

Portis Gold Mine ^[1]

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by George-Anne Willard, 2006

See also: [Gold Hill Mine](#) ^[2]; [Gold Rush, The North Carolina](#) ^[3]; [Gold Rush,](#) ^[4] [Gold Mining in the Uwharries](#) ^[5]; [Reed Gold Mine](#) ^[6]

The Portis Gold Mine, located in the northeastern corner of [Franklin County](#) ^[7], was the first mine in the Eastern Carolina Belt (composed of [Warren](#) ^[8], [Halifax](#) ^[9], [Franklin](#) ^[7], and [Nash](#) ^[10] Counties) and operated intermittently from about 1835 to 1936. The Portis gold deposit was in the rocks of the Spring Hope Formation in the eastern slate belt. The primary mining method has been identified as "hydraulicking" 15 to 30 feet of surface material, but recovery was hampered by the region's sticky clay. The total amount of gold mined is unknown. In 1884 the estimate was more than \$1 million, and in 1972 one geologist projected that up to \$7 million worth of gold was mined in that area.

By the end of the nineteenth century, gold in the Portis mine was difficult to find and there were no profits to be had. The final attempts to extract gold were by the Norlina Mining Company, which brought in heavy mining equipment and constructed an assay lab, a main building for the crushing equipment, a dormitory, a superintendent's house, a blacksmith and machine shop, and a six-million-gallon reservoir for the water required by the gold recovery process. The cost of the mining operation exceeded by one-third the value of the gold recovered, and the mine was closed in 1936.

References:

P. Albert Carpenter III, *Gold Resources of North Carolina* (1972).

Richard F. Knapp, *North Carolina Gold: A Selected Bibliography of Mining History, Technology, and the Reed Gold Mine* (1978).

Thilbert H. Pearce, "The Portis Diggings," *The State* (1 Apr. 1972).

Bruce Roberts, *The Carolina Gold Rush* (1971).

Additional Resources:

Sketch of Portis Mine, North Carolina Maps, North Carolina Collection, UNC Libraries:

http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/ncmaps&CISOPTR=943&CISOBOX=1&REC=2 ^[11]

Gold Mines, NC Historical Marker E-89: <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?ct=ddl&sp=search&k=Markers&sv=E-89%20-%20GOLD%20MINES> ^[12]

1869, 1870 Act to incorporate Portis Gold Mine in Franklin County: <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?ct=ddl&sp=search&k=Markers&sv=E-89%20-%20GOLD%20MINES> ^[13]

1876,77 Bill to extend Portis Gold Mine in Franklin County: <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/journal-of-house-1876-1877/3935703> ^[14]

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Authors:

[Willard, George-Anne](#) ^[24]

Origin - location:

[Franklin County](#) ^[25]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[26]

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