Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District **Taos County, New Mexico**
Name of Property County and State:

NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018
(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

Resub
1274
875

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name **Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District**

other names/site number **N/A**

2. Location

street & number **Black Copper Canyon Road** ☐ not for publication

city or town **Red River** ☒ vicinity

state **New Mexico** code **NM** county **Taos** code **055** zip code **87558**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ 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 ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Dorothy Victor, acting SHPO Sept. 20, 2000
Signature of certifying official Date

New Mexico State Historic Preservation Division
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other (explain): _____

(Opi) Signature of Keeper Date of Action

Sarah D. Pope 10/27/00

5. Classification

Ownership of Property)
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
- ☐ public-local
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)
- ☒ district
- ☐ site
- ☐ structure
- ☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
7	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
8	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry/Processing/Extraction

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other – no style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions

foundation **Earth, concrete**
walls **Wood, wood beams**
roof **N/A**
other **Wood beams**

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☒ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry
Social History
Engineering
Archaeology--Historic--Non-Aboriginal

Period of Significance

1896-1914, 1945-1950

Significant Dates

1896, 1897-1901, 1912-1914, 1945

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District Name of Property

Taos County, New Mexico County and State:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **1.25 acres**

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	**13**	**466900**	**4054500**
2			
3			
4			

☐ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)
See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)
See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title **Ina Siler and J. Rush Pierce**

organization _____ date **July 1998**

street & number **5920 North Ross Ave.** telephone _____

city or town **Oklahoma City** state **OK** zip code **73112**

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name **Ina Siler**

street & number **5920 North Ross Ave.** telephone **405-810-0690**

city or town **Oklahoma City** state **OK** zip code **73112**

Narrative Description

The Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District is located in Taos County, New Mexico, approximately five miles south of the town of Red River. State Highway 578 leads in a southerly direction from the town and follows the Red River into the Upper Valley. At about 4.6 miles, it is joined on the left (east) by the Black Copper Canyon Road. This road, after about one mile, ends at the gate to the Siler property. From the gate, a road continues east to the Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District, a distance of less than one-half mile. The district is located on a steep slope along the northern side of Black Copper Creek.

The property is located at an altitude of 9300 feet in a mountainous area of alpine forest consisting of Englemann spruce, Douglas fir, aspens, and willows. The entire region is characterized by high mountains with steep, timbered slopes and narrow canyons. One mile east of the district is a high ridge separating the Red River and Moreno Valleys. Near the crest of this ridge, the Black Copper Creek begins and flows westward, eventually joining the Red River, part of the Rio Grande watershed. Across the ridge to the east in the Moreno Valley, the Moreno Creek flows into the Cimarron River and is a part of the Canadian watershed. Adjacent to Black Copper Canyon are the Bear, Fourth of July, and East Fork canyons.

The district comprises about one and one-quarter acres above and along side Black Copper Creek. It includes several features, the most important being the mine itself and the stamp mill. Of these two, the mill is the most noted, being well-preserved and of the greatest historical significance. In 1991, an archaeological survey of the mine was made by Jeffrey Boyer, Office of Archaeological Studies, Museum of New Mexico. As part of his report, he stated that this mill "may be the only standing stamp mill in Northern New Mexico." Furthermore, in a cover letter to Boyer's report, written by Homer Milford of the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, Milford states:

> This site contains the only 19th Century Stamp mill in New Mexico known to Bob Eveleth of the New Mexico Bureau of Mines, and everyone else I have talked to. It is thus a unique historical entity for New Mexico. The few remaining 19th Century Stamp mills throughout the West are rapidly being destroyed. There are over a dozen arrastras but this is the

only technological successor of the arrastra that has survived to 1991 in New Mexico.

The various features of the area are described below and are numbered in accordance with the accompanying site map.

Feature 1: Concrete Foundation. This is a concrete foundation which measures 6'6" by 5'6" and is 2'6" thick. Along the western side of it are two sections of 4" iron pipe, one leading in the direction of the shaft and the other disappearing into the ground, down slope. This feature appears to be the foundation for the boiler which produced steam to operate the hoist machinery and possibly to supply the Stamp Mill machine.

Feature 2: Retaining Wall. The retaining wall is built into the hillside and consists of 8" by 10" milled timbers which are stacked to a height of 5'6", supported by iron rods. The wall extends from just beyond the concrete foundation to a point slightly east of the shaft, a distance of 42 feet. At least a portion of this wall appears to make up the back wall of the shaft house.

Feature 3: Rock Foundation. This is a foundation composed of rough-hewn rock located adjacent to the retaining wall. It is 7 1/5' wide and 19½' long and is partially covered with rubble. There are red brick fragments present, milled planks, and two lengths of ore car rail. This is probably the location of the shaft house noted on the patent plat.

Feature 4: Main Shaft. The main shaft of the Black Copper Mine. Currently, this shaft is capped by a 6" concrete slab that measures 13' by 16' (capped in 1993). Prior to closure, the opening was 10'10" by 8'2" and the shaft reached maximum depth of 248 feet. There were five levels, with Levels 2, 4, and 5 being the most extensive. Level 2, called the Merrick Tunnel, was quite long, extending 785 feet and having an opening at a distance north and west of the shaft. Diagrams of the mine, its various levels, and its extent are shown on accompanying site maps.

Feature 5: Tower. This is the collapsed hoist tower that stood over the mine shaft and now rests atop the tailings pile. The tower was constructed of large milled wooden beams which measure 11" by 11" and are 25½' long. Smaller beams -- 6¾" by 3" and 3¾" by 3½"-- are scattered about. A large steel pulley is still present at the top of the tower and steel cable is tangled in the beams.

Feature 6: Discovery Adit. The discovery adit is located east of the shaft. The opening measures 4'3" tall and 3'7" wide and the adit is open about 45' into the mountain. A few scattered boards are all that remains of the portal. Other beams are scattered down slope along with a small pile of rocks.

Feature 7: Black Copper Adit. This is the Black Copper adit, located just above the level of the creek west of the tailings pile. The collapsed adit is evident as a scar 23' long and 10' wide. The portal had a wooden beam framework that is now largely buried to within one foot of the top beam at the entrance and there are standing timbers on either side of the entrance. Beams and logs are scattered below the portal and a short 4-inch length of pipe extends from the entrance to the adit. Originally, there was a small room just inside the entrance.

