siding. Beaded tongue-in-groove siding and a boarded over window opening are located on the west wall of the porch.

The rear façade of the core has a single window opening central to the façade and exhibits heavy log surrounds. The walls are clad in the same siding that covers the front façade and south elevation. Decorative fascia is located under the eaves on the gable-end.

An open-air porch is attached to the façade of the core and the adjacent addition. It has a low-pitched gable roof that is badly deteriorated with much of the underlying decking exposed to the elements. The roof is supported by square posts and is partially enclosed by a low wall clad in asphalt siding. The porch shelters a window opening that is central to the core façade. Access to the porch is off-set to the north of the façade.

A large shed roof addition is attached to the north side of the residence and is partially built into the hillside on the north. Its roof is badly deteriorated with much of the decking collapsed into the interior of the addition. A wood paneled door entry on the addition faces south and opens onto the façade porch. The walls of the addition on the east and west facades are clad in asphalt siding. The addition has been extended on the northeast corner of the structure. It has an entry that opens to the east and holds a wood paneled door that once included a now-missing single fixed light. There are three window openings on the façade of the addition; all are boarded-over.

Accessed from the addition, a root cellar is dug into the hillside on the north. The cellar has concrete walls and a concrete roof. The roof has been exposed and is badly deteriorated.

Landscaping for the house and associated outbuildings includes a tractor tire that has been placed horizontally on the ground and once served as a planter. Dry-laid sandstone retaining walls are also located along the hillside above the house to the north.

Shed (30), unknown construction date, one contributing building
This collapsed shed is located approximately 15' to the east of the Cameron House and built up against the hillside to the north. It was a wood frame building with a shed roof sheathed in corrugated metal. Its original function is unknown.

Garage (31), unknown construction date, one contributing building
Built against the hillside to the north, this collapsed garage is east of the Cameron House and about 8' east of the collapsed shed (Building 30). The garage was oriented north and south and opened to the south. It had a shed roof covered in corrugated metal. A shop extended off the garage to the west. It had a gable roof and was of wood-frame construction.

Powder Magazine (32): constructed circa 1906-1909, one contributing building
This powder magazine has stood at this location since the beginning of the Smith Mine operations. This powder magazine is isolated up a dry coulee northwest of the mining complex. The magazine is built into a west slope and is rectangular in shape with approximately 7' of side wall exposed and 8' extending into the hillside. The stone magazine has a sandstone barrel-arched ceiling/roof once covered with aggregate concrete, now deteriorating. It appears the building is doubled walled.

The powder magazine is constructed of sandstone, presumably cut from the exposed sandstone outcrop directly across the coulee. The arrangement of stones on the exposed side walls is generally horizontal. The exterior stones have been shaped and dry-laid with no mortar visible.

The facade faces east and exhibits larger rusticated stone coursing with cement mortar. The entrance is centered on the facade with a steel I-beam for the lintel. The vertical board door is sheathed on the exterior with steel plate. The arched roof at the facade is faced with concrete. The wall is 18" thick at the entrance.

The interior consists of two compartments. The entrance opens into a small compartment with wood walls and wood flooring. A wood door accesses the larger main compartment. Walls in this compartment have irregular coursing with mortar. The curved ceiling displays parallel courses of generally similarly shaped stones. Three steel tension rods tie the side walls together. Two round

ventilation pipes are secured to the arched ceiling, one at its center that protrudes out the façade, and the other situated south of center exiting through the rear (west) wall.

Transformer Structure (33): unknown construction date, one contributing structure
This open steel frame transformer structure stands north of the coal processing plant (Building 9). The structure measures 4'x 12' at its base and rests on six concrete pier footings. The top of the structure holds a wood slat platform. Wood threaded dowels that once held insulators are secured to the platform on its north edge. Metal conduits are aligned along its south edge.

Steel Frame Structure (34): unknown construction date, one contributing structure
This steel frame structure stands northeast of the tipple (Building 5). It is constructed of heavy steel I-beam members and stands within a concrete foundation that measures 18' x 16' and has a concrete floor. The foundation opens to the south and exhibits 12" high walls with bolts set into the top of the concrete. Two I-beams are set in the floor. This structure has an unknown function.

Water Tank (35): constructed circa 1914, one contributing structure
Two water tanks (Structures 35 and 36) are visible on a 1916 historic photograph of the Smith Mine. These tanks are clearly visible in an early 1940s historic photograph and reported still in use in 1942. This tank was the larger of the two and is the closest to the tipple and building complex. The tank is built into a side slope where the ground was leveled to accommodate the tank.

This structure consists of remnants (with a 20' diameter) of a platform on which the circular water tank sat. Tongue-and-groove boards extend across the diameter of the platform. Across the platform lay narrow wood slats presumably from the tank walls that appear to have fallen inward. A few iron band sections remain that once secured the circular tank. A vertical pipe protrudes from the interior of the platform.

Water Tank (36): constructed circa 1914, one contributing structure
Two water tanks (Structures 36 and 35) are visible on a 1916 historic photograph of the Smith Mine. These tanks are clearly visible in an early 1940s historic photograph and reported still in use in 1942. This tank was the smaller of the two and is located above the larger tank. It is situated on the edge of a sandstone outcrop and dried-laid sandstone is used to level the platform.

This structure consists primarily of remnants (with a 12' diameter) of a wooden platform on which the circular water tank sat. Wood beams serve as footings to support the platform. A base is formed of small 2" x 4" lengths whose ends are cut at a diagonal to accommodate the circular tank. Tongue-and-groove boards (most are missing) extend across this base. At least seven iron hoops once secured the tank rest on the platform. A vertical pipe protrudes from the interior of the platform.

Foundations (37), unknown construction date, one contributing structure
This foundation consists of three piers of aggregate concrete aligned south of the Blacksmith and Repair Shop (Building 15). All are approximately 9' in length and 3' wide. The function and construction date of the foundation is unknown.

Foundations (38), unknown construction date, one contributing structure
Located on the hill south of the mining complex between the Tipple (Building 5) and the Coal Processing plant (Building 9) are three substantial aggregate concrete walls and two piers. A 1942 historic photograph shows an extensive surface mine complex once existed at this location prior to the 1945 fire. Presumably these concrete foundations supported in the buildings that once stood here. The upper most foundation wall is approximately 47' long while the other two are approximately 24' in length. They are all about 1' wide.

Foundation (39), unknown construction date, one contributing structure
A 1942 historic photograph shows an extensive surface mine complex that once existed at this location prior to the 1945 fire. This foundation likely served to support buildings within this complex. This foundation wall is positioned east of the Blacksmith and

Repair Shop (Building 15) and northwest of the tipple (Building 5). It measures 1' wide and 80' long and stands approximately 3' high.

Reclaimed waste dump (one non-contributing site)
In 1990, the Montana Department of State Lands, as part of its mine reclamation project, reclaimed the slack piles from the Smith Mine. This approximately 160-acre area is located directly east of the mine complex.

District Integrity

The physical landscape of the Smith Mine historic district remains relatively undisturbed since its historic period. No modern visual intrusions disrupt the mine surroundings. To the south across the coulee, Montana Secondary Highway 308 generally follows its historic route since its initial construction in the 1930s. Road reconstruction and mine reclamation activities however have obliterated mine openings, including the Smith Mine No. 3 adit of the Smith Mine Disaster. The reclamation of the coal waste or slack area that once dominated the landscape east of the mine has affected the historical setting of the site. The loss of this physical evidence is in response to public concerns regarding environmental hazards of abandoned mining properties. However, the loss of this mining feature does not diminish the powerful image of mining exhibited by the mining complex itself.

The Smith Mine historic district has the "ability to evoke images of time, place and historical patterns" of coal mining through the preservation of many buildings and structures depicting various phases and functions of coal mining.[2] The Smith Mine is the most intact coal mine in Carbon County. Historic photographs reveal the mine's development and show how the site has changed over time, due to new technologies, mine expansions or in the case of the Smith Mine, fire. Some buildings lost to fire are evident only by scattered foundations and footings within the site. The railroad grade today is only faintly discernible by the presence of the boxcar loader.

The strength of the Smith Mine historic district is the ability of the remaining buildings and structures to reflect the historic nature of the coal mining operation. The extant building and structures, constructed between 1906 and 1946, present a cohesive mixture that represents not just one stage of development but spans the lifetime of the mine. Some buildings have been altered to varying degrees while others appear unchanged except for neglect and deterioration. All of the buildings are strictly utilitarian in nature and constructed to be functional. Taken individually, they are non-descript lacking in any decorative elements. But taken as a whole, they are representative of surface workings for an underground coal mine that was established in the early twentieth century.

Most mining properties present "a strong sense of feeling when viewed by contemporary observers."[3] The Smith Mine best illustrates Montana's coal mining heritage, evokes the 1943 mine disaster, and is in fact a revered site in the state that stands in testament to the lives that were lost.

[2] US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 42*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1993), 13.
[3] Ibid, 21.

History of the Smith Mine

Bear Creek Coal Field

About sixty million years ago, the Bear Creek area was part of a vast subtropical coastal plain with major rivers flowing eastward into an inland seaway. Between these major river systems great thicknesses of plant material accumulated that was converted to peat and eventually buried under sand, mud, and other sediments. Over millions of years, the increased pressure and temperature from burial compressed and baked the peat into high grade sub-bituminous coal.[4]

Between about 70 to 55 million years ago, tectonic forces caused dramatic deformation of the region and culminated in the formation of mountain ranges like the Beartooth, Pryor, and Big Horn Mountains. This deformation tilted the sedimentary layers and associated coal seams in this area downward to the east. The coal in the Red Lodge and Bear Creek fields are part of the immense Fort Union Formation, which is estimated to contain over 200 billion tons of coal in eastern and central Montana. The Red Lodge and Bear Creek fields encompass an area of 32 square miles.[5]

There were eleven workable coal seams in the Bear Creek field, with the Montana Coal and Iron Company (MCI) concentrating its efforts on the numbers 2 and 3 seams in its Smith and Foster Gulch mines. Both seams averaged about eight-feet thick and were composed of high grade sub-bituminous coal, which made it excellent for use in railroad locomotives, industrial furnaces, and for domestic purposes. Bear Creek coal burned between 10,000 to 11,500 British Thermal Units (BTU's).[6]

Coal in Montana

The Lewis and Clark Expedition documented exposed coal seams on the upper Missouri and lower Yellowstone rivers in 1805 and 1806. Captain Meriwether Lewis noted coal in "great abundance" along the Missouri just north of its confluence with the Yellowstone River in April 1805. Thereafter, Lewis and Clark left almost a daily record of where coal was located along the Missouri River until it reached the vicinity of the Marias River. William Clark commented on "immense" deposits of coal on his journey down the Yellowstone in 1806. The coal, however, was low grade lignite that was not particularly well suited for use by the railroads or as a good home-heating source. Lieutenant John Mullan later observed in 1865 that eastern Montana was "underlain with immense coal fields." Although a few coal mines operated in Montana in the 1860s, there was no real market for coal until the arrival of the railroads in the 1880s.[7]

The Wagon Mine Years (1866-1905)

The Panic of 1873 impeded the progress of the Northern Pacific Railway (NP) across Montana, but when it resumed construction of its transcontinental line in 1881, good sources of fuel were critical to its success. Its locomotives required vast amounts of coal for

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[4] David Alt and Donald W. Hyndman, *Roadside Geology of Montana*, (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing, 1986), 223-224; Eugene S. Perry, "Mineral Industry of Montana," *Montana Resources and Opportunities*, (Helena, MT: Montana Department of Agriculture, Labor and Industry, 1933), 59; *Montana Resources and Opportunities* (Helena, MT: Montana Department of Agriculture, Labor and Industry, 1928), 195; E. G. Woodruff, "The Red Lodge Coal Field, Montana, *United States Geological Survey (USGS) Bulletin 341* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1909), 92-93; N.H. Darton, "Coals of Carbon County, Montana," *USGS Bulletin 316* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1907), 185-186.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid. In the Bear Creek field, the coal was overlain by a thick overburden of Fort Union Formation sediments, which made strip mining of the resource impractical. Sub-bituminous coal is distinguished from the poorer grade lignite by its black color and its lack of a woody texture.

[7] Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Definitive Journals of Lewis & Clark*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 4:81,85, 255; Ibid, 8:243, 248, 259; John Mullan, *Miners and Travelers' Guide*, (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1991), 51, 59, 94; Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, rev. ed., (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1991), 337.

fuel and the low grade lignite coal common in eastern Montana did not suit the railroad's purposes because of its high sulfur content. The railroad began mining coal on Bozeman Pass west of Livingston, Montana at Chestnut, Cokedale, and Storrs, but sought better sources of the mineral farther to the east.[8]

"Yankee Jim" George discovered coal outcrops along Rock Creek in south-central Montana while prospecting for gold in 1866. The area, however, was within the boundaries of the Crow Reservation and far from any potential markets. George did not exploit his discovery, but word of it reached entrepreneurs in Bozeman, who quietly waited for the opportunity to develop the coal deposits.

The location of these coal deposits within designated Crow Territory deterred development. The Bear Creek coal field is situated on lands once described by an Apsaalooke chief as "a good country because the Great Spirit had put it in exactly the right place." The Mountain Crow division of the Apsaalooke (Crow people) came to live in northern Wyoming and southeastern Montana over 500 years ago or possibly longer. The Mountain Crow ranged as far east as the Powder River and as far west as the Yellowstone River and depended on the availability of game and edible plants.[9]

The 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty designated Crow Territory to encompass all lands south of the Musselshell River between the headwaters of the Yellowstone River to the west, the headwaters of the Powder River to the east and the main ridge of the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming as its south boundary. After the discovery of gold in southwestern Montana in the early 1860s, continuous pressures by non-Indians resulted in several reductions to the original Crow Indian Reservation boundaries.[10]

The second Fort Laramie Treaty in 1868 reduced Crow Territory by removing all lands in Wyoming and north of the Yellowstone River and making the eastern boundary the divide between the Big Horn and Rosebud Rivers, restricting the Crow to approximately eight million acres. An 1880 agreement ratified in 1882 eliminated all Crow lands west of the Boulder River. In this same agreement, the Crow ceded a wide strip of land that extended from the Boulder to the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone encompassing the Red Lodge/Bear Creek coal field. This agreement allowed for the development of coal deposits located within the ceded strip.[11]

Two Bozeman businessmen, Walter Cooper and Madison M. Black, who remembered "Yankee Jim" George's coal discovery on Rock Creek, quickly snapped up coal lands, and began mining small amounts of coal in 1882 to sell to the railroad. Cooper and Black founded the mining camp of Red Lodge in 1884. The promise of jobs in the mines drew hundreds of miners to the remote region within just a short time and the population of Red Lodge mushroomed. Successful coal mines, however, require a good transportation system to get the product to market. The lack of a railroad and the camp's remote location hampered the full-scale development of the mining properties for several years.[12]

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[8] Malone et al., *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 337-338; Phyllis Smith, *Bozeman and the Gallatin Valley: A History*, (Helena, MT: Twodot Books, 1996), 186, 188.

[9] Little Big Horn College, "Apsaalooke Writing Tribal Histories Project," Obtained at http://lib.lbhc.cc.mt.us/history

[10] Charles J. Kappler, ed. and comp. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties 2 vols.*, 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904), 594-596. Crow treaties and agreements are available at http://www.digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/. For a discussion of reductions to the Crow Reservation, see William M. Brooke, "A Contest over Land: Nineteenth Century Crow-White Relations," *Montana Vistas: Selected Historical Essays* ed. Robert Swartout, Jr., (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981), 1-24 and Burton M. Smith, "Politics and the Crow Indian Land Cessions, 1851-1904," *Montana, The Magazine of Western History* 36:4 (Autumn 1986), 24-37.

[11] Kappler, *Indian Affairs*, 2: 1108-1011; Ibid, 1:195-197.

[12] Smith, *Bozeman and the Gallatin Valley*, 186, 188; for the development of the town of Red Lodge, MT see Shirley Zupan and Harry C. Owens, *Red Lodge: Saga of a Western Area*, (Red Lodge, MT: Carbon County Historical Society, 1979).

