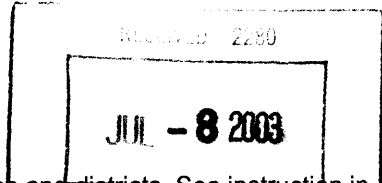


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

777



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction 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 an 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 Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank

other names/site number 5SM.2030.13

2. Location

street & number along North Trout Lake Road [N/A] not for publication

city or town Ophir [X] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county San Miguel code 113 zip code 81435

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 [ ] statewide [X] locally. ( [ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title: Georgia Corteglia, State Historic Preservation Officer; Date: June 20, 2003

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society
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 certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- [X] 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 [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of the Keeper: Edson H. Beall

Date of Action: 8/21/03

Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
Name of Property

San Miguel County, Colorado  
County/State

## 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 count previously listed resources.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

### Name of related multiple property listing.

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

Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/rail-related

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Not in use

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No style

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone; Concrete

walls Wood

roof Wood/shingles

other

### Narrative Description

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

Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
Name of Property

San Miguel County, Colorado  
County/State

## 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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

## 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
- # \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Engineering

### Periods of Significance

1891-1951

### Significant Dates

1891

### Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Rio Grande Southern Railroad

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Colorado Historical Society

Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
Name of Property

San Miguel County, Colorado  
County/State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 13 246590 4189890  
Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

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

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Tracy Kurek (additional material by OAHF staff)

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date February 2003

street & number P. O. Box 1243 telephone 970-728-4223

city or town Telluride state Colorado zip code 81435

## 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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Trout Lake Land Company

street & number P. O. Box 2368 telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Telluride state Colorado zip code 81435-2368

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
San Miguel County, Colorado  
(Railroads in Colorado 1858-1948 MPS)

Section number 7 Page 1

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**DESCRIPTION**

The 1891 Rio Grande Southern Railroad (RGS) Trout Lake Water Tank sits at an elevation of 9,802 feet immediately east of an abandoned railroad grade that runs along the east shore of Trout Lake. Now an unimproved road, the narrow gauge railroad originated in the town of Ridgway and ran southward past Trout Lake to Rico, the RGS's division point. In 1953, salvage operations removed the rails and ties and much of the railroad grade became a Forest Service access road. The water tank is now within a planned residential subdivision that encircles Trout Lake, a natural lake which was dammed and enlarged to become the principal water supply for an early hydro electric power plant.

The structure consists of an elevated circular 50,000-gallon tank measuring 16 feet in height and 24 feet in diameter. The slightly tapered wall of the tank is constructed of vertical 2"x6" redwood boards approximately 20 feet in length. These vertical boards are held in place by 13 metal restraining bands fastened with turnbuckles. The width of the restraining bands decrease as they rise to the top of the tank, while the distance between the bands increases from the bottom to the top. In addition near the bottom, two metal cables encircle the tank.

The tank has a conical roof with an overhanging boxed eave. Four narrow strips of wood create a corbelling effect along the fascia. The roof is sheathed in wood shingles and the peak is capped with ball and pedestal finial.

There is an approximately 10 foot long riveted metal spout on the tank's track (west) side that is suspended from a framework of two chains running through pulleys. The water level gauge is nailed to the tank near the spout. Although quite faded, this measuring stick was painted black and white and evenly numbered from two to fourteen.

A wooden ladder was installed on the south side of the water tank to reach the entry hatch in the conical roof. A spare ladder was suspended on hangers mounted on 12x12 foot posts on the north side of the tank. Both were removed at some point.

The elevated tank is supported by ten 12"x12" posts approximately ten feet in height with 6"x8" timbers used as cross bracing and knee braces. The posts are anchored to 12"x12" wooden sills that in turn rest upon a stone foundation. The northeast side of the stone foundation is reinforced with a concrete platform. Directly beneath the center of the tank is a 7x7-foot wood frame enclosure that contains the water intake pipe. Known as a frost box, it is designed to prevent the intake pipe from freezing. On the east side, a 4x8 foot plywood door provides access.

