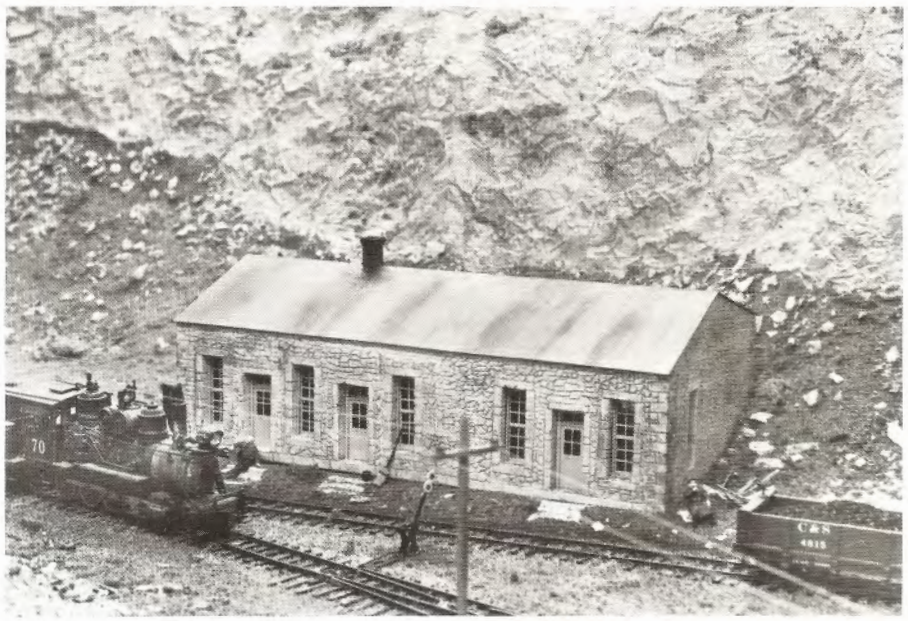
The Denver, South Park & Pacific

Facilities at Alpine, Colorado

Part 1

by Mike Horner
Photos by the author



The author's HO scale stone boarding house in position on his HOn3 layout.

Nestled in a high alpine valley at the west portal of Alpine Tunnel was the town of Alpine, Colorado. Alpine was built entirely as a railroad service facility on the famous Denver, South Park and Pacific three-foot gauge railroad. The tunnel was closed in October, 1910, when the Alpine facilities were abandoned. Many of the structures remained in place for years after their abandonment and today you can still see the foundations, some of the structures, and piles of stones that marked the location of this little community. I have spent many happy hours wandering over the site of Alpine and have collected a great deal of first hand information on it. I have used this information, plus information from photos and company records, to draw the plans presented in this series of articles. I have also built most of these buildings in HO scale for my HOn3 layout.

In many instances, my actual field measurements differed from those listed in the Union Pacific records by several feet. In some places I have had to use my imagination to fill in the voids in my data left by time. But, for the most part I took the utmost care to reconstruct on my drawing board the structures which existed at Alpine at one time or another. My general layout map of the Alpine facility shows the location of each of the buildings I drew for this series. The structures at Alpine will be discussed in order as numbered on this map.

There were two buildings listed in my 1886 U.P. records which I have not been able to recognize as existing from any photos, nor could I find any remains of these buildings. These buildings are a stone bunk house measuring 14 feet by 16 feet 6 inches and a stone wash house measuring 10 feet by 18 feet.

The large service structures at Alpine were constructed of stone which could withstand the harsh winters with little maintenance. The first boarding house at Alpine was listed as a section house in the

The stone boarding house today.

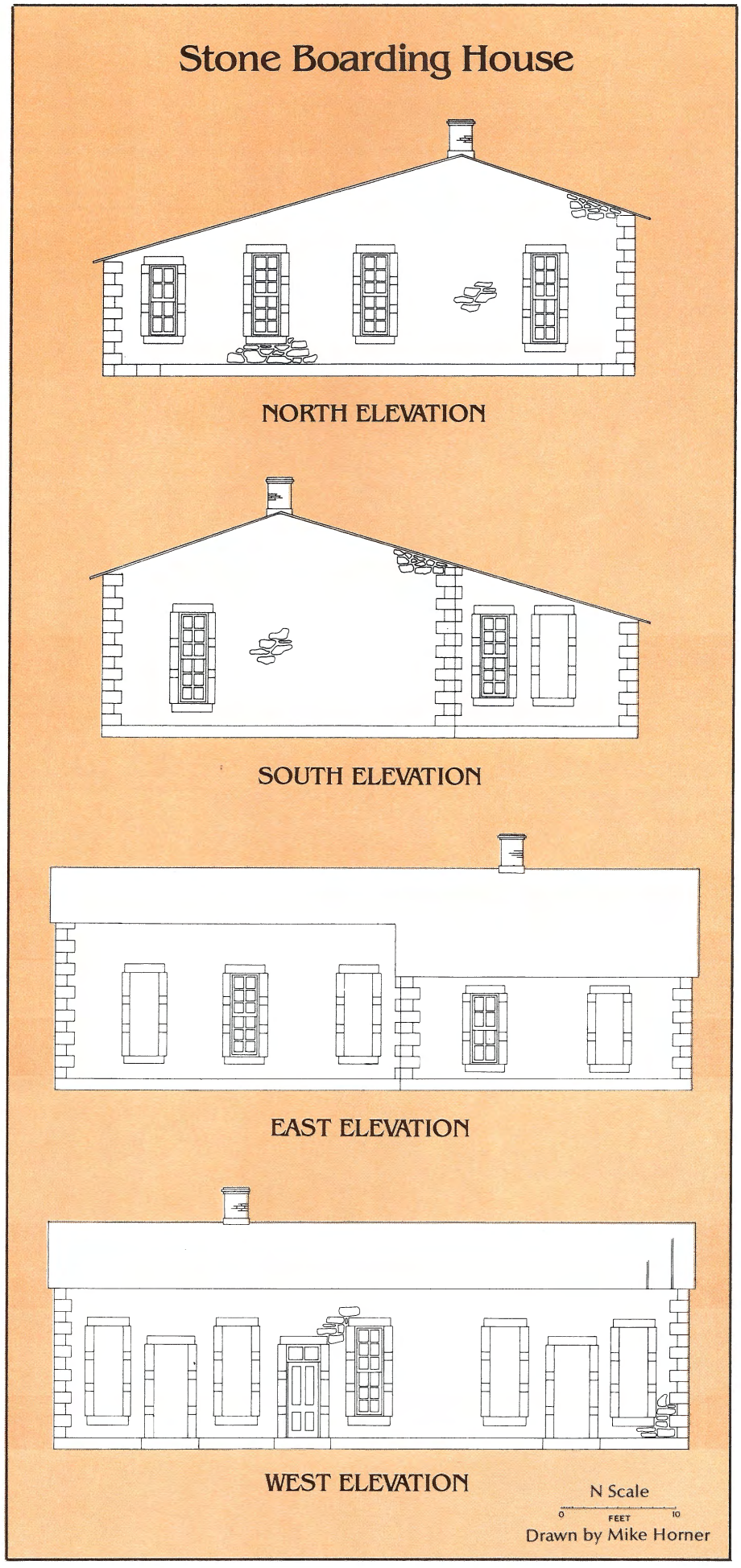
1886 records; I have labeled my drawing of it "Stone Boarding House." This structure measured 55 feet 8 inches by 30 feet with a 25 foot 6 inch by 16 foot addition on the northeast corner of the building. By 1896 the building was no longer being used. Photos from about this time show that the roof was missing from the south end of the building and that the remainder of the roof was in dismal shape. There is a rumor that the structure suffered fire damage in 1906 but I could find no evidence to support this.

