

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF THE PHASE I OHIO CITY TOWN HALL
(SITE 5GN5833) FOUNDATION STABILIZATION AND HISTORIC REHABILITATION
PROJECT IN GUNNISON COUNTY, COLORADO**

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ABSTRACT

The History Colorado State Historical Fund awarded a grant to Gunnison County for the complete structural stabilization and rehabilitation of the Ohio City Town Hall, in Ohio City, Colorado (SHF Grant No. 2014-02-026). Alpine Archaeological Consultants Inc. (Alpine) was hired by Gunnison County to monitor all ground-disturbing activities associated with the stabilization, including excavation of the foundation area, two foundation trenches, and excavation of an electrical-utility line trench. The monitoring was conducted on September 8 and 15, and October 30, 2014 by Charles Reed of Alpine. A moderate amount of cultural materials were found. No artifacts were collected, and those observed were analyzed in the field.

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INTRODUCTION

Alpine Archaeological Consultants, Inc. (Alpine) was retained by Gunnison County to monitor ground-disturbing activities associated with the Phase I foundation stabilization and historic rehabilitation of the historic Ohio City Town Hall. Because funding for the rehabilitation and stabilization project is partially funded through a grant from the Colorado State Historic Fund (SHF, Grant 2014-02-026), monitoring of the ground disturbance associated with the project was required. Alpine monitored three days of ground disturbing activities, relating to moving the building to an empty lot to the east, excavating the building foundation, and excavating a utility-line trench. The rehabilitation and stabilization work is being led by TerraVision Contracting Group, Inc. The archaeological monitoring was performed by Charles Reed. Kimberly Redman served as the Principal Investigator for the project, and Seth Frame was responsible for the Geographic Information System work and resulting maps.

Location and Environmental Setting

The project area is within the town of Ohio City, in Gunnison County, Colorado (Figure 1). The physical address of the town hall is at 8503 County Road (CR) 76, Ohio City, Colorado, at the northeastern corner of CR 76 and Miner's Avenue. The building is at an elevation of 8,580 ft. Vegetation and soils in the area have been altered by a long history of occupation and habitation in the area. Native soils in the area consist primarily of an upper stratum of dark, organic-rich gravelly brown silty loam overlying lighter brown silty loam mineral subsoil with high amounts of gravels, cobbles, and boulders. Ohio City is on mapped bedrock deposits of felsic and hornblende gneisses (Tweto 1979). Vegetation in the area consists of grasses, forbs, sagebrush, cottonwood, rabbitbrush, and pine.

CULTURE HISTORY AND HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The mountains of Colorado may have been first inhabited to a limited degree as early as 10,000 B.C. by big game hunters representative of the Paleoindian tradition. Evidence of this early occupation is rarely encountered in the region, although is present in the region at both the Tenderfoot site (5GN1835) and the Mountaineer site (5GN2477). With the end of the Pleistocene came climatic conditions very similar to those of the present day. By about 5500 B.C., coinciding with this climatic moderation, there was a transition in subsistence and material culture termed the Archaic tradition. Archaic peoples exploited a greater variety of plant and animal foodstuffs and manufactured tools quite distinct from their predecessors. Regionally, the Archaic period is very well represented archaeologically. By the time of Euroamerican contact, the primary aboriginal group in the project area was the Ute, living an Archaic-like lifestyle. The Utes were Numic speakers who may have arrived in western Colorado as early as A.D. 1500. As a result of Euroamerican contact, the Utes acquired the horse and underwent rapid culture modification, including assimilation of various Plains Indian traits.

The first European people to enter western Colorado were Spanish explorers. Juan de Rivera led three expeditions through the San Juan Mountains from 1761 to 1765 in search of mineral wealth (Mehls 1984). In 1776, the Escalante-Dominquez Expedition passed through western Colorado in search of a route between Santa Fe and missions in California.

Exploitation of the Southern Rocky Mountain's natural resources by Euroamericans began in the 1820s, with the arrival of fur trappers. The fur industry persevered until the late 1830s, when over-trapping and falling fur prices made such activities unprofitable (O'Rourke 1992). Euroamerican use of western Colorado was slight in the two decades that followed, consisting primarily of explorations by the U.S. Government. Use intensified, however, with the discovery of gold in Colorado in 1859. A veritable gold rush followed the discovery, bringing thousands of Euroamericans to Colorado. The Territory of Colorado was organized only two years later, in 1861.

