

The official bulletin of the Dothan Gem & Mineral Club, Inc.

ROCKHOUNDS HERALD

920 Yorktown Road, Dothan, AL 36301-4372

www.wiregrassrockhounds.com

March 2016

Aquamarine $\text{Be}_3\text{Al}_2(\text{SiO}_3)_6$
Bloodstone SiO_2

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Words from...

The President

Spring will officially arrive on March 19th. What a great way to start off our annual gem & mineral show which is scheduled for March 19 – 20! I am excited that warmer weather is here and hope everyone is as excited about our upcoming show as I am. A whole weekend surrounded by shiny things. Could it get any better?

At our February meeting, club members unanimously voted to cancel the March meeting. With Easter occurring this year on our normal meeting date and the show happening the weekend before, we all decided that cancelling the meeting would be a reasonable thing to do. The April meeting will occur at the usual time on the 24th.

I know some club members will miss the April meeting because there will be a three day dig and rock swap at Graves Mountain. The mountain will be open to collecting from 8 am to 6 pm each day, Friday thru Sunday, April 22 – 24. If you go to the dig & swap, please make plans to bring your treasures to the May meeting for Show & Tell.

Hope to see everyone at the show. Come support the club and add to your collection!

Pat

Announcement

New Baby – Brooke and Christian Holderith welcomed a baby boy to the family on February 25. Seth weighed 8 lbs. 12 oz., was 21 inches long and Brooke says, “He is a perfect little bundle!” All are doing great and Brooke’s mom is visiting to help them get settled. Congratulations, you guys!

Upcoming Shows

March 19 – 20	Dothan Gem & Mineral Club	Dothan, AL
March 18 – 20	Rome Georgia Mineral Society	Rome, GA
April 2 – 3	Lexington Rock Gem & Jewelry Show	Lexington, KY
April 23 – 24	Memphis Archaeological and Geological Society	Memphis, TN

<http://www.amfed.org/sfms/club-shows-123.html>

Meeting Minutes – February 2016 – by Secretary

The meeting was called to order on 2/28/16 at 14:05 by President Pat LeDuc. There were 22 club members and one guest in attendance. Our guest was Laural Meint's sister, Lee. Happy birthday was wished to all our February babies. And speaking of babies, Brooke and Christian Holderith have a new baby boy!

CORRESPONDENCE: AMFS Newsletter and nothing else.

REMINDERS: 1.) A reminder about dues being due so get 'em in. 2.) We need volunteers for the upcoming show. Please make time to pitch in. 3.) See Gary if you have questions about the Graves Mountain Trip scheduled for April 22, 23 and 24. Gary has some info and advice about travel, lodging and such. (Arnie recommended the Bate's Motel as the best accommodations near the Graves Mountain site.)

MINUTES & TREASURER REPORT: Minutes from January were approved after changing to correct that Arnie Lambert was not an original founding member of the Club. Diane Rodenhizer presented the latest of the thrilling treasurer report series, which was also approved. We are reminded that although we are not broke, we should not to get too big for our britches since the show will eat into what seems to be a high bank balance faster than an egg-sucking dog.

OLD BUSINESS: No Old Business, per se, was discussed.

NEW BUSINESS: The members voted to cancel the regular meeting in March due to Easter and for show reasons. Pat gave a rundown on her plans for a rock-related trip with Joan Blackwell to attend a dig and then a class at William Holland Lapidary School later this year.

SHOW BUSINESS: Anyone taking a yard sign advertising the show was asked to sign for the signs taken. Jeff DeRoche said we are running low on signs and more will need to be made up for next year. Members were reminded that parking may be an issue at the Farm Center due to *The Highland Games: Men in Skirts*. All were asked to please try to leave room at the entrance for loading and unloading. Jeff has people for doing the setup and security for Friday and Saturday nights. Radio and TV spots are a "go", as is the TV interview thing. The club voted to buy food and feed the vendors as usual; sandwiches on one day, Bar-B-Que on the other day. The allocation for purchasing club meeting door prizes and next year's show door prize was increased by \$60 over last year's amount. Meredith Capshaw and Pat have petrified wood to donate for Silent Auction prizes. Arnie indicated he may have some pieces for auction and for grab bags. The Marino Family volunteered to help make up grab bags and to help with the show. We are told that the Farm Center may be for sale and won't that be a fine kettle of fish.

