

Bishop Creek Hydroelectric System, Plant4 HAER No. CA-145-4-B
Worker Cottage (Building 105)
Bishop Creek
Bishop Vicinity
Inyo County
California

HAER
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14-BE-V,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: Near Bishop Creek in North 1/2 of the Southeast 1/4 of Section 19, Township 7 South, Range 32 East, M.D.M, Inyo County, California. Eastern Sierra Nevada approximately 2.5 miles southwest of the town of Bishop, California, and 225 air miles due north of Los Angeles.

Date of Construction: 1909

Builder: Unknown

Present Owner: Southern California Edison Company
2244 Walnut Grove Avenue
Rosemead, CA 91770

Original Use: Worker Cottage

Present Use: Worker Cottage

Significance: Building 105 Plant 4 (formerly Building No. 4, Plant 4), a small bungalow cottage, is a rare, surviving example of early worker's housing at the Bishop Creek Hydroelectric System. Built in 1905, Plant 4 was the first on the Bishop Creek System, and it remains the system's operating headquarters. This house is one of the four earliest cottages built for employees at Plant 4. The Bishop Creek System is considered significant for its role: (1) in the expansion of hydroelectric generation technology, (2) in the development of eastern California, and (3) in the development of long-distance power transmission and distribution.

Report Prepared By: Thomas T. Taylor, Senior Archaeologist
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Environmental Affairs Division
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Date: August 27, 1995

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I. DESCRIPTION

Building 105, Plant 4 is a small, Craftsman style cottage located about 350 feet northeast of the Bishop Creek Hydroelectric System Plant 4 powerhouse. This cottage was part of a residential enclave of 12 houses, most of which have been demolished, where the Plant 4 workers lived (Photo 145-4-B-1). The project area is about five miles southwest of the town of Bishop, Inyo County, California. The Bishop Creek System is primarily located along the south, middle, and north forks of Bishop Creek on the steep eastern slopes of the southern Sierra Nevada Range. Plant 4 is one of five plants sited at varying elevations along Bishop Creek. Situated in the middle of the Bishop Creek System, Plant 4 is northeast of Plants 2 and 3, and southwest of Plants 5 and 6.

Building 105, set about 3 feet higher than the street, is on a site that slopes slightly down toward the low, stone retaining wall separating the front yard from the street southeast of the house (Photo 145-4-B-2). A concrete stair with six steps penetrates through the stone wall providing access to the front yard and the house (Photo 145-4-B-3). The small front yard consists of a lawn, a concrete walkway, and several small shrubs around the base of the house. Four more steps lead up from the front yard to the house's off-center front door.

Building 105 is a single-story with basement, rectangular plan (27 feet along the front and rear, 34 feet along the south side and 38 feet along the north side), bungalow style house characterized by its steep hipped-roof and a prominent shingle-sided Cubic Style dormer on the front roof (Photos 145-4-B-2, 145-4-B-3, and 145-4-B-7). Structurally, the building is one of four reinforced concrete cottages built at Plant 4. The exterior walls are covered with rough textured stucco, except for the rear additions and the front of the house (originally a recessed porch) which are covered with asbestos shingles (Photos 145-4-B-3, 145-4-B-4, 145-4-B-5, 145-4-B-6, 145-4-B-7, and SCE drawing 214529-0). The roof is covered with asphalt shingles and has exposed rafters under the eaves. One metal chimney projects from the roof on the south side of the house.

Walls of the building are penetrated by 1-light over 1-light, double-hung, wood-frame windows with wood surrounds and sills. Aluminum frame sliding windows have been added along the north wall, the rear addition, the front, and the east side of the south wall (Photos 145-4-B-3, 145-4-B-5, 145-4-B-6, and 145-4-B-7). The aluminum front entrance door has inset panels below a nine pane window.

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The extensive revisions to the rear of the house occurred in two phases, the first of which may have taken place at the time of initial construction. The original plans called for a evenly rectangular building with a 4 by 13 foot screen porch off the kitchen at the rear (SCE drawing 214529-0). This space was instead incorporated into the kitchen and a 3 1/2 foot by (probably) 13 foot extension (likely originally a screened porch) added on. Later, this area was further modified by adding a 14 1/2 foot by 7 foot utility room behind the rear bedroom which connected through to the now enclosed rear porch addition.

