

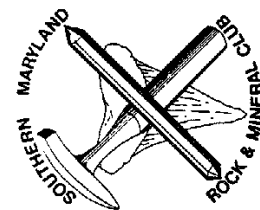
September 2009



SOUTHERN MARYLAND ROCK AND MINERAL CLUB



RockTalk



Message from the President

It has taken me a while, but I think I am finally beginning to understand our rock club and its relationship to the regional and national clubs. Since it was not obvious to me, I thought that the membership might profit from a brief description of these relationships. The parent organization is the AFMS, the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies. Their annual convention was just held in July/August 2009 in Billings, MT. I heard a rumor that some of our members may have attended this event. For more information on the AFMS (including links to the subsidiary federations), please visit www.amfed.org.

The national organization (AFMS) is comprised of seven regional federations. We, the Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club (SMRMC), belong to the Eastern Federation, or EFMLS (Eastern Federation of Mineralogical and Lapidary Societies, Inc.). I

am not sure of where the regional boundary lines are, but a trip to the AFMS web site should answer any questions. The EFMLS has planned out its conventions for the next 3 years. In 2009 it will be in Bristol, CT October 17-18, in 2010 in Newark, DE March 6-7 (which will just miss our rock show on February 20), and in 2011 it will be co-hosted with the AFMS in Syracuse, NY on July 7-10.

The AFMS has 633 societies or clubs, with almost 50,000 individual members. Each year they award prizes in their Bulletin Editors Competition, and the 2009 results are in. As I was reading through the awards, I noticed that in Section VII, the Top 10 Written Features, that 3 of the top ten winners (#4, 8 and 10) were President's Messages that appeared in local rock club newsletters. Unfortunately, I didn't make the cut. I had no idea that anyone was read-

ing, let alone judging. I promise to try and do better in the short time remaining to me.

The good news is that two of our members did win an award in the AFMS competition. In Section X, Top 10 Adult Poetry, Dave Lines won an Honorable Mention for his "A True Tale of the Morefield Mine on Christmas Eve Eve Eve" that appeared in the January 2008 issue of Rock Talk. And not to be outdone, in Section XIII, Top 10 New Editors, our own editor Jessica Thomson snagged the number 9 winner's spot based on the February 2008 issue of Rock Talk. Congratulations to these two winners.

I will not be at the next meeting due to a previous engagement (but if I am lucky, I will return with a specimen or two of Trinitite for Sam's rock collection). See you at the October meeting.

Inside this issue:

Message from the President	1
Big Hill	2
August Meeting Minutes	3
Upcoming Shows	4
The Gold Gastrolith of Calaveras County	5-6
Meet the Member	7
Editor's Message/ Program and Refreshments	8

Meetings

...are held the 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.

Clearwater Nature Center 11000 Thrift Road
Clinton, MD.

For more information, call Michael at (301) 297-4575.

Bill Hill

Ralph Gamba

On Saturday, August 15, Harry League, Tina League, Arnold Klick, Mary Cramer, Ralph Gamba, David and Sami Knies and family met in Crofton to journey to Cornwall, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania to collect minerals at Big Hill.

Cornwall hosted iron mining beginning in 1742. Hurricane Agnes began to flood the mine in 1972 (Figure 1) and mining operations ceased in 1973. The three mine openings (big hill, middle hill and grassy hill) produced approximately 106 million tons¹ of iron ore and over 82 minerals, including gold². Fluids from a diabase intrusive replaced limestone, forming magnetite and other minerals. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum commission offer tours of the Cornwall Iron Furnace (www.cornwalliornfurnace.org).



Figure 1. Hurricane Agnes flooded the pit in 1973.

Tina, Harry, the Knieses, Mary and Ralph arrived the furnace and headed to the hill. Gary and Cindy Lohman and Arnold Klick arrived soon thereafter. We parked alongside Boyd street and headed down the path toward the hill. The Pennsylvania summer storms made the path to the hill swampy. The path was overgrown with weeds and the hill was barely visible from the road.

