



SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHEOLOGY

NEWSLETTER

Volume 36

Fall 2007

Number 4

2007 SIA FALL TOUR REVIEW—ELY, NV

Almost 100 SIA Members and friends journeyed to Ely for the 2007 Fall Tour. Ely is quite remote; a T-shirt in a local shop said “Ely – 200 Miles to the nearest Wal-Mart”! The tour was organized by the **Nevada Northern Railway (NNRY)** with the theme “Booms, Busts, and Rebirth.”

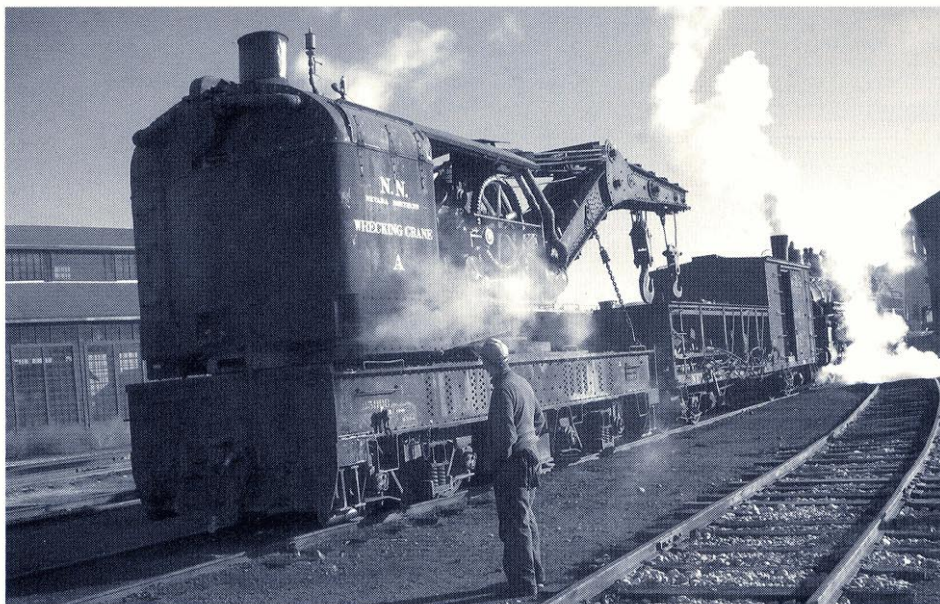
Though founded earlier, the town of Ely started to grow when new methods for extracting copper from low-grade ore were developed in the early 20th century. Just outside of town there is an extensive deposit, which has been actively mined for over 100 years. In 1905, construction began on a railroad to move ore to a smelter being constructed at McGill, about 15 miles from the mines, and to bring in supplies and equipment from a junction with the Central Pacific at the new town of Cobre (copper in Spanish), approximately 115 miles from Ely. NNRY also transported blister copper from the smelter for further electrolytic refining in the East via the Central Pacific interchange. As the mines grew, so did traffic on the railroad; as many as thirty ore trains per day moved between the mines and the smelter. NNRY supported passenger traffic until 1941,

when highway improvements favored buses instead. The remote location meant that NNRY had to be fairly self-sufficient with respect to maintenance and repair of the rolling stock, so an extensive collection of specialized shops was developed in the East Ely yard.

A worldwide decline in the price of copper, along with environmental restrictions on the smelter, led to a decision by Kennecott Copper to close the Ely operations, including the NNRY, in 1978. A group of local citizens thought that there might be some possibility of operating a tourist railroad, and after various negotiations, false starts, and lots of hard work, today’s NNRY was born. As noted in the 2006 press release from the U.S. Department of the Interior announcing the designation of the NNRY as a National Historic Landmark, “Nevada Northern. . . is the best-preserved, least altered, and most complete main yard complex remaining from the steam railroad era.”

Although events didn’t get underway until Thursday, some SIA members came in early and enjoyed various attractions in Las Vegas and along the way to Ely. It was a pleasant surprise to run into many of them when we got to

(continued on page 2)



Jay McCauley, all photos

Steaming-up the NNRY wrecking crane.

In This Issue:

- Industrial Museums—New Formulas
- SIA Preservation Grant Assists Research on Millville’s Past
- Electro-Pneumatic Block Signal System
- 2008 SIA Conference Preview—San José
- Call for Nominations of SIA Officers