Feature 8: Stamp Mill. The function of a stamp mill was to crush the ore, producing sand and fine gravel from which the gold could be extracted. Atop the mill was a large wooden hopper, funnel shaped, into which the ore was loaded. It passed down through small gates at the bottom of the hopper onto belt or gear-driven wheels and was fed into an iron trough below the stamps. The stamps themselves consisted of large, heavy iron pistons driven by a machine, often a steam engine. The stamps were lifted, then dropped onto the ore, crushing it to sand and gravel. This crushed ore was then passed into a slanting wooden sluice box where it was mixed with water. The slurry moved down the sluice and the gold, being heavy, would settle to the bottom where it could be recovered. To increase the yield, plates made of copper and filmed with mercury were placed in the sluice box. The gold combined with the mercury to form an amalgam which was easy to recover. After a 'run' of ore, the amalgam was collected and heated, vaporizing the mercury and recovering the gold. By cooling the vapor, the mercury itself could be recovered and reused.

The Black Copper Stamp Mill is located on a steep hillside overlooking the creek and stands west of the mine. The primary structural members of the mill are 12" by 12" milled beams, three on each side and buried deeply into the hillside. The structure is 2½' wide and 18' long, with an additional 9½' platform on the downhill side of the mill. The north and top-most part of the structure is the wooden hopper, a large box with a floor that slopes steeply downhill. The floor is made of 1" by 6" planks laid side by side on 3" by 10" planks that are set 12" apart. The sides and front of the hopper are also built of 1" by 6" planks, the side planks being set at about a 45-degree angle. There are two small gates at the bottom of the front wall of the hopper.

Below the hopper is the cast-iron machinery and the stamps. This bears the name "McFarlane & Co., Denver, Col.", apparently the manufacturer. Just below the gates are gear-driven wheels which fed the ore into the iron trough under the stamps. This trough rests on upright 2" by 12" planks set into the ground. Although the mill was built to accommodate ten stamps, only five were purchased. The stamps, which consist of heavy iron pistons, are 8.75" in diameter with walls 2" thick. They were

drive by a camshaft connected to a large wooden wheel still mounted east of the mill. This wheel was in turn driven by a belt connected to an engine which was mounted on a small platform 4 feet from the southeast corner of the mill. As the wheel turned, the camshaft lifted the stamps and dropped them into the trough, crushing the ore. Although the engine is now gone, the engine platform is still intact.

The crushed ore exited the trough through a door (now gone) and probably into a sluice mounted on the platform in the front or downhill side of the mill. This sluice is now gone but its presence is indicated by the two small depressions observed at the bottom of the hill along the road. Although much of the machinery has been removed from the mill, it is remarkable that the drive wheel, the funnel wheel, and the stamps are still present after almost one hundred years.

The tailings pile is located immediately south of the shaft and southeast of the discovery adit. Its top is about 26' in diameter, while its base measures about 120' across at the bottom of the canyon. The pile is approximately 40' in height and because of its size, appears to have re-routed Black Copper Creek, forcing it southward around the base.

Statement of Significance

The Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District is historically significant under criterion A for its association with the mining industry in New Mexico and particularly the gold mining boom in the Red River area at the end of the 19th Century. This gold rush led to the influx of several thousand new people into the area, changing the demographics and culture of this part of the state. Although the boom was rather short lived, it brought considerable new wealth at the time. Even though many of the miners eventually left for other places, some remained and settled; a surprising number of people living in this area today are direct descendants of those who originally came in search of riches. The Black Copper, being one of the premier mines in the Red River valley, is a prime example of the flow of events at the time. Its rapid rise and subsequent fall are a perfect parallel of the history of the entire gold mining boom in the surrounding districts. An understanding of this mine provides a key to the interpretation of this part of New Mexico's history. The Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District is also significant under criterion C because of the continued existence of the Stamp Mill, in surprisingly good condition after close to 100 years. This mill is likely the only remaining nineteenth-century stamp mill in New Mexico and one of the few in the West. Finally, the Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District is significant under criterion D for the subsurface archaeological remains likely to be associated with the nominated features, and for the information to be gained from the physical structures themselves and their spatial relationships.

HISTORY

During the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century, northern New Mexico became the destination for hundreds of miners from various parts of the United States. They roamed the canyons and mountains of the Sangre de Cristo in search of gold and silver, built roads and towns, opened hundreds of mines, and left a legacy which is felt today. The mining activities were centered in four areas: near Taos on the Rio Hondo, in the Moreno Valley, along La Belle Creek in the Valle Vidal, and in the Red River Canyon. The last of these was developed latest, but for a short time the mines near Red River were very active and productive. One of the richest of these was the Black Copper, located five miles south of Red River Town and along Black Copper Creek.

Taos Area

Exploration for gold began in the Taos area immediately following the Civil War. In 1865 mining claims were filed by Kit Carson and Ceran St. Vrain on land not far from Arroyo Hondo. The ore was of low-grade quality and in small amounts so the miners began to move up the canyon into the mountains. However, rich strikes in the Moreno Valley lured most of the miners eastward to the slopes of Baldy Mountain. Activity in the Taos area was limited until the 1880s when William Fraser built a road up the canyon to the headwaters of Rio Hondo. In 1892, rich ore was found, miners flocked to the area and the town of Amizette was established. Exploration was carried out in the surrounding area: Long Canyon, Gold Hill, Bull-of-the-Woods Mountain, and Fraser Mountain. Results were disappointing because of inconsistency of the yield and the severe difficulties in transporting the ore to distant smelters. An influx of money was provided by Albert Twining in 1901 and there was a brief period of interest. The town of Twining was formed at the junction of the Lake Fork and East Fork (the approximate site of today's Taos Ski Valley). Within ten years most of the miners had left and the town and mine sites were deserted.

Moreno Valley

In 1866, a Ute Indian traveled to Fort Union, New Mexico Territory, to trade furs. He carried with him some colored rocks he had gathered, thinking they might be of value. The fort's sutler, Col. William Moore, quickly realized that these stones consisted of copper ore. He traced their source to Baldy Mountain in the Moreno Valley. With two partners he filed a claim in the area and formed The Copper Company. Three prospectors were hired to explore the area and they set out in the fall of that year. After reaching the south slopes of Baldy and while camp was being set up, one of the men, R. P. Kelly, decided to pan the nearby stream. To his surprise, gold was found in significant amounts. Over the next few weeks, gold was discovered in many of the surrounding streams, gulches, and hillsides. However, the approach of winter forced the prospectors out of the high valley and they returned to Fort Union. Over the winter news of this gold strike leaked so that in the following spring hundreds of prospectors flocked to Baldy Mountain and the Moreno Valley. The subsequent arrival of many more miners led to the forming of a townsite west of the mountain. It was named for Elizabeth, the four-year-old daughter of John Moore, a principal organizer of the community. Thus, in 1867, Elizabethtown became the first

incorporated town in New Mexico; by the following year it contained several thousand people.
At the time, the entire area was owned by Lucien Maxwell, who had acquired the vast Beaubien-Miranda Land Grant. He opened several mines on the north and east slopes of Baldy, including the Aztec, Montezuma, and French Henry mines. The Aztec in particular proved to contain very rich ore and Maxwell soon became the wealthiest man in New Mexico.