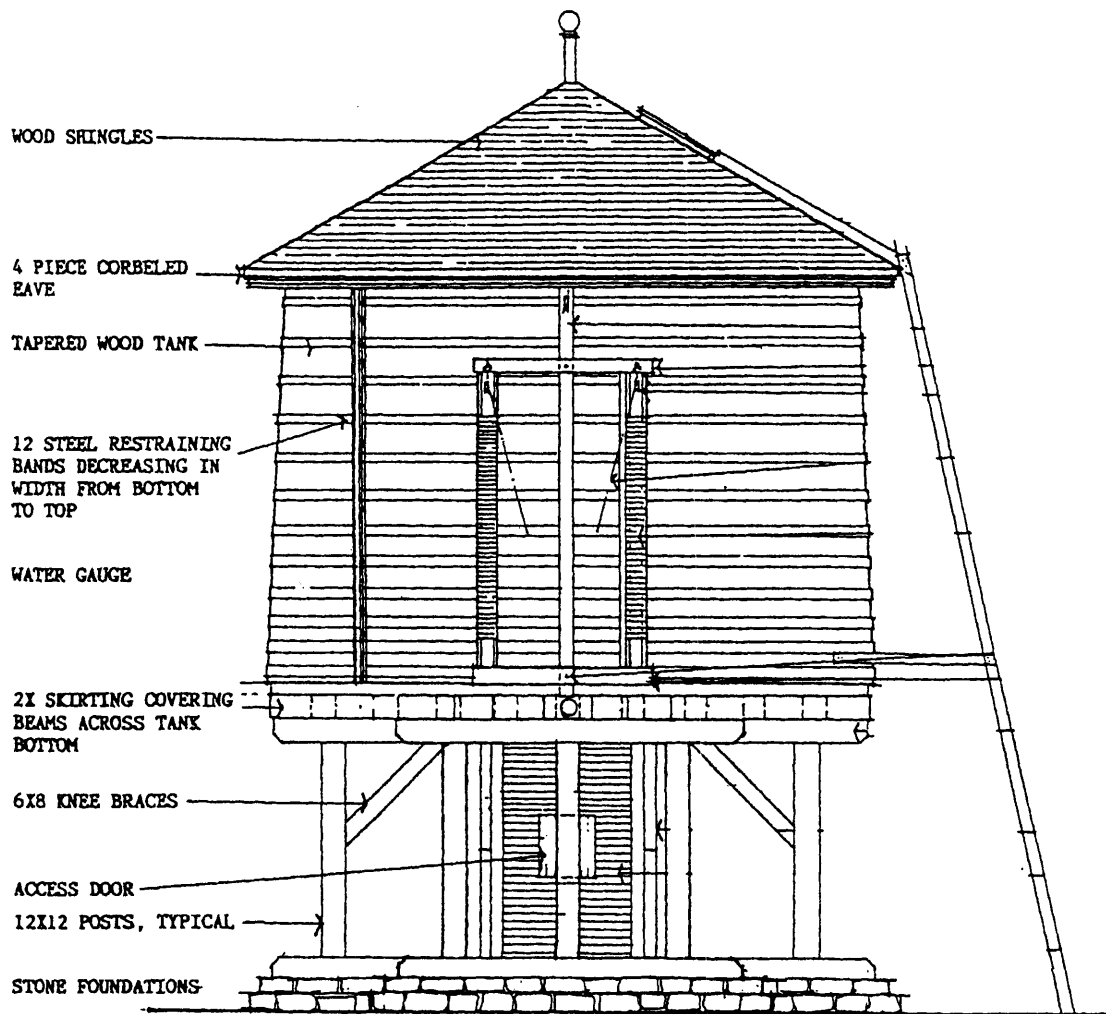
The only significant loss of original material and design was the removal of the two ladders and, as evident from historic photographs, some of the cross bracing members are missing. Repainted twice, the body of the tank is currently painted a deep red while the other wood elements are painted a dark brown. The tank was re-roofed about 25 years ago with wood shingles that closely matched the originals.

United States Department of the Interior  
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**Continuation Sheet**

Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
San Miguel County, Colorado  
(Railroads in Colorado 1858-1948 MPS)

Section number 7 Page 2

Originally the site included a station sign a little north of the water tank on the east side. In addition, two outhouses were installed to accommodate the Galloping Goose passenger traffic. These associated features are no longer present. The setting has also been impacted by nearby home construction and the loss of the rails and ties. Despite these alterations, the Trout Lake Water Tank still conveys its engineering and historical significance through its characteristic shape, materials, and location adjacent to the railroad grade.