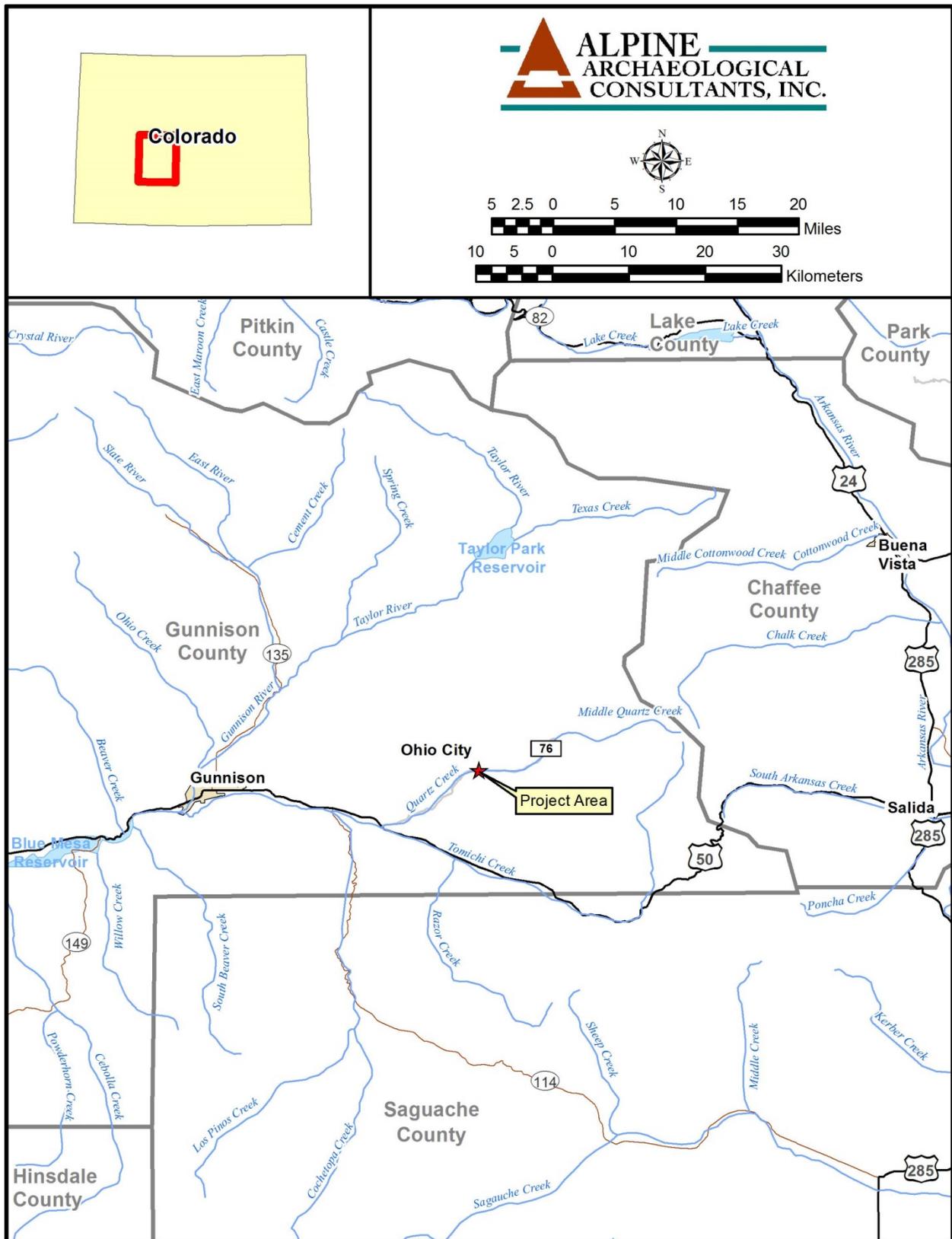


Figure 1. General location of the Ohio City Town Hall.

Expeditions into the Gunnison country and the Elk Mountains between 1860 and 1873 brought attention to mineral deposits and the prospect of gold and silver wealth for miners and capitalists alike. The silver strike at Leadville and the establishment of a camp there in 1878 fostered a rush that quickly saturated the area and then dispersed across the mountains over the next several years. As mineral interest in the Gunnison area grew rapidly, camps were established and town sites platted in a typical boom-time pattern and pace witnessed throughout the West. Crested Butte, Virginia City, Taylor Park, Schofield, Ohio City, Pitkin, Belleview, and others were all boom-town contemporaries and can be characterized as part of a general rush to the Gunnison area by miners and capitalists to exploit its mineral wealth in the areas where promising strikes had been made. Ohio City is listed as having been established in the latter part of 1879 at the location of the Eagle City town site, and incorporated in 1907 (Gunnison County 2014).

