

## Southern Gold

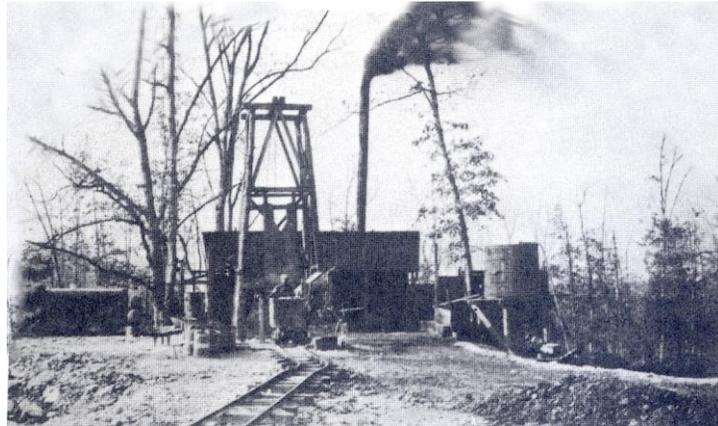
As we begin our third season of prospecting on Claim #1, the Booker Goldmine. We thought it would be interesting to explore the roots of the mine and the local history. To put this in perspective we should examine when gold was first found in Virginia and examine what role the Virginia gold mines played.

What kind of role would the Booker Gold Mine play in this history?

The earliest written reference to gold in the south dates back to times in 1513 and 1564, where Spanish and French Settlers observed Appalachian Indians mining gold in placer gravels.



The earliest authentic reference to gold in Virginia is by Thomas Jefferson in 1782. He describes a lump of ore found on the north side of Rappahannock River about 4 miles below the falls. The gold "was interspersed in small specks through a lump of



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ore of about four pounds weight, which yielded seventeen pennyweight of gold.

In 1799, the Reed nugget was discovered in Cabarrus County, North Carolina, and some years later more lumps were found, one weighing 28 pounds. A mine opened shortly after this nugget was identified as gold.

North Carolina likes to claim the first discovery of gold. Perhaps they have overlooked Mr. Jefferson.

From the years 1800 to 1825 placer mine operations opened in North Carolina and Virginia. Towards the end of this period Georgia also joined the rush. These operations were conducted in farmers fields. There is very little documentation if any available.

The interesting timeframe occurs between the years 1825 to 1835. This is when well funded financiers from northern states and even England sent geologists to Virginia and North Carolina to examine whether it was commercially viable to acquire property and open a gold mine.

Up to 1825 all the gold produced in Virginia and North Carolina came from placer gravels, but during that year veins were opened in Montgomery County and afterwards in Mecklenburg County. Between the years 1804 and 1828, all gold of domestic production deposited at the United States mint, amounting to only \$116,000 came from North Carolina. Gold was worth almost \$ 21 an Ounce.

In 1829 the mint records show a production of \$2,500 from Virginia, and during the same year South Carolina sent gold

worth \$3,500 to the mint. Keep in mind these reports only reflect what was deposited at the US Mint. How much gold was mined and made into local coin? How much was traded as a pinch of gold for supplies or drink? These numbers are not available so it makes it difficult to get an accurate number of true gold production.

### Gold in Virginia

The Virginia Mining Company of New York, operating between the years 1831 and 1834, opened the Grasty tract of land in Orange County and was the first gold mining company incorporated in Virginia. The date of the incorporation was March 10, 1832. The first discovery of gold in the James River basin was probably on the Collins place in Goochland County, about 1829. The first attempt at mining was by the Fishers, who built dams across the branch and prepared to work the gravels in rockers. Before active mining had actually begun.

The discovery of the gold-bearing veins at the Tellurium mine is said to have been made in 1832 by G. W. Fisher while hunting, and according to J. R. Hamilton, veins were found on the Waller property during the same year. Discoveries on other properties in the district followed in rapid succession. When Prof. W. B. Rogers wrote his "Report of the Geological Reconnaissance of the State of Virginia, 1835," Booker's mine (the Morrow mine) was already under active development. On most properties gold was

found first in the branches, and as the placer gravels were frequently rich and could be worked by crude methods necessitating little or no capital, the deposits along the branches were rapidly exhausted. The first primitive washing was



B. VAUCLUSE MINE, ORANGE COUNTY, VA.  
Open cut near south end of area shown on plate 20. Looking southwest. Note prominent fluting in walls.

with the pan, but almost from the first rockers were used on the branch gravels. Long-toms were also used and in places hydraulic mining was carried on, in most places branches had insufficient grade to permit the use of sluice boxes.

In examining some of the early gold mines in Virginia we know the following:

In Orange County the The Grasty Tract gold mine was opened in 1829 and the Vaocluse gold mine was opened in 1832. the Melville opened shortly after that.

In Fauquier County the Franklin gold mine began operations in 1825 and the Liberty in 1834

In Buckingham County the Booker Mine opened in 1835 and the Bondurant in 1836.

In Goochland County The Collins opened in 1830, the Waller opened in 1831, Tellurium in 1832, The Moss opened in 1835 and the Busby in 1836.

In Prince William County the Crawford mine opened in 1835.

In Spotsylvania County the US Mine opened in 1835.

So, the Booker Goldmine was one of the first Gold Mines to open in the country and it opened in that golden age between 1825 to 1835, or the first gold rush.