We collected on the hill but around 12 noon, Harry, Tina and Ralph ventured up the hill along a path on the side of the hill. Tina found nice garnet crystals, some about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch across while Harry (Figure 2) found specular hematite. All (Figure 3) found small magnetite crystals that glistened in the sun along with pyrite and chalcopyrite. Ralph found some small calcite crystals in a vug. Ralph also collected rocks with vugs hoping to duplicate his find of millerite from a previous trip. Harry found a beer can and claimed a find of Miller Lite. With the heat, most people preferred finding Miller Lite to millerite. Gary and Cindy looked for rocks for their pond.



Figure 2. Harry and Tina League examine their find.

Continued on Page 4

SMRMC OFFICERS

PRESIDENT:
Alex Schuman

VICE PRESIDENT (membership):
Ralph Gamba

VICE PRESIDENT (Programs):
Larry O'Callaghan

Co-VICE PRESIDENTS
(Field Trips):

Dave Lines
(301) 934-9396

Bob Davidson

SECRETARY:
Polly Zimmerman

LIAISON/Youth Coordinator:
Michael Patterson
(301) 297-4575
michael.patterson
@pgparks.com

EDITOR
Jessica Thomson
rocktalkeditor@yahoo.com

WEBMASTER
Bob Davidson

EFMLS Representative
Dee Tinsley
flydeetin@gmail.com

***If corrections or additions are needed, please contact Rocktalk Editor

Minutes...

Polly Zimmerman

August 24, 2009 - Pot Luck Dinner and Meeting Minutes

Dinner and Dessert was enjoyed by all!!!!!! Lots of great selections.

Meeting was called to order at 6:45PM.

Secretary: The minutes were approved as printed in the Rock Talk.

Treasurer: The treasury has had no changes.

Membership: The new 2009 membership list is not ready
due to the renovations.

Programs: November meeting does not have a program. Anyone interested?

Fieldtrips:

*Cornwall PA- Everyone had fun in the mud and tall weeds.

Some great samples were collected. 11 hounds attended.

*Willis Mt. trip on Sept 19th. Contact Dave!

*Mt. Ida Crystal competition. Oct. 8, 9, & 10.

Rock Talk Editor: Please send any articles **early**.

Editor is now back at work. Thanks

Web Master: Please visit the website. Great information.

Old Business/ New Business: 2010 Rock show – Begin advertising !!!

Adjourned for rock auction 7:25PM FUN FUN FUN \$\$\$\$\$



Figure 3. Harry, Arnold, Jennifer, and David at Big Hill

The hot Pennsylvania summer sun took its toll. Arnold was the first to leave. The Knies family then left for a side trip to Hershey Park. Mary and Ralph left to visit her Mother in Columbia, Pennsylvania. The Lohmans and Leagues left soon thereafter. We all had a good time and were pleased with their finds. Based on the size of the hill, there are plenty more minerals available for the collector.

1. Cornwall Iron Furnace visitor's brochure.
2. Jones, Jeri L. Gold in Southeastern Pennsylvania and Other Gold Notes

Upcoming Shows and Events

By Ralph Gamba

September 26 – 27: Howard County Fairgrounds Atlantic Coast Gem, Mineral and Jewelry show. Saturday 10 AM to 6 PM, Sunday 10 AM to 5 PM Route 144, West Friendship, MD adults \$5.00

September 26 & 27: Morgantown, WV Gem, Mineral and Fossil Show. West Virginia Geological Research Center at Mont Chateau. Mont Chateau Road, Cheat Lake I-68 East, Exit 10 Saturday 10 Am to 6 PM, Sunday 11 AM to 5 PM

November 7 – 8: Gemarama 2009. Tuscarora Lapidary Society. CFS, The School at Church Farm, Exton, PA. North side of Bysiness Route 30, ½ mile west of Frazer-Rt 30 exit of Route 202 Saturday 10 AM-6 PM, Sunday 10 AM to 5 PM \$6 admission

December 12: Fall Festival of Fine Minerals 10 AM to 4 PM. Holiday Inn, 9615 Deereco Road, Timonium, MD. I-83, exit 17

If anyone has information on any other local shows or rock events, contact Ralph Gamba at rgamba@verizon.net, so they can be included in this list.

THE GOLD GASTROLITH OF CALAVERAS COUNTY: A tale of a well-traveled nugget

Story and Photos by Glenn Wasson

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM Rock & Gem; January 2007 issue



Spectacular stories about gold and the odd adventures connected with this precious metal are commonplace, particularly in Calaveras County and elsewhere in California.