The influx of Euroamericans into the area inhabited by Ute Indians brought conflict. The Treaty of 1868, between the Utes and the federal government, was an attempt to alleviate these conflicts by forming a large reservation for the Utes on the western slope of Colorado, away from the primary mining areas (Ubbelohde et al. 1972). As mining continued to boom, however, many miners entered the reservation area. Much of this encroachment was due to a misunderstanding of where the reservation's boundary was; the eastern boundary of the reservation was initially farther to the east, placing the later location of the town of Gunnison within the reservation, but subsequent survey of the eastern boundary shifted the boundary to the west, allowing the town of Gunnison to be formally settled. The 1873 Brunot Agreement reduced the size of the reservation by removing the portions of land on San Juan Mountain from the Ute reservation. The Brunot Treaty served to increase hostilities between the Ute and Euroamericans, and eventually culminated in the confinement of the Ute to small reservations in southernmost Colorado and eastern Utah in 1881.

As mining grew less profitable in the late nineteenth century, occupants of the area invested more heavily in other pursuits, such as agriculture and the promotion of tourism, both of which remain important industries in the area today. The Ohio City Town Hall was constructed in 1906, during a second mining boom in the region, one of three that Ohio City underwent (Gunnison County 2014).

The Ohio City Town Hall was constructed in 1906, serving as the Baer Boss Mercantile building, owned by the Tarkington Family. The initial landowner, Samuel Tarkington, was a brick mason. The Tarkington family also operated a restaurant out of the building for eight years, prior to selling the property to the town in 1914, at which time it became the town hall. According to HPA the terne siding was probably added at that time (Humphries Poli Architects 2011:2-2). Patent information about terne siding shows that it was available in the late 1890s, so would have been available during initial construction of the building. Mining ceased to be economical in the area in 1920s. As a result, the railroad stopped service to the area, the population of the area dropped, and the local government soon disbanded (Humphries Poli Architects 2011:2-2). The town hall was acquired by Gunnison County in 1974, when the Colorado Secretary of State determined Ohio City to qualify as an abandoned town site (Gunnison County 2014). Gunnison County leased the town hall to the Quartz Creek Improvement Association, which used it as a meeting space and community center until the county terminated the lease in 2008 due to concerns about the building's structural stability (Humphries Poli Architects 2011:2-2). The town hall was designated a historic county landmark in 1996.

PREVIOUS WORK AND PROPERTY BACKGROUND

The Ohio City Town Hall was designated a historic Gunnison County landmark in 1996 (Gunnison County 2014). In 2010, Humphries Poli Architects (HPA) conducted a historic structure assessment (HSA) for the Ohio City Town Hall as part of SHF grant 2010-HA-024 for Gunnison County. At that time, the Town Hall was assigned Smithsonian number 5GN5833. The structure

has been used for numerous purposes since its inception, including a mercantile, restaurant, town hall, and community center (Figure 2). The reader is referred to the HSA (Humphries Poli Architects 2011) for full background on the Ohio City Town Hall and the historical context for Ohio City, Colorado. Alpine monitored the excavation of small test holes during a structural assessment of the town hall in 2012, as part of the SHF Grant 2010–HA-024 (Mullen 2011). Applicable research questions and topics for historical structures and towns can be found in Church et al. (2007), which provides a Colorado-wide context for historical archaeology.



Figure 2. Southern face of Ohio City Town Hall.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND FIELD METHODS

The project objectives were to identify, prevent, and minimize any impacts to important cultural materials and archaeological features that may be present along the structure's foundation and in a utility trench that leads to the building. Alpine met the objectives by monitoring the ground-disturbing activities that occurred at the Ohio City Town Hall. Excavation of the foundation and utility trenches was carried out by a track-hoe operated by Hearne Excavating. The archaeological monitor inspected the trenches for any cultural materials. Most of the excavated fill along the foundation was immediately placed into a dump truck for off-site disposal and was thus unable to be examined; spoil removed from the utility trench was placed adjacent to the trench, and was examined for cultural materials. Excavation was paused when cultural materials were observed, allowing the archaeologist sufficient time to analyze and document the materials. No artifacts were collected during monitoring, and most were removed with the fill for disposal offsite. Site and monitoring data were plotted with a Trimble GeoXT Global Positioning System (GPS) unit. The site was plotted on a USGS quadrangle map and the site map was completed using the same GPS units. The GPS map illustrates the site boundaries, artifact concentrations, structures, features, and relationship to the project area.