In 1887, a syndicate headed by Helena banker Sam Hauser and NP president Henry Villard bought Cooper and Black out and formed the Rocky Fork Coal Company. That same year, Billings's railroad promoter Thomas Oakes incorporated the Rocky Fork & Cooke City Railroad, a subsidiary of the NP, to haul coal extracted from the Red Lodge mines to the NP's main line at Laurel. With the arrival of the railroad in 1889 and the subsequent expansion of the mine facilities, Red Lodge quickly grew to a population of 4,800 people, including miners from the United States, Eastern Europe, and Finland. In 1898, the NP-owned Northwestern Improvement Company gained control of the Rock Creek mines. Over the next four decades, the railroad utilized the coal to fuel its locomotives in Montana and North Dakota. But even higher grade coal could be obtained only a few miles east of Red Lodge at Bear Creek.[13]

The Red Lodge coal development nearly paralleled the development of coal deposits in central Montana. Small mines first appeared in the late 1870s and early 1880s but the arrival of railroads into the region stimulated serious coal production. In 1887, the construction of the Montana Central Railroad (MCRR) between Great Falls and Helena, and the arrival of the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railroad (later the Great Northern) caused a boom in the development of the Belt coal mines east of Great Falls as the bituminous coal mined there was used to fuel the Manitoba and MCRR locomotives. The Great Northern Railway expanded mines at Sand Coulee (six miles southeast of Great Falls) between 1888 and 1898. For a few years at the end of the nineteenth century, Cascade County was Montana's leading coal producer.[14]

In Carbon County, east of Red Lodge, the 1888 General Land Office survey map for T8S R21E, the location of the Smith Mine, identified five coal veins. The government surveyor observed two small coal mines operating along Bear Creek that presumably sold coal in Red Lodge for domestic use. The steep divide between Bear Creek and Red Lodge prevented any large-scale exploitation of the resource. The higher grade coal in the Bear Creek field soon drew the interest of several Billings, Montana entrepreneurs. In 1887, promoter Phillip Gallaher and former Yellowstone County surveyor George Lamport staked out coal lands in the district and began searching for investors to develop the properties.[15]

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[13] Zupan, *Red Lodge*, 129-130; Robert A. Chadwick, "Coal: Montana's Prosaic Treasure," *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, 23:3 (Autumn 1973), 25; Donald B. Robertson, *Encyclopedia of Western Railroad History*, 2 Vols, 2 (Dallas: Taylor Publishing, 1991), 344; Bill Taylor and Jan Taylor, *The Northern Pacific's Rails to Gold and Silver: Volume II, 1888-1898*, (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories, 2008), 9, 14-15, 19, 23; Louis Tuck Renz, *The History of the Northern Pacific Railroad*, (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1980), 157-158.

[14] *Progressive Men of the State of Montana*, (Chicago: A.W. Bowen & Co., c. 1903), 1019-1020; William J. Furdell and Elizabeth Land Furdell, *Great Falls: A Pictorial History*, (Virginia Beach, VA: 1984), 24-25; Ralph W. Hidy, Muriel Hidy and Roy V. Scott, *The Great Northern Railway: A History*, (Boston: Harvard Business School, 1988), 319; Chadwick, "Coal: Montana's Prosaic Treasure," 25.

[15] US Surveyor General, 1888 General Land Office survey map and notes for T8S R21E, microfiche on file at Records Room, Montana Bureau of Land Management State Office, Billings, MT; also available at http://glo.mt.gov; Paul Anderson, *Definition and Evaluation of the Bear Creek Mining District, Carbon County, Montana,* Prepared for Montana Department of State Lands by GCM Services, Inc, Butte, MT 1993, 33; Jon Axline, "Something of a Nuisance Value:" The Montana, Wyoming & Southern Railroad, 1905-1953," *Montana The Magazine of Western History* 49:4 (Winter 1999), 51-52; Montana Land Tract Books, T8S R21E, microfilm, Montana Historical Society Research Center, Helena, MT.

Gallaher and Lamport were able to convince Boston millionaire Elijah Smith and several of his New York City associates (including many of his relatives) to invest in the Bear Creek field.[16] In order to commercially mine the coal, the partners incorporated the Montana Coal and Iron Company (MCI) in December 1889.[17] The company acquired title to 937 acres of coal land along Bear Creek, including the future Smith Mine location, over a two year period beginning in 1890. By 1898, when the MCI purchased an additional 2,197 acres adjacent to the original claim, the company had been mining small amounts of coal on the north side of a coulee for several years. The mine, however, functioned more as a wagon mine with the coal hauled over the hill to Red Lodge for sale for home heating purposes. Lack of a railroad slowed development of the mines. Despite this problem, the MCI mined an average of 6,000 tons of coal a year and sold most of it in Red Lodge.[18]

During the early 1890s, several of the MCI's investors filed mineral claims on land in the district adjacent to Smith's original claims. In 1898, however, many investors, including George Lamport, traded the land for shares in the company. The trade proved fortuitous for them as the MCI paid a hefty dividend to them nearly every year for the next five decades – sometimes at the expense of making recommended safety improvements in the mines.[19]

The MCI's Smith Mine was one of only three companies active in the Bear Creek field at the turn-of-the-twentieth century. Billings businessmen Christian and Peter Yegen owned the Bear Creek Coal Company about 1½ miles east of the Smith Mine operations, while the Amalgamated Copper Mining Company (ACMC) mined coal just west of the Smith Mine at Washoe. All three companies, however, realized that without a railroad their operations would never amount to much because of the great expense in hauling coal by wagon over the divide to Red Lodge, where it could be shipped out on the NP's Rocky Fork Branch. Attempts by the mine owners failed to interest the NP into building to the Bear Creek mines. By 1905, the owners were ready to deal with the devil to get the much-needed railroad.[20]

Realizing the importance of a railroad to the district, Elijah Smith's successor, Charles Smith, and company manager W. W. Worthington, along with the owners of the adjacent Bear Creek Coal Company mine and the ACMC, listened to proposals in 1905 by Frank Hall, a slick promoter, who promised to build a railroad into the coal field. With the backing of a syndicate of small-time Lancaster, Pennsylvania businessmen, Hall proposed to construct a railroad from the NP's terminus at Bridger to Yellowstone

[16] Born in 1827, Elijah Smith was the son of Elisha Smith, the founder of the Menasha Wooden Ware Company. Based in Menasha, Wisconsin, the company manufactured wooden pails, tubs, barrels, and boxes. Smith was a passionate Christian, moralist, and philanthropist who donated much of his fortune to Christian organizations in the east. It is not known why he chose to invest his money in coal mines in far-away Montana, but it could have been the promise of lucrative contracts with the Amalgamated Copper Company and the Northern Pacific Railway that helped make his decision. Elijah Smith died in 1899, leaving control of the company to a relative, Charles Smith. Surviving MCI company records indicate that many of its shareholders were members of the Smith family. Indeed, the family continued to be involved in the company up until the time of its dissolution in 1980.

[17] The Montana Coal and Iron Company (MCI) records are Manuscript Collection Number 352 at the Montana Historical Society Research Center Archives, Helena, MT. . This collection was being processed when the authors were conducting their research for this nomination and therefore box and folder numbers will not be provided in the citations. Hereinafter, the collection will be referred to as MCI Collection.

[18] A wagon mine is typically a small operation where large scale development has not yet occurred. Coal wagon mines usually consist of a small amount of tonnage mined with the material sold in local markets; Woodruff, "The Red Lodge Coal Field, Montana," 100; Darton, "Coals of Carbon County, Montana," 189.

[19] MCI Collection.

[20] Montana Secretary of State, Business Entity Search, obtained at www.app.mt.gov/bes; Jeffrey E. McNeish, *Long March Toward Tragedy: Events Surrounding Montana's Disaster*, (Billings, MT: The Author, 2007), 10; Montana Tract Books T8S R21E, T7S R21E; Axline, "The Montana, Wyoming & Southern Railroad," 51-52; Chadwick, "Coal: Montana's Prosaic Treasure," 28; MCI Collection; Howard F. Welsh. *Fourth Annual Report of the Inspector of Coal Mines of the State of Montana*, (Helena, MT: Independent Publishing Co., 1904), 12; Woodruff, "The Red Lodge Coal Field, Montana," 94.

National Park, with a branch line up Bear Creek to the coal mines. Eager to obtain a railroad, the three coal companies offered free right-of-way for the proposed line and, as an added inducement, breaks on the price of coal to fuel the new railroad's locomotives. Unknown to his financers and the coal companies, Hall intended to sell the short line railroad to the NP as soon as possible – making a hefty profit for himself and his investors; but it also ensured the railroad would be cheaply built and poorly run. For the next 47 years, the MCI and the Yellowstone Park Railroad (renamed the Montana, Wyoming and Southern in 1909) maintained an adversarial relationship marred by almost annual complaints by the MCI about the lack of sufficient railcars to ship its coal.[21]

In August 1906, the Yellowstone Park Railroad reached the coal mines, initiating a significant expansion of the Bear Creek coal field. Within months of its arrival, five coal companies operated commercial mines in the district: the MCI's Smith Mine, Bear Creek Coal Company, International Coal Company, Smokeless and Sootless Coal Company and the ACMC mine at Washoe. The railroad also created towns in its wake, including the new coal camp of Bearcreek. Founded by Lamport and Robert Leavens in 1905, the camp's population boomed along with the mines. In 1909, within four years of its founding, Bearcreek boasted a population of 1,200 inhabitants with most employed in the Bear Creek mines.[22]

The First Boom (1906-1922)

The Smith Mine is located at the head of a coulee in the northwest and southwest quarters of Section 6, T8S, R21E on land acquired by Smith and Lamport in 1890. On October 1, 1906, the mine officially began commercial operations, two months after the arrival of the railroad. Beginning in late 1906 and continuing into 1907, the mine dramatically expanded its operations and constructed an extensive above-ground support complex. Records detailing the extent of that first major expansion have not survived, but reports by outside observers indicate the MCI expended a significant amount of money in developing its Bear Creek properties. In 1907, the company began developing the Number 3 seam located underneath a hill across Scotch Coulee and south of the original Smith Mine workings. To that end, it established a secondary mine complex on Foster Gulch about 1½ miles to the southeast of the main complex. The Number 3 seam, although the mines' most profitable, was plagued by water seeping into the mine from springs and by small amounts of methane gas. Along with the Number 3, the MCI continued to extract coal from its original mine in the hill to the north of the complex and began plans to tunnel into the Number 2 seam across the creek to the south. Presumably the Smith Mine utilized the "room and pillar" method of mining, where coal is mined by driving passageways or main entries, cross entries and air courses through the coal and mining the coal from small rooms or chambers.[23]

The Smith Mine profited from excellent management in its early years. Under the direction of the first company manager, W. W. Worthington, the MCI

> Extended a main gangway and air course for nearly 1,000 feet to the northwest into the Number2 seam. Two other entries ran east and had a total of 19 rooms.' Another entry was opened into the Number3 seam on the north side of the creek. A careless hoist was installed in the Number3 seam and an electric locomotive was installed on the main line in the mine, although horses and mules were still used elsewhere in the workings.[24]

Surface facilities included a tipple, boxcar loader, repair shops, outbuildings, a wash house, boarding house, and several residences rented to mine employees. In 1907, the mine employed 25 to 40 men. That year, MCI removed 8,071 tons of coal from the MCI

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[21] Axline, "The Montana, Wyoming & Southern Railroad, 52-55; Jon Axline, *Cultural Resource Inventory and Evaluation: Bearcreek – East & West* [S-RS 308-1(1)8], Report prepared for the Montana Department of Highways, 1991, 4-9.

[22] Ibid.

[23] MCI Collection; W.C. Borchert, Methods of Mining Coal," *The Pahasapa Quarterly*, 8(2): 41-53.

[24] MCI Collection.

mines. It constituted only a fraction of the 1,238,976,874 tons of coal extracted from the Red Lodge/Bear Creek fields in 1907, which made Carbon County the largest producer of coal in Montana.[25]

Coal production on MCI properties steadily increased beginning in 1908, as did the number of men employed by the company. Coal mining, however, does not occur year-round with the bulk of the activities happening over a five-month period in the winter, summer and autumn of the year. Consequently, throughout its history, the Smith Mine was shut down part of the year because of a low demand for coal. The increased demand of the Smith and Foster Gulch mines' product caused the company to continuously expand its above and below-ground facilities beginning in 1909. By 1910, the above-ground complex at the Smith Mine included a new tipple, boxcar loaders, storage bins, carpenter shop, blacksmith shop, two powder magazines (Structures 21 and 32), an aerial tramway between the tipple and the mine north of the complex, an office building, and stable.[26]

The Smith Mine also purchased electricity from the nearby Bear Creek Coal Company, the first fully electrified mine in the district. As the MCI's operations expanded, however, the Bear Creek mine could not provide an adequate amount of electricity to both sites. The MCI's second and most long-tenured manager, James Freeman, whose plans to open a new tunnel into the Number 3 seam across the coulee to tap into the estimated 1.8 million tons of coal located there, needed a reliable source of power for the expansion. In 1914, Freeman and Montana Power Company president John D. Ryan reached an agreement by which the power company would provide electrical power to the Smith Mine for the relatively small amount of one cent per kilowatt hour. When Freeman traveled to Butte to sign the contract, however, Ryan changed the terms of the agreement. Freeman stormed out of the meeting, returned to Bearcreek and immediately petitioned the MCI's board of directors to fund the construction of a power plant at the Smith Mine. Although the directors denied his request, three major stockholders in the company, Edward Berwin, Grant Schley, and Charles Smith, forwarded Freeman $60,000 to build a power plant (Building 12) at the mine. The plant used steam to create electricity to power the mine's hoist, fan, and an electric locomotive. By 1915, the Smith Mine had completely electrified its operation, which diminished the need for mules and horses underground. Fortunately for the company's investors, an abnormally cold winter drove the price of coal up which quickly offset the price of the power plant.[27]

The Smith Mine began to feel the impact of the European War in 1915 with an increased demand for coal. That year, it shipped over 140,000 tons of coal, mostly to the NP-owned Northwestern Improvement Company. By 1916, annual production grew to over 150,000 tons. The mine owners increased the number of men employed at the Smith Mine to 200, including 27 men employed in the topside facility. As the war intensified in 1916, Freeman reported the war "caused a scarcity of coal and enhanced price," much to the delight of the company's stockholders. In September 1916, a fire of unknown origin, which Freeman believed was arson, burned down the tipple, boxcar loader, and many other processing buildings at the Smith Mine. The fire caused a two-week shut down at the mine during a critical time until a new tipple and loading facility could be constructed. Back in operation by mid-October, the MCI posted its best year yet, netting $76,359 for its shareholders. In 1917, the mine's output rose by 88,000 tons to 238,844 tons of coal shipped. Part of the increase could be attributed to the company opening a new tunnel across the coulee to the south into the Number 2 seam. The increased output in 1917 also meant the expansion of the support facilities, including the construction of a new blacksmith and repair shop (Building 15).[28]

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[25] MCI records; Anderson, *The Bear Creek Mining District*, 5; Paul Anderson, "There is Something Wrong Down Here:" The Smith Mine Disaster, Bearcreek, Montana, 1943," *Montana the Magazine of Western History* 38:2 (Spring 1988), 4-6 (hereinafter referred to as Smith Mine Disaster); Butler: 13; McNeish, *Long March Toward Tragedy*: 11; Woodruff, "The Red Lodge Coal Field, Montana," 101, 107; Darton, "Coals of Carbon County," 189-190; J.P. Rowe, "The Coal Mining Industry of Montana," *Engineering and Mining Journal* Vol. 87 (April 24, 1909):845.

[26] MCI Records; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: Bearcreek, Montana (1914), Montana Historical Society Research Center Archives, Helena, MT.

[27] MCI Collection.

[28] MCI Collection.

