

Klondike Mines Railway

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1992

KLONDIKE MINES RAILWAY

Preliminary Survey and Field Recording Project

Dawson City Museum and Historical Society



**Barbara Hogan and Gregory Skuce
July, 1992**

THE DAWSON CITY MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

APPRECIATES

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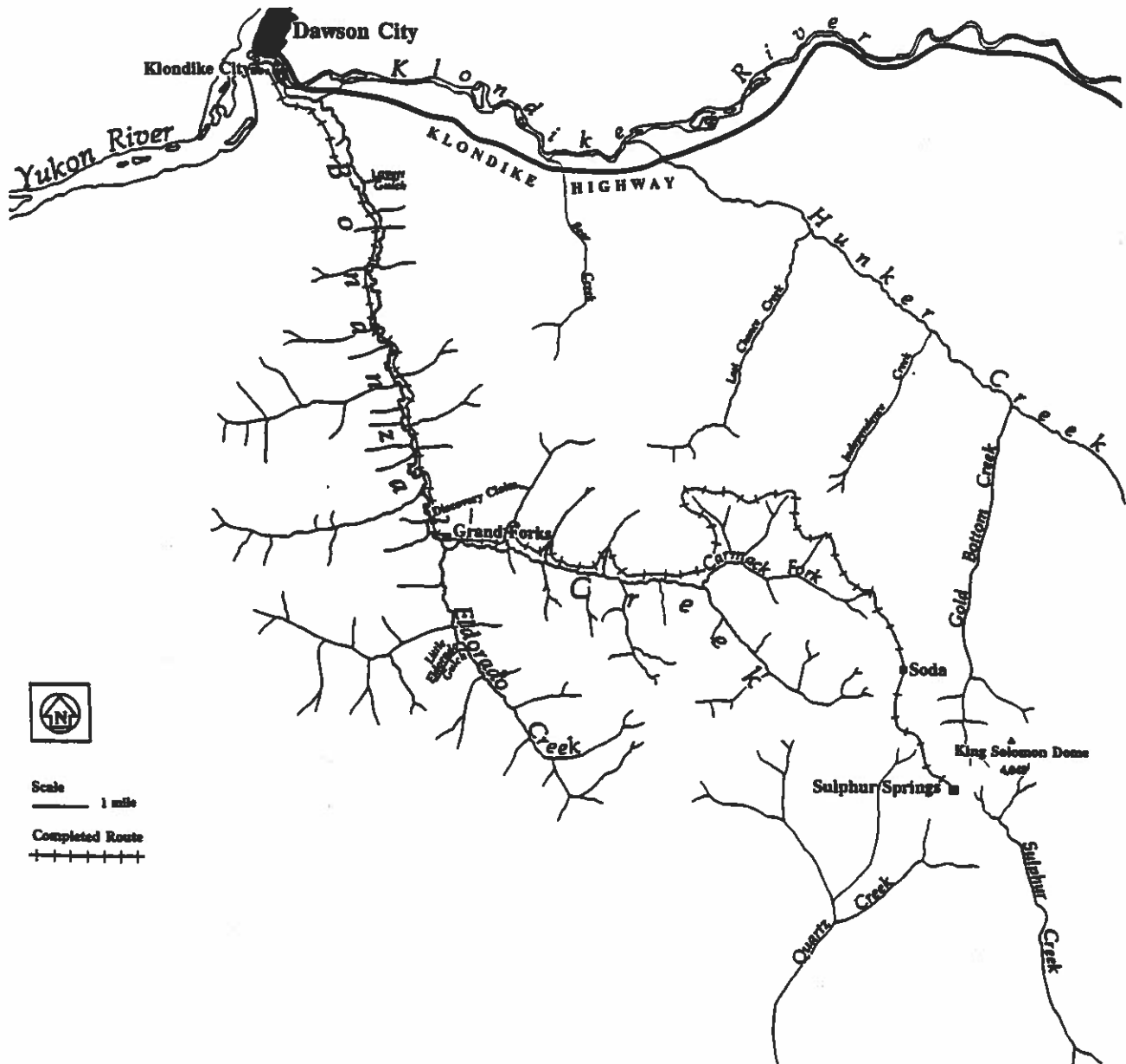


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INTRODUCTION

At the height of the goldrush hundreds of miners wanted supplies on their placer mining claims, and could not take the time to deliver the materials themselves. Two entrepreneurs realized that an inexpensive freighting system was needed.¹ In 1898 John H. McKenzie and H. Stratton applied for a charter to build a narrow gauge railroad through the goldfields. After persistent lobbying, a charter was granted along with provisions for a telegraph and telephone line.

Construction began in 1903 after financial backers and right of ways were determined. Three or four miles of track was laid, and considerable grading was done.² Cribbing along the waterfront of Klondike City, grading for a spur line in Klondike City, and waterfront leases were negotiated for the construction of a terminus for the railroad, between 1903 and 1905. In 1905, the Governor General recommended the plans for the route of the KMR be approved and that subsidies be granted for construction to continue. Work began on the steel bridge crossing the Klondike River and the rail line was continued along Front Street in Dawson City.³ In May, 1906, the first consignment of freight arrived in Dawson City from Klondike City.⁴ By June of 1906 an inventory of the Klondike Mines Railroad consisted of 1 repair shop, 1 engine house, 2 steam engines, 1 passenger car, 1 baggage car, 13 box cars, 10 platform cars, 1 flanger, 2 level grade crossings, and 1 bridge over the railroad.⁵ Track had been laid as far as Grand Forks by July of 1906.⁶ At this time, the second phase of the project began, grading the ground from Grand Forks to Sulphur Springs in preparation for the rail bed. In November of 1906 the line between Dawson City and Sulphur Springs was completed and trains operated daily.⁷

¹ Gates, Michael. The Ridge Road Project: A Co-operative Undertaking Between Klondike National Historic Sites and Yukon Government. May 1987. Unpublished report at Klondike National Historic Sites. Appendix B. p.8

² Murphy, Eugene. Railway Building and Operation in Yukon, Dawson Daily News, July 21, 1909.

³ Mitchell, Robert. Chronology of Klondike Mines Railway Company. August 8, 1989. Unpublished report at the Dawson City Museum Resource Library.p.4

⁴ Dawson Daily News. May 24, 1906

⁵ Mitchell, Robert. Chronology of Klondike Mines Railroad Company. August 8, 1989. Unpublished report at the Dawson City Museum Resource Library.p.7

⁶ Dawson Daily News. July 4, 1906

⁷ Mitchell, Robert. Chronology of Klondike Mines Railway Company. August 8, 1989. Unpublished report at the Dawson City Museum Resource Library. p.9

In Klondike City, sidings, an eighty by thirty roundhouse and repair shop, and two large coal bunkers were built. The main station, general offices and freight sheds were located in Dawson. A station made from corrugated iron was constructed on the hill above Grand Forks. At the terminus in Sulphur Springs, a station house including a general waiting room, ladies waiting room, baggage room, warm storage room, and freight shed were built here. A wye large enough to turn around a locomotive and four cars was found here as well as a frame round house for one locomotive.⁸

A schedule was published listing the stations and departure times and a telegraph line ran the length of the line. Arrangements were made so KMR passengers were able to connect with the Orr and Tukey Stage Lines travelling to destinations farther south.⁹ Freight was handled to all points on the creeks by the company's own freighting outfits.¹⁰

As dredges were being built and the mining industry was booming, the KMR was necessary for moving tons of freight. Stations were built at the construction sites of the dredges, to unload the heavy equipment that the dredges were built from. 104 Below Bonanza,¹¹ 90 Below Bonanza,¹² and 37 Below Bonanza,¹³ were all sites of dredge construction. Water stations were located at Klondike City, 37 Below Bonanza, and Flannery Creek.¹⁴

Originally the railroad was to run year-round from Dawson to Stewart City, a distance of seventy miles, but the extension was never started. Financial troubles remained with the company as it was never able to recover the initial cost of construction. By 1914, the KMR ceased operation,¹⁵ the dredges were built, and the number of people mining decreased as the larger companies acquired the mining claims. Although the Klondike Mines Railway

⁸ Ibid. p.9

⁹ Dawson Daily News. November 6, 1906

¹⁰ Ibid. July 21, 1909

¹¹ Yukon Gold Collection. PH984R-234-119. Dredges 1 and 2 built at the mouth of Bonanza. Acklan tailings visible in background, area of photo is 104 Below Bonanza. Dawson City Museum

¹² Green, Lewis. The Gold Hustlers. Anchorage, Alaska, Alaska Northwest Publishing. p. 308

¹³ Collins Collection. PH984R-15-1-111, Dawson City Museum.

¹⁴ Klondike Mines Railway Collection. Train Schedule, Dawson City Museum.

¹⁵ Mitchell, Robert. Chronology of the Klondike Mines Railway Company. August 8, 1989. p.14

operated for only eight years, it was instrumental in the development of mining in the Klondike Goldfields.

