

Rains Bathhouse
Old Rains Townsite
Spring Canyon
Standardville vicinity
Carbon County
Utah

HAER No. UT-54

HAER
UTAH,
4-STAVI.V,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
P. O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Rains Bathhouse

HAER No. UT-54

Location: Old Rains townsite, Spring Canyon, approximately two miles west of Standardville and six miles west of Helper, Carbon County, Utah (NE/SE/SE/NW Section 7, T13S-R9E)

UTM: 12.503505E.4395440N
Quad: Standardville, Utah, 7.5'

Date of Construction: ca. 1915-1916

Builder: Carbon Fuel Company

Present Owner: John, Nick and Gene S. Pappas
856 N. 3rd East
Price, Utah 84501

Present Use: Abandoned

Significance: The Rains Bathhouse is associated with events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of our history, i.e., early 20th century coal mining in Utah and the western United States. The bathhouse is an integral part of the overall Rains mining operation and the associated Rains community. It is a unique component of the coal mining industry and is the only intact example remaining in the Spring Canyon district. The foundation and basement walls also reflect Italian stone masonry techniques that are the most important architectural contribution of this district. The site retains sufficient integrity of setting and physical integrity to convey feeling and association with its period of historical significance.

Historians: Robert G. Rosenberg, Historical Consultant
A. Dudley Gardner, Principal Investigator
Western Wyoming college

August 1988

I. HISTORY

The Rains Mine was developed by the Carbon Fuel Company in 1915. The company was formed by L. F. Rains, president and former manager of the Standard Mines. L. R. Wattis was vice president, and Patrick J. Quealy, who owned coal mines in Kemmerer, Wyoming, was secretary. Before the mine could begin shipping coal, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad branch was extended two miles northwest from Standardville. Track construction was begun on August 20, 1915, and the Carbon Fuel Company began shipping coal from its mine six months later.¹

The new mine was well equipped from its inception. The mine developed a coal seam, averaging 17 to 19 feet thick in the Castlegate "A" and Sub 2 coal seams. The mine portal was located on the north slope of Spring Canyon, east of the town of Rains, and a large tipple was built that could handle one hundred railroad cars daily on four loading tracks. The coal was hauled to the surface in cars by an electric hoist, and the empty cars were pulled back into the mine by gravity. The coal was dumped into a bin, and then was fed onto a 450-foot conveyor to the tipple below, where it was screened and sorted.²

The mine was developed by the room and pillar method, where the coal was mined in rooms separated by narrow ribs or pillars that held up the roof. The coal was undercut by machine and drilled and shot down, using explosives. Mules pulled the coal cars to the main haulages. During its first 120 days of operation, an 80-man work force produced 63,000 tons of coal.³

The Carbon Fuel Company built a town adjacent to the mine, with sixty wood frame houses for its workers. It is likely that the company used readily-available standardized coal camp building plans for constructing the Rains living quarters. The company probably used its own employees to lay out and build the structures to fit the confines of Spring Canyon. However, no records or plans have been located concerning the construction plans of Rains. About 175 people lived there during the early years, and this number gradually increased with production. Although supervisory personnel tended to live in more substantial residences, there was very little hierarchy in housing along either ethnic or economic lines. The town had a large store, run by the Rains Mercantile Company, a gravity-fed water supply, and electric power from the Utah Power & Light Company. Rains also had a boardinghouse and a school. One of the earliest structures built at Rains was a large wood frame bathhouse for the mine workers.⁴

The Rains Mine coal bore the trade name of "Hi-Heat" and the mine was often known by that name. The Rains Mine steadily increased the size of its work force and production. In 1919, a 170-man crew produced

211,324 tons of coal. In 1920, a 180-man force produced 214,894 tons of coal. In 1921, a 210-man crew produced 158,133 tons of coal.⁵ The population of the town of Rains approached 500 during this time period, counting dependents. However, when crews were temporarily increased, many of the additional single miners often lived in tents. The Rains Mine production peaked in the mid-1920s and gradually declined thereafter. In 1924-1925, the mine produced 220,239 tons of coal, and in 1925-1926, the tonnage decreased slightly to 181,319 tons. In 1928, 161,319 tons were produced, but from January 1, 1929 to June 30, 1930, production was only 132,424 tons for the eighteen month period. The Rains Mine closed permanently in 1930. However, in 1935, the Uta-Carbon Coal Company opened the Uta-Carbon Mine, which brought new life to the town. It was located downslope from the old Rains Mine portal and continued operations until 1956. No other mines operated in Rains after that time.⁶