With the United States' declaration of war against Germany in April 1917, production at the Smith Mine soared. Increasingly, the MCI concentrated its efforts on the Number 3 seam located south and across the coulee from the surface facilities. MCI began phasing out its mining operations north of the complex and temporarily in the Number 2 seam. In 1918, the company signed an agreement with the NP by which it guaranteed to purchase a specific amount of coal from the company each year. The NP was the MCI's biggest customer in 1918 and would be for much of the company's history.[29]
MCI's profits and the amount of coal mined dropped precipitously beginning in late 1918 and continued through much of 1919. First, the cessation of the war in November 1918 caused the federal government to drop many of its price guarantees in regards to its coal purchases. Added to that was the effects of the Spanish Influenza pandemic in late 1918 and early 1919. The number of miners stricken by the disease caused the company to operate at half its capacity during its most active months. Towards the end of 1919, Montana was suffering the effects of a post-war economic depression and drought, which drove away many of the MCI's customers. Freeman told the company's treasurer that, for many Montana farmers, coal had become a luxury that they could not afford. Furthermore, coal mines in Wyoming and Utah also had entered the Montana market and were undercutting local mines prices by a dollar less than what it sold its product for. The high grade coal of the Smith Mine, however, kept it in the market despite the competition and the state's poor economy.[30]

In November 1919, the United Mine Workers called a nationwide coal miners' strike that shut down much of the nation's coal industry, including the Smith Mine. The miners struck for higher wages, a shorter work week, and a more equitable distribution of work. The five-week strike was not resolved until early December when the federal government agreed to a wage increase, but only after it ordered soldiers sent to many coal districts, including the Bear Creek field, to enforce the reopening of mines. Despite the abrupt end to the strike, Montana coal miners obtained a 14% wage increase. The MCI, however, lost four months of work and $50,000 because of the strike. Labor problems would continue to plague the Red Lodge/Bear Creek mines throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, increasing labor costs eventually contributed to the Northwest Improvement Company's decision to close down its Red Lodge mines and instead concentrate on its new strip mine at Colstrip in southeastern Montana.[31]

The strike and economic depression ultimately proved a minor setback to the company. The depression caused many of the other mines in the area to shut down, thus removing some of the local competition. By 1920, the Smith and Foster Gulch mines were the biggest producers of coal in the Bear Creek field. Despite a chronic railcar shortage, the MCI expanded its market into Seattle and Portland. Although the company's profits returned to its World War I level, Freeman's report to the shareholders in 1922 was mixed to say the least:

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[29] The MCI's relationship with the NP, however, was a complicated one that also involved the railroad's subsidiary, the Northwestern Improvement Company, which owned the mines across the divide in Red Lodge. Despite the great amounts of tonnage mined by the Northwestern, all of its coal went to fuel the NP's locomotives. In 1919, a depressed economic market made the company rethink that policy and it began selling coal on the open market – some of it mined from property adjacent to and leased to it by the MCI. In May 1919, manager James Freeman wrote to the company's treasurer about the unwanted competition, "I have taken the matter up with the local unions of all the mines in the field as well as the Chamber of Commerce with the intention of making a strenuous campaign against [the Northwestern Improvement Company's] unfair competition and if possible keep them off the commercial market entirely." Evidence suggests that Freeman's efforts were not successful, but market conditions may have compelled Northwestern to abandon its foray into the commercial market especially after it began strip mining coal near Colstrip in 1924. MCI Collection.

[30] MCI Collection.

[31] The MCI was also hit hard by a significant change in the formula by which the government set its taxes for coal mines. At the end of 1919, the company's directors learned that the MCI owed more than $100,000 to the Internal Revenue Service – an issue that was not resolved until the mid-1920s. MCI Collections; Zupan, *Red Lodge: Saga of a Western Area*, 133-134; Malone et al, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, 338; Paul Anderson, "The Smith Mine Disaster," 5; Chadwick, "Coal: Montana Prosaic Treasure," 20.

> The prospects for the new year [1923] are not promising. Car shortages, embargoes, and mild weather have resulted in a poor start. I do not anticipate a miners' strike as the United States Coal Commission has publically stated they [sic] would not tolerate a strike this year. . . . The property of the company is in excellent condition. There has been a steady increase in the productiveness of the mines.

In 1922, however, the company installed a new electric hoist, employed 424 men at the Smith and Foster Gulch mines and hoped for a profitable year.[32]

Smith Mine Number 3 and Expansion (1923-1941)

Coal production at the Smith Mine remained steady throughout the 1920s. Although the coal company's primary customer was the NP, it also maintained contracts with coal distributing companies, lumber yards, and power companies in Montana and northern Wyoming. In 1924, business was good enough that the company built a new tipple, invested in new boxcar loaders, and several other topside support buildings, including new warehouses. In 1929, MCI vice president and mine manager James Freeman announced to the company's stockholders that the mine was completely mechanized and there were no longer any mules used to haul coal underground. The completion of the two-year mechanization project meant that the mine could produce more coal each month, which necessitated the expansion of the mine's processing operation. Consequently, the company "had to install picking tables and remodel [the] tipple." Coal production soared to a daily output of 1,000 tons and a net profit of over $72,000 for the company. The Montana Department of Agriculture, Labor, and Industry enthusiastically reported that the Bear Creek field contained an estimated 1.25 billion tons of high grade sub-bituminous coal waiting to be extracted and sold to customers throughout the Pacific Northwest and northern Rockies. As the 1920s came to a close, the MCI's Smith and Foster Gulch mines were the biggest in the Bear Creek region with the expectations of many prosperous years ahead.[33]

In 1929, manager Freeman reported that the stock market crash and ensuing economic depression had begun to affect "current income unfavorably." Other clouds had also begun to appear on the horizon for the company; clouds that would eventually have dire consequences for its Bear Creek operations – the increasing usage of natural gas by many of its customers for home heating and cooking rather than coal. Montana's natural gas industry developed concurrently with its oil industry beginning in 1913. Natural gas proved a cheaper and cleaner alternative to coal and was eagerly adopted by Montana households in the years following World War I.

As the Great Depression deepened in 1930, Freeman complained about the mild winter, natural gas, and the fact that many of the company's existing customers were having a difficult time paying their bills. In an attempt to correct the situation, the MCI was forced to offer longer terms of credit to many of its principal customers, including the NP and the Great Western Sugar Company, to maintain its sales volume. The national economic calamity had, however, already cut into the company's projected revenue – in 1930, the company netted only $21 more than its 1929 profit of $72,000. Revenues and coal production continued to drop in 1932 with only 187,000 tons of coal mined with a net profit of $35,429 for the MCI. Freeman blamed the loss on the "introduction of natural gas into a considerable part of the territory served by the company" and also because of the warm winter. All things considered, however, much of the decline probably occurred because there were fewer people locally that could afford to buy Smith Mine coal. It was clear that Freeman did not grasp the extent of the Great Depression upon the remote Bear Creek region.[34]

In their 1932 annual report to the MCI stockholders, Freeman and company president Thomas Kearney made plans to expand the production of its Smith and Foster Gulch mines. They reasoned that increasing production would make coal more affordable to

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[32] MCI Collection; Anderson, *Bear Creek Mining District*, 34.

[33] MCI Collection, Montana Department of Agriculture, Labor and Industry, *Montana Resources and Opportunities*, (Helena, MT, 1928), 197.

[34] MCI Collection; Anderson, "The Smith Mine Disaster," 5; Chadwick, "Coal: Montana's Prosaic Treasure," 20, 26; Malone et al, *Montana A History of Two Centuries*, 338; Federal Writers' Project, *Montana: A State Guide Book*, (Helena, MT: Department of Agriculture, Labor and Industry, 1939), 85.

existing and prospective customers and slow the conversion of its market to natural gas. In the annual report, the men proposed the construction of new cleaning plants, the sale of pulverized coal, and the installation of an automatic stoker at the mine. Although the price per ton of coal had been steadily declining since 1926, they hoped the infusion of "considerable capital" would improve the MCI's position. Contracts with the Northwestern Improvement Company, Northern Pacific Railway, and the Great Western Sugar Company stabilized the company's bottom line and ensured a higher output of coal during the 1930s.[35]

The company's fortunes began to turn around in 1933. The company mined nearly 265,000 tons of coal, compared to 181,000 tons the year before. The 1933 expansion included the construction of a new crushing plant, a first aid building, a new 200-locker wash house, coal sheds and scales, an elevator (adjacent to Building 9), additional conveyors, a new repair shop underground in the Smith Mine Number3, a cleaning plant, and a new electrical substation. In addition, a boiler house was added onto the Blacksmith and Repair Shop (Building 15). The expansion caused the company to operate at a loss in 1934 and 1935 to pay for its investment, before once again turning a profit in 1936. With the earnings, the company constructed a new carpentry shop and foreman's office. The 1936 profit was, apparently, a fluke as the company again operated at a loss in 1938 before turning a $2,000 profit in 1939. With war looming in Europe, the nation's industries began to revive, thereby increasing the demand for coal. In 1941, the MCI reported sales of nearly 352,000 tons of coal and claimed a profit of $22,000. The next three years, however, would prove the most profitable in the company's history, although soon foreshadowed by the Smith Mine Disaster in 1943.[36]

The Smith Mine Disaster (1943)

In the early months of 1943, the Smith Mine was working "three shifts a week to meet coal needs for a nation at war." The morning of February 27, 1943 brought miners to work since it was pay day plus time and a half paid for working on Saturday. The miner's stories reveal it was a morning filled with normal activities, like Bill Pelo getting a flat tire and John Hodnik oversleeping. For two men, it was their last day on the job. Pete Giovetti was moving to a small farm and Joe McDonald was going into military service.[37]

At 9:37 a.m., an underground explosion and hurricane force winds blowing out of the Number 3 adit signaled that something terrible had happened underground. Seventy-seven men entered the mine that morning and only three returned. Miners came from all over Montana to assist in the rescue effort. Unfortunately all rescue efforts failed and one man died as a result of his rescue attempts. Investigations later indicated that thirty miners probably died instantly in the explosion. Carbon monoxide gas and lack of oxygen killed the remaining forty-four men. Five of these men survived for an hour and a half after the explosion, barricaded in a small shop.[38]

These five men had time to compose poignant farewell messages to their loved ones. One note found near the bodies of Walter Joki and John Sudar read "Good bye wives and daughters. We died an easy death. Love from us both be good." Another listed the names of four men and read, "Frank Pajnich, Fred Rasborschek, John Sudar and Walter Joki. We try to do our best but we couldn't get out." A third message from Emil Anderson read, "Its 5 minutes pass 11 o'clock Agnes and children I'm sorry we had to go this way God bless you all Emil with lots of kiss."[39]

Jeff McNeish, who has recently published three volumes on the Smith Mine Disaster, called it "the most traumatic event to have occurred" ... in south-central Montana which "... left an atmosphere of grief that can be felt to this day." The miners who immigrated

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[35] MCI Collection; Anderson, "The Smith Mine Disaster," 5.

[36] MCI Collection.

[37] The narrative on the Smith Mine Disaster is taken primarily from Paul Anderson's "There is something Wrong Down Here": The Smith Mine Disaster, Bearcreek, Montana, 1943," *Montana The Magazine of Western History* 38:2 (Spring 1988), 2-13.

[38] Ibid, 8.

[39] Ibid, 8.

to work in the Red Lodge/Bear Creek coal fields came from numerous ethnic groups like Scottish, Finnish, Italian and Slavic and each group had established their own close-knit communities. The disaster affected them all.[40]

Montana Governor Sam C. Ford immediately appointed a commission to investigate the disaster. The US Bureau of Mines, the United Mine Workers and MCI followed the State of Montana and all four entities conducted their own individual investigations.

> All of the reports of the investigation agreed that methane gas somehow accumulated into the mine and was accidentally ignited. This initial explosion caused coal dust to go into suspension; the suspended dust was then ignited in a second explosion. In spite of the tremendous force of the explosions, the mine working stayed intact, and no one was killed by cave-ins. It was also generally agreed that while some men died instantly from the explosions, a majority died from the effects of gas and lack of oxygen following the explosions.[41]

While they could all agree on the results of the disaster, none could agree on the cause of the first explosion and the source of origin of the explosion. The accepted explanation stated the disaster "was caused by the accidental igniting of gas at some undetermined place in the mine." Theories abounded but no conclusive evidence was brought forward to definitely explain the cause of the disaster. The one positive outcome of the Smith Mine Disaster is that it served to heighten awareness regarding mine safety. The Montana legislature eventually passed numerous laws improving safety conditions in Montana's coal mines. These new safety procedures included modernized ventilation procedures, the use of electric safety lamps and rescue equipment for miners.[42]

Demise of Smith Mine (1944-1953)

Despite the deaths and bad publicity, the disaster did not have an immediate impact on the overall operation of the mine. Although the Number 3 adit was permanently closed in March 1943 and underground workings allowed to flood, the company resumed production in the Smith Number 2 mine on the hillside above the Number 3 tunnel by April. Production continued to be high through 1943 and 1944, averaging 538,000 tons a year with the company raking in record profits. MCI did implement some of the safety recommendations suggested by State Mine Inspector G. C. Goodman in November 1942. The end of World War II in September 1945 ended the boom the Smith Mine had experienced beginning in 1942. From a high of nearly 561,000 tons of coal mined in 1945, the tonnage dropped to 390,000 tons in 1946 and 200,000 tons in 1947. The waning revenue was worsened by a decline in the quality of coal mined by the company, and a fire in October 1945. The fire destroyed a significant number of the mine's core topside structures, including the trestle, boxcar loaders, rock tipple, main tipple, rescreening and wet cleaning plants, and the coal bunkers. The company never determined the cause of the fire. It did, however, build a new screening plant and wet cleaning plants (Building 9), but the smaller size of the processors and the retention of only one boxcar loader indicated that the MCI had no plans to increase production of the Smith Mine.[43]

The 1943 mine explosion and the October 1945 fire initiated a slow decline in the Smith Mine's fortunes that was aggravated by a series of poor business decisions on the part of the company's management. In March 1946, the company shut down operations in Smith Mine Number 2, located farther up the hill above the old Number 3 mine. The MCI attributed the closure to the "increasing costs of mining operations, early curtailment of government coal purchases and the drop in the domestic and steam coal market because of an abnormally mild winter." Two years later, the company ceased operations at its open pit mine to the northwest of the Smith Mine complex. The mine, which had been opened in 1948, did not produce a good quality coal and the significant overburden made cleaning the coal much more expensive. Coal production after the war averaged around 200,000 tons annually before dropping to 100,000 by 1951. The company's revenues, however, continued to decrease. In 1950, the Great Western Sugar Company, a steady

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[40] Jeff McNeish, *Sons of America, Brothers Underground, Remembering the Victim's of Smith Mine Number 3,* (Billings, MT: The Author, 2007), preface.

[41] Anderson, *The Smith Mine Disaster*, 8.

[42] For a discussion of the various theories, see Anderson, "The Smith Mine Disaster," 8-12; for laws, 12.

[43] Anderson, "The Smith Mine Disaster," 6; Anderson, *Bear Creek Mining District*, 36; MCI Collection.

customer for over 25 years, cancelled its contract with the MCI. The following year, in 1951, the Montana Power Company and ACMC dropped their contracts with MCI when the smelter converted to natural gas for fuel.[44]

To perhaps regain some of its competitive edge, the company attempted in 1951 to open a new mine into the Number 3 seam about a half-mile east of the ill-fated adit associated with the disaster. The new Number 3 mine, however, was directly beneath the old Number 2 mine, which had flooded when it was abandoned in 1946. Despite the warnings of mine engineers and employees, MCI proceeded with its new mine and expended a considerable amount of capital on the expansion. The workings collapsed in 1953 and flooded the mine. Fortunately no lives were lost, but the company lost a large amount of equipment and material. That same year, the NP, its conversion to diesel locomotives almost complete, cancelled its coal contract with MCI. The NP, which had been purchasing coal from the company since the 1910s, was also its biggest source of income along with its most steady customer. The Montana, Wyoming & Southern Railway, long an adversary of the MCI, also ceased operations in 1953. The loss of those two companies proved too much for the MCI and it, too, closed down its operations. The MCI leased its Foster Gulch mine to other companies before it permanently closed down in 1957. Despite the lack of any coal mining activity in Montana, MCI remained on the state rolls of active corporations until 1980 when its stockholders dissolved the company.[45]

Coal mining continued in the Bear Creek field into the 1980s. Leopold "Poly" Janskovitch operated a small wagon mine adjacent to Secondary Highway 308 into the early 1970s. He sold coal to local residents who still used it to heat their homes. The Bear Tooth Coal Company mined coal on nearby Brophy Gulch just to the north of the Smith Mine until 1980; it was the last underground mine to close in the district.