Enclosure of the recessed front porch, lengthening the living room and the front bedroom, constituted a major later alteration to the structure. At that time the two center porch supports shown in the original plans (SCE drawing 214529-0) were removed, leaving only the two end supports for incorporation into the revision (Photos 145-4-B-3 and 145-4-B-4). The original low parapet wall enclosing the symmetrical porch is visible below the asbestos siding. The two remaining porch supports are heavy, square-shaped, chamfered columns with overscaled decorative brackets forming capitals.

The house has about 960 square feet of interior space divided into six rooms: a kitchen, a bathroom, a living room, two bedrooms, and a utility room. The houses' compact plan has no halls with the rooms opening directly one to another. The original plan is essentially intact except for the revisions to the front and rear of the house previously described, and a completely remodeled bathroom which was expanded into space shown on the original plans as walk-in closets for each bedroom.

Although not shown on the original plan. Building 105 has a small basement comprised of two small (12 by 12 foot and 7 by 5 foot) spaces accessed from an outside stairway located on the north side of the house (Photos 145-4-B-5 and 145-4-B-6). The basement which was probably used as a utility area as well as providing access to the bathroom plumbing, has concrete walls and two wooden workbenches (Photos 145-4-B-8 and 145-4-B-9).

The 19 1/2 foot by 12 1/2 foot living room retains two of the original 1-light over 1-light, double-hung windows (Photo 145-4-B-10). Here and throughout the rest of the house, the walls have been refinished in drywall and the original door and window surrounds replaced by plain board framing; most of the original five-panel interior doors have been retained. The living room ceiling features acoustical tile, a single light fixture, and the interior vent leading to the chimney; the floor is wall to wall carpet. Heat is provided by two electrical wall heaters (one each on the east and west walls) (Photos 145-4-B-10 and 145-4-B-11). The front bedroom also has an acoustical tile ceiling with a single lighting fixture, wall to wall carpet,

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and a single electrical wall heater (Photo 145-4-B-12). Combination storage cabinets/sliding door closet are recent additions built into the south wall at the east end of the room as replacement for the closet space lost in the bathroom remodeling (Photo 145-4-B-13). The rear bedroom is smaller duplicate of the front bedroom with similar built-in cabinetry/sliding door closet, carpet, ceiling, lighting and heating (Photo 145-4-B-16).

Remodeling and re-configuration of the bathroom added about 30 percent to the space of this room. Built-in cabinets occupy the entire south wall (Photo 145-4-B-14). The ceiling is drywall and features a single light fixture. Flooring in linoleum. A second wall light electrical fixture is over the sink next to the modern combination bathtub/shower (Photo 145-4-B-15). The bathroom is accessed by both bedrooms.

The kitchen is accessed from the living room, rear bedroom, and rear utility area (Photos 145-4-B-17 and 145-4-B-18). It features linoleum flooring, drywall ceiling and built-in cabinets from front to back along the south wall, framing the original 1-light over 1-light, double-hung window over the sink, and along the back wall above the major appliance locations (Photo 145-4-B-18). A single ceiling electrical fixture lights the room.

The rear utility area is lighted by two globular fixtures, one hung from a sloping drywall ceiling in the shed-roofed northern portion, and the other hung from a plank ceiling in the southern portion (Photos 145-4-B-20 and 145-4-B-21). The southern wall is taken by a floor to ceiling storage cabinet; a second cabinet suspends from the ceiling and north end of the east wall (Photo 145-4-B-19). Walls in this room are drywall except for the southern half of the east wall which is rough stucco. Flooring is linoleum; heat is provided by a single electrical wall unit. The main electrical junction box for the house is located on the east wall of this room (Photo 145-4-B-20).

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Please refer to the "Historical Context" sections in the general report for Bishop Creek, Plant 4 (HAER No. CA-145-4) for historical information regarding Plant 4 and the Bishop Creek System.

Each of the five Bishop Creek power plants, and Control Station, was originally developed with an associated residential complex occupied by operating and maintenance crews; all have now been removed with the exception of small remaining enclaves at Plant 4, Control Station,

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and a single house at Plant 6. Several houses, like Building 105 at Plant 4, were constructed during the expansion period of 1907-1909 to accommodate the additional workers needed to operate the power plants. Building 105 Plant 4 is one of four bungalow style houses built in 1909 at Plant 4, the earliest worker houses constructed at this plant (Theodoratus Cultural Research 1988:A-81). The company development of employee living areas, especially at Plant 4, permitted comprehensive planning seldom seen in privately developed residential areas during this period. The setting of Building 105 Plant 4 still retains many elements of the old residential planning in this area, including picturesque curving streets, houses sited on terraces with stone retaining walls, manicured front lawns with unified groupings of shade trees, and integrally designed lighting standards.