PROGRAM and SHOW & TELL: Neil Pollan had two amazing pieces of opal from Oregon, in pink and blue. Pat showed some petrified wood, pottery shards and Indian artifacts. Elliott Whitton brought in and read to us from a web story about finding an almost complete, fossilized duck-billed dinosaur, which was recovered from a creek somewhere near Montgomery, AL. The dinosaur is no longer among the living as it has been turned to stone. There is a lesson there for all of us.

The meeting wrapped up with food and the presentation of door prizes. The door prize went to Meredith! Immediately after the meeting, JoAn Lambert conducted a class on making wire and rock trees.

Respectfully submitted by B. Fizzell

Seven Keys To Building a Great Mineral Collection – Part 1 of 2

Building a great collection of fine minerals involves a few fundamentals. Excellent articles have been written on the subject of what makes a connoisseur, what connoisseurs consider, what makes mineral specimens desirable, and what it takes to build a world-class collection of minerals. I list selected ones at the end of this post and I highly recommend every one. These authors are connoisseurs with decades of experience, and it's our privilege to be able to learn from them.

My own perspective here is just a little different. It is of paramount importance to know what is involved in connoisseurship, and in fact many of us happily strive until we get there – it's a great challenge. However, for me, the fun and the amazing experience is in the journey itself. Enjoying mineral collecting doesn't require anyone to start with world-class specimens, or even have a world-class collection or specimen, although we may all aim for that and we may be lucky enough to arrive there some day. You can be anywhere along the road and enjoying the experience, having a great mineral collection that makes you happy every day, and you have a significant role in refining what "great mineral collection" means for you personally.

So here are what I think of as seven keys to building a great mineral collection – master these, and you will be there.

1. First, Think Through What You Really Want

Most of us only really think of this much later on, once we're way into it, even if in hindsight it would have been so great to have started here. Of all of the fundamentals, this one is probably the hardest to get a handle on, in part because real experience helps you answer it for yourself (and so to start with it can be a bit of a chicken and egg problem, but anyway...). I would strongly encourage you to think about this early, and often, as you invest years and a lot of money in a collection. It is something you will keep thinking about as you progress.

What do you want from mineral collecting and your mineral collection? You might consider this by referring to the points I set out in **Mineral Collecting: Is it For Me?** where I describe the things I personally get out of mineral collecting. I would also recommend Rock Currier's writings in this context (see reference below). Which ones are important for you? If mineral collecting for you is more about personal connection to nature, for example, than other factors, you will build a different collection than you would if significance and competition was most important to you.

Regardless of how you answer this question, mineral collecting is for your enjoyment, and the best part of this gig is that you get to set many of your own rules, so set yourself up to enjoy it and succeed by understanding from the outset what you will enjoy, and what you will define success to be. Define what a great mineral collection means to you, so that you can achieve it!

It's really worth thinking this through. Once you have some concrete ideas about it, I would even suggest writing notes in your smartphone (or somewhere) so you can remind yourself at important moments – for example, when you are at a mineral show or a great website and want to buy everything in sight because they are all just so cool – it's really good to be able to remember your own goals.

It would be really easy to say “my goal is to have the best” – and that's a critically important thought every collector should include in a particular way, so I'll come back to it under Key #6 below. But if you set out with nothing more in your mind about your collection than simply that you want really only “the best” – by which I mean a collection of mineral specimens that are truly world-class by the standards of the mineral collecting elite – you are setting yourself up for some really hard moments unless you have unlimited funds, unlimited time, unlimited space and resources, and are uncommonly able to be in the right place at the right time. You may well have world-class specimens in your collection, now or in future, but if the only thing you have in mind is “the best”, you'll miss out on a lot of amazing things in the world of minerals!