On the west side of Baldy near Elizabethtown, conditions were more suitable for placer and hydraulic mining which required large amounts of water. As the mining activity increased, the volume of water in the Moreno Creek proved insufficient, especially in late summer and fall. Maxwell hired Capt. N. S. Davis, an army engineer, to search for additional sources of water. After surveying the surrounding area, he proposed building a large irrigation ditch to divert water from the Red River watershed into the Moreno Valley. The Moreno Water and Mining Company was organized to construct the Big Ditch and work was started in 1868. This canal was more than 41 miles in length and constructed by hand on the mountainside at nearly 10,000 feet. It was opened the following summer but the results were very disappointing, since the resulting flow was only about 20 percent of the projected output of 7.6 million gallons per day. This was insufficient to support maintenance on the ditch and to pay off the stockholders. The major part of the project was abandoned although small amounts of water were supplied to the Moreno Valley.

The lack of water prevented large-scale placer mining although shaft mining continued on Baldy Mountain. In the 1890s, many miners left the area and either moved north to the boomtown of La Belle or went over the ridge westward to the strikes in the Red River Canyon. By 1910, Elizabethtown had become a virtual ghost town.

La Belle

In 1870, the large Costilla Estate (the southern half of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant) was acquired by a Dutch company. In an effort to develop the property, they opened the land and encouraged the arrival of settlers and prospectors. Miners began to roam the valleys but it was not until 1894 that a significant gold strike was made on La Belle Creek, a tributary of Comanche Creek and part of the Costilla watershed. Within months a large number of people converged on the area and founded the town

of La Belle. By 1895, it contained over 600 inhabitants, two hotels, a stable, grocery, a blacksmith and three saloons. A newspaper, the *La Belle Cresset*, began and stage service was established to Elizabethtown and Fort Garland, Colorado. Roads were built to both Red River and Elizabethtown, which was less than fifteen miles distant. Although ore production was good there was the ever-present problem of transporting the ore to smelters. Schemes were advanced to obtain rail service from Colorado but these proved fruitless. Miners began to drift to other areas. Some of them crossed the ridge to the west and made strikes along Bittercreek and Cabresto Creek. The communities of Anchor and Keystone grew up but enjoyed only a brief period of prosperity. By 1900, La Belle was empty and most of the miners had left.

Red River Canyon

The Red River Canyon lay midway between Taos and La Belle and only a few miles over the ridge from Elizabethtown. As one would expect, prospectors appeared early, wandering over the mountains from the Rio Hondo and the Moreno Valley. However, serious mining activity occurred later than in the other areas. A few strikes were made in the 1880s by the Red River Mining Company and the Pioneer Mining Company, but work ceased after a short time. Settlement of the valley began in 1892 with the arrival of the Mallette brothers who came primarily to homestead, but also to engage in prospecting. Others followed and began to search the various tributaries of the Red River. In Pioneer Canyon, the Ajax, Tom Thumb, Stella, and Caribel mines were opened, while along Placer Creek were found the Jayhawk, Buffalo, Golden Treasure, and Bunker Hill mines. Along Bittercreek were located the June Bug and the Independence. In 1895, the Red River town site was established and two years later contained several hundred people. It boasted of three hotels, two butcher shops, a market, livery, stable and ten saloons as well as a newspaper, the *Red River Review*.

About five miles south of the townsite, in the Upper Red River Valley, miners began to explore the Fourth of July, Black Copper, and Bear canyons. This area lay only a short distance due west of, and over the ridge from Elizabethtown. Thus the bulk of these prospectors came from E-town and maintained ties there. A road was constructed from the Moreno Valley by way of Hematite Creek to the ridge at its juncture with Fourth of July Canyon. This provided a direct route between the miners in the Upper Valley and the mining activities around Elizabethtown. In 1897, a rich strike was made along Black Copper Creek, and for a while interest shifted to this part of the Red River area.

Mining in the Red River Canyon followed the course of the other gold districts in northern New Mexico. There was wide variation in the quality of the ore, great difficulties and expense in transporting it, and insufficient capital. Efforts to build local smelters proved unsuccessful and attempts to entice railroads into the area were to no avail. At one time plans to link the area to Raton by rail were announced by the New Mexican and Pacific Railroad Company. A route was staked and rails were extended as far as Ute Park in the Cimarron Canyon, but plans to extend further to Elizabethtown and Taos were scrapped. By shortly after 1900, most of the mining activity was on the wane. There was modest activity along Bittercreek and in the Pioneer and Placer canyons, but by 1920 nearly all the mines had shut down. The Depression followed by a World War, wrote an end to the gold mining interest in this part of New Mexico.

Black Copper Mine

Nearly five miles south of the town of Red River lies the Black Copper Canyon and its adjacent neighbor, Fourth of July Canyon. This area is located only a few miles west of Elizabethtown so it was only natural that miners in the Moreno Valley would drift over the ridge and explore the Upper Red River Valley. When the Big Ditch was constructed in 1868, a portion of it traversed both the canyons. Many of the workers were miners from Elizabethtown, and they undoubtedly became acquainted with this entire area. Whether or not any of them prospected in the canyons is not known, but there are no records of strikes or claims from this period. It was only much later, after the town of Red River was settled and the Red River Mining District became active, that the first known gold discovery was made along Black Copper Creek. In 1896, two brothers, Neal and H. C. Garner, filed claim on what was to become the Black Copper Mine. That same year they leased it to four miners, P. H. Peterson, A. H. Lucas, Tom Sparks, and Frank Higgins. Work was carried out for several months and then in February 1897, the big strike was made, assaying in at $100,917 a ton. This caused great excitement throughout the Red River area and prospectors rushed into both canyons. The influx of miners and the growing number of claims in the Black Copper and Fourth of July Canyons led to the formation of the Black Copper Mining District in March, with Charles Dold as president.

