

EMERY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Presents

A tour of Spring Canyon and adjacent mining towns



September 22, 2018

Spring Canyon, Utah (formerly called Storrs)

Though the area where the Spring Canyon Coal Company would develop a mine had been known for years as having a rich coal seam, it would be decades before commercial operations would be established. In the late 1800's, Helper residents were often known to haul coal by wagons from an opening on the side of the mountain. A small mine was worked in Sowbelly Gulch by Teancum Pratt in 1895 when he built a wagon road and began to haul coal back to Helper. Around 1897, bought the acreage, operating his small coal mining venture until 1912. At that time, Jesse Knight and other investors in Provo, Utah purchased the land and organized the Spring Canyon Coal Company.

The company began to develop some 2,000 acres of coal land and made plans to build a railroad to connect the mine in Spring Canyon with the D&RG Railroad at nearby Helper. Starting with just about a half dozen miners, supervised by Provo ex-sheriff George Storrs, coal was first shipped to Helper via wagons.

However, when the railroad was completed in October, 1912, the mine began to make its first shipments on the train, which sported a brand-new locomotive. Storrs also was the superintendent of the railroad, as well as the mine.

Coal was delivered from the mine to the canyon floor by way of an aerial tramway. Expanding quickly, a new steel tippie began to be built in March, 1913, which had a capacity to handle some 2,000 tons of coal per day. By May, it was operational and was shipping about 600 tons per day with expectations of quick growth. That same year, the private railroad was bought by the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad.

As the mine expanded the camp that supported it was also growing, taking on the name of Storrs, for the mine superintendent. The company also built a number of four room cottages for the miners which included hot and cold running water, a store, a hotel, and a hospital. By the end of 1914, the mine was producing about 1,000 tons of coal per day.

Spring Canyon Coal Company, 1925,

In 1919, a new surface tramway replaced the mine's aerial tramway.

Jesse Knight died on March 14, 1921 and the following year, the company was sold to James B. Smith and his associates of San Francisco, California.

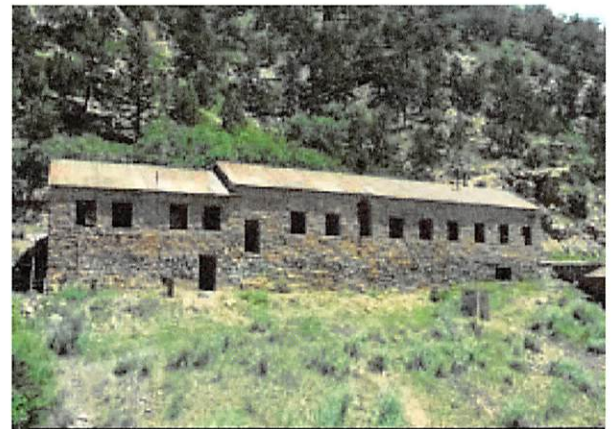
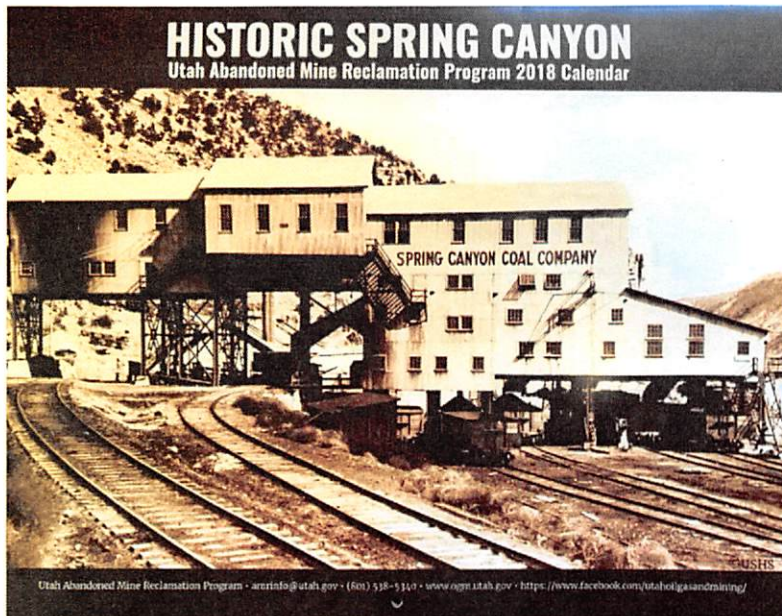
In 1924 the Town of Storrs changed its name to Spring Canyon, perhaps because its first superintendent, George Storrs, who had moved on and started his own company, had been indicted on mail fraud charges in connection with promotion of his Great Western Coal Company in Gordon Creek Canyon. Though Storrs would later be cleared of the charges, the town would forever be known as Spring Canyon. By that time, the town boasted a population of approximately 1,100 people.

