Paris Canyon Mine
(Western Phosphate Mine, Idaho Phosphate Mine, McIlwee Mine)

On November 6, 1901, Margarette Grandi, widow of Pietro Grandi, received a homestead patent from the General Land Office (GLO) for the E½SE¼ of Section 8, T. 14 S., R. 43 E., BM (Figure 24). This tract is located about 2½ miles west of Paris, Idaho. On November 8, 1913, Mrs. Grandi received another homestead patent from the GLO for adjacent acreage in Section 8 and Section 17. These two contiguous patents formed what would become the Paris Canyon Mine.

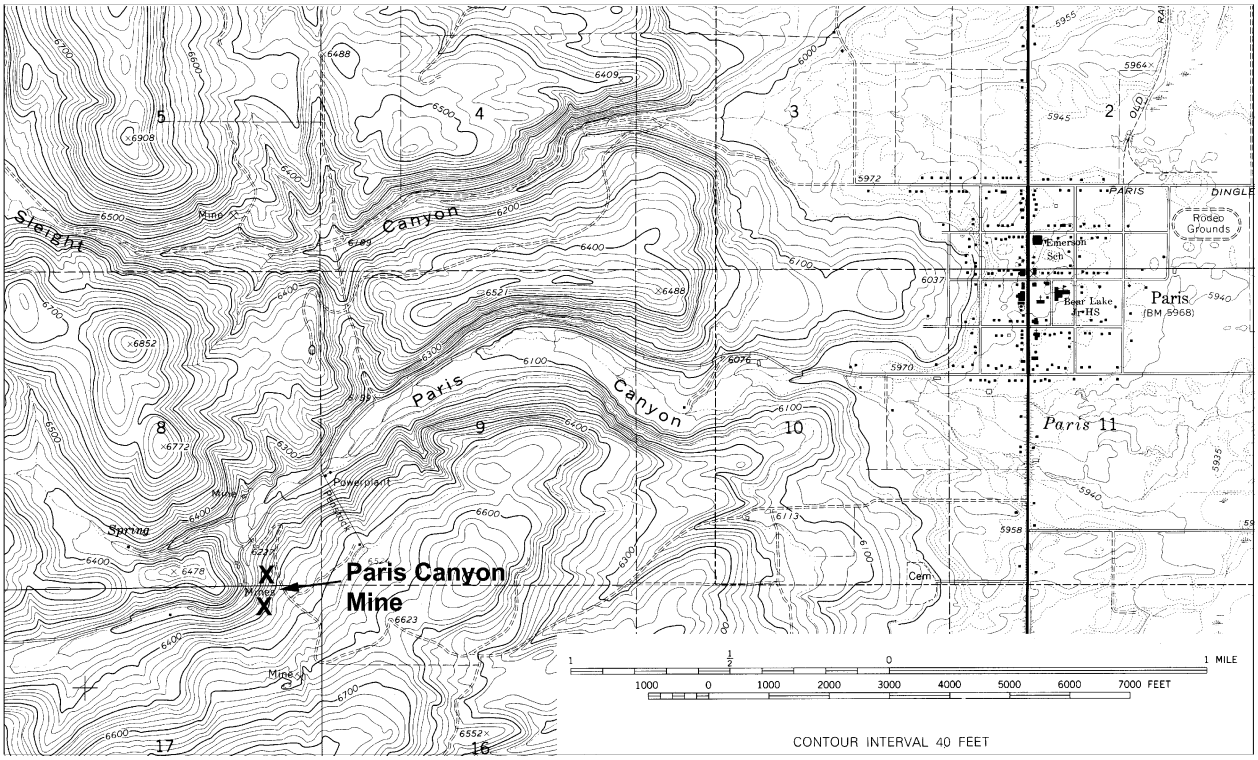

Figure 24. Map showing the location of the Paris Canyon Mine, Bear Lake County, Idaho.