MONITORING ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Alpine monitored ground-disturbing activities at the Ohio City Town Hall on three separate days (Figure 4). Alpine monitored the excavation of two trenches along the eastern and western faces of the building on September 8, 2014. The trenches were excavated on the exterior of the building foundation to allow the building to be lifted and moved to an adjacent lot. The trenches varied between 6 and 8 ft. wide, and between 2 and 3 ft. deep (Figure 3). Alpine returned on September 15, 2014 to monitor the excavation of the area below the building, in advance of the construction of a new building foundation. Excavation for a new foundation resulted in the digging of a 2-ft.-deep foundation area extending slightly 3–6 ft. beyond the building's footprint (Figure 5). This work also included cleaning out an existing, historic basement. Alpine completed monitoring on October 30, 2014 during the excavation of a buried electrical-line trench and the excavation of a footer trench associated with the replacement porch (Figure 6). The utility and footer trenches were between 30 and 42 in. wide, ranged between 2 and 3 ft. deep, and were excavated by a small track hoe operated by a local excavator. Monitoring encountered a variety of historic artifacts centered around the town hall. All of these materials were fairly close to the town hall and were considered a part of the site

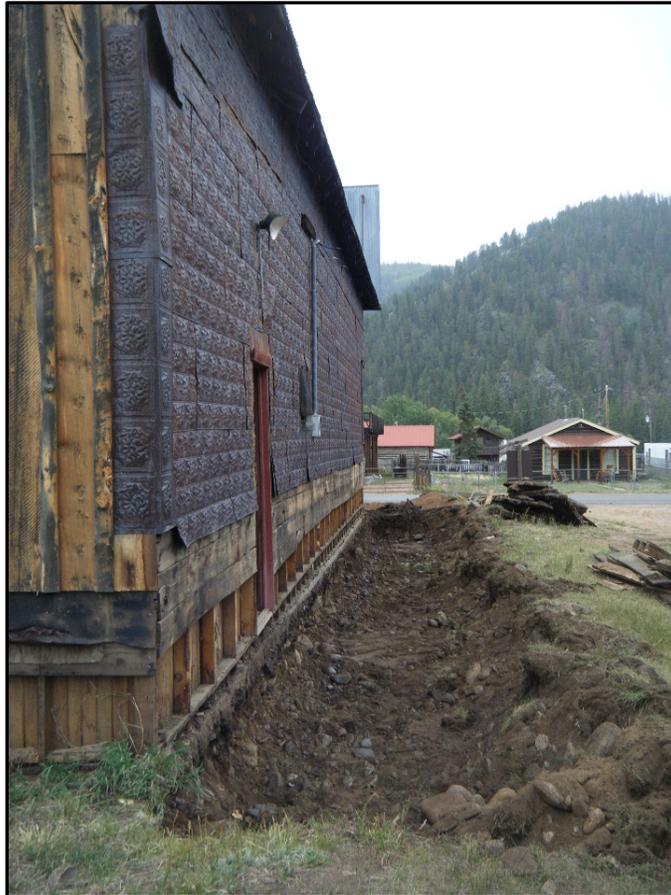


Figure 3. Completed trench along western face of town hall, facing south.