The Smith Mine buildings, however, continued to deteriorate next to the highway, a derelict of the Bear Creek coal field's once vibrant mining history. Tourists drove by the site on their way to or from Red Lodge with no idea of the tragedy that occurred there in February 1943 or even realizing what role the Smith Mine played in Montana's once vibrant underground coal mining industry. The site became a haven for rattlesnakes and the occasional beer bust as it slowly rusted away. In the 1990s, the Department of Environmental Quality's Abandoned Mines Section reclaimed the immense slack piles on the hillside to the east of the mine and permanently closed the adits around it, including infamous Number 3 adit. The Abandoned Mines Section did not stop there, but also reclaimed the other mines in the district, including Janskovitch's tipple and adit of his roadside mine. Today, there is little evidence of the Bear Creek district's coal mining heritage – except for the buildings at the Smith Mine site, their rusty corrugated metal walls and empty windows a ghost of the district's most colorful and notorious past.

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[44] Jeffrey E. McNeish, *Quiet Courage: Media Accounts of Montana's Smith Mine Number3 Disaster*, (Billings, MT: The Author, 2007), 157; MCI Collection; Anderson, *Bear Creek Mining District*, 36-37.

[45] MCI Collection; Anderson, *Bear Creek Mining District*, 36-37; Axline, "The Montana, Wyoming & Southern Railroad," 63; Montana Secretary of State, Business Entity Search, obtained at www.app.mt.gov/bes.

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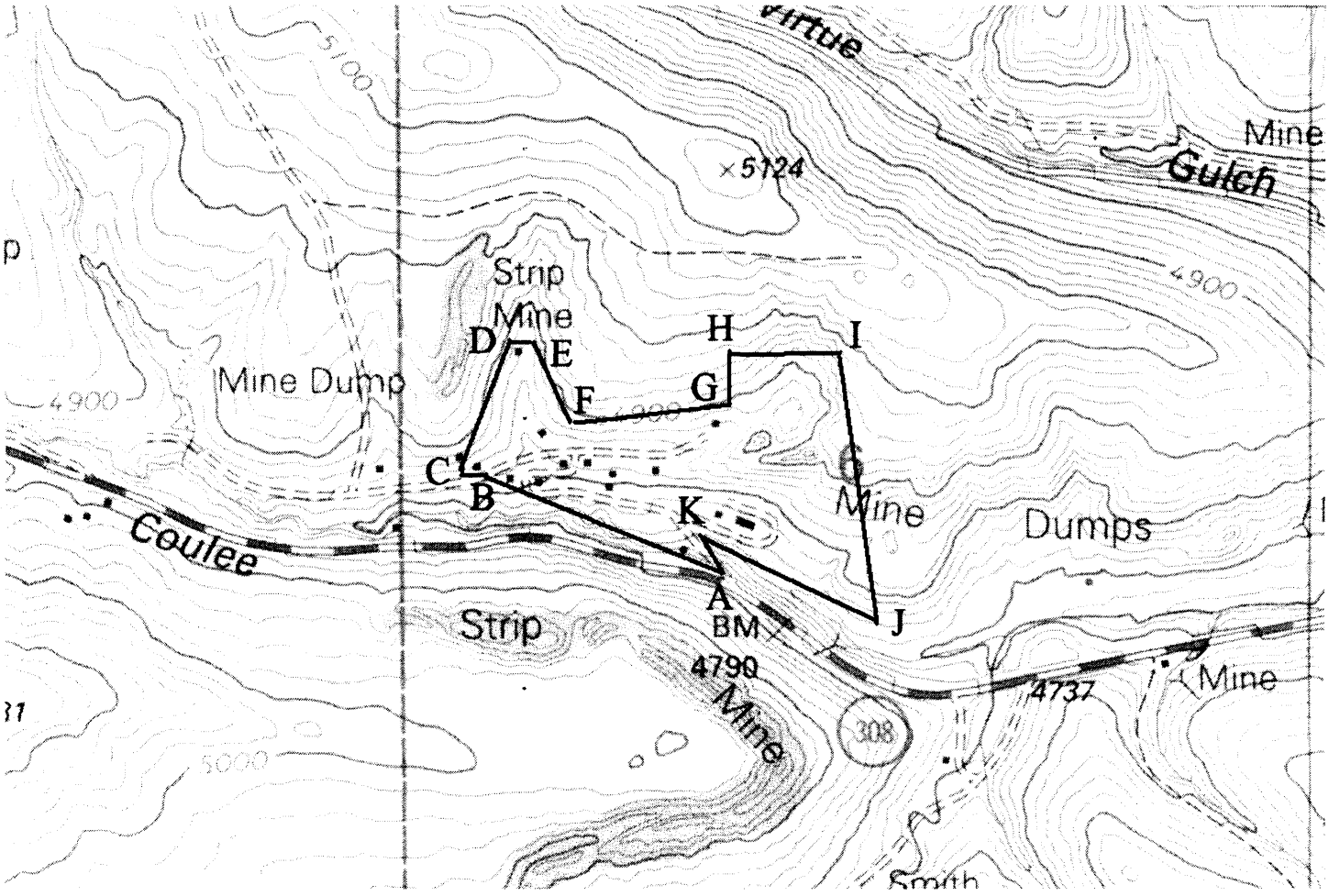
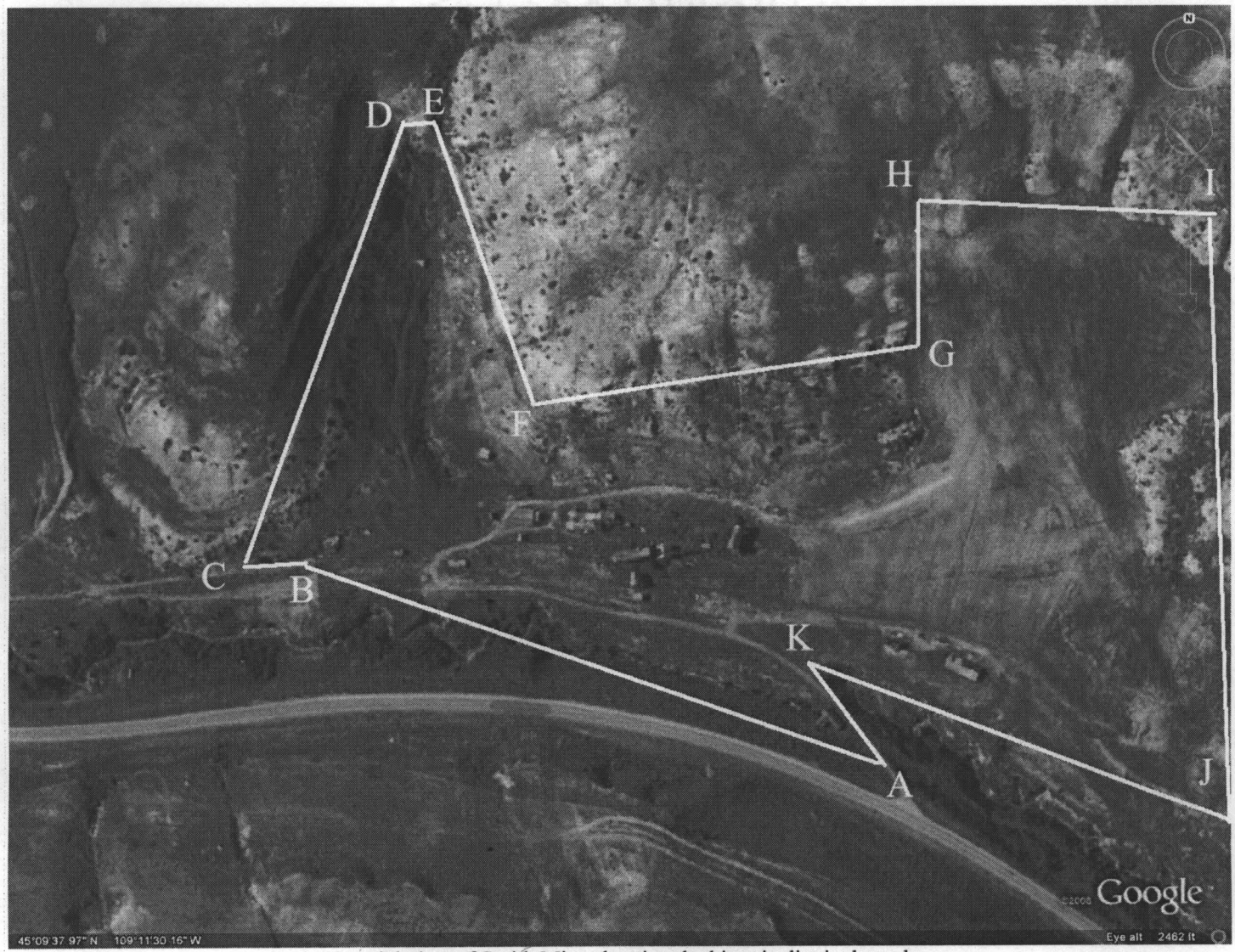
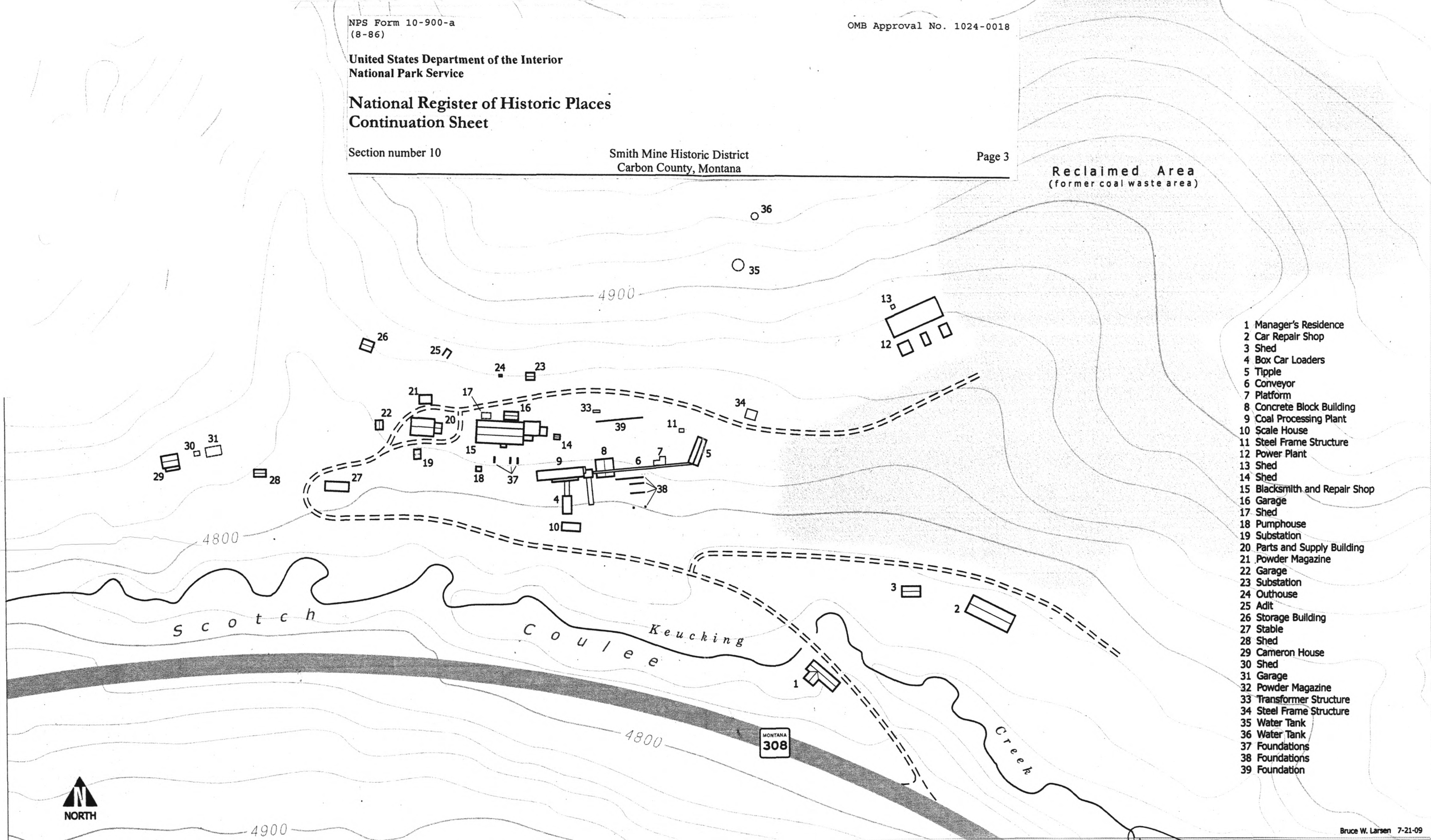


Detail of USGS 7.5 minute Red Lodge East Quadrangle (1996) showing the location of the Smith Mine Historic District.



2008 aerial view of Smith Mine showing the historic district boundary.


Reclaimed Area
(former coal waste area)
4900
4800
4900
4800
Scotch Coulee
Keucking Creek
MONTANA 308
NORTH
1 Manager's Residence
2 Car Repair Shop
3 Shed
4 Box Car Loaders
5 Tipple
6 Conveyor
7 Platform
8 Concrete Block Building
9 Coal Processing Plant
10 Scale House
11 Steel Frame Structure
12 Power Plant
13 Shed
14 Shed
15 Blacksmith and Repair Shop
16 Garage
17 Shed
18 Pumphouse
19 Substation
20 Parts and Supply Building
21 Powder Magazine
22 Garage
23 Substation
24 Outhouse
25 Adit
26 Storage Building
27 Stable
28 Shed
29 Cameron House
30 Shed
31 Garage
32 Powder Magazine
33 Transformer Structure
34 Steel Frame Structure
35 Water Tank
36 Water Tank
37 Foundations
38 Foundations
39 Foundation
Bruce W. Larsen 7-21-09

Photographs

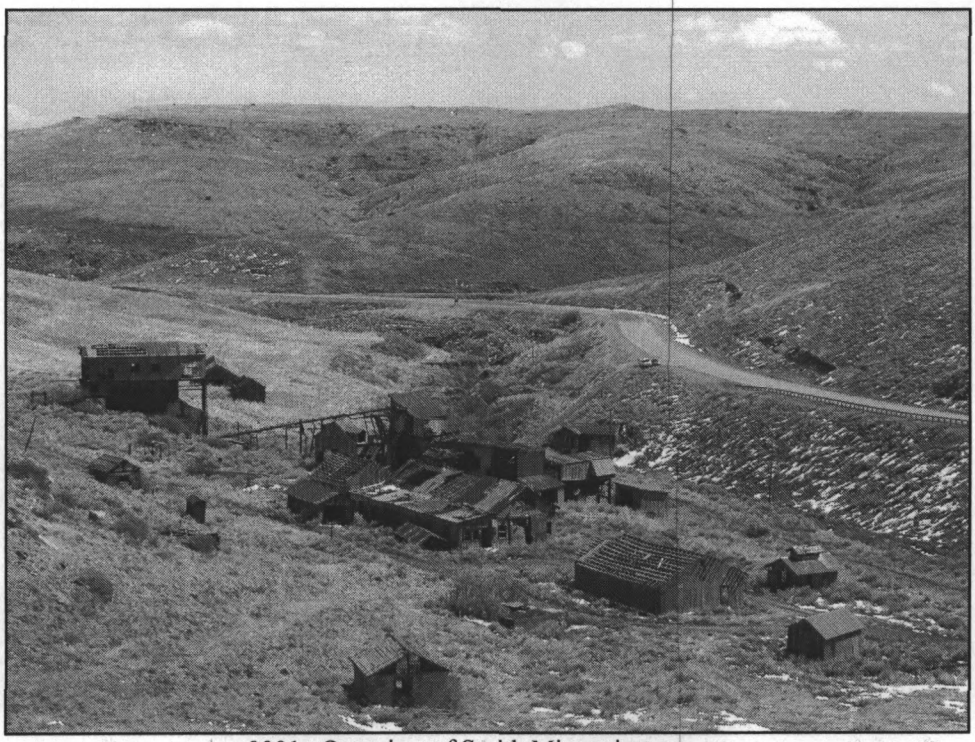
In accordance with the March 2005 Photo Policy expansion, the photos that accompany this nomination are printed on HP Premium Plus Photo Paper, using a Hewlett Packard 100 gray photo cartridge. This combination of paper and inks is included on the NR's list of "Acceptable Ink and Paper combinations for Digital Images." The images are also recorded on an archival CD-R with a resolution at least 1200x1800 pixels, 300 dpi in "true color" 24-bit format.