By 1940 the Spring Canyon mine was ranked as the fourth largest producer in the state. Ever expanding, by 1948, the Spring Canyon Coal Company was also operating the Standard and Royal Mines.

However, the prosperity couldn't last forever, and by 1954, much of the coal had been depleted and the Spring Canyon Coal shut down the vast majority of its operations, operating with just a skeleton crew. Most of the residents left town, but the mine continued to operate until 1969, when it was closed

Railroad tram through Spring Canyon

forever.



Spring Canyon Mine shop



Plaque at the base of the
Spring Canyon Coal Co. Coal Bin

Mangum home in Spring Canyon

Robert Pott's mother: Iris Mangum Potts at back door.
Two girls by fence: Minnie Lucinda Mangum(left) and Estella Odena (right). Girl in front: Clara and twins Harold and Garold Mangum.

Photo courtesy of Robert Potts



Standardville, Utah

About five miles west of the present Utah town of Helper, lies a small treasure hidden since the early 1920s. It isn't a large treasure, but is certainly there to this day and would be a great find for someone.

Up Spring Canyon, there were a total of six mining camps, some of the towns of considerable size. One was Standardville. The town was built beginning in 1912 when F.A. Sweet opened a coal mine just a quarter of a mile north of the main canyon—the mine portal still exists.

Because the town was exceptionally well-designed and built, it became a "standard" for other mining towns and hence the name, Standardville. The town boasted a steam-heated swimming pool, fine billiard hall (the mosaic tile still exists) and very modern company general store.

Not far from the company offices near the billiard hall was a two-inch pipe protruding from the ground. It was uncapped and in the days before OSHA was not unusual. But what lies at the bottom of that pipe is.

A small girl living in one of the company houses near the office and billiard hall found a cigar box her daddy had placed in a bureau drawer. It was very heavy she said, and she took it outside to play with it. After prying on the lid held in place by a small nail, she found the wooden cigar box contained newly minted silver dollars.

She said she played with them for awhile and then walked over to the pipe and, one by one, dropped them into the pipe protruding from the ground. After they were all gone, she took the cigar box back to her home.

Needless to say, when her father found them missing, he questioned the family and she confessed. Her father asked her to show him where she had put them and she walked back to the area just east of the billiard hall and office. There they found a row of pipes that had been cut off—she could not tell which pipe she had dropped them into!

Today, little remains of the once-bustling town. In the mid-1970s most of it was bulldozed down, but there remain a few remnants of the town, including a few pipes protruding from the ground.

Story by © Chuck Zehnder, added July, 2007.



Standardville 1916



Standardville tipple and coal storage, 1916,

The "city" and the mine were so modern and well planned that the town was named Standardville, as a "standard" for other mining camps to follow.

In February, 1914 the company shipped its first coal and during that year the mine was producing about 200 tons of coal daily. A year later the output had increased fivefold.

The population of Standardville increased and the town boasted a large company store, steam-heated apartments, a butcher shop, a barber shop, a hospital, recreation hall, tennis courts and an elementary school with four teachers and 200 students. Junior high students attended school in Latuda and high school students traveled to Price.

Disaster struck Standardville on February 6, 1930 when a gas explosion erupted in the mine. While 29 men were working, a pocket of carbon monoxide gas was ignited probably from sparks from a cutting machine, killing 20 of the miners and three members of a rescue crew. After the explosion, which occurred about 9:00 p.m., nine miners were able to escape. The three members of the rescue crew died when they were crushed during a cave-in.

Though the explosion dealt a blow to the mine and the community, it continued to thrive and by 1932, more than 2,000 tons daily went over the modern steel tipple.

Latuda

One of the town's earliest problems was with water, which had to be hauled in from Helper, before a small spring was tapped from some distance, and piped into the town. Another problem for the "city" was snow slides. Surrounded by mountains at an elevation of some 6,700 feet, Latuda was subject to snow slides, two of which occurred on February 16,

1927, killing two miners and burying a row of houses a nearly a mile of railroad track.