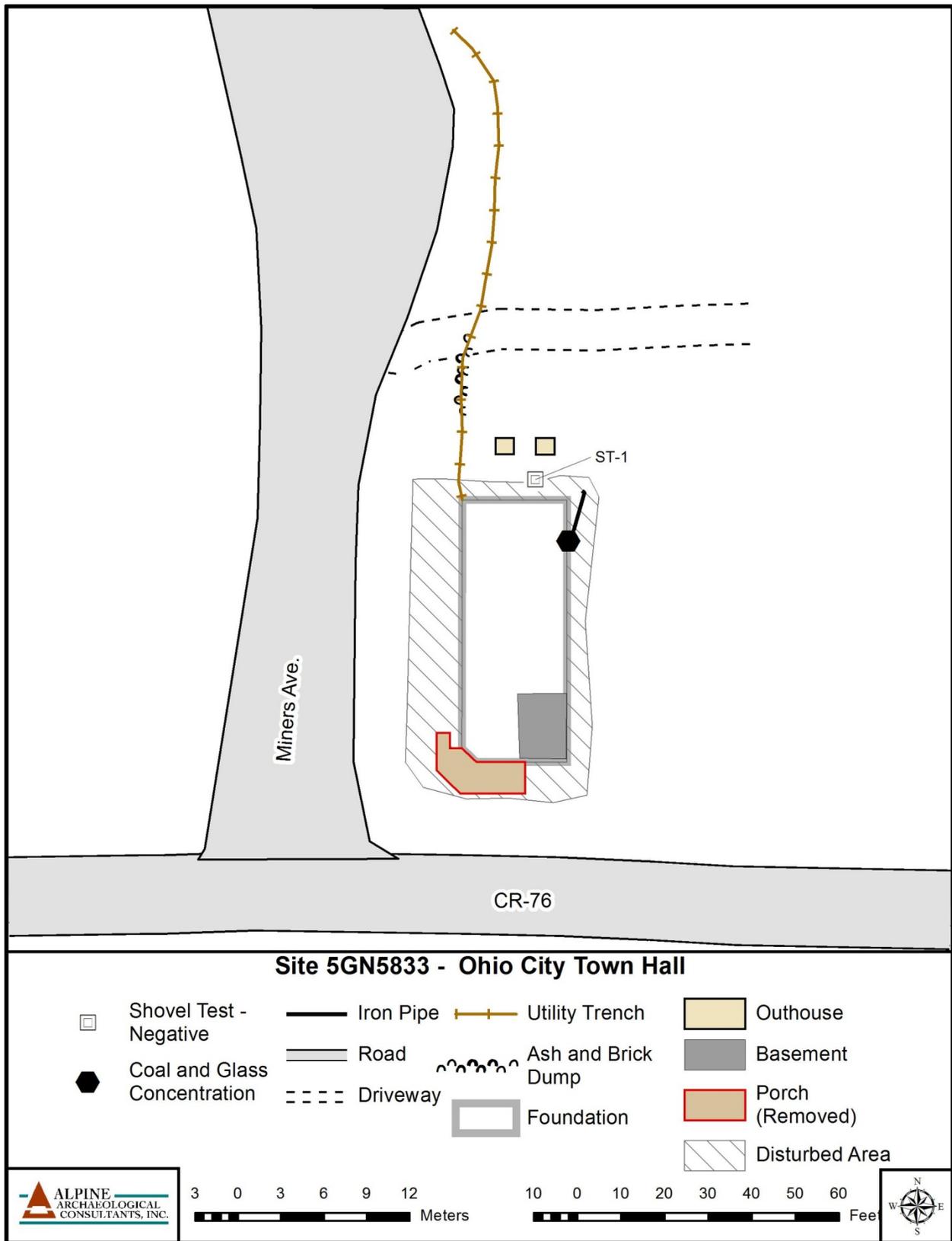


Figure 4. Plan map of monitored work at the Ohio City Town Hall (site 5GN5833).



Figure 5. Excavated foundation area after completion of trenching and removal of soil within new foundation area, facing southeast.



Figure 6. Excavation of the utility trench, facing south.

5GN5833—The Ohio City Town Hall

Site 5GN5833, the Ohio City Town Hall, is a previously documented structure in Ohio City, Colorado. The site boundary includes the structure and nearby encountered artifacts, encompassing 597 m² (6,426 sq. ft.).

Alpine revisited the site during the course of monitoring, finding it to largely be as previously documented. A full architectural description of the town hall is available in the HSA (Humphries Poli Architects 2011), with relevant information summarized here. The town hall is a one story, single-room (Figure 7), wood-frame building with ornamental-pressed, terne-plate metal siding on the southern, eastern, and western faces of the building, and wooden board and batten siding on the northern and upper south faces (Humphries Poli Architects 2011). The building is front gabled with a false-front that is constructed of vertical board and batten. Architecturally, the building falls within the False Front Commercial building type. The main, southern facade of the building faces CR-76 and has a store-front array of fixed, wood-sash windows, with the primary entryway at the southwestern corner of the building. An additional entryway is on the northern end of the western side. Aside from the store-front windows, only two other small fixed, wood-sash windows are present on the eastern and western sides of the building. Terne-plate siding on the southern side was only placed below the windows, with most of the front displaying uncovered board and batten. An 11-x-15-ft. poured concrete basement over layered cobbles is below the southeastern portion of the building. The interior walls of the basement are fairly smooth. Fill around the basement is cobbles and soil (see Figure 8).

The structure has undergone several modifications since its construction. The roof is covered with galvanized sheet metal, instead of the original shingle roof (Humphries Poli Architects 2011). A modern wooden porch addition at the southern entrance was removed during the course of the project. Two outhouses are present directly north of the town hall. Although in the same wood-frame style as the Town Hall, their exact ages are unknown and it is unclear if they of historic age (Figure 9). Discussion with an Ohio City resident during monitoring suggested that the outhouses may have been given to the community in the 1970s by the U.S. Forest Service (personal communication to Charles Reed, September 15, 2014). The outhouses are still in use.