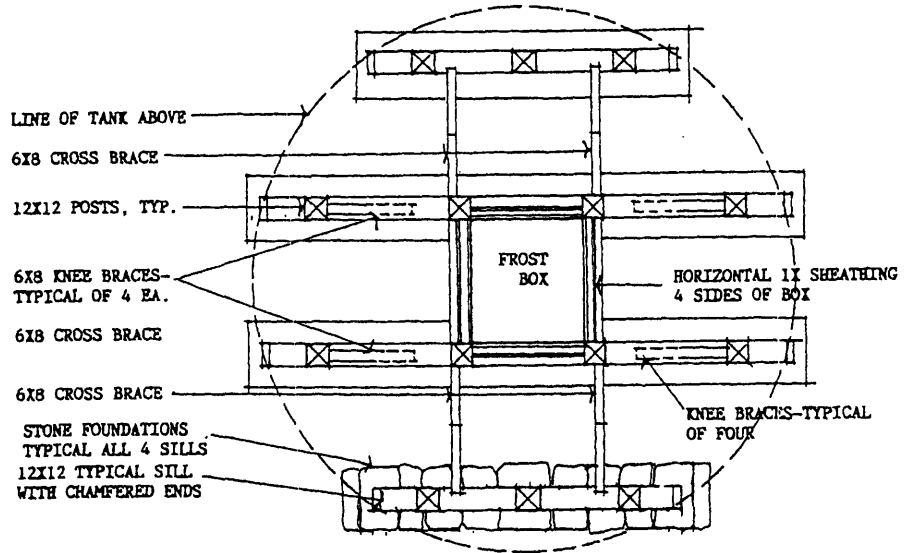
TRACKSIDE ELEVATION

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

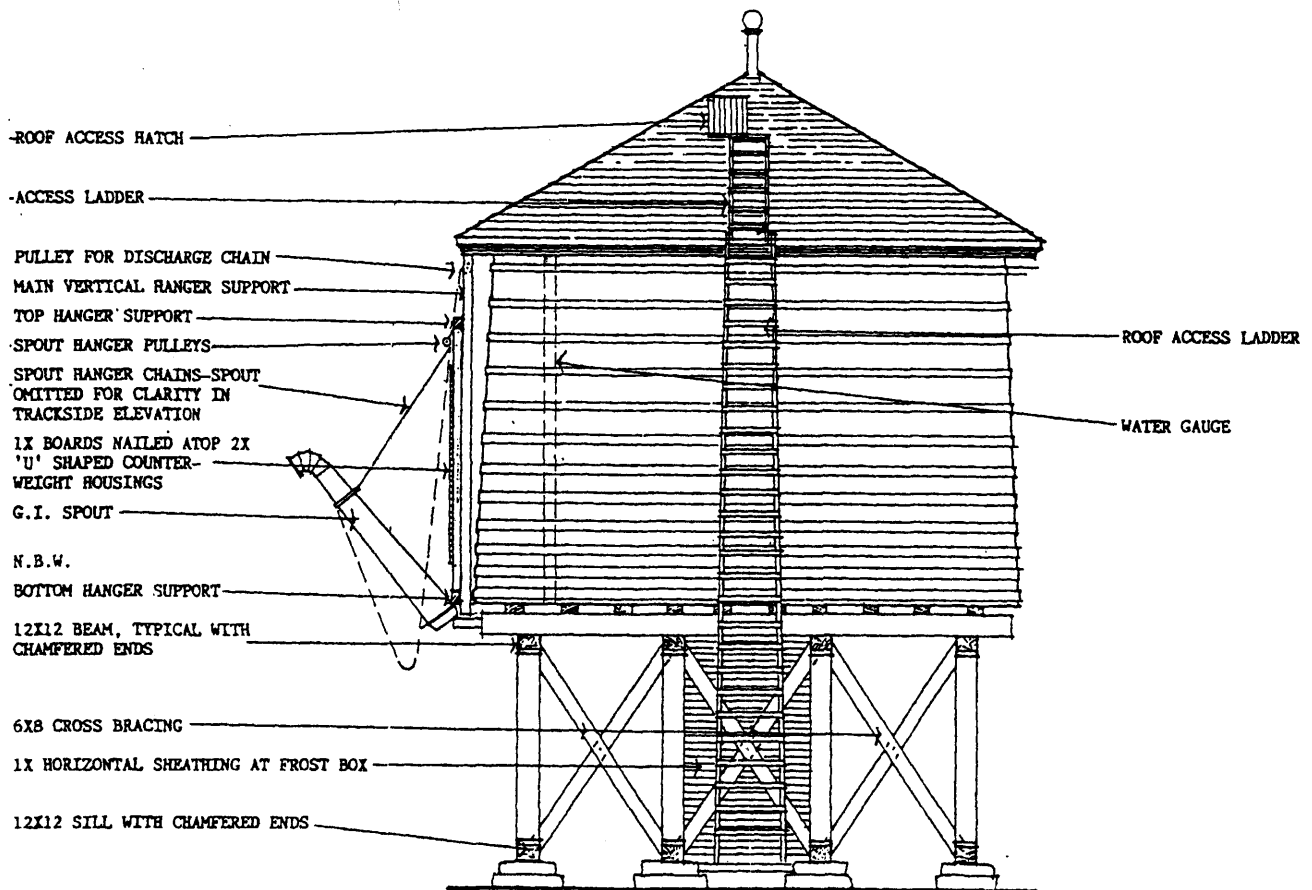
Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
San Miguel County, Colorado  
(Railroads in Colorado 1858-1948 MPS)

Section number 7 Page 3

Source: *The R. G. S. Story*,  
Volume IV, page 200.



