

The Sierra Pelonaagram



November 2010

... Member of the California Federation of Mineralogical Society Inc. ...

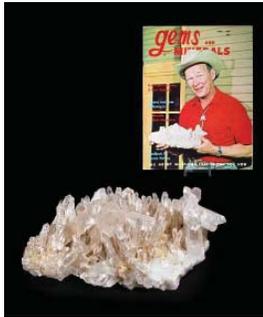
The Sierra Pelona Rock Club is a non-profit organization founded in 1959 with the objective to sponsor activities and promote interest and education in: mineralogy, lapidary, geology, paleontology and related subjects.

Roy Rogers and Dale Evans

Did you know that they were also rockhounds? Earl found a bunch of photos from an auction house that was selling off some of their collection. Below are a couple photos from the auction:



Petrified Wood, Agate and Jasper



Arkansas Quartz



California Minerals

November Birthdays

Happy Birthday to our November Babies

Grisella Bryson
Barbara Farrar
Frank Hummelbaugh
Diane Southwell



Officers:

President – Bill Webber
Vice-President – Ron Strathmann
Secretary: Minutes-Nancy Hilliard
Treasurer – Greg Mazourek
Federation Director (CFMS/AFMS) – Shep Koss

Chairpersons:

Pelonagram Editor – Heidi Webber
Claim - Mike Serino
Donation Rock Table - Al Brown
Field Trips – Bonnell Forstner
Historian - Frank Humelbaugh
Hospitality – Evelyn Velie
Membership – Ron & Akiko Strathmann
Programs – Mike Serino
Publicity – Diane Southwell
Storage - Mike Moreno
Sunshine - Evelyn Velie
Web site – Bud Sabatino

The Sierra Pelona Rock Club, is a member of the California and American Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Inc. (CFMS/AFMS). The general club meetings (Open to the public) are at 7:30 PM, on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at:

**The Clubhouse of the Greenbrier
Mobile Estates EAST
21301 Soledad Canyon Rd
Canyon Country, CA 91351**

Contact the Club or the Sierra Pelonagram Editor at:

**Sierra Pelona Rock Club
P.O. Box 221256
Newhall, Ca. 91322**

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Visit the SPRC website <http://www.sierrapelona.com/>



Serpentinite

Recently the powers that be in Sacramento tried to eliminate serpentinite as our state rock because it contained asbestos. The move failed, but brought some attention to our state mineral. I thought it would be interesting to look into this group of minerals and learned a lot I never even considered. I hope it is as interesting to you. Heidi

Serpentinite is composed of minerals of the serpentine group. It forms by regional metamorphism of deep-sea rocks from the oceanic mantle.

Serpentinite is common beneath the oceanic crust, where it forms by the alteration of the mantle rock peridotite. But it is seldom seen on land except in rocks from subduction zones, where oceanic rocks may be preserved.

Most people call it serpentine (SER-penteen) or serpentine rock, but serpentine is the set of minerals that make up serpentinite (ser-PENT-inite). It gets its name from its resemblance to snakeskin, with a mottled color, waxy or resinous luster and curving, polished surfaces. Serpentinite is a sexy rock.

Serpentinite is low in plant nutrients and high in toxic metals. Thus the vegetation on the so-called serpentine landscape is dramatically different from other plant communities, and serpentine barrens contain many specialized, endemic species.

Serpentinite can contain chrysotile, the serpentine mineral that crystallizes in long, thin fibers. This is the mineral commonly known as asbestos.

Black Smokers

The “black smokers” of the deep sea floor have company near the Mid-Atlantic Ridge: the remarkable white carbonate chimneys of the Lost City hydrothermal field. Discovered in 2001, Lost City is an example of a whole new class of structure—and the product of a major geochemical process.

Lost City is quite different from a black smoker. Black smokers are very hot springs that lie in the central rift of deep-sea spreading zones. They form as superheated seawater (200 to 400 degrees C) reacts with hot rocks of the oceanic crust, specifically basalt and its coarse-grained version, gabbro. The water turns to an acidic fluid full of iron and sulfur minerals, which drop out of solution as a dark “smoke” and build up black chimneys on the rocky seafloor.

Lost City, though, is located away from the spreading rift. There seawater reacts not with basalt of the upper crust, but the mantle rocks beneath. These are peridotites, low-silica rocks containing olivine and pyroxenes, a mineral group high in magnesium as well as iron (that is, they are **mafic**). At relatively cool temperatures, these minerals oxidize to serpentinite plus brucite ($Mg(OH)_2$), magnetite (Fe_3O_4), and leftover hydrogen ions. The resulting fluid is alkaline rather than acidic, and rich in calcium.

