

HUMBOLDT COUNTY

GHOST TOWNS AND MINING CAMPS

The first mining district organized in the present area of the county was Vicksburg, in 1863 and the Pueblo district in adjacent Oregon, was at that time thought to be in Nevada. These and other districts of the 1860's remained small because of remoteness, poor transportation facilities and harrassment by nomadic Bannocks. After three army camps were established, the Indians were brought under control. Ranching developed at Paradise City and mining at Spring City. The latter remained active in the 1880's, and in 1897, the Golconda-Gold Run area, which had been active in the late 1860's, reawoke for a decade.

A rich district was National, noted after 1907 for its bonanza ore. Smaller camps were active until World War I, but then mining was quiet until the Jumbo boom of the mid-1930's revived surrounding districts. The Getchell mine, Humboldt County's most productive mine, was in operation after 1940 until its closing in 1967.

DUTCH FLAT

Eleven miles via desert road east of U.S. 95 at a point 13 miles north of Winnemucca. Placer gold was discovered on the west slope of the Hot Springs Range in 1898, and for many years, several men used rockers to wash gravel, but operations were difficult because water had to be hauled by wagon from a source a mile away. The Dutch Flat Mining Co. began extensive, systematic placering in 1904, using modern equipment including a dragline scraper and washing plant, but the inadequate water supply hindered profitable operations and the company gave up after a few years. In 1900-10, Chinese began extensive operations, burrowing for rich pockets of ore and recovering gold with water carried to the placers by a line of Chinese water boys. In later years, work by leasers pushed district production past \$200,000. Extensive dumps remain.

WILLOW POINT

Four miles southeast of State Route 8B, at a point, 1½ miles northeast of its junction with US 95. This station served travelers on the Winnemucca-Paradise Valley Road during the last part of the 19th century and by 1910, it had a hotel, saloon, and livery stable. A post office was open in 1868 and during 1887-1910. No buildings remain.

PARADISE VALLEY

At the end of State Route 8B, 18 miles northeast of US 95 at a point 22 miles north of Winnemucca. A four-man prospecting party from Star City ventured onto a beautiful plain now know as Paradise Valley, in the summer of 1863 to seek minerals in the surrounding hills. While nothing of value was found, they were impressed by the valley's fertile acres. One man abandoned his pick and tools and returned within a few weeks with horses, wagons, mower, hay-press and blacksmith tools to begin a ranch. By the end of the next year about twenty ranchers had started work, but Indian raids were so numerous that Camp Scott was established nearby to insure the safety of the ranchers. Late in the 1860's, the village of Paradise City was begun, and by 1879, it had the Paradise Valley post office, the Reporter, a score of other businesses and a population of 100. Though Paradise City was never a mining town, one of the locals working nearby must have been quite a character. Wells Drury, of the Gold Hill News, once saw a miner from Paradise, walk into the Virginia Saloon, and pounding on the bar with his six-shooter until the glasses danced announced, "I'm a roarin' ripsnorter from hoo-rah camp, an' I can't be stepped on. I'm an angel from Paradise Valley and when I flop my wings, there's a tornado loose...Give me some of your meanest whiskey, a whole lot of it, that tastes like bumblebee stings pickled in vitroil. I swallered a cyclone for breakfast, a powder mill for lunch, and haven't begin to cough yet. Don't crowd me." Drury further stated that one by one the saloon patrons quietly left and when the bad man turned around, the place was empty! Paradise Valley, which long ago dropped the word City from its name, continued through the mid-20th century as a quiet ranching community with hotels, stores, saloons, and Methodist and Catholic Churches. Hitching posts, old sidewalks, frame buildings of a bygone era (many uninhabited) and dirt streets make this town an interesting place to visit.

CAMP WINFIELD SCOTT

Four and a half miles northwest of the town of Paradise Valley. For five years after December 1866, this army camp protected Humboldt County settlers and travelers from Indian depredations, such as theft of stock and slaughter of men and women. During the winter of 1866-67, officer's quarters and large adobe brick barracks were constructed, as well as a hospital, guardhouse, trading post and stables. Attacks on travelers and theft of livestock, greatly diminished by 1869 and the camp was abandoned in February of 1871, after it lived out its usefulness. Several original structures are now used by the Buckingham Ranch. Ask permission to visit.