In 1913, Leo W. Bach explored for phosphate on and around the Grandi (sometimes spelled Grandy) homestead. Phosphate beds were accidentally exposed by erosion caused by a breached ditch that provided water for irrigation and waterpower. The ditch was owned by the Utah Power and Light Company. Bach opened three prospects near the new exposure. One prospect consisted of a 130-foot tunnel next to the exposure in which 100 feet of phosphate was opened. This tunnel was apparently unsupported because by August, 1914, it was in too bad a condition to reenter (Mansfield, 1927). Another prospect was the cleanup and enlargement of the accidental exposure itself and the third prospect was a 60-foot long entry on the north side of the canyon but it was entirely in low grade black shales with no main bed exposed (Mansfield, 1927, p. 252-254). There were also two crosscut trenches in the area of the adits (Gidel, 1916b). Mr. Bach had other phosphate experts visit the Grandi

farm and all concurred that the beds were of the best quality and could be easily mined. Mr. Bach, characterized as "a man who talks but little unless he has something to say" (Paris Post, 1915), felt confident that there were millions of tons of the phosphate ore on the property. There was also additional extensive surface prospecting and limited hand trenching done (Service, 1966). The Paris Post (1915) reported that there were some very flattering offers made for the purchase of Mrs. Grandi's property. A shipment of phosphate ore was sent to Los Angeles on July 23, 1915 and a second shipment to Los Angeles was made on August 2, 1915. This phosphate ore was probably surface or near surface material and was shipped for testing purposes. Also, a carload of phosphate ore was shipped to the Anaconda Copper Mining Company for testing in March, 1916 (Nichols, 1916).

In May 25, 1917, papers were filed in the Bear Lake County Courthouse that created a new phosphate mining company entitled the Western Phosphate Mining and Manufacturing Company of Salt Lake City, Utah. The officers of the fledgling company were Lewis A. Jeffs, president, J. Russell Shephard, vice-president, and DeWitt Knox, secretary-treasurer. The board of directors also consisted of Margarette Grandi and Roy A. Welker. Mrs. Grandi's homestead property was purchased by the new company at that time (Paris Post, 1917). It is interesting to note that Lewis Jeffs, president of the new company, was at the same time, vice-president and western agent for the United States Phosphate Company of Detroit, Michigan, which was in the process of patenting phosphate mining claims in Little Canyon, southwest of Paris and which would become the Consolidated Mine. Jeffs envisioned opening up a new mine and installing a 200-ton per day mill in Paris Canyon. This mining project was being backed by a number of Salt Lake City venture capitalists (Paris Post, 1917). Electricity to the new mine and mill would come from a near-by waterpower facility owned by the Utah Power and Light Company, and, in fact, Western Phosphate Mining and Manufacturing Company constructed a transmission line to the property in June, 1917. Transportation of ore to the railroad in Paris would be by surface tram.

The actual development of the mine property started in August, 1917 (Mansfield, 1927; Service, 1967; Bennett and others, 1989) and the initial shipment from the new mine was made to the west coast in October of that year. With this production, the Paris Canyon Mine became only the second mine in Idaho to produce and ship phosphate ore (Service, 1966). In February, 1918, 21 rail cars of phosphate ore were shipped to Honolulu (Bell, 1918) and the average production was up to about one carload a day. A description of the current mine workings was given in the April 12 issue of the local newspaper (Paris Post, 1918a), as follows:

> *"The main working tunnel was started at a point on the south side of the Paris Creek and cut the hanging wall vein at a slight angle within a distance of ninety feet from the portal, giving fifty feet of stopping ground on the vein. From this point the tunnel followed the vein for a distance of 300 feet, gaining twenty-five feet additional depth for each 100 feet of tunnel and will continue to add this*

additional depth as the work progresses for a distance of about 300 feet. Raises, 50 to 100 feet high, have been opened at intervals of 50 feet along the tunnel."

The Paris Post (1918b) reported that a tunnel was being started on the same vein as the main mine but on the north side of Paris Creek. This tunnel was to develop additional ore on the north extension of the phosphate bed. The main tunnel of the Paris Canyon mine had been advanced to 600 feet by August, 1918 and was advancing at an average of 5 feet per day (Paris Post, 1919). Gidel (1919a) reported that there was some trouble in mining the first 400-500 feet of the drift and stopes because of a clay and soft shale hanging wall. Phosphate ore was hauled to Paris by teams and loaded into rail cars for shipment. Bell (1919) reported that about 60,000 tons of ore had been produced since the opening of the mine and that the bulk of that tonnage was shipped to Hawaii and Japan, as well as the Pacific Guano and Fertilizer Company in California (Gidel, 1919a).

In January, 1920, the Western Phosphate Mining and Manufacturing Company held a special reorganization meeting. At this meeting, the name of the company was changed to Western Phosphate Company. This was done because of a change in principal stockholders. James A. McIlwee was one of the principal stockholders and became involved in the running of the mining company. The capital stock offering of the company was changed from 300,000 shares at $1 par value to 400,000 shares at $1 par value. It was about this time that the mine started to be called the McIlwee Mine.