Once you've thought about this a bit, just take the bull by the horns. (You can refine and change later – most of us do, in some way.) What kind of collection do you think you'd like to build? What drives you? What fascinates you? And what practical considerations like financial and space resources come into the equation? Do you want a wide-open, no-limits kind of collection? Would you prefer a collection that has focus? Would you limit yourself to higher-end specimens only? Does the challenge of collecting as many species as possible beckon to you?

If you are not new to mineral collecting, you will know about the kinds of collections people build, and you may already have a focus or a specialty (or none at all). But in case this is a new topic for you, there are various ways to approach this and here are some examples:

Wide Open – No Limits

You can choose to be unlimited in what you collect. I personally chose this route. The great part about it is that you can add anything you like to your collection.

Ultimate freedom to love the mineral specimens that grab you. Nothing suggesting what you “should” add to your collection. The challenge is endless. And it's a great way to go. You do need thorough knowledge of the factors that are considered to characterize fine mineral specimens and connoisseurship, and after that, it's all open. But this does have some potential drawbacks for some people, so you might want to think about whether these matter to you personally: it is hard to achieve significance (if having a collect that

stands out in comparison to others matters to you), it is hard to become a true expert, it could easily be more expensive than any of us can afford or reasonably justify spending on minerals and so it (if this last one doesn't apply to you, that's awesome), it can take more space than you have, and your collection will likely always be very "incomplete". I personally had no problem facing up to any of those – in fact, for example, I always loved it that the collection could never be called "complete". If your collection is very far from "complete", that means a new challenge is always out there – who the heck cares if you're missing representatives of key minerals? You can always see those in other ways. You have mineral specimens you enjoy, and a challenge that never runs out, and so what could be better? However that was just my choice. Many people specialize – in part, because they can achieve greater significance with their collection, in less time, and in part because it may seem like it will allow them to get closer to "the best", although... turns out it's not that simple...

Specialization by Mineral Type or Geography

The great thing about specializing is that you can scale your mineral collection to suit you. You can choose a single mineral species, or a group of species. You can choose geography or locality – a very common way to specialize – and your choice can be something broad like the minerals of the United States or the minerals of Canada, something more limited like the minerals of a particular region, province or state, or you can even specialize in a single locality. The advantages are obvious – you can collect a mineral specimens within a much more limited scope, you can become an expert, and you can stand out from many others. You can also devote your time and money within one specific field and so you may develop a higher calibre collection (taken as a whole, if that matters to you) than you might have done otherwise. But of course nothing in life is perfect, and there is a disadvantage, which you may or may not care about and may or may not be relevant to the specialization you choose: depending on what you choose, you may well not be the only one with that specialty, and in fact there may be many people with that specialty, so there can be serious competition for specimens within a specialty. It's no issue at all if you don't care about such things, or if an area of specialization is any of a large number of broader ones, but it does mean that it can be just as hard, or sometimes harder, to be as close to the level of "the best" or "complete" as you might like.

In contrast to the ultimate freedom of the wide open collection, having a specialty will drive your collection in a particular direction. For example, if you specialize in one mineral, and there is a significant new find of that mineral, you should add a specimen from that find. Or if your geographic region produces something new of significance, you will feel that you should add it. The good news is, obviously, if you've chosen your area of specialization well, you'd be naturally inclined to add those specimens anyway even if you had not chosen an area of specialization!

Other Specializations

There are of course many other ways to specialize. Explore whatever inspires you. For example, it could be something like “gem minerals”, or minerals from a particular type of deposit (such as pegmatite minerals or ore minerals), or maybe fluorescent minerals. Or it could be a specialization related to the kind of specimen – a collection of single crystals, for example (crystals with no matrix).