The Dawson City Museum has undertaken a preliminary survey and field recording to document engineering features and buildings remaining along the route of the Klondike Mines Railway. The site of each station was visited and several sections of the railroad were traversed completely. The information was compiled in the following report.

METHODOLOGY OF FIELD RECORDING

A considerable amount of preliminary research is completed before conducting any fieldwork. A general knowledge of the history of each project is important. Historic and contemporary maps and photographs help determine the location of possible sites. Oral histories, books, diaries and other resource material are used to help define the function of the sites. The availability of modern routes and the best means of transportation to each site are decided after consulting with local individuals living in the areas concerned.

Upon arrival at each site a map is made of the orientation of the buildings and structures, engineering features, surface modifications and natural forms. Colour slides and black and white photographs are taken of each elevation of each building, feature or artifact. An overall view is also done if feasible. Interior photographs using flash or natural light become part of the photographic record where possible. When recording each site, the resources are labelled as a building, a feature, or an artifact. A building is a structure or any part of a structure. A feature is a man made item, ie. an old foundation, a spillway, or a railbed. Artifacts are the objects found on site that appear to be relevant to the time period being recorded.

Buildings and features have each side measured from corner to corner and the distances from each other noted. All measurements are in meters and are rounded off to the closest centimetre. Condition of the walls, roof, and foundation is noted. Some features are difficult to determine, depending on the age and the amount of traffic through the area. If this is the case, a site is defined only when research and the existence of related artifacts or buildings substantiates the evidence found. A five hundred meter perimeter around each site is inspected to ensure that all the information pertaining to the site is documented.

The information is then transcribed to Dawson City Museum Field Recording Forms. These forms list site names, site numbers, locations, U.T.M., Latitude/Longitude, land status, ownership, buildings, features, artifacts, and research notes. Each site is marked on national topographic maps. Diagrams are drawn to scale showing the location of the buildings, features, and artifacts. The photographic images are assigned unique numbers and record forms are compiled for each roll of film, listing location, description, and direction of each view.

The methodology employed concurs with the Government of Yukon's Historic Site Inventory Program.

The finished site forms, maps, photographs and record sheets are compiled in a report which is available at the Dawson City Museum, Heritage Branch - Government of the Yukon, and the National Archives.

SITE LISTINGS AND DESCRIPTIONS

Site One: Sulphur Springs

Feature One: Foundation, depression only. Condition of dirt indicates the decomposition of manure, possibly used as a stable for the stage lines located here.

Feature Two: Building foundation, charred sill logs still evident. Large clumps of coal slag apparent along the southwest elevation. Judging by the size and proximity to the rail bed, this could be the Sulphur Springs train station and ticket office. Artifacts recorded, various artifacts of domestic use, ie. lock set, bed springs, tin, stove, cans, etc.

Feature Three: Domestic dump.

Charred lead sealed tins and squared tins situated approximately 1 - 2m. east of the rail bed. This dump could be from the train station, or possibly from later use of the foundation.

Feature Four: Foundation, large cleared area with a raised perimeter. Located 1.53m. south of the train tracks. Could have possibly been used for freight storage shed. Artifacts recorded, some tins, two lanterns, enamel saucer etc.

Feature Five: Large grassy area not typical of vegetative growth here. Ground has been disturbed possibly for housing, pasture, or cleared due to heavy traffic in the area.

Feature Six: Dump, large, comprised of domestic type items. Possibly used by railroad, and roadhouses. Made up of tin cans, china etc.

Feature Seven: Grassy meadow, large clearing of undetermined size due to recent catwork. Roadhouse was situated here, exact location undetermined. Artifacts recorded, tin cans, bottles, and a section of roof covered with flattened tin cans.

Feature Eight: Large grassy meadow not indicative of growth patterns in this area. Ground features difficult to determine, due to tall grass and recent catwork.

Feature Nine: Wye for the Klondike Mines Railway. Series of three connecting tracks used to turn the trains around.

Artifact One: Switch plate for train. Cast switch plate for early narrow gauge trains. Used to switch train to another track, siding or in this case to enable the train to turn using a wye. Artifact Two: Frog, a cast iron rail system used in conjunction with the switch plate. Used to direct the train to another set of tracks running beside each other.

SITE LISTINGS AND DESCRIPTIONS (cont'd)

Artifact Three: Capstan, a wooden reeled capstan. Unknown if used in conjunction with the train. Recent roadwork has partially buried artifact.

Site Two: Soda Station

Building One: Wooden boxcar taken from it's frame (undercarriage). Fair condition, likely used as a station; boxcar adapted as it was not used much for freight. Artifacts recorded, piled lumber, tin cans, and wood heater.

Artifact One: Switch plate, cast iron switch plate used to secure rails when switching track.

Artifact Two: Switch for frog, cast iron switch used to switch trains on rails. Used to move switch plate back and forth, allowing trains to switch tracks.

Site Three: Carmacks Fork

Building One: Frame, board and batten, poor condition. Possibly bunkhouse, with tool shed added onto east end of building. Has two sets of two bunks on the north wall. Hand made table in north west corner. Artifacts recorded, small sheet metal cookstove, lard pail, enamel pail, door with lockset, square tin, handmade table, bunkbeds, packing crate, tin can.

Feature One: Foundation, large flat area, built up on side of the hill, foundation work obvious from the downhill side of the hill. Artifacts recorded, small dump with, lead sealed cans, square gas cans, round metal lids approximately 8" in diameter.

Feature Two: Foundation, smaller flat area built into side of hill.

Feature Three: Trestle, post and beam. Fair condition, beams washed down small creek. Train crossed creeks and ravines using trestles.

Feature Four: Dump, domestic use, bottles, cans, lead sealed tins, square tins, moose antler.

Site Four: Flannery Pup

Feature One: Foundation, raised level area of ground, rocks and gravel cut into side of hill. Possibly used as a station for Flannery, it's size corresponds with the general size of station buildings. Water tower is located just west of this area. Artifacts recorded, 3 wooden packing crates, partial small wooden table or footstool. Two sections of 5" stovepipe.

SITE LISTINGS AND DESCRIPTIONS (cont'd)

Feature Two: Collapsed boards and one inch pipe. Probably a water tower, proximity to rail bed and artifacts found in the area support this theory.

Feature Three: Collapsed trestle, poor condition. Post and beam (log) trestle to support narrow gauge train. Artifacts recorded, section of rails, boards, and spikes.

Feature Four: Box culvert, milled planks in box-like construction. Fair condition. Used to drain creeks and surface water from upper side of the rail bed to protect foundation of rail bed.

Artifact One: Handmade bobsled, iron runners, wooden frame. Used during winter to freight people or supplies.

Artifact Two: Water spigot, galvanized metal. Good condition, used to transfer water from a holding tank to the steam engines. Water tower has collapsed, foundation timbers still intact.

Site Five: Grand Forks

Feature One: Rock footings evident where rail bed used to be. Good condition. Current road is built on these rock footings.

Site Six: 25 Below Discovery on Bonanza

Feature One: Section of intact rails and rail bed. Narrow gauge on rail bed foundation. Fair condition, area has been heavily mined, and is filled with tailings and overburden. The rail bed has been obliterated except for this one small section.

Site Seven: 37 Below Discovery on Bonanza

Feature One: Collapsed boards, timbers, iron pipe beside a standing YCGC structure. Poor condition, appears to be the remnants of the collapsed water tower that was located here. Artifacts recorded, boards and timbers, approximately 1" to 2" iron pipe.

Feature Two: Rails from railway. Fair condition.

Site Eight: 47 Below Discovery on Bonanza

Feature One: Timbers and posts from trestle used by KMR to cross Bonanza Creek. Poor condition, damaged by dredging operation. Hewn timbers, beams and posts scattered throughout tailings piles.

SITE LISTINGS AND DESCRIPTIONS (cont'd)

Site Nine: 67 Below Discovery on Bonanza

Feature One: Cribbed bridge support in fair condition. An abutment for a bridge across Sourdough Gulch.

Site Ten: 90 Below Discovery on Bonanza

Feature One: Garbage dump and an area large enough to accommodate a siding. Possible location of a station.

Site Eleven: 104 Below Discovery on Bonanza

There was a station listed here with a six car siding, no evidence remains today due to the extensive dredging activity.

Site Twelve: Old Inn

No features, artifacts or buildings remain, due to extensive dredging activity. A wye, and station were once located here. (PH984R-76-1-42) Louise Forrest Collection, Dawson City Museum.

Site Thirteen: Klondike City

Feature One: Cribbed service pit with stairs for entry. This pit would enable men to stand underneath the KMR engines to do mechanical work. The surrounding artifacts suggest a much larger service area. Artifacts recorded, tin, shrouding, stove safeties, rails, hood from a forge.