In 1928 the Liberty Fuel Company built a new "modern" four track steel tippie, which increased capacity to 1,500 tons per day.

By the mid-1940s production had begun to fall, reduced to just about 1,000 tons per day and by 1954, the company had shut down much of its operation.

In 1966, the mine was closed permanently, and the entrance blasted shut. The Population in the town peaked at about 400 people, but by 1967 no one was left.



Town of Latuda peaked at about 400 people.

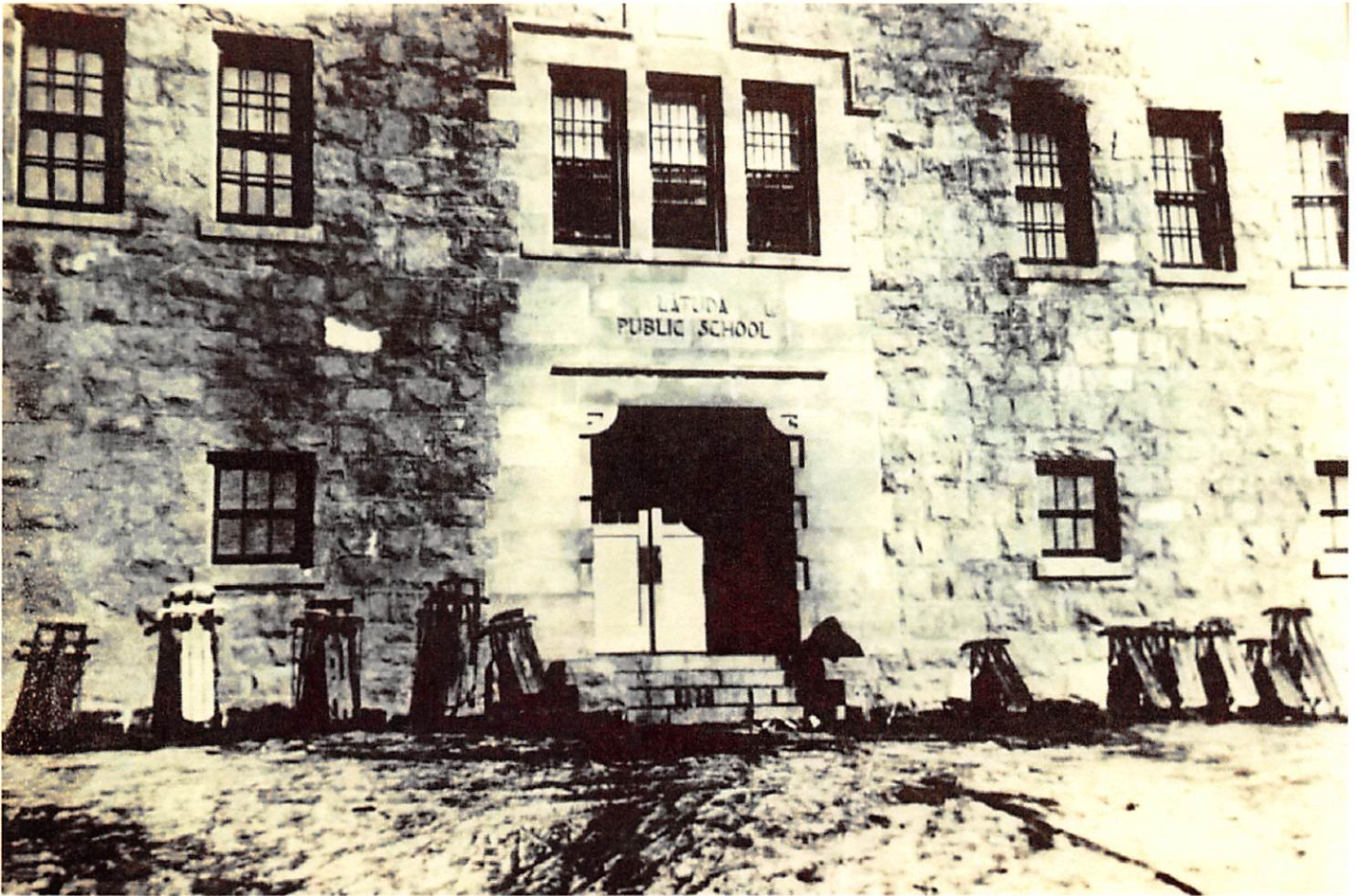
Francisco Latuda and Charles Picco, both of Trinidad, Colorado, paid \$39,948.25 to the U. S. Land Office in Salt Lake City for approximately 326 acres of coal lands on August 1, 1917. (*Utah State Historical Society clipping file: Eastern Utah Advocate, August 2, 1917*)



1966 photo of Latuda (Liberty) Coal Mine Tipple



Coal Company Office



Latuda School with a line-up of to and from school transportation



Photo courtesy of Alex Barber



Old Root Cellar - courtesy of Jade Allen Cook

Rains

Just beyond Latuda at the upper end of Spring Canyon, are the remains of three small mining camps – Rains, Mutual and Little Standard. These were so closely grouped together that the towns blended one into the other. Rains got its start in 1915 when prominent mining engineer Leon Felix Rains garnered the interest of P.J. Quealy, a coal operator from Wyoming, in investing in the coal lands west of Standardville.

Soon, the Carbon Fuel Company was organized, the land was purchased from the government and Mr. Rains served as president of the company. Interestingly, Rains had been a grand opera singer until he became interested in the coal industry, first gaining his experience selling coal in California. Later, he worked as the general manager for the Standard Coal Company from 1913 to 1914, before starting the Carbon Fuel Company.

The 18-foot coal seams in this area were so thick that the company had little development work to accomplish before taking out its first load, which was shipped in November, 1915. The coal camp that grew up around the mine took on the name of its president, and the company built some 60 houses for its employees, as well as a school, a boarding house, a bath house, and a store.

By June, 1916 the Carbon Fuel Company was shipping about 300 of coal per day on its own railroad spur built from the end of the line at Standardville. Later the Liberty Mine at Latuda would use the spur. In 1919, the Denver & Rio Grande bought the railroad property between Standardville and Rains.

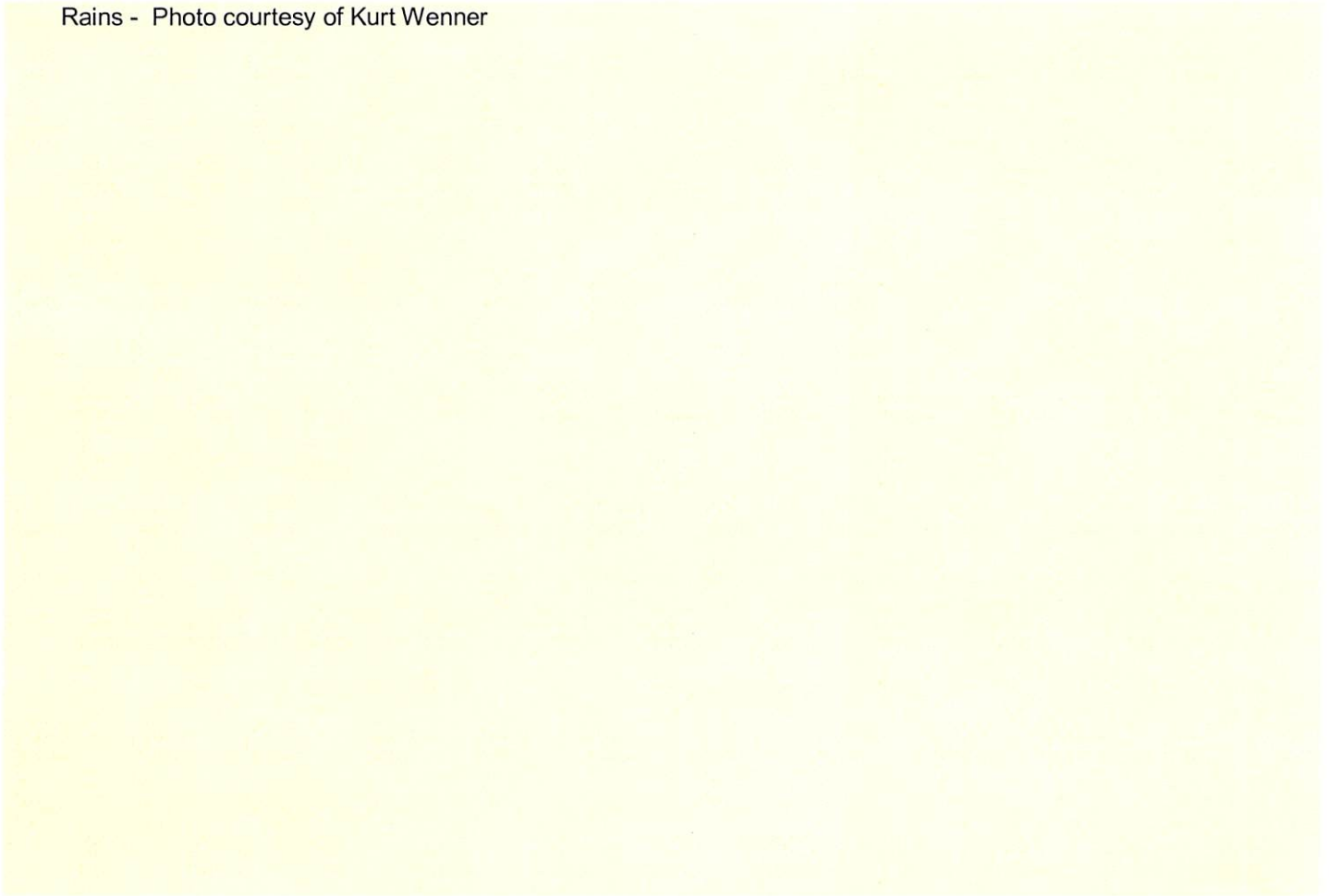
The mine continued to prosper until 1930, when a portion of the operations were shut down. However, in 1938, the Carbon Fuel Company extended its underground workings and began working the adjacent and by then, defunct Mutual Coal Mine.