Located in the heart of Mother Lode country, Calaveras County may strike a chord in your memory for it was here that Mark Twain first witnessed and later wrote about frog jumping. His short story “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” memorialized this unusual contest held in the early days by miners starved for entertainment. The piece launched Twain’s remarkable writing career.

Even today, the frog-jumping contest is held at the County Fairgrounds at Angels Camp, just one town that grew out of the fevered rush of thousands of fortune hunters after the discovery of gold at Sutter’s Mill in 1848.

Today, Angels Camp still uses Twain’s “Frog” as part of its tourist attraction and promotion. For that reason, and the fact that Angels Camp has a long history of gold mining, the 2006 California Federation of Mineralogical Societies held its 2006 gem and mineral show on the fairgrounds.

As part of the welcoming ceremonies at the Federation Show, I entertained the crowd by telling the most unusual tale of a gold nugget and a barfly who ended up in jail in 1987.

The Gold Country of California has certainly produced its share of fascinating stories, some involving the discovery of huge gold nuggets and crystallized masses. Other stories of derring-do and what might be called “odd events” involving gold and the people who lust for it have happened here.

Monster nuggets have surfaced throughout California’s gold country. The largest piece of gold ever found on our continent came from Carson Hill in Calaveras County in 1854. The piece weighed nearly 200 pounds!

More recently, the Jamestown Mine in neighboring Tuolumne County gave its owners a wonderful gift, a group of superb leaf golds, the largest of which weighs 44 pounds. You can see that amazing bit of precious metal if you visit the Ironstone Winery in the town of Murphys, a few miles from Angels Camp. The gold is displayed in an open vault at the winery, which boasts that this is the largest crystallized gold specimen on display anywhere in the world. You can enjoy a little wine tasting and see this great gold in the winery’s fascinating small museum about Calaveras County’s Gold Country.

Murphys is an old gold camp that has had its share of great gold events, but none is more renowned or funnier than the Great Gold Gastrolith caper!

The size of the Gold Gastrolith is very average when compared with the tens of thousands of nuggets rescued from California’s rivers and streams. But the story of its travels, which involves a bibulous gold lover, drew national attention.

Murphys Hotel was constructed in 1856 and is now on the National Registry of Historical Sites. Although the old camp’s hotel has the names of many famous people on its register and its rooms have been the scene of many historic and unusual circumstances, its best known incident took place in the hotel on July 16, 1987.

On that night, Tim Nolan, of San Andreas, and Tom Peterson, of Angels Camp, were in the bar at Murphys Hotel. After a few beers, Peterson produced a gold nugget he had panned and passed it around. Bar patrons admired it, hefted it, and enjoyed it. It was a nice nugget, half again as large as a nickel. It fit into the bowl of a spoon with room to

...Continued on Page 6

Gold Gastrolith...

...CONTINUED

spare.

The nugget was handed to Nolan in his turn. He looked at it, then dropped it into his glass and promptly down the beer, nugget and all!

The startled Peterson immediately demanded his nugget back. He began pounding Nolan on the back, hoping to stimulate regurgitation of the gold. Despite these efforts and the unsolicited advice of surrounding bar patrons, Nolan did not cough it up. Then they took him to the men's room and hug him by his ankles. Nolan's brother, hoping to help, beat him on the stomach, but to no avail!

Unable to retrieve the gold nugget, the boys called the local deputy sheriff, who escorted the gold-bearing Nolan to the local hospital. Medical experts labored over him in hopes of recovering the "sunken" treasure, but the recalcitrant nugget remained firmly in place. This forced the deputy sheriff to arrest Tim Nolan on a charge of grand larceny.

The story, far too good to be kept quiet in Calaveras County, immediately hit the wire serves of the United Press International and the Associated Press. The story was picked up by newspapers all over the nation. Radio commentators, always on the lookout for a funny story, also reported it for the amusement of their listeners. Television coverage quickly followed, and I've been told that Johnny Carson chortled in his monologue that drinkers in the Mother Lode town of Murphys spiked their beer with gold nuggets to give the brew a little more body!

The story seemed to confirm widely held beliefs in America's heartland that, although California might be an interesting place to visit, it was still too freakish a location for ordinary people to live.

