

SHOW-ME ROCKHOUNDS

JUNE 2005 NEWSLETTER

MEETINGS are held at the WESTPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY each month at 7:00pm. The library is located at 201 Westport Rd. KCMO. There is parking on the side and in the rear of the library. 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. Our purpose is to further the study and awareness of the Earth Sciences amongst our membership and the public.

OFFICERS: Marty Mueller President; Vice-President ????
Sharon Penner, Treasurer Secretary & newsletter Carol Fergason.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Hello June:

As I had mentioned before, having plans for the warm seasons, we will be busy little beavers. First up is the Missouri Mines Annual Rock Swap during the weekend of June 10th, 11th, and 12th. It is the historic mill at Park Hills; south of St Louis in the Old Lead Belt District. The Association encourages the club members to visit this state historical site. They always bring informative displays to our March Show with a case devoted to new mineral specimens purchased partially funded by Association donations. The Association (through Ted) has put together a field trip for Saturday where we can collect Drusy Quartz, very handsome highly textured quartz great for rock gardens, and Barite, some well formed specimens have been collected. Rain or shine it's been a good time. I know some of us are going to the Rocky Mountain Federation show up in Colorado Springs, the next weekend. This is where timing for our club gets interesting. On June 9th, Sharon Penner will be taking picnic site proposal to the Association, and someone from IGAMS will put forward the August 28th date for the Association Picnic (and I hope) Rock Swap. Then comes our own meeting and I'll still be up in Colorado. I am getting excited for the Show-Me Rockhounds because I've been seeing our club members having a good time sharing collections and sites. Thanks to Frank for getting us into the two quarries in Kansas, we need to invite Bruce Stinemetz to come and show what he collected there and have Ted bring in his snail. Hats off to Rolland for sharing his location for petrified wood, we do need a trip back to Topeka so we can pick up some grab bag material. Yes, so as I was saying, I'll be missing the June meeting while climbing around the Rockies. I will be at the July meeting, I think. Martin

MAY Meeting Minutes:

Ten Rockhounds visited and shared our stories as the meeting was brought to order by Martin. Sharon presented the treasurers report: our club received \$240 for our club cases at the March show and the balance reported was \$1323.28. Minutes for last months meeting were read and approved.

Sharon provided the minutes of the last Association report. Rockhounds voted “NO” to longer show hours for next year. Discussion ensued as to the annual picnic. The Show Me Rockhounds are ready to volunteer to “sponsor” the picnic. We wish to have a swap at the picnic to become an annual swap. Our newest member Linda Leake and Martin will scout out a location, several members will coordinate the swap and others will work with the Association. Our club agreed that Sunday August 28th would be the best day for the picnic and our delegate will take that info to the next Association meeting.

Martin shared his ideas of educational cases that should be sponsored by the Association in that the Association provide monies from the education fund to clubs to purchase materials for educational cases that are donated to science teachers across the metropolitan area. These cases would be created by the various rock hobby clubs.

Charley shared info re: the RMFS field trips—now listed on the web site at www.csms.us

Carol passed around Thank You cards that were signed by members who attended the last quarry field trip.

Ted shared the rock of the month leaverite and Rolland shared some fossils. Martin and Charley shared some bone and rock finds from the Dolese quarry.

Calendar of Events:

June10-12 Field Trip and Park Hills Swap Missouri Mines in Park Hills. Call Ted for details 816-985-5624. Friends of Mineralogy meeting 8am Sat June 11th at the historic Missouri Mines site in Park Hills. Call bruce at 816-795-1641 for details of the FOM meeting.

**June 21 Tues Show Me Rockhounds Meeting
7pm Westport Library**

August 19-21----AFMS/MWF show with the St Louis Association of Earth Science Clubs will be held at the Greensfelder Recreation complex in Queeny Park on 550 Weidman Rd ; More to come....

The Association Picnic Sunday August 28.....

After going off and on over the years to the picnic, I find myself at a little bit of a loss. Because my view of the Association has been built upon the March Show, I haven't given much thought to the picnic. Luke warm to the point of questioning why we even have the picnic. Charley and I have talked about the clubs and their relationship to the Association with the results being the Show-Me Rockhounds' involvement on the picnic. I have for a year been pushing for a rock swap, an idea that was born of the contention over the new summer show that many felt was in competition with Ed Tripp's November show. I remember being told of several shows that had their roots in small swaps, hearing stories from Hounds now long in tooth setting up card tables, pitchers of lemonade, and rocks. Good, bad and even ugly rocks, some were sold, some were traded, some were given, many went to new homes to be dusted off, planted in gardens, cut into slabs, cabs, and polished. Is this where the cutting rough was found?

Now this year the Association Picnic is to be hosted by a member club, that club is us, the Show-Me Rockhounds. I want to know what being a host means. Linda Leake and I have emailed each other about the scope of being the host for the picnic. Are we limited to proposing time and place for the Association to grumble and rumble over until it is to their liking? Or does the host get the autonomy to set the table and provide the meat and drink?

