

# The First Authenticated Gold Discovery in America

## North Carolina - 1799

There is no doubt that gold mining occurred in "America" before the country was founded, but authentic records of discovery cannot be found. Therefore, the generally accepted first gold discovery is credited to the seventeen-pound nugget found by 12-year-old Conrad Reed in Cabarrus County, North Carolina in 1799.

According to *Historical Sketches of North Carolina 1584 to 1851*, by John H. Wheeler:

**T**he first piece of gold found at the mine was in the year 1799, by Conrad Reed, a boy of about twelve years old, a son of John Reed, the proprietor. The discovery was made in an accidental manner. The boy above named, in company with a sister and younger brother, went to a small stream, called Meadow Creek, on a Sabbath day, while their parents were at church, for the purpose of shooting fish with bow and arrow, and while engaged along the bank of the creek, Conrad saw a yellow substance shining in the water. He went in and picked it up, and found it to be some kind of metal, and carried it home. Mr. Reed examined it, but gold was unknown in this part of the country at that time, he did not know what kind of metal it was: the piece was about the size of a small smoothing iron.

Mr. Reed carried the piece of metal to Concord, and showed it to a William Atkinson, a silversmith, but he not thinking of gold, was unable to say what kind of metal it was.

Mr. Reed kept the piece for several years on his house floor, to lay against the door to keep it from shutting. In the year 1802, he went to market to Fayetteville, and carried the piece of metal with him, and on showing it to a jeweller, the jeweller immediately told him it was gold, and requested Mr. Reed to leave the metal with him and said he

would flux it. Mr. Reed left it, and returned in a short time, and on his return the jeweller showed him a large bar of gold, six or eight inches long. The jeweller then asked Mr. Reed what he would take for the bar. Mr. Reed, not knowing the value of gold, thought he would ask a "big price" and so he asked three dollars and fifty cents (\$3.50)! The jeweller paid him his price.

After returning home, Mr. Reed examined and found gold in the surface along the creek. He then



associated Frederick Kisor, James Love, and Martin Phifer with himself, and in the year 1803, they found a piece of gold in the branch that weighted twenty-eight pounds. Numerous pieces were found at this mine weighting from sixteen pounds down to the smallest particles. The whole surface along the creek for nearly a mile was very rich in gold.

The veins of this mine were discovered in the year 1831. They yielded a large quantity of gold. The veins are flint and quartz.

*"I do certify that the foregoing is a true statement of the discovery and history of this mine, as given by John Reed and his son Conrad Reed, now both dead."*

*George Barnhardt, January, 1848*