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2007 Fall Tour  
Ely, Nevada -  
Booms, Busts and  
Rebirth  
Sept. 27-30, 2007

## 2007 Fall Tour, Ely, Nevada—Booms, Busts and Rebirth

The 2007 Fall Tour is being hosted by the Nevada Northern Railway, in Ely, NV from Thursday, Sept. 27 through Sunday, Sept. 30, 2007. The tour will also visit the re-opened Robinson Copper Mine, as well as other local sites. The SIA web site has more information about the tour including maps, pictures and other recommended activities and stops.

In 2006 the U.S. Dept. of the Interior designated the Nevada Northern as a National Historical Landmark. The press release stated:  
*Nevada Northern. . . is the best-preserved, least altered, and most complete main yard complex remaining from the steam railroad era. The Nevada Northern Railway was established in 1905 to support the area's booming copper mining industry. The era of dieselization of the railroad industry during the second half of the 20th century led to alterations and demolitions of railroad yards and shops nationwide. The East Ely yard escaped modernization because of its geographical remoteness and the decline of the mining industry it once served.*

### Mining in White Pine County

Ely is the county seat of White Pine County, an area with a rich history of mining. Beginning in the late 1860s mines were opened to exploit the mineral riches of the area. The town of Hamilton, a Friday stop, was established in 1868 for the silver mines being created on nearby Treasure Hill. As many as 200 mines were active at the height of the boom there. By 1869 when White Pine County was established, the new county seat of Hamilton had a population of over 10,000. Like so many mining towns in the West, when the ore played out, the population dwindled; by late 1873, its had only about 500 residents, and the county seat moved to Ely. Today only remnants of this once booming town remain, but they evoke the excitement of the silver boom. We'll also be visiting other historic structures in the vicinity.

Copper mining didn't really start until the early 1900's due to the low quality of the ore body, and the remoteness of the area. In 1905 a copper mine was started in the Robinson District, and the Nevada Northern Railway was established to serve the mine bringing in goods, people and equipment and moving the ore about 22 miles away to the smelter at McGill. By 1908 the first blister copper was produced, and by 1909, the mine and smelter were in full operation, producing over \$6 million worth of copper in that year. The mine also produced gold as a byproduct. The railroad was the lifeline for the mine and the town. Initially, virtually everything came in by rail, as the roads were primitive or non-existent. Similarly, the Nevada Northern had to be self-sufficient. The railroad operated a complete maintenance shop at East Ely including support for major repairs on the rolling stock. A variety of forces lead to the closure of the mines in 1978. These included the global decline in copper prices, environmental restrictions being imposed on the smelters and the availability of promising new copper mines elsewhere in the world.

### Lodging and Travel

A block of rooms has been reserved at the historic Hotel Nevada. When it was constructed in 1929, the six story hotel was the tallest building in Nevada. It has been renovated and has all the modern amenities. Tour participants should contact the hotel directly at 888-406-3055 to reserve rooms, mentioning the Nevada Northern reservations. Rates for the tour are under \$50 per night. There are several other hotels and motels in Ely.

Ely is best reached by flying into Las Vegas, which is about 250 miles from Ely. Salt Lake City is also about 260 miles from Ely. We recommend getting a rental car and driving. There are limited flights to Ely, but the planes are small and probably already booked. Due to the very high costs and limited demand, there will not be an SIA-sponsored bus to/from Ely.

We'd advise leaving some time for visiting IA related sites near Las Vegas and on the way to and from Ely, some of which are described on the web site.

### Tour Specifics

You should be prepared for touring on unpaved locations, including touring the East Ely yard complex, the Robinson Mine, and the Hamilton ghost town. The altitude of some of the tour sites is over 8,000 feet above sea level, so plan to pace yourself. All of the usual SIA Road Rules apply. Above all, stay safe! The weather should be good, but will be dry, so plan to stay well hydrated. You can bring your own safety equipment, though it may not be needed for all stops.

### Thursday, Sept 27, 2007

Travel and earlybird tours. Since most attendees will probably fly into Las Vegas and do things on their own there, Thursday is a travel day. The Ward Charcoal Ovens State Historic Park near Ely will have some SIA tours on Thursday afternoon. Once in Ely, the White Pine County Museum will be open, and we will have available materials for a self-guided walking tour of Ely as part of the registration package.

Dinner Thursday will be at 6:00 at the Postal Palace, across from the Hotel Nevada.

**Friday, Sept. 28, 2007****Mines – Old and New**

We will be visiting the Robinson Mine and the historic ghost town of Hamilton. The tour will divide into two groups, Group A will visit the Robinson Mine in the morning, and the Hamilton area in the afternoon. Group B will visit Hamilton in the morning, and the Robinson Mine in the afternoon. Lunch will be at the Robinson Mine. Both groups will leave Ely around 8:30AM and return about 4:30PM.

The Hamilton tour will leave ample time to explore the area and take pictures. The Robinson Mine tour will be more structured, as this is a working mine.

The Robinson Mine is a few miles West of Ely off US 50. Hamilton is about 40 miles West of Ely, most of which is on US 50. The last six or so miles are on County/Forest Service gravel roads.

Dinner on Friday is on your own. The Hotel Nevada has a very nice prime rib dinner at “casino prices” (e.g. cheap), and there are other choices within walking distance.

**Saturday, Sept. 29, 2007****Real Railroading**

We'll start Saturday with a very special treat for the early risers. Starting about 6:00AM, you can watch the crew hostelling a steam locomotive to operation! You don't just turn on the ignition switch and drive off a steam engine. Rather, there is a fairly complex set of tasks to make the locomotive ready to operate. We'll share coffee and pastries with the crew, but they will be busy and may not have a lot of time to chat. Detailed directions and maps will be in your registration packet.

Tours of the Nevada Northern site will get underway at about 8:30, and will start at the depot. We'll break up into moderate sized groups, as many of the things to see are fairly modest in size.

The Nevada Northern Railway Museum is not your customary museum. There is no display building *per se*; the museum encompasses a fifty-six acre outdoor National Historic Site containing sixty-six buildings and structures, steam and diesel locomotives, and over fifty freight cars. In addition to the yard and shops, the museum owns thirty miles of railroad track.

The Nevada Northern Railway is an operating, historical railroad. It is dirty and gritty. It smells of coal smoke, creosote, and sweat. It is noisy at times: locomotive whistle off, cars clang as they are coupled together, and there's the hooting of the owl that lives in the coal tower. Walking through the museum you can experience firsthand what it took to move a mountain of copper ore.

Lunch will be on-site. The tours will be completed in the early afternoon, leaving ample time to explore the site on your own. Again, this is a working railroad, and safety is very important. There are a few other possible activities under consideration for the afternoon.

Dinner on Saturday will be aboard the Ghost Train starting about 6:30. Depending on exactly how many people attend the dinner, it will either be buffet style or a full sit down dinner in the diner car. The train will pick us up near the Hotel Nevada. We might see some of the “fancy girls” from the train!

**Sunday, Sept. 30, 2007**

Sunday is another local and enroute tours day. There will be mid-day SIA tours of Pioche with its aerial tramway and “million dollar” courthouse. (Pioche is along a slightly different route back to Las Vegas.) We'll have a walking tour of Ely at 10 AM if there is sufficient interest. If you missed the Ward Charcoal Ovens SHP, they are also worth a self-guided stop.

For those with a more flexible schedule, we recommend the route through Tonopah and Beatty, including a stop at the ghost town of Rhyolite outside Beatty. This could be done in one day, but taking two days would let you linger in Tonopah and Beatty, or go over to Scotty's Castle in Death Valley National Park.