Limiting your Collection by Size

For so many reasons, size is an important thing to think about, regardless of whether you use it to limit your collection. In fact, I feel so strongly about this one that I have written a separate post about it – **Size Matters!**. I favour at least a little bit of flexibility when it comes to size – personally I think of size considerations more as guidelines than actual rules – (Captain Barbossa’s view of the Pirate’s Code... but I digress...). Some collectors are very strict about this, and impose size restrictions to dictate the development of their collection, which can be as good a way as any to define your collection. And certainly if formal competition matters to you, size specifications are often strict. Size restriction does relate to other aspects of what you appreciate about minerals – the smaller you are willing to go, the more likely you are to achieve incredibly high quality, and of course many of the mineral species simply don’t occur in larger sizes, so if you are interested in a large number of species, small specimens will work well anyway.

2. Quality, Quality, Quality

“There are three things that matter in property: location, location, location.” Often attributed to British real estate tycoon Lord Harold Samuel, this has become a timeless statement of a principle in the real estate industry. Of course there are more things that matter in real estate, but we get the idea. When it comes to collecting fine minerals, the three things that matter are quality, quality, quality.

Like real estate, sure, this is a major over-simplification of a complex subject. There are many factors to consider and you will want to know them all cold, and you should have your own view on every one of them. They are discussed more in Key # 3, next.

But to me, quality rules the day.

Of course, insisting on “perfect” quality can also be taken to extremes and will leave you in an absolutely impossible place – if you inspect perfect-looking cabinet or even miniature specimens with magnification, you will almost always find a nick or a chip not immediately visible to the eye, particularly once you get to magnification. True perfection is most often unattainable (micros excepted). At some point, an insistence on high quality can verge on obsessive and unhelpful, and yes, I have been there. If you insist on complete true perfection, you could find yourself unable to enjoy the vast majority of mineral specimens, even fine ones. Some level of damage (hopefully

nominal, often only visible with magnification, or peripheral) is going to be part of virtually all mineral collections – it's a matter of what level you choose is acceptable for you. Some minerals, particularly the very rare, are not even available in undamaged specimens – or if it is possible to obtain one, the price may be beyond the reach of any mere mortal. And some specimens you field collected may have perfection in many regards, like a perfect crystal or more, but may not be perfect all the way around – you'll still treasure the specimens you collect yourself.

So what level is “right”, or acceptable? It's personal, but within some guidelines. There should be no visual distraction from damage. Of course that's a subjective statement – what distracts one person may not distract the next – but if you are looking at a specimen, think about whether a reasonable knowledgeable collector would say that there is damage which is visually distracting.

My best advice is set the bar as high as you can, particularly when buying minerals. This will enable you to have a top quality collection and enjoy the minerals all along the way. My own personal level of acceptable damage is none evident visually, or extremely low and not visually distracting from the main viewing angle, and I hope that's obvious from this website.

I insist upon excellent quality from the front, main, optimal viewing angle. I do not typically insist upon 360 degree freedom from damage, and certainly not 360 degrees in all dimensions – because it's almost impossible and I'd be able to enjoy few minerals if I did that. Almost all specimens have points where they were originally attached to the host rock and had to be removed, so there will be points of attachment or rough broken rock evidencing that removal. (On this subject, it is possible to find “floaters” – specimens of crystals that are complete all around and formed suspended in a liquid with no points of attachment – but floaters are relatively limited in occurrence.) There are collectors who do expect every specimen in their collection to have only a point of attachment at the bottom of the specimen, and for the specimen to be otherwise damage and contact-free in 360 degrees. Exclusive club.

Before I move on from this subject, just a note about the terms “damage” and “contacts”. Usually the term damage is used to denote damage caused by human activity, although it can also apply to naturally broken crystals. There is another concept which affects many mineral specimens and that is the notion of a “contact” or that a specimen is “contacted”. A “contact” on a mineral specimen is an area of the specimen where the crystals naturally grew up against something else – sometimes it was another crystal, and others it will simply have been the other side of the vein or pocket, where the crystal cavity did not leave enough space for proper crystal growth. Contacts are obviously viewed as a detraction from specimen perfection, but are not considered to be the same kind of issue for a specimen as damage. Contacts may or may not be visually distracting, which again is a personal consideration. But usually contacts don't cause the same kind of grief for people that damage does – they are a natural aspect of the mineral specimen's history and are judged on the basis of how distracting they are. Many specimens cannot be extracted without some kind of contact at least around the periphery.