At the time there were no roads or trails in the area and thus no easy travel to either Red River City or Elizabethtown. In order to provide a means of shipping the ore, the

new district appointed a committee to study various access routes. They decided to take advantage of the road already built from E-town to the community of Hematite, located just over the ridge from the new mining district. Using financing from merchants in Elizabethtown, assistance from the Taos County Commission, and labor from the residents of Hematite, the road was completed in June 1897. It began in Elizabethtown, traversed up Hematite Creek to the town of Hematite and then crossed the ridge at the head of Fourth of July Canyon. From there it trailed down the canyon to reach the Upper Red River Valley, then ran south for a very short distance to Black Copper Creek. Therefore, ore could now be shipped to the mill in E-town and supplies could more easily be obtained there. The major problem in all the gold mining districts was their inaccessibility and the large costs of transporting ore to mills (and the smelters in Colorado). The new road tied the Black Copper Mining District to the Moreno Valley, which at the time appeared to be the most logical transportation terminus. There was already stage service from Elizabethtown to many of the surrounding communities, but also access to Cimarron, Raton, and even Trinidad, Colorado. There was even talk of extending the railroad from Cimarron to Elizabethtown by way of Ute Park.

About the time of completion of the new road, the Franklin Placer Company was building sluices to serve miners in the Upper Valley. They decided to take advantage of their location, being near the road at the foot of Fourth of July Canyon and only about one mile from the Black Copper Mine. Using a few cabins built for their workers, a new town was established and given the name of Franklin City. It was located near the point where the Black Copper, Fourth of July, and Bear Creeks all emptied into the Red River and there was hope that the town would serve as a supply center for the mining district. Unfortunately, it did not live up to its pretentious name, never growing beyond a few cabins, one store, and two saloons. Within a short time, it disappeared completely.

During the early part of 1897, the Black Copper Mining District was quite active, employing as many as fifty men. However, the Garners soon joined in some kind of agreement with A. T. Gunnell of Colorado, which changed the ownership of the Black Copper Mine. Gunnell transferred his interest to the Taos Gold Mining and Milling Company, which was incorporated in Colorado. This company also came to include the Queen and Jubilee Lodes owned by C. E. Stubbs and Hannah Stubbs. The change in ownership somehow resulted in quarrels between the operators and owners, resulting in a slowdown of the mining operation. By summer only six men

were left on the payroll. This drastic curtailment of the mining production had a chilling effect throughout the district, and was a leading cause of the failure of Franklin City. Very little work was done during the remainder of the year.

By early 1898, the disagreements were resolved and the mine resumed active production, employing up to 24 men. By the following year, the owners decided to build a mill at the mine. A hoisting plant and boiler were installed and ore was shipped to the mill in Elizabethtown to determine the optimum type of equipment to give the greatest yield. In 1900, R. Cline was appointed superintendent of the Black Copper and work progressed. By that time, the main shaft had reached a depth of 240 feet. In the fall of that year, Cline ordered the machinery for a five-stamp amalgamating mill. A site was selected, housing for the mill was put in place, and in February of 1901 the mill was complete and in operation. The impact of this event was reported in the Taos *Cresset*: "The success of this mill proves that we have a mining camp. Nothing has happened before that has done so much to place the Red River district on a permanent basis."

High hopes for the Black Copper Mine would soon come crashing down. The quarrels, bickering, and disagreements of 1897 would return again and this time result in closing of the mine. In spite of the spirit of optimism in the spring of 1901, later during the summer the owners stopped the mill and closed the tunnel. Reasons were not clear though the owners declared they needed to install new machinery. The miners speculated that the real reason was a struggle for control or else some form of litigation involving the owners. Whatever the issue, the mine closed, miners left the area, and the Black Copper lay dormant over the next ten years.

In 1912, there was a revival of interest in mining throughout the Red River area and there is evidence that work on the Black Copper resumed about that time. There is a letter dated June 1914 from N. H. Emmonds, a mine inspector, addressed to one of the owners, George Spencer, describing conditions at the mine. He referred to certain problems and questioned the veracity of the miners and the mine supervisor. The exact situation is not known for certain but it is fairly clear that there was little if any profit from the mine during that time. In fact, there was considerable loss on the operation, for in 1916, a court found that the Taos Gold Mining and Milling Company owed Spencer over $125,000 and was in default on the loan. The Taos County sheriff was ordered to sell the property at auction and it went to Spencer for $3,000.

owed Spencer over $125,000 and was in default on the loan. The Taos County sheriff was ordered to sell the property at auction and it went to Spencer for $3,000.

In 1922, Spencer leased the mine to J. A. Reid of Red River with the agreement that Reid would reopen the mine, develop it, and pay Spencer 25 percent of the return. There is no record of the outcome of this arrangement but it is unlikely that much work was done. In fact, in 1929, Spencer quitclaimed his interest in the mine to the Blue Bird Mining Company of Montana, of which he was an owner. Ten years later, the mine interest went to Spencer's attorney, Frank Cheetham of Taos, supposedly in payment for legal services. During all this time, the mine property lay empty, the buildings and equipment deteriorating. In 1935, there appeared in the *Taos Valley News* the account of a party of hikers who visited the Black Copper Canyon:

> The old cabins where the frenzied gold seekers once stayed, have almost fallen down and the mill was stripped of everything the erstwhile filching 'poachers' could carry away. Not a window was left either in the mill buildings or the crumbling cabins. The tall smoke stack still reared itself above the structure leaning on its guy wires: the only reason for its being there that the thief could not engineer a way to get it down from its high place to spirit it away.

In some way, Spencer retained part ownership in the mine and during the 1940s he deeded interest in the property to Irene Siler, wife of O. B. Siler. There was court action between Spencer and Cheetham over proper ownership, the final outcome being an arrangement by which Mrs. Siler advanced up to $15,000 to Cheetham to help develop the mine.

In 1945, O. B. Siler put the mine back into operation and continued to work it until 1961. He employed a crew which at times included twenty men, some of whom lived in bunkhouses located west of the mine on the Siler property. In 1998, Ina Siler interviewed William Foreman, the son of O. B. Siler's supervisor. He recalled that the stamp mill was put into operation powered by a gasoline engine (called by the miners a "Poppin' Johnny"). Ore was brought to the surface in ore cars which were moved by rails to the hopper above the mill. After being crushed by the stamps, the ore was loaded into dump trucks and hauled to a smelter in Colorado Springs. There is an

assay certificate report dated 1945 which listed ore from the third stope as showing 3.34 ounces of gold and 277.9 ounces of silver per ton. A further assay report from 1957 showed lesser amounts. In 1961, Mr. Siler was killed in a mining accident in Carrizozo, New Mexico, thus ending the Black Copper Mine operation.

In 1910, there appeared in a mining journal a quotation from a Red River claim holder which seems to best summarize the mood of not only the Black Copper but also the entire gold boom in northern New Mexico:

> There is at least 100 prospects here that if they were in any other district would cause the wildest excitement, but handicapped as we have been, 40 to 60 miles from the railroad, wagon roads that were next to impassable, a real estate boom on hot air, unable to induce capital to come, we have kept right along, believing that the district would make good in time, and from the development work that has been done, in a few years the Red River district will have several paying mines on the list. It has more natural resources than any other camp.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Articles

Claussen, W. E. "There Was Gold in Every Gulch." *New Mexico Magazine*, April 1948.

Books

Hamilton, Winifred. *Wagon Days in Red River.* n. p.: W. O. Hamilton, 1947.

Jones, F. A. *New Mexico Mines and Minerals.* Santa Fe: New Mexican Printing Co., 1904 (World's Fair Edition).

Murphy, L. R. *Philmont: A History of New Mexico's Cimarron Country.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972.

Pearson, Jim B. *The Maxwell Land Grant.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961.

_____. *The Red River/Twining Area: A New Mexico Mining Story.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986.

Sherman, James E., and Barbara H. Sherman. *Ghost Towns and Mining Camps of New Mexico.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975.

Chapters

Bauer, Paul W. "Elizabethtown," in *Techtonic Development of the Southern Sangre de Cristo Mountains.* Socorro, New Mexico: New Mexico Geological Society, 1990.

_____. "The Big Ditch," in *Techtonic Development of the Southern Sangre de Cristo Mountains.* Socorro: New Mexico Geological Society, 1990.

Pratt, Boyd. "Toward a Market Economy: 1846-1879," in *The North Central Regional Overview: Strategies for the Comprehensive Survey of the Architectural and Historic Archaeological Resources of North Central New Mexico*, by Boyd C. Pratt and David H. Snow. Santa Fe: New Mexico State Historic Preservation Division, 1988.

Letters

Emmonds, N. H. to George K. Spencer, 1914. Copy in possession of Ms. Ina Siler.

Merlan, Thomas, State Historic Preservation Officer, New Mexico State Historic Preservation Division, Office of Cultural Affairs to Homer Milford, 1991.

Milford, Homer, Environmental Coordinator, New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, to Thomas Merlan, 1991.

Reports

Boyer, Jeffrey L. "The Black Copper Gold Mine: Archaeological Survey Near Red River, Taos County, New Mexico." Archaeology Notes No. 40. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico, Office of Archaeological Studies, 1991.

Cordell, Linda S. "Cultural Resources Overview of the Middle Rio Grande Valley, New Mexico." Santa Fe: USDA Forest Service, Southwestern Region, Albuquerque and USDI Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Office, 1978.

Lingren, W., L. C. Graton, and C. H. Gordon. "The Ore Deposits of New Mexico." U. S. Geological Survey, Professional Paper 68. Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1916.

Martinez, Patrick D. "Red River/Fourth of July Canyon/Black Copper Canyon Stock Tanks and Cattleguards: Cultural Resources Surface Survey." Cultural Resources Report No. 1989-02-041. Taos, New Mexico: Carson National Forest, 1989.

Rossiter, Raymond. "Statistics of Mines and Mining in the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains." U. S. Commissioner of Mining Statistics, report to Secretary of Treasury. Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1870.

Schilling, John H. "Mineral Resources of Taos County, New Mexico." Bulletin No. 71. Socorro: New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, 1960.

Young, Jon, and Bob Lawrence. "Carson National Forest Cultural Resources Planning Assessment. Cultural Resources Report No. 1988-02-006. Taos, New Mexico: Carson National Forest, 1988.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Verbal Boundary Description

The Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District is triangular in shape with the apex pointing westerly (slightly north of west) and the base of the triangle being the eastern boundary of the property. The old wagon road that leads to the district forks into two roads. The right-hand road forms the southern boundary. The left-hand road forms the northern boundary. From the point where the road forks, the southern boundary follows the southern side of the road and extends 450 feet to the base of the tailings pile, at 128°. At the end of this road the boundary continues at the same bearing beyond the tailings pile for another 170 feet. From the point where the road forks, the northern boundary follows the northern side of the road 495 feet to a point just beyond the mineshaft, at 110°. At the shaft site, the boundary continues at the same bearing another 110 feet to the rock outcropping above the discovery adit. The eastern boundary extends from the rock outcropping south, at 218° for 138 feet, where it intersects with the southern boundary.

Boundary Justification

Because of the mine's age and remote location, there are very few man-made boundary lines in the area. The two old roads serve as convenient boundaries, since the triangular area between them encompasses the mine shaft, stamp mill, and all other features associated with the district. The eastern boundary was chosen to include the tailings pile.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Photographs and Maps

All photographs were taken in June 1998 by J. R. Pierce of Red River, New Mexico. The negatives are in his possession (PO Box 489, Red River, New Mexico, 87558). Each photograph is numbered and the description of each is listed below by number.

Figure 1: Feature 1, the concrete foundation. This view is taken from near the southwest corner of the foundation, looking toward the northeast. This feature was apparently the location of the boiler.

Figure 2: Feature 2, the wood retaining wall. This view was made south of the wall looking north. In the foreground is a portion of the rock foundation.

Figure 3: Feature 3, another view showing the rock foundation and the retaining wall in the background. This view is looking to the northeast.

Figure 4: Feature 4, the location of the shaft which is now covered with a concrete slab. The picture was taken a few feet west of the slab, looking east.

Figure 5: Feature 5, the collapsed hoist tower. At the far end of the long beam is the pulley and cable which cannot be seen in this picture. The view was made on top of the tailings pile, looking south with part of the slab over the shaft seen in the foreground.

Figure 6: Feature 6, the discovery adit. The picture was taken from just east of the shaft location looking to the northeast.

Figure 7: Feature 7, the Black Copper adit. This is now collapsed. The view is directly east with the tailings pile in the background.

Figure 8: Feature 8, the Black Copper stamp mill. This photograph was taken from the road below and south of the mill looking upslope toward the north.

Figure 9: Feature 8, the stamp mill, as seen from the road above the mill. This shows the large hopper which stands above the machinery. The large wheel on the east side of the mill is seen and above and to the right of the wheel are the long iron rods to which the pistons are attached. This view is looking in a southeasterly direction.

