

ROCKHOUNDS HERALD

920 Yorktown Road, Dothan, AL 36301-4372

www.wiregrassrockhounds.com

February 2017

Streak: White

Amethyst

Mohs: 7.0 or lower

Words from...

The President

Well, Mother Nature decided to rain us out last month. It really wasn't so much the rain that caused us to cancel the meeting; we just couldn't ignore those tornado watches and warnings. Better safe than sorry, but I did have a bunch of left over chicken salad to deal with.

The weather was much nicer for the Panama City show so Bruce Fizzell and I headed down on Saturday the 28th. They had a really good variety of vendors with everything from fossils to rock hounding equipment for sale. We had several of our Dothan members vending and it looked like all of them were busy. If you got new treasures from Panama City, bring them for the February Show & Tell.

This will be the last meeting before our show. For those of you who need a reminder, our show will be March 18 - 19 in the Houston County Farm Center. Hard to believe it is just around the corner. If you need flyers or signs, we will have them available at the February meeting. Also, let's make sure our Show Chairman, Jeff DeRoche, has enough help with set up, front tables and such, so volunteer to help out where you can.

There are going to be several SFMS sponsored workshops this year. The SFMS has reserved the week of June 11th at the William Holland School of Lapidary Arts. They have also scheduled 3 sessions at Wildacres. Those classes [will be the weeks of July 23-29, August 21-27 and Sept 18-24](#). You can go to <http://sfmsworkshops.com/> to get a list of individual classes and info for registration.

Hope to see everyone at our meeting on the 26th.

Pat

Announcement

Membership Dues – Time again to pay your annual club dues. Diane Rodenhizer will be accepting checks and cash from now until the end of February. If you can't make it to the February 26 meeting, please send a check (no cash, please) to: Diane Rodenhizer, 478 Private Road 1106, Enterprise, AL 36330.

Upcoming Shows

FEB 25 – 26	Mississippi Gem and Mineral Society	Jackson, MI
FEB 25	Imperial Bone Valley Gem, Mineral & Fossil Society	Lakeland, FL
MAR 3 – 5	Suncoast Gem & Mineral Society	St. Petersburg, FL
MAR 10 – 12	Aiken-August Gem, Mineral & Fossil Show	Augusta, GA
MAR 18 – 19	Dothan Gem and Mineral Club	Dothan, AL
MAR 25 – 26	Lexington Rock, Gem & Jewelry Show	Lexington, KY

Meeting Minutes – January 2017 – by Secretary

Editor's Note: There are no meeting minutes from January 2017 due to the meeting having been cancelled during a threatening storm system moving through the Wiregrass on Sunday, January 22. Please enjoy the following article reprinted from a sister newsletter in Huntsville, AL.

Mineral Notes: by Mike Soroczak

Hi guys, I thought I would pass this along to you. Tonight I was working on a Dinosaur Bone tear drop pendant when I encountered something that had not occurred before. I was using almost brand new, (less than a dozen cabs used on them), 14K, 25K, and 50K diamond wheels, and then finished off with a new cerium oxide wheel. For hard items like agates and jaspers as well as corundum I have not had a problem with what happened.

It seems that on Dino bone you can use a new 14K wheel but when I went to the 25K wheel the diamonds seemed to grab the stone in a few places and popped some of the agate in the cell structure loose causing the subsequent holes to chafe white around the newly formed dimples. These were not only scratches, but pock marks as well. Working the bone on the 50K and the cerium oxide did not help. So I had a ruined a nice stone that is now only worth a lot less.

I used Opticon to fill the tiny holes to see if I could recover some semblance of a whole stone. The Opticon trick did not work. My intention was to dome the cab on both sides so I had a piece thick enough to do that.

When I ground the Opticon off on a 600 grit wheel it popped the resin out of the pockmarks. So I bit the bullet and put a 3mm shoulder on the thing and cabbed it on down on my old wheels. I finished it off with cerium oxide slurry and it looks like I spray painted the surface with high gloss polyurethane finish. I'm passing this along to you guys because the club and shop users might need to know this.

PS -- Make sure to use a higher rate of water when cutting Dino Bone. You do not want to get the stone hot nor do you want to inhale the fumes from this stuff. Some of it smells like old dead swamp muck and I believe these to have been plant eaters. Some of it has no smell at all. So I don't know what they ate.



Source: Rocket City Rocks & Gems, Volume 48 No. 6 – June 2016

Mysterious Stone Instruments Keep Being Discovered in Vietnam

The country has embraced đàn đá, but no one is quite sure of its exact history.



