Carolina Gold

THE HISTORY OF GOLD IN NORTH CAROLINA
What Is Gold Worth To You?

• It has been used for thousands of years and has millions of different uses.
• You even have gold IN you or ON you.
• It’s a symbol of wealth.
• It has started wars.
• It has built economies.
Where Does Gold Come From?

• Essentially, gold comes from space!

• August 17, 2017 scientists were able to observe a neutron star collision.
  • A massive star exhausts its fuel and collapses into itself.
  • Debris from the collision contained 200 Earth masses of gold!
  • This is how gold first comes to Earth!!
  • Space debris needs to go somewhere...meteorites containing gold fell to Earth millions of years ago.

• ~550 million years: Rock layers are deposited near a chain of volcanic islands.

• Volcanic activity buries the rock layers in the Earth.

• 450 million years: Volcanic islands collide with ancient North America, folding the rocks.
• As the rocks fold, tension cracks form and fills with Quartz, forming veins.

• Some quartz veins are “enriched,” or have gold inside them, but not all.

• Quartz without gold is called **barren** or **bull** quartz.
• Millions of years: Erosion exposes rock at the surface.

• Gold in small concentrations in the rocks and quartz veins release and travel in water.

• With help from the water, the gold forms various sized nuggets to be found by future prospectors and miners!
• A major fault runs through several states, including the Piedmont Triad.

• This fault is where you will find gold and where the history of gold in NC begins.
Reed Gold Mine History – John Reed

• Born in 1759 in Hessen Cassel as Johannes Rieth
  • Illegitimate child living in a small community
  • Illiterate and poor

• Arrives in U.S. as a Hessian Soldier in 1778
  • John Reed fought for the British during the American Revolution
  • Unit was stationed outside of Savannah, Georgia

• Deserts his post in 1782
  • Came to Mecklenburg County, later Cabarrus County
  • Found a German community

• Meets and Marries Sarah Kaiser
  • John and Sarah had 9 children!
  • Became a subsistence farmer. Did NOT intend to become a gold miner.
Reed Gold Mine History – Conrad Reed

• Born in 1787
  • 3rd child of John and Sarah Reed
  • At 12 years old, he discovered a 17 lb. gold nugget
  • Nugget was used as a door stop for about 3 years
  • Sold at market for a farmer’s weekly wage: $3.50
    1799: A 17 lb. nugget was worth $3,600
    2020: A 17 lb. nugget is worth $428,332
Reed Partnership

• John Reed partners with 3 Neighbors
  • Martin Phifer, Frederick Kaiser, Rev. James Love
  • Each partner supplies equipment and 2 enslaved men

• Peter, an enslaved man, finds the largest nugget to date
  • Found in 1803, Peter finds a 28 lb. nugget in Little Meadow Creek
    1803: A 28 lb. nugget was worth $7,000
    2020: A 28 lb. nugget is worth $705,488

• Is still the largest nugget found to date in the Southern region
Types of Mining: Placer Mining

- Placer (Plass·er) Mining is also known as “Surface” Mining
  - Panning or mining of modern or ancient bodies of water (creeks, streams, etc.)
  - Tools: Pans, cradle rockers/log rockers, sluices
  - Lighter materials are washed away, leaving heavier gold behind
Types of Mining: Lode Mining

- Lode Mining is also known as “Underground” Mining
  - Extraction of gold from hard rock
  - Requires more technology and has greater risks
  - In Stanly County, Matthias Barringer discovers gold in underground veins of white quartz in 1825
  - Discovery leads to lode mining at Reed in 1831

- Underground mining would primarily have been men’s work, regardless of ethnicity
Who Is Doing the Work?

• Enslaved People
  • Court documents show Reed purchased at least 3 enslaved people.
  • At the time of his death in 1845, Reed owned 18 enslaved people.

