

medium of exchange. Denison Olmsted recounts that, "Almost every man carries about with him a goose quill or two of it (gold), and a small pair of scales in a box like a spectacle case. The value as in patriarchal times, is ascertained by weight, which, from the dexterity acquired by practice, is a less troublesome mode of counting money than one would imagine. I saw a pint of Whiskey paid for by weighing off three and a half grains of gold".⁴⁰

Much of the mining and prospecting was done on a part-time basis by farmers working their own lands. "When the crops were laid by, the slaves and farm hands were turned into the creek-bottoms, thus utilizing their time during the dull seasons. Where mining proved more profitable than planting, the former superseded the latter entirely."⁴¹ By the early 1820's, however, there were a considerable number of men who made their entire living by mining, and "itinerant German miners and mineralogists had already come into the country in some numbers".⁴² These men usually leased land and paid a portion - one fourth to one half - of gold found to the landowner for the right to mine.

SAMUEL McCOMB'S MINE

While small amounts of placer gold are reputed to have been found prior to the Revolutionary War at the site of the Dunn mine and placer mining was common in Mecklenburg by the early 1820's, it was not until 1825 that Samuel McComb discovered and began mining gold-bearing veins on his farm near the northern end of the Rudisill lode. This was the first documented lode gold mine in Mecklenburg County. McComb's discovery was on one of a series of low hills and ridges that occur along the east side of Irwin Creek. Little is known of his mining activities at the site

except that no deep mining was done. In all likelihood he and his farm hands first mined the more easily workable, near-surface, weathered portions of the veins by means of pick and shovel and recovered the gold by panning. He may also have employed the rocker, long tom and sluice-box as these devices had already been developed and were in use in local placer mining.⁴⁴ However, McComb's mine was not a placer operation and, as excavations exposed the hard quartz veins, it was necessary to grind the ore. We have no record of the method of grinding employed at the McComb's mine. However, Tompkins reported that about 1825 both the Mexican arrastra and the Chilian grinding mills were known to be in use in the region.⁴⁵

Samuel McComb is reported to have become a rich and prominent man due, at least in part, to his activities with respect to gold. Within a year or two another lode mine, the Capps Hill mine, located in the vicinity of Capps Hill Mine Road between Beatties Ford Road and Bellhaven Boulevard, was in operation and appeared along with the McComb mine in Professor Elisha Mitchell's map of 1828 (figure 4).⁴⁶

Meantime, plans to develop Catawba River navigation, begun in 1801, were not progressing well and people began agitating for railroads as well as improved public roads. By 1825, all white men between the ages of 18 and 45 and all black men between the ages of 16 and 50, were required to work the public roads, and in May 1827 the county court appropriated 200 dollars for a complete survey of county roads and bridges as well as other features.⁴⁷

On April 26, 1825, Charlotte's first newspaper of record, the Catawba Journal, editorialized concerning the nation's first Sunday newspaper published in New York, "If Sunday papers are tolerated here, we may look next for the introduction of Sunday Theatres, and other fashionable vices