I've written about quality and damage elsewhere on our site too, including in **Guidelines for Buying Our Minerals**.

Finally I feel I should note that when it comes to some mineral specimens – pieces that are so significant as to stand out among all minerals for what they are – quality becomes only one of many considerations. Maybe it's like real estate where a unique historic castle on a nondescript out-of-the-way hill will not be considered on a location basis the way a normal house on the same hill would, but in mineral collecting, a world-class specimen for the ages may have been damaged and repaired and/or restored and that fact seems to be overshadowed by the significance of the specimen. If you'd like to read more about mineral specimen treatments and alterations, see **Beware the Hand of Man: Fakes, Treatments, Repairs and Other Alterations**.

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Source: <http://www.mcdougallminerals.com/blog/seven-keys-to-building-a-great-mineral-collection/>

Links to additional articles mentioned in Part 1 of **Seven Keys To Building a Great Mineral Collection**:

Mineral Collecting – Is It For Me? – <http://www.mcdougallminerals.com/blog/mineral-collecting-is-it-for-me/>

Size Matters! – <http://www.mcdougallminerals.com/blog/size-matters/>

Guidelines for Buying Our Minerals – <http://www.mcdougallminerals.com/Guidelines-for-Buying-Our-Minerals.html>

Beware the Hand of Man: Fakes, Treatments, Repair and Other Alterations – <http://www.mcdougallminerals.com/blog/beware-the-hand-of-man-fakes-treatments-repairs-and-other-alterations/>

Editor's Note: Part 2 of **Seven Key To Building a Great Mineral Collection** will appear in the April 2016 issue of the *Rockhounds Herald*.

Club Meeting – February 2016

Photos by Pat & Bruce



Gem Tree Class – February 2016

Photos by Pat & Bruce



Small class, but some beautiful results.



The Physical Properties of Minerals



Minerals are identified by analyzing their physical properties. Let's learn about these properties and discover what they mean and how to determine them. Start by reading the descriptions of each of the physical properties. You can then dig deeper by going to the source website listed below and clicking on each of the links to learn more about each property.

Cleavage & Fracture

Cleavage and fracture are descriptions of how a mineral breaks into pieces. Cleavage describes how a mineral breaks into flat surfaces (usually one, two, three or four surfaces). Fracture describes how a mineral breaks into forms or shapes other than flat surfaces.

Hardness

The hardness of a mineral is a way of describing how easy or difficult it is to scratch the mineral. It is used, in combination with the other physical properties, to help identify a mineral specimen.

Luster

Luster is a description of the way a mineral surface looks when light reflects off of the surface.

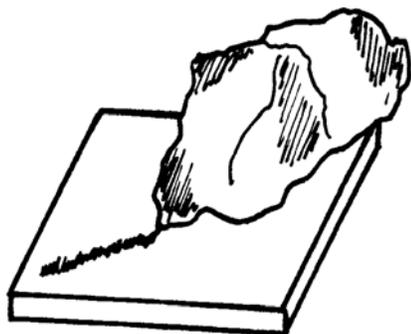
Specific Gravity

Specific Gravity is a measure of the density of a mineral compared to the density of an equal volume of water.

Streak

Streak is the color of a mineral when it is crushed to a powder.

STREAK



Another physical property that mineralogists use to identify a mineral is *streak*. Streak is the color of a mineral when it is crushed to a powder. Most minerals are the same color in the hand sample as they are when they are crushed. However, there are a few minerals that are a different color when they are powdered.

The easiest way to crush a mineral into a powder is to do a *streak test*. Try this yourself. Take a mineral and rub it against a piece of unglazed porcelain. The back side of a bathroom or kitchen tile is perfect. Officially this is known as a *streak plate*. Look at the color of the line on the streak plate.