TANK PLAN  
TRACKSIDE DOWN



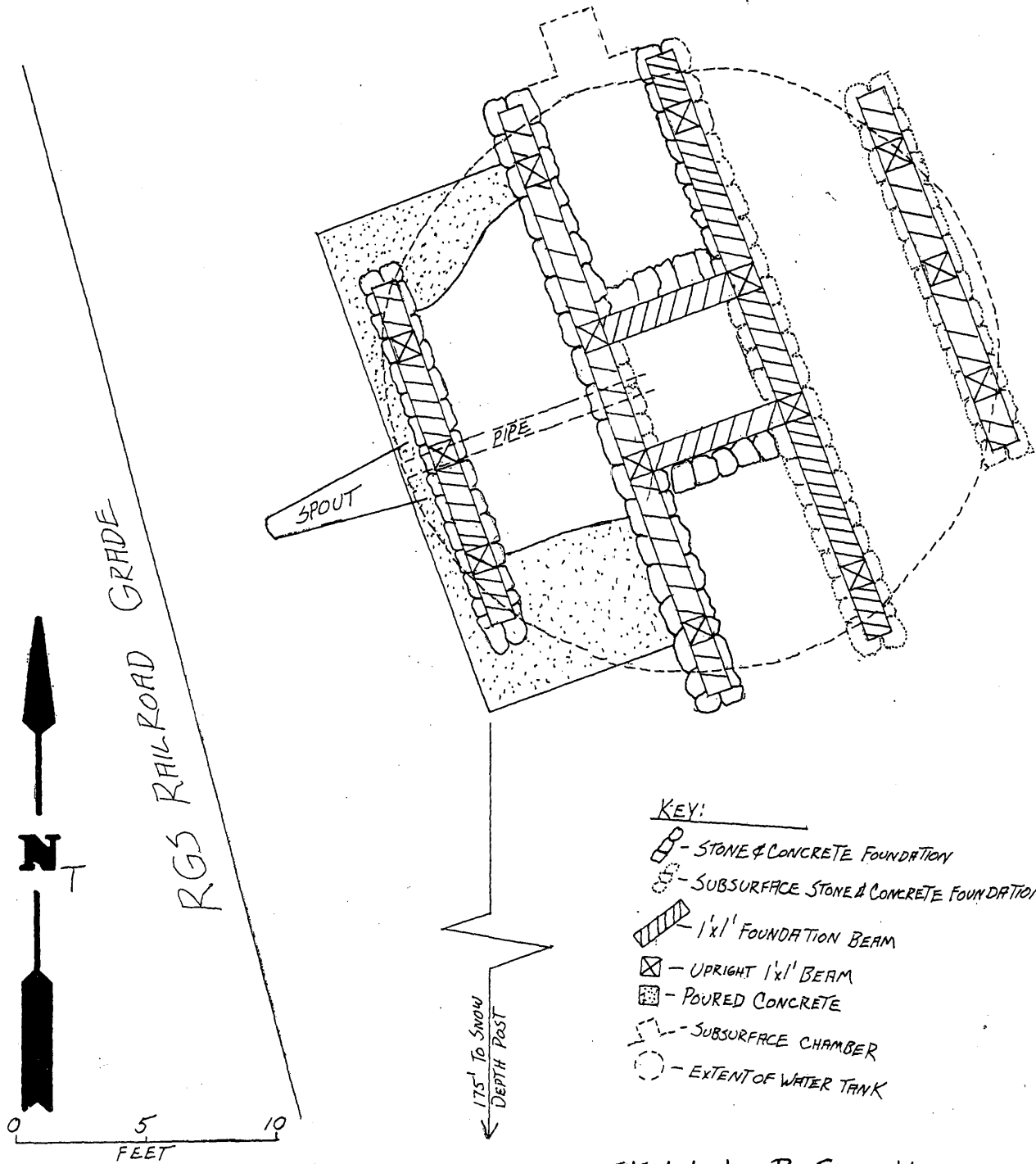
SOUTH ELEVATION

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
San Miguel County, Colorado  
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Field Sketch Map