The warm, alkaline fluids bring up different minerals than the hot acid waters of black smokers. Brucite and aragonite (a form of calcium carbonate) build up the white stone towers of Lost City. Surely there are many other places like it, but we haven’t been looking for them before.

Another chemical that forms at Lost City is methane, which is something that microorganisms can eat. In fact, the white stony towers of Lost City may form around the mineralized bodies of such microbes.

This chemical reaction—**serpentinization**—does two things: it produces some heat and it expands the rock by roughly one-third. Naturally the peridotite shatters under this expansion, which gives seawater even better access to fresh rock and creates large amounts of serpentinite mud. With a big enough body of peridotite, this can go on for millions of years—and in fact the whole upper part of the world’s oceanic mantle becomes serpentinized as it cools.

Because of serpentinization, oceanic plates take up a great deal of water: a cubic meter of rock can gain as much as 300 kg of water. When oceanic plates undergo subduction, the heat and pressure reverse the serpentinization reaction and release the water into the deep lithosphere, where it gives rise to volcanoes. So the mechanism building Lost City is one that carries huge amounts of water down into the mantle, part of the vast and complex cycles that keep the Earth running.

Reference: About.com:Geology



President’s Message

Thanksgiving already! Can the Holiday Madness be far behind? It is inescapable. One way to get away from the madness for just a bit is to join Ron and Bonnie on one of their field trips. Just think about a beautiful and peaceful visit to our claim. The desert is perfect this time of year, so come on, join us on the next trip November 20.

Bill Webber, President
SPRC

CFMS Shows 2010

(no shows scheduled for December)
November 6-7 2010, Ridgecrest, CA
Indian Wells Gem & Mineral Society
Desert Empire Fairgrounds
520 south Richmond Road
Hours: 9-5 both days
John DeRosa (760) 375-7905
November 12, 13, 14 2010, Sacramento, CA
Sacramento Mineral Society
Scottish Rite Center
6151 H Street
Hours: Fri & Sat 10-6; Sun 10-5
Bob Johnson (916) 339-7007
Website: <http://www.sacramentomineralsociety.org>
November 13-14 2010, Yuba City, CA
Sutter Buttes Gem & Mineral Society
Yuba-Sutter Fairgrounds (Franklin Hall)
442 Franklin Ave.
Hours: Sat 9-5; Sun 9-4
Erik Anspaugh (916) 567-9750
Email: inez_brg@yahoo.com
November 20-21 2010, Oxnard, CA
Oxnard Gem & Mineral Society
Oxnard Performing Arts Center
800 Hobson Way
Hours: Sat. 9-5 Sun. 10-5
Frank Bouich (805) 271-0538
Email: show_info@oxnardgem.com
Website: www.oxnardgem.com

November Birthstones: Topaz and Citrine



Two gems are appropriate for November birthdays - *Topaz* and *Citrine*.

Topaz is a gemstone available in a rich rainbow of colors. Prized for several thousand years in antiquity, all yellow gems in antiquity were called *topaz*. Often confused with citrine quartz (yellow) and smoky quartz (brown), quartz and topaz are separate and unrelated mineral species. The most prized color of topaz is called *Imperial topaz* after the Russian Czars of the 1800s and features a magnificent orange body color with pinkish undertones.

A mineral of somewhat varying composition belonging to the silicate group, it is not a quartz and therefore has nothing in common with citrine quartz, a far less valuable stone. True topaz may be yellow, gold, pink, blue, green, mauve or red. It does not reflect the light to any great extent; so the larger the stone the better. It is widely used in jewelry making and frequently imitated by citrine quartz.

Topaz comes from Brazil (where it is as widespread as amethyst) Australia, Madagascar, USA, Mexico and Ceylon.

Citrine, the other birthstone for November is known as the "healing quartz". This golden gemstone is said to support vitality and health while encouraging and guiding hope, energy and warmth within the wearer.

It is one of the most affordable of gemstones and plentiful in nature. Citrine is found most frequently in Brazil, Bolivia, and Spain. A glassy, wine-yellow variety of quartz is often mistakenly called "topaz", which is a completely different and far more valuable gemstone.

The color of citrine varies from pale yellow to Madeira. However, the darker citrine is generally artificially formed by heating poor quality amethyst. The mineral is found wherever there is quartz and, in fact, it has too vast a provenance to represent a wise investment.

It is used for inexpensive jewelry.