Photographers: Jon Axline; Joan L. Brownell
Date: November 2008; February 2009; April 2009
Negatives: Jon Axline, Helena, MT; Joan L. Brownell, Billings, MT

Photo Number	Description *
0001.	Overview of Smith Mine, view to east
0002.	Overview of Smith Mine, view to northwest
0003.	Manager's Residence (1), view to southeast
0004.	Car Repair Shop (2), view to west
0005.	Shed (3), view to northwest
0006.	Boxcar loaders (4), view to southwest
0007.	Tipple (5), view to north/northeast
0008.	Conveyor (6), view to north
0009.	Platform (7), view to south
0010.	Concrete Block Building (8), view to north/northwest
0011.	Coal Processing Plant (9), view to south
0012.	Scale House (10), view to east
0013.	Steel Frame Structure (11), view to northeast
0014.	Power Plant (12), view to southeast
0015.	Shed (13), view to south
0016.	Shed (14), view to north/northeast
0017.	Blacksmith and Repair Shop (15), view to east
0018.	Garage (16), view to southeast
0019.	Shed (17), view to east
0020.	Pumphouse (18), view to north/northwest
0021.	Substation (19), view to southwest
0022.	Parts and Supply Building (20), view to west
0023.	Powder Magazine (21), view to north/northeast
0024.	Garage (22), view to northwest
0025.	Substation (23), view to northwest
0026.	Outhouse (24), view to northwest
0027.	Adit (25), view to north/northwest
0028.	Storage Building (26), view to east
0029.	Stable (27), view to northwest
0030.	Shed (28), view to west
0031.	Cameron House (29), view to west
0032.	Shed (30), view to northwest
0033.	Garage (31), view to north/northwest
0034.	Powder Magazine (32), view to northwest
0035.	Transformer Structure (33), view to northeast
0036.	Steel Frame Structure (34), view to north/northeast

0037. Water Tank (35), view to south
0038. Water Tank (36), view to northwest
0039. Foundations (37), view to west
0040. Foundations (38), view to northeast
0041. Foundation (39), view to northeast
0042. Reclaimed area, view to north
0043. Smith Mine 1916
0044. Smith Mine, circa 1941-42
0045. Smith Mine Disaster Adit, February 1943
0046. Smith Mine Disaster "waiting," February 1943

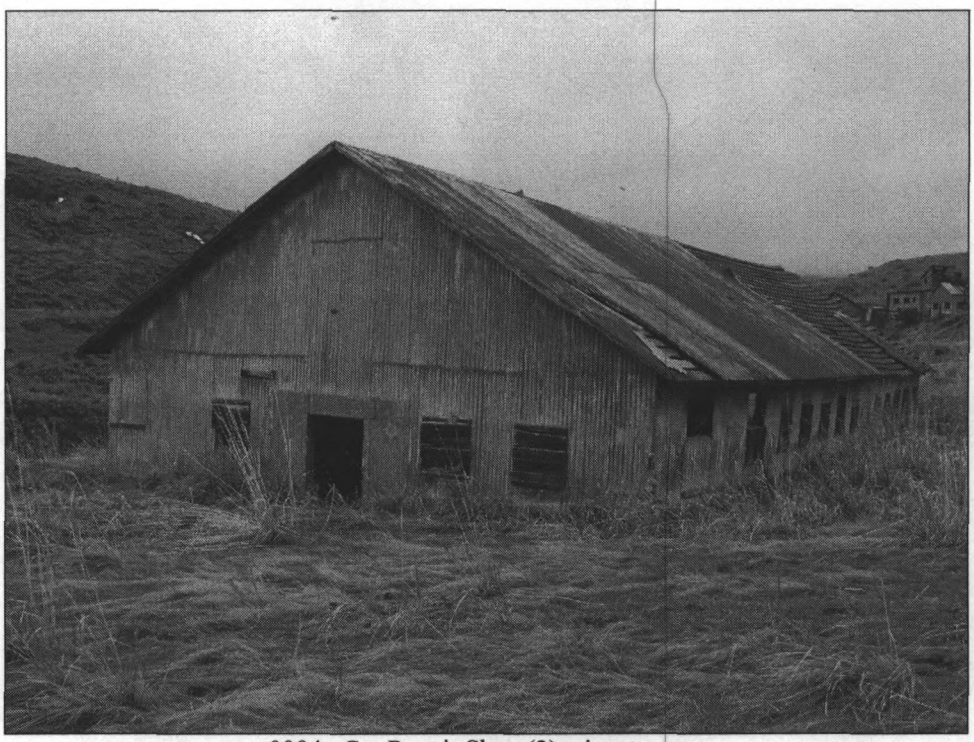
* number in parentheses after the feature name corresponds to the number on the site map



0001. Overview of Smith Mine, view to east

0002. Overview of Smith Mine, view to northwest

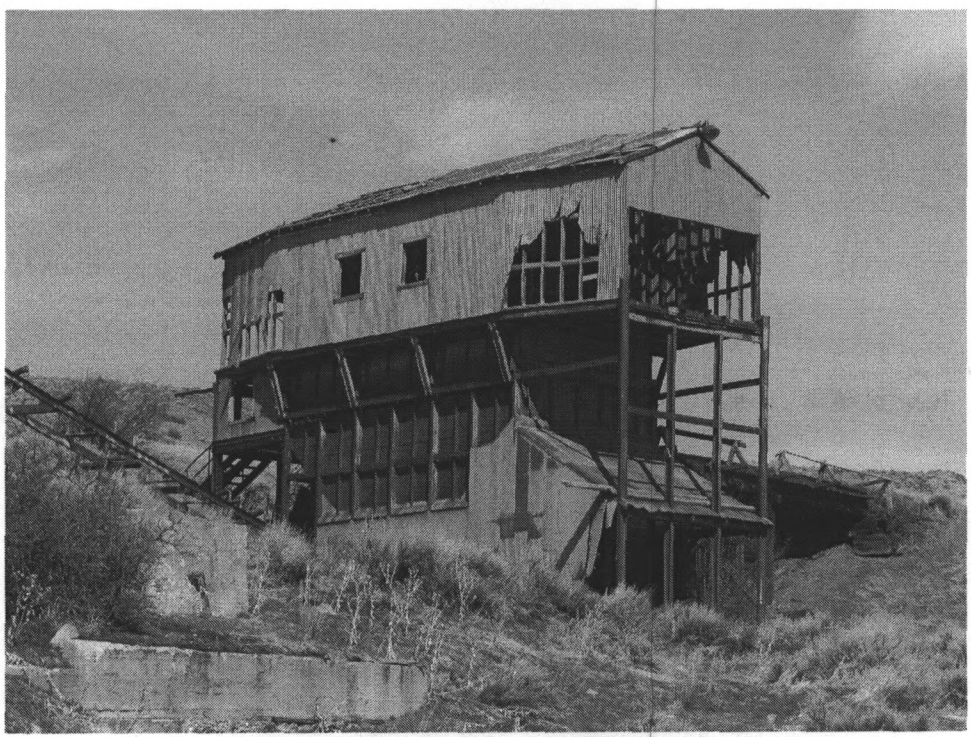
0003. Manager's Residence (1), view to southeast



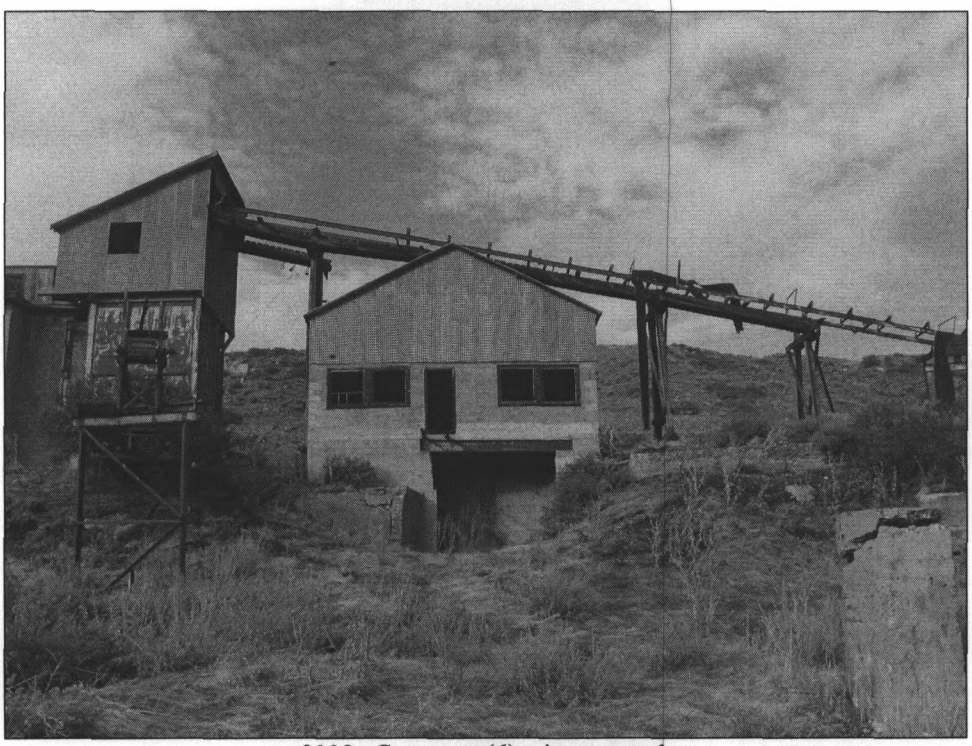
0004. Car Repair Shop (2), view to west

0005. Shed (3), view to northwest

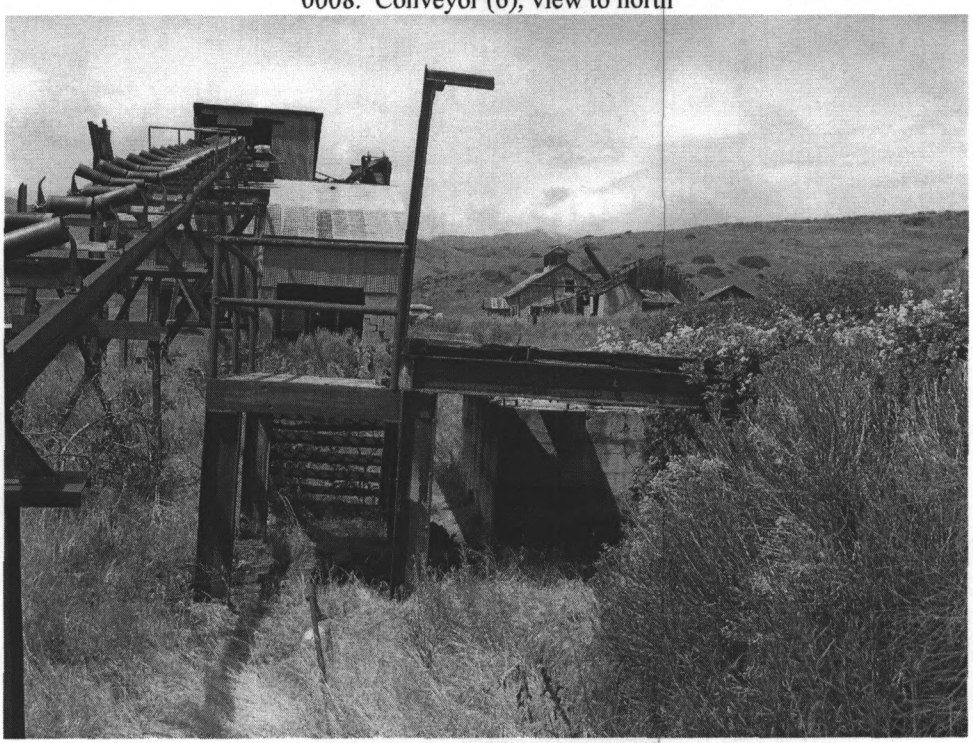
0006. Boxcar loaders (4), view to southwest



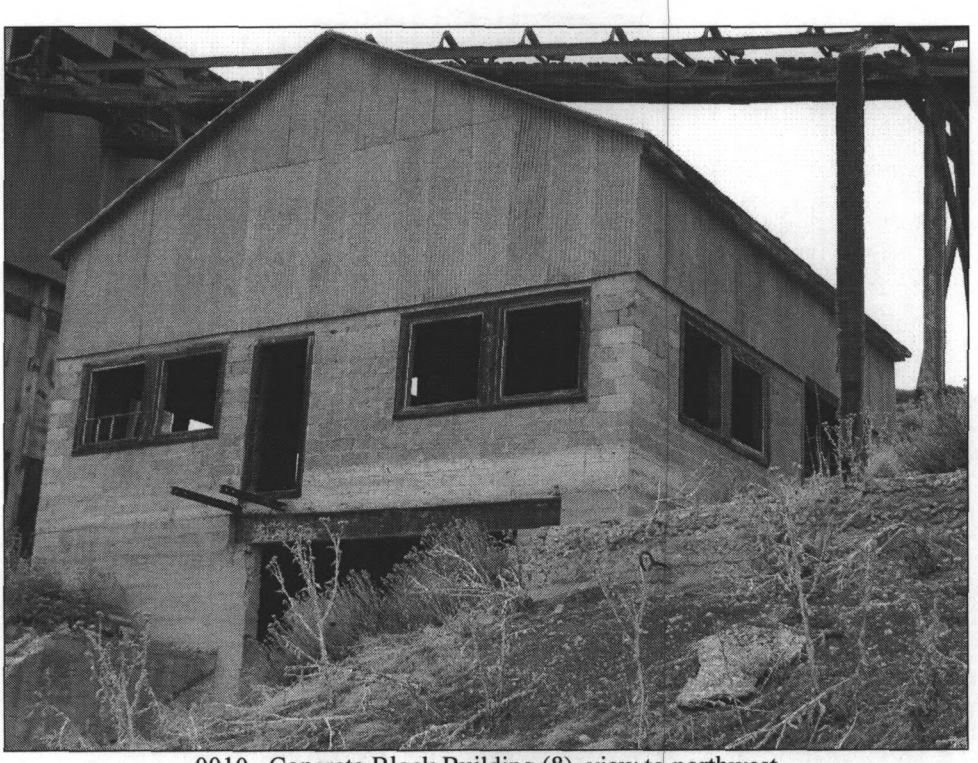
0007. Tipple (5), view to north/northeast



