

# **SHOW-ME ROCKHOUNDS**

APRIL 2006 NEWSLETTER

**Dues are \$10.00 per family and \$5.00 for individual memberships. Show-Me Rockhounds is a non-profit organization affiliated with the Association of Earth Science Clubs of Greater Kansas City, Inc. and the Mid-West Federation of Mineralogical Societies. Monthly club meetings are at the Plaza Library in the Large meeting room. Our purpose is to further the study and awareness of the Earth Sciences amongst our membership and the public.**

**OFFICERS:** Marty Mueller President; Rolland Smith Vice-President  
Sharon Penner, Treasurer; Secretary & newsletter Carol Ferguson.

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:**

Howdy, it's April. And that's no joke.

Slowly yet surely we are processing the calcites we had picked up at the American Mill site down by Granby. Charley is starting to fuss at me for the card table still set up in the family room and I'm thinking about trying to take stereo photographs of some of them.

One thing on the Granby trip, with walking through the woods that have grown over the dump piles, was the need for eye protection. I didn't hear of anyone getting hurt, we were lucky, that environment is prime eye poking habitat. Remember your safety glasses.

April 22<sup>nd</sup>, we are planning a trip to Lake Kanopolis, for some this trip is a two night event. The closest city of size is Salina, about three hours from Kansas City, and the lake is another 30 – 40 minutes beyond to the south and west. We will be starting at the parking area at the south end of the dam; the cliff face on the shore has been an important collecting site. About five years ago a large section of the Dakota Sandstone collapsed covering the zone between it and the Kiowa Shale. The collecting we'll do there will be based upon the weathering of the sandstone and the water level in the lake, after dealing with that area; we may go north to Horse Thief Canyon. We can eat there and along the shore, collect the small white barite roses that weather out of the Dakota Sandstone, there are also iron cemented concretions with fossil carbonized wood in them. Bruce thinks he knows where the barite crystals can be found, so we may give that a try.

After those three stops on Lake Kanopolis, we will drive up and over to Lake Wilson. At Lake Wilson, we will meet at the parking area south of the east end of the dam. This location has been good for collecting selenite crystals. We often collect in the cut; this is a large ditch for overflow from the lake, here we find more selenite crystals and shark teeth. Once we're done there everyone can choose what they want to do.

You can go north to Lucas, where you can see the Garden of Eden. This concrete edifice speaks of political activism of a century gone by. Or less than an hour to the west is the Sternberg Museum of Natural History. Either one is a good choice.

This Saturday, April, 8<sup>th</sup>, is a mineral sale by a couple of our friends that sell in the swap dollar area at the gem and mineral show. Charlie Spencer will be having it in Lee Summit and as I said about collecting, you can do it in the field or you can go to a sale.

Well its time for me to go out to the RV, to start getting it ready for collecting, remember carry a hammer, protect your eyes, and see you at the meeting. President Marty.

**MARCH MEETING:** MARCH 21, 2006 MEETING NOTES

Meeting opened by Martin. Eight regular members along with 5 guests attended the meeting this evening. Guests included Donna Ashley and a family of four—Robin, Jerry, Rick and Michelle. Everyone was happy to see Ted Ferguson at the meeting. Treasurer reported \$1123.65 balance. It was reported there were 6 Show Me Rockhound cases in the show that our club will get \$\$ from the Association.

Martin passed out 2 articles on fossils. One article was about a new fossil T. Rex ancestor not previously known that had been found in China in 2002. The other article dealt with the find of human fossils from a remote Indonesian island of Flores.

Sharon provided information on Ken Stalders Mineral and fossil garage sale in Lees Summit on Saturday April 8<sup>th</sup>.

There was a field trip last Saturday to the Granby area east of Joplin for calcites and other minerals. Martin pulled out some large calcites and vugs with hemimorphite. He also had a small photo album of pictures taken at the site. Martin indicated there are a couple of field trips coming up. Tentative date April 22<sup>th</sup> for weekend trip to the Lake Kanopolis and Lake Wilson areas for pyrite, turritella fossils, and selenite and possibly sharks teeth. Also, May 13<sup>th</sup> weekend for a trip to the Jet/ Cherokee Oklahoma area to the salt plains for selenite crystals. Call Martin at 816-333-2328 for more information.

Fossil of the month presented by Rolland was the Sordes Pilosus—an ancient flying squirrel of the order of Pterosauria.