Figure 10: Feature 8, the stamps. This photograph was taken from the west side of the mill looking directly into the machinery. Only four of the five stamps are visible in this view. The trough is directly below the stamps.

Figure 11: Feature 8, the gear mechanism which fed the ore from the hopper into the trough below the stamps. The picture was made from the east side of the mill looking into the machinery.

Figure 12: Feature 8, the engine platform which sits a few feet southeast of the mill. This view is from below the mill, near the road, and looking north.

Figure 13: The tailings pile, as viewed from near Black Copper Creek, looking eastward.

Figure 14: 7.5 minute USGS map showing location of Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District.

Figure 15: Detailed sketch map of the Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District.

Figure 16: Sketch map of the Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District, with distances.

Figure 17: Diagram of the Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District.

Figure 18: Detailed diagram of the Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District.

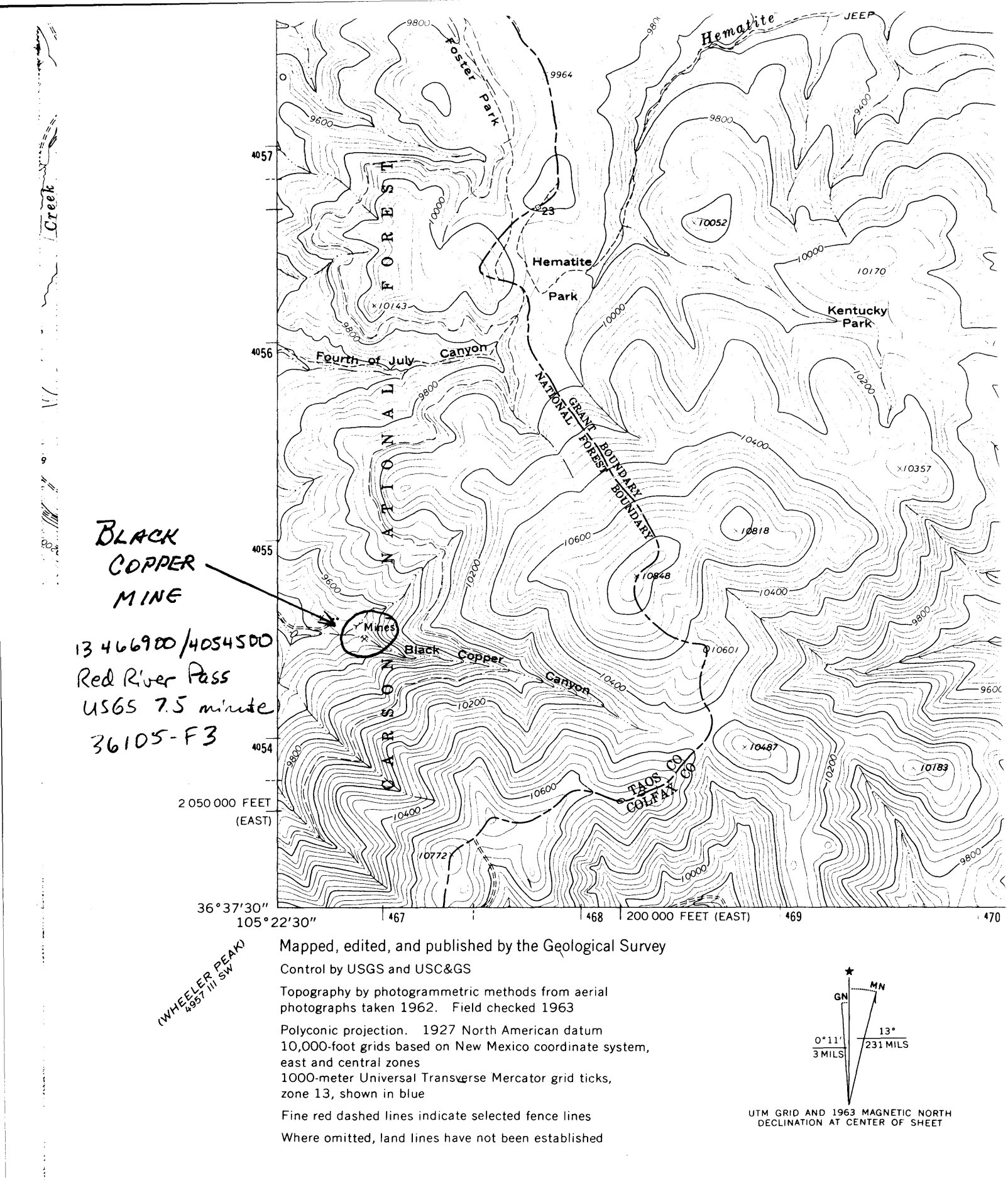

Figure 14: 7.5 minute USGS map showing location of Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District.