0008. Conveyor (6), view to north

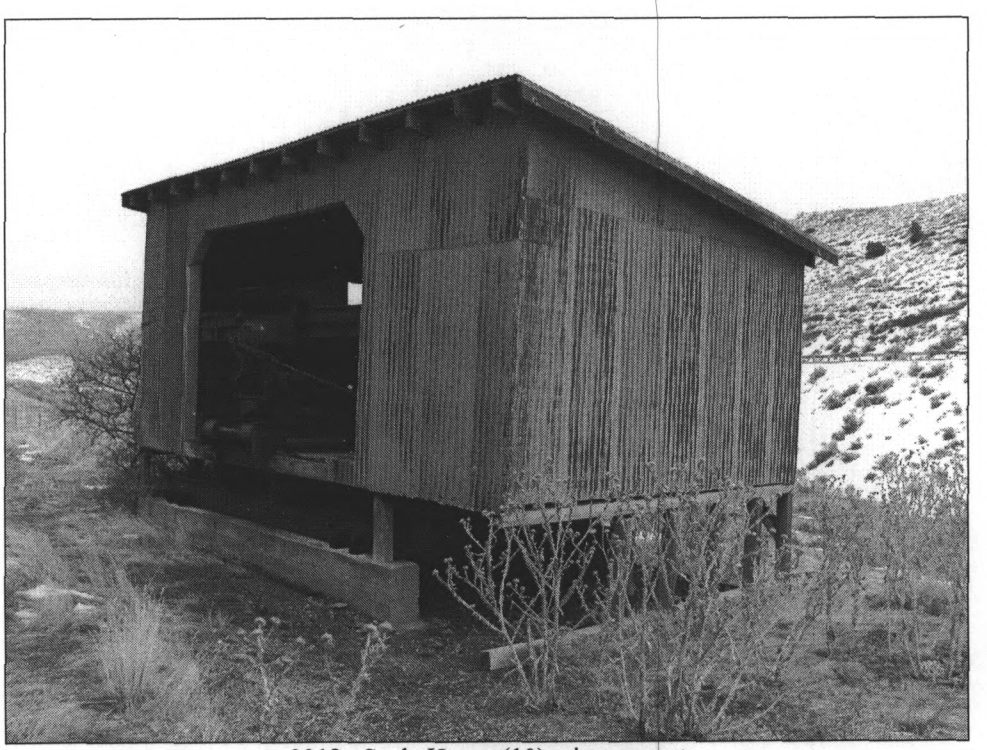


0009. Platform (7), view to south



0010. Concrete Block Building (8), view to northwest

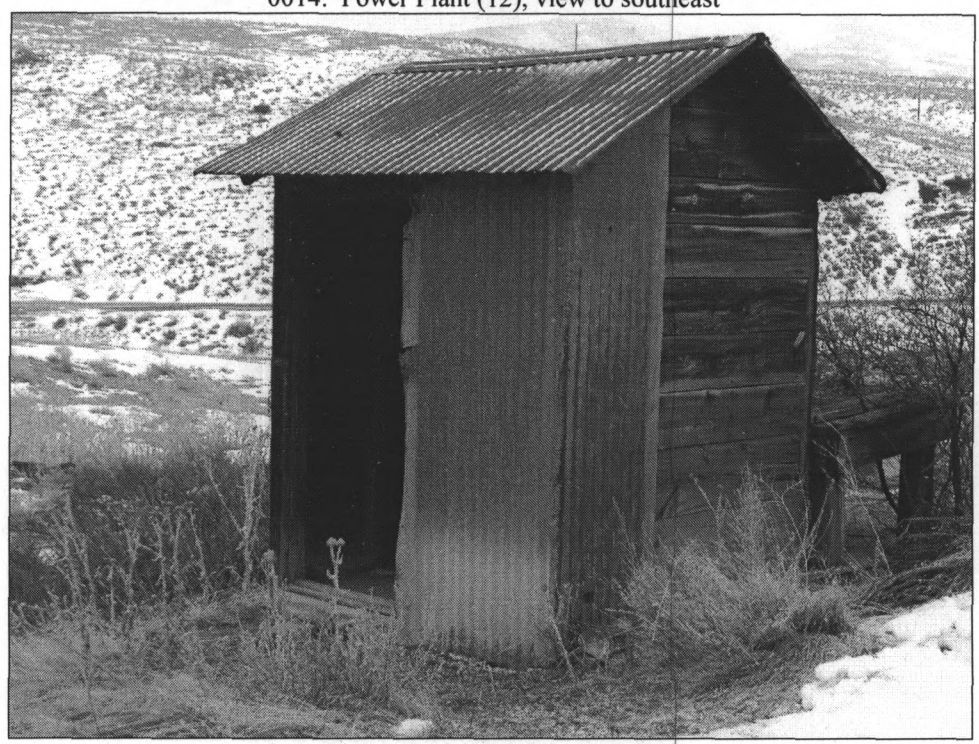
0011. Coal Processing Plant (9), view to south



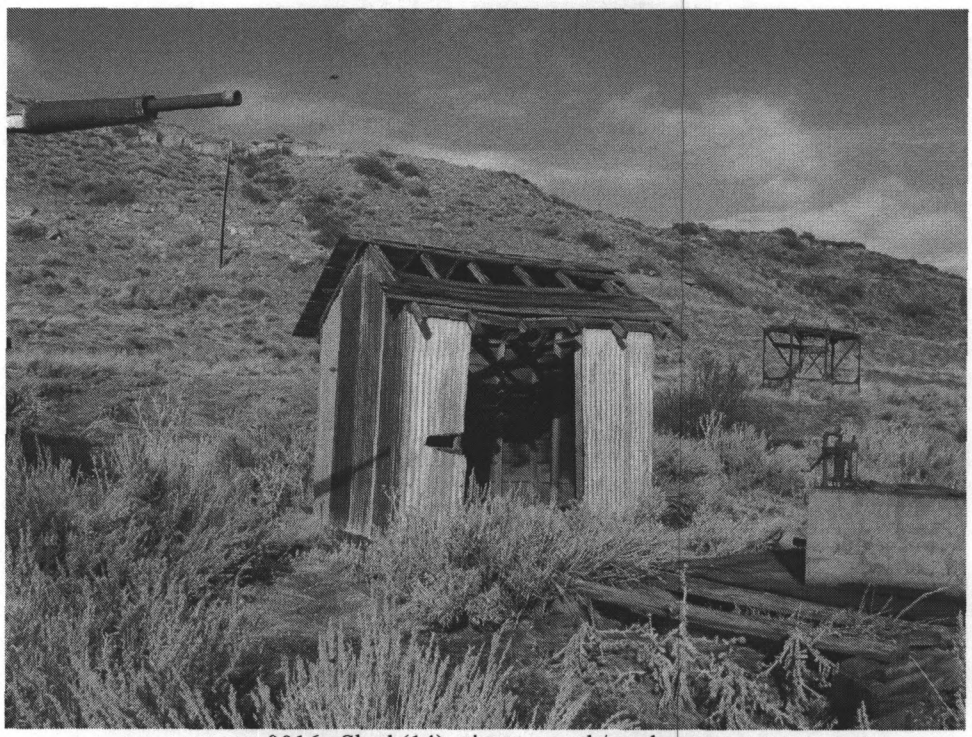
0012. Scale House (10), view to east

0013. Steel Frame Structure (11), view to northeast

0014. Power Plant (12), view to southeast



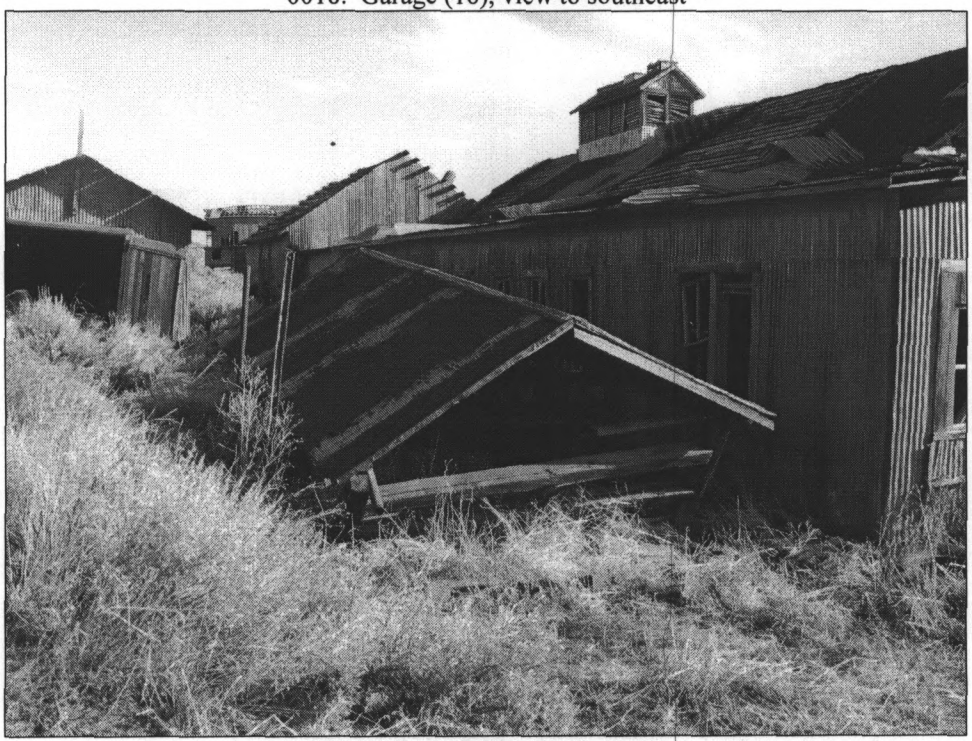
0015. Shed (13), view to south



0016. Shed (14), view to north/northeast

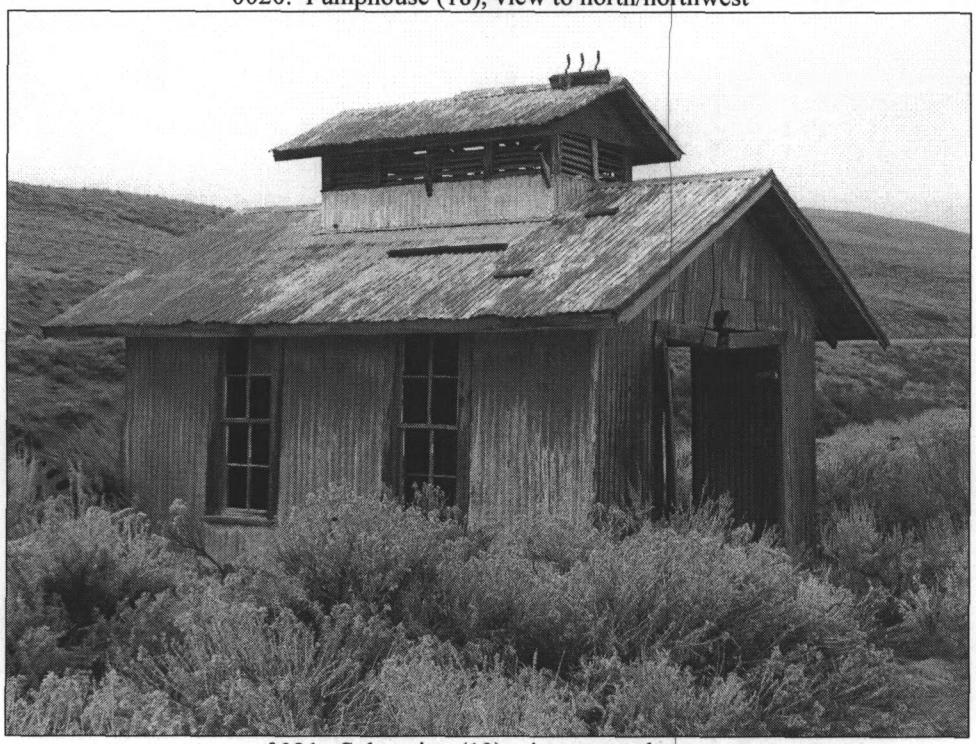
0017. Blacksmith and Repair Shop (15), view to east