SPRING CITY

By unimproved road, 2 miles east, 6 miles north, then 1 mile east of Paradise Valley. After initial discoveries in 1868, a district was organized in 1873 and soon Spring City was a lively burg containing an express office, seven saloons, stores, two hotels, a restaurant, brewery, bookstore, and a daily stage service to Winnemucca via Paradise Valley. Local ores were treated at nearby Queen City. Siskron post office was opened here in November of 1878, but the name was soon changed to Spring City. Eighty townspeople voted in the 1880 election, suggesting a population of perhaps 150. The peak years came in the 1880's when over \$1 million in silver and gold were recovered at a local ten-stamp mill, but with the fast decline after 1890, there was little further reason for Spring City's existence and the post office closed in 1895. Revivals in 1907-15 and 1931-35 netted limited amounts of silver and brought the district's production to \$1.5 million--although generous estimates double that figure. Old buildings remain from 20th century operations and stone and mud walls from older structures are also found here.

QUEEN CITY

By graded road, 8 miles east and north of the town of Paradise Valley, Queen City was founded as a milling town for Spring City gold mines seven miles west, in 1847 when two mills were built on Martin Creek to take advantage of its water power. The camp grew steadily to a peak population of about 100 in 1879, rivalling nearby Paradise City, now Paradise Valley, but because of Queen City's poor location at the mouth of the canyon, its competitor became the area's chief town. By the next year, Queen City had been deposed, and all stores soon closed. During its short five-year life, milling foundations mark the site, located just a few yards north of the Martin Creek county park and swimming.

PARADISE WELL

Or Flynn, east side of US 95 at a point 1 mile north of its junction with State Route 8B (25 miles north of Winnemucca). This stage station with store, hotel and livery stable early in this century had its origin during the early statehood days. A windmill marks the site.

CANE SPRINGS

One mile southeast of State Route 140 at a point 2½ miles west of its junction with US 95 (23 miles north of Winnemucca). For many years around the turn of the century, this stage station, consisting of a hotel, saloon, and livery stable, served travelers passing through this part of the Santa Rosa Range. Amos post office was open here in 1889-90 and from 1898 to 1926.

JUMBO

Via desert roads, 12 miles west-southwest of State Route 140 at a point 2½ miles west of its junction with US 95. Mining activity began about 1910 after the discovery of Alabama and other mines. During the next year on the east slope of the Slumbering Hills, arose a small camp called Awakening, which briefly contained a saloon, store and other buildings. The district proved itself in 1912 when gold was shipped out, and with increased mining, three different mills came into operation by the end of the decade, including an amalgamation mill at nearby Daveytown. Nothing eventful happened after 1918 until the discovery of the Jumbo mine in the Slumbering Hills in February of 1935, created considerable excitement and several claims were located that spring. The mine was sold later in the year, and in 1936, the new owners equipped the property with a 30 ton mill paid for out of proceeds from the mine. Following Herbert Hoover's visit in the summer of 1936 and his favorable mention of the Jumbo mine, it received nationwide publicity. The west coast mining community believed that another great gold discovery had been made and a rush quickly populated the district with prospectors, agents for mining companies, engineers, and others. San Francisco papers covered the story in detail and "The March of Time" radio program beamed the news to the world. A number of small mining companies began work but only the Jumbo sustained production and the boom died out. In May of 1937, H.L. Hunt and other Texas oil operators, secured a 35-year lease on the Jumbo mine for a cash down-payment of \$250,000 with royalty payments of ten to fifteen percent of extracted ore. An option of buying the mine for \$10 million at any time within twenty years was also purchased. But Hunt did not follow through with large development because of extensive litigation and the mine reverted to its original owners. Significant production took place until 1914 and again in 1948 until 1951. The district is now generally idle. Only mill foundations remain at the Awakening site: a mill and several buildings are left at Daveytown and below the Jumbo mine lies the ruins of a dance hall and saloon.

SOD HOUSE

North side of State Route 140, at a point 14 miles west of its junction with US 95. This primitive station house, built entirely of sod, has been a landmark and part of a ranch for decades since about 1880. Authorities do not agree on its origin.

VARYVILLE

Or Columbia, 30 miles west of State Route 140 at a point 38 miles west of its junction with US 95 (70 miles northwest of Winnemucca). Five years after discoveries near Bartlett Creek, the Columbia district was organized in 1875 and a camp started here. Ore was initially worked in an arrastra, but in the late 1870's two five-stamp mills were running. The district never gained prominence and in the 1880's, it was forgotten. Modern developments began in 1931 in the middle of the Depression by the Leonard Creek Placers, Ltd., which ceased operations before 1935. Some buildings remain.