• Women and Children
  • Operate surface mining tools: log rockers, cradle rockers, and pans
North Carolina Mints

• Bechtler Mint
  • Christopher Bechtler and family arrive in the US in 1829 and travel to Rutherford County, North Carolina.
  • The lack of a mint in the area leads locals to try assaying and stamping gold for miners.
  • By 1831, Bechtler announces that he will process raw gold into coins and ingots. In 1832, he announces that a $1 gold coin will be available.
  • 17 years later, in 1849 the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia begins to issue $1 gold coins.
• Charlotte Mint
  • A Carolina mint was built due to the amount of gold produced in NC.
  • Congress authorized the Charlotte Mint in 1835. It opened in 1837.
  • Served as Confederacy Headquarters during the Civil War. Became an assaying office after the war.
• NC Gold was produced in many mints
  • The Bechtler Mint (until 1840) produced $3.7 million
  • The Charlotte Mint (1837-1860) produced $4.17 million
  • The Philadelphia Mint (until 1860) produced $9.1 million
Gold in North Carolina

• Gold Hill
  • Operates from 1865-1915
  • Considered a Boom Town, or a place where the population “booms” due to a sudden influx of families moving for gold mining work and domestic work.
  • In 1842, George Barnhardt, son-in-law to John Reed, digs the deepest shaft (500 ft.) in the U.S. to date
Guilford County Gold Mines

- Fisher Hill/Millis Hill/Pucket Mine (Au + Cu)
  - 6.1 miles East of Jamestown
  - Worked as early as 1856

- Gardner Hill Mine (Au + Cu)
  - 2.6 miles east/southeast of Jamestown
  - Was most productive before 1856
  - Estimate of $100,000 in gold by 1854

- Beard Mine (Au + Cu)
  - 4.2 miles east of Jamestown
  - Active prior to 1856

- Hodges Hill Mine (Au)
  - 7.4 miles east of Jamestown

- Pine Hill Mine (Au)
  - 8.3 miles southeast of Greensboro

- Jacks Hill Mine (Au + Cu)
  - 1.8 miles south of Jamestown

- Lindsay Mine (Au + Cu)
  - 3.9 miles east of High Point
  - Southern extension of the North State Mine

- Deep River Mine (Au + Cu)
  - 4.2 miles east of High Point
  - Active around 1905, Operations stopped 1905

- Fentress Mine (Au + Cu)
  - 8.1 miles southeast of Jamestown
  - Opened in 1853 as a gold mine, first copper mine in NC
  - Still had some exploration into the 1970s
  - Total estimation of $334,000 in ore
The Castle McCulloch Gold Mill

- North State Mine (Au + Cu)
  - Mine worked before Civil War
  - Between March and November, 1854: Produced $35,000 in gold and $10,500+ in copper
  - Total production estimated at $125,000

- Engine House Completed in 1823
  - Built by Charles McCulloch, Cornish engineer
  - Granite castle with drawbridge, moat, 70 ft tower
  - Used steam engine technology

- Restored in 1980s
So What?

• The Carolina Gold Rush made the Piedmont region of North Carolina one of the few “industrial areas” in the South

• The rise of industrialization and technological advances forces the Southern economy to be competitive with the North. This calls for a modernization of society and attitudes to create the “New South.”

• Integration of industrialization and not relying on an agriculture based labor system (enslavement) and wage labor helped to ease the economic transition after the Civil War to a more industrial economy.

• Mining is still a lucrative business internationally.
Grasberg Mine  
Indonesia

South Deep  
South Africa

Muruntau  
Uzbekistan
For More Information

• Historic Gold Hill – Experience one of the original boom towns and explore the Village of Gold Hill.
  • [http://historicgoldhill.com/](http://historicgoldhill.com/)

• Reed Gold Mine State Historic Site – Visit the location where the NC Gold Rush began. Walk through the underground mine and try your hand at panning for gold!
  • [https://historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/reed-gold-mine](https://historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/reed-gold-mine)

• The North Carolina Gold Trail – Travel around the state and visit all of the important historical sites involved with the NC Gold Rush!
  • [https://www.visitncgold.com/](https://www.visitncgold.com/)