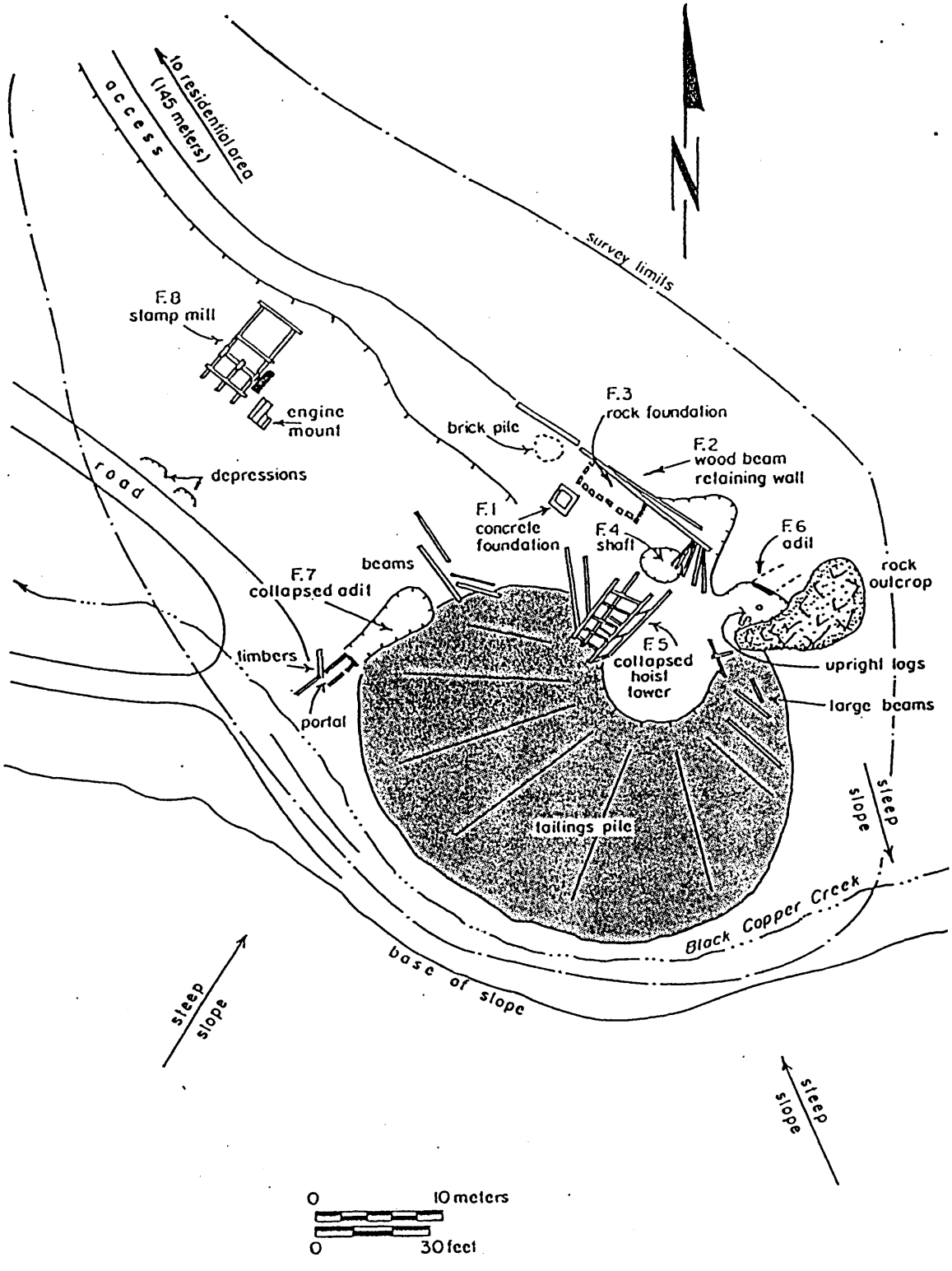

Figure 15: Detailed sketch map of the Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District.

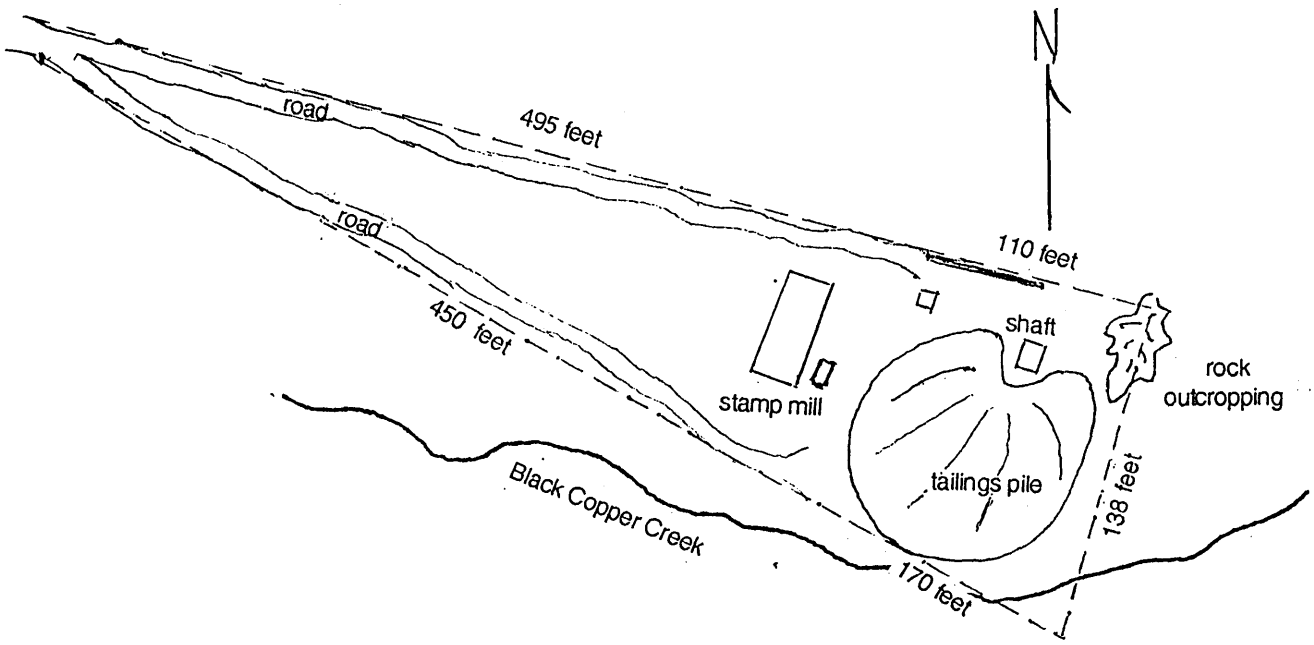

Figure 16: Sketch map of the Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District, with distances.

