

Reed Gold Mine ^[1]

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by Robert L. Remsburg III, 2006

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

[Reed Gold Mine](#) ^[7], located in [Midland](#) ^[8], 12 miles southeast of Concord, is the site at which the first authenticated discovery of gold in the United States occurred. In 1799 [Conrad Reed](#) ^[7], the 12-year-old son of German immigrant John Reed, uncovered a 17-pound gold nugget while fishing in Little Meadow Creek. Within four years, the first gold mine in the country had been established, starting as a placer mine and later expanding to vein or lode mining. As mining spread, North Carolina experienced a gold rush that made it the largest domestic producer of the precious metal until the California rush of the 1850s. Reed Gold Mine was one of the richest mines in the South and was noted for its large nuggets, weighing up to 28 pounds.

The most impressive physical work at the mine occurred in about 1854, when miners greatly expanded the underground workings and built a substantial engine millhouse with a stone chimney and a steam engine. The Reed mine's success was sporadic, and like many other mines in the state, after the [Civil War](#) ^[9] it operated intermittently. In 1895 the Kelly family of Springfield, Ohio, purchased almost exactly the undivided acreage that John Reed had owned. They did not operate the mine profitably but instead kept the property for nearly eight decades as a southern retreat. The site was recognized as a [National Historic Landmark](#) ^[10] in 1966, and the [North Carolina Department of Archives and History](#) ^[11] three years later consulted the heirs of Armin L. Kelly about acquiring it. In December 1971 the Kellys sold 760 acres at a very reasonable price and donated 70 acres for the establishment of [Reed Gold Mine State Historic Site](#) ^[12].

The [National Park Service](#) ^[13] prepared a master plan for the site, and [Geological Resources, Inc.](#) ^[14], of [Raleigh](#) ^[15] prepared a study of the underground workings at the mine. Further planning and historical research were undertaken, and a support group, the [Gold History Corporation](#) ^[16], was formed. In 1971 the General Assembly appropriated funds for development, and a staff began work at the site. Artifacts were collected; a visitors center was built; 400 feet of underground tunnel was restored; roads, bridges, and walking trails were laid out; and the site was opened to the public in April 1977. In the ensuing years, mining machinery and equipment reclaimed from other abandoned mines were displayed at the Reed Gold Mine site. The staff at the site provides interpretive programs, special events, and educational work, and a panning area allows visitors to try panning for gold.

References:

P. Albert Carpenter III, *Gold in North Carolina* (1993).

Linda Funk, *Reed Gold Mine Guidebook* (1979).

Richard F. Knapp, "Golden Promise in the Piedmont: The Story of John Reed's Mine," *NCHR* 52 (January 1975).

Knapp, ed., *North Carolina's State Historic Sites: A Brief History and Status Report* (1995).

M. A. Schwalm, *A Hessian Immigrant Finds Gold: The Story of John Reed* (1996).

Additional Resources:

National Park Service Historic Landmark: <http://tps.cr.nps.gov/nhl/detail.cfm?ResourceId=428&ResourceType=District> ^[13]

ANCHOR, Reed Gold Mine: <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/reed-gold-mine> ^[17]

NC Historic Sites, Reed Gold Mine: <http://www.nchistoricsites.org/reed/> ^[12]

NC Historical Marker L-7, Reed Gold Mine: <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?ct=ddl&sp=search&k=Markers&sv=L-7%20-%20REED%20GOLD%20MINE> ^[18]

1979 Act to appropriate funds for Reed Gold Mine: <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/p249901coll22&CISOPTR=389707&REC=7> ^[19]

Subjects:

[Antebellum \(1820-1861\)](#) ^[20]

[Civil War \(1861-1865\)](#) ^[21]

[Early Statehood \(1789-1820\)](#) ^[22]

[Mines and mineral resources](#) ^[23]

Natural resources [24]

Places [25]

Post War 20th Century (1946-2000) [26]

Authors:

Remsburg, Robert L., III [27]

Origin - location:

Cabarrus County [28]

From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.[29]

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[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/reed-gold-mine> [2] <https://www.ncpedia.org/gold-hill-mine> [3] <https://www.ncpedia.org/portis-gold-mine> [4] <https://www.ncpedia.org/industry/gold-rush> [5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/gold-rush> [6] <https://www.ncpedia.org/industry/gold-uwharries> [7] <http://www.nchistoricsites.org/reed/history.htm> [8] <http://www.townofmidland.us/> [9] <https://www.ncpedia.org/civil-war> [10] https://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/founders/sitec33.htm [11] <http://www.history.ncdcr.gov/> [12] <http://www.nchistoricsites.org/reed/> [13] <http://tps.cr.nps.gov/nhl/detail.cfm?ResourceId=428&ResourceType=District> [14] <http://www.geologicalresourcesinc.com/> [15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/geography/raleigh> [16] <http://www.ncgoldhistory.com/> [17] <https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/reed-gold-mine> [18] <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?ct=ddl&sp=search&k=Markers&sv=L-7%20-%20REED%20GOLD%20MINE> [19] <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/p249901coll22&CISOPTR=389707&REC=7> [20] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/antebellum-1820-1> [21] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/civil-war> [22] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/early-statehood-1> [23] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/mines-and-mineral> [24] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/natural-resources> [25] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/places> [26] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/post-war-20th-cen> [27] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/remsburg-robert-l-> [28] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-18> [29] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/encyclopedia->