

OBLIGATORY NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT-- Jean Ann Wahl-Piotrowski

Well, lets see.... Poor visibility due to blowing snow kept me from making it to the February 1 board meeting--when I couldn't tell where the road was because the ground was all white & couldn't see ahead of me for the snow in the air, I decided to turn around and go home. Thanks to Royal for running the meeting with no notice. Mary Gowans was off to Alaska, so Marie Lewis filled in as secretary. Thanks again Marie for being our permanent substitute. :)

February marks the beginning of spring for me (despite the blasted snow & cold): it's time to send off my seed & plant orders, sow some pansies and go on the first collecting field trip of the year! Ya, ya, so what if these are all indoor activities-- they are still SPRING activities. And, the first spring shows are just around the corner. So lets sharpen those chisels, tidy up the collecting bag, and clear a few storage shelves...IT'S TIME TO GET MOVING!

FEBRUARY REFRESHMENTS-- IF YOUR LAST NAME BEGINS WITH N-Z, PLEASE BRING SOME FOOD TO THE FEBRUARY MEETING. THANKS!**FEBRUARY PROGRAM: POWER CARVING OF ALABASTER** -- Royal Olson

Because our field trip this month (Saturday, February 17th)) will take us through the gypsum mine, one hundred feet beneath the city of Grand Rapids, this program may help some of you to decide to come and collect some material. You may use it to carve, or provide some for the "Children's Table" at our show.

Last year we had a demonstration and a "hands on" trial of hand carving this materials which is a lot like carving dry Ivory soap (formerly a very popular art form.) There were some hints that power tools could be used, but we did not show them nor go into detail on their application.

This program will consist of several short descriptions on the use of each type of power tool. Then I will try to answer any questions you may have. You won't get to actually feel and test the methods at the meeting, because our liability insurance will not permit it, but then there is always home practice. Anyone who has been carving and has a piece or two in progress or finished is encouraged to bring it for others to see.

Looking ahead: March's program is the Silent Auction. Bring things you wish to sell. Buy form the offerings of other members. Encourage new and prospective members to attend this fun meeting. In April Margaret Randolph and Mike Cook will share their knowledge of Native American artifacts: where they were collected and how they were made.

EN MEMORIUM: LIFE MEMBER MILO HILLIS (jawn)

Life member Milo Hillis passed away January 11, 1996. Milo and his family gave many years of service to the club: printing & mailing the news letter, faithfully exhibiting at our shows, and generally helping out wherever he was needed. Milo was best known for his job of "MC" at our show, keeping the public informed & keeping an eye out for shoplifters while he was at it!

We will miss Milo's companionship; and, offer our sympathy to his daughter Donna Lay and grandchildren John, Diane, Jean Ann and Tim Lay.

GRAND RAPIDS FIELD TRIP, FEBRUARY 17-- George Heaton

The February field trip will be to the Michigan Natural Storage Co. Gypsum Mine in Grand Rapids, Michigan. We will meet on Saturday, February 17th at the Michigan Natural Storage Co. office at 10:00 am. The storage company charges \$2.50 per person. Bring flashlights, lanterns, and spare batteries since the mine tunnels are dark. You will need hammers, sharp chisels, and buckets or boxes to carry tools and rocks. If you collect selenite crystals, you will also need tissue paper to wrap them. The mine is around 54 degrees, so you will probably find it most comfortable to dress in a few layers which you can adjust to your level of activity. Boots and a hard hat are also recommended. Do not forget to bring a lunch and something to drink. We stay down in the tunnels until about 3:00pm.

Material to be collected includes massive gypsum in the form of "pencil ore" and alabaster, and gypsum crystals called selenite. I would like everyone to collect and carry out a couple of good pieces of "pencil ore" for the children's table. If everyone does this it will add up to a good quantity of material and I won't have the back-breaking job of hauling out one huge and heavy bucketful by myself. I would appreciate this very much.