Since Nolan's gastrointestinal tract seemed adamant about retaining the gold nugget, medical authorities advised the group that it should not take more than three or four days for the insoluble object to pass through the digestive tract. Nolan was sent back to his boarding house in San Andreas and consigned to using a potty chair.

The District Attorney's office, to keep track of the passing of time, hung a sign in the office that read "Nugget Watch Day," changing the number each day. But day after day, the nugget refused to show up.

After seven agonizing days had passed, so did the nugget. A welcome metallic clink announced to Nolan that the time had come. Literally relieved, Nolan showed the nugget to his landlady after cleaning it with a toothbrush, which he then discarded!

His landlady advised him to rush over to the District Attorney's office and surrender the ill-gotten gain. At the District Attorney's office, a little tomfoolery went on, during which time the nugget was passed around to all who were there. Then they penned the word "ceased" on the Nugget Watch sign and called Peterson.

Of course, the press was notified for a photo session. Then the fun really began. The District Attorney demanded that Peterson prove the nugget was actually his! Luckily, the nugget had a distinctive shape, which Peterson described as resembling a buffalo on one side and a ghostbuster on the other! This satisfied authorities, and Peterson was reunited with his nugget, none the worse for its unusual journey.

There are several unverified stories about what happened to the nugget next. Peterson, in need of money, eventually sold it. There are also rumors it played a part in several drug sales later on. After years of searching, I finally tracked the nugget down by advertising that I would pay a premium, far above the nugget's gold value, for the nugget with an unusual true tale attached. When the gold was finally offered, its authenticity had to be verified once again. When I placed it next to newspaper pictures published at the time of its recovery, it proved to be a perfect match, a true gold gastrolith!

Meet the Member

By Carole Raucheisen

Name: Samantha Knies

Area live in: Marbury

Place of birth: Washington, D. C.

Occupation: High school student

How became interested in rocks/minerals/fossils: On a family vacation to North Carolina 2 years ago.

How long a collector: Sammy says she has always collected pretty rocks, and she collected shark's teeth when she was younger.

What you like to collect: Anything shiny or anything that looks cool.

Favorite find and how found: Amethyst and amazonite at Moorefield Mine.

Favorite Rock Club experience: Moorefield Mine and into the mine shaft.

Most memorable field trip: Moorefield Mine.

What you have gained from the Rock Club: More opportunities to collect rocks.

What you would still like to find/collect: A larger variety of specimens.

Other interests: Watching anime, or manga on U-tube (For us older folk, that is Japanese animation, like Astro Boy, Yu-Gi-Oh, and Pokemon)

Learning about Japanese language and culture

Art: drawing, painting, crafts

Self professed math fanatic; taking Algebra II this year

Taking care of her 4 cats (self professed cat lover)

Archery

Possible career choices:

Japanese teacher, Manga author

Electrical chemist



ROCKTALK

Clearwater Nature Center
Maryland-National Capital Park &
Planning Commission
11000 Thrift Road



[We're on the web:
www.freewebs.com/smrmc/ **]**

Message from the Editor

Happy Fall everyone! I hope the season brings not only cool weather to all, but some great stories of recent trips. I know I can't wait to hear from everyone who went out west and see all their "treasures."

I want to extend my thanks to Larry for getting permission for us to reprint the article from Rock & Gem. That was a great find and took some work. It's a

great article and I hope you enjoy it as much as Larry and I did. And

thank you, Glenn, for allowing us to reprint your work!

I am issuing a newsletter challenge! For all of you who routinely go on trips, what is a tip that you would give to rockhounds for a successful trip? This could be a safety tip, tips about proper gear, etc. Be creative! Email your tips to rocktalkeditor@yahoo.com

Happy Hunting!



PROGRAMS/ REFRESHMENTS

September	<u>Program:</u> Ralph Gamba <u>Refreshments:</u> Jessica T. and Polly Z.
October	<u>Program:</u> Geology of Maryland <u>Refreshments:</u> Lorna and Mel Larson
November	<u>Program:</u> _____ <u>Refreshments:</u> Paul & Linda Holden
December	Holiday Party

Courtesy of Ore-Cutts Mineral Society Inc., Santa Maria, CA