This is the mineral's streak.

Mineral Name	Streak
Azurite	
Malachite	
Hematite	
Pyrite	
Fluorite	
Calcite	
Graphite	
Feldspar	
Quartz	
Corundum	
Gypsum	
Sulfur	
Galena	

If you have the following minerals, do a streak test on each and record the result in the table above. If you do not have a specimen, or if your specimen is too good to damage by doing a streak test, look the answer up in a good mineral book. (It is always best to do your physical tests on pieces of a mineral that are not collector specimens. Any test you do (specific gravity, hardness, streak) will damage the specimen.

Notice that minerals that are harder than the porcelain will not leave a streak. A streak plate has a hardness around 7. You may see a colorless line, but that is where the mineral scratched into the streak plate!

Who What Where When Why How

March Birthdays

MAR 1 David Jones
MAR 7 Jeff DeRoche
MAR 7 Thomas Merino
MAR 8 Harold Newman
MAR 16 Ginger Merino
MAR 19 Grady Dunn
MAR 19 George White
MAR 19 Lisa Wisham
MAR 21 Billy Johnson
MAR 23 JoAn Lambert
MAR ?? Ben Ferguson

Random Rock Facts

Rocks are classified by how they are formed. There are three basic groups: igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic. In each group, distinctions are made for texture or grain size and chemical or mineral content. However, there are some gray areas.

Mercury is not a solid at normal temperatures, but if it gets cold enough it becomes solid. Coquina is a sedimentary rock made of seashells. The shells are made of minerals, but they themselves are not minerals. Coal is considered a rock, but it is not made of minerals; it comes from organic matter plants. These last two are called biogenic rocks.

Source: http://www.rocksandminerals4u.com/what_is_a_rock.html
Reprinted with permission from Doug Mann

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

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.

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Annual Dues

Single \$15
Family \$20

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Hospitality Chair – Vacant

Club Hostess – Vacant

Club Liaison – Garry Shirah
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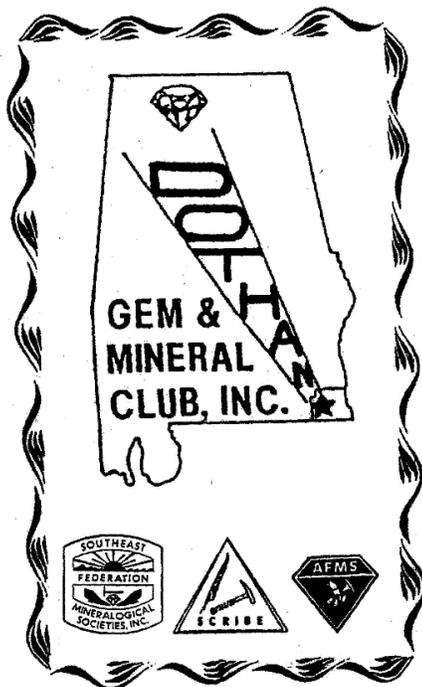
Refreshments

MAR 27 – cancelled

ROCKHOUNDS HERALD

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Where you might hear...

Under the earth's crust is the fiery hot mantle. Saying that the mantle is fiery hot does it injustice. The coolest outer part of the mantle is about 1000 degrees Celsius (1800 degrees Fahrenheit). Here the rock is molten liquid, white hot.

This molten liquid, or magma, is made up of a fairly uniform mixture of elements. Some of the major elements present are silica, iron, sodium, potassium, aluminum, magnesium, and gasses, including water vapor, oxygen, carbon dioxide, nitrogen, hydrogen and sulfur dioxide.

These elements form chemical combinations that crystallize in patterns to form **eight basic rock forming minerals**. These eight minerals form most rock. They are **olivine, pyroxene, amphibole, orthoclase, plagioclase, muscovite, biotite, and quartz**.

Source: http://www.rocksandminerals4u.com/igneous_rocks.html
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