



# NSS

## 75th ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION Ely, Nevada | 2016

### Self-Guided Road Trip

# BELMONT MILL GHOST TOWN

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**Miles:** 110 miles round-trip from Ely, Nevada.  
**Time:** About 4 hours including stops.  
**Services:** No services beyond Ely. Gas up in advance!

#### Travel advisory:

You'll be on graded dirt roads for most of this trip. In dry weather, conditions are easily passable with a 2wd vehicle up to the mill. Beyond that, you would want a 4wd vehicle with decent clearance. CAUTION: Belmont Mill is nearly 100 years old. We strongly advise against going into the main building. You should treat ghost town explorations much like you would a cave trip. Open mine shafts and old buildings present many dangerous hazards to an unwary visitor. Stay alert and aware. Always let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return. Carry sufficient gas, water, food and a spare tire. Services are few and far between and mobile devices are typically useless. As in caving: take nothing but pictures, kill nothing but time.



*Belmont Mill Ghost Town. Photo by Matt Bowers.*

#### Cool things to see:

The Belmont Mill Ghost Town is a really fun day trip from Ely, Nevada. Although completely abandoned, it's one of the best preserved sites from the early 20th century mining rush. You should definitely bring a camera!



| Location     | Miles       | Time         | Coordinates               |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Start</b> | <b>0.00</b> | <b>00:00</b> | <b>39.2533, -114.8741</b> |

In Ely, from the intersection of Great Basin Blvd. (Highway 93) and Aultman Street (Highway 50), travel west on Aultman heading out of town. Once you leave town, there will be no services until you return. Gas up and take food and water before you leave. Let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return. And watch your speed in Ely - they take the speed limits seriously here.

|                             |             |              |                           |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Lehman's Illūminātiō</b> | <b>0.84</b> | <b>00:01</b> | <b>39.2487, -114.8883</b> |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------------|

When you pass by the Park Vue Motel in downtown Ely, look to your right. The mural on the side of the Park Vue was created by Carolina Shrewsbury of the NSS Arts & Letters Section. The NSS received a \$16,000 grant from the Great Basin Heritage Area Partnership to create and install the mural. The scene depicts the historic discovery and exploration of the Lehman Caves in Great Basin National Park. Discovered in the late 1800s by Absalom Lehman, the caves feature over 300 rare shield formations. The Ely Renaissance Society owns several murals around town. You can pick up a walking guide at the White Pine County Chamber of Commerce.



*Lehman Cave Mural. Artwork by Carolina Shrewsbury.*

|                                 |             |              |                           |
|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Robinson Mining District</b> | <b>5.29</b> | <b>00:08</b> | <b>39.2653, -114.9494</b> |
|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------------|

You're now driving through the Robinson Mining District. You can easily see the waste dumps to the south of the highway. This is the overburden material stripped from the pits to expose the underlying ore. At one time, this active copper mine was the largest human-made hole on Earth!

Around 1868, prospector Thomas Robinson discovered gold and silver here, along with widespread, low-grade copper. Several gold mines were opened, but none were successful. Without sufficient demand, the lack of transportation, the low grade of the ore, and the difficulty in extracting the copper made it unprofitable for mining.

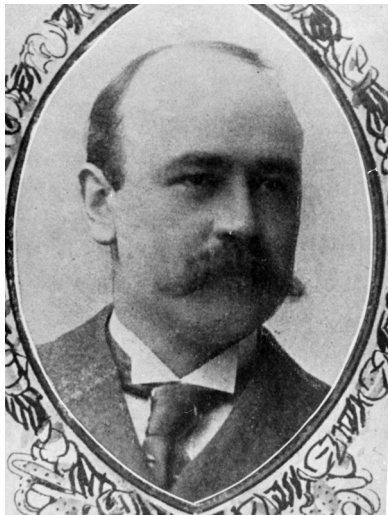
Copper was re-discovered in 1900. Mark Requa (1866-1937) optioned the copper claims of Edwin Gray and Dave Bartley. Requa was the son of a Comstock engineer and a trusted advisor to President Herbert Hoover. The two men had become close friends while attending engineering classes at Stanford University in California. Requa's initial interest in White Pine County was to build a feeder railroad to the Eureka and Palisade Railroad. However, the copper soon captured his attention. He organized the White Pine Copper Company in 1902, and quickly solved problems related to metal extraction and transportation.



*Robinson Mine as seen from Garnet Hill. Photo by Matt Bowers.*

| Location                 | Miles | Time  | Coordinates                    |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------------|
| Robinson Mining District | 5.29  | 00:08 | 39.2653, -114.9494 (continued) |

In the winter of 1904, Requa went east to secure financing for the new mine and smelter. During that trip, he learned that the company that owned land next to his, the New York and Nevada Copper Company, was bankrupt. He purchased it and created the Nevada Consolidated Copper Company.



Mark Requa. Image compliments of the Nevada Northern Railway Museum.

Subsequent meetings with railroad magnate E. H. Harriman, then-president of the Southern Pacific Railroad, secured Requa the right to extend his Nevada Northern Railway to the trans-continental lines in the northern part of the state. This connection gave the company access to distribution channels across the continent.