One of the more popular attractions in the Paris area, the mine offered tours to the interested public. One of the things of interest to see at the mine was the transportation of the ore in cars pulled by mules. On some occasions, the mine provided light dancing and music along with food for touring guests and transportation to the mine and return from Paris by sleigh (Paris Post, 1920b).

On February 12, 1920, the new Western Phosphate Company's 300-ton per day mill began operation at the mine (Figure 25). The mill was 159 feet long by 40 feet wide and at the same elevation as the tunnel. The ore was trammed about 800 feet from tunnel to mill. This tramway was eventually covered by a snowshed to facilitate winter operations (Figure 26).

In March, 1920, the first full trainload of phosphate left Paris for Portland where it was to be shipped to Hawaii and Japan (Hansen, 1964). The Western Phosphate Company celebrated the event by attaching placards describing the phosphate and where it was mined to each rail car (Paris Post, 1920e, f).

The Paris Post (1920g, h) reported three significant events concerning the Paris Canyon Mine. First, a 3½-mile long railway spur was completed up Paris Canyon from Paris to the mine (also Bell, 1920; Mansfield, 1927) (Figure 27). Second, a 250-ton per day drying plant was completed at the mine. And third, the same ditch that allowed Leo Bach to discover phosphate on the property in 1913, caused a major cave-in of the main tunnel of the mine. Apparently, the ditch wetted enough ground above the tunnel to increase the weight of the overburden and exceeded the carrying capacity of the

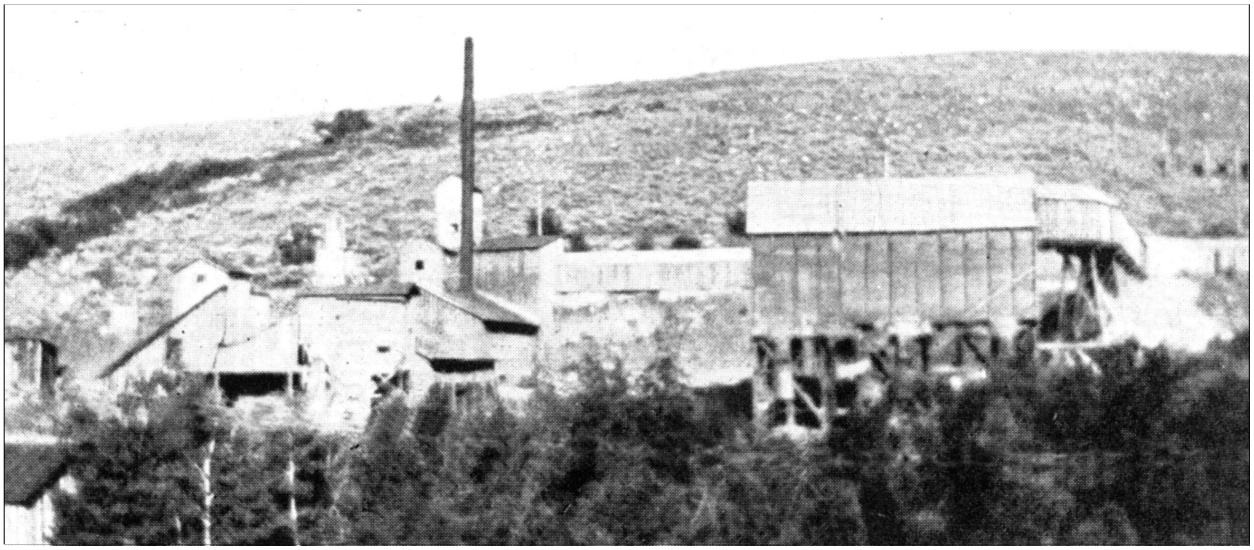

Figure 25. General view of the pulverizing mill and crude rock storage bins of the Idaho Phosphate Company. This photo has been reprinted with the express written permission of Rock Products Magazine. Reprinted from the June 26, 1926 issue of Rock Products Magazine.

Figure 26. Overview of the Paris Canyon Mine showing the snowshed over the tramway, August 31, 1920. Photo by G. R. Mansfield, #478,479, USGS Photographic Library.

mine timbering. About 50 feet of tunnel was destroyed. A crew of men had been retimbering to support the ground and had just left for lunch hour when the collapse occurred. There were no injuries or fatalities in the incident. The mine was closed for about 5 days while the tunnel was repaired. The report stated that a flume would probably be constructed over the mine to prevent future cave-ins.