Sketch by R. Currit



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
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**Continuation Sheet**

Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
San Miguel County, Colorado  
(Railroads in Colorado 1858-1948 MPS)

Section number 8 Page 5

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## SIGNIFICANCE

The 1891 Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank is eligible for the National Register as it meets the registration requirements for the water station subtype as defined in the *Railroads in Colorado 1858-1948* Multiple Property Documentation Form. The tank is eligible under Criterion A in the area of Transportation for its association with the Ridgway to Rico division of the Rio Grande Southern Railroad (RGS). The tank provided water to countless steam locomotives from its construction in 1891 until the last RGS train ran the line in 1951. The tank was a very necessary stop, especially for trains that consumed a great deal of water while working in the area's heavy snows and difficult terrain.

The tank also meets the registration requirements under Criterion C in the area of Engineering as it represents a distinctive design and construction method associated with water tanks on the RGS system. The Trout Lake Water Tank is a rare surviving example of a once common structure in Colorado's railroad landscape. The RGS constructed sixteen water tanks, at approximately ten-mile increments, along its 162-mile length to service the locomotives. These tanks were wooden construction with conical roofs and a 50,000-gallon capacity that dispensed water by gravity through a goose neck delivery spout. After abandonment, all but three of the water tanks were removed. Only the tanks at East Mancos, Rico and Trout Lake remain, and Trout Lake is the best preserved.

### Historical Background

In November 1889, Otto Mears, "king of southwestern Colorado road builders," incorporated the Rio Grande Southern Railroad, one of his many narrow gauge railroads in the San Juan mountains of southwestern Colorado. Operating on rails spaced three feet apart, these narrow roadbeds allowed greater flexibility in negotiating over mountain passes, around difficult curves, and up steep canyon floors. Mears planned to tap the economic riches of the area—lumber, livestock, and mined ores, particularly silver.

Construction of the RGS began in 1890 from two different directions—from the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) tracks in Durango northwest towards Mancos and Dolores and from the D&RG tracks in Ridgway south toward Telluride and Ophir. Mears and his chief engineer Charles Gibbs envisioned the railroad being built and operated as two divisions, with Rico as the designated division point. The grading and track-laying proceeded slowly from Placerville south to Vance Junction. By early spring 1891, construction started at Vance Junction with the goal to reach Rico before the heavy snows in the late fall. "After a few sharp curves, the grade headed along the east shore of the lake. The hillside that extended up from the lake was clear of obstacles, and the grade easily continued on its 3.0 percent grade to the Trout Lake water tank at Milepost 49.1" (Collman et al. 1994:196). The station included a passing siding along with the standard 50,000 gallon water tank, although there never was a depot. About one-half mile north of the siding was the little settlement of Trout Lake, which was older than railroad. The railroad then made a giant loop around the upper end of Trout Lake in order to gain elevation on the final climb to Lizard Head Pass. The contracting crews worked through inclement weather over very rough terrain and built numerous trestles. On September 30, 1891, the first train reached Rico from the north with regular service beginning the following month. The 162.6-mile meandering railroad between Durango and Ridgway was finished in late 1891 with the joining of the two ends south of Rico.

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Section number 8 Page 6

Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
San Miguel County, Colorado  
(Railroads in Colorado 1858-1948 MPS)

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While 1892 was a profitable year for the RGS, financial success did not last long. In the fall of 1893, Congress repealed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act and triggered a major depression in the Colorado silver mining industry. Most of the silver mines in the San Juan area shut down and Mears lost the RGS to the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. While the area never fully recovered from the depression, the RGS was able to continue operating until 1951.

The D&RG kept the line operating by buying a majority of its stock and making it a subsidiary. The RGS hauled freight, mostly coal and lumber, instead of the intended silver. Despite frequent derailments and a high accident rate, the RGS became a popular tourist train offering some of the most identifiable natural and engineered scenery in the state, including Lizard Head Mountain, Trout Lake, and the trestles at Ophir and Telluride (Fraser 1997:68). The water tank at Trout Lake became a favorite stop for rail fans on excursion trains and for tourists on the Galloping Geese. The lake and surrounding mountains provided a perfect setting for scenic photography and lunch. Collman et al (1994:196) noted that in later years the railroad "thoughtfully provided Galloping Geese restrooms." The outhouses were appropriately named "goose" and "gander."

