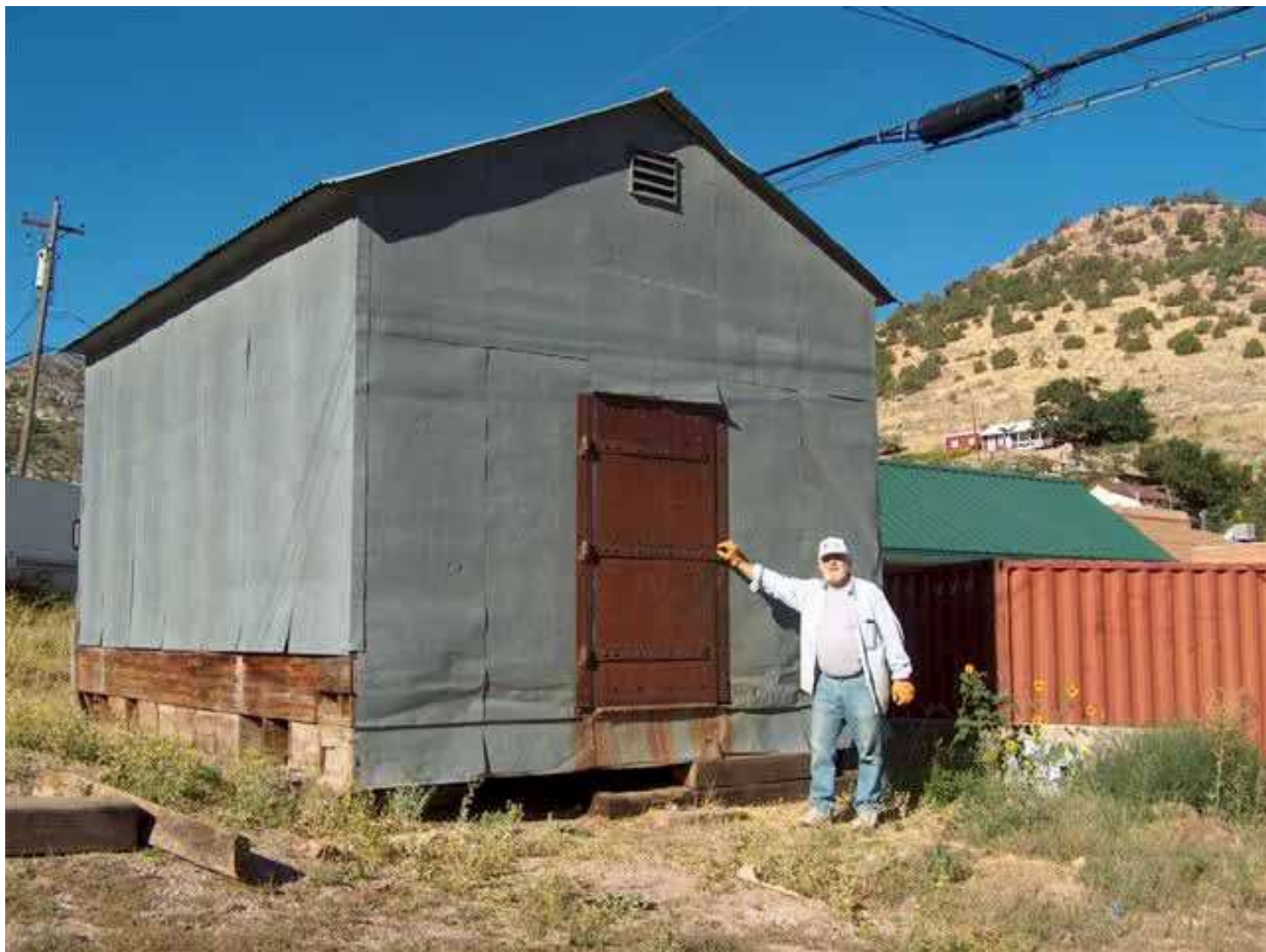


# The Pioche Powder Magazine

*by Bob Werner*

Pioche, located along US-93 at the southern end of the Great Basin, is situated in a narrow canyon at 6,000 feet elevation. It is about 190 miles north of Las Vegas and 113 miles south of Ely and was one of Nevada's richest and most lawless silver camps. Discovered during the winter of 1863/64, Pioche boasted over 10,000 residents by the early 1870's when it became the county seat of Lincoln County. Mining lasted over 100 years with the last mine being closed by Bunker Hill in 1972 and today about 700 residents remain. Pioche primarily produced silver, lead and zinc with lesser amounts of copper, manganese and gold. Total production for the district amounted to about \$170 million.



*Bob Werner stands in front of the powder magazine in its original location.*

There have been a number of powder magazines in and around Pioche over the years. One, located in downtown, caught fire in 1871 and the 300 or so powder kegs essentially leveled the business district. The present powder magazine, built around 1920, was originally located at the lower east end of town near the Union Pacific RR depot. During WW-II it was moved uptown to a lot on Meadow Valley Street. Explosives were dispensed from the magazine until the early 1950's when it fell into disuse. Several owners of the lot have come and gone, but when the last owner recently sold the lot the new owners planned to tear the magazine down. Being a fairly well preserved historical building it seemed well worth the trouble to try to preserve it.



*The large flat-bed is backed into position.*



*The cab of the flat-bed is turned sideways and the powder magazine is dragged aboard with a loader.*

Saturday morning, the day of the big move, came and my able-bodied crew assembled uptown at the powdermag. A local dirt moving contractor loaned us the truck and loader and Lee, my "main man" graciously agreed to operate the equipment. With some difficulty we got it onto the truck and slowly moved our precarious load onto Main Street. We didn't get very far before we ran into overhead phone and power lines, but a quick trip to the home of one of our local utility folks to borrow the hotstick was going to resolve that problem. We had traffic blocked on Main Street for a little over an hour, but no one seemed to mind and it was an unusual photo opportunity for the tourists in town.



*It was a tipsy ride out of town.*

The structure came through the move in good shape with minimal restoration required to the floor joists and a little body work on the metal sheathing. I had acquired the original Hercules "Magazine Rules For Dynamite and Powder Magazine" sign several years ago from the then current owner of the magazine and it has since been returned to the inside of the door where it was originally.

*The building is unloaded to its final resting place at the Werner home.*





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What may be a surprise to some is that the move was made without any permits or anyone getting concerned and calling the Sheriff - one of the benefits of living in a rural Great Basin mining camp. While MSHA or OSHA might have had some concerns, it was just another Saturday in Pioche!

*This sign hangs inside the powder magazine.*