



# The Prospector

Portland Gold Prospectors, Inc.

GPA Portland, Oregon Chapter



December, 2020

## America's First Gold Rush was Not in California

Most people have heard of the 49ers and the California Gold Rush. Not nearly as many people are aware that there was an American Gold Rush before the 49ers. This rush took place in the Southeastern US primarily in the states of North and South Carolina and Georgia but with additional production and activity in Virginia and Alabama. It all started on a Sunday in 1799 where 12 year old Conrad Reed and some of his siblings were shooting fish with a bow and arrow in Little Meadow Creek, Cabarrus County, North Carolina. Conrad saw something gleaming in the creek and found a shiny rock which he took home to his father – who used it for a doorstep for the next three years. In 1802 John Reed sold his doorstep to a jeweler for \$3.50. It turned out to be a 17 pound gold nugget that was worth roughly \$4,000.00 at the then price of \$20.67 for an ounce of gold and about \$240,000 at today's gold prices. About a year later, John Reed started mining on the property and continued to do so for several decades. The largest documented nugget

from the Reed Mine was 28 pounds. The news of Reed's gold spread slowly but generated a substantial gold rush in the southeastern US. It is unlikely that the Reed gold discovery was the first Southern gold discovery; mint records and other sources indicate gold was sold from the region before 1802. But the Reed discovery generated the first documented regional activity and North Carolina was the largest gold producing state in the US until the 49 rush. This mine is now a state park.

A number of writers and historians have erroneously credited this as the first documented gold found in the US. The earliest gold reported was in fact by Thomas Jefferson in 1782. He recorded a gold-bearing rock weighing 4 pounds and containing about 17 penny weight (0.85 oz.) of gold from the north side of the Rappahannock River about 4 miles below the falls. This is near the present day town of Stafford, Virginia. Gold has been intermittently mined from the Southeastern US ever since the 1799 Conrad Reed discovery. Most recently gold was mined from the state of South Carolina from a number of mines at Barite Hill, Brewer, Haile and Ridgeway. The Haile Mine which was discovered in 1828 has had numerous episodes of production which were interrupted by events such as Sherman's March to the Sea during the Civil War, a boiler explosion which killed Earnest Thies the mine manager in 1908, and the WWII War Production Board Order L-402 closing all US gold mines. This particular history is typical of the mines and gold mining activity in the Southeast.



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**PRESIDENT'S BLOG  
December, 2020**

**>>>>NO MEETING IN DECEMBER<<<<**

I know I sound like a broken record, but there is no Chapter Meeting in December. While some people think we are being too cautious, we don't really have a choice insofar as the restrictions that are in place regarding the Covid-19 scenario and "social gatherings" in Clackamas County.

With that being said, I remain hopeful that we can at least have a Board Meeting in January – if not in person, then maybe by Zoom, which is a program that allows you to see and hear

people in a "Zoom" meeting on your computer, tablet or phone. In the event we decide to proceed with a Zoom meeting, I will ask Tim to send out a "blanket" email, and I will also put it on Facebook. All members are invited to the Board Meeting.

Thank you and **HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**

*Mike*

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**Yankee Jim**

An unfortunate accident...

Digging gold was not a fun job, so miners obviously were not thrilled with having the fruits of their labors plucked by robbers, no matter how romantic "road agents" might have seemed to the readers of 19th-century pulp novels. Thus the robber known as "Yankee Jim" was not a popular figure around the gold camps

northeast of Auburn, where hundreds of millions of dollars in the mineral were being found. The only clue miners had to the masked bandit's identity was the distinctive New England accent with which he spoke. One day, according to a popular account, a stranger wandered into a saloon near the diggings, and asked for a drink -- with a distinctive New England accent. The bartender summoned the vigilantes, who hanged the fellow.

But the robberies continued.

A month or so later, a Wells Fargo agent shot and wounded the robber, and vigilantes hanged him too.

The real Yankee Jim was buried alongside the unfortunate stranger, and they shared a headstone. One arrow pointed to the body of the robber, and another to the body of the stranger.

The inscription read: "Here lies the body of Yankee Jim. We made a mistake and the joke's on him."

# What's On Your Christmas Wish List?



Sometimes I wish "Doc" was Santa Claus!



The new **Washington Gold and Fish** pamphlet is now available. You must have it with you whenever you prospect in the state of Washington.

Download a copy to print here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/environmental/hpa/types/prospecting>



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