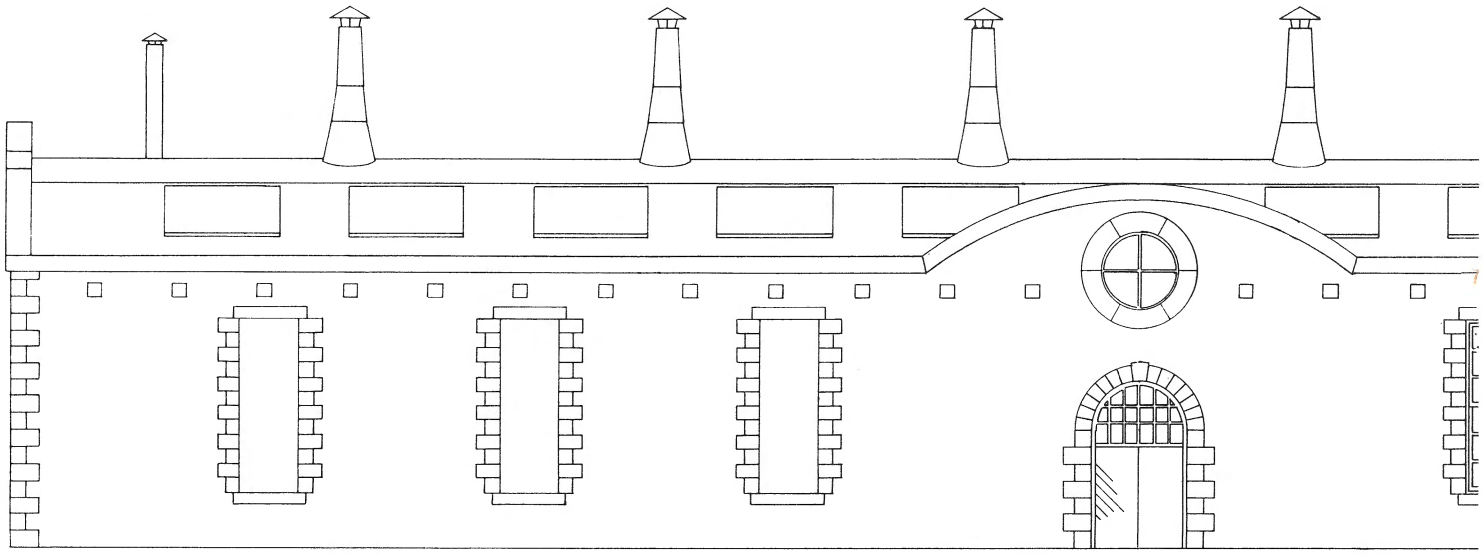
The corner stones for this building were cut from native granite and were 12 inches square by 19 to 20 inches long. The vertical window and door stones varied in size from 26 to 29 inches long and 8 to 10 inches wide. The smaller square stones were 8 to 10 inches square. The sill stones were 8 by 10 inches by about 4 feet long. The walls were 18 inches thick. The windows on my plan are correctly placed except I am unsure of the east windows on the addition and the southwest window on the south elevation. The fallen rock in these locations suggested that there had been windows in these locations. The doors and windows were framed with 2 by 8 inch stock. I managed to find a piece of window trim with some light gray paint still showing. I can only guess at the type of roof covering. I think it was sheet steel because this material was used on the large engine house which was built just prior to the boarding house.

The engine house is probably the best known of the buildings at Alpine. Construction started on the 58-foot by 157-foot long building sometime in 1882. The building contained full engine servicing facilities. There was a 9,516 gallon tub type water tank in the southeast corner of the building. This tank was 18 feet in diameter and five feet high. A 14-foot by 40-foot coal platform was also located inside the building. The original skylights in the roof show in photos up until about 1900.

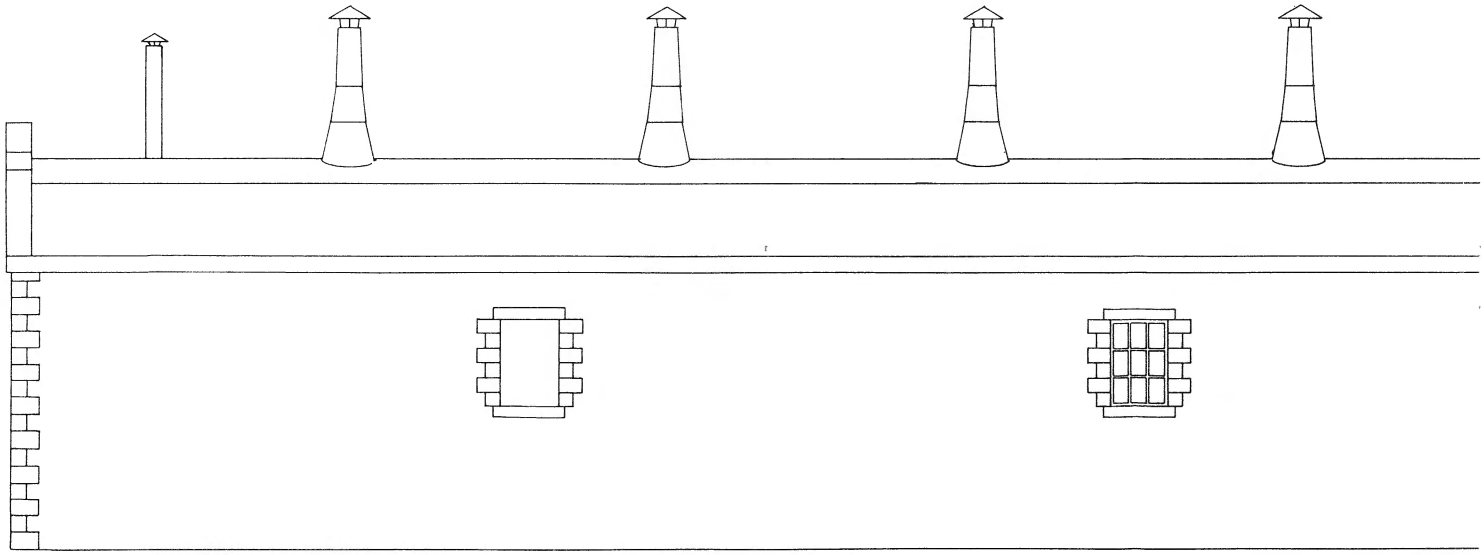
There was also a turntable inside the engine house. Records indicate that a 50-foot turntable from St. Elmo was moved to the west portal of Alpine Tunnel in 1899. Quite possibly, the engine house did not have a turntable until then. The single track leading from the turntable to the southeast on my map was the only lead which is clearly visible today. But, if the engine house could really house the six engines that historians claim it housed, at least two other leads would be necessary. If these leads did exist, they are now buried under several feet of wall stone.