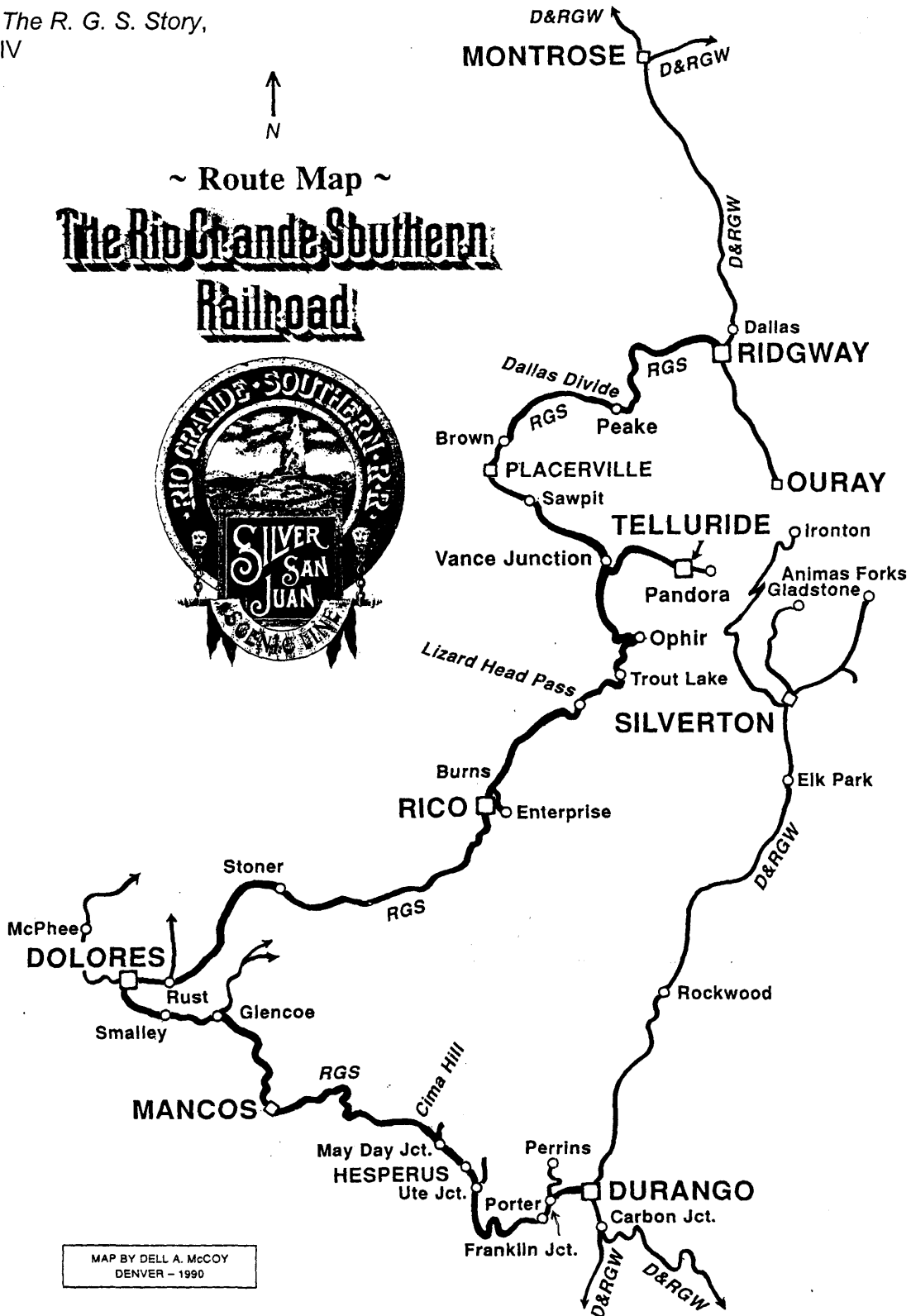
The final RGS train ran on December 27, 1951, and the railroad was abandoned on April 15, 1952. Salvage operations that removed the rail and ties were completed by July 1953. Most of the 16 railroad water tanks were demolished or destroyed by deterioration or vandalism in the years following abandonment. This rare surviving example is a picturesque reminder of the days when the Rio Grande Southern Railroad transported people and goods between the communities of Ridgway and Rico.

