

Return to BUCKSKIN

You will know when you have arrived at Buckskin—if for no other reason—because you will see a rusting Model-T parked on the hillside. How it got there is poignantly told in the accompanying story by Gene Segerblom.

Midsummer is the best time to make the trip to the old mining center. Start from Winnemucca, drive northeast through Paradise Valley (and pause to explore this attractive old community), then continue north, over steep Hinkey Summit to Buckskin. From Paradise Valley, the town, it's exactly 26.2 miles, mostly over unpaved roads, to Buckskin junction. Turn right at the junction and proceed another 2.8 miles to Buckskin. To complete the jaunt, we suggest that you continue west from Buckskin junction, driving another 13 miles to reach U.S. 95 south of McDermitt. The entire loop through this delightful country can be covered comfortably in less than a day.

By GENE SEGERBLOM
PHOTOS BY CLIFF SEGERBLOM

Memories of the "good old days" of one's youth often seem remote from reality indeed after childhood haunts are revisited. But this was not the case when I took my family to see Buckskin where I had spent many a delightful summer.

On my return after some 20 years to Grandpa's Buckskin mine, I found the wildflowers as beautiful, the mountains as high and rugged, the air as fresh, and the old mining camp as exciting as I had remembered them.

Buckskin is actually a mountain, about 63 miles from Winnemucca, in the Santa Rosa Range, northern Humboldt County. From its top elevation of 8,900 feet, you can see mountain peaks in California, Oregon and Idaho. We even try to convince ourselves that on a clear day you can see mountains in Utah. But there's some doubt of that!

On one of Buckskin's slopes is a slide of shale rock of buckskin color. That's how it got its name. When we were children, we found many arrow heads near the top, evidence that the Indians in the area once hunted there. They probably never camped overnight, however, if they believed an ancient Indian legend describing how the mountain turned upside down one twilight.

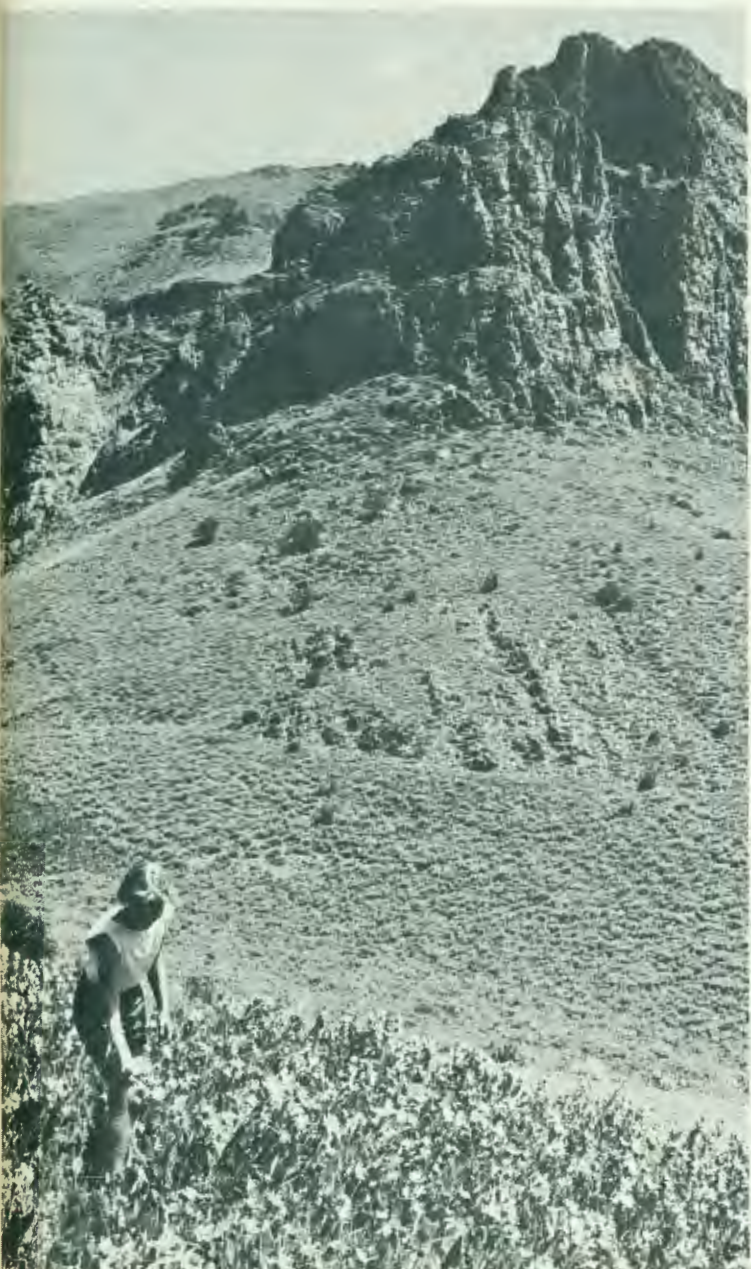
Buckskin mine was located in about 1906 in claims made by my grandfather, the late J. W. "Johnny" Bell, and his partner, George Ward. Johnny Bell who served for many years as Humboldt County Senator in the State Legislature came to Nevada when he was 12. He earned his first dollar at Spring City, north of Paradise Valley, when it was a booming mining town. When the ore petered out, he moved on to Buckskin, building his home and assay office on the ridge overlooking the "world."

Grandpa always kept a Model-T to drive to camp, refusing to use the newer Model-A's because they would hit bottom on those bad roads or experience other difficulties that never befell the trusty Model-T. He would often invite one of his grandchildren to ride with him in the venerable Model-T, always regarded as a special treat by the lucky one of us who was selected.

When he was in his 80's, having decided that he was ready for his last trip to Buckskin, he drove the



Fishing on Siard Creek, one of the many streams in the flats below Buckskin, is part of a summer visit.



A carpet of wildflowers on Hinkey Summit, enroute to Buckskin.



The road to the top of Buckskin.



Remains of the mill at Buckskin.



Granite Peak, viewed from the Model-T.



California peaks in the background.



Snow remains the year around.



Ore car at the Buckskin mine.

Model-T up the hill above the cookhouse, parked it there and left it. It remains there today, sort of a monument to his pioneer spirit.

During its heyday, when about 60 men were employed at the workings, gold and silver ore was shipped from Buckskin to Salt Lake City and San Francisco. The Lucky Tiger Mining Company once leased the mine and produced about \$500,000 in bullion. All told, Buckskin's mines over the years produced over \$1,000,000 in ores. There is still rich ore there but it cannot be mined profitably at the going price of silver.

Mining activity in the area in recent years, mainly confined to a quicksilver mine on top of Buckskin, is limited by the short working season. It's impossible to do much there during the winter months since the road is open only from about May until November. And it has been known to snow on the Fourth of July.

A trip to Buckskin, from Winnemucca via Paradise Valley, takes about two hours these days. In the era of spring wagons and teams of horses, it took two full days to reach the camp. The road to Buckskin crosses Hinkey Summit, then meanders over the fishing creeks of Martin, Dutch John and Cabin, streams that attract the fishermen who, along with hunters, account for most of the traffic into the area lately.

Most of the buildings in the old mining camp are still standing. There's the long bunk house, the cook shack and the individual family cabins.

When you visit an old mining camp like Buckskin, you can't help thinking that some day there may be another boom, and you can't help hoping that those who made fortunes and sank them back into the ground will enjoy another bonanza. A visit here recalls most pleasantly a vanished era in early Nevada.



A touching reminder of the old days—Grandpa's Model-T which he parked here when in his 80's. Below, Cliff does a painting of the old car.