

mine's name appeared first (p. 233) as "Rudisill" and later (p. 286-287) as "Rudisil", the spelling it retained throughout its last operation in the 1930's. As the spelling "Rudisill" appears to be the older version, it is the one adopted for use in this report.

THE GOLD SEEKERS

Two types of Europeans searched for gold in America during the three centuries following Columbus' voyage of discovery. The first type was the profiteer, the person who came to the new world to earn fame and fortune. These people did not intend to settle in America but to grow wealthy and return to Europe. The Spanish conquistadors were the most famous group of these men. They were very successful in their search for gold in Mexico and Peru and, so, were able to get rich quickly on America. They also entered Florida and possibly other areas of the southeastern United States looking for gold. Dr. F. A. Sondley points out that the Spanish explorer Captain Juan Pardo established a base camp near or at a large Indian town called Xualla in the years 1566 and 1567. The site appears to have been located near Lincolnton, North Carolina, and was almost certainly a gold prospecting camp.¹⁵ Although the Indians had carried small amounts of southeastern Piedmont gold to Florida for trading purposes, there is no record that the Spaniards ever succeeded in acquiring any significant quantities of gold in this region.¹⁶

Another approach to acquiring personal wealth in America was in establishing colonies of settlers and then trading with the colonies, more of a long-term proposition, but with goals similar to those of the Conquistadors. Even these colonials did not overlook the possibility of

acquiring gold in North America. Professor George B. H. Hanna, long associated with the United States Branch Mint at Charlotte, noted that Sir Walter Raleigh required that one fifth of all gold and silver found in his colony was to be paid to him.¹⁷ An expedition fitted out by Sir Walter Raleigh and led by Ralph Lane left the first English settlement on Roanoke Island, North Carolina in 1585 to explore the adjacent mainland for gold. They did not find gold but did make the first European discovery of iron ore within the limits of the United States.¹⁸

The second type of European who searched for gold in America was the person who came for the purpose of establishing a permanent home and did not plan to return to Europe. At first, however, these people were more concerned with building a house and making a living than with searching for gold.

The actual settling of Mecklenburg County by permanent immigrants began about 1748.¹⁹ They "were predominantly Scotch-Irish - energetic, industrious people with an unerring instinct for a good trade".²⁰ By 1750 they were trading home-made goods such as hides, tallow, cheese and whiskey for, among other things, iron - a much more practical metal than gold to these pioneers. Charlotte was incorporated as a town in 1768, and it is little wonder, then, that one of the first streets established was named Trade Street.

Prior to the Revolutionary War grist mills powered by water wheels began to be erected along streams in Mecklenburg County.²¹ One such mill, first known as Hayes' Mill and later as the St. Catherine or Bissel's mill, was established just south of present day Remount Road on Irwin Creek (figure 1) and is reported to be the mill "where