

Abstract

The Great Gold Rush Revival: Georgia's Second Gold Rush

By

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In the late 1820s, gold was discovered in the Appalachian foothills of North Georgia within what was then the Cherokee Nation. Gold fever swept through the region, and by autumn of 1829 Cherokee lands were flooded with thousands of miners panning out the creeks and digging into the hillsides. Despite efforts on the part of the state and federal governments to stem this tide of prospectors, the "Great Intrusion," as it came to be known, continued unabated. By 1839 the Cherokee Nation had been driven to what is today Oklahoma on the Trail of Tears. In its place was a bustling gold region.

Though the gold rush in Georgia lasted little more than a decade, it has attracted a good deal of attention over the years. Almost anyone with an interest in the history of Georgia and the South is to some degree familiar with the great antebellum gold rush that swept the Southern Appalachians from Virginia to Alabama in the 1830s. However much less is generally known about later mining activities in Georgia. Nonetheless, around the turn of the century another

epidemic of gold ever struck the state. So great was the excitement generated by this new obsession with the Georgia gold fields that some saw it as a rebirth of the old gold rush days.

"There has been a great revival of interest in gold mining in Georgia." With these words the Atlanta Constitution announced in January of 1899 the beginning of what would become Georgia's second gold rush. This new gold mining boom, which touched other states in the southern gold belt as well, lasted only a few years. But in that time it saw the establishment of the largest gold processing plants ever built east of the Mississippi River, and so forms an important, though largely forgotten, chapter in the story of gold mining in Georgia and the South.