In the early 1900s, commercial and residential use of electricity was in full-scale development across North America. Availability of large amounts of power from distant locations had become possible after Charles Parsons' production of turbogenerators in 1889. The transmission infrastructure to deliver that electricity, however, did not exist.

In the span of a few short years, the demand for power transmission technology exploded as North America adopted an electrical-powered society. The key ingredient of those power transmission lines was a previously un-impressive mineral. Copper.



"Copper Flat" at the Robinson Nevada Mine. Image compliments of the Nevada Northern Railway Museum.

Today, the anticipated ore reserves at Robinson are about 103 million tons containing 0.68% copper and 0.23 gm/t gold. Current annual production averages around 120 million pounds of copper and 75,000 ounces of gold. This mine is one of the largest employers in White Pine County. There is a very good chance that some of the copper that is helping power your car right now actually came from this mine.

|                   |       |       |                    |
|-------------------|-------|-------|--------------------|
| Rosevear Grainery | 34.94 | 00:33 | 39.3522, -115.3712 |
|-------------------|-------|-------|--------------------|

About 4.2 miles past the turnoff to Ruby Lake, you'll see an abandoned ruin on the right side of the highway. The rock structure that still stands was part of the historic Rosevear Ranch and was used as a grainery.

Thomas and Emily Rosevear separately emigrated from Cornwall, England to Nevada in the 1870s. Emily ran a boarding house in nearby Hamilton before marrying Thomas after her first husband passed at a young age. Her wedding dress is in the museum in Eureka, Nevada.



Rosevear Ranch Ruin on Highway 50. Photo by Matt Bowers.

| Location          | Miles | Time  | Coordinates                           |
|-------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------------------|
| Rosevear Grainery | 34.94 | 00:33 | 39.3522, -115.3712 <i>(continued)</i> |

Thomas emigrated to Nevada with his father, Jacob, and 4 other brothers as young men. They worked the mines, but quickly determined that their future was in ranching and providing beef to the miners. They acquired the nearby Green Springs Ranch in the late 1800s, and this ranch remains in the family today.

Four of the brothers remained in Nevada, and these families owned cattle and grazed in Jakes Valley, Railroad Valley, White River Valley, Newark Valley and summered their cattle in the White Pine Range from the late 1800s to the present. Jacob and one son, Jack, returned to Cornwall.

This grainery structure is on private land that is now part of the Moorman Ranch.



|                    |       |       |                    |
|--------------------|-------|-------|--------------------|
| Illipah & Hamilton | 36.54 | 00:35 | 39.3535, -115.3947 |
|--------------------|-------|-------|--------------------|

The mines of the White Pine District were first established in 1865. Between 1868 and 1875, they supported many thriving towns including Hamilton, Eberhardt, Treasure City and Shermantown. These communities, now all ghost towns, are clustered eleven miles south of this point.

Hamilton and its neighbors thrived as a result of large-scale silver discoveries in 1868. Experiencing one of the most intense, but shortest-lived silver stampedes ever recorded, the years 1868-1869 saw some 10,000 people living in huts and caves on Treasure Hill at Mount Hamilton, at an elevation of 8,000 to 10,500 feet above sea level.

Hamilton was incorporated in 1869 and became the first county seat of White Pine County that same year. It was disincorporated in 1875. In this brief span of time, a full-sized town came into bloom with a main street and all the usual businesses. A fine brick courthouse was constructed in 1870.



On June 27, 1863, the main portion of the town was destroyed by fire. The town never fully recovered. In 1885, another fire burned the courthouse and caused the relocation of the White Pine County Seat to Ely.

| Location                      | Miles        | Time         | Coordinates               |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Little Antelope Summit</b> | <b>41.65</b> | <b>00:43</b> | <b>39.3975, -115.4682</b> |

The pronghorn antelope is common in this area. And if you're following the speed limit, they can run faster than you can drive right now! The *Antilocapra americana* is a species of artiodactyl mammal, meaning they have an even number of toes. (Mammals, like horses, which have an odd number of toes are called perissodactyls.) Indigenous to interior western and central North America, this species is not a true antelope, but it is often known colloquially in North America as the prong buck, pronghorn antelope, or simply antelope because it closely resembles the true antelopes of the Old World and fills a similar ecological niche due to parallel evolution.



*Pronghorn on winter range in Mineral County, Nevada.  
Photo by NV Department of Wildlife.*

Every year, the Nevada Department of Wildlife collaborates with the Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service to assess herd density and habitat conditions of the state's antelope population.

Slow down as you come off the summit. You'll be turning off the highway very soon.

|                             |              |              |                           |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Belmont Mill Turnoff</b> | <b>45.15</b> | <b>00:48</b> | <b>39.3943, -115.5258</b> |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|

From Highway 50, look for the sign to Belmont Mill / Green Springs. This is also White Pine County Road #5, but it's not marked as such from the road. Turn off the highway headed south. During dry weather, the road should be easily passable by 2wd vehicles. In extremely wet or snowy weather, it's probably not a good idea to try it in a 2wd street vehicle. There are no services at all out here - even your mobile phone won't work. You did tell someone where you were going and when you'd be back, right?