0018. Garage (16), view to southeast



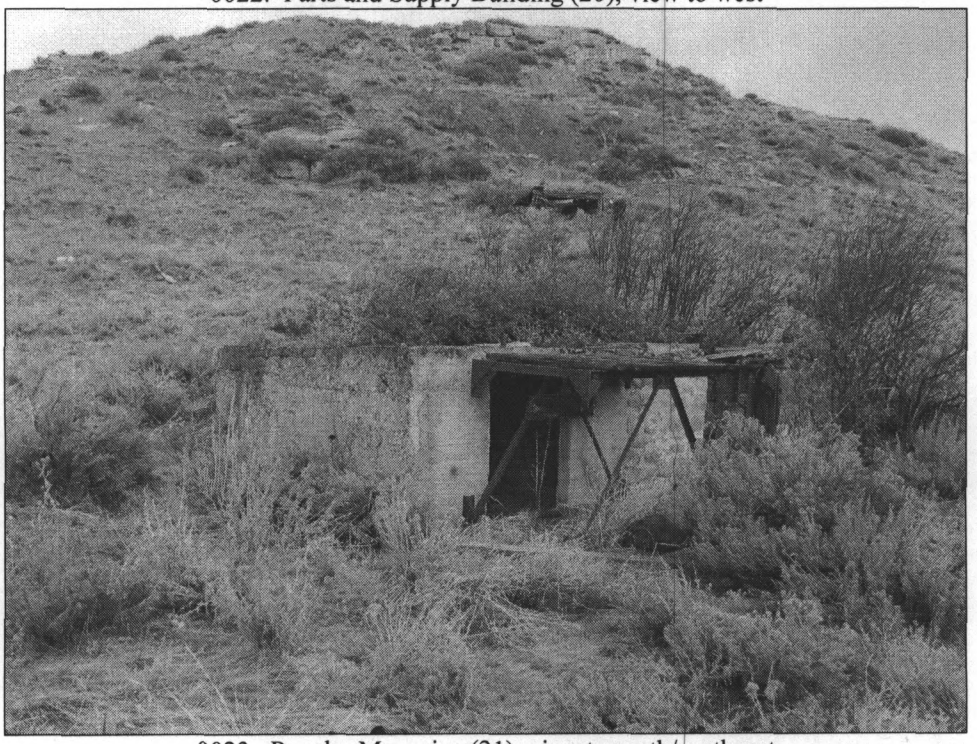
0019. Shed (17), view to east

0020. Pumphouse (18), view to north/northwest

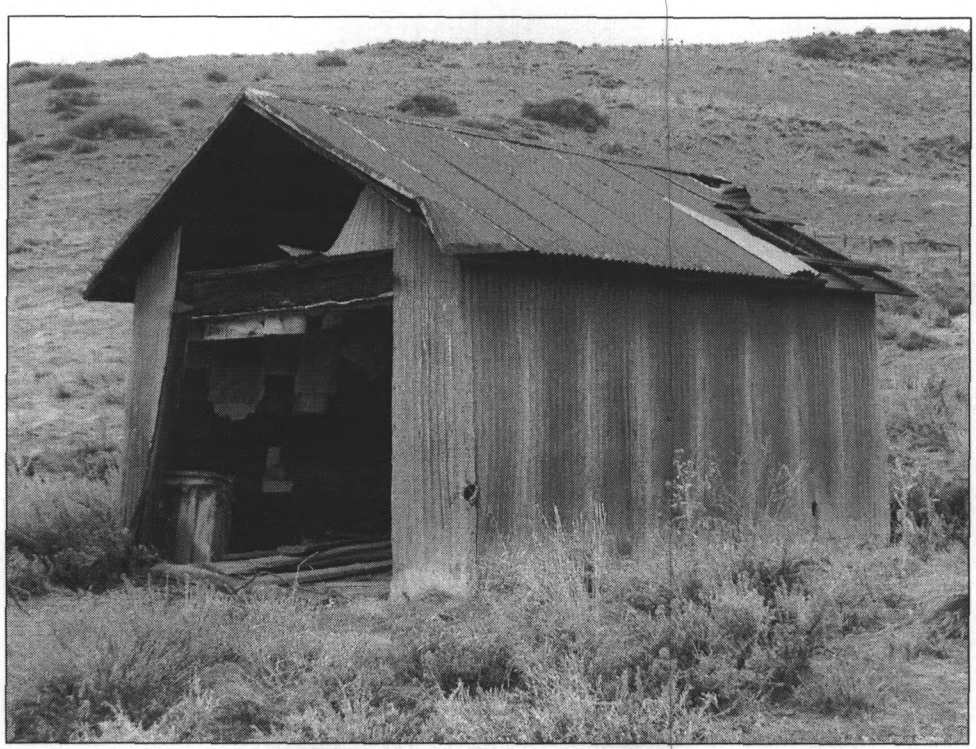


0021. Substation (19), view to southwest

0022. Parts and Supply Building (20), view to west

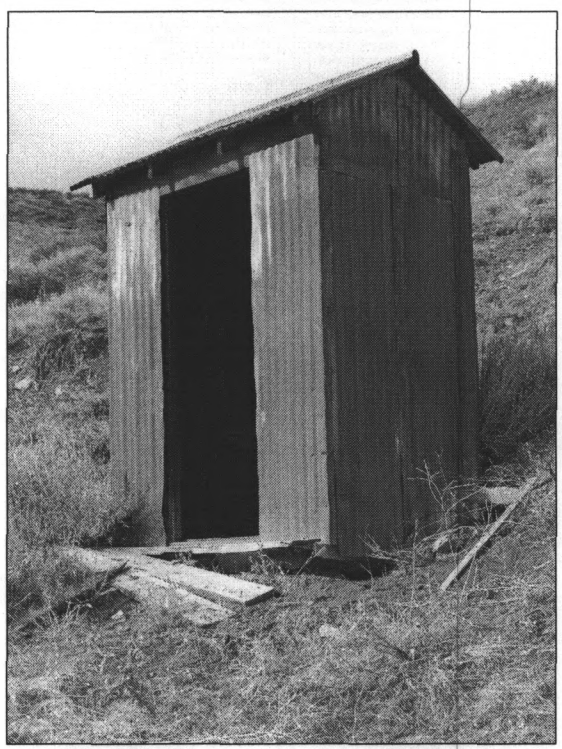


0023. Powder Magazine (21), view to north/northeast



0024. Garage (22), view to northwest

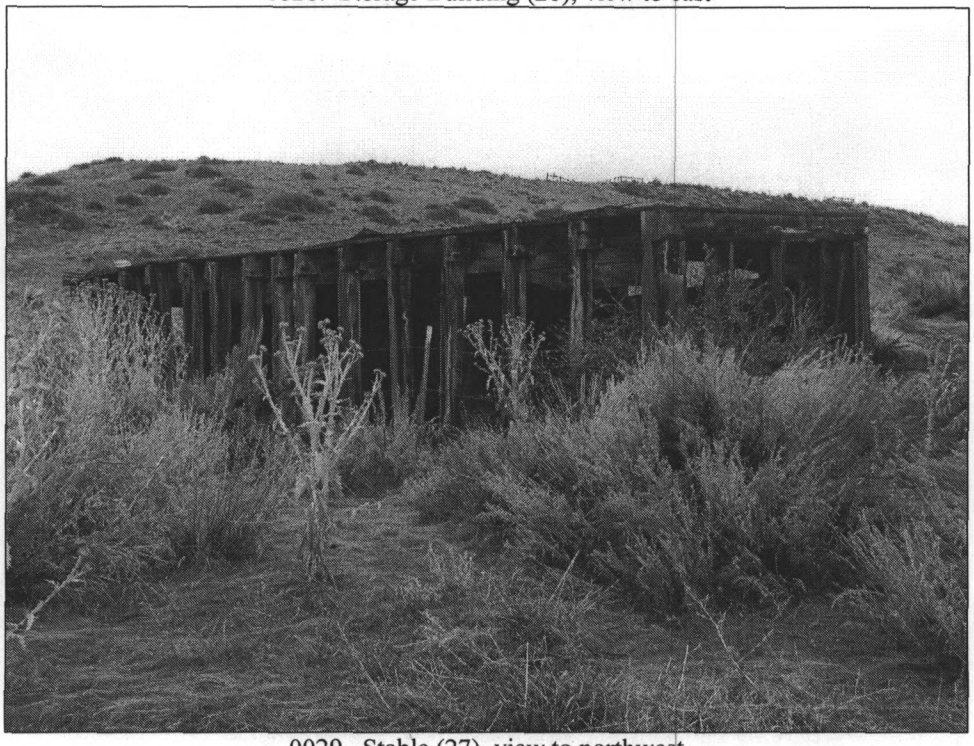
0025. Substation (23), view to northwest



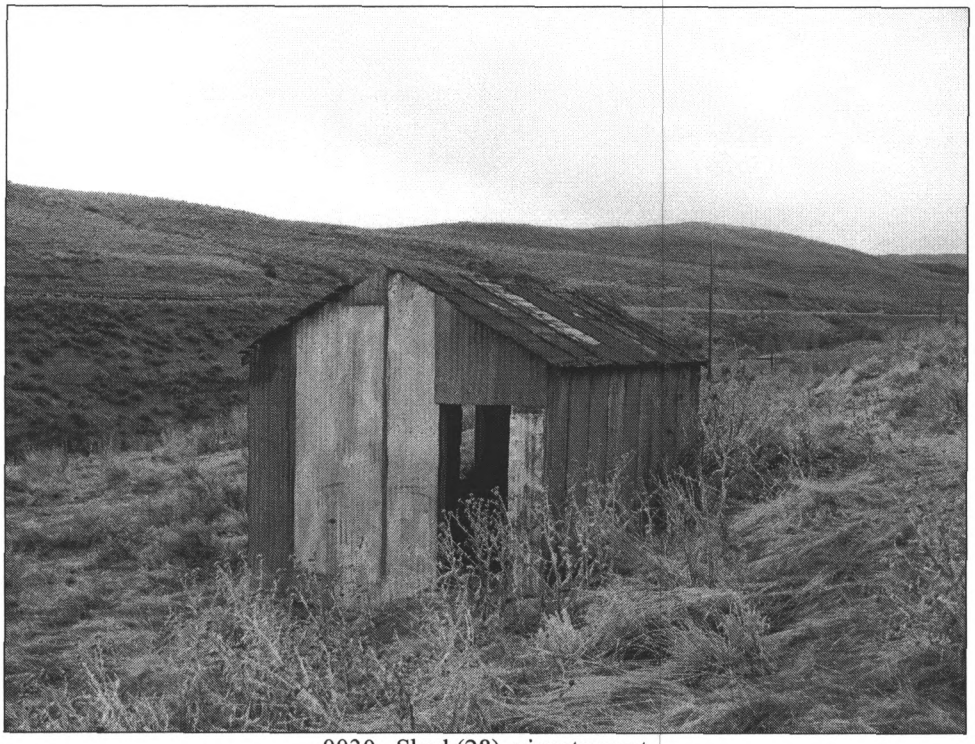
0026. Outhouse (24), view to northwest

0027. Adit (25), view to north/northwest

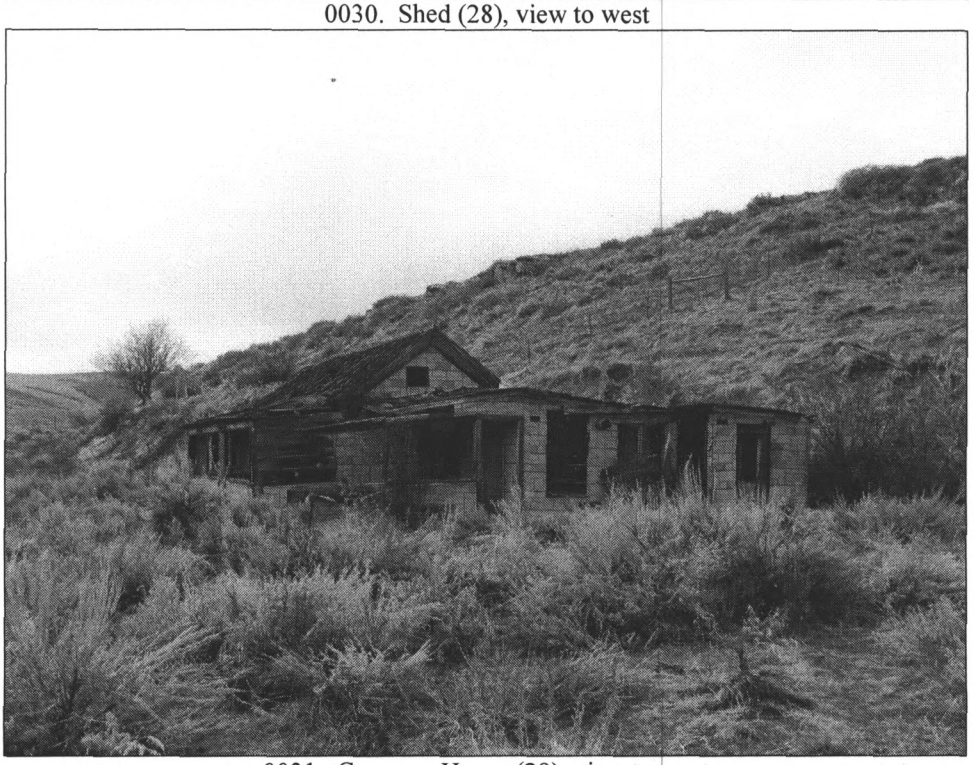
0028. Storage Building (26), view to east