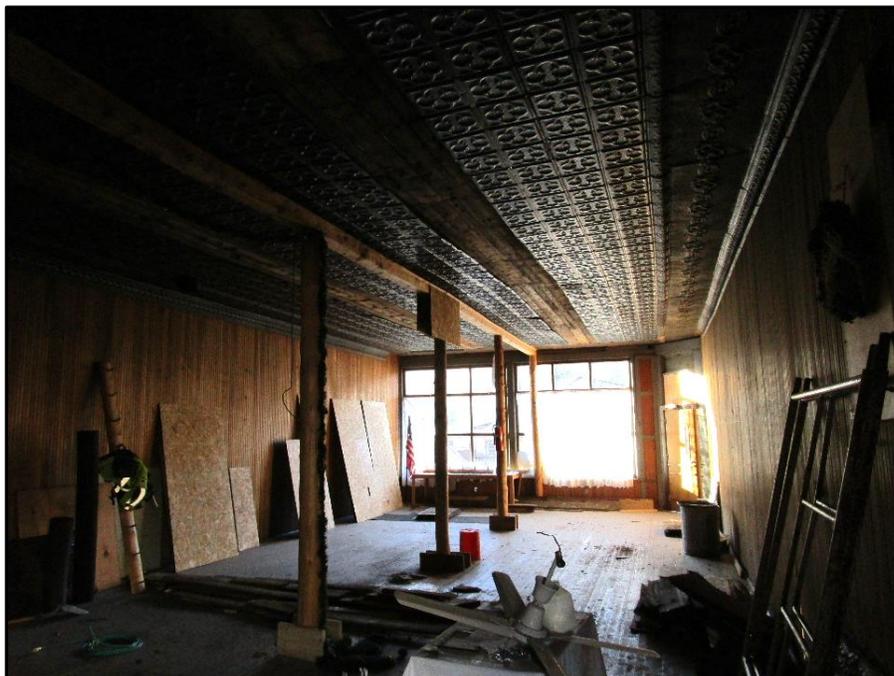


Figure 7. Interior of the Ohio City Town Hall, facing south-southeast.



Figure 8. Overview of the basement following the building move, but prior to clean out. View to the southeast. Note the cobble fill around the basement.



Figure 9. Two outhouses north of the town hall and foundation area, facing north, with the town hall's basement in foreground.

Results of Monitoring

Several hundred historic artifacts associated with the Ohio City Town Hall were observed during monitoring. Bottle fragments were the most numerous artifact class, and were largely aqua-colored, but also included numerous clear, amber, and green-colored bottle fragments. Several Sanitary cans were documented, along with a small number of hole-in-cap cans. Wire nails were observed in fairly high numbers scattered throughout the fill. Table 1 lists representative artifacts documented during monitoring, along with their general location.

Two primary sediment strata were observed during monitoring. The uppermost stratum (Stratum I) was organic-rich, brown sandy loam. This overlaid yellowish brown sandy loam (Stratum II). Large river cobbles and boulders were common throughout both strata, increasing in size and quantity with depth. The upper stratum contained cultural materials throughout, including charcoal and coal fragments. The underlying stratum appears to represent native deposits. The transition between the strata is generally between 15 and 25 centimeters below modern ground surface (cmbs). A shovel test (ST) was placed 6 ft. north of the building between the town hall and the easternmost outhouse. The ST was 30 cm diameter, and excavated to subsoil, terminating at 40 cm below surface. Removed sediment was screened through ¼-in. hardware mesh and examined for cultural materials. The ST was dug during excavation of the eastern and western foundation trenches, and prior to movement of the building. This was done to evaluate the potential for historic privy deposits outside of the confines of the outhouses' footprints and to evaluate the soil profile in a less-disturbed context. The strata were consistent with that of the trenches, with the transition between Stratum I and II at 14 cmbs. Charcoal and coal fragments, and one wire nail were recovered in the upper 10 cmbs of the ST; no other cultural materials were encountered, suggesting that disturbances within 6 ft. of the town hall could proceed with little chance of impacting potential privy deposits.