The large snowshed which covered the single mainline track next to the engine house was gone by the late 1880's. Until the Colorado & Southern operations began, there was only one track outside the engine house. The passing track shown on my plan was added sometime between 1899 and 1906. Then, in early 1906, a disastrous fire completely destroyed the engine house. It was never rebuilt. Instead, a turntable and water tank were installed between Alpine and the west portal of the tunnel,





WEST ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION

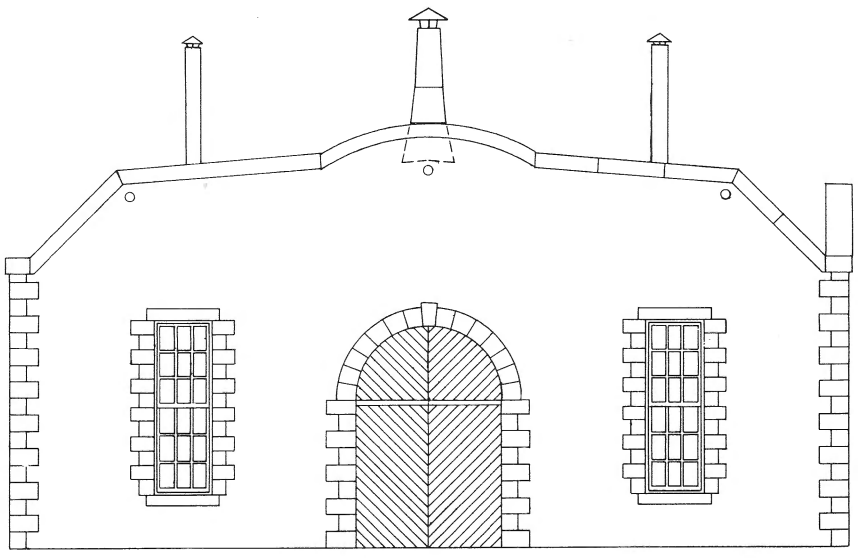
NORTH ELEVATION

Engine House

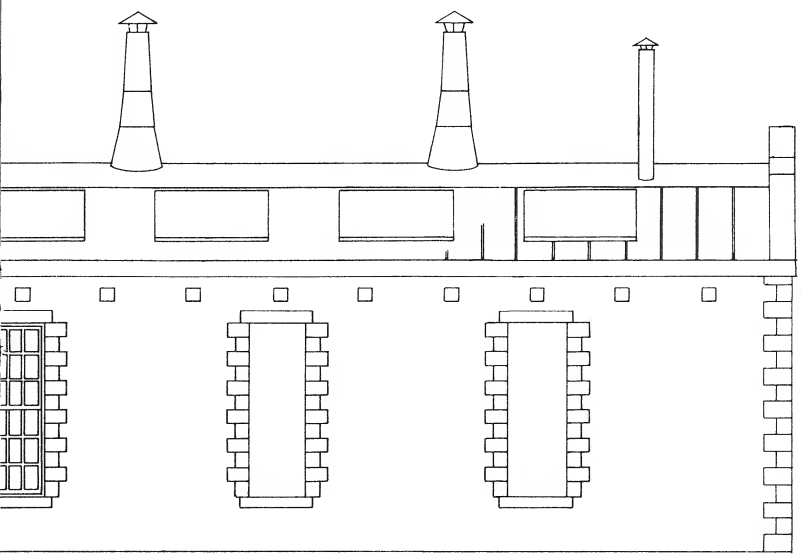
Drawn by Mike Horner

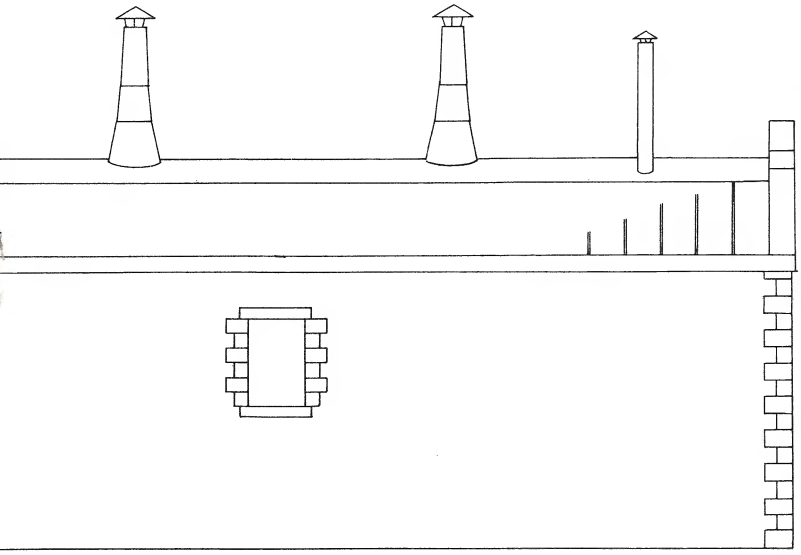
N Scale

0 FEET 10



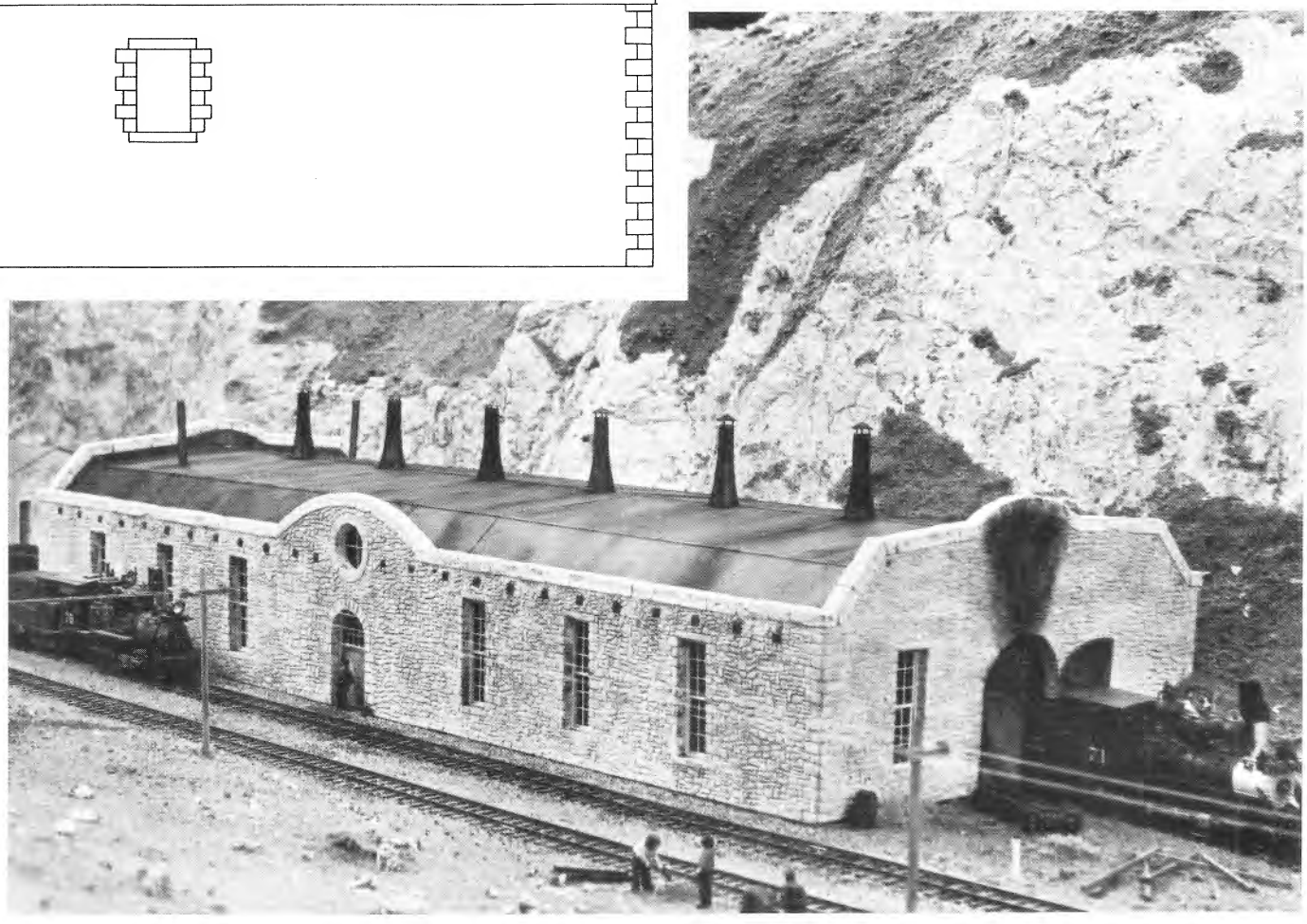
SOUTH ELEVATION –
NO WINDOW EAST OF DOOR

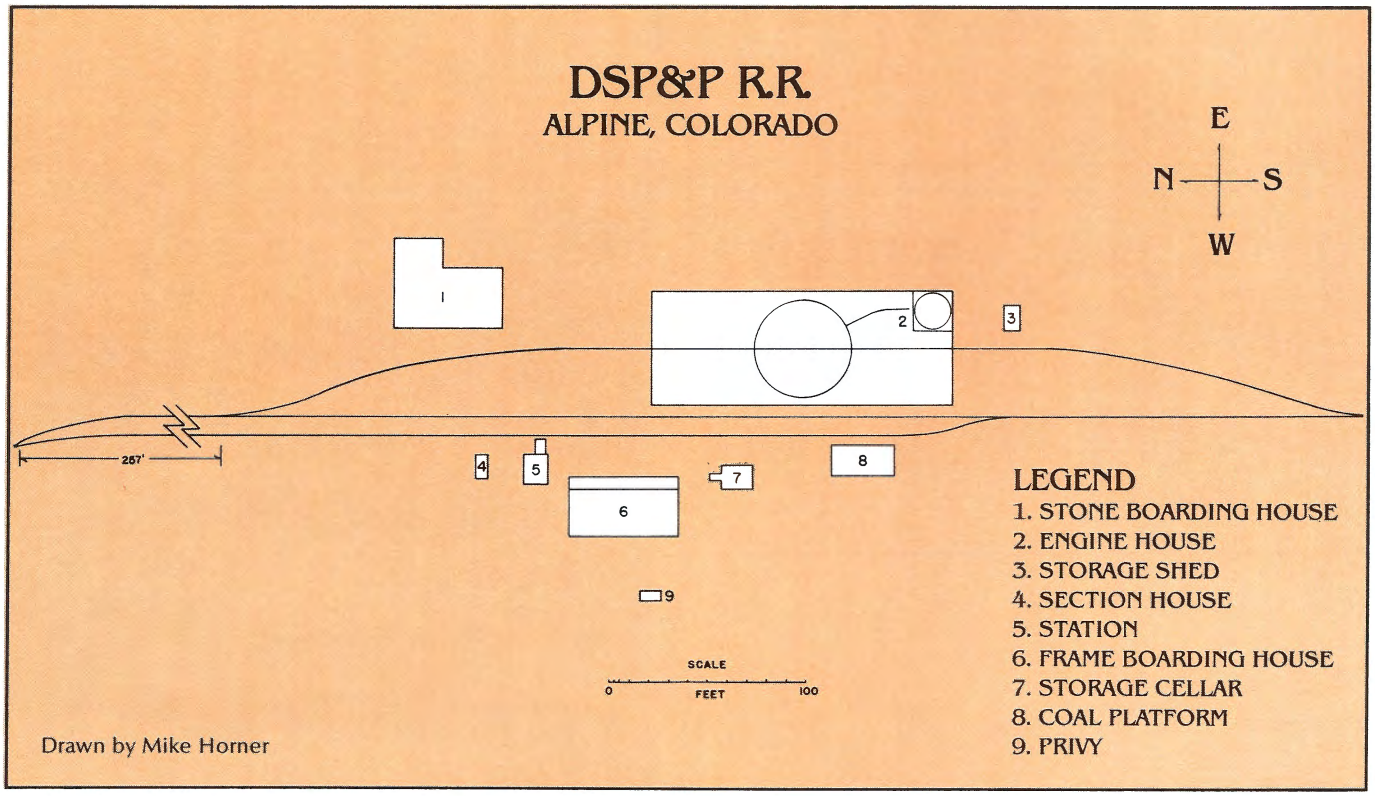




The northwest window of the engine house on the north wall.

The Alpine engine house in HO scale on the author's layout.





The north end of the HO model of the stone boarding house.

and a coal platform was built in Alpine to accomodate engine servicing.

My specific measurements show that the corner and door stones were 14 inches square by 24 inches long. The windows had 12 by 12 inch by 20 inch framing stones with approximately 9 inch by 4 foot sill stones. The wall cap stones were 12 by 18 inches and varied in length from two to four or five feet. The walls were two feet thick up to the roof line where they seem to be only about 12 inches thick. I had to estimate the number of windows on the east wall. The southeast windows showed me the correct width and height plus the distance of the windows from the end wall. I added only two other windows on my plan because I could only find evidence of window stones in two other places in the rubble from the east wall. Since the building was symmetrical there should have been a center window and one the same distance from the north end. Sheet steel was used on the roof. Pieces of roof jacks for the engines are still visible among the bushes around Alpine. I found the base for one and a center portion from another in the bushes. I used photos for the rain cap detail. The smoke jacks for the heating stoves seemed to move over the years because they are shown on both sides of the roof depending on the year the photo was taken. There were supposed to be six mammoth heating stoves but I could never locate that many stove roof jacks in any one photo.

The Denver, South Park & Pacific

Facilities at Alpine, Colorado

Part 2

by Mike Horner
Photos by the author

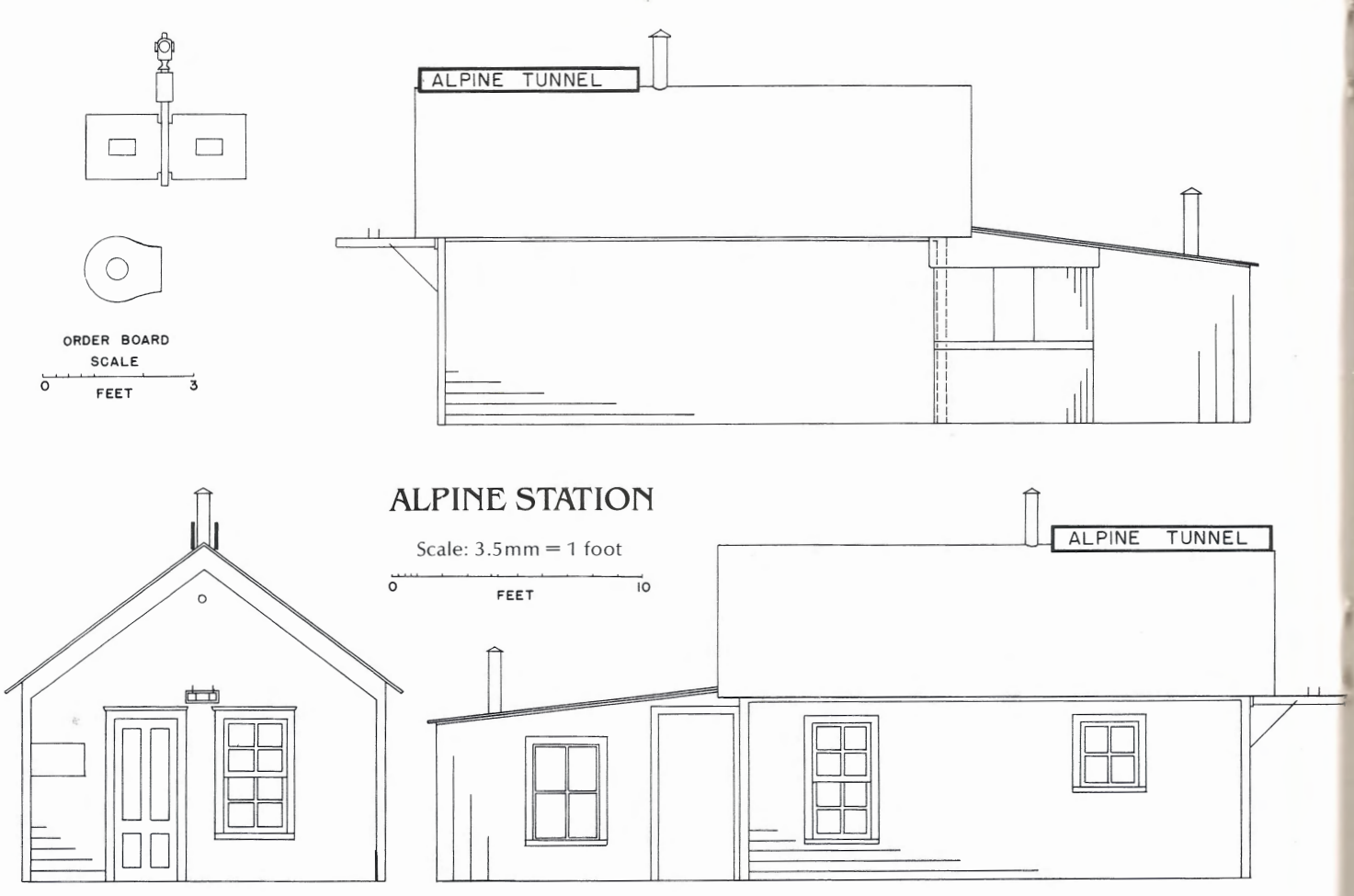
In the last issue, Part 1 of this series, I described the general layout of Alpine, Colorado and discussed its stone boarding house and engine house. In this article I will describe several of Alpine's small service buildings and its station.

Just south of the engine house there was a small 8 x 13 foot building built right into the mountainside. I labeled it as a storage shed on my map in Part 1. However, I now believe this building was a small section house built sometime between 1899 and 1906 to replace the old section house just north of the station. It does not appear in any of the photos taken around 1900. However, because of its location it would have definitely been built before the fire of 1906.

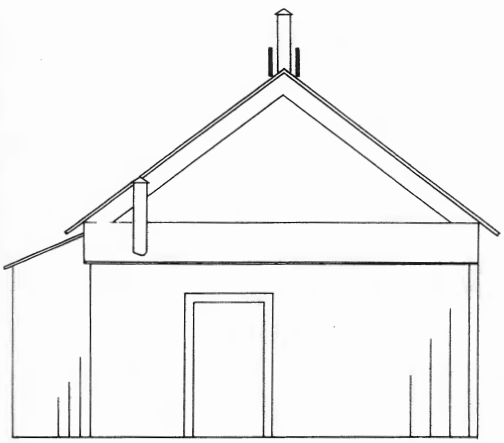
According to the Union Pacific records, the section house immediately north of the station was built in 1890. It appears in photos in 1896 and 1899, but was gone by 1906. My drawings of this building are not highly accurate because they were completely drawn from only two photos. The windows on the north side appear to be boarded up in a 1899 photo.

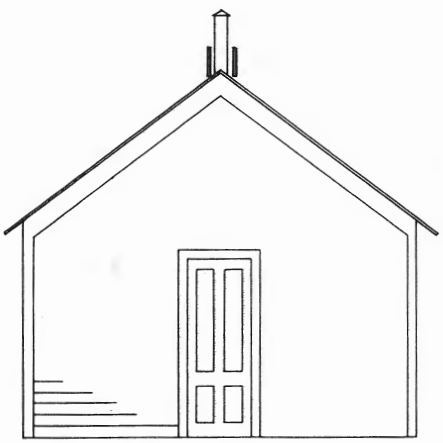
The station at Alpine was located at mile post 161.8 from Denver, at an elevation of 11,462 feet, and is the best preserved structure at Alpine. It was built in February, 1883 to serve as a telegraph and train dispatch office. The front half served as the office. The rear section provided living quarters for the station agent. Later, sometime between 1899 and 1906, there was an addition to the rear of this building. The sign "Alpine Tunnel" on the roof top, and the train order board appeared between 1906 and 1908.