An ancient đàn đá at the Vietnamese Institute of Musicology in Hanoi.
Photo by [Mike Adcock](#)

In April of 2015, farmer Pham Dinh Huyen of Quang Binh, Vietnam set to work on his new fishpond. He had barely started digging when his shovel hit a rock. He pried it out and put it aside, but then he hit another, and another. Eventually, he had 20—large, oblong slabs of various sizes, some of them pointed at the ends.

So he did what you do when, in Vietnam, you find a bunch of weird rocks all together—he hit each one with the flat of his shovel, and listened. And lo and behold, they rang out clearly, in varying tones. He called his local museum, and they confirmed his suspicions—Huyen’s future fishpond was a musical graveyard. He had dug up one of Vietnam’s many ancient lithophones.

Rocks, to most of us, seem cold, inert, and boring. Across time and all over the globe, though, people have taken them and made them sing. The lithophone—a set of ringing stones carved and arranged to allow for musical performance—can be found everywhere from Scandinavia to Indonesia, says Mike Adcock, a musician and lithophone enthusiast who has spent years compiling a book on the subject. In Argentina, they’re carved out of quartz; in Namibia, pounded into large boulders. Some researchers even think Stonehenge is a giant lithophone.

In Vietnam, they’re called đàn đá. Most are chunks of volcanic rock or of schist, a kind of layered slate, that have been carved into a more sonorous shape. Experts think they date back anywhere from 3000 to 10,000 years—younger than the pan pipe, but older than anything with strings. As more and more pop up all over Vietnam, archaeologists attempt to solve the many mysteries that dog them, and musicians figure out how to add their unique tones to an already-rich folk tradition.



Is Stonehenge just a giant upright stone xylophone? [Nedarb/Public Domain](#)

The first đàn đá discovery occurred in 1949, when a group of construction workers in the Central Highlands dug up eleven stone slabs. The stones were vertically oriented and huddled together, and word of the strange find soon spread to a nearby town, Nдут Lien Krak, where ethnologist Georges Condominas was living and working. As Adcock describes in a recent paper, Condominas was drinking rice beer with some friends when they got to talking about the stones, and, intrigued, he asked to go see them. He obtained permission to bring them with him back to France, where he sent them to the Musée de l'Homme.

Archaeologists, historians, and anthropologists puzzled over the stones, until someone decided to put them in order from largest to smallest, and lay them over a pair of supports, like a xylophone. "It immediately became apparent...that this was undoubtedly a musical instrument," *New Scientist* wrote in 1957. "It was possible to play tunes on them ranging from a simplified version of *Claire de Lune* to *Pop Goes the Weasel*." The markings on them were identified as remnants of the tuning process.

This initial đàn đá is, like so many colonial-era artifacts, still in Paris. But since its identification, more and more have turned up. Experts seek them out on archaeological digs, but laypeople also find them while planting yams and, like Huyen, building

fishponds. A musician named Pham Van Phuong, who actively seeks them, has found five separate sets in one stream, and other amateurs go out đàn đá-hunting in their spare time, the way New Englanders look for arrowheads. "It's like people lugging around metal detectors," Adcock says. "Everyone wants to go out and find something really genuine and discover it."

This discovery is, in some ways, the easy part. Much harder is looking back in time and trying to figure out who used the stones, and exactly what for. Some minority groups in Vietnam have long kept ringing stones to scare animals and birds away from crops—but these are structured as wind chimes or hanging gongs, different from the lithophones, which are often found laid out and accompanied by mallets. Other clues come from comparing the tones available in đàn đá to those of better-known ancient musical traditions, like Javanese gamelan music. It's possible that ancient emigrants to Vietnam held these scales and songs in their heads, and sought to recreate them with the materials of their new environment.

But it's difficult to know for sure. "One of the things about instruments is there's very little evidence," says Adcock. "You can see rock paintings, and there's no doubt that's a picture of a bison." But for most of human history, music was lost to time as soon as it was made: "We've got nothing to go on except circumstantial evidence, and markings on a stone."

This hasn't stopped people from embracing this new old tradition. Folk musicians have incorporated the đàn đá into tunes and styles that didn't originally include it, playing fast and melodious, rather than ringing and repetitive. "They're creating a revival, rather than recreating one," says Adcock. Newly built, portable đàn đá can be found in instrument shops across the country. One enthusiast in Ho Chi Minh City has built a giant twelve-stone lithophone, tuned just like a piano. He keeps it in his office, at a luxury toilet engineering firm, and plays it for guests.