PUEBLO

(Oregon), approximately 5 miles north of Denio on State Route 140. Late in the summer of 1863, a Major Harmon discovered silver on the east flank of the Pueblo Mountains in an area then thought to be in Nevada. By the following summer, a small mill was installed, but Indians burned it down in 1865 and drove the settlers out of the district. For the next few years, mining continued to be harassed by Paiutes and Bannocks who had "an ugly and disagreeable way of giving surprises for the boys working there." By February of 1867, things were more orderly and a post office was established, which suggests that a small community may have formed. The district declined later in the year, the post office closed in August and little has since been heard of Pueblo.

VICKSBURG

Later Ashdown, 5 miles southeast of State Route 140, at a point 11 miles southwest of Denio (78 miles northwest of Winnemucca). Although locations were made in the Vicksburg district in the summer of 1863, Indian troubles retarded early development of silver mines. The Pine Forest Gold Mining Co. began developing gold deposits about 1904. A post office was opened and production proceeded intermittently. In 1919, the Ashdown Gold Mining Co. installed a new mill and the mines continued irregular operations for several years. The Ashdown mine had produced about \$400,000 by 1950 and was being worked in the 1960's.

CAMP MCGARRY

Thirty-six miles southwest of State Route 140 at a point 11 miles southwest of Denio. The army established this camp in November of 1865 to protect travelers using trails in northwestern Nevada and southern Oregon. Its several stone buildings included a large storage barn, mess hall, and barracks with walls two feet thick. The camp and reservation were abandoned after three years of use and troops were sent elsewhere. The grounds eventually became part of the Summit Lake Indian Reservation and in later years, Indians came in the summer to graze stock.

REBEL CREEK

3/4 miles east of US 95 at a point 14 miles north of its junction with State Route 140 (44 miles north of Winnemucca). Both placer and vein deposits were worked at this point on the west slope of the Santa Rosa Range as early as the 1870's, and scores of prospectors returned in June of 1907 after "remarkable" finds were reported. The district has never yielded gold in paying quantities, though some work was done in the 1930's.

WILLOW CREEK

Later Platona, 1 mile north-northeast of US 95 at a point 18 miles north of its junction with State Route 140. A stage station functioned at this point on the Winnemucca-Idaho line in Nevada's early years. A winter traveler in 1864, described Willow Creek as a good inn, managed by hospitable people who maintained a bounteous table, clean beds and a bar offering merchandise from San Francisco. To the east, Willow Creek Canyon's small gold and silver mines fed a local five-stamp mill, and a boarding house and assay office were built at the head of the canyon. In this century, the station was known as Platona, and a post office operated from 1909 until 1925. At that time placering was under way nearby in an area which had previously been worked by Chinese, probably as early as the 1870's.

NATIONAL

Ten miles east of US 95, at a point 29 miles north of its junction with State Route 140 (62 miles north of Winnemucca). This camp is noted for its bonanza gold ore, probably the richest ever mined in Nevada. Two prospectors made initial discoveries in June 1907 and quickly located all the choice properties in the vicinity. They entered the district by car and named the prominent elevations around their 34 claims after parts of their National automobile-- Radiator Hill and Auto Hill, for example. Large leasing blocks several hundred square feet were drawn up during 1908, and leases were let on them for one-year or 15-month periods based on a sliding scale of royalty payments. Early in 1909, certain leasers found an extraordinarily rich ore shoot in their shaft, and the initial shipment from it averaged almost \$30.00 per pound of ore! After news of the high grade broke out in the mining press, all sorts of adventurers, miners and gamblers flocked here, swelling the camp to 1800 or 2000. For several months during 1909-10 that lease produced \$250,000 to \$275,000 per month, and selected ore up to \$100,000 a ton was shipped. In September of 1910, the National Mining Co. purchased the lease and stepped up operations. Total productions from that narrow shoot was said to have reached \$4 million by 1911. The rich rock encouraged high-grading and stealing, and on two occasions, armed men broke into the mine and removed several sacks of ore. After these incidents, the owners hired guards to keep watch around the clock. On a steel tower, was installed a large searchlight; its rays played upon the mine entrance throughout the night. In 1911-1912, National had several stores, saloons, a two-story hotel, a post office, the weekly Miner, offices for professional people including a doctor and dentist, stage lines running north and south, and other businesses, legitimate and other-wise. This spirited town with streets "paved with gold" was hit by apex litigation in June of 1912, when the National brought suit against two adjacent mines for trespassing. In a notable trial before the U.S. Circuit Court at Carson City the following October, the National emerged victorious. That mine continued operations a while longer, but by 1915 the camp expired after producing about \$7 million. The mill shell, assay office and a few other wooden buildings remain.

