

# THE ROCKFINDER

Michiana Gem & Mineral Society  
Tom Noe, Editor  
305 Napoleon Blvd.  
South Bend, IN 46617



# THE ROCKFINDER

FEBRUARY, 1997

# MICHIANA GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY

## 1997 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	.....	Margaret Heinek	7091 E. East Park Lane, New Carlisle, IN 46552-9400
Vice-Pres.	.....	Emily Johnson	62295 Pine Rd., North Liberty, IN 46554
Secretary	.....	Marie Crull	17651 Bryan St., South Bend, IN 46635
Treasurer	.....	Pam Rubenstein	1316 Catherwood Dr., South Bend, IN 46614
Liaison	.....	Michael Slattery	52332 Carriage Hills Dr., South Bend, IN 46635
Past Pres.	.....	Jim Russell	27911 North St., North Liberty, IN 46554

### HEADS OF COMMITTEES

Programs	.....	Emily Johnson	62295 Pine Rd., North Liberty, IN 46554
Hospitality	.....	Pat McLaughlin	515 N. Clay St., Mishawaka, IN 46545
Educational	.....	Gordon Dobecki	11900 Laughlin St., Mishawaka, IN 46544
Librarian	.....	Bob Miller	1106 Clayton Drive, South Bend, IN 46614
Historian	.....	Ed Miller	3431 E. 18th B Rd., Tippecanoe, IN 46570
Sunshine	.....	Sister Jeanne Finske	Bertrand Hall, St. Mary's, South Bend, IN 46556
Publicity	.....	Tom Noe	305 Napoleon Blvd., South Bend, IN 46617
Membership	.....	All Members	
Field Trips	.....	Kathy Miller	1106 Clayton Drive, South Bend, IN 46554

THE PURPOSE of the Michiana Gem & Mineral Society is to promote interest in and study of the earth sciences and the lapidary arts, and the sharing of knowledge and techniques.

General meetings are held the fourth Sunday of each month, 2:00 pm EST, at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 805 S. 29th St., South Bend, IN. Exceptions include field trip meetings, June (field trip), July (no meeting), August (club picnic) and December (Christmas Party).

Board meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month, 7:00 pm, St. Joseph County Public Library, basement level.

The annual club show is Labor Day Weekend.

The Michiana Gem & Mineral Society, a not-for-profit organization, is affiliated with the Midwest Federation of Mineralogical Societies and with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies.

*Rockfinder* staff:

Editor, Tom Noe, 305 Napoleon Blvd., South Bend, IN 46617  
 Co-Editor, Herb Luckert, 221 Marquette Ave, South Bend, IN 46617

Reporters, Bob Heinek, Herb Luckert, club members  
 All contributions for publication should be in the hands of the editor by the 10th of each month. Call (219) 289-2028 or (219) 282-1354. Permission is hereby granted to reprint any original *Rockfinder* articles, as long as due recognition is given along with the reprint.

cut \_\_\_\_\_

**Yearly Membership Dues (Payable before January 1)**

_____ Individual	\$ 6.50 per year
_____ Family	\$10.00 per year
_____ Junior	\$ 2.00 per year

Please send your dues and this form to  
 Michiana Gem & Mineral Society  
 c/o Margaret Heinek  
 7091 E. East Park Lane, New Carlisle, IN 46552-9400

- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| General Geology _____ | Beads _____          |
| Gems & Minerals _____ | Silversmithing _____ |
| Fossils _____         | Artifacts _____      |
| Cabochons _____       | Rockhound _____      |
| Faceting _____        | Crystals _____       |
| Carving _____         | Micromounts _____    |
| Other _____           |                      |

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, St., Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Mo/Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 will attend meetings, yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Mo/Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 will attend meetings, yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Mo/Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 will attend meetings, yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Mo/Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 will attend meetings, yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Anniversary Mo/Date \_\_\_\_\_

# THE ROCKFINDER

Volume 37  
Number 2

The Newsletter of the  
Michiana Gem & Mineral Society

FEBRUARY, 1997

MEETING: Sunday, February 23  
Doors open at 1:30 pm.  
Meeting starts at 2:00 pm.

PLACE: Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
805 S. 29th (29th & Wall)  
South Bend, IN  
Guests are always welcome.