Not everyone is convinced that the đàn đá's deserves this place in the pantheon. The specimen at the Musée de l'Homme came with its own skeptic, Fritz A. Kuttner, a musicologist who maintained for decades that it wasn't an instrument at all. "Any long and fairly thin stones will emit some kind of sound," he wrote in 1953. "To qualify as lithophones... shaped stones have to show some evidence, not just of shaping, but of acoustical and mathematical knowledge and skills." Because the stones are not tuned to any known tone system, Kuttner argues, they shouldn't make the cut. Other modern Western scholars, like anthropologist Roger Blench, have told Adcock that the đàn đá's utilitarian role as a crop protection device disqualifies it from ancient instrument status. Adcock rebuffs this, saying these critics are hamstrung by reliance on conservative, Western-centric definitions of music.

Granted, Adcock says, some of the discoveries are hard to swallow. People have claimed to find hundreds of stones at once, which Adcock says is unlikely. Phan Tri Dung, the luxury toilet engineer from Ho Chi Minh City, claims his instrument is a re-creation rather than an invention, and that it's proof that ancient Vietnamese music was

built around the Western scale, against the conclusions of most of the country's musicologists. Although his instrument is amazing, Adcock says, his conclusions are probably not accurate. A certain number of the many finds likely fall under this category.



Phan Tri Dung plays his controversial lithophone in his office in Ho Chi Minh City.
Photo by [Mike Adcock](#)

Others, though, are rock solid. Experts in Vietnam have authenticated at least 200 different stones over the past few decades, and some now reside in museums and shops. Others have been sold to collectors and historians, who, by comparing different instruments and keeping careful track of their pedigrees, can draw new conclusions about their origin and evolution.

Adcock himself has not learned how to authenticate individual instruments. But he is most convinced by the argument from human nature, both compelling and difficult to prove—that everyone who has access to a noisemaker eventually wants to experiment with it. “I think we can assume that people who are making sound, that they would have been making whatever equivalent to music there was at that time,” he says. “Why wouldn’t they have? It’s fun.” He should know—since beginning to study lithophones, he has started a band, carving his own instruments out of roof slate. Someday, someone will dig one of them up and wonder what he was thinking.

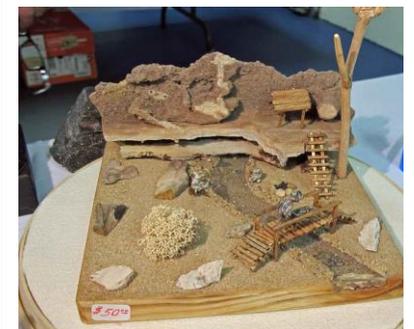
Written by Cara Giaimo

Reprinted with permission from Sommer Mathis, *Atlas Obscura* - (email dated 1/24/2017)

Source: <http://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-mysterious-stone-instruments-that-keep-popping-up-in-vietnam>

PC Gem Show – January 2017

Photos by Pat & Bruce



Nice turnout for the Panama City show. Eager buyers had a wide variety of items to choose from. The DG&MC members who set up tables reportedly saw a brisk business.

PC Gem Show – January 2017

Photos by Pat & Bruce





Mineral Streak

Have you ever picked up a pretty rock and wondered if it contained precious gems? Have you ever thought that your sharp eyes could make you a millionaire? How can you tell for sure that you found a gold nugget?

Rocks are made of combination of minerals. If you visit Yosemite National Park, you will find lots of rocks with clear, white, and black flecks. This type rock is called **granite**, and consists of three minerals: quartz, feldspar, and mica. **Minerals** have a uniform chemical composition and occur naturally in the Earth's crust. When geologists try to identify a mineral, they investigate several properties. They might test how hard a mineral is (Talc can be scratched with a fingernail, while a diamond can scratch glass).

Geologists also look at the color of the mineral, but they know that color can be misleading! The mineral quartz, for example, is commonly seen in clear, pink, and brown forms. Sometimes, the outer surface of a rock can react with air, giving it a different color. The **streak** of a mineral is the color of the powdered form of the mineral, and is often a more useful clue than the apparent color of the mineral alone.



Problem: What is streak and how can it be used to identify a mineral?

Materials

- Piece of unglazed white porcelain (back of tile would work fine)
- Assorted metallic and non-metallic minerals. good choices include:
 - Iron pyrite
 - Hematite
 - Mica
 - Talc
 - Halite
 - Magnetite

Procedure

1. Make a table similar to the one on the following page.
2. Record the color of the mineral sample in your data table.
3. Rub the mineral sample across the streak plate. Record the color of the powder on the plate. If your mineral sample is very hard, the powder you see might be that of the streak plate rather than the mineral itself.

Who What Where When Why How

February Birthdays

FEB 15 Steven Ward
FEB 20 Gary Meredith
FEB 23 Chris Wisham
FEB 24 John Webber
FEB 26 Samantha Merino
FEB 28 Bill Tharpe

Random Rock Facts

Luster, or lustre, is the way light interacts with the surface of a mineral—specifically the way it reflects light. It is most readily apparent on a fresh cut surface and is the first key step in mineral identification. The three major types of luster are metallic, glassy (vitreous) and dull.