The program this evening was *Rockhound: The Movie*. An entertaining and informative DVD about the annual Quartz festival in Mt. Ida, Arkansas, collecting ancient sea fossils in the Hill Valley area of Texas and the famous Barite Roses of Oklahoma. Bill and Lois Patillio were featured in the video as the creators of the “Rock Food table” which we have had at our show in the past.

Per Rolland: Fossil for April will be *Psittacosaurus mongoliensis*. The April program will be Rolland discussing the Geology and paleontology of the Lake Kanopolis area.

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**Calendar of Events:**

**April 18<sup>th</sup> Tuesday SHOW ME ROCKHOUND MEETING 7PM**

**April 22** Saturday Field trip to the Lake Kanopolis and Lake Wilson areas, Salina, KS  
Call Martin at 816-333-2328 for more information

**May 5-7** McPherson, KS Gem & Mineral Swap 4-H Fairgrounds Hickory & Woodside  
Contact Marvin Lundquist @ 620-241-7003 or email [swederocker@mpks.net](mailto:swederocker@mpks.net)

**May 6-7** Central Missouri Mineral, Fossil & Gem Society Annual Swap in Rolla, MO  
Regional Fairgrounds 12860 S. Hwy 63 Contact Ray Prater @ 1-573-341-2383

**May 13** Field trip to the Jet/ Cherokee Oklahoma area to the salt plains for selenite crystals. Call Martin at 816-333-2328 for more information

**May 16<sup>th</sup> Tuesday SHOW ME ROCKHOUND MEETING 7PM**

**June 9-11** Rocky Mtn Federation Show in Stillwater, OK; Charles Ramming 1-405-624-3448

**June 9-11** Missouri Mines Annual Swap @ Missouri Mines State Historic Site in Park Hills, MO



## Highway Claims Rock Shop

By Todd C. Frankel  
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

ALEXANDRIA, MO.

Betty Sheffler stubbed out her cigarette in the turtle ashtray, shifted in her motorized scooter and, with a whiff of resignation, signed the papers. She'd get her money in a week or so. For now, the 80-year-old woman lit into the young man from the Missouri Department of Transportation. "It is a house of history. And it seems such a shame, such a pitiful shame for so much thought to be put into any place," Sheffler said, "and have it destroyed."

They were gathered inside Sheffler's horseshoe-shaped house in Missouri's far northeast corner. The new highway - the reason for this awkward meeting - runs close by on its way to the Iowa border. The home's exterior walls were covered with exotic, multihued rocks from all over the world. Inside there was even more rock - Mexican calcite, Brazilian quartz and thousands of Keokuk geodes, rocks unique to this region.

Sheffler's Geode Mines and her unique rock shop have been considered a treasure for collectors, and an ever-more valuable one as the places open to rock hunters become increasingly hard to find, just like the rocks themselves.

Sheffler has until May 1, 2006 to leave the land she's owned for nearly 60 years. The state needs it to expand Highway 61 to four lanes from two, part of the Avenue of the Saints running from St. Louis to St. Paul. Sheffler fought the state. But the state pushed back with a court-ordered condemnation under eminent domain. Which is why the man from the highway department was visiting last week with the promise of compensation. "I'd just as soon tear up the check and set fire to it and stay home," Sheffler said. "But it's not my home anymore, now is it?"

As a young girl, Betty hunted geodes - ordinary round rocks that belie their sparkling crystal interiors. Geodes were easy to find back then. The Keokuk region has one of the highest concentrations of geodes in the nation. Most were deposited more than 300 million years ago when a shallow sea covered the land. Keokuk geodes are the Iowa state rock.

In 1947, she married and moved to the property she is now losing to the highway. She recalled how her late husband was astonished at the truckloads of rocks that came with his new bride. Twelve years later, she opened her rock shop. In 1960, she opened her first geode mine. And in 1971, she and her husband finished the horseshoe-shaped house with 60 tons of rocks laid in the walls. The above-ground geode mine looks like an old excavating pit with walls of dirt-covered shale. That's where the geodes hide. Sheffler started out charging \$2 per person to mine. She closed one mine and opened another. Last summer, the price was \$15 per person for 50 pounds of rocks. "It is one thing to show a geode in a display case," Sheffler said. "It is another thing to let people go in and dig their own and get the thrill of it."

The 526-mile Avenue of the Saints project is completed except for a 17-mile stretch around Sheffler's place. The narrow highway is considered treacherous. Trucks fly past with only a double yellow line in between. In 2000, this stretch emerged as a symbol of unsafe roads when a teenager, just weeks from her high school graduation, was killed in a head-on collision. Sheffler has known for years that the state might take her land.