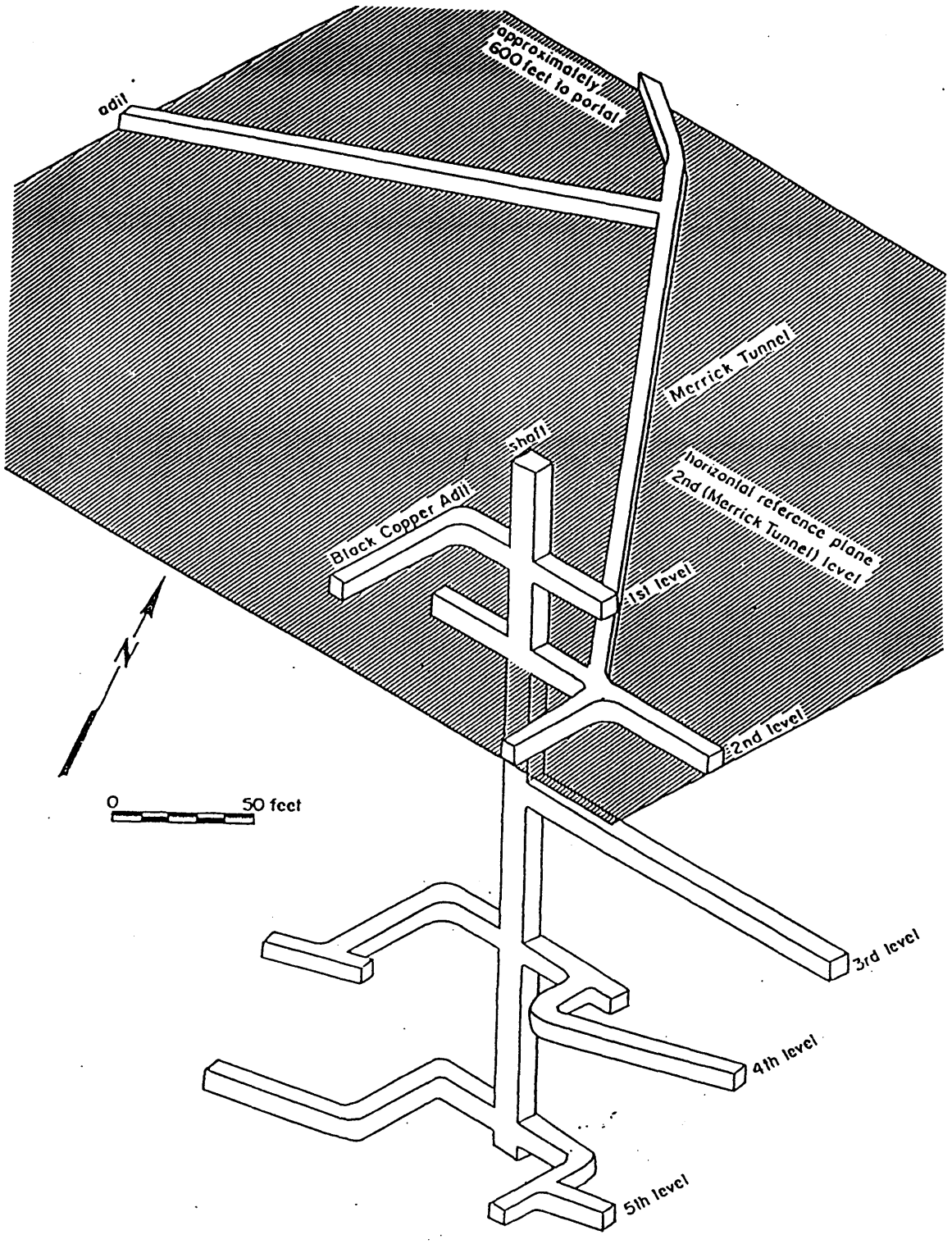

Figure 17: Diagram of the Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District.

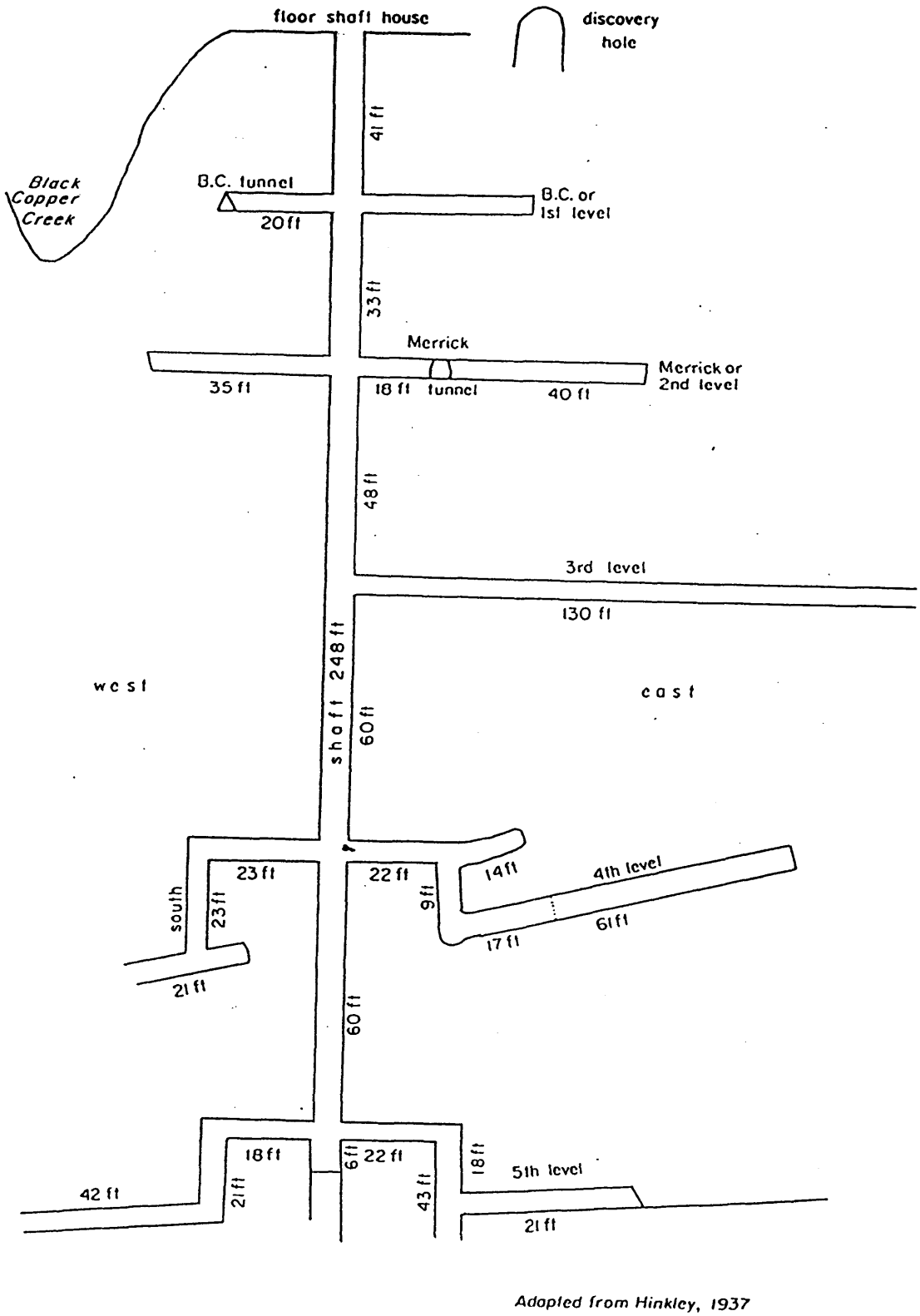

Figure 18: Detailed diagram of the Black Copper Mine and Stamp Mill Historic District.