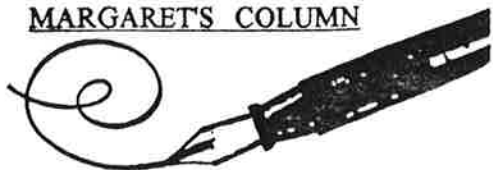
HOSTS: Tom Noe & Sr. Jeanne Finske

PROGRAM: A videotape on field explorations for rocks and minerals. We will also be putting together prizes for the kids' activities at the show next fall. Bring your glue guns; the club will provide the glue.



## UP AND COMING

- March 7-9--Gem & Mineral Show, Wayne County 4-H Fairgrounds, Richmond, IN.  
March 8--Chicago Rocks & Minerals Society Silent Auction, 4600 Peterson Ave, Chicago  
March 14-16--"The Beauty of Copper" show, 302 5th St., Michigan Center, MI.  
March 15-16--Geodeland show, the Union, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.  
March 22--Metro Rock Swap, 23400 Wick Rd., Taylor, MI (Dearborn Club).  
April 5-6--"Ohio's Treasures" show, 300 Broad Street, Columbus, OH.  
April 5-6--Fulton County Rockhounds Annual Show, 250 South Ave. D, Canton, IL.  
April 5-6--West Suburban Lapidary Club Show, 2015 Manchester Rd., Wheaton, IL.  
April 5-6--G.O.L.D. 21st Annual Show, 4625 W. 110th, Oak Lawn, IL.  
April 5-6--Central Ohio Mineral, Fossil, Gem Show. Columbus Rock & Mineral Society and Licking County Rock & Mineral Society, 300 W Broad St., Columbus, OH.  
April 9-12--Indian Mounds Rock & Mineral Club Show, 28th St. & East Beltline, Grand Rapids, MI.  
April 11-13--South Bend Gem & Mineral Show, Century Center downtown, South Bend, IN.  
April 18-20--M.A.P.S. National Fossil Exposition (buy, sell, swap, etc.) Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.  
April 19--Illinois State Geological Survey field trip to Columbia and Waterloo (caverns, sinkholes, fossil collecting in limestone). Contact IL Geological Survey.  
April 26-27--Blackhawk Rock Club Gem & Mineral Show, 7711 N. Main, Rockford, IL.  
May 3-4--"Those Super Sulfates" show, 2250 Seymour Ave., Cincinnati, OH.  
May 9-11--31st Annual Gem Jewelry & Mineral Show. 3501 Lapeer Rd., Flint, MI.  
May 24-26--Chicagoland Gems & Minerals Association, DuPage County Fairgrounds, 2015 Manchester Rd., Wheaton, IL.  
June 27-29--32nd Annual Gem, Mineral-Fossil Show & Swap. Monroe County 4-H Fairgrounds, Bloomington, IN.  
June 28-29--23rd Annual Rockhound Seminar, Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, MI.

MARGARET'S COLUMN

Today is Valentine's Day, so a belated greeting. Last month the Michiana Gem Society celebrated their 35th anniversary with a very good cake and program. If you missed it, because of the snow, slippery roads or the ball games, you were missed. Speaking of slippery roads, going home that day, I hit a patch of ice and slid across the street, sideways right in front of a road truck. Thank goodness, he was stopped, and wasn't moving. Close call!

It won't be long until we can start planning trips to hunt rock. Remember the Society bought a permit to hunt at Mazon Creek in Illinois. Kathy Miller has the permit that will allow a group or family to hunt there. If you take the permit and use it, **IT MUST BE RETURNED**, because without it no one else can go there hunting.

There is an outstanding display of Faberge items at the Cleveland Museum from March 9th through May 11, 1997. There are 32 various private collections, which include collections of Lillian Thomas Pratt, Marjorie Maryweather Post, Malcomb Forbes and many other prominent collector's displays, including some 15 eggs made of jewels, gold and gemstone manufactured from 1880 through 1916. Entrance fees are \$7.00 to \$10.00.

Science Alive was, as usual, a success. It was estimated that 1,000 came into the library each hour. We were so busy I did not get to go to the other floors to see what was available for the youngsters. I would like to thank Gordon Dobecki for the work he did on the Petoskey stones to get them ready for the finished polishing. Gordon had 300 stones that he brought, and he only took home 25, so 250 youngsters went home happy! My thanks to Bess Wise, Addie Niebauer, Herb and Phyllis Luckert, Emily Johnson and Bill Jr., David Peltz, Jessie Zeiger, and Bob Heinek.

We will have a "hands-on" program this month. The members of the Board made some of the items at the last Board meeting, and they are fun things that will be used for the Kiddies Korner in August. Come to the meeting and help construct them.

See you on Feb. 23rd. Bring a friend!

\* \* \* \* \*

Want to make **TRILOBITE COOKIES?**

*This "formula" was recent research by Prof. George W. Hart (who is neither a Professor of gastronomy nor paleontology, but he likes cookies. Preheat oven 350° F.*

Real trilobites are extinct marine animals which lived gazillions of years ago. Real trilobites may or may not have tasted like chicken. Who knows?

1 stick unsalted butter, 1 stick margarine  
2/3 cup sugar  
1 egg, teaspoon vanilla extract  
3/4 teaspoon almond extract  
2 1/2 cup flour, 1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
Apricot preserves  
8 oz semisweet chocolate bits  
Decorative candy dots for eyes

- 1-Blend butter, margarine and sugar in a mixer
- 2-Add egg, vanilla and almond until yucky
- 3-Add flour, baking powder, salt; mix to make dough
- 4-Use cookie press with serrated-bar-shape to form a mess of cookies. Make sizes, babies to big mommas.
- 5- Bake 12 min. (until edges are lightly brown).
- 6- Cool and sort by size, as in next step you will want to combine 2 cookies of same size to make the trilobite.
- 7- Fill matched top/bottom pairs with jam. Squeeze together just hard enough to spread the jam, no oozing.
- 8- Melt chocolate bits in double boiler.
- 9- Dip one end of each cookie in melted chocolate, lay out on wax paper.
- 10- Place 2 candy decorations for eyes.
- 11- Refrigerate (while on cookie sheets) at least 20 minutes.
- 12- YUM-YUM eat-'em-up, or store for later in the refrigerator. They will be extinct again.

From *Rocket City Rocks and Gems*, Huntsville, AL



## MINERAL PRICES: WHY SO HIGH?

by John Betts

I am a part-time mineral dealer. I get many questions about the prices of collectible mineral specimens. Novices are the most confused because they have yet to understand the confusing factors that affect mineral values. The following is a hypothetical chronology of prices and events in the life of a typical mineral specimen.

### The Beginning

All minerals start in the ground. A specimen is not worthless (because collectors may still lust after the undiscovered specimen) but it does not yet have a price tag. It will lie there undisturbed, as it has for millions of years, until one of two things happens. Either it will erode from the solid rock, work its way into a sedimentary deposit and start another cycle of rock formation, or man will intervene and do something with it. It could go to a smelter to be refined into a commercial/industrial resource, or it could become a collectible mineral specimen. I am going to focus solely on this latter path.

### Price Evolution

A collector digs it up and stores it wrapped in newspaper in his basement. It typically will remain in this state for two or three years, until his wife threatens to toss out all of the "junk" in the basement. Price: \$0.00.

The collector washes it off for the first time and decides it is still worth keeping even though most of the other material he collected should have been left in the ground. He trades it at a swap along with ten other pieces to a collector who can see through the iron staining and dried pocket clay. He gets an amethyst from Brazil in exchange. Price: \$0.50.

The experienced, new owner dissolves the pocket clay and iron staining in acid to reveal the real beauty of the crystals. It is now clean and lustrous. Price: \$5.00.

The specimen is donated to the local mineral club for their fund-raising auction. It sells for \$12.00.

The new owner trades it away at a local swap to a savvy collector who knows the location has just been closed and no more specimens will ever be found. Owner values it at \$25.00.

Years later, *Mineralogical Record* runs an article on the lost location. The author identifies a rare left-handed twin crystal form as unique to the location. The owner doubles the price to \$50.00.

The owner dies, leaving most of his collection unlabeled. His heirs have no idea what to do with the collection. A local mineral dealer calls the widow and offers \$1,800 for the whole collection and will not charge her extra for moving it. The price paid for each specimen approximately \$0.50.

Now the mineral, unlabeled, is misidentified by the dealer as originating in Austria and a \$50.00 price is assigned, along with the "classic" location notation.

The specimen does not sell for two years. The small-time dealer discovers there is no money in selling mineral specimens, decides to sell wire-wrapped amethyst pyramids instead. Sells his whole stock for 20% of the labeled prices. The specimen goes for \$10.00.

