

BELMONT MILL, TRAILER
(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-Q
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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 2060348.26, Northing 14267116.30 (southwest corner of structure) (NAD 83).
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Feature No. F12.

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. 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 throughout the years, including the trailer. 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 trailer is located on the hillside northwest of the mill (NV-46-A), along the access road that begins in the canyon bottom and winds up the small drainage on the north end of the site. The trailer sits just west of an intersection where the road continues west while a switchback leads to the upper boardinghouse (NV-46-N), the upper outhouse (NV-46-O), and the shed (NV-46-P).

The trailer is a disused, vehicle-pulled mobile home or travel trailer that probably dates to the 1940s or 1950s; it measures about 19'-1" north to south and 7'-10" east to west. In plan it is rectangular but comes to a triangular point at the north (front) end. Two 4" x 6" horizontal wood members run the length of the trailer bed and a third member extends beyond the front of the trailer to form a tongue or trailer hitch. A wishbone-shaped steel framework to which wheels would have been mounted extends from the base of the

tongue toward the sides of the trailer. The trailer framework rests on a mixture of reused cast concrete, concrete blocks, and wood shims that level it on the hillside.

The floor framing comprises 2" x 4" joists that support a floor of 5"-wide, tongue-and-groove boards. The wood-framed walls are of 2" x 4" studs covered with particleboard on the exterior side, with wood battens at the joints. According to an oral account, the trailer was originally sided with blue, grey, and silver metal, probably aluminum.¹ The flat roof is supported by 2" x 4" joists that are presently covered with a mixture of particleboard and plywood sheets and a layer of tarred paper; the final roof covering was again most likely aluminum. Originally the west wall had two wood-framed windows, 29" wide x 22" high, one opening onto the kitchen area at the front and one onto the sleeping area at the rear; the windows are missing and their original appearance is not known. A third inward-swinging casement window, painted green, is located in the east wall of the kitchen; it appears to have been single-paned although the glazing is gone. The single doorway is immediately south of this window; the door is missing but the wood casing remains.

The interior has an open plan, with a kitchen area north of the door and a common or sleeping area to the south. A small closet or water closet has been walled off between the two windows in the west wall. The interior walls are finished with gypsum board and a plain, 1" x 4" wood baseboard. The ceiling is finished with composite board (apparently a wood fiber-based pressed board) and painted white. The kitchen is fitted with a wood shelf or counter along the west wall and a metal drainpipe on the northwest side of the triangular end, indicating that a dry sink may have been located here. The trailer otherwise bears no traces of plumbing or electrical systems.

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

As early as 1945, Andrew Dowd, a mining engineer, and his wife Ermyl lived at the site, perhaps as employees of the owner or as unofficial lessees, and also as caretakers.² After Andrew's death sometime after 1956, Ermyl continued to live at the site and worked as caretaker for the claimholder, Don Jennings. By the 1960s she made her home in the kitchen of the lower boardinghouse (NV-46-I). Beginning at this time and perhaps earlier, she rented rooms and provided meals in the boardinghouse to miners working nearby claims, a practice she continued until the middle 1970s to supplement the limited income from her own mining claims.³

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

² Interviews with Hal Jensen and Hal (Rod) Jensen, Jr., 1 October 2010. Andrew Dowd was mentioned definitively in association with the Belmont mine in 1956. See L. E. Davis et al., "The Mineral Industry of Nevada," in US Bureau of Mines Minerals Yearbook Area Reports, 1956, Vol. III (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1958), 761.

³ Interview with Hal (Rod) Jensen, Jr.

In the 1970s Mrs. Dowd married Carl Tillman, the caretaker for a property in Seligman Canyon on the west side of the White Pine Mountains, and a man thirty years her junior. In the mid-1970s the couple moved from the lower boardinghouse to the residence behind the mill, and it was probably at this time that they built the east addition to the building and created the upper boardinghouse (NV-46-N). According to an oral account, the trailer and the junked cars that remain scattered along the road leading to the upper boardinghouse were moved there by Tillman.⁴ In the late 1970s or even as late as 1980 (perhaps when the property changed hands and Jennings no longer paid a caretaker's fee), Dowd and Tillman moved to Ely, where the latter worked at the Hotel Nevada.⁵

Based upon the materials of construction, the dimensions, and the lack of plumbing, it appears that the trailer dates at the earliest to about 1943. By that time,

... trailers averaged a width of 8 ft. and were over 20 ft. in length, they had up to 3 to 4 separate sleeping sections but no bathrooms. By 1948, lengths had reached up to 30ft and bathrooms were introduced.⁶

Presently the trailer is in poor condition. All of the original metal siding has been removed, exposing the vulnerable materials of the interior and resulting in extensive material deterioration and loss. The windows and door are missing, the wall framing at the south end is damaged and displaced, and the roof has collapsed.

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.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., and interview with Ronald Jordan, 29 September 2010. Tillman died in the early 1990s on the dance floor of the casino and Dowd probably died several years before that.

⁶ Mary Bellis, "Mobile Homes," <http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blmobilehome.htm> (site accessed December 30, 2010).