BUCKSKIN

By unimproved road, 12 miles east of US 95 at a point 29 miles north of its junction with 140. Two Winnemucca prospectors located the Buckskin mine on the northeast slope of the Buckskin Mountains in 1906, and when the mines boomed at National, four miles to the northwest, several more prospected this vicinity. The Buckskin National Gold Mining Co. built a 100-ton flotation mill, but that process proved unsuitable for the ores. The company and various leasers operated the mine intermittently for two decades until the Nevada Lucky Tiger Co. took over the property about 1930 and erected another mill. Even that effort was short lived, and operations were halted when the mill burned during the Depression.

FORT McDERMITT

Five miles east of US 95, at a point 40 miles north of its junction with State Route 140 (69 miles north of Winnemucca). This place is not to be confused with the community of McDermitt on US 95, 5 miles to the west. Lieutenant Colonel Charles F. McDermitt (also spelled McDermit), commander of the Nevada military district, ordered establishment of a camp at Quinn River Station on the north bank of the East Fork of the Quinn River during the summer of 1865 to protect travelers passing between Boise, Star City and Virginia City. That same summer, Colonel McDermitt was ambushed and killed by Indians while rifing in Quinn River Valley, and by 1867 the camp renamed in his honor, had stone and adobe buildings which housed the usual army facilities. About a decade later, frame buildings were added, and in 1879, Camp McDermitt became Fort McDermitt, but the need for military presence in the area was diminishing, and a decade later the fort, Nevada's last calvary post, was abandoned. The buildings became part of the Fort McDermitt Indian Reservation, and some of them still stand.

LAUREL

Four and a half miles north of State Route 49, at a point 6 miles west of Winnemucca via graded roads. Two companies began to mine silver in 1910-11 and the camp of Laurel formed. The post office opened in June of 1911, but the boom was cut short when the townspeople learned that they had settled on patented railroad land. Late in 1912, a new corporation bought the railroad section on which the mines were located and began development, but the veins were shallow and the camp was soon abandoned. The post office closed in July of 1913. A cluster of wooden buildings remain of Laurel, now known as the Ten Mile District.

JUNGO

On State Route 49, at a point 36 miles west of Winnemucca. The newly completed Western Pacific Railroad in 1910 established Jungo as a station which gained initial importance as a stock shipping point for ranches as far north as Denio and the Quinn River country. Jungo acquired a saloon, post office, blacksmith shop, warehouse, school, feed lot, loading corrals, and a hotel and store of general merchandise run by G.B. Austin, who maintained it for over forty years. Auto stages ran to Burns, Oregon, and prospectors from nearby districts hung out at this town of forty people. A Bay Area promoter organized a corporation in 1923 and sold desert lots near Jungo for dry farms. Several were started, but alkali prevented crops from growing. The gold discovered at nearby Jumbo in 1935, briefly increased activity, but by the end of World War II, Jungo had only a single family and in 1952 lost its post office.

RED BUTTE

Fifteen miles northwest of State Route 49 at a point 5 miles west of Jungo. The Jackson Mountains were first prospected for gold on their western flank in the spring of 1907 and the camp of Red Butte emerged. By September of 1908, it contained thirty tents and businesses. Gold ore was freighted to Humboldt House on the Southern Pacific for a while, and a threeseater stage ran between the two points in 18 hours time. After completion of the Western Pacific nearby in 1910 copper ore was shipped, especially during World War I. Some buildings still remain, but low-axle cars cannot reach the camp.

SULPHUR

On State Route 49 at a point 58 miles west of Winnemucca. A lone Paiute discovered native sulphur deposits on the eastern base of the Kamma Mountains, about 1869 and then directed prospectors to little mounds of the yellow rocks in exchange for the promise of a bronco, saddle and blankets which he never received. Some sulphur was mined in 1874, and during the early 1880's six tons were produced daily. The Nevada Sulphur Co. gained control of the deposits in August of 1899 and began extensive operations. The Western Pacific Railway laid lines through here in 1909 and named the station Sulphur. A settlement which included a post office then formed, and the station was receiving point for the mined sulphur, which reached 12 tons a day in the early 1920's. The automobile age eliminated the need for a local store, and by 1953, the post office was finally closed. Sulphur mining continues.