*Road to Belmont Mill / Green Springs from Hwy 50. Photo by Matt Bowers.*

|                               |              |              |                           |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Red Hills &amp; Jasper</b> | <b>47.55</b> | <b>00:54</b> | <b>39.3656, -115.5380</b> |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|

Off to the left, you'll see a dramatic display of mineral colorization in the low hills east of the road. For the non-geologists, red is usually suggestive of a high iron content that has oxidized in the sediment. For the geo-inclined, this is the "Younger Sedimentary and Volcanic Rock" sequence of probable Miocene-Pliocene terrestrial deposits. It was described by Hose and Blake in Bulletin 85 from the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology titled "Geology and Mineral Resources of White Pine County, Nevada". The sediments lie on Paleozoic carbonate rocks. Generally located south of Ely, the sediments lying on the Paleozoic are assigned to the Eocene Sheep Pass Formation. If you want to stop for a while, this is a good place to collect jasper that has weathered out of the slope.



*Mineral oxidization on the road to Belmont Mill.  
Photo by Matt Bowers.*

| Location  | Miles | Time  | Coordinates        |
|-----------|-------|-------|--------------------|
| Road Fork | 48.54 | 00:55 | 39.3501, -115.5324 |

Stay left at the Y in the road. Follow the sign to Belmont Mill. You are now on White Pine County Road #9.

|           |       |       |                    |
|-----------|-------|-------|--------------------|
| Road Fork | 51.74 | 01:04 | 39.3085, -115.5066 |
|-----------|-------|-------|--------------------|

Continue straight ahead at the fork in the road. Follow the sign to Belmont Mill (not Hamilton). You are now on US National Forest Road #623.

If you look closely near the US Forest Service sign, you'll see a faded marker for the Lincoln Highway. The Lincoln Highway was one of the earliest transcontinental highways for automobiles across the United States. Conceived in 1912, and formally dedicated October 31, 1913, the Lincoln Highway ran coast-to-coast from Times Square in New York City west to Lincoln Park in San Francisco. It originally passed through 13 states: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and California.

The road was America's first national memorial to President Abraham Lincoln, predating the 1922 dedication of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., by nine years. As the first automobile road across America, the Lincoln Highway brought great prosperity to the hundreds of cities, towns and villages along the way. It became affectionately known as "The Main Street Across America".

You're now driving on it.



*Lincoln Highway marker on the road to Belmont Mill. Photo by Matt Bowers.*

|                         |       |       |                    |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|--------------------|
| Belmont Mill Ghost Town | 54.24 | 01:15 | 39.2768, -115.5144 |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|--------------------|

The Belmont Mine and Mill were worked early in the 1900s by the Tonopah Belmont Development Mining Company. This fascinating camp gave the White Pine Mining District its last breath of life. Silver-lead ore from this mine was processed at the mill and then shipped off to Eureka, Nevada.

At one time, the White Pine Mining District was a thriving community of 10,000 people at 8,000 feet above sea level scattered across the mountain range. Numerous buildings still exist in various stages of decay. Some of their purposes are obvious, some will require your imagination. Now completely abandoned, this is one of the best preserved sites from the early 20th century mining rush.

Cables from the Belmont Mill's ore haul system still extend 3 miles up the mountain to the mine. If you walk up behind the mill, you can see the tension system used to keep the lines tight during hot summers and brutally cold



*Belmont Mill Ghost Town. Photo by Matt Bowers.*

| Location                | Miles | Time  | Coordinates                    |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------------|
| Belmont Mill Ghost Town | 54.24 | 01:15 | 39.2768, -115.5144 (continued) |

winters. The huge tension box of rocks is just hanging by a (very) old chain. We really don't suggest climbing on or going inside the building. The US Forest Service recently shored up the mill, but its integrity is still somewhat questionable.

If you have a 4wd vehicle with decent clearance, you can drive up to the mine by backtracking to the first intersection and turning right on the road that leads up the mountain. At last report, the road was in semi-decent condition, but there are some areas of steep exposure. If you're afraid of heights, this isn't for you.

Please note, this is a federally protected historic site. Take nothing but pictures. Kill nothing but time.

You can download a free video on the history of the White Pine Mining District from our convention website. <http://nss2016.caves.org/freestuff/programs.php>



Belmont Mill Ghost Town. Photo by Matt Bowers.

### Returning to Ely...

To return to Ely from the mill, just backtrack these driving directions. Alternatively, you can take a right at the Hamilton sign and go that way through Hamilton to Illipah Reservoir and back to Highway 50. We haven't field-checked that route in a while, but it should be passable in a 2wd vehicle if the road is dry. If the road is wet, don't even try it with 4wd. There's a section of road with a lot of clay that gets super slippery when wet. Even a little rain can make it dangerous.

From Belmont Mill, you are 75 minutes (about 55 miles) from Ely.



### Special thanks...

Doug Powell, US Forest Service; Roger Bowers & Bill Wilson, geologists; Mindy Seal, Bureau of Land Management; Nevada Northern Railway Museum; Deanna Stever & Matt Bowers, National Speleological Society