Artifact One: Inspection cart, steel frame appears to have had a wooden deck. The air cooled engine and flywheel are still mounted in place. Used to inspect the rail or telegraph line.

Artifact Two: Snowplough. Wooden and cast snowplough generally mounted on the front of the engine to clear snow from the track.

Artifact Three: Wheels and axles and "tires". Spare or used parts that were once used on the rolling stock of the KMR.

Artifact four: Small rail cars used to haul ties and rails for track maintenance.

Artifact Five: One passenger car and baggage/passenger car. Remaining parts of cars that were burned. Metal frames and wheels still in place. (Dawson Museum - Roy and Bertha Gibson Collection PH983-19-1).

CONCLUSIONS

The field recording and preliminary research of the Klondike Mines Railway has been successfully completed. All of the stations that are listed on the railroad dispatch schedule were visited and recorded as well as the main crossing at Bonanza Creek and a maintenance shed.

The site of Sulphur Springs Station was determined positively by the evidence of a "wye"; a combination of railines and switches enabling a train to turn around. Although there was only part of one switch found, the excavations of the wye were obvious. The probable site of the station building was located judging by the size of the foundation and proximity to the siding. Large dumps and surface modifications on the hill above the station indicate the presence of a fairly large settlement. Roads from Bonanza, Quartz, Sulphur, Dominion, Hunker and Gold Bottom Creeks converged here. Historically, there were roadhouses, stagelines and stables found here at this important junction.

The railbed from Sulphur Station to Flannery Creek is in good condition except all of the track has been salvaged. The ties remain below a few inches of soil and vegetation. Telegraph wire, insulators and poles are occasionally evident. The station at Soda is made of a K.M.R. boxcar that was removed from it's undercarriage and situated on the siding with windows and a heater added. The station at Flannery Creek appears to have been moved or burned but the collapsed water tank and gravity feed line remain. There are three trestles over the pups of Flannery Creek that are fallen down.

Most of the station sites that are located on the lower part of Bonanza Creek were subject to extensive disturbance by placer mining through the years. When their was no evidence found of the station or siding, maps were made of the general areas but few photographs were taken. Through this region short sections of railbed remain intact and are easily visible from the Bonanza Road.

In Klondike City the maintenance and repair shops, the coal bunkers and accompanying sidings were originally found. The shop area was positively located by the evidence of the " service pit" a dugout that enabled workers to stand underneath the locomotives and carry out repairs. There are several artifacts here that are strongly associated with operations of a railway maintenance shop. The coal bunker area has a private dwelling built on it. A passenger car and a combination passenger/baggage were sided here and since have burned, leaving all the metal parts. The main road to Klondike City follows the route of the railroad where it has been blasted through the rock cliffs along the Klondike River.

The main station and ticket office, general offices, baggage and freight shed were originally located beside Front Street in Dawson City, but no evidence was discovered during this field recording.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Dawson City Museum acquired the locomotives of the Klondike Mines Railway in 1961 when the engines were moved over the ice from the workshop or "roundhouse" at Klondike City. Since then the museum has become a repository for information and artifacts associated with the railroad. It is desirable that a complete history of the Klondike Mines Railway be compiled for future exhibits and publications.

Klondike City has been under a recent threat by placer mining activity that could eradicate all of the remnants of the railroad, not to mention other important history. There is an immediate need to collect the parts of the locomotives that are directly related to the ones in the Dawson City Museum Train Shed, which have been positively identified by Robert Mitchell. The other artifacts that are associated with the K.M.R. and are small enough to be easily pilfered should also be collected. The fieldwork that was done in 1991 and the last visit in 1992 only documents what is visible on the surface. The layers of silt and vegetation from the various floodings of the Yukon and Klondike Rivers cover an area undoubtedly rich in history.

During some of the oral history work on this project it became obvious that more could be done. Ed Whitehouse remembers seeing the trains as a small boy, and there are probably more individuals with similar recollections.

The archival research has been preliminary in nature in order to document existing sites and structures. It could be supplemented by further research at various archives and a compilation of reproductions of historic photographs.

There are several artifacts along the route of the Klondike Mines Railway that should be either collected or protected until such time as they could be used in an interpretive display. One of these is a switching apparatus that is unique to railroad applications before 1905. Another is a galvanized metal spigot from a water tower used to fill locomotives.

There are still unanswered questions about the Sulphur Springs area especially since no historic photographs have been found to date. Besides being the terminus of the Klondike Mines Railway, it was also a major junction of stage roads serving the creeks, containing roadhouses and barns. Its location, fairly close to the Upper Bonanza Road and also on the historic Ridge Road, make it a suitable spot for future interpretation. Here again it is felt that the field recording only scratched the surface and some archaeology would uncover a wealth of information.

This field recording project of the route and stations is proving to be an important tool for the Dawson City Museum to use for further interpretation of the Klondike Mines Railway. It is important that more work be accomplished in order to culminate in a more complete history.

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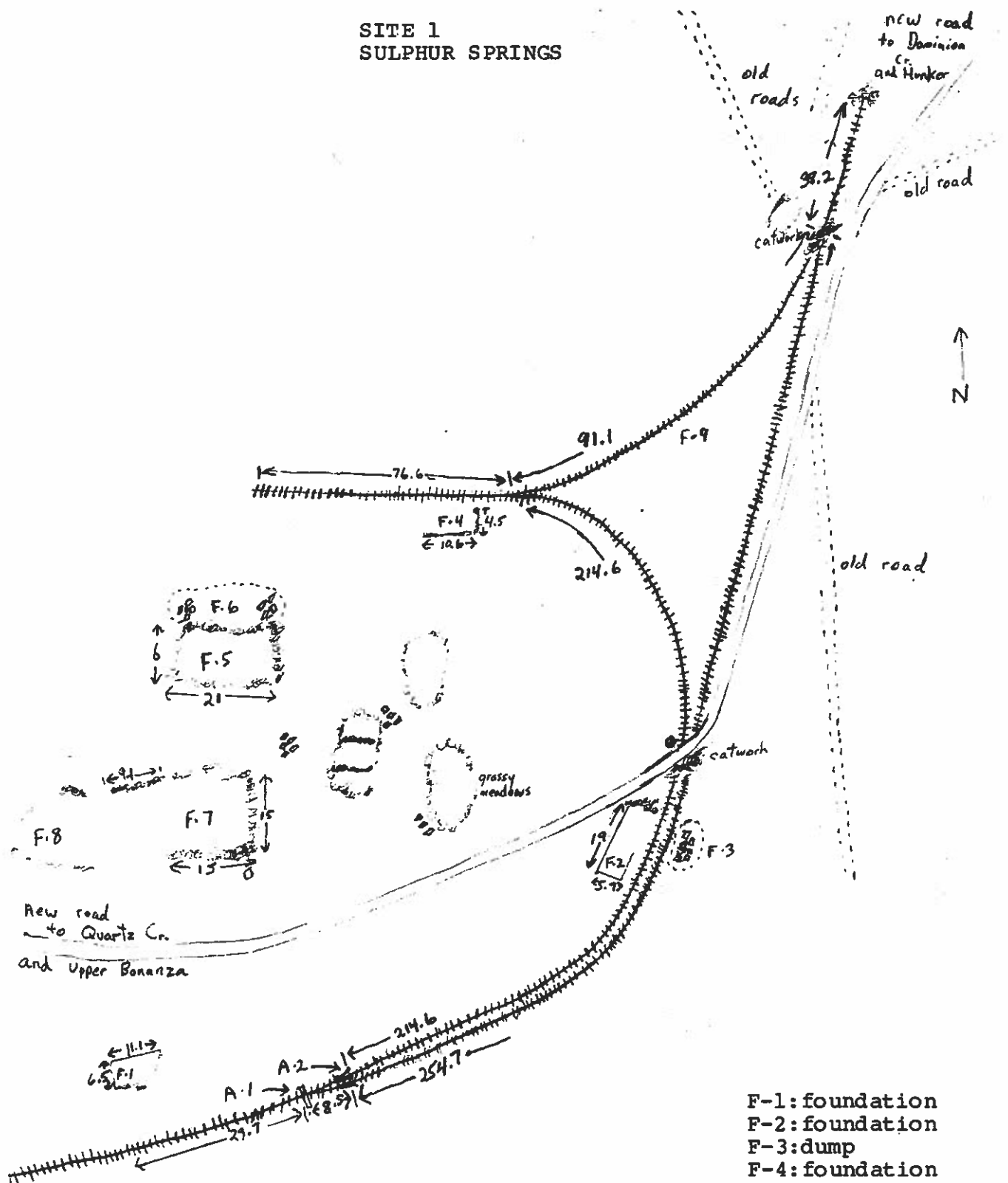
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SITE 1
SULPHUR SPRINGS



- F-1: foundation
 F-2: foundation
 F-3: dump
 F-4: foundation
 F-5: grassy area
 F-6: dump
 F-7: grassy area
 F-8: grassy area
 F-9: wye
 A-1: switch plate
 A-2: frog
 A-3: capstan