Jeannette McAlpine and her husband moved to Rains from Oklahoma in 1935. Recalling her life there, Mrs. McAlpine stated, "But how could we live in this two-room house without indoor plumbing, clothes closet, and kitchen cabinets? No landscaping! Where were the grass, the flowers and the trees?" She did remember that the people were friendly and, for amusement, dances were held on the second floor of the large stone Mutual Store building less than one-half mile west of the town.⁷

Today, the Rains bathhouse is the only intact structure remaining at the old Rains townsite. The buildings were either torn down for materials or moved to other communities after the mine closed. The bathhouse is suffering the ravages of time and vandalism and has a cracked foundation, collapsing room, and disintegrating floor.

II. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RAINS MINE AND TOWN

In 1985, Desert West Research, Salt Lake City, Utah, conducted a Class III cultural resource survey of the Spring Canyon area, including the old Rains townsite. Rains (42Cn490) was considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.⁸

The Rains townsite, mines, and the Rains bathhouse are an integral part of the history of the Spring Canyon coal mining area, the Book Cliffs Coal Field, and the overall history of coal mining in the State of Utah and the western United States. It is therefore believed that the site has local, state, and regional historical significance. In terms of economic impact, the Rains Mine and Uta-Carbon Mine produced large quantities of coal, despite fluctuations in the market from 1916, when the first load of coal left the tipples by rail, until 1956, when the last mine closed. During this time period, there was only a five year gap, between 1930 and 1935, when Rains was idle. Secondly, at its peak,

the Rains Mine employed a work force of 200, and the townsite had a population of around 500. The Book Cliffs Coal Field, of which the Rains Mines was a part, produced approximately 75% of Utah's overall coal output into the 1970s.⁹ Finally, Rains and its sister camps in the Spring Canyon area boasted a rich ethnic diversity. Miners from all points of the globe, including Italians (who were responsible for the fine stone masonry), Austrians, Greeks, Germans, Scandinavians, and Japanese were able to live and work together despite language and cultural barriers.

The Rains bathhouse is a unique component of mining facilities, especially important to the coal mining industry. It was as integral a part of any large coal mining operation as were the lamphouse and checkhouse. Although bathhouses were constructed at Standardville, Latuda, and other company towns in Spring Canyon, the Rains bathhouse is more complex and efficient than those normally observed, having individual shower stalls and changing rooms, separated by a central aisle. The monitor roof with clerestory windows provided ample light, roominess, and ventilation. The foundation and basement walls display the fine stone masonry practiced by the Italians, who lived and worked in Spring Canyon. The stone was quarried from the nearby rock outcroppings and cliff faces. It was skillfully cut into blocks and laid to create tight-filling stone courses with pointed mortar. The stone masonry displayed in the Spring Canyon communities and mining structures is the most important architectural contribution of this district and also reflects the ethnic heritage.

Today, the Rains Bathhouse is still intact. There are cracks in the stone foundation; the exterior and interior walls and the roof have deteriorated and are in need of repair. The overall setting of the Rains Bathhouse has not been compromised by modern intrusions, except for an electrical substation located several hundred feet east and downslope from the structure. The other components of the Rains townsite have been torn down and removed, although several foundations and building sites are still evident. None of the mine-related structures remain standing. Therefore, the Rains Bathhouse stands as the sole remnant of the Rains townsite and mining operation, where hundreds of miners and their families lived and worked in a company coal mining town.

III. SITE DESCRIPTION

Rains Bathhouse: Site 42Cb490, Feature 1, Structure S10
(NE/SE/SE/NW Section 7, T13S-R9E, template anchored in NW corner).