III. SOURCES

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IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This Historic American Engineering Record documentation of Building 105 Plant 4, a cottage at Plant 4 of the Bishop Creek Hydroelectric System, was undertaken because the building represents excess housing. SCE is continuing to automate the Bishop Creek power plants. The automation of the power plants has made it unnecessary to have on-site crews, thus, residential units like this cottage have become obsolete.

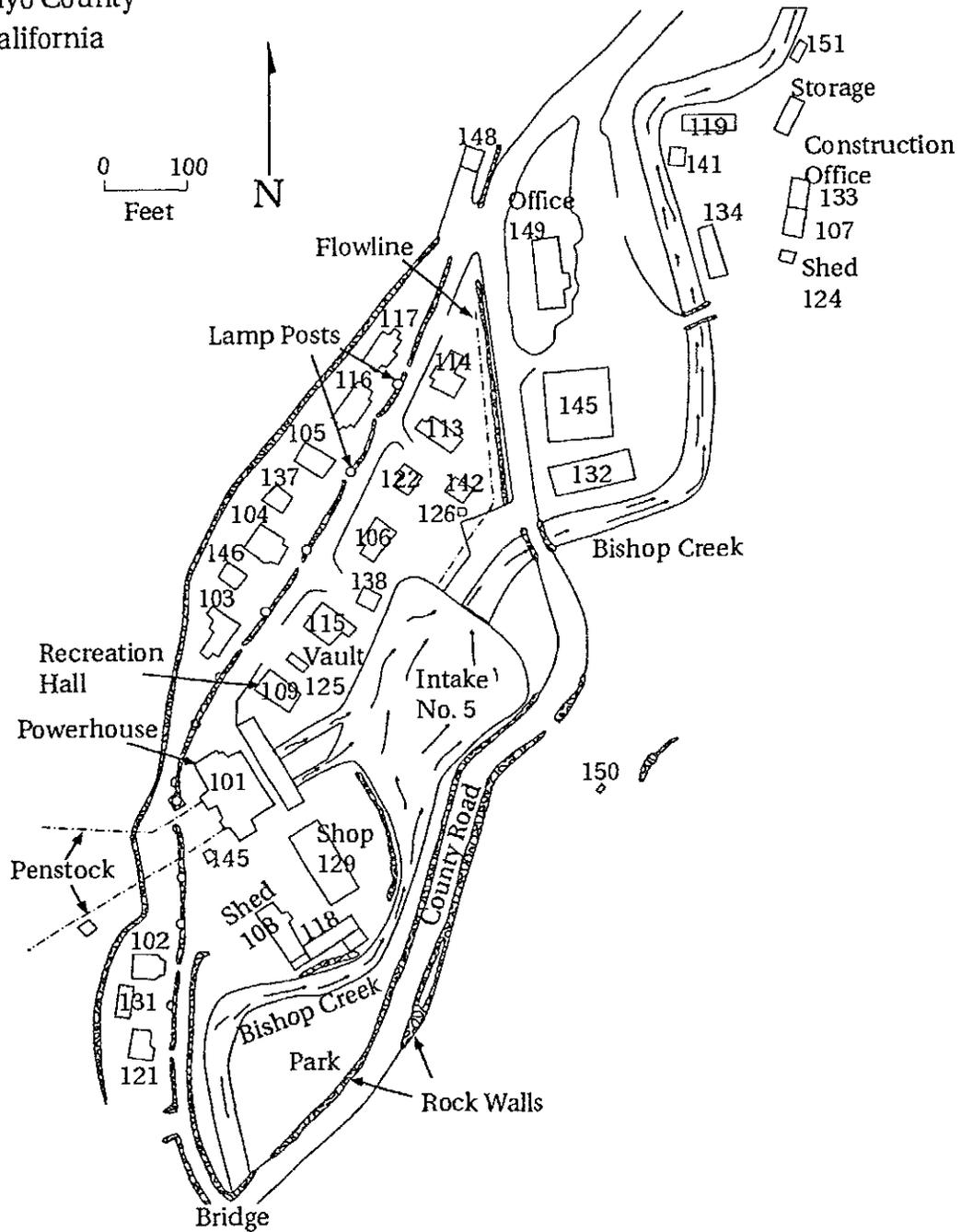
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