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Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
San Miguel County, Colorado  
(Railroads in Colorado 1858-1948 MPS)

Section number 8 Page 7

Source: *The R. G. S. Story*,  
Volume IV



MAP BY DELL A. McCOY  
DENVER - 1990

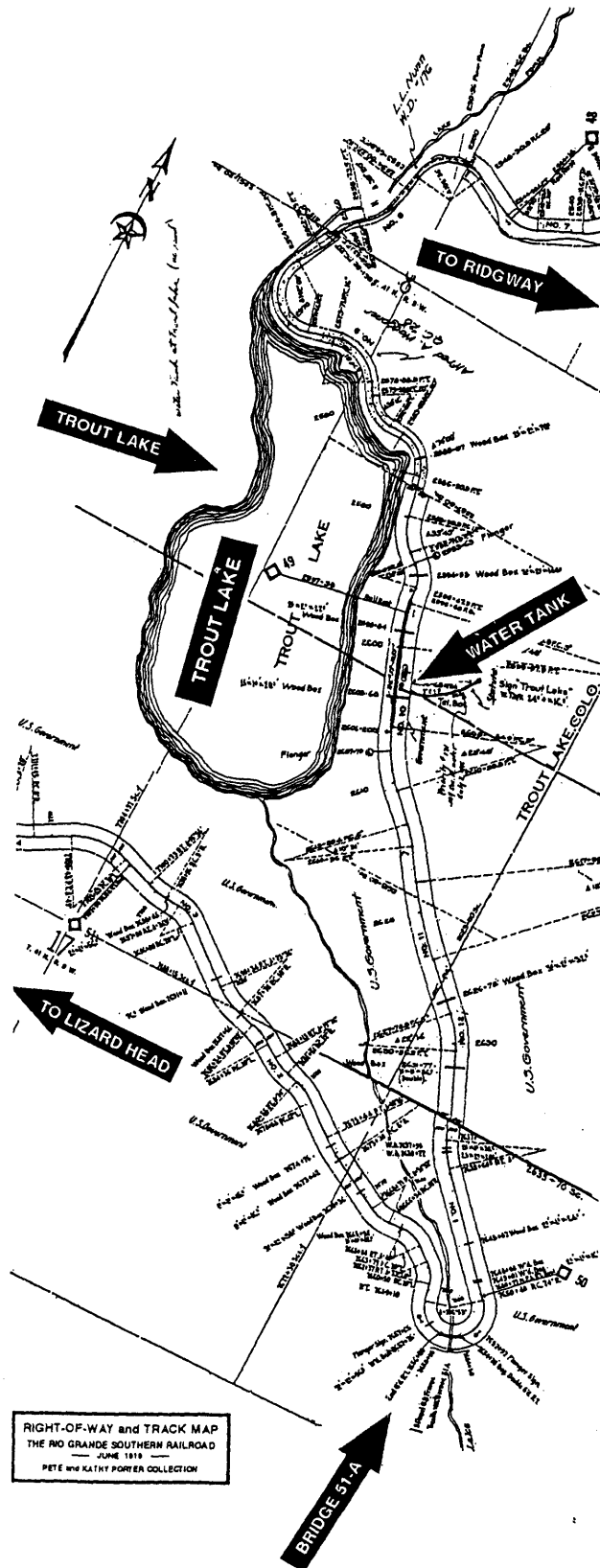
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
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Detail Map

Source: *The R. G. S. Story*,  
Volume IV, page 207.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 9

Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
San Miguel County, Colorado  
(Railroads in Colorado 1858-1948 MPS)

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Collman, Russ; McCoy Dell A.; and Graves, William A. *The R.G.S. Story, Volume IV: Over the Bridges, Ophir Loop to Rico*. Denver: Sundance Books, 1994.

Crum, Josie Moore. *The Rio Grande Southern Story*. Durango: Railroadiana, Inc., 1957.

Currit, R. Sketch map in Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Form for 5SM2030.13 (Trout Lake Water Tower). On file at the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.

Ferrell, Mallory Hope. *Silver San Juan: The Rio Grande Southern Railroad*. Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1973.

Fraser, Clayton B. *Railroads in Colorado 1858-1948 Multiple Property Documentation Form*, August 1997. Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.

----- Historic Railroad Inventory Record for 5DL478.9 (Rico Water Tank). On file at the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.

----- Historic Railroad Inventory Record for 5MT4035.13 (East Mancos Water Tank). On file at the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.

