

BELMONT MILL, WORKSHOP
(Nevada Belmont Mill)
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Approximately 7 miles south of U.S. Route 50 on USDA Forest
Service Road No. 623
Ely vicinity
White Pine County
Nevada

HAER NV-46-K
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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Location: Approximately 7 miles south of U.S. Route 50 on USDA Forest Service Road No. 623, Ely vicinity, White Pine County, Nevada.
U.S. Geological Survey, Seligman Canyon, Nevada, 7.5 Quadrangle (1992), Township 16 North, Range 57 East, Section 1.
UTM Zone 11, Easting 2060684.10, Northing 14266612.95 (southeast corner of building) (NAD 83).
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Feature No. F6.

Significance: The Tonopah Belmont Development Company (TBDC) was one of the most important companies created during Nevada's early twentieth-century mining boom. As ore deposits in its central Nevada mines were depleted, the company sought new claims to resurrect its fortunes. In 1926 TBDC built the Belmont Mill near Hamilton to process lead and silver ore from its recently acquired claims in the White Pine mining district of eastern Nevada. The small pilot mill employed the most recent advances in table concentration and flotation mineral processing techniques, and the company erected numerous other buildings and structures to support the mining and milling work. This included what originally may have been a workshop and storage building adjacent to the boardinghouse. The site was largely abandoned by TBDC after a few years, but later owners used the mill and associated structures for smaller operations. Today, although most of the equipment has been removed, the Belmont Mill site is one of the only intact early twentieth-century mill complexes in eastern Nevada. Importantly, many of the domestic buildings and structures remain to provide a glimpse of daily life there, including the workshop. The mill complex is a tangible reminder of the decline and failure of a once-powerful company and, thereby, of the boom and bust cycle so common in the mining industry. The subsequent modification and reuse of the site for small-scale operations typifies the ceaseless hum of optimism that sustains the mining industry.

Description: The two-room, shed-roofed workshop is located in the canyon bottom a few feet south of the root cellar (NV-46-J) and southwest of the boardinghouse (NV-46-I), at the base of the steep hill that rises immediately to the west. It measures about 24' north to south and 15'-2" east to west.

The workshop appears to have no foundation and sill plates are set directly on the ground. The wall framing comprises 6" x 6" posts at the corners and 3" x 6-1/4" boards for the sill plates, studs, and rafter plates. The walls are clad in a mixture of materials: on the south wall are corrugated metal panels like those used for the mill (NV-46-A) and the power house (NV-46-B). On the west and north walls, horizontal boards are used at the wall base to shore the building against the slumping hillside, while corrugated metal is used for the upper walls; one panel on the north interior wall bears writing in pencil that

reads “Tonapah [*sic*] Belmont Dev Co, Hamilton via Eas [*sic*] Ely, Nev.” The east wall comprises vertical boards for the south room and, for the north room, horizontal boards below the window, vertical board above and beside it. At some point, corrugated cardboard was applied over the boards and nailed in place with battens, presumably to provide additional weatherproofing. The interior partition wall is composed of horizontal boards to about half height and corrugated metal panels above.

The shed roof, which slopes downward from east to west, comprises 1-1/2” x 7-1/4” rafters, board sheathing, and traces of two finish layers: asphalt roll roofing and, more recently, corrugated metal. Rafter tails are exposed on the east and west sides; short board lengths have been placed between the tails on the west side to finish the wall top. The north and south sides have no eaves.

The six-light wood windows are like those used for the other TBDC buildings. The east wall of the north room has a fixed window and the south room has two pairs of sliding sashes, one each in the south and west walls. All windows have crude board casings and no trim. Both exterior doors are located in the east wall. The north room door comprises vertical tongue-and-groove boards nailed to three horizontal rails on the interior side, with metal strap hinges and the shadow of a rim lock on both the door and the jamb. The south room has wood-framed, corrugated metal double doors (the north door is missing) with triangular metal strap hinges.

On the interior, both rooms originally had board floors running east to west, but these are in poor condition, covered in fill, or missing (in particular on the north half of the south room). The walls and ceilings are unfinished. Remnants of knob-and-tube wiring indicate that the building was electrically lighted at one time.

History: See the Narrative Overview in HAER No. NV-46 for a broad contextual history.

Based on the style and materials of construction, the workshop was built by TBDC in 1926 as part of the domestic complex that served the miners, shift workers, and other wage earners employed at the mill site. In a photograph from ca. 1940, the south and west walls and the roof, with its original asphalt roll roofing, are visible in the foreground (see Figure 4 in HAER No. NV-46). The original purpose of each room is unclear but the building would have most likely served to support the domestic functions of the boardinghouse and may have been used for fuel storage, food storage, carpentry, and so forth. Physical evidence and an oral account indicate that, in the 1960s and 1970s, the north room was used for coal storage and the south room for wood storage and perhaps a workshop.¹ Today the workshop is in poor condition: the settling hillside has severely compromised the west wall; the roof covering is gone, exposing the board sheathing and allowing precipitation to enter the interior; the windows are heavily damaged or missing; and one of the doors is missing.

¹ Interview with Hal (Rod) Jensen, Jr., 1 October 2010.

Sources: See HAER No. NV-46.

Historian: Anne Oliver, Principal, Oliver Conservation Group. Fieldwork for the project was conducted in the fall of 2010. Project documentation was accepted by HABS/HAER in 2011.

Project Information: See HAER No. NV-46 for complete details. In summary, this project was completed under a contract between the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and a consulting team under the direction of ajc architects (Salt Lake City, Utah), in consultation with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office. The project historian was Anne Oliver, historic preservation consultant with Oliver Conservation Group. Matt Wallace, intern architect with ajc architects, was responsible for the architectural measured drawings and completed all fieldwork and final drawings with the assistance of Oliver Smith Callis, draftsman. The photography was produced by Steve Tregagle Photography under the direction of Steve Tregagle and with the assistance of Heath Brown.