1 m. = 1 mm



PHOTO IDENTIFICATION SHEET

PHOTOGRAPHER B. Hogan

Date July 14 / 12
Field Film # 92201

LOCATION	BUILDING	Frame Number	Elevation/View
		0	
Site #1 Sulphur Springs		1	S. down Sulphur Creek
" "		2	E. along railbed
" "	Feature 1	3	S. side
" "	"	4	W. side
" "	"	5	N. side
" "	"	6	E. side
" "	"	7	same as 6
" "	"	8	S down to railbed
" "	"	9	G. SKUCE standing on railbed
" "	Artifact 1	10	plate (part of switch)
" "	" 2	11	frog (part of switch)
" "	" 2	12	" " "
" "	" 2	13	looking E. on rail bed
" "		14	
" "	F. 2	15	W side
" "	"	16	detail of "Klinkers"
" "	"	17	N.W. side with remains of wa
" "	"	18	N. side
" "	"	19	S.W. side
" "	"	20	S.W. corner
" "	Railroad	21	W. along railbed
" "	"	22	W. showing other line
" "	F. 2	23	N. side with road in back
" "	"	24	E. side
		25	
		26	
		27	
		29	
		30	
		"	



PHOTO IDENTIFICATION SHEET

PHOTOGRAPHER *B. Hogan*

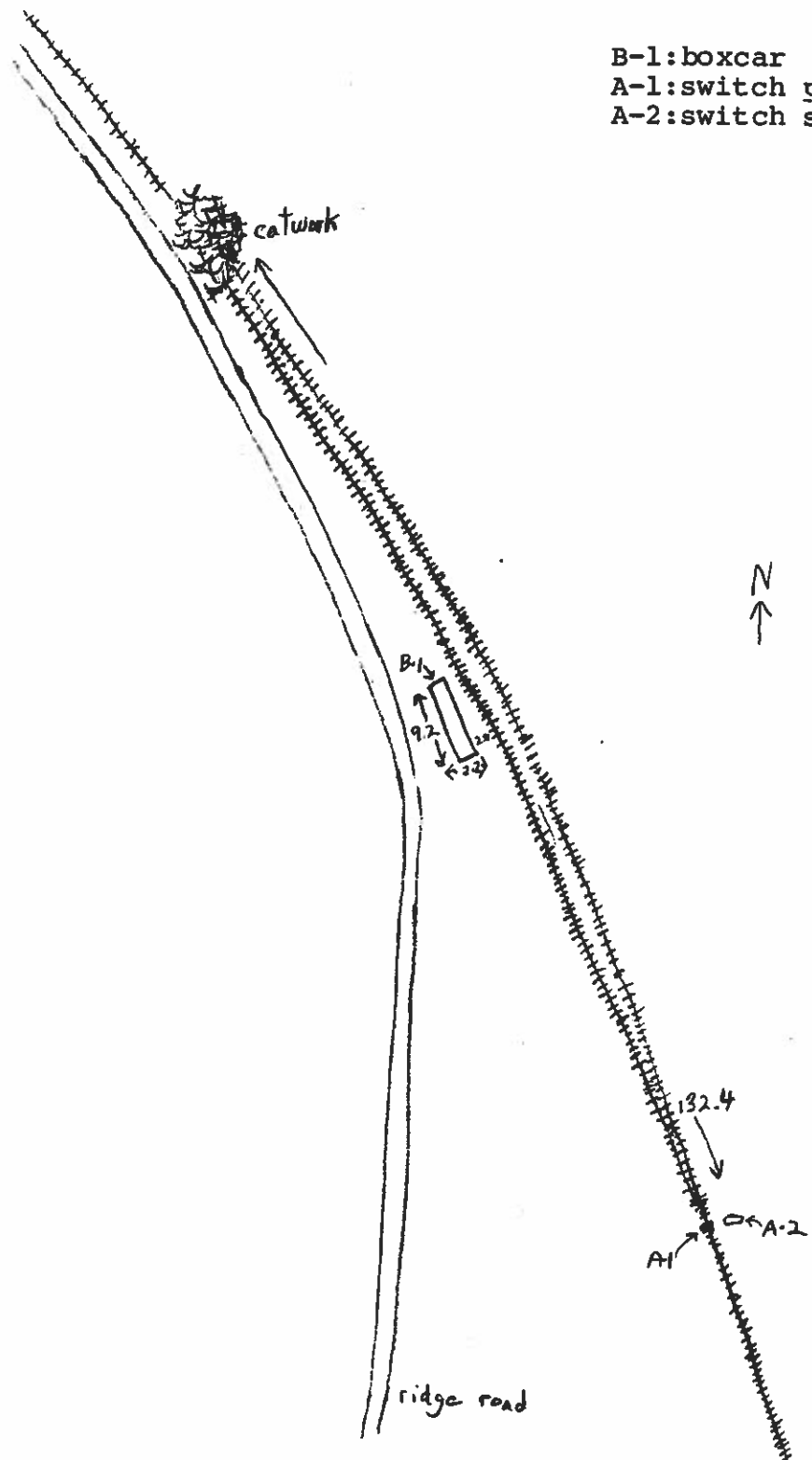
Date July 15/92

Field Film #922.2

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SITE 2
SODA STATION

B-1:boxcar
A-1:switch plate
A-2:switch stand



1 m. = 1 m.m.



922-3



922-2



PHOTO IDENTIFICATION SHEET

PHOTOGRAPHER *B. Hogan*

Date *July 15/92*
922.2, 922.3
 Field Film

LOCATION	BUILDING	Elevation/View
	Number	
Site #2 Soda Station	B.1	922.2-18 siding W. of boxcar
" "	"	" 19 S.W. corner
" "	"	" 20 " "
" "	"	" 21 S.E. corner
" "	"	" 22 N.E. corner
" "	"	" 23 " "
" "	"	" 24 N.W. "
" "	"	" 25 closer of N.W. corner
Site #2 Soda Station	A.1	922.3-1 plate
" "	"	" 2 plate
" "	"	" 3 plate and railbed
" "	A.2	" 4 switch stand
" "	"	" 5 "
" "	"	" 6 "