A lens of coal (unburnt and cinders) was observed during the monitoring of the trench along the eastern side of the building. The concentration consisted of a roughly 3-x-2-ft. area of burned and unburned coal, deposited about 4 in. thick, roughly 25–29 in. (64–74 cm) below surface, and about 8 to 9 ft. south of the northeastern building corner. The surrounding sediment is darker (Stratum I). No evidence of a coal chute was observed. An artifact concentration was observed in this area during excavation of the foundation. The concentration contained 30–50 pieces of aqua bottle glass, representing at least three bottles, along with some amber glass fragments and some plain white earthenware. Most of the glass is at least partially melted. The scatter was observed following the removal of the building, so was in somewhat disturbed contexts, but covered a 10-x-5-ft. area. The epicenter of the scatter was near the location of the coal scatter, suggesting that the two are related. A 4-in.-diameter, cast-iron pipe (waterline) was also observed angling towards the eastern face of the building, and going underneath the foundation about 8 ft. south of the northeastern building corner. The pipe and the coal scatter hit the building edge at the same place, so the coal could have been deposited in place, or disturbed and scattered, during the excavation of the pipe. The coal-and-ash concentration likely represents refuse deposited along the building foundation at some point during the building's occupation.

Aside from the artifact scatter, artifacts were generally of fairly low density, intermixed with modern trash deposited beneath the building and within the basement. The basement contained numerous historic artifacts, including cast-iron pipe collars, Sanitary and hole-in-cap cans, and modern debris, including several pull-tab beverage cans. Along with refuse, the basement was filled with cobbles, gravel, and sediment (Figure 8). It is unclear if the deposition was natural or culturally derived. The rehabilitation and stabilizing work is leaving the historic basement intact, and is being tied into the new foundation (Figure 10).

Table 1. Representative Artifacts Observed during Monitoring.

Class	Type	Quantity	Location	Description
Brick	Common brick	15–25	Along foundation/crawlspace	Red common bricks and brick fragments. No manufacturer marks.
Brick	Common brick	~30	Ash and brick concentration on utility trench	Red and light-colored common bricks and brick fragments. No manufacturer marks.
Can	Beverage	1	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	Handi Imitation Black Cherry 12 fl. oz. soda can.
Can	Beverage can	1	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	Red-painted tin flat-top beverage can with “Handi Imitation Black Cherry 12 Fl. Oz” (post early 1950s).
Can	Hole-in-cap	2	Basement	Hole-in-cap can fragments.
Can	Sanitary	5	Basement	Sanitary can fragments.
Can	Sanitary cans	5–10	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	Rotary-opened, knife-and nail opened.
Can	Tobacco tin	1	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	Simple-pin-hinge Prince Albert tobacco tin (1908–1948 ^a).
Can	Tobacco tin	1	Footer trench	Simple pin-hinge tobacco tin (pre-1948 ^a).
Earthenware	Dishware	5–10	Artifact concentration	White earthenware fragments.
Earthenware	Dishware	1	Crawlspace/ sub-foundation	White earthenware fragment with “GEO” mark in blue.
Earthenware	Dishware	50–75	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	White earthenware vessel fragments.
Enamelware	Dishware	1	Ash and brick concentration on utility trench	White and red enamelware bowl.
Glass	Amber bottle	~5	Artifact concentration	Amber bottle glass fragments.
Glass	Amber bottle	1	Basement	Brandy/wine bottle finish.
Glass	Amber bottle	1	Basement	Bottle base with Owens-Illinois maker’s mark (1929–1954 ^b).
Glass	Amber bottle	5–10	Basement entry	Amber glass bottle fragments.
Glass	Amber bottle	1	Basement entry	Bottle base with Knox Glass Bottle Company with keystone maker’s mark  (1917–1953 ^c).
Glass	Amber bottle	1	Crawlspace/ sub-foundation	Amber bottle finish.
Glass	Amber bottle	1	Footer trench	Amber beer bottle finish.
Glass	Aqua bottle	30–50	Artifact concentration	Scatter of aqua-colored glass bottle fragments, largely melted, and representing at least three bottles.
Glass	Aqua bottle	1	Basement	Aqua bottle base with the American Bottle Company of Chicago maker’s mark (1905–1917 ^b).
Glass	Bottle fragments	~100	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	Numerous aqua, clear, green, and amber bottle fragments.
Glass	Canning jar	1	Basement entry	Canning jar with screw-on lid.
Glass	Canning jar	1	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	White milkglass lid liner fragment.

Table 1. Representative Artifacts Observed during Monitoring.