The Rains Bathhouse is located at the old Rains townsite on the lower north slope of Spring Canyon near the mouth of Rains Canyon. It is a

rectangular-shaped one-story wood frame building (49.7 feet east-west by 22 feet north-south) with a full one-story foundation and basement built of coursed, locally-quarried, cut sandstone with pointed mortar. The building is oriented approximately east-west, and the main entrances are on the east and west elevations. The building has an interesting monitor roof that extends the ceiling of the central portion of the building. The roof has projecting eaves with exposed rafters. The eaves on the east and west elevations feature simple decorative wooden brackets with beveled ends. The lower level of the roof is covered with wooden shingles and the upper portion is covered with red asphalt shingles. The exterior walls are covered with narrow shiplap siding. The north and south elevations have evenly spaced three-light windows with wooden frames and plain surrounds. The clerestory on the same elevations have five evenly-spaced four-light windows set in wooden frames with plain surrounds. These windows are hinged and swing inward. No glass remains in any of the window bays. The east elevation has one doorless bay located near the northeast corner of the building. There is a large rectangular window opening south of the doorway with plain surrounds that no longer retains any glass, muntins, or frames. The west elevation has a similar doorway near the northwest corner and a centrally located window bay with plain surrounds above door level in the monitor. There are two evenly-spaced round metal ventilators protruding from the south roof slope below the monitor and a round metal chimney located in the peak of the monitor toward the east central end of the building.

The interior of the building consists of an open central aisle with shower rooms on the north side and changing rooms on the south side. These three areas are partitioned, and each area is divided into individual segments. The shower segment has a concrete floor with a central longitudinal trough for drainage. There are six, evenly-spaced doorways into the shower area, indicating individual shower stalls. However, there are no longer any partitions. The changing rooms are located on the south side and were divided into individual stalls by partitions about five feet in height. The partitions are no longer in place. There were five or possibly six changing rooms or stalls located in the southeast half of the building.

The remainder of the southern segment is composed of two larger rooms. The middle room has one entrance, and a continuous strip of wood encircles the walls. Nails protrude from this trim at regular intervals and appear to have been used for hanging up garments. The room in the southwest corner also has one entrance, and the remains of a heater fan were found on the floor. The basement contains only one room that once housed a coal-powered furnace and hopper, which could be filled from an opening in the west foundation wall. There is also a doorway in the south elevation of the basement wall near the southwest

corner and a small window opening to the east of the doorway. The basement room measures 17 feet 8 inches times 11 feet 7 inches. A brick chimney extends from the basement into the main floor. All interior walls are covered with wood lathe and/or metal mesh and plastered. The central aisle has a concrete floor and a high ceiling reaching above the windows in the clerestory monitor.