Purfield, H. Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Form for 5SM2030.13 (Trout Lake Water Tower). On file at the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
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Section number 10 Page 10

Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
San Miguel County, Colorado  
(Railroads in Colorado 1858-1948 MPS)

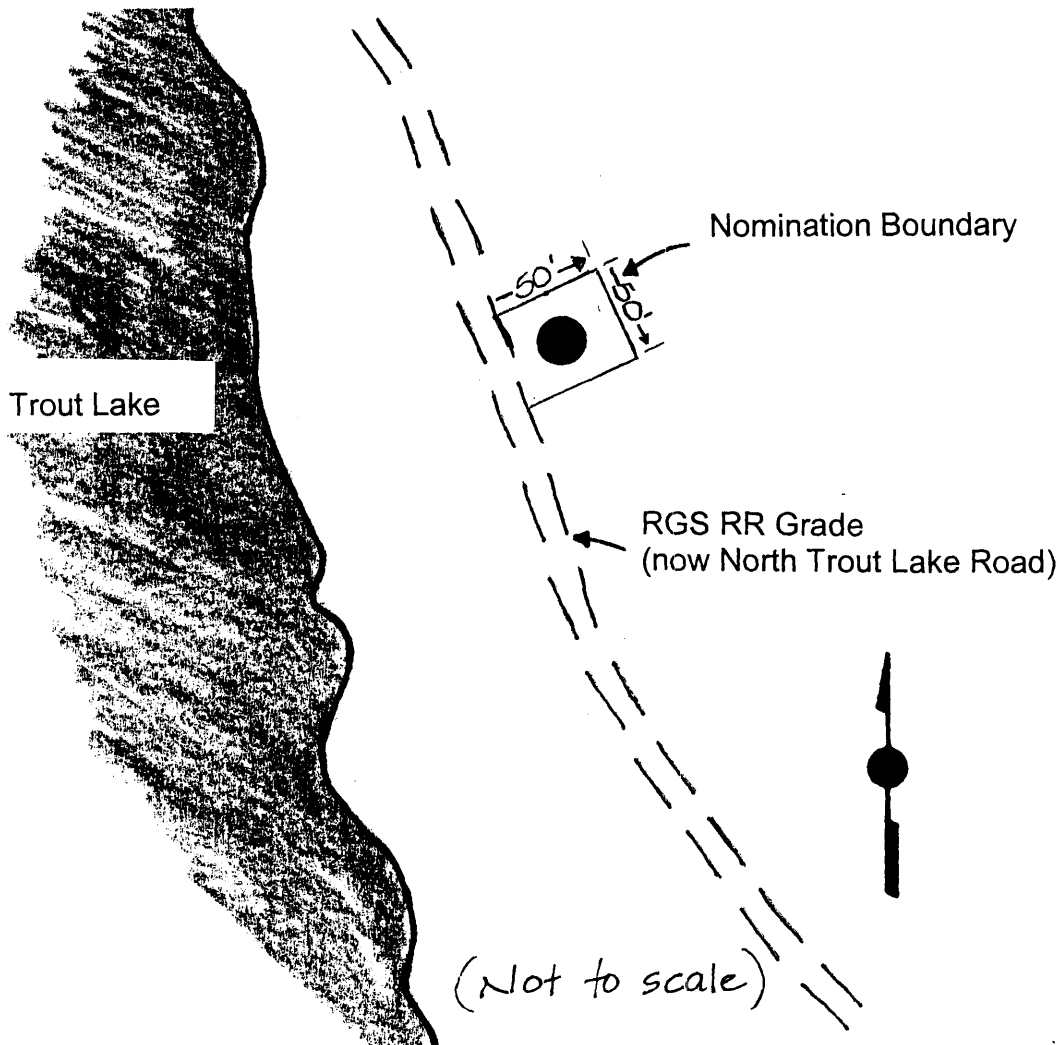
**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The water tank is located on a 50 foot by 50 foot tract of land abutting the east side of the abandoned Rio Grande Southern railroad grade, now an unimproved road known as North Trout Lake Road.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary includes the land historically associated with the water tank during its operation, excluding acreage that contains recent construction.



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National Park Service  
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Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
San Miguel County, Colorado  
(Railroads in Colorado 1858-1948 MPS)

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**PHOTOGRAPH LOG**

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Name of property: Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
Location: San Miguel County, Colorado  
Photographer: Greg Stob  
Photograph Date: 30 November 2002  
Location of Negatives: Trout Lake, Colorado

<u>Photo #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	west (track) side of water tank; camera facing E
2	south side of tank; camera facing N
3	east side (rear); camera facing W
4	north side of tank; camera facing S
5	view from road [abandoned railroad bed]; camera facing SE
6	south side of tank; camera facing N
7	close-up of south side of tank; camera facing N
8	close-up of restraining bands on south side; camera facing N
9	frost box underneath tank on the east side; camera facing SW
10	profile of water spout on track (west) side; camera facing NW
11	close-up of spout and water gauge; camera facing E

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
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Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank  
San Miguel County, Colorado  
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**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**  
Mount Wilson Quadrangle, Colorado  
7.5 Minute Series