Of course being the host club our duties and responsibilities are in between. The Association will pay for the site, the meat and drink, plus cover some of the other odds and ends that I don't know of. I don't know how much of the picnic logistics that the Show-Me Rockhounds will have to deal with. I do know that it is up to us to form, promote, and supervise the rock swap. As soon as this first step is made by the Association June 9th on us having a rock swap, we need to inform as many members in our clubs across town about it. We have to our July meeting to see to having members to commit to packing up rocks for the swap. The reason I use the work "commit" is that in my life the picnic was something to do but not a priority, easy to find something else to do. To ask anyone to load up a trunk or truck with rocks, well that takes commitment. Commitment to do as much as we can, making this a priority and maybe we will have another rock swap next year. Martin

Subject: Benitoite Mine Trip Report:

Hello Everyone, After staying in Coalinga Friday night, June 3, we headed out to the Benitoite Mine at about 9:30 on Saturday. Weather was perfect. For those of you who have never been to the mine or this area, outside of the middle of the Mojave Desert, it is probably the most remote area in California. It must be the least populated county in the state as there are no significant cities or any highways in the entire county. The mine is right in the middle of the San Benito Mountains and at about 5000ft

elevation. It was an easy hour to hour and a half drive from I-5 to the mine. This trip by the Gem and Mineral Council was led by Tony Kamph, curator of the LA Nat. History Museum, and the Benitoite Mine manager (Brian Lees, the mine owner, was unable to attend). This is the last planned collecting trip to the mine as it is nearly reclaimed following it's final year (which unfortunately ended just a few weeks ago). After a very brief talk on the type of rocks and mining done in the area, it was time to collect. We were showed the type of rocks to look for, basically the classic blue schist with natrolite coating, and off we went. The best case scenario for the best crystals is to find large areas covered in natrolite but with evidence of included neptunite and benitoite so that the natrolite could later be etched away revealing perfect crystals. Easier said than done as virtually all the natrolite found was isolated large masses with no indication of mineralization or as small drusy areas on the schist. I began collecting in the stream nearby. Apparently the miners had recently broken rocks in the area, so a small area in the stream had numerous small partial crystals of benitoite. I took quite a bit of this "gravel" and although I got numerous bits of crystal, nothing was significant or note-worthy. I then headed up the hill above the newly filled in pits to dig through the tailings. These tailings are what the mine owners are currently re-screening before backfilling the small pits. For the first few hours, I did manage to find a few nice pieces with some broken crystals of neptunite, some larger crystals of natrolite, and a few pieces which have potential but need to be etched. Most of the rock was caked in mud, so it required some energy and luck to be able to clearly see if you found a nice piece. One of the larger piles was hosed off with the water truck, and we all rushed to it in hopes of finding a good specimen before it dried. One gentleman found a huge, 1in benitoite crystal embedded in natrolite. Although it was basically broken in half, it had the classic crystal form and by far was the largest crystal found during the day. My luck really changed in the afternoon. After eating a sandwich while digging in the stream again, I headed back up the hill to dig on the steepest, least visited pile. I broke a piece of natrolite in half, revealing numerous small crystals of benitoite on both sides. After etching this piece, I should end up with some good quality crystals. I then found a fantastic small piece containing about a 1/2in partially broken benitoite associated with a nice neptunite crystal. The benitoite is very gemmy and could be better if I etch the piece, although I like it in matrix better. I then found a 1in piece of natrolite covering several benitoite chips. It isn't spectacular, but the color is amazing. I also found a large piece with a partially exposed benitoite crystal in the natrolite which should look good when cleaned up. Finally, the highlight of my day

came at the very end as I was near the top of the steep hill. At first I thought it was a neptunite, but it was actually a perfect, undamaged gemmy benitoite sticking out of a natrolite matrix. It will make a wonderful thumbnail. At the very end of the day, the mine manager let us go through a pile they were currently screening. Many people found some great, well formed, neptunite and benitoite crystals, although not very gemmy. Unfortunately, those of us who were working hard digging on the upper hill got to this pile late and only found a few crystals. Overall, the trip was a success and everyone had a good time. With the exception of the "salted" screening pile at the end, those people who were willing to work hard, had patience, and didn't mind getting dirty or climbing hills were rewarded with decent pieces. However, although some beautiful natrolite crystals were found, it appears as though the days of large plates with perfect benitoite crystals surrounded by 1in+ neptunite crystals are long over. Some interesting pieces can still be found, although I wouldn't set expectations too high or expect perfect undamaged crystals. As a geologist, just examining a classic blue schist was pretty exciting. The mine is currently being reclaimed, and, due to its small size, this shouldn't take very long. It is too bad that something couldn't be done about this and make it into a kind of "protected rockhounding site" aka Topaz Mountain in Utah. My only concern with this would be, unlike Topaz Mountain, there isn't a lot of material (with and without crystals) here if you just look at the tailings that haven't been used to backfill the mine. There is not an unlimited supply, and several people with large trucks could really make a dent out of the overall amount available. If you have any further questions about this trip, please let me know. Thank you. Sincerely, Andrew Turner Geologist OMYA California and OMYA Arizona Inc.