In June, 1920, the mine was reported to be 1,400 feet long with numerous stopes and that the main tunnel was being enlarged to a double-track 7 x 8-foot entry. Working in the mines and mills in the 1920's was a hazardous occupation and the Paris Canyon Mine was no exception. The mine recorded

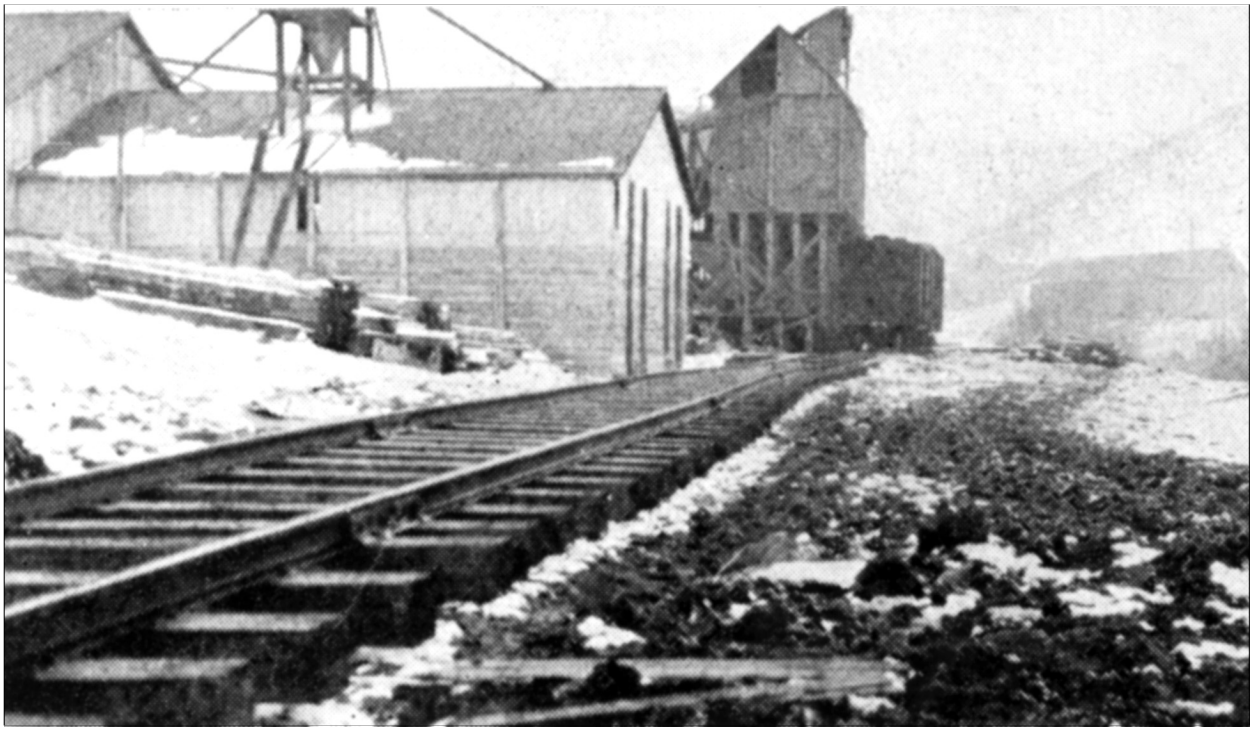

Figure 27. Cars at crude rock bins. This photo has been reprinted with the express written permission of Rock Products Magazine. Reprinted from the June 26, 1926 issue of Rock Products Magazine.

its first fatality on July 18, 1920. Henry Perrett got caught up in a screw conveyor in the mill and received fatal injuries (Paris Post, 1920i). The accident, as was all fatal accidents in the Idaho mining industry, was investigated by the Idaho Inspector of Mines (Bell, 1920).

Labor unrest was not unknown in the mining industry either, with the mine experiencing its first workers strike on September 3, 1920. The strike lasted 3 days and was called over equitable treatment of workers and pay increases (Paris Post, 1920j). At the time of the strike in September, Mansfield (1927) and Service (1966) reported that the mine consisted of an entry 2,000 feet long with an exploratory crosscut 1,000 feet from the portal and 200 feet long. About 53 stopes at 50-foot intervals had been made. Mansfield also noted that there were facilities at the mine for quartering the employees as well as mess halls and stores (Figure 28). A report in Rock Products Magazine, a trade journal (Anonymous, 1926), stated that in addition to complete mining, milling, and pulverizing equipment, suitable housing conditions for offices, a boarding house and living quarters for the labor force was also available at the mine site.