The new owner is more knowledgeable and recognizes the true origin of the specimen. He researches the location and makes a Xerox copy of the article in *Mineralogical Record* as a sales prop and prices it at \$100.00.

An "instant" collector, who is making enough money at age 35 to start collecting minerals again, after giving up collecting in high school, buys the specimen for \$90. He is happy. He got 10% off!

Meanwhile, there is so much demand for minerals from the old location that prices climb. Brian Wayne Lees-Thompson (All names used herein are fictitious and are not based in any way on actual persons.) reopens the mine, attracting attention to the location again. Because of savvy marketing and the perceived shortage of specimens, prices are set at numbers that look like long-distance telephone numbers (though the small

***Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face.***

***- Victor Hugo***

specimens are only priced at numbers that resemble zip codes).

After two years the market is saturated. (After all, how many people are there in the world who will pay over \$10K for a mineral specimen... 500?) Mr. Lees-Thompson can't give them away. Prices drop to 10% of post-reopening prices. The minerals from the mine become a commodity worth about as much as Uruguayan amethyst! Meanwhile our specimen is sold to a new owner for \$150.00.

He shows the specimen to an experienced collector who owns a microscope. They spot rare inclusions of balonium. They write an abstract that is accepted for presentation at the Rochester Mineralogical Symposium. They give a 15-minute presentation. It is offered for sale for \$500.00.

It sells immediately to a locality collector who specializes in that location only. It is placed in a position of honor in his collection. An abstract is published in *Rocks and Minerals* magazine. The collector is offered \$1,000 for it and he refuses.

As the owner's age goes up, so does the mineral's value in the owner's mind. But he also knows that he can't take it with him when he passes on. He offers it to a local museum for \$5,000. The museum has an annual acquisition budget of \$1,000. They try to find a donor to purchase the specimen for the museum.

In the meantime, the owner dies. The heirs know nothing about the collection, they just want to move into the house. So everything is hauled away by the trash hauler. The mineral specimen ends up in the local landfill and starts the rock-forming cycle anew.

### **So What Is a Mineral Really Worth?**

This silly chronology illustrates that the price is determined in varying parts by aesthetics, rarity, location, associations, uniqueness, marketing and scholarly study. As with art, value increases with knowledge of the subject. There is no absolute value. There are no hard and fast rules (Adler, 1981).

If there were not mishaps along the way, the greater fool theory would prevail. Each owner would buy it and sell it to a greater fool who will

pay more. Eventually it works its way up the price ladder until it reaches a practical limit. As collectors, all that matters is whether there is a bigger fool out there willing to pay more than we did. And there is.

Reference:

Adler, Mortimer J., 1981, *Six Great Ideas*, MacMillan Publishing Co., New York

New York Mineralogical Club *Bulletin*, (Oct., 1996)

## **RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT NOTRE DAME**

Next time you're out on campus, check out the displays from the former Geology Department which are on view in the Cushing Engineering Building. (The Geology Department is now merged with the Engineering Department.) Cushing is between the Law School and the Snite Museum (O'Shaughnessy Hall), pretty close to the stadium. A long corridor is lined with displays of minerals crystals and a full range of specimens from all the major groups. There's also a nice gathering of tourmaline crystals which was donated by a collector. Some fossils are also on display.

There are a few fossils in the entrance foyer to the biology building, between the library and the JACC.

In addition, the Hesburgh Library has files of all the U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps for the entire United States. Anyone can look at these, and they are very handy for planning trips. They can't be checked out, but you could photocopy sections that you want. Just ask at the Information Desk for directions to the maps. They're on the first floor.

All the books from the former Geology Library are now kept in Hesburgh Library, and anyone can go in and use them. (The public cannot check them out, though.) There are many shelves of reference books on land forms, minerals, fossils, all the USGS publications, many periodicals, etc. There's a photocopier on the same floor, if you don't have a library card to check them out.

Of course, the front of the Hesburgh Library has one of the largest stone mosaics in the world, which is well worth a visit by rockhounds.

## SOME SUREFIRE SIGNS THAT YOU'RE A ROCKHOUND

Many mineral collectors use the term "rockhound" to describe themselves and those who share their interests. Others seem to be more comfortable labeling themselves as "casual collectors," reserving the term "rockhound" for those exhibiting extreme and obsessive levels of interest and involvement with rocks and collecting. If you're uncertain as to which camp you're really in, here are some surefire signs your level of interest in rocks has exceeded casual or rockpup levels and you've finally graduated to full-blown rockhound.

