A ghost town preserved in a state of “arrested decay” just outside of Yosemite National Park – how can you say no?

PROJECT PARTNERS: Bodie Foundation and California State Parks System

PROJECT SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY:
From www.parks.ca.gov: “Bodie State Historic Park is a genuine California gold-mining ghost town. Visitors can walk down the deserted streets of a town that once had a population of nearly 10,000 people. The town is named for Waterman S. Body (William Bodey), who had discovered small amounts of gold in hills north of Mono Lake. In 1875, a mine cave-in revealed pay dirt, which led to purchase of the mine by the Standard Company in 1877. People flocked to Bodie and transformed it from a town of a few dozen to a boomtown.

“Only a small part of the town survives, preserved in a state of ‘arrested decay.’ Interiors remain as they were left and stocked with goods. Designated as a National Historic Site and a State Historic Park in 1962, the remains of Bodie are being preserved in a state of ‘arrested decay.’ Today this once thriving mining camp is visited by tourists, howling winds and an occasional ghost.” Bodie has been named by California legislature as the official state gold rush town. You can read a detailed brochure about the town’s (occasionally salacious) history here. You can also find beautiful historic photographs of Bodie, like the one above of the Railroad Office, on the Library of Congress’ website.

HistoriCorps was asked to preserve the park’s Railroad Office, which is only one of more than 100 historic buildings onsite. The railroad was an important part of the gold mining that spurred the boom town’s founding and development, and visitors can still walk (or even mountain bike) the rail line to Mono Lake. The railroad office structure, primarily its chimney, were destabilized by recent earthquakes.

CHALLENGE LEVEL: MEDIUM, primarily due to the high altitude (8,500’) of Bodie.

WHAT: In order to preserve Bodie’s Railroad Office, volunteers worked with HistoriCorps field staff and learn to do the following tasks. The crew:
• Documented, dismantled, and rebuilt portions of an earthquake-damaged brick chimney
• Installed a seismic retrofit to the brick chimneys
• Installed period-appropriate “step and counter flashing” where the chimney meets the exterior roof to ensure proper water runoff and reduce leakage
• Excavated and repointed a section of the stone and brick foundation

WHERE: Bodie State Historical Park is located only an hour from Yosemite National Park! GPS Coordinates: 38.213284, -119.0168604
Here is a Google map of Bodie State Historical Park.