The station measures 14 feet 4 inches by 20 feet 3 inches and was a light grey color with a Pullman Green trim. In a 1939 photo, The roof appeared to be made from asphalt roll. The present T & T sign measures 15 inches by 30 inches with 2½ and 3½ inch high lettering. This is larger than the original as shown on my plans.

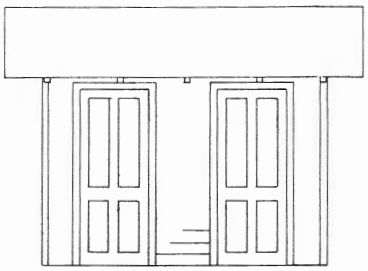


The Alpine station shows in the distance to the left of the engine house on the author's HOn3 model of Alpine, Colorado. The September 1982 **RAILROAD MODEL CRAFTSMAN** had an excellent article on building the Alpine station by Joseph Crea and Paul Schenk.

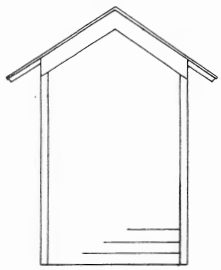




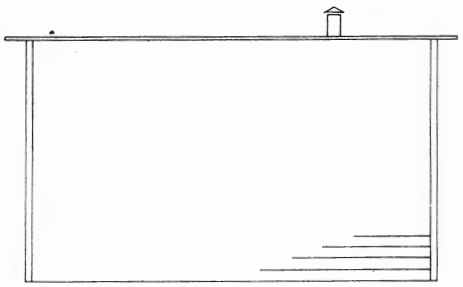
PRIVY

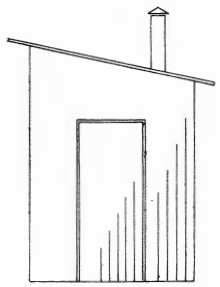


EAST ELEVATION

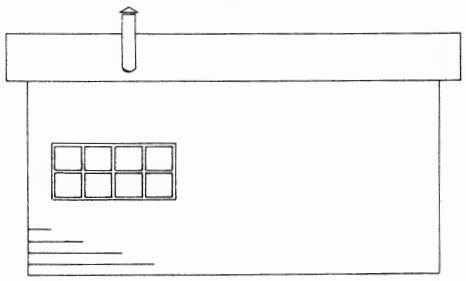


SECTION HOUSE

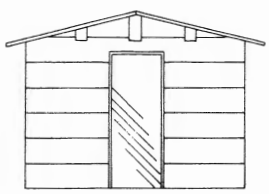




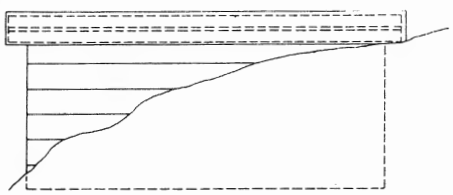
EAST ELEVATION



STORAGE SHED



WEST ELEVATION



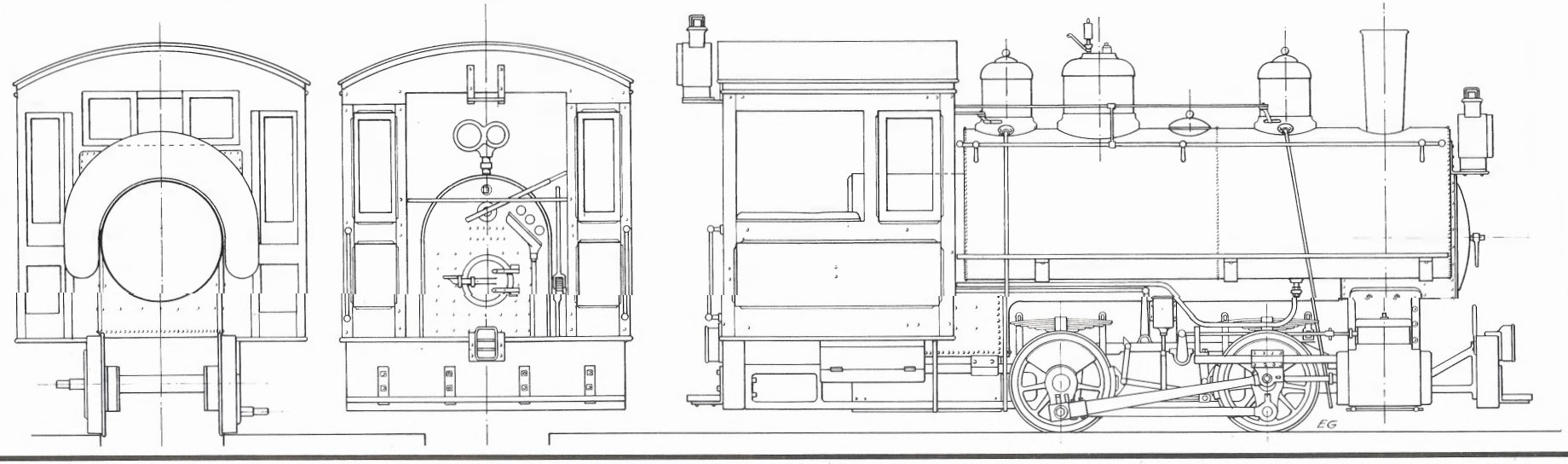
Scale: 3.5mm = 1 foot

0 FEET 10

The remains of the Alpine, Colorado, storage shed or "new" section house, just south of the engine house. This building was built right into the side of the mountain.

The station at Alpine, Colorado, is the best preserved structure there.

This little Baldwin tanker was built in 1903. She is a three-footer, although she could also be ordered in standard gauge. The English style smokebox front is quite unusual. There are no dogs or clamps, only the handle-like locking device. Since this engine was a standard contractor's or industrial model, it would be at home on anyone's layout. Here are the specs: 3-foot gauge, 10 x 16 inch cylinders, 29-inch drivers. She weighed in at 35,700 lbs. and she burned soft coal. *Photo, collection of H. L. Broadbelt.*



Baldwin 0-4-0T Locomotive

Drawing and text by Ed Gebhardt
Scale: ¼ inch = 1 foot

The Denver, South Park & Pacific

Facilities at Alpine, Colorado

Part 3

by Mike Horner

In Part 1 of this series I discussed the general layout of Alpine, Colorado and discussed its stone boarding house and engine house. Part 2 covered several of the small service sheds and the passenger station. In this part I will discuss the frame boarding house, coal platform, and water tank.

After the fire in Alpine in 1906 the Colorado & Southern constructed a large frame boarding house just to the south of the station. It was completed in October 1906. A room which served as a combination dining room, club room and kitchen, and two bedrooms were on the first floor. There was a small private lodging room upstairs which was used by visiting railroad officials. The rest of the building was one large boarding room for the C&S employees stationed at Alpine. A huge coal stove heated the entire building during the cold months.