SITE 3

B-1: bunkhouse
 F-1: foundation
 F-2: foundation
 F-3: trestle
 F-4: dump

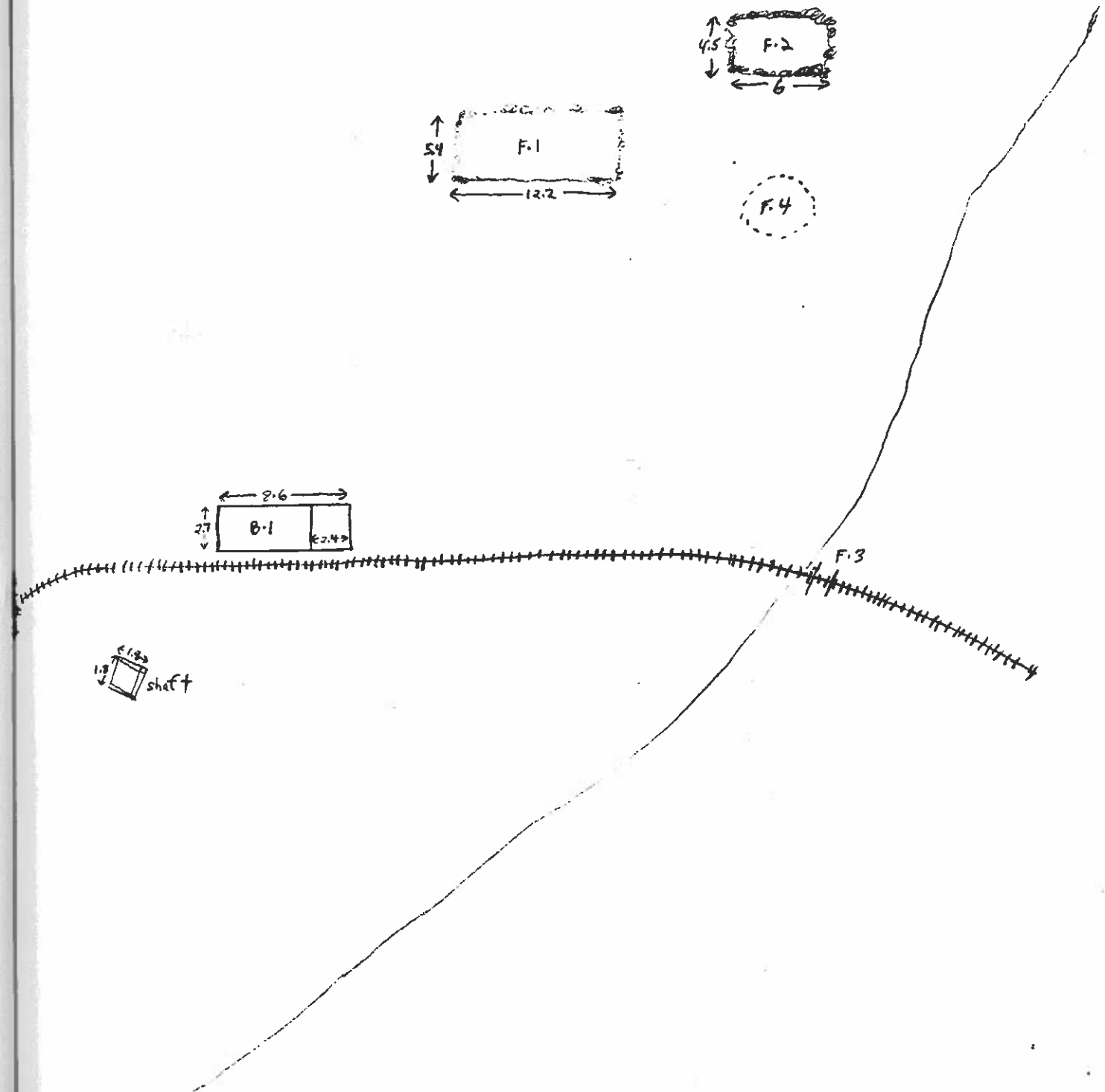




PHOTO IDENTIFICATION SHEET

PHOTOGRAPHER B. Hogan

Date July 16/1992

Field Film #9223

[illegible]

SITE 5
GRAND FORKS

F-1: rock walls

↑
N

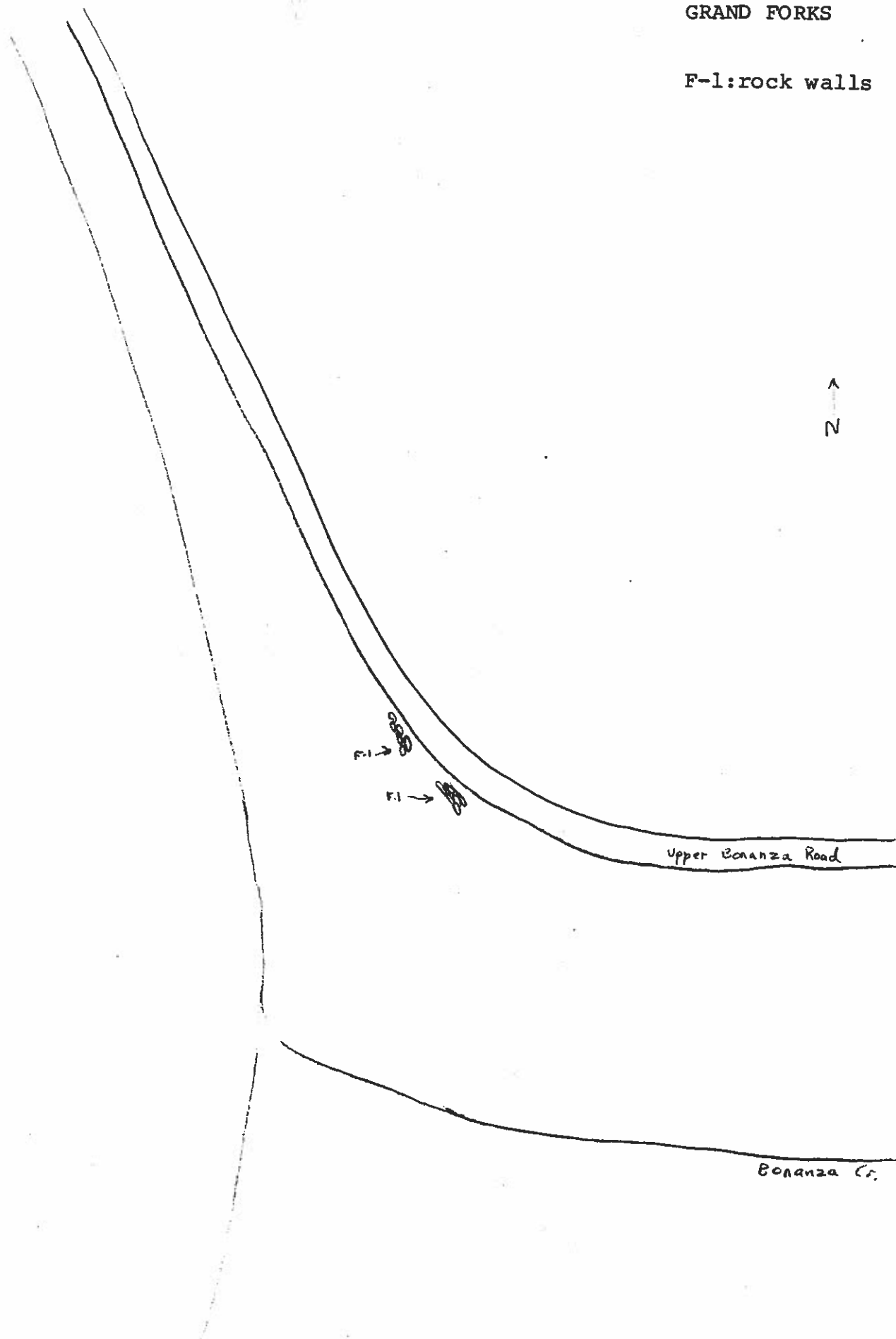
F-1 →

F-1 →

Upper Bonanza Road

Bonanza Cr.

Elcrado Cr.



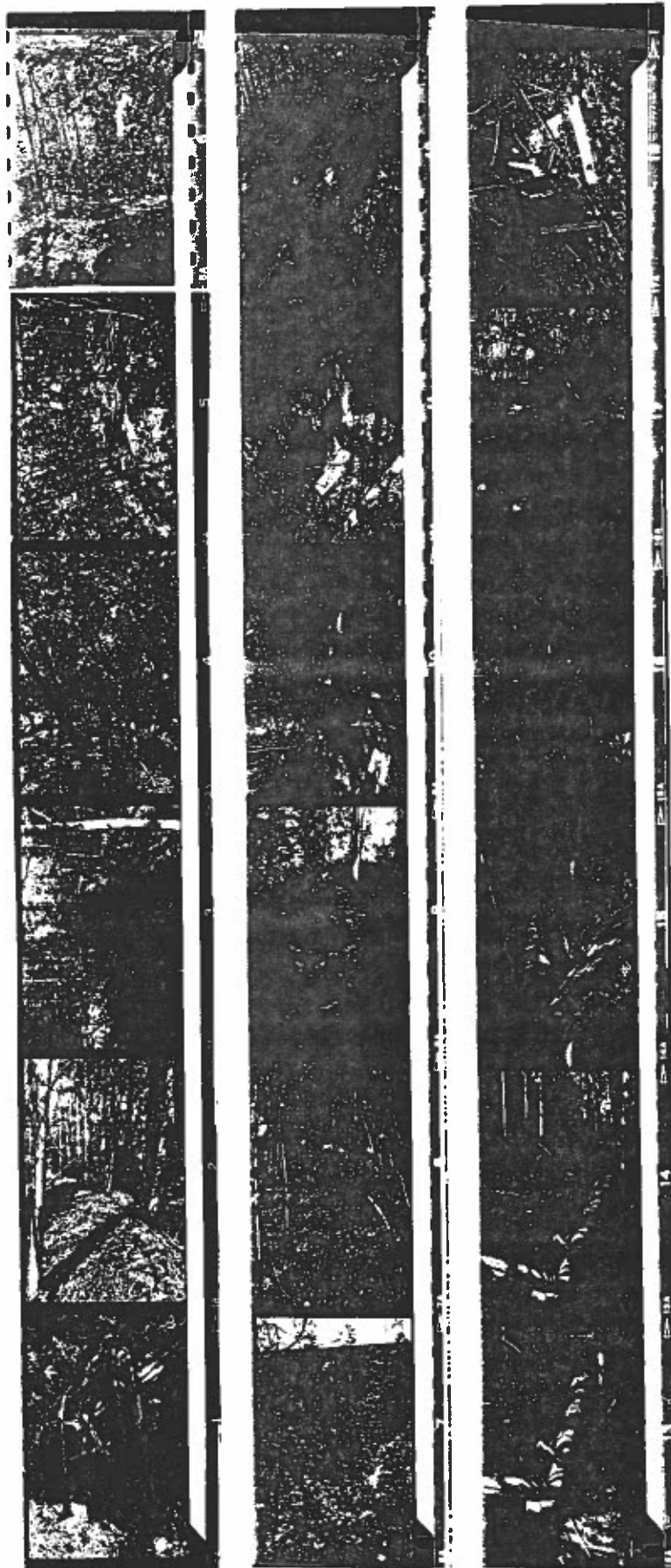


PHOTO IDENTIFICATION SHEET

PHOTOGRAPHER *B. Hogan*

Date July 22/92

Field Film #922.4

[illegible]

Bonanza Cr.