A second strike at the mine was called on November 6 and lasted until November 12, 1920. This strike was called over a cut in wages and the failure of the company to make the adjustments agreed to from the first strike (Paris Post, 1920l, m).

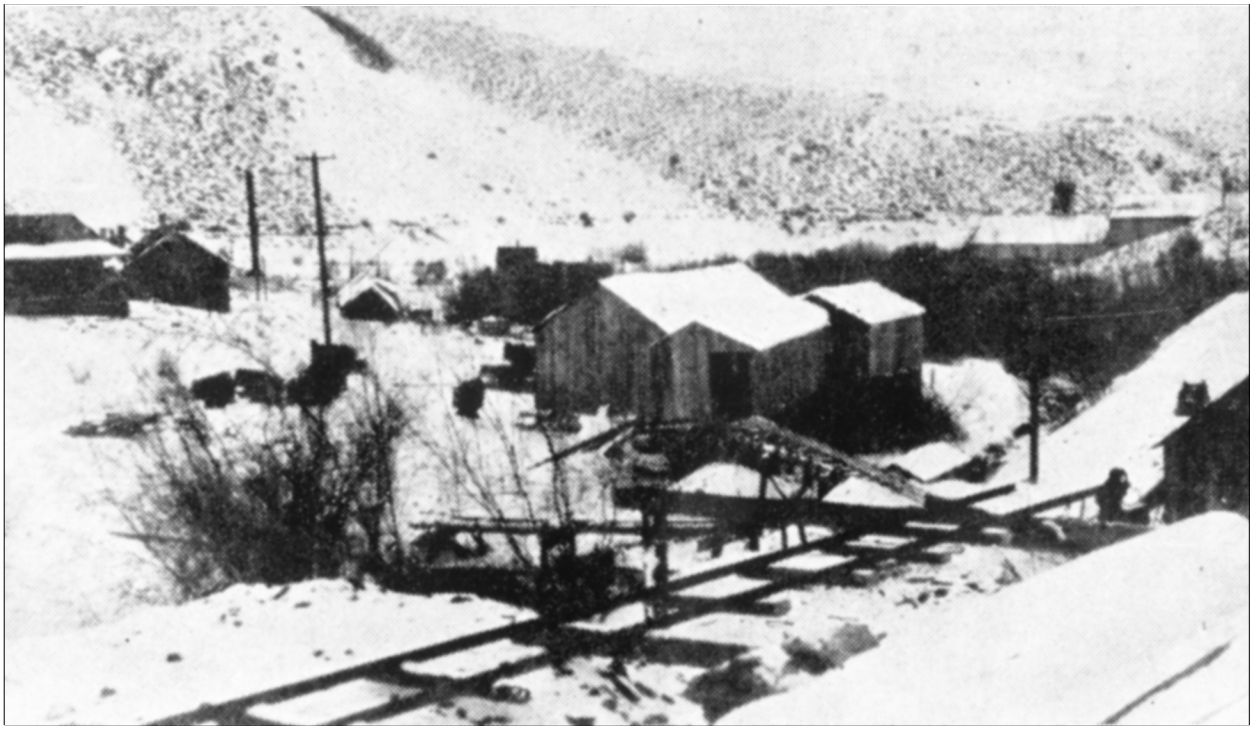

Figure 28. View from the Paris Canyon Mine entrance showing storehouse, employee's cottages, and part of the mill. This photo has been reprinted with the express written permission of Rock Products Magazine. Reprinted from the June 26, 1926 issue of Rock Products Magazine.

The mine closed down in December, 1920 (Mansfield, 1927; Service, 1966), partly because of financial difficulties and partly due to a down-turn in the phosphate market. This placed several hundred men out of employment. Ninety-four of the men filed labor liens against the company in January, 1921 (Paris Post, 1921b). On October 27, 1921, the Western Phosphate Company filed bankruptcy proceeding in the Federal District Court (Paris Post, 1921c, d, e) and a bankruptcy sale was held in Salt Lake City on November 22, 1921. The Paris Canyon Mine property went to the best bidder, James A. McIlwee. McIlwee, although a stockholder in the bankrupt Western Phosphate Company, had been ruled exempt from the bankruptcy proceeding, thus allowing him to bid for ownership. As a condition of sale, McIlwee had to agree to pay off the lien holders (Paris Post, 1921f).