Reference: *Mineralzone.com* and *Americangemsociety.org*



SPRC Business Meeting Greenhouse Café, Saugus

The meeting was called to order at 6:45pm. In attendance were Bill and Heidi Webber, Evelyne Velie, George Lawrence, Ron Lawrence, Greg Mazourek, Shep Koss, Karen Kubota, Diane Southwell, Ron and Akiko Strathmann and Frank Humelbaugh.

Bill told everyone what a great field trip we had for October to Lavic Siding and the Piscah Crater. There were about 20 people in attendance.

It was noted that this is not an election year for board members. They hold their position for 2 years. However, Chairpersons do time out each year as of midnight, December 31. They are appointed by the president of the SPRC. At this time, most of the current Chairs are content to continue in their capacity, but we need to replace a few. Bonnie as Field Trip Chair would like to relinquish her position if someone else wants to take over. Diane Southwell feels the same. The Program Chair is vacant and the board has been filling in as needed.

Evelyne reported that things are on track for the Holiday Party. We clarified that the club will supply meats, paper goods and cutlery. Side dishes, drinks and ice will be brought by members.

Ron said that Mary Bates will be the Program for November and will be talking about local area geology and geography.

Ron said that the November 20 field trip will be to Castle Butte and the claim. (We need to bring a bag of quick-set cement and a shovel to re-set a post). We also hope to go to the visitor's center at the Borax Mine. There is a small charge of \$3 Ron thought. He will email everyone with details.

Greg reported that it was a slow year at Lombardi's. Heidi moved that Greg could spend up to \$100 to buy the trains he affixes to the railroad spikes to sell. Evelyne seconded and it was passed.

A clarification was made by Greg and Shep regarding the by-laws. They were updated 3 years ago to be more in line with the CFMS by-laws. They both stated it took several months of work before getting the current by-laws approved by our membership.

Shep stated that Federation Elections are in 2 weeks. Ant Hill is closed per the BLM and Buena Vista Museum in Bakersfield for the foreseeable future. The developers have submitted plans and obtained official approval for the site although building may not occur for some time.

Ron said the club has no new members.

Diane proposed to have the membership application re-worded to ask prospective members if they would like to hold office or a chair position, thereby more actively pursuing participation in the club. Ron seconded and the motion passed.

Frank said that Earl gave him copies of the historical papers for the club. Earl put them all on disc.

Ron proposed that Greg look further into buying an LCD projector that he saw for \$99 at CVS and bring us his findings. Evelyne stated that she doesn't mind using hers, but the replacement bulbs are very expensive (over \$200) and hers may be on its last legs since it has many hours on it. Since we are using this technology more in our programs, the feeling is that we should obtain our own. Heidi seconded and the motion passed.

The meeting was concluded at 8pm.

Lost Treasure

California, “The Golden State”, is the fourth largest producer of gold in the United States, following only Nevada, Utah, and Alaska. In 2001, California’s mines produced some 449,200 troy ounces of refined gold.

The discovery of gold on the South Fork of the American River at Sutter’s Mill, near Coloma, in 1848 led to the fabled California Gold Rush of 1849. Unlike traditional hard-rock deposits, California’s gold was readily available on the surface, concentrated into rich placer deposits which an inexperienced prospector with minor tools could reasonably expect to exploit.

But as surface deposits in California became depleted, the California Gold Rush was generally considered to have come to a close in 1858, when the Colorado Gold Rush began.

Nevertheless, tales of lost Mother Lode gold mines, and those further south, particularly in the Mohave Desert, credibly abound even today.

In the coming months, I will explore several of these lost mines.

Source: About.com

Jack Stewart’s Lost Lode

The 1870’s were “silver years” in the mining history of the American West. After the fabulous Comstock silver strike in western Nevada, silver replaced gold in the hearts of the miners and prospectors of the West. 1873 was a big year at the Comstock mines as massive new silver lodes were discovered in the lower workings. These fabulous silver discoveries sent out a ripple of excitement to all parts of the West as prospectors poured over the mountains in search of the white metal. Soon after the Comstock windfall, prospectors discovered incredibly rich silver deposits in the Panamint Range of eastern California. Some of the Panamint ore assayed out at \$3000 worth of silver per ton of ore!

Silver was king in Colorado during the 1870’s. It was during those years that the so-called “carbonate craze” swept the state. Prospectors scouted the mountains in search of silver-bearing ore bodies emplaced in carbonate rocks such as limestone. Prospectors looked for limestones that were closely associated with igneous rocks. And they found them! It turned out that Colorado was particularly well-endowed with silver deposits. In 1878, one of the greatest silver camps of all was born with the discovery of a 10-foot thick, tabular bed of silver-bearing lead carbonate. Leadville instantly leaped to prominence. In the San Juan Mountains of southern Colorado, a similar ore body near Rico was worked during the 1870’s.

