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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Geologist Talk in Helen June 15

Dr. Bill Witherspoon, co-author of the popular guide, *Roadside Geology of Georgia*, will present a talk, "Helen in Georgia's Gold Belt: Geology and History," in Helen at 3:00 PM Saturday, June 15. The event, free and open to the public, will be at the Holiday Inn Express, 8100 S Main St, Helen, GA 30545, hosted by the Helen Arts and Heritage Center.

Before Helen became a Bavarian tourist town in 1969, in fact long before its incorporation as a logging town in 1913, it was the site of gold mining from the gravels of the creeks that feed the Chattahoochee. Only two miles west of town, in what is now Smithgall Woods State Park, powerful hoses washed gold out of soft ground, and shafts were sunk into hard rock. Helen lies within a the 160-mile long feature geologists call the Dahlonega Gold Belt.

In a slideshow with animations, Dr. Witherspoon will explain the science behind the formation of North Georgia's gold deposits over a time span of half a billion years, from earliest volcanic activity to the settling of nuggets in streams.

Although Georgia did not host the first gold discovery in the US, it can claim the first gold rush. Many of Georgia's '29ers took their know-how to the 1849 California gold rush. Insights from historians show how Georgia's gold rush fostered its industry and helped give it a different character from neighboring states.

Roadside Geology of Georgia, a full-color 320-page guide, has sold more than 7,000 copies, and is part of a Mountain Press Publishing series for the general reader that has sold over one million copies. "Our goal is to take the reader to Georgia's natural wonders and explain the science that lies behind the scenery," says Witherspoon, who taught geology to K-12 students and their teachers for 17 years at DeKalb County Schools' Fernbank Science Center, and co-authored the 2013 book with Dr. Pamela Gore of Georgia Perimeter College.

Contact for information: Dr. Bill Witherspoon, bill@georgiarocks.us.