

INTRODUCTION

The Southern Appalachian Gold Fields

Charlotte lies within the Southern Appalachian gold fields, a belt enclosing most of the gold deposits in the southeastern United States extending from the Great Falls of the Potomac River to east-central Alabama in the Piedmont and Blue Ridge Provinces of the Appalachian Mountain system.<sup>1</sup> This banana-shaped belt ranges up to 100 miles wide through North and South Carolina (figure 1), and is made up of several smaller distinctive mining districts (figure 2).<sup>2</sup>

The Haile mine at Kershaw, South Carolina, operating between 1829 and 1942, has been the leading gold producer in the southeast, producing over 125,000 ounces of gold. Second is the Gold Hill Mine, Gold Hill, North Carolina, operating between 1842 and 1935, producing about 160,000 ounces of gold. A third mine operating between 1838 and 1935 with production probably near equal to the Gold Hill mine was the Findley Ridge mine at Dahlonega, Georgia. While other mines were in smaller deposits, there were hundreds of them producing a considerable amount of gold.<sup>3</sup> The table on the following page lists gold production for seven southeastern states.

The Occurrence of Gold.

Gold is an exceedingly rare metal making up only .0004 percent of the earth's crust.<sup>4</sup> Yet ore values of 1/2 ounce of gold per ton, a concentration of 80,000 times the average crustal level, are commonly mined economically. Fortunately, various geologic mechanisms have acted to concentrate minerals.

Figure 2. Mining districts comprising the southern Appalachian gold fields. Daryl W. Chevie, Southern Gold (New York: Vantage Press, 1977, 25.