A luster between metallic and glassy is called *adamantine*, and a luster between glassy and dull is called *resinous* or *waxy*. However, there are no set boundaries and there are many other common descriptors for mineral surfaces that fall between the three major types. Luster is qualitative, rather than quantitative.

Source: <http://geology.about.com/>

Meeting Information

Time: 2:00 PM
Date: Fourth Sunday of each month (except June, July and August)
Place: Fellowship Hall – Tabernacle United Methodist Church
4205 S. Brannon Stand Road
Dothan, AL

Officers

President – Pat LeDuc
334-806-5626

Vice President – Garry Shirah
334-671-4192

Secretary – Bruce Fizzell
334-577-4353

Treasurer – Diane Rodenhizer
334-447-3610

Bulletin Editor – Joan Blackwell
334-503-0308
Tfavorite7@aol.com

Webmaster – Pat LeDuc
334-806-5626

Membership Chair – Diane Rodenhizer
334-447-3610

Show Chair – Jeff DeRoche
334-673-3554

Field Trips Chair – Garry Shirah
334-671-4192

Hospitality Chair – Vacant

Club Hostess – Vacant

Club Liaison – Garry Shirah
334-671-4192

Website: www.wiregrassrockhounds.com

Objectives

To stimulate interest in lapidary, earth science and, when necessary, other related fields.

To sponsor an educational program within the membership to increase the knowledge of its members in the properties, identifications and evaluations of rocks, minerals, fossils and other related subjects.

To cooperate and aid in the solution of its members' problems encountered in the Club's objectives.

To cooperate with other mineralogical and geological clubs and societies.

To arrange and conduct field trips to facilitate the collection of minerals.

To provide opportunity for exchange and exhibition of specimens and materials.

To conduct its affairs without profit and to refrain from using its assets for pecuniary benefit of any individual or group.

Classified Ads

Looking for an item to round out your rock collection?

Got a specimen, tool or handicraft for sale or trade?

Submit the pertinent details to me by the 10th of each month and your inclinations will be made known to the membership in the next bulletin.

N. J. Blackwell
28 Lakeview Trail, Apt. C
Daleville, AL 36322
Phone: 334-503-0308
Email: Tfavorite7@aol.com

Annual Dues

Single \$15
Family \$20

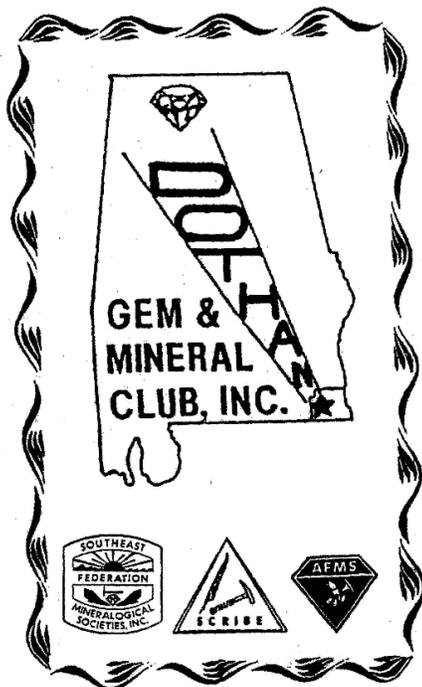
Refreshments

FEB 26 – Potluck Refreshments

ROCKHOUNDS HERALD

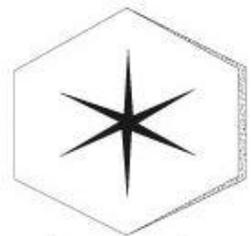
Editor – N. J. Blackwell
28 Lakeview Trail, Apt. C
Daleville, AL 36322

www.wiregrassrockhounds.com



Where you might hear...

A percussion figure is an arrangement of cracks on the face of hexagonal micaceous minerals, e.g., mica, which is formed when the mineral is put under pressure, as when sharply impacted by the blunted point of a steel center punch.



Percussion on mica

In appearance it is a flat, six-rayed "star," with the "star" composed of six lines protruding from each corner of the crystal that bisect near the center of the crystal. The shape of a percussion figure reflects the symmetry of the crystal and the anisotropy* of the crystal's tensile strength.

** Having a physical property that has a different value when measured in different directions. A simple example is wood, which is stronger along the grain than across it.*

Source: <http://www.minerals.net/resource/property/percussi.aspx>

Member of
Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Inc.
American Federation of Mineralogical Societies