James A. McIlwee formed a new company to mine the phosphate at the Paris Canyon Mine, now known as the Idaho Phosphate Mine (Campbell, 1921). This company was called the Idaho Phosphate Company and filed to do business in Idaho on January 6, 1922. Ray C. McIlwee, son of James A. McIlwee, was the new mine manager (Figure 29).

The Idaho Phosphate Mine resumed operations in August, 1922, after closing down nearly two years. The mine was in reported good condition and did not require extensive repair and maintenance.

Figure 29. Ray C. McIlwee, General Manager, Paris Canyon Mine. This photo has been reprinted with the express written permission of Rock Products Magazine. Reprinted from the June 26, 1926 issue of Rock Products Magazine.

Apparently, the mine closed shortly after it reopened and did not resume operations until September, 1923 (Paris Post, 1923). Favorable market conditions kept the mine open and shipments of phosphate ore began leaving the mine site in November, 1923. The mine closed down for the winter months. The Paris Post (1924) reported that repair work started in the spring of 1924 with retimbering the main tunnel and preparing to drive another new tunnel. However, another down-turn in the volatile phosphate market kept the mine closed and it wasn't until June, 1926 that the mine resumed operation on a small scale. The mine closed again shortly after it opened and it was to never produce ore again. Kirkham (1925) reported that the mine development in 1925 consisted of 3,000 feet of tunnels, drifts, crosscuts, and winzes beside several stopes (Figure 30).

Although the mine remained closed, there was more to the story connected to the mine. Sometime in the period 1927 to 1938, the name of the Idaho Phosphate Company was changed to the McIlwee Phosphate Company. In an article published in the Paris Post (1938), James A. McIlwee made a pitch for the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) to extend their phosphate mining and milling to the Bear Lake phosphate deposits. In an open letter to President Roosevelt and to Senator Borah, McIlwee offered free use of the rail spur up Paris Canyon and the Grandy Flat site for TVA's operations. The article went on to explain how the deposits could by mined and milled easily and cheaply. There is no record that McIlwee was ever taken seriously by the Federal Government or TVA.

In April, 1939, the McIlwee Phosphate Company reorganized and changed their name to the McIlwee Idaho Phosphate Company, a Nevada corporation (McDowell, 1948). This new company had filed to do business in Idaho on March 24, 1939. All real property (254 acres) was transferred from J. A. McIlwee to the McIlwee Idaho Phosphate Company by a warranty deed of March 23, 1939 (Wyodak, 1943). The reorganization and the new company did not guarantee that the mine would open and in fact, it did not. In May, 1942, as part of the war effort, the rails up Paris Canyon were torn up and were in all probability relaid at some Army facility (Paris Post, 1942a). During the war years, some of the mine buildings (bunkhouses, boarding house, mill facilities) were torn down and reused as farm buildings in the area around Paris. Most of the remaining buildings were vandalized and burned over the next few years (Figures 31, 32, and 33). In December, 1942, the Metals Reserve Company leased, with an option to buy, the McIlwee property in Paris Canyon. The Metals Reserve Company was a government agency formed to stockpile strategic metals for the war effort. Further discussion of the Paris Canyon phosphate deposits will be made in the section on the Wyodak Mining and Manufacturing portion of this report.

After Wyodak explored in and around the Paris Canyon deposits, there were other companies interested in the phosphate. McDowell (1950) reports that the property was sold to L. W. McGann who had been the president of the McIlwee Idaho Phosphate Company. In 1957, the Potash Company of America carried out experimental and development work on the mine property but nothing came of that work (McDowell, 1957, p. 86, 153-154). In 1973, the McGann property was acquired by the current owner, Earth Science Incorporated. In 1994, Bennett (1994) reported that Carlson

