

The Sierra Pelona nagram



October 2015

... 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.



Hello everyone.

Last month was sad and busy time for our club. Tragically, we were forced to say goodbye to our dear friend Shep Koss. Besides our general meeting and field trip, many of us helped out with a couple of rock sales benefiting Shep's family. These sales generated some much needed cash that will help out Shep's brother, Barry. We appreciate everyone who pitched in to help and everyone who purchased rocks and such from the sales. All of the proceeds went to a great cause.

Last month's field trip was to the picturesque community of San Simeon. We spent some time searching San Simeon creek for jade, serpentine, plasma agate and jasper. There was plenty of material to be found and I believe everyone left with some full buckets. After collecting, we were all able to grab some lunch together at a local spot in Cambria. We had a large group and the weather was perfect for our trip.

Since then, there was the Trona Gem -o- Rama. Some of us attended that and sloshed through the mud looking for the hanksite crystals contained within. Besides the field trips, there was also a good show to walk through and pick up some nice slabs and other materials. The once a year event is always a lot of fun.

It's hard to believe that we are almost at the end of the year already. Before you know it, the Christmas party will be here. After that, it will be time to ring in 2016! To that end, we would encourage you members to consider holding office in 2016. The club grows when we get fresh people with new ideas to lead us. I sincerely hope that some of you will volunteer to help out the club by holding office or work as a chairperson. Even if you've never volunteered before, there are plenty of experienced folks who will be happy to help you out or answer questions.

October Birthdays

Omid Aeen Oct. 4
Linda Castro Oct. 1
William Edwards Haase Oct. 2
Olive Edwards Haase Oct. 20
William Edwards Oct. 10
Jane Sheppard Oct. 6

November Birthdays

Frank Hummelbaugh Nov. 10



Our apologies, but the minutes to the October Business Meeting are not available at this time.

Officers:

President – Greg Langewisch
Vice-President – Trina Aeen
Secretary: Tina White
Treasurer – Ron Rackliffe
Federation Director (CFMS/AFMS) – Shep Koss

Chairpersons:

Claim--Mike Serino
Donation Rock Table--Akiko Strathmann
Equipment--Bill Webber
Field Trips – Open
Historian -Open
Hospitality – Tina White
Membership – Heidi Webber
On-Line Presence (website)-- Larry Holt
Pelonagram Publisher, Editor – Heidi Webber
Programs – Shep Koss
Publicity –Bruce Velie
Storage--Bill Webber
Sunshine--Brigitte Mazourek

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:

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Soapstone

Soapstone (also known as steatite, or soaprock) is a talc-schist, which is a type of metamorphic rock. It is largely composed of the mineral talc and is thus rich in magnesium. It is produced by dynamothermal metamorphism and metasomatism, which occurs in the areas where tectonic plates are subducted, changing rocks by heat and pressure, with influx of fluids, but without melting. It has been a medium for carving for thousands of years.

Pyrophyllite, a mineral very similar to talc, is sometimes called soapstone in the generic sense since its physical characteristics and industrial uses are similar, and because it is also commonly used as a carving material. However, this mineral typically does not have such a soapy feel as soapstone.

Physical Characteristics

Soapstone is relatively soft because of its high talc content, talc having a definitional value of 1 on the Mohs hardness scale. Softer grades may feel soapy when touched, hence the name. There is no fixed hardness for soapstone because the amount of talc it contains varies widely, from as little as 30% for architectural grades such as those used on countertops, to as much as 80% for carving grades. Common, non-architectural grades of soapstone can just barely be scratched with a fingernail and are thus considered to have a hardness of 2.5 on the Mohs scale. If a candidate rock cannot be scratched with a knife blade (hardness of 5.5), it is not soapstone.

Soapstone is often used as an insulator or housing for electrical components, due to its durability and electrical characteristics and because it can be pressed into complex shapes before firing.

Historical Uses

Soapstone is used for inlaid designs, sculpture, coasters, and kitchen countertops and sinks. The Inuit often use soapstone for traditional carvings. Some Native American tribes and bands make bowls, cooking slabs, and other objects from soapstone; historically, this was particularly common during the Late Archaic archaeological period.

Locally quarried soapstone was used for gravemarkers in 19th century northeast Georgia, USA, around Dahlonega, and Cleveland, as simple field stone and "slot and tab" tombs.

Vikings hewed soapstone directly from the stone face, shaped it into cooking-pots, and sold these at home and abroad.

Soapstone is sometimes used for construction of fireplace surrounds, cladding on metal woodstoves, and as the preferred material for woodburning masonry heaters because it can absorb, store and evenly radiate heat due to its high density and magnesite (MgCO₃) content. It is also used for counter tops and bathroom tiling because of the ease of working the material and its property as the "quiet stone." A weathered or aged appearance will occur naturally over time as the patina is enhanced. Applying mineral oil simply darkens the appearance of the stone; it does not protect it in any way.

Tepe Yahya, an ancient trading city in southeastern Iran, was a center for the production and distribution of soapstone in the 5th–3rd millennia BC. It was also used in Minoan Crete. At the Palace of Knossos, archaeological recovery has included a magnificent libation table made of steatite. The Yoruba of West Nigeria utilized soapstone for several statues most notably at Esie where archaeologists have uncovered hundreds of male and female statues, about half of life size. The Yoruba of Ife also produced a miniature soapstone obelisk with metal studs called superstitiously "the staff of Oranmiyan"

Modern Uses

Soapstone has been used in India for centuries as a medium for carving. Mining to meet world-wide demand for soapstone is threatening the habitat of India's tigers.

In Brazil, especially in Minas Gerais, due to the abundance of soapstone mines in that Brazilian state, local artisans still craft objects from that material, including pots and pans, wine glasses, statues, jewel boxes, coasters, vases. These handicrafts are commonly sold in street markets found in cities across the state. Some of the oldest towns, notably Congonhas, Tiradentes and Ouro Preto, still have some of their streets paved with soapstone from colonial times.

Some Native Americans use soapstone for smoking pipes; numerous examples have been found among artifacts of different cultures and are still in use today. Its lack of heat conduction allows for prolonged smoking without the pipe's heating up uncomfortably.

Some premium wood-fired heating stoves are made of soapstone to take advantage of its useful thermal and fire resistant properties.

Soapstone is also used to carve Chinese seals.

Currently, soapstone is most commonly used for architectural applications, such as counter tops and interior surfacing. There is currently only one active North American soapstone mine. That mine is found in Central Virginia and is operated by the Alberene Soapstone Company. All other architectural soapstone is mined in Brazil, India and Finland and imported into the United States.

Welders and fabricators use soapstone as a marker due to its resistance to heat; it remains visible when heat is applied. It has also been used for many years by seamstresses, carpenters, and other craftsmen as a marking tool because its marks are visible and not permanent.

Soapstone can be used to create molds for casting objects from soft metals, such as pewter or silver. The soft stone is easily carved and is not degraded by heating. The slick surface of soapstone allows the finished object to be easily removed.

Soapstones can be put in a freezer and later used in place of ice cubes to chill alcoholic beverages without diluting. Sometimes called 'whiskey stones', these were first introduced around 2007. Most whiskey stones feature a semi-polished finish, retaining the soft look of natural soapstone, while others are highly polished.

Reference: Wikipedia



carving by Kathleen Dahlquist-Gray