Somewhere along the line, the mine was sold as by late 1945 it was under the ownership of the Utah-Carbon Coal Company and in 1951, was operated by the Hi-Heat Coal Company. But the coal was gradually being depleted and in 1958 the mine was shut down completely.

Barn at Rains



Rains - Photo courtesy of Kurt Wenner



Rains looking down canyon

Photo courtesy of Eldon Miller

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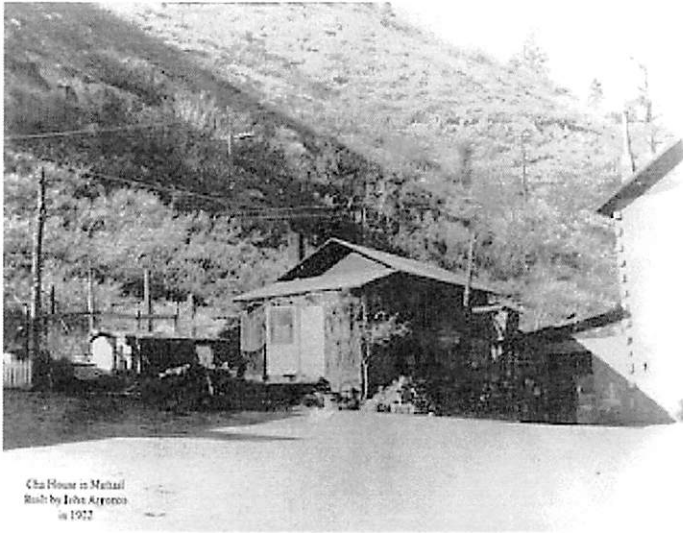
Mutual



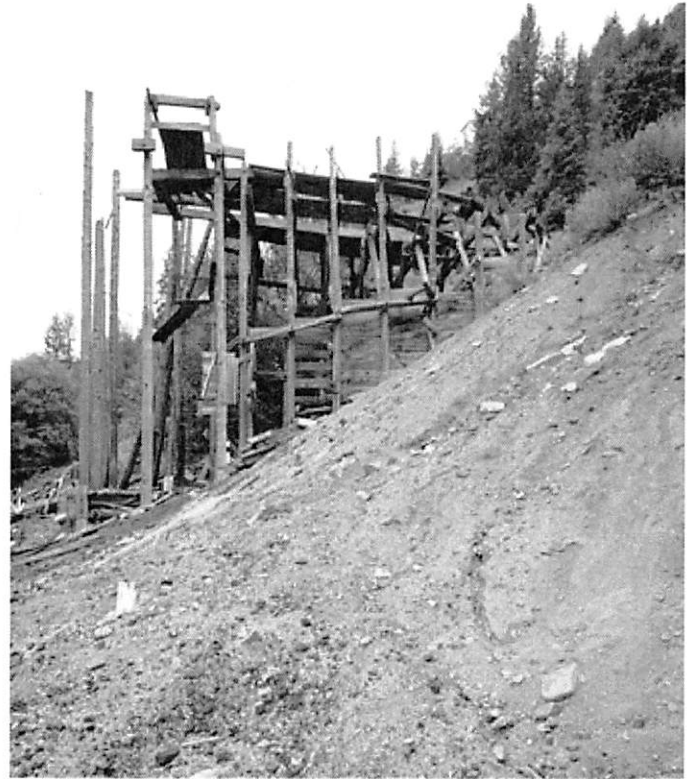
Just northwest of Rains was the mining camp of Mutual developed by the Mutual Coal Company in 1921. Along with the Mutual Mine, there were also a number of smaller operations in the area. Located so close to Rains, the Mutual's population utilized the Rains school and post office, but had its own large company store and a number of miners' homes.