**(...Rock Shop cont..)**

Last August, the highway department went to court, invoking the government's right to take private property for certain purposes. In January 2006, the state paid \$632,868 to compensate Sheffler for the loss of 21 acres, according to state records. She will keep about 30 nearby acres.

"It's a terrible thing for all of us," said June Culp Zeitner, of Rapid City, S.D. Zeitner, known as the "Queen of Mineralogy," has authored nine books on rocks. At age 90 and with the days of climbing rock piles behind her, Zeitner is working on a new book. This one is about geodes. She has visited Sheffler's mine many times. "Every place we lose, we can't get back. It was the last place that I know of where we knew we could find something and it was legal," Zeitner said.

Most of the land is empty. But the highway and the new interchange will run through her shop and between the two geode mines. Sheffler's son, Tim, manages the business for his mom. He wants to reopen the shop in a new location. He doesn't know what will happen to the mines. He expects the mines to be closed this year, and perhaps forever. Rockhounds, with numbers estimated at more than 50,000 nationwide, say they don't know what they'll do without Sheffler's place. There are perhaps fewer than a dozen such geode mines in the country, and none as well-known.

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ROCK CREATIONS

***Quigleys Castle*** in Eureka Springs, Arkansas

As soon as Albert Quigley (1905-1972) headed for work at the lumber mill one June morning in 1943, Mrs. Elise Quigley (1910-1984) gathered their five children about her and ordered: "We're going to tear down the house." And demolish the family's three-room house they did.

Mrs. Quigley had already designed her dream home. To bring nature indoors, four feet of earth was left bare between the edges of the living space and the walls. Into the soil which borders the rooms on the inside, Mrs. Quigley planted flowering, tropical plants that grow up to the second-story ceiling. The plants are over fifty-five years old now.

In back of the house stood a **heap of rocks and fossils** that Mrs. Quigley began collecting as a 9-year old girl. The pile in the back yard had grown into a mountain as she continued collecting from hillsides and creek beds that surrounded the property in the beautiful Arkansas Ozark hills.

The rocks were to assume an important part of the house. Working for three years, Mrs. Quigley covered the four two-story walls with rocks she selected for their beauty, shape or resemblance to familiar objects. She had also created rock garden beds and planters and bird baths. The collection of fossils, quartz crystals, druzy quartz, barite roses, rose quartz, shells and arrowheads, and petrified wood is beyond imagination.

***The Grotto*** in West Bend, Iowa

The magnificent structure that fills an entire city block was created by the use of many different types of rocks and minerals. The founding father and creator of The Grotto was Father Dobberstein, who's studies had included courses in geology. He began combing the mid-west for rocks and minerals. On vacations he ranged farther afield, making rock-hunting expeditions to the Black Hills of South Dakota or to the deserts of the southwest. Typically, a few days after his return, a freight car would arrive in West Bend loaded with petrified wood, fossils, stalactites, calcite, quartz crystals, jasper, malachite, turquoise, and other geological wonders. Townspeople supplemented these finds with boulders from their fields and with agates and geodes collected beside local rivers. No accounting was made either of the many man-hours of labor involved in building the Grotto or the money expended in gathering the stones and shaping them into a harmonious unit.

## **Did you know this about the mineral ZEOLITE?**

**Q: *I inherited a rug that smells like smoke. How can I get the odor out?***

**A:** Zeolite, a porous mineral that absorbs the molecules that cause odors, should be able to extract the smell. Available as small rocks or as a powder, zeolite is naturally occurring but also can be produced artificially. It is sold at pet stores and home centers, often under the name "volcanic mineral." Larger quantities can be found for a lower cost at stores that sell swimming pool supplies. (Zeolite is used in pool filters.)

To rid a rug of a smoky smell, spritz the surface with water, then cover it with a layer of zeolite about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch thick. In a couple of days, collect the zeolite, and vacuum the rug. If the rug is small, you can also put it in a plastic trash bag with a few cups of zeolite. Tie the bag, and leave it for a few days. Zeolite is reusable—place it in the sun for a day or two and it will discharge the smells it has absorbed—and can be employed to treat a variety of odors, including those on furniture, fabrics, and car upholstery.

*Online:*  
our favorite tips  
[marthastewart.com/askmartha](http://marthastewart.com/askmartha)