To get there take I-96 to the 28th street-West exit at Grand Rapids. (This will be the 2nd 28th St. exit.) Go west on 28th St. to Clyde Park Ave, turn right (North) on Clyde Park. Take Clyde Park to Grandville Ave. and turn left (West). Grandville Ave. becomes Chicago Drive just west of Clyde Park. Take Chicago Dr. to Judd Ave. and turn right (North.) Take Judd to Michigan Natural Storage which is on the right just before the railroad tracks. Allow about 1 1/2 hours driving time from Lansing.

STILL TIME TO GET EDUCATED AT FENNER NATURE CENTER--jawp

By the time you get this newsletter, Grit, Florence & Royal will have already given their presentations at Fenner. But, you're not too late.

On February 24 at 1:30pm, Bettie Patterson will give her talk "The Myths, Minerals and Medicines of Birthstones." There are many legends surrounding birthstones. Bettie will have stones on hand for you to see and discuss the many stories surrounding them.

On March 9 at 1:30pm, Gordon & Marie Lewis will present "Let's Go On a Field trip!" Where do you find rocks & minerals, what tools and other gear do you need, how do you care for them? Gordon & Marie will share their experiences & expertise. This session may be especially valuable to newer club members getting ready for their first field trips.

Fenner Nature Center is located at on Mount Hope Rd. near the corner of Aurelius Rd. -- just a little west (?) of the golf course, and between two cemeteries. After the talks, be sure to examine the nature exhibits, enjoy the bird watching station and maybe even take a nice walk on the grounds.

NEW MEMBER: Phyliss White

5457 Maple Ridge
Haslett MI 48840
349-9159

WELCOME!

JANUARY POTLUCK-- George Heaton

Our January potluck at the Alaiedon Township Hall on Sunday, January 21 was well attended with almost 30 members present. This was sufficient to provide a good quantity and variety of good food and George Heaton ate just the right amount again. We all had a good time playing Rocko after consuming the food. Those members who did not come missed out on some very good food and a fun time.

TIDBITS via Outcroppings (Clearwater FL) 1/96

--Are you a lapidary with Internet access? Try gemcutters@interserv.com.

--A Gentleman Rockhound, age 50, desires to meet a woman who owns a camper.

Please enclose picture of the camper.

SAVE STAMPS FOR MWF ENDOWMENT FUND (jawp)

If you bought a bookmark or two from Neil Snepp at the December meeting, you are familiar with the Midwest Federation's project to add to the MWF endowment fund. It looked to me as though there was a significant shortage of pretty stamps-- perhaps we can help the cause. Save up your canceled stamps and send them to: Lyle Kugler, 612 S.E. Third St., Aledo IL 61231. Or perhaps you could get Neil to take your stash to the next MWF meeting?

MINES CLOSE-- Dean Stone via MWF Newsletter 2/96

It is with great sadness that I report that the last existing underground fluorite/fluorspar mines in Southern Illinois have ceased operation.

The Ozark Mahoning Company's Annabel Lee Mine and No. 1 Mine, previously known as the Minerva No. 1, have ceased production and the company has been pulling equipment out of the mine starting December 4, 1995.

It is expected that both mines will be sealed with a concrete cap by January 31, 1996.

There continues to be exploration in the area, but there is no promise that nay new shafts will be sunk in the immediate future.

The loss of the Annabel Lee and No. 1 will be greatly felt b all of us who appreciated the beautiful and unusual specimens coming out of those mines.

PLACES TO VISIT: word search via MWF Newsletter 1/96

- Shows
- Auctions
- Rocksales
- Jewelers
- Demonstrations
- Museums
- GarageSales
- Giftshops
- Quarries

- __ Swaps
- __ Friends
- __ Meetings

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE INQUIRING FOSSIL COLLECTOR--

Andrew A. Hay via Crystal Cluster (DesPlaines IL) 2/96

A small but steady number of letters come to the officers and members of ESCONI requesting information on the quality of collecting, directions to where, and what to collect. The letters are often filled with a mixture of collecting facts that were pertinent 20 years ago, and a confused picture of collecting today. In order to answer many inquiries at once let me wander on.