SITE 6
25 B.D./BONANZA

F-1: railbed



catwork

F-1

catwork

Fox Gulch

Queen Gulch

SITE 6 25 B.D./BONANZA CREEK

Roll 922-5



PHOTO IDENTIFICATION SHEET

PHOTOGRAPHER G. Skuce

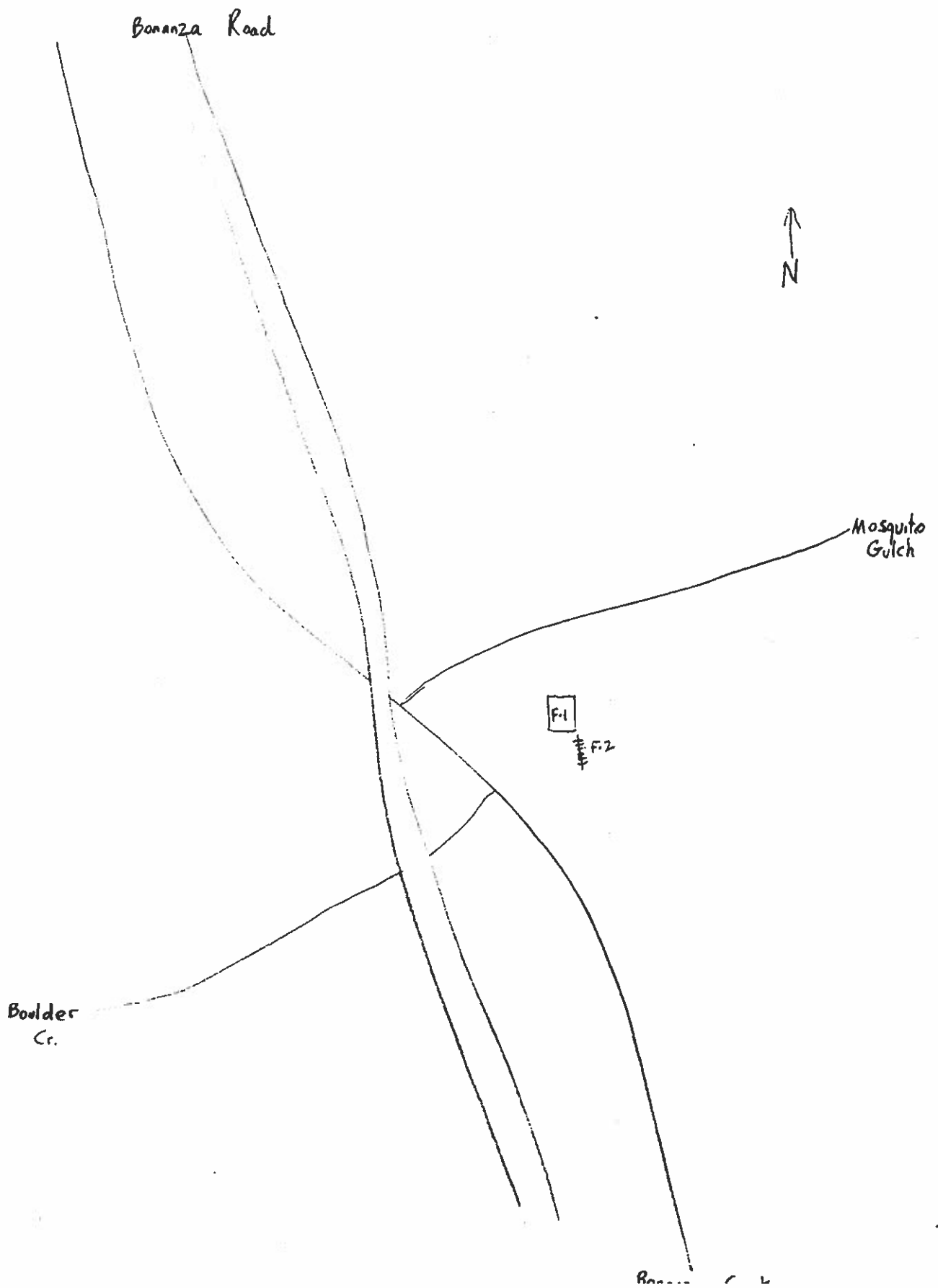
Date July 28/92

Field Film #922.5

[illegible]

SITE 7
37 B.D./BONANZA

F-1: water tower
F-2: rail



SITE 7

37 B.D./Bonanza Creek

Roll 922-5



PHOTO IDENTIFICATION SHEET

PHOTOGRAPHER G. SKUCE

Date July 28/92

Field Film #922.5

[illegible]

Bonanza Road

SITE 8
47 B.D./BONANZA

F-1:timbers from
trestle

F-1



tying
bulch

Bonanza Cr.

SITE 8

47 B.D./BONANZA CREEK

Roll 922-5

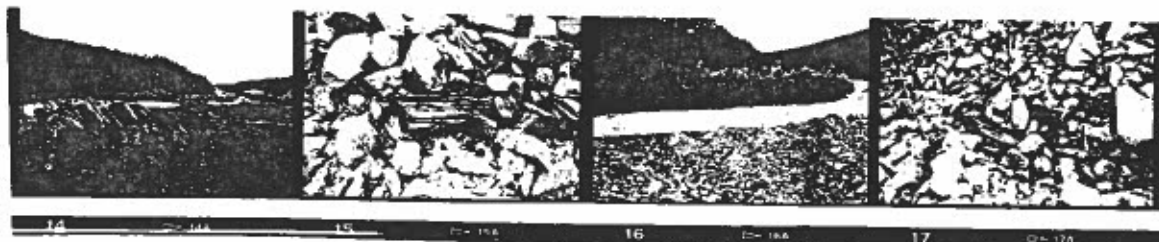


PHOTO IDENTIFICATION SHEET

PHOTOGRAPHER G. SKUCE

Date July 28

Field Film #922.5

[illegible]