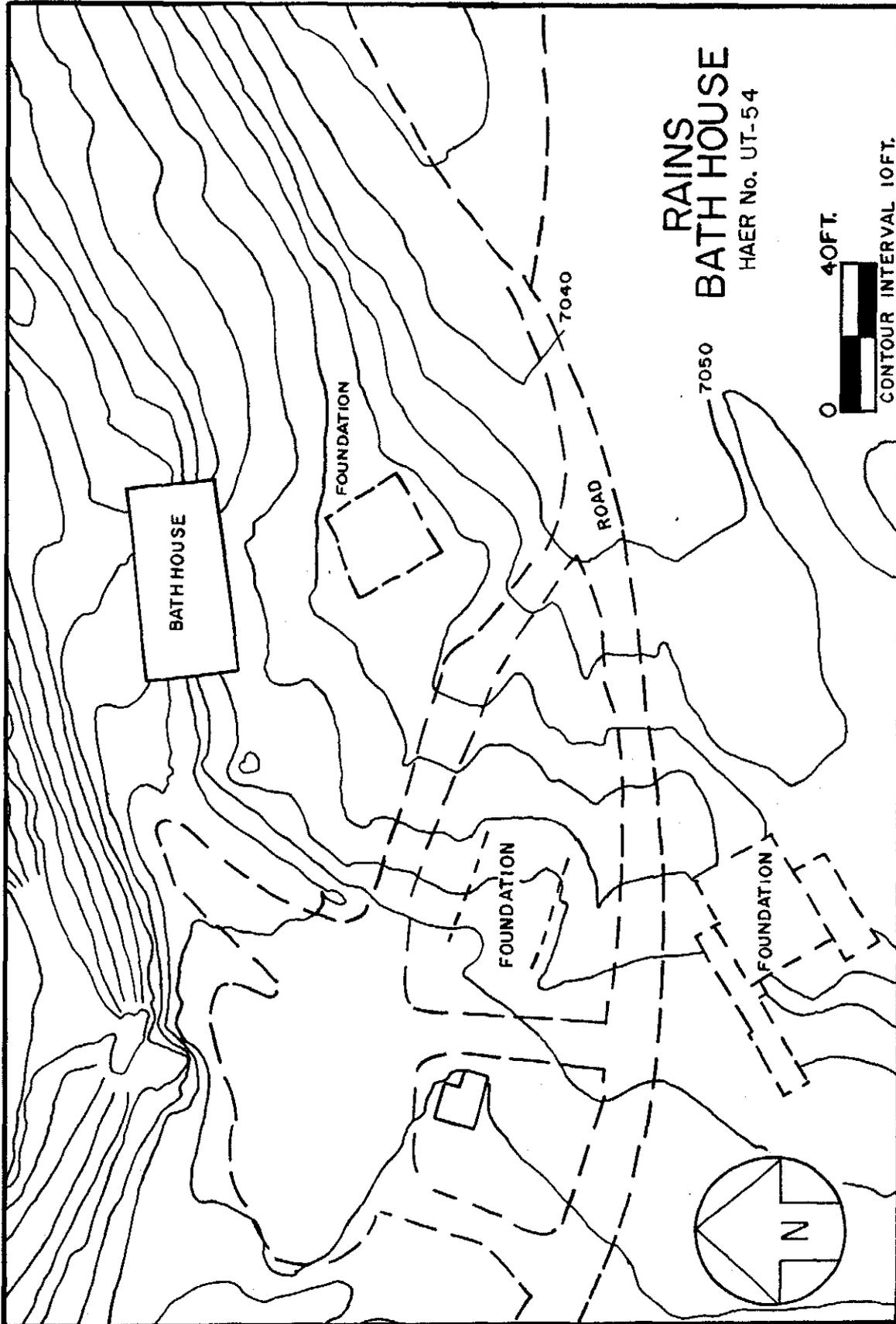
Bathhouses were usually built only a larger mine operations for the use of the miners. Most followed the same basic plan. A miner entered the building after his shift and deposited his dirty clothes into a wire basket suspended from the ceiling by a chain. He then showered and changed into clean clothes. The process was reversed in the morning, and he changed into his work clothes before entering the mine. There was often a centrally-located pot belly stove. The Rains Bathhouse no longer retains any hardware or changing baskets. The interior has been gutted for materials, making the exact layout difficult to define.