Let us begin by saying that fossil collecting in general has been curtailed by the irresponsible behavior of collectors who aroused the ire of the quarry/mine owners and the insurance companies; government reclamation directives (covering over fossil localities for reasons of safety;) illiterate bureaucrat attempts to save archaeological remains ("archaeologists" hunt dinosaurs and other fossils;) last but not least, housing developments. Some, but not all, of these things have affected fossil bearing concretion collecting in the northeastern Illinois area labeled "Mason Creek."

Ironstone concretions and their fossil contents have been known in this area since the 40's of the 19th century. With the opening of shaft mines in the 1870's and the beginning of profitable strip mining in the 1920's, the fame of the area and its fossils resource grew. The stories of the almost endless number of concretions collected in the middle of this century are legend. That is what many of our questioners write us about. The author can remember the days the strip mines were being bulldozed over. It was impossible to get any more in the trunk or inside the car. That was then. Despair not, it is yet possible to come and collect concretions; although, not in such great quantities. But a caveat: any experienced collector will tell you that one must open a great number of concretions before finding a "keeper." Knowing someone who lives in one of the small towns that grew up around the shaft mines of yesteryear is a tremendous asset. Goodly portions of some towns are built on a mine's flattened spoil heap. A road or shopping mall under construction offers a chance to search for concretions. The Mazon Creek area is dotted with conical heaps; spoil piles of defunct shaft mines. Getting the land owner's permission presents the opportunity to search for concretions.

The most accessible collecting site for those unfamiliar with the Mazon Creek area is the Mazonia-Braidwood State Fish and Wildlife Area; part of an electric utility's nuclear station cooling pond; formerly Peabody Coal Company's Pit 11. One does not **need** a boat, as is often asked; but, a boat gives access to remnants of the original Pit 11 spoil piles now surround by an oval cooling pond. Best collecting times are in the Spring or after heavy rains. Rain and freezing and thawing of Winter expose the partially buried concretions.

To obtain a collecting pass for this State area contact: The Mazon Creek Project, Earth Science Dept., Northeastern Illinois University, 5500 N. St. Louis Ave., Chicago IL 60625-4699

CLUB EVENTS

- February 15 Regular Meeting, North School. 7:30. N-Z bring food. Gypsum carving.
February 17 FIELD TRIP. Michigan Natural Storage. Grand Rapids. 10:00 am
March 7 Board Meeting. 7:30. Meridian Twp. Service Center
March 21 Regular Meeting, North School. 7:30. SILENT AUCTION.

SHOW CALENDAR

- March 9 & 10 Roamin Club Auction. Schoolcraft College, Waterman Campus Center Bldg, 18600 Haggerty Rd, Livonia. Sat. 11-6, Sun 12-6.
Free.
- March 15-17 Jackson Show. Frat. Order of Eagles, 302 5th St, Michigan Center. Fri. 1-9, Sat. 10am-9pm, Sun. 10am-5pm. Adults \$2, Teens .50
- March 23 Metro Rock Swap (Dearborn Club). Democratic Club of Taylor, 23400 Wick Rd., Taylor (just East of Telegraph). 10am-5pm.
Free.
- April 3-6 Indian Mounds Show. Eastbrook Mall, 28th St., Grand Rapids
- May 4-5 Kalamazoo Show
- May 10-12 Flint Show, Flint IMA Sports Arena
- May 17-19 Dearborn Show. Dearborn Civic Center, Michigan & Greenfield. Fri. 5-9, Sat. 10-8, Sun. 11-5:30
- June 21-23 Bloomington Show & Swap, Bloomington IN
- July 19-21 Sudbury Gem & Mineral Show, Sudbury Ontario
- July 26-28 Geodeland Earth Science Clubs & MWF Show & Convention, Macomb IL