The white metal was also king in Arizona during the 1870’s. The great silver district of the Trigo Mountains got its start with the discovery of the rich Black Rock and Pacific lodes in 1877.

Then, around the turn of the century, gold again replaced silver in importance as numerous rich strikes were made all over the West. 1891 was the year of the great Cripple Creek gold rush. Situated at an elevation of 10,000 feet, the gold-choked throat of the buried “Cripple Creek volcano” has produced over \$430 million in gold! Cripple Creek was the last of Colorado’s great gold camps. In 1895, the fabulous lode deposits of Randsburg were discovered in the Mohave Desert of southern California. The Randsburg mines produced nearly a million ounces of gold during their lifetime. Southern California was the scene of another rich gold strike during the 1890’s. The discovery took place in the Panamint Mountains, about 7 miles south of the abandoned silver camp of Panamint City. The mining camp that sprang up along the western flank of the Panamints was named after the famous Australian gold camp known as Ballarat.

In 1897, it was Alaska’s turn. The great Alaskan gold rush took prospectors to the Klondike and then to Nome the following year. The great placer deposits of Alaska have produced over 20 million ounces of gold to date. In the early 1900’s, the focus shifted back to the American Southwest. In 1902, the fabulous ore bodies at Goldfield, Nevada were discovered. The mines at Goldfield eventually produced over 4 million ounces of the yellow metal. The Goldfield strike sent a pulse of excitement throughout the desert Southwest. Prospectors combed the wilderness, looking for gold and silver ores similar to those at Tonopah and Goldfield. In 1904, the famous Death Valley prospector “Shorty” Harris discovered the rich Bullfrog lode, near the Nevada/California border. Two years later, prospectors returned to the Panamints and located the gold deposits at Skidoo. The Panamints had a way of luring back prospectors again and again. It had happened back in 1873, and then in the 1890’s, and then again in 1906.

One of the many prospectors drawn to the Panamint Range during the 1890’s was a veteran of the Death Valley country named Jack Stewart. In 1897, Stewart found himself on the Death Valley side of the Panamints, not far from Stovepipe Wells. During a rare Death Valley downpour, Stewart was forced to take cover along the northeastern flank of the range. In one of the many small canyons that cut the range, Stewart discovered a freshly-exposed deposit of gold-bearing quartz float! He gathered up some samples, waited out the storm, and continued on his way to Stovepipe Wells. Eventually, Stewart returned to the Panamints to search for the source of the rich float. But the landscape had somehow changed! Perhaps another storm had altered the canyon floor, but in any case, Stewart was unable to locate the deposit. He never did.

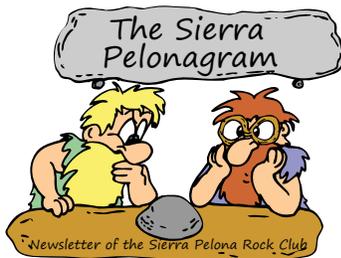
Mining History

The Panamint Range is the great repository of precious metals in Inyo County, California. The various mining districts of the Panamints collectively produced some 300,000 ounces of gold during their lifetimes. The range is also home to some amazingly rich silver veins. Some of the silver ore found in Marvel Canyon assayed out at an incredible \$3000 per ton!

Silver was the magnet that initially drew prospectors to the Panamints. They came in search of the fabulous silver lode known as the Lost Gunsight Mine. In 1860, a prospector named Alvord discovered silver in the Panamints while searching for the Gunsight Mine. Indeed, silver was the metal that started things in the Panamints. In 1873, prospectors discovered a bonanza of silver at the head of Surprise Canyon. The following year, a wave of prospectors poured into the canyon. Rich strikes were made on the slopes of Marvel Canyon a feeder of Surprise Canyon. A tough mining camp known as Panamint City sprang up near the mines. It had a woeful reputation, but of course its days were numbered. By 1877, the rich silver deposits were gone and the mining camp withered away.

Gold was discovered late in the Panamints. It wasn’t until the 1890’s that the rich Ballarat deposits were located along the western flank of the Panamints. Then in 1905, the renowned Death Valley prospectors “Shorty” Harris and Pete Aguerberry discovered gold-bearing quartz veins in the heart of the range, near present-day Harrisburg. The following year, two prospectors on their way to the Harrisburg diggings stumbled on one of the richest gold deposits in all of southern California. The mines at Skidoo poured out nearly \$3 million in gold and silver during their 14 years of operation.

October Field Trip to Lavic Siding, Hector Hills and Pisgah Crater
Photos by Steve Hobbs



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