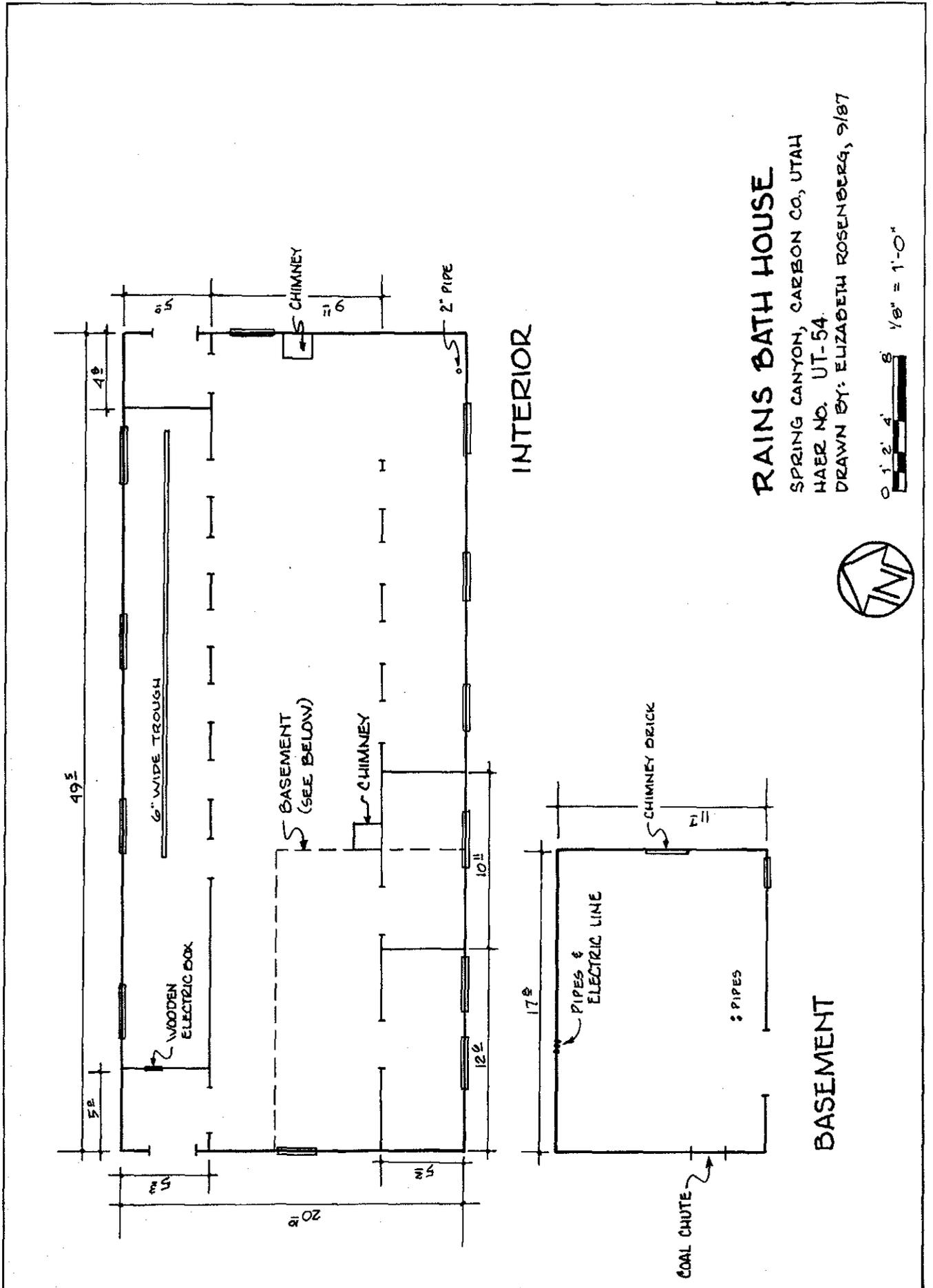
The present condition of the bathhouse is poor, due to vandalism, scavenging of materials, and lack of maintenance. The foundation walls are badly cracked, the roof is swayed and open in many places, the interior walls are in poor condition, all windows and doors are missing, and the floor is quite dangerous. Finally, portions of the shiplap siding have been removed or have deteriorated over time.