0029. Stable (27), view to northwest

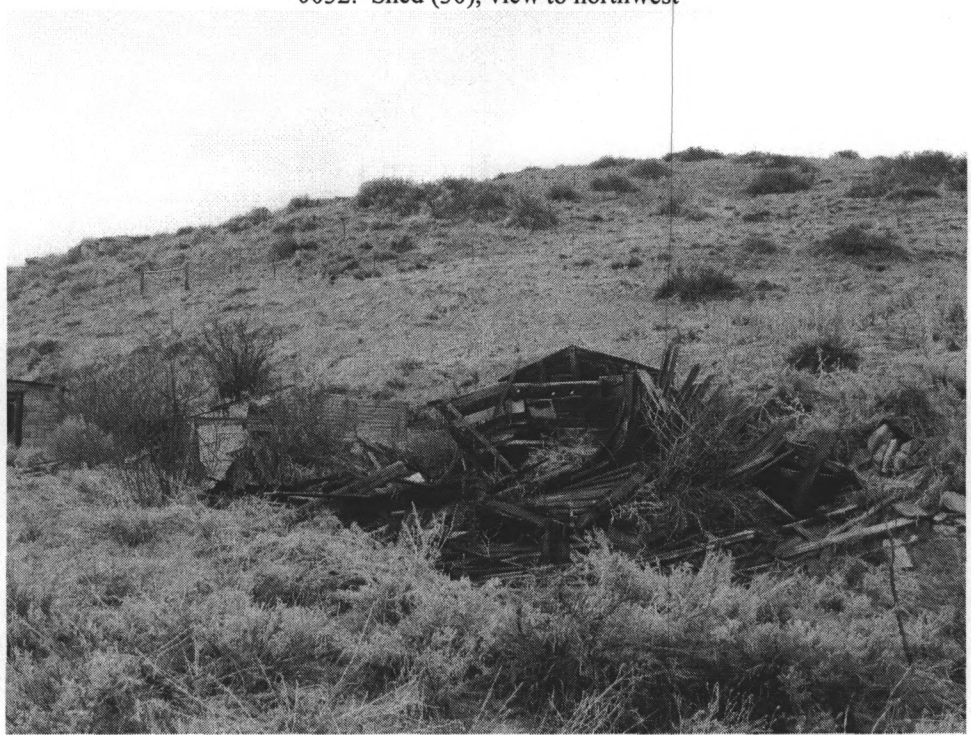


0030. Shed (28), view to west



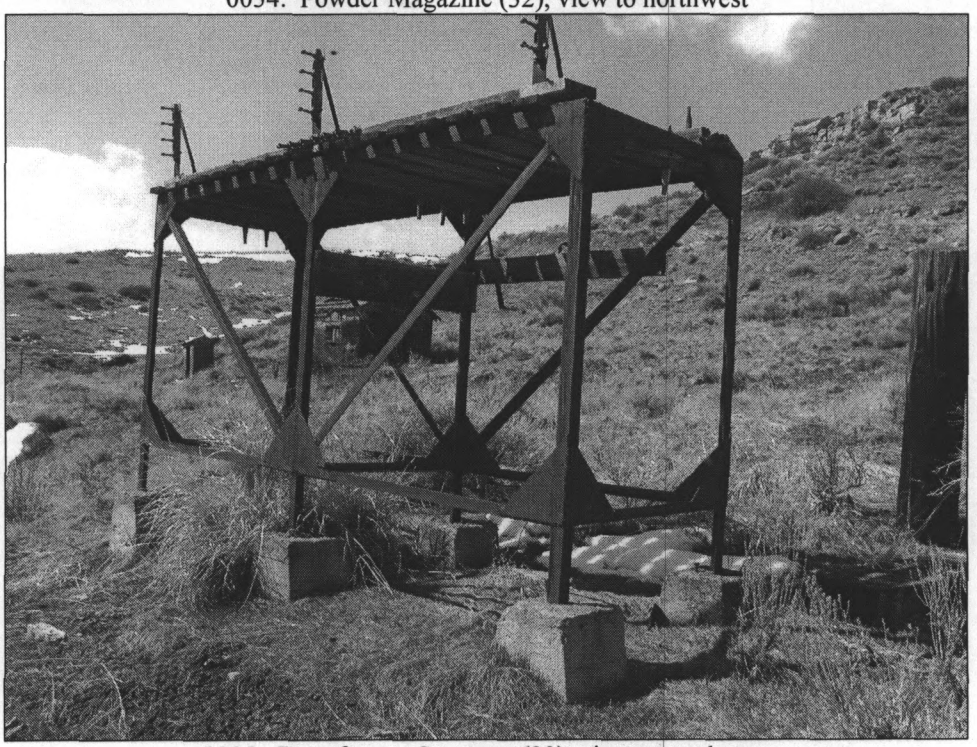
0031. Cameron House (29), view to west

0032. Shed (30), view to northwest

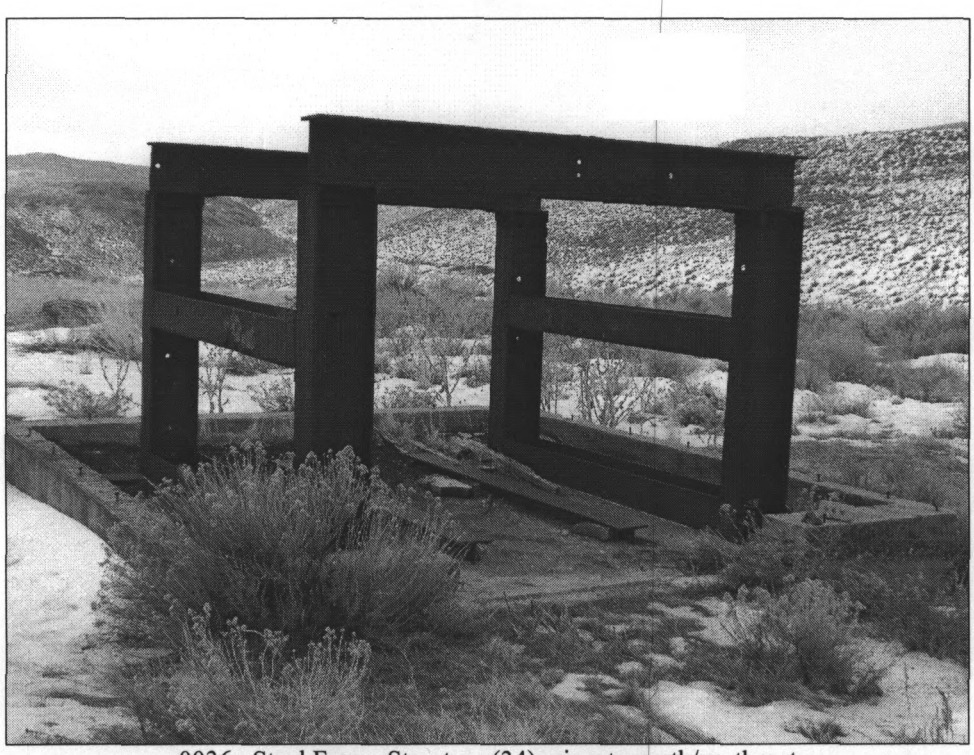


0033. Garage (31), view to north/northwest

0034. Powder Magazine (32), view to northwest

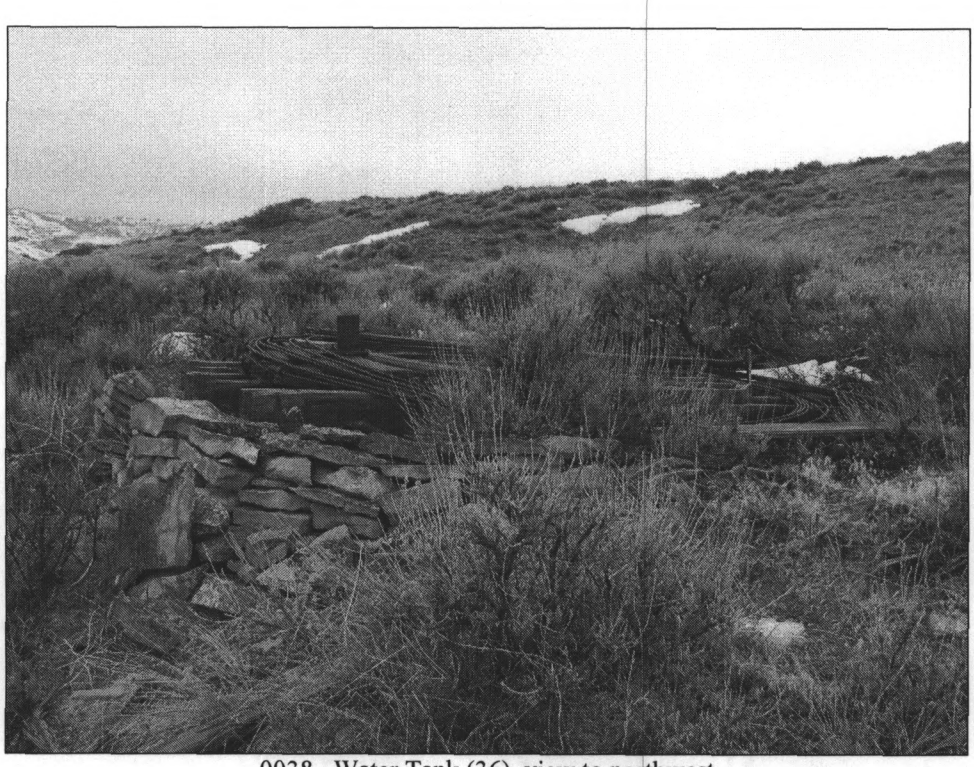


0035. Transformer Structure (33), view to northwest



0036. Steel Frame Structure (34), view to north/northeast

0037. Water Tank (35), view to south

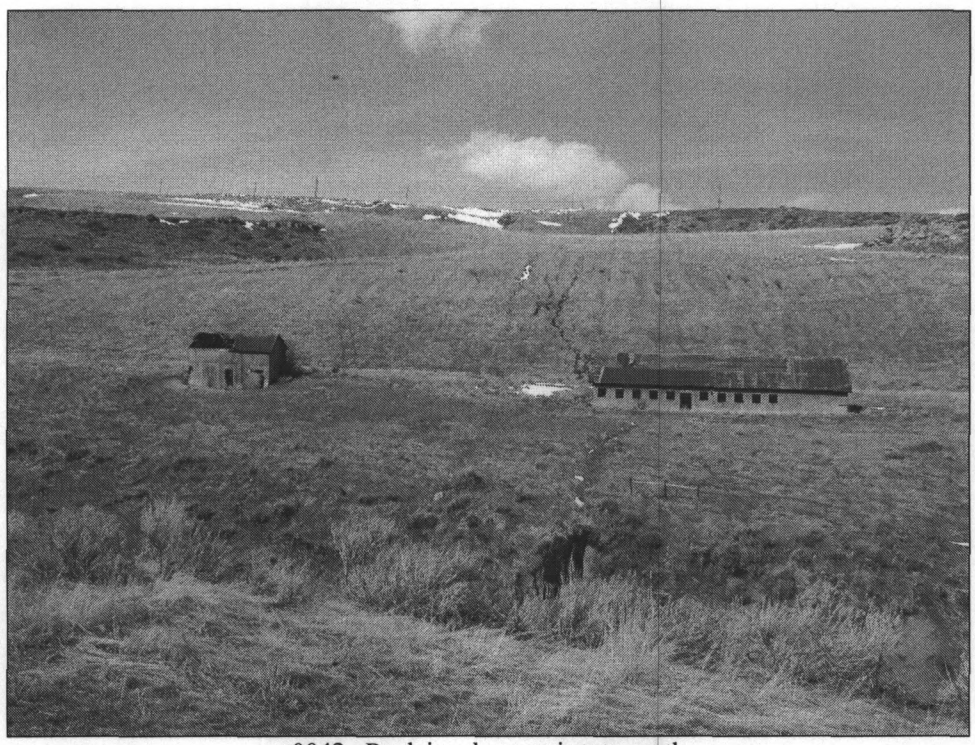


0038. Water Tank (36), view to northwest

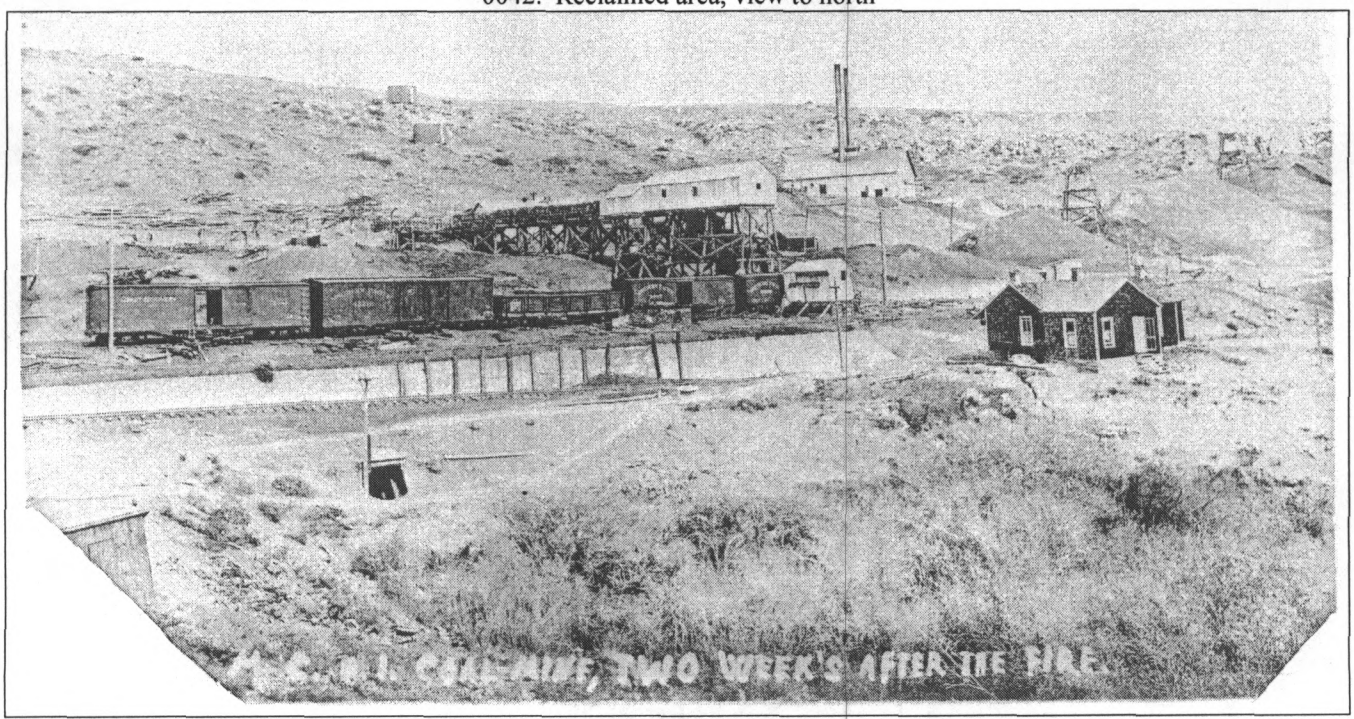
0039. Foundations (37), view to west

0040. Foundations (38), view to north

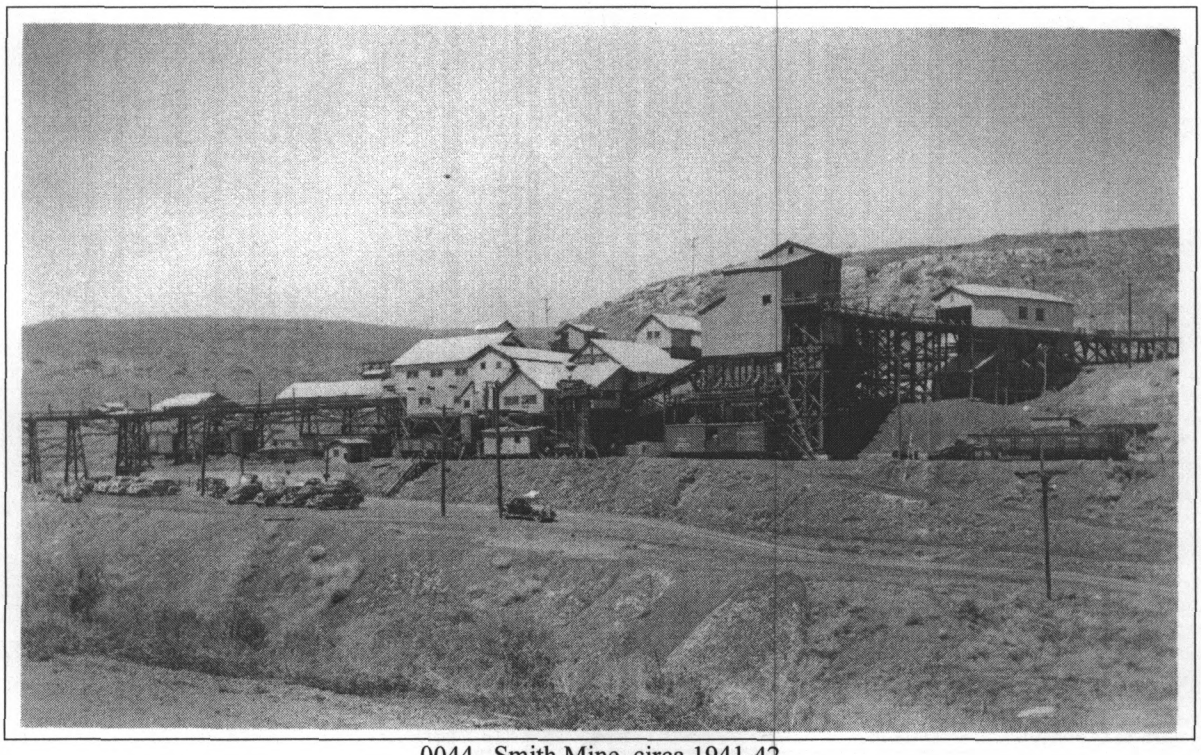
0041. Foundation (39), view to northeast



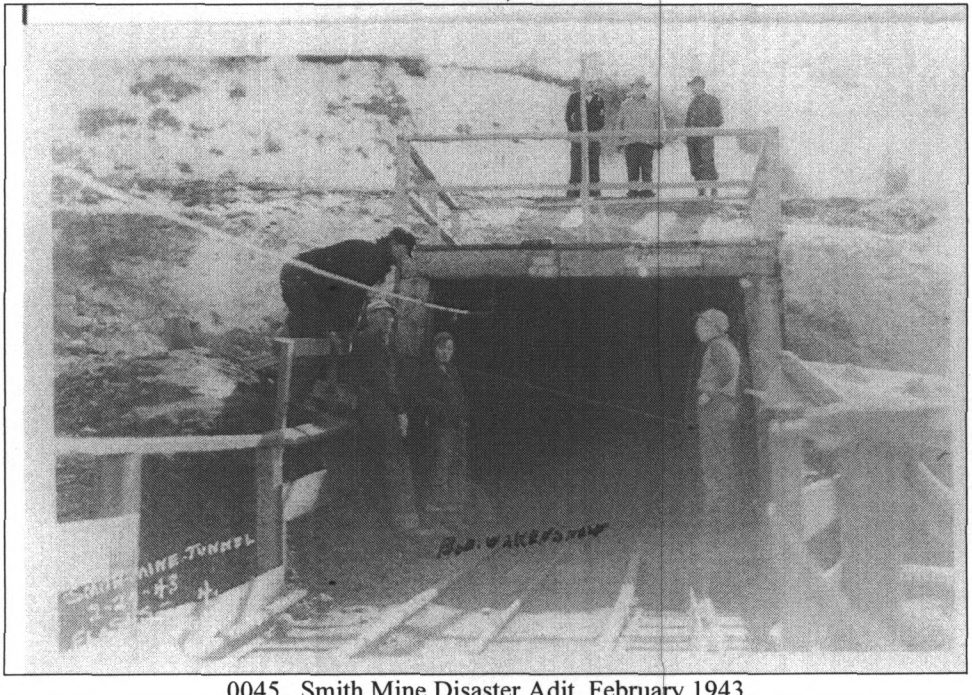
0042. Reclaimed area, view to north



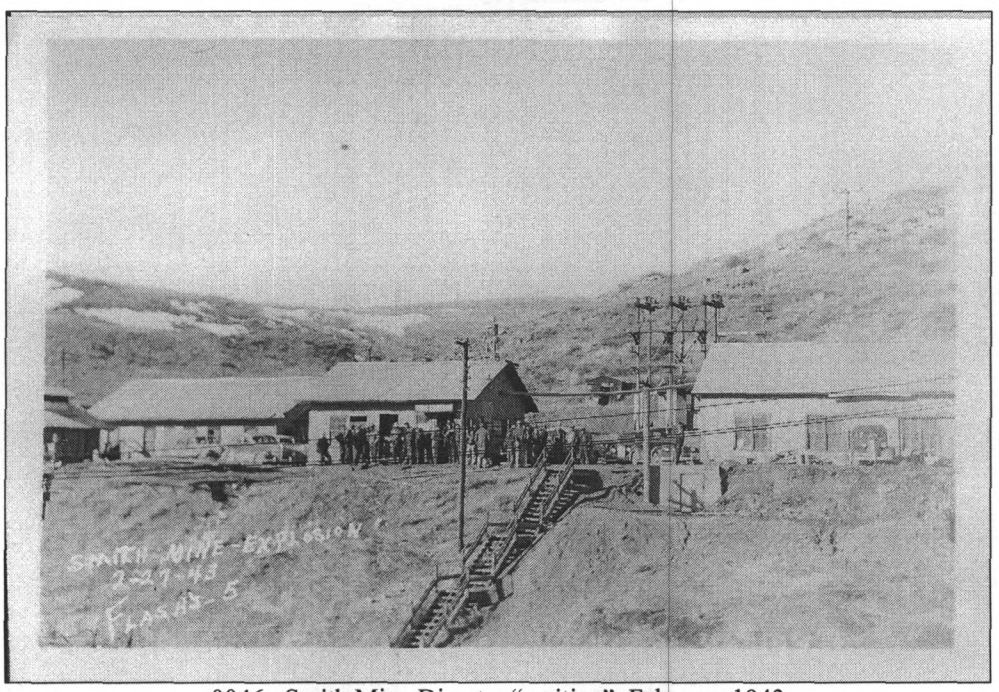
0043. Smith Mine 1916



0044. Smith Mine, circa 1941-42



0045. Smith Mine Disaster Adit, February 1943



0046. Smith Mine Disaster "waiting", February 1943