You're probably a practicing rockhound if three or more of these signs apply to you. If ten or more apply you are advised to seek professional help immediately!

You're a rockhound if...

You can pronounce the word "molybdenite" correctly on the first try.

You think the primary function of road cuts is tourist attractions.

You own more pieces of quartz than underwear.

You associate the word "hard" with a value on the Mohs scale instead of "work."

The rockpile in your garage is taller than you are.

You have a strong opinion as to whether pieces of concrete are properly called "rocks."

The local university's geology department requests permission to hold field trips in your backyard.

You associate the name "Franklin" with New Jersey instead of "Ben."

There's amethyst in your aquarium.

Your wife has ever had to ask you to move flats of rocks out of the tub so she could take a bath.

Your spelling checker has a vocabulary that includes the words "polymorph" and "pseudomorph."

Your children are named Rocky, Jewel and Beryl.



On a trip to Europe, you were the only member of the group who spent time looking at cathedral walls through a pocket magnifier.

They won't give you time off from work to attend the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show and you go anyway.

You begin fussing because the light strips you installed on your bookshelves aren't full spectrum.

You've ever purchased an individual, unafaceted rock, regardless of the price.

You've ever spent more than ten dollars for a book about rocks.

You shouted "Obsidian!" to a theater full of movie-goers while watching *The Shawshank Redemption*.

The polished slab on your bola tie is six inches in diameter.

You find yourself compelled to examine individual rocks in driveway gravel.

The USGS identifies your collection as a major contributing factor to isostasy in your state.

You know the location of every rock shop within a 100-mile radius of your home.

The rock shop owners send you get well cards when they haven't seen you for a week.

You're retired and still thinking of adding another room to your house.

Your idea of a "quiet, romantic evening at home" involves blue mineral tack and thumbnail boxes.

You're planning on using a pick and shovel while you're on vacation.

You can point out where Tsumeb is on a world globe.

You think Franklin, New Jersey, might be a cool place to go on a vacation.

You associate the word "saw" with diamonds instead of "wood."

You begin wondering what a complete set of the *Mineralogical Record* is worth.

When you find out, you actually consider paying it.



The baggage handlers at the airport know you by name and refuse to help with your luggage.

You receive a letter from the county informing you that a landfill permit is required to put any more rocks on your property.

Your Internet home page has pictures of your rocks.

There's a copy of *Dana's Manual* next to your toilet.

You still think pet rocks are a pretty neat idea.

You get excited when you discover a hardware store that stocks 16-pound sledge hammers and 5-foot-long pry bars.

You debate for months on the Internet concerning the relative advantages and drawbacks of vibratory versus drum tumblers.



Your employer has asked you not to bring any more rocks to the office until they have time to reinforce the floor.

You find rocks when you empty your pockets at night.

You went to a rock festival--and you hate music.

You can find Quartzsite on a map in less than 5 seconds.

You think you *know* how to pronounce "chalcedony."

You are thinking about giving out specimens for Halloween.

You planted flowers in your rock garden.

You purchase things like drywall compound just to have another bucket to carry rocks in.

The club you belong to uses rocks for centerpieces for the annual Christmas Dinner.

You give directions like, "Turn right at the green farmhouse..."

You watch the scenery in movies instead of the actors.

You decide not to get married because you'd rather keep the stone from the ring yourself.

You never met a rock you didn't like.

You've ever tried to sneak a costly mineral specimen past your spouse.

You dream about rocks rather than rockettes.

You've ever thought there should be a "Be kind to rocks week."

Rocks speak to you and say, "Take me home with you."

You know the difference between schist and coprolite.

You plan your vacation around a gem and mineral show.

You sing "I love thy rocks and rills" a little louder than the rest of "My Country 'Tis of Thee."

You think of heaven as "The Happy Rock-Hunting Grounds."

You've ever had technicolor dreams of discovering a gem pocket.

Thanks to rockhounds Mel Albright, Richard Bush, Betty Commean, Dan Imel, Daniel Russell and Don Lichtenfelt for their contributions to this list!

The Brontotherium was the largest (12 feet tall) land animal in America during the Cenozoic Era. This animal became extinct before the end of the Oligocene.