Bonanza Creek

SITE 9
67 B.D./BONANZA

F-1: bridge support

Sourdough
Gulch

hydraulic
filling

catwork

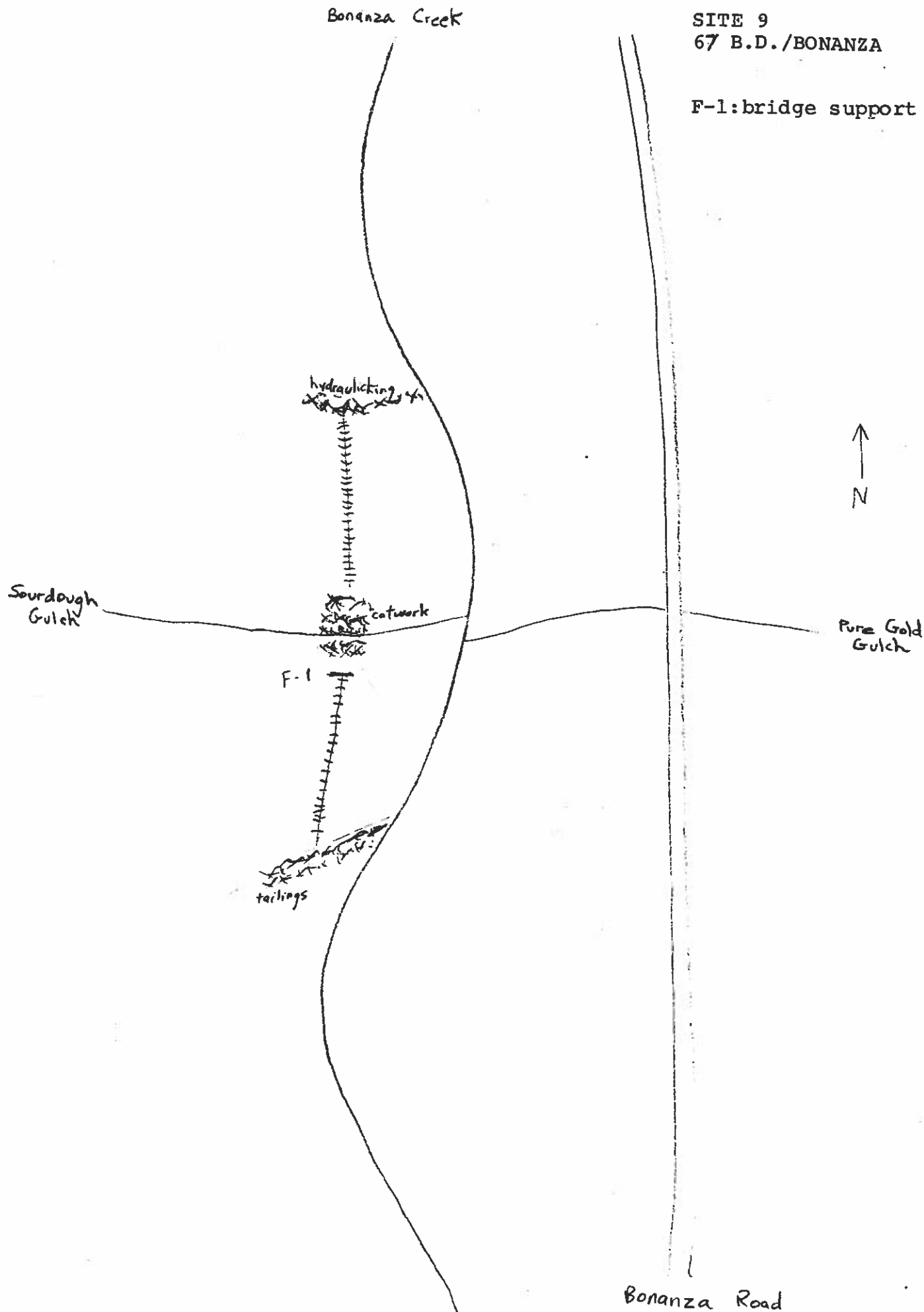
F-1

tailings

Pure Gold
Gulch



Bonanza Road



SITE 9

67 B.D./BONANZA CREEK

Roll #922-5



PHOTO IDENTIFICATION SHEET

PHOTOGRAPHER G. SKJUE

Date July 28

Field Film #922.5

[illegible]

SITE 10
90 B.D./BONANZA

Bonanza Cr.

Miner
Gulch

catwork



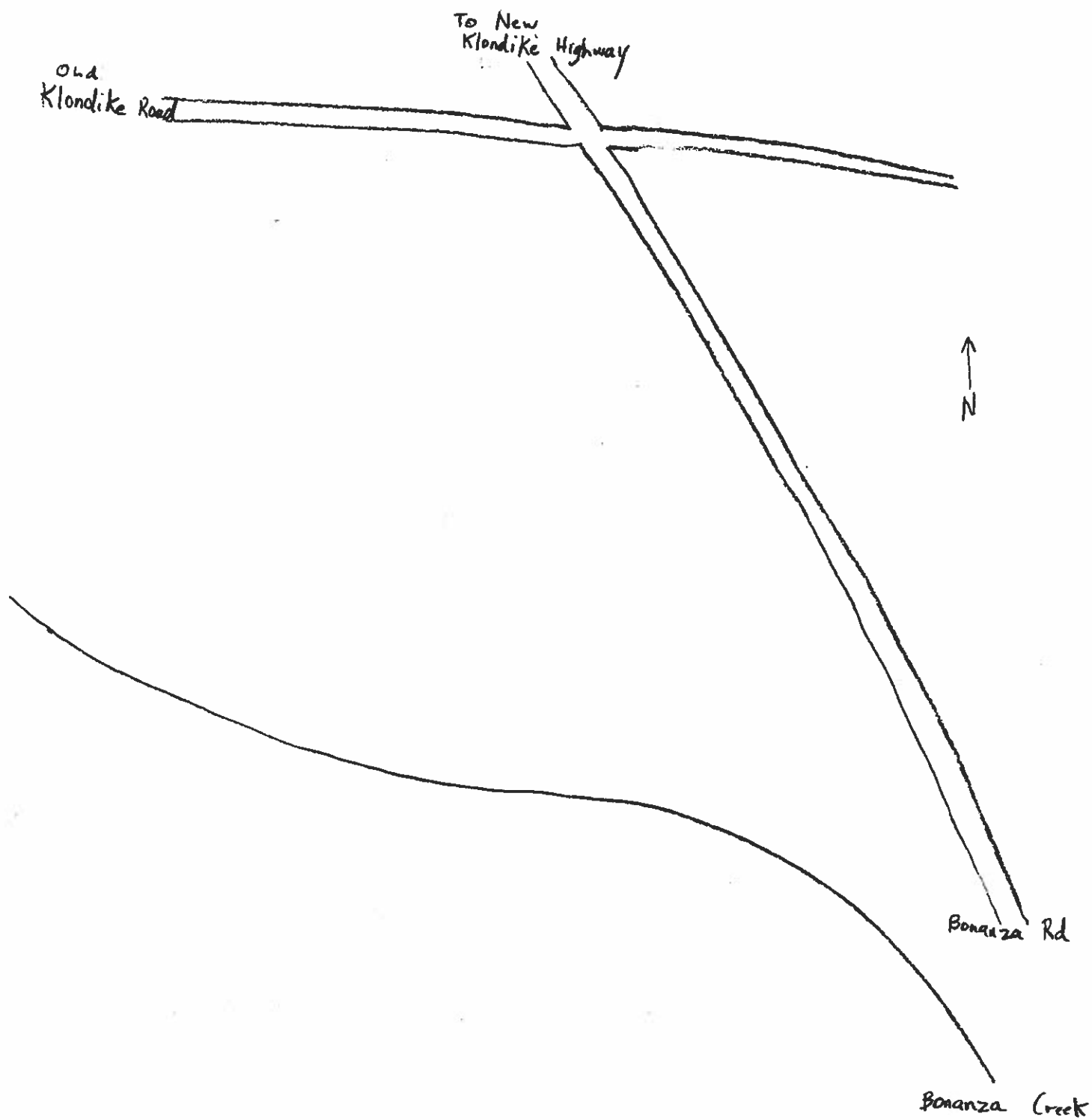
catwork

Bonanza
Rd.