From 1921 to 1931, the Mutual Mine produced more than 1.5 million tons of coal, which was rated one of the best domestic coals in the territory. The mine closed in 1938 and its workings were taken over by the adjacent Carbon Fuel Company by extending its own underground workings into the Mutual mine.

Numerous mining remains dot the end of the canyon and the old walls of the Mutual Company Store still stand, amongst corrals and ranching paraphernalia.



House built in 1922 by John Arroncco



Mutual Tipple

Photos courtesy of Internet

Peerless



Town of Peerless



Lonely Foundation remains



Filled-in mine shaft at Peerless

In 1916, 440 acres (1.8 km²) of land were purchased by William and Charles Sweet. They immediately began to develop coal mining operations. In 1917, the Sweets sold the property to the Peerless Coal Company. Coal shipments began over the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad in 1918. As the mining continued, the population grew. At its peak, the town's population was about 300, half of which worked in the mines. The community included thirty homes, a store, a school, the mine office, a post office, and a poolhall. Coal production peaked in World War I, when 2,000 tons of coal was mined daily. In 1938, coal mining activity began to decline and people began to leave. By World War II, the mine was operating very little, and only a few people remained. The mine closed in 1954, and the rest of the residents left. A few foundations and filled-in mine shafts remain.



Sage brush grows heavy around the remains of Peerless

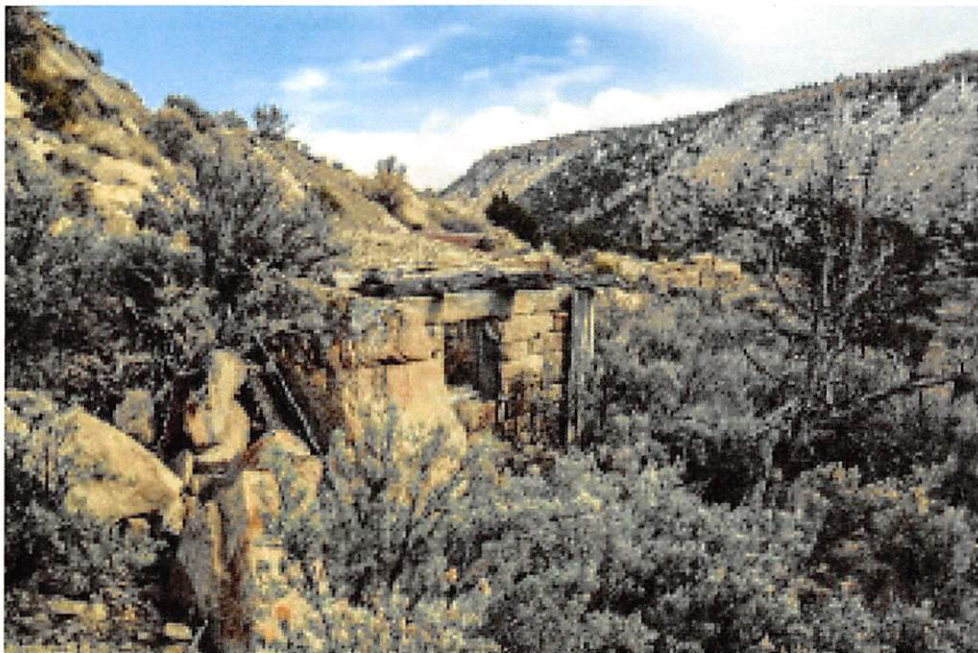


Photo Courtesy of Sue Smith

Burnt Tree Fork



Remains of Burnt Tree Fork

Photos courtesy of the Internet