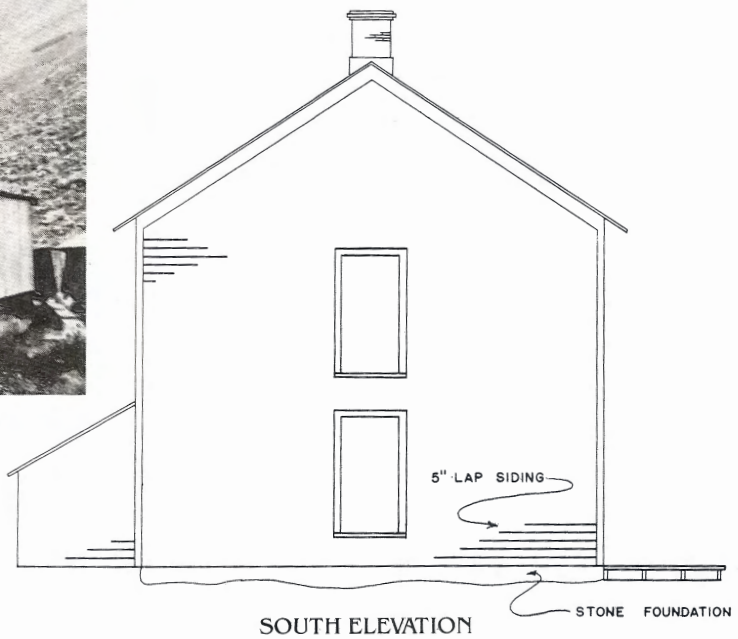
The outside dimensions of this building were 55 feet, 8 inches by 24 feet. It was painted the same color as the station. The siding was 5-inch T-lock lap. None of the photos are sharp enough to give any indication of the type of roof used. I could not locate any type of roofing material in the rubble that once was the boarding house. I guess that it had asphalt roll – similar to the station. All trim measured 4 inches wide except under the eaves where the trim was 9 inches wide. The drawing of the west elevation, except for the two southern most windows and door, is pure guesswork on my part. The rest of the windows and doors follow the general design of the structure. The staircase appeared to be in line with the second front door from the north and was constructed with 42-inch by 12-inch treads with 8-inch risers.

Behind the boarding house was a two-hole privy, painted in the same colors as the boarding house and station. It seems there was a similar structure located on the west side of the track directly across from the center of the engine house.

There was a covered entrance to a stone storage cellar at the south end of the boarding house front platform. As near as I can tell, it was built about the same time as the boarding house. The walls were built from native granite, possibly taken from the remains of the engine house. The roof was then covered with earth for insulation. My drawing is a partial section view with the earth removed. The inside stone walls were lined with 2 x 12-inch stock.

Just south of the cellar is the new coaling platform built to replace the one destroyed in the engine house fire. Today it stands empty, patiently awaiting the arrival of a train of loaded coal cars to fill it once again. Like the rest of Alpine, it is slowly slipping away into oblivion, leaving only memories and dreams to recommend it to eternity.

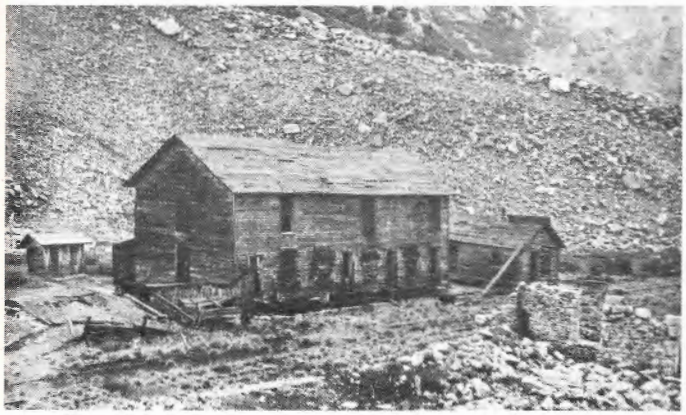
The north side of the station and the boarding house at Alpine, Colorado taken in August, 1939. *Photo by R. Kindig.*



SOUTH ELEVATION

NORTH ELEV. – NO WINDOWS

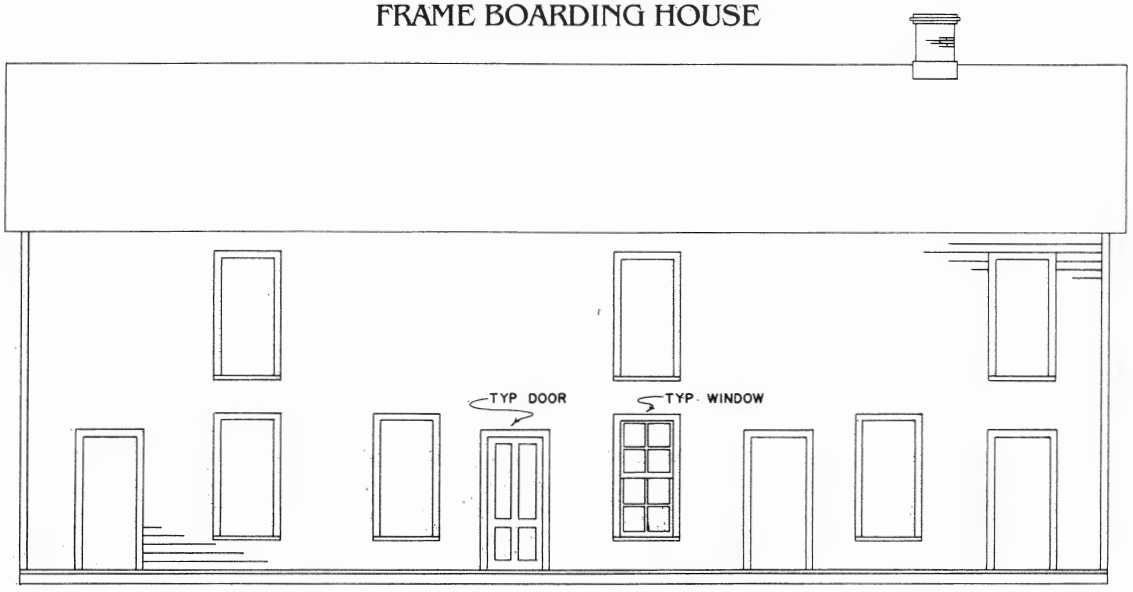
0 SCALE 10 FEET



This photo was taken by Richard Kindig in 1939. It shows the east and south side of the station at Alpine, Colorado – the frame boarding house and the two-hole privy. You can also see the covered entrance to the storm cellar at the near end of the boarding house. *Photo by R. Kindig.*

