



NHL Executive Summary



Name of Property: Bodie Historic District (Updated Documentation)

City, State: Bridgeport (vicinity), CA

Period of Significance: 1859-1962

NHL Criteria: 1, 5

NHL Criteria Exceptions: 6

NHL Themes: III. Expressing Cultural Values

6. Popular and Traditional Culture

V. Developing the American Economy

1. Extraction and Production

4. Workers and Work Culture

VII. Transforming the Environment

1. Manipulating the Environment and its Resources



Previous Recognition: National Historic Landmark, 1961

National Historic Context: Theme XV: The Mining Frontier

NHL Significance:

- Located in the high desert east of California's Sierra Nevada, the Bodie Historic District is significant under Criterion 1 for its association with broad patterns in Western mining history, exemplifying the boom-and-bust cycles that characterized the explosive growth and often precipitous decline of mining districts across the West from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century.
- Bodie possesses additional significance under Criterion 1 in illustrating the cultural phenomenon of the mining ghost town. Beginning in the 1920s and especially after World War II, Bodie's extensive collection of abandoned buildings and desolate setting drew increasing numbers of tourists and came to represent the iconography of the mythic West. Preserved in a state of "arrested decay" with the establishment of Bodie State Historical Park in 1962, the district's large number of surviving buildings and distinctive aesthetic exceptionally illustrate major developments in Western mining history and the indelible appeal of the Western ghost town in American culture.
- Bodie is also significant under Criterion 5 as an exceptionally well-preserved mining landscape. The abandoned townsite consists of a uniquely intact collection of Western vernacular architecture and is surrounded by the remnants of mining and milling operations representing significant developments in mining technology and processes spanning from 1859, with the discovery of gold in the area, to 1942, when the U.S. War Production Board halted all non-essential gold mining operations in the United States and the last of the large Bodie mills shut down. Collectively, Bodie's remaining buildings, structures, sites, and objects outstandingly illustrate major changes in technology, investment, labor, and social conditions that characterized Western mining during its formative years.

Integrity:

- Bodie's large, varied, and well-preserved collection of buildings, industrial structures, archeological sites, and related features possesses a high degree of integrity in all seven aspects and illustrates the transformation of an indigenous homeland and natural landscape into a distinctive mining landscape.
- The pattern of circulation networks, land uses, natural features, scattered debris, and clusters of buildings, structures, and objects define Bodie's historic mining landscape and character as a ghost town. The surrounding mountainous terrain and high-desert scrub vegetation convey the historic setting of an abandoned mining district.
- California State Parks' preservation policy of "arrested decay" has helped maintain the district's high degree of integrity. Other than limited renovations to create living and office space, intervention is undertaken only where needed to preserve buildings as completely as possible in the condition they were in when acquired by the state. Buildings are stabilized to prevent their collapse and halt further deterioration. Personal belongings and equipment left behind are preserved in place.
- Most of Bodie's major underground mines as well as hundreds of examples of smaller-scale mining and milling operations dating to the period of significance retain integrity as sites and convey the high level of integrity of the mining landscape.

Owner of Property: California Department of Parks and Recreation, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Hunewill Land & Livestock Co



Acreage of Property: 4,890.95

Origins of Nomination: California State Parks

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: This update defines a boundary, revises the statement and discussion of significance in accordance with current scholarship and NHL Program guidelines, and provides a current inventory of contributing and noncontributing resources. This information can aid California State Parks, its partners, and other owners in planning, resource management, and interpretation.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: No known potential for a negative public response.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of April 8, 2025):

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation:

Advisory Board Recommendation: