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Brief History of Gold Mining in Alabama

By Fred Barnard

Alabama isn't normally thought of as a gold-mining state, but in fact it has a significant history of gold production in the east-central part of the state.

A great belt of gold-bearing metamorphic rocks occurs in the Piedmont region of the southeastern U.S. from Virginia to Alabama, with the greatest production from North Carolina and Georgia. Beginning in 1799, when a North Carolina farm boy found a 17-pound nugget, heightened awareness of gold resulted in local people discovering deposits throughout the region: South Carolina in 1827; Georgia and Virginia in 1829; and Alabama in 1830.

Gold was eventually discovered in nine counties in the east-central Alabama portion of the Piedmont province. Much of the gold was in placer deposits in creeks, such as in the Arbacoochee district in Cleburne County (about 18,000 ounces produced from 1830 to 1880). Quartz lodes were mined at Hog Mountain, near Goldville in Tallapoosa County. The Hog Mountain district operated from 1839 to 1916, and was revived from 1934 to 1938, using cyanide technology in a modern mill. Eventually this mill was dismantled and moved to Georgia. Hog Mountain yielded about 25,000 ounces, which was half of Alabama's cumulative total of some 50,000 ounces.

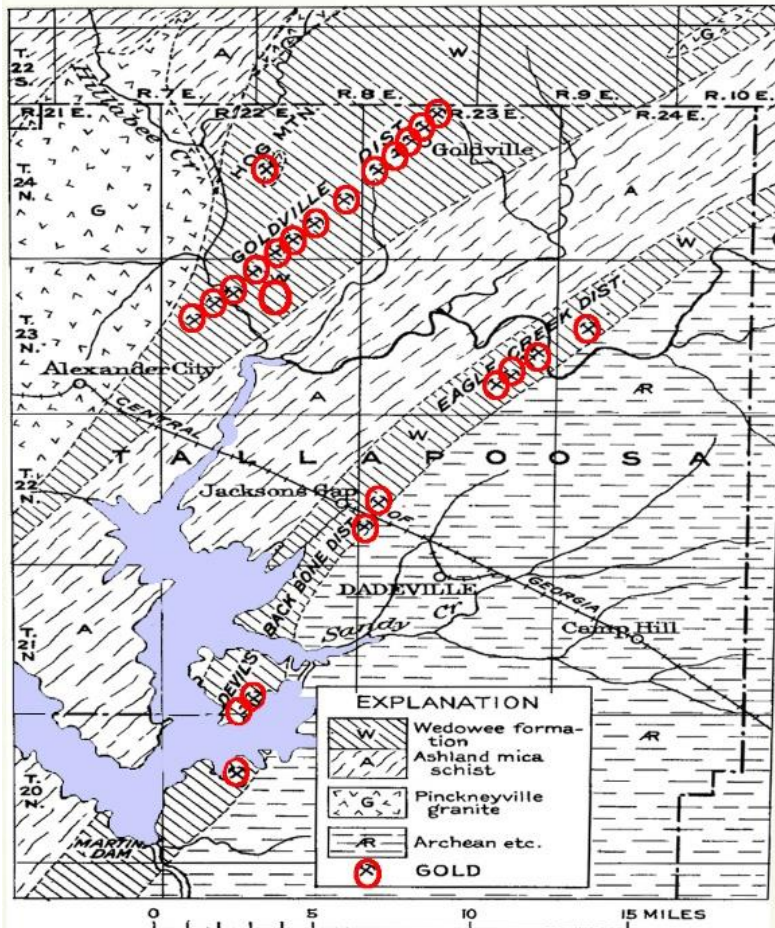


PLATE 3
Modified from Alabama Geological Survey Special Report 14, 1930.

Few signs remain of Alabama's gold-mining history, which was cut short by an exodus of miners to California, starting in 1849. The writings of Peggy Jackson Walls provide insight into the human side of Alabama's gold-mining history.



The 1935 Hog Mountain Gold Mining and Milling Company, reprinted from *The International Atlas of the World, War History Collection*, Chicago, 1946. *Courtesy of Peggy Jackson Walls.*

From page 84 of *ALABAMA GOLD*, by Peggy Jackson Walls, 2016

References:

Peggy Jackson Walls, “Alabama Gold, A History of the South’s Last Mother Lode” History Press, 2016, 176 pages. Summarized in YouTube video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrvjoeBgz3w, accessed November 14, 2021 (run time 40 minutes).

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