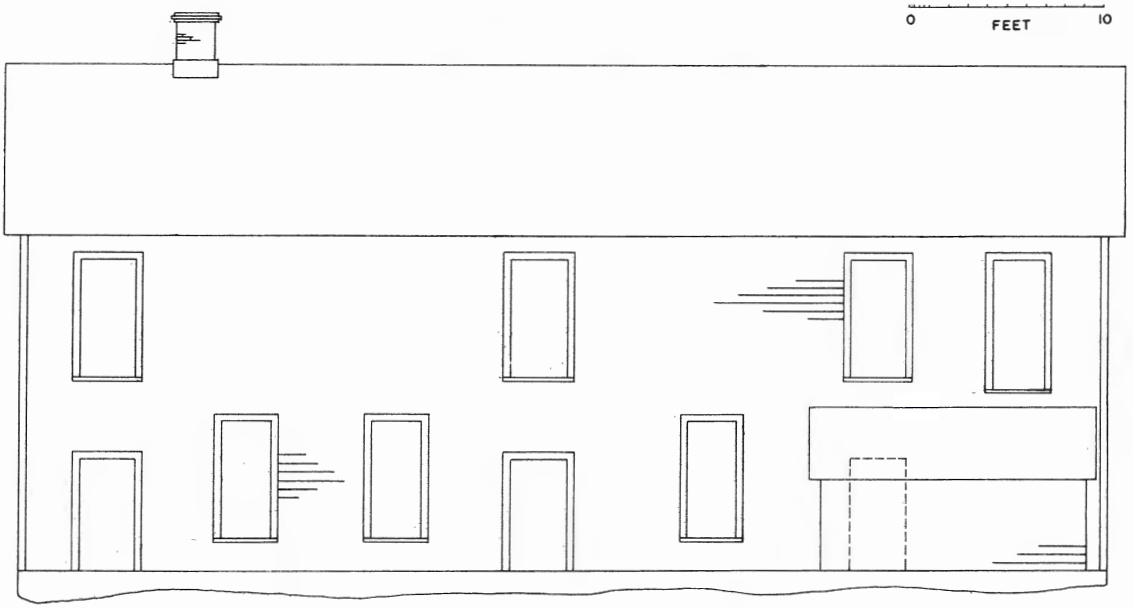
The remains of the engine house at Alpine, Colorado showing the base of the water tank in 1939. Notice the hoops. *Photo by Don R. E. Rogers.*

FRAME BOARDING HOUSE



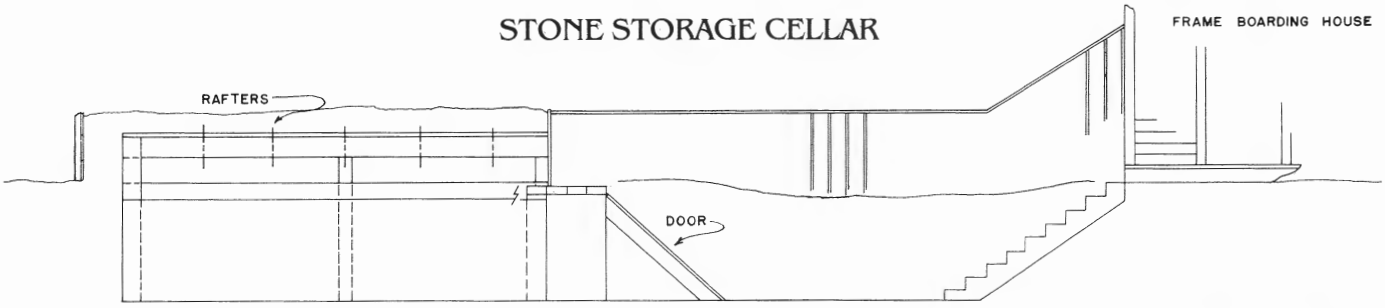
EAST ELEVATION

SCALE
0 FEET 10

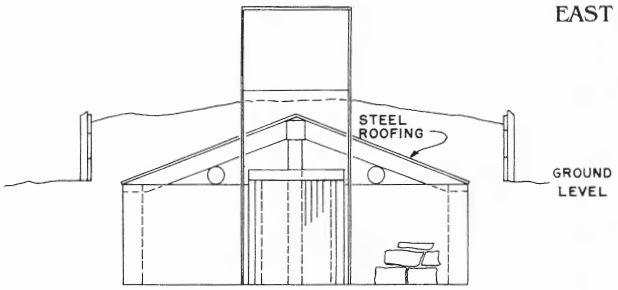


WEST ELEVATION

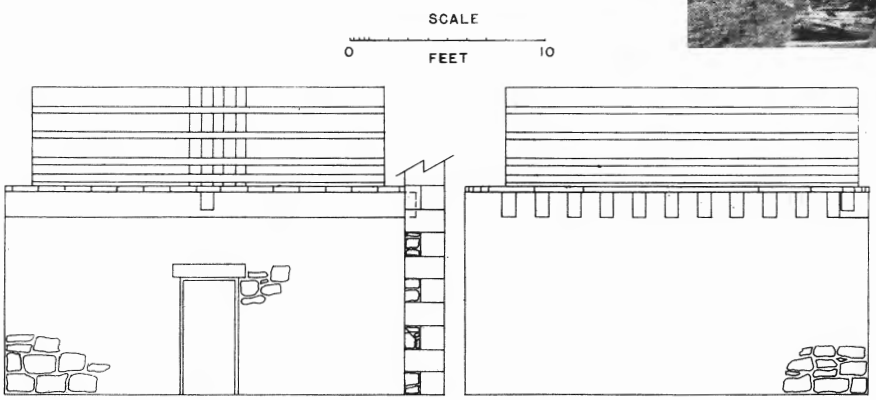
STONE STORAGE CELLAR

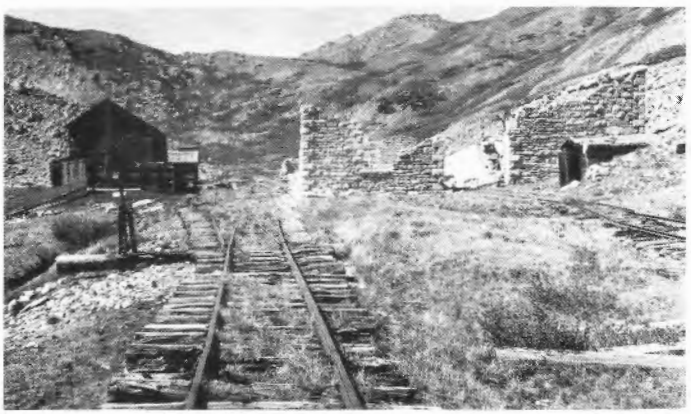


EAST ELEVATION



WATER TANK





A view looking north at the remains of Alpine, Colorado in 1939. Refer to the DSP&P Alpine, Colorado map in Part 1 of this series (July/August 1983 **GAZETTE**) and compare it with this photo. You can see here, on the right, the end wall of the stone boarding house (#1 on the map), the end wall of the engine house on the right (#2), and the storage shed to the far right (#3). On the left, starting from the rear of the photo is the depot (#5), the south end of the frame boarding house (#6), and the coal platform (#8, nearest the front of the photo). Note that the switch stand has been changed from the original harp type. *Photo by Don R. E. Rogers.*

COALING PLATFORM

The coaling platform at Alpine, Colorado patiently waiting for a train that will never come. *Photo by Mike Horner.*