GOLCONDA.

North of I-80 at Golconda exit, 16 miles east of Winnemucca. Golconda's eight or ten hot springs were a noted landmark for westbound travelers years before Nevada was born, and during the territorial days it was a minor spa and resort. When the Gold Run district, 12 miles to the south, was organized in 1866 and the Central Pacific was laid through here two years later, the village of Golconda formed and soon became an important freight and telegraph station. Transcontinental train riders swam in the warm springs, and nearby farmers scalded their swine in one spring which was said to be so hot that it could boil an egg in a minute. The community didn't grow in the 1870's, but struggled on until 1897, when a townsite was laid out by Scottish interests who organized the Adelaide Star Mines Ltd. as a subsidiary to their nationwide firm to work the Adelaide and other newly acquired copper mines in the Gold Run district. The parent Glasgow and Western Exploration Co. constructed the 12-mile long Golconda and Adelaide narrow gauge between their large ninety-ton smelter and concentration plant half a mile north of Golconda and the mines. Within months, Golconda grew to 500 inhabitants, with six hotels, a post office and the weekly News. The town's slogan was "What Anaconda has been to Montana, Golconda promises to be for Nevada" and the most optimistic envisioned this town as soon having 10,000 people. Unsatisfactory milling returns led to a shutdown by the spring of 1900, but some irregular activity continued until 1905. Two years later, the mill reopened with additions, and mines and railroad were again operating; but the Scottish interests suspended all work in 1910 after incurring additional losses. The Nevada Massachusetts Co. built a 100-ton chemical plant in 1939 to treat ores from mines four miles east, but that operation shut down after World War II because of losses. Sleepy Golconda contains several old buildings and foundations of the two mills remain.

GOLD RUN

Later Adelaide, by graded road 11 miles south of I-80 at the Golconda exit (15 miles southeast of Winnemucca). After formation of a district in October of 1866, several gold and silver mines were opened. In the spring of 1867, the Humboldt Register reported in glowing terms that thousands of tons of ore in sight were worth nearly \$100 per ton. A townsite plotted that fall on an elevated site on Gold Run Creek, soon had a few businesses around a plaza, including a commodious hotel which claimed to have the best of liquors and cigars at the bar at all times. Gold Run, then also known as Cumberland, had a population of sixty including a few families at the end of 1867, and during the next year, the eight-stamp Golconda mill three miles south of Golconda, worked ore from the Hope and Golconda mines. For fuel, the mill used sagebrush, collected by Indians at a cost of \$4 per day. But a sustained

boom did not develop and the camp probably expired by the spring of 1871, when the Golconda mine closed. Scottish interests renewed mining with vigor for a decade after 1897 (see Golconda), and the Adelaide mine was the principal producer. In the summer of 1907, the town of Adelaide was laid out below the mines, but the district was only intermittently active thereafter with leasers producing almost \$200,000. During World War I, the mines sustained a lengthy development. By the 1930's, the camp of Adelaide had moved a mile and a half west where a new mill had been built. A few 20th century wooden buildings mark the site of Gold Run, while Adelaide has mill foundations and a few shacks.

GETCHELL MINE

Ten miles north of State Route 18 at a point 16 miles northeast of I-80 at Golconda exit. Though the northeast slopes of the Osgood Mountains were prospected as early as the 1880's for copper and silver, the first important discoveries were made in 1933 when two Winnemucca prospectors found gold. Mining tycoon, Noble Getchell purchased the ground during the next year and formed a company to begin exploration. Ground was broken for a 400-ton cyanide mill in June of 1937, and after a power line was extended from Golconda, an era of intensive gold mining followed. A company camp was built around the operation, with ninety cottages, a store of general merchandise, boarding house, bunkhouses, and a recreation hall. The federal government allowed the Getchell to operate during World War II because of the badly needed arsenic that was found with the gold. Of the latter, about \$9 million was recovered by 1949. From 1950 to 1957 the Getchell became a profitable tungsten producer, and almost \$30 million in that metal was recovered in 6 years. The mill could recover tungsten from 1000 tons of ore daily, when running at full capacity. During the 1950's, much gold had been blocked out, and so the mine was reopened in 1961 to work the gold mantled, leaving walls and foundations.