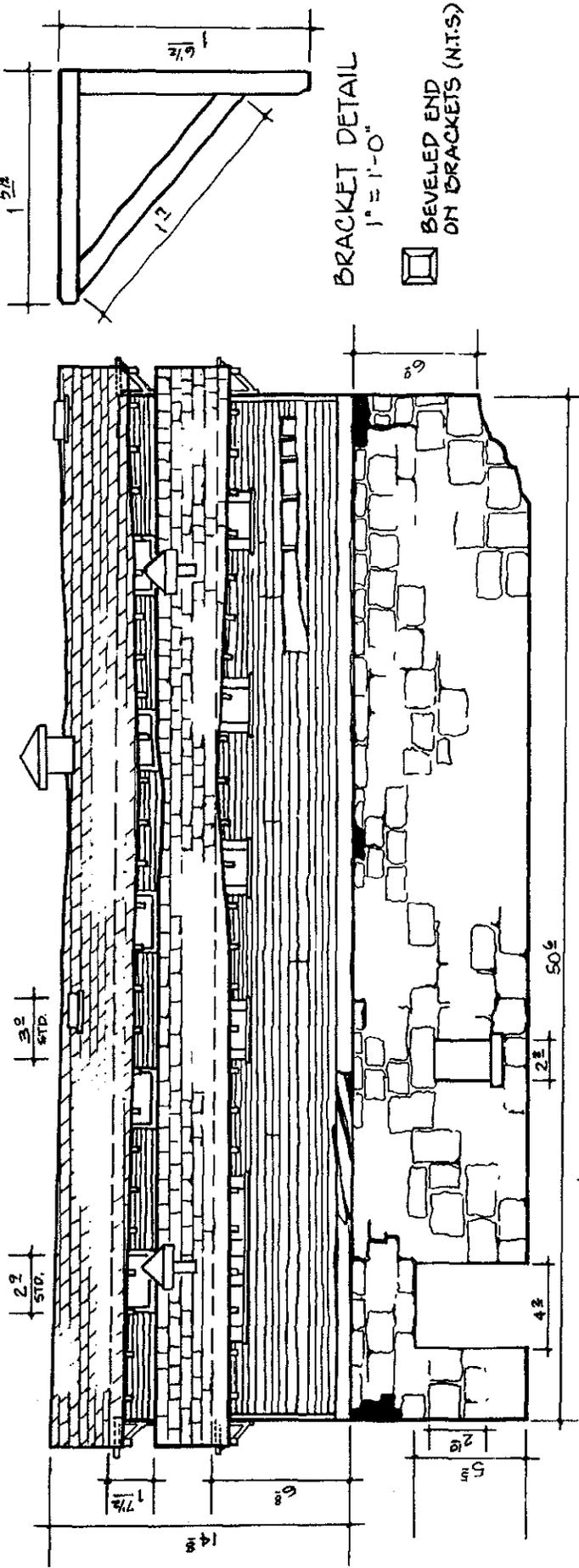
IV. FOOTNOTES

- 1 State of Utah, Report of the State Mine Inspector, 1916, pp. 280-281.
- 2 Ibid., p. 281.
- 3 Ibid., p. 282; C. A. Allen and E. M. Spieker, "Analyses of Utah Coals," U. S. Bureau of Mines Technical Paper No. 345 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), pp. 51-52.
- 4 State of Utah, State Coal Mine Inspector, 1916, p. 282.
- 5 State of Utah, Report of Industrial Commission, State Coal Mine Inspector, 1922, pp. 922-923.
- 6 State of Utah, Report of the Industrial Commission, State Coal Mine Inspector, 1928, p. 62; 1930, p. 52.
- 7 H. H. Doelling, Central Utah Coal Fields: Sevier, Sanpete, Wasatch Plateau, Book Cliffs and Emery, Monograph Series No. 3 (Salt Lake City: Utah Geological and Mineralogical Survey, 1972), p. 350; Richard Schultz, personal communication, Helper, Utah, August 23, 1987; Chuck Zehnder, A Guide of Carbon County Coal Camps and Ghost Towns (Helper, Utah: n.p., 1984), 26-27.

- 8 Michael S. Berry, "An Archeological Evaluation of Historic Coal Mining Sites in Carbon County: Spring Canyon, Bear Canyon, Scofield and Gordon Creek Areas," Desert West Research, Salt Lake City, Utah 1985 (typewritten).
- 9 Doelling, p. 250.

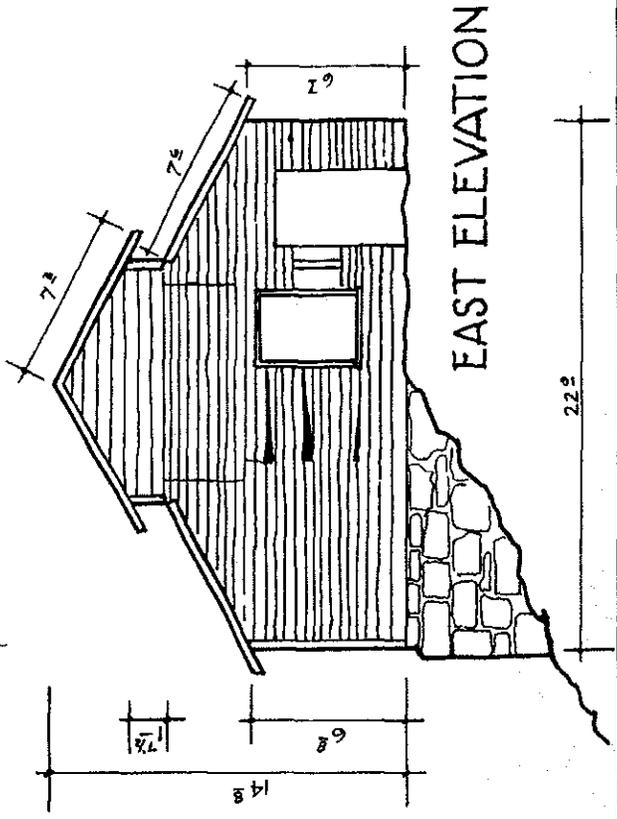






BRACKET DETAIL
1" = 1'-0"
BEVELED END
ON BRACKETS (N.T.S.)

SOUTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION

RAINS BATH HOUSE
SPRING CANYON, CARBON CO., UTAH
HAER NO. UT-54
DRAWN BY: ELIZABETH ROSENBERG, 9/87