California
Gulch

SITE 11

104 B.D./BONANZA



SITE 12
OLD INN

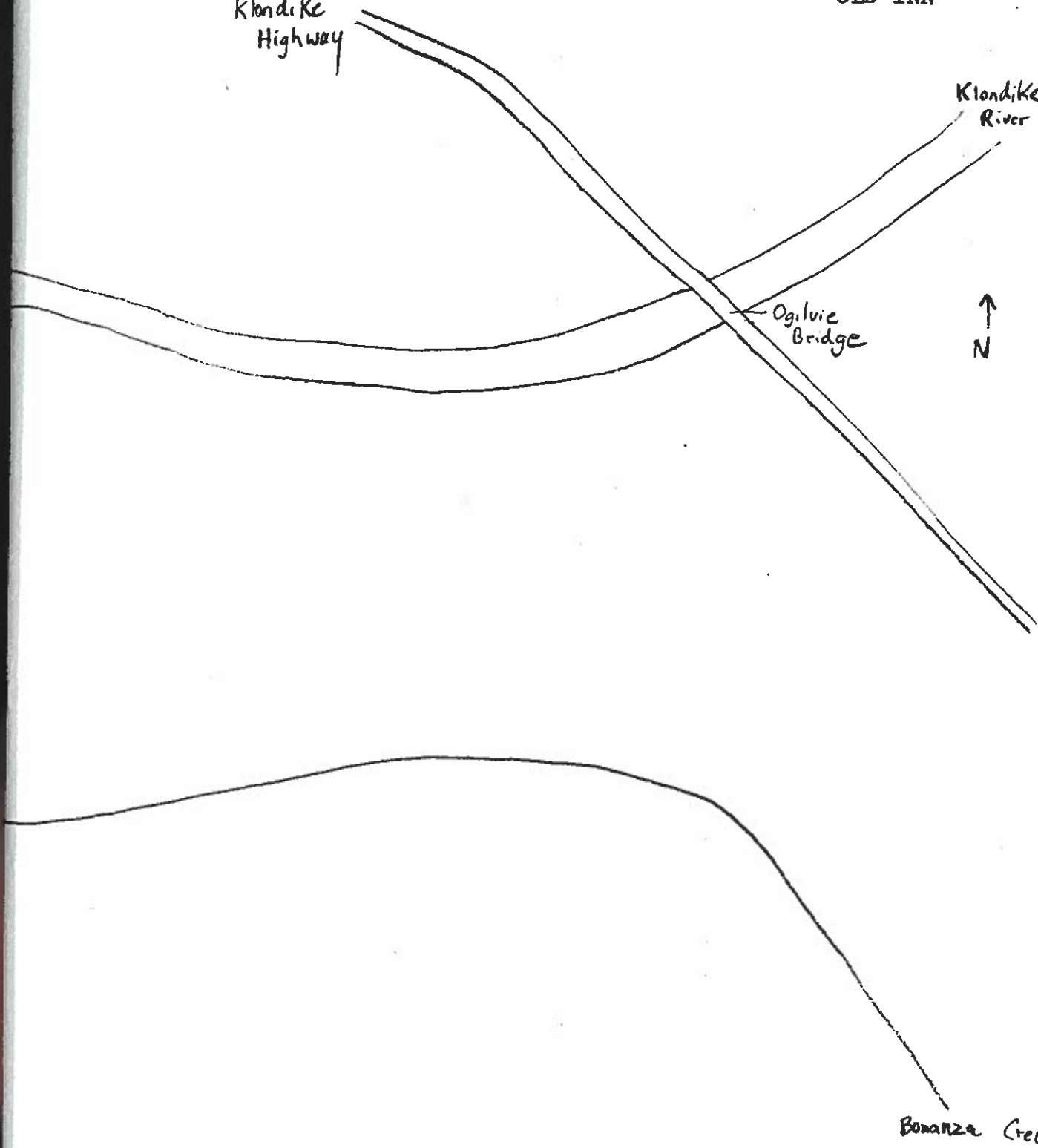
Klondike
Highway

Klondike
River

Ogilvie
Bridge



Bonanza Creek



SITE 13

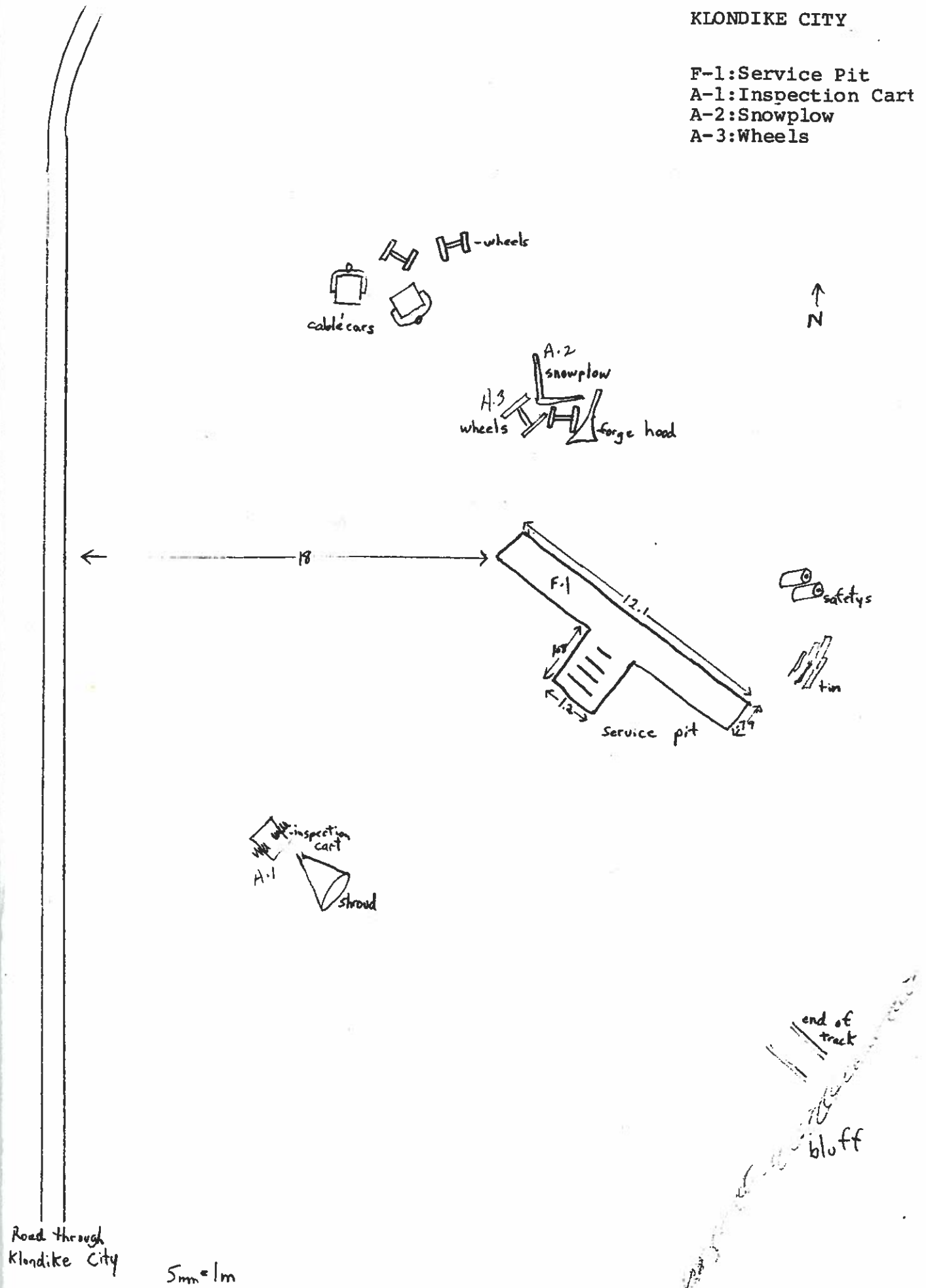
KLONDIKE CITY

F-1: Service Pit

A-1: Inspection Cart

A-2: Snowplow

A-3: Wheels



SITE 13
KLONDIKE CITY

F-1: Service Pit
A-1: Motorized Cart
A-2: Snowplow
A-3: Wheels and Axles
A-4: Maintenance Cars
A-5: Passenger Cars

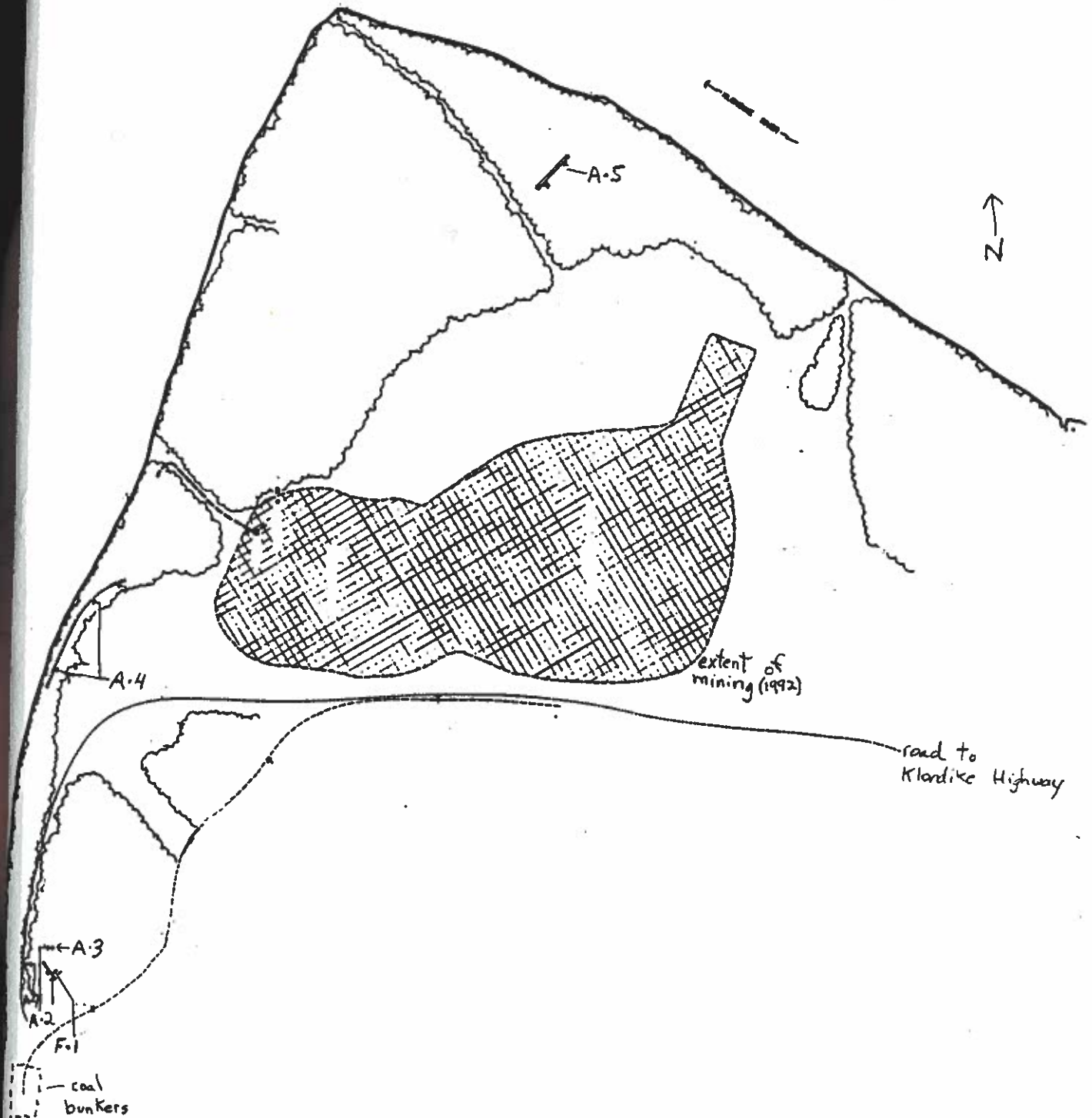




PHOTO IDENTIFICATION SHEET

PHOTOGRAPHER G. SKUCE

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Field Film #922-6

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