Class	Type	Quantity	Location	Description
Glass	Clear bottle	1	Basement	Clear glass Blue Bird Soda bottle with Owens-Illinois maker's mark with 1946 date stamp. Side has Applied Color Label reading "It's always Blue Bird Time. Gunnison Creamery, Gunnison Colorado" and "Blue Bird Imitation Grape Soda; Bottled under license from Citrus Products Co. Chicago, USA."
Glass	Clear bottle	1	Basement entry	Clear bottle base with late Owens-Illinois maker's mark and a 1975 date mark.
Glass	Clear bottle	1	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	Threaded clear glass bottle finish.
Glass	Clear bottle	1	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	Oval clear glass bottle base with late Owens-Illinois maker's mark and 1964 date mark.
Glass	Clear bottle	1	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	Rounded-rectangular Hazel-Atlas bottle base with "58 ^a 64" embossing. Likely 1964 date.
Glass	Green bottle	5-10	Basement entry	Green glass bottle fragments.
Glass	Window	~10	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	Clear window pane glass.
Metal	Cast iron	2	Basement	Cast iron pipe collars.
Metal	Misc.	1	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	Metal wire spiral handle. Possibly a portion of a cast-iron stove damper.
Metal	Misc.	1	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	Barrel hoop strap.
Metal	Pail	1	Basement entry	Metal pail (1 ft. tall), squashed.
Metal	Wire nails	25-50	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	Wire nails.
Stoneware	Dishware	1	Crawl space/sub-foundation	White porcelain cup fragment.
Stoneware	Jug	2	Crawlspace/sub-foundation	Jug handle fragments.
Wood	Dimensional lumber	5	Basement entry	2-x-5-in. boards with rusted wire nails.

a: Kirkpatrick and Duran (1981)

b: Toulouse (1971)

c: Lockhart (2004)



Figure 10. View of the basement following cleaning/removal of refuse and cobbles, facing north.

Almost no artifacts were observed during excavation of the utility-line trench, aside from a concentration of ash, common brick, coal, and a white and red enamelware bowl in a roughly 8–10-ft.-long section of the trench. The bricks did not appear to have been part of an intact and buried feature; given the coal and ash, the concentration appears to represent a buried discard pile. Based on the artifact assemblage observed during monitoring, it is clear that historic use of the area continued, not only from the early 1900s through the 1920s, but up to the early 1960 as well.

National Register Recommendation

Although HPA documented the Ohio City Town Hall in 2010, they did not evaluate the site for potential inclusion in the NRHP. Following the current project, Alpine recommends site 5GN5833, the Ohio City Town Hall, as eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. Ohio City and other regional mining-boom contemporaries, such as Crested Butte and Pitkin, were important in the Euroamerican settling of the area. As an early mercantile building, restaurant, and subsequent town hall, the Ohio City Town Hall was a central fixture within the early occupation of Ohio City, and is, thus, recommended as eligible under Criterion A. The building is not associated with any persons of historical significance, so is not recommended as eligible under Criterion B. The site is also recommended as eligible for inclusion under Criterion C, as it retains many diagnostic elements of False Front Commercial buildings, including the store-front window, rectangular plan, wood frame construction, and a tall single story with false front that gives the building a sense of greater substance, which characterize architectural elements seen throughout the early mining booms in the region. The building also contains historic architectural and design elements that are fairly unusual to the style, such as the corner entryway and the terne-plate siding on the southern, western and eastern sides. The Ohio City Town Hall, unlike many early commercial buildings of the time, had embellishments on the exterior sides of the building, rather than just on the front façade. Despite some modern additions and alterations, the building remains in fairly good condition, and retains integrity of setting, location, design, materials, and workmanship. Finally, monitoring observed a moderate amount of subsurface artifacts buried to a depth of 20 cm. Although historic and modern disturbances have impacted the integrity of these buried materials, there is potential for additional

buried materials with sufficient integrity to contribute to our understanding of the history of the building and the town (Criterion D).

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Alpine conducted archaeological monitoring of ground-disturbing activities at the Ohio City Town Hall on September 8 and 15, and on October 30, 2014. Monitoring of the ground disturbance associated with the rehabilitation and stabilization project was required because the project is partially funded through a grant from the Colorado SHF. A moderate amount of artifacts and two coal, ash, and artifact deposits were observed during monitoring. All monitoring activities were documented, and artifacts were analyzed and left at the project site. No further monitoring or data recovery efforts are needed for this phase of the renovation. The appropriate Colorado State site form has been completed for the town hall (site 5GN5833), with Alpine recommending the site eligible under Criteria A, C, and D.

Artifact density was slightly higher than expected, largely relating to the two dumped artifact and coal concentrations, the artifacts of which were then scattered through post-occupational and current construction disturbances. Artifact density dropped fairly quickly away from the town hall, slightly unexpected given the other historic buildings in the area and the long period of use of the area.

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