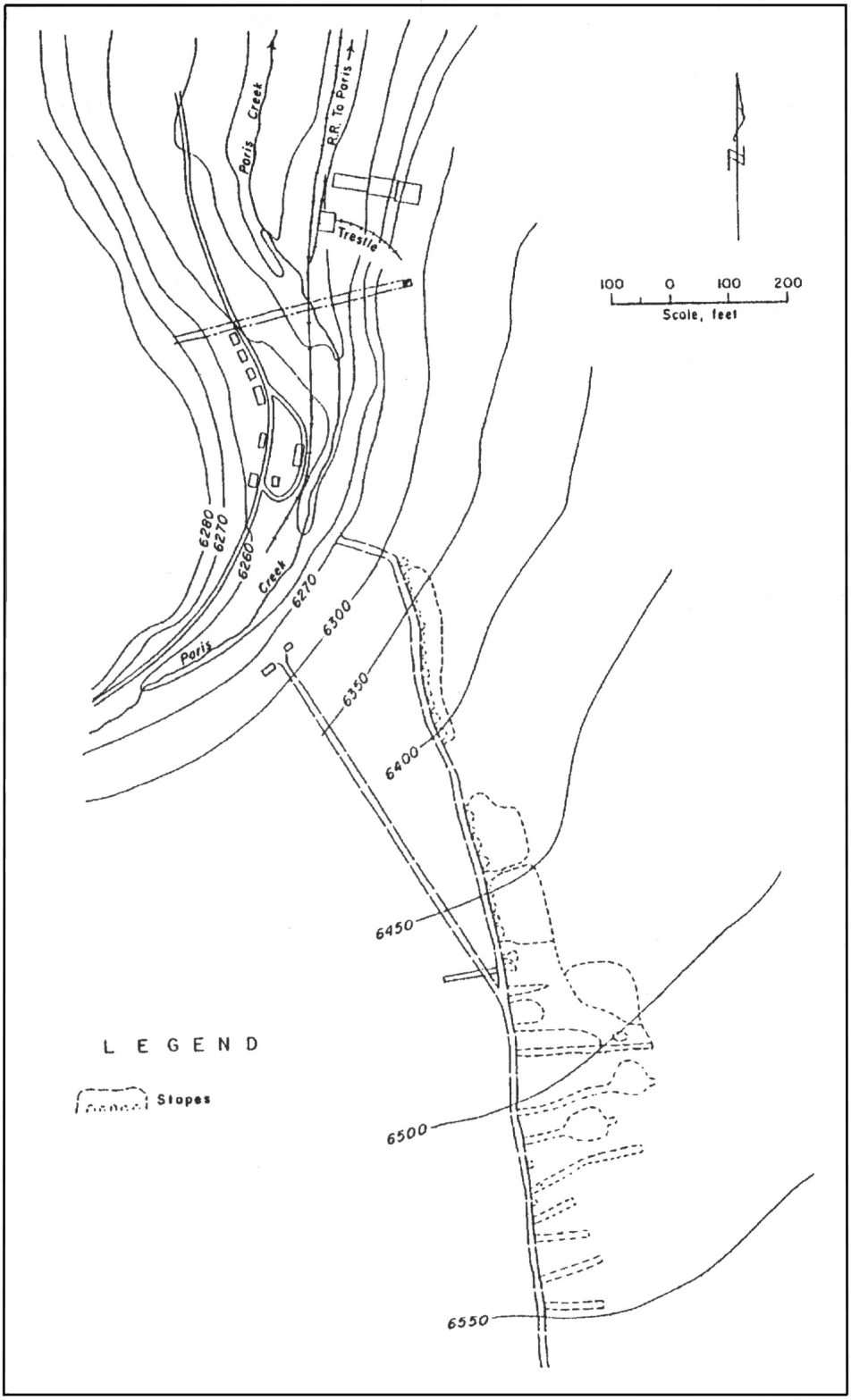

Figure 30. Map of underground development, Paris Canyon Mine. Map from Wyodak, 1943.

Figure 31. Paris Canyon Mine, about 1943, view southeast. The dump of the Paris adit and winze is at left. The mill of the old McIlwee phosphate operation is at right. Photo from Wyodak, 1943.

Figure 32. Paris Canyon Mine, about 1943, view southwest, showing portal and dump of Paris adit with mill and camp buildings of the McIlwee phosphate operation in the background. Photo from Wyodak, 1943.

Figure 33. Paris Canyon Mine, view southwest, September, 1975. Photo by Peter Oberlindacher, BLM.

Food, Ltd., of Calgary, Canada had applied for a special use permit from the Bear Lake County Planning and Zoning Commission for trucking about 50 loads of phosphate ore from the mine site for testing and market studies. The Planning and Zoning Commission stated that the work was never done and no ore was trucked (personal communication, 1996).