



Rock Talk



September 8th Club Meeting Program

Please bring anything you want to share with our members to show what you've learned or accomplished this summer. Did you take a class, go rock hounding, or learn a new craft? Share it with the club! Be sure to bring examples of what you learned or collected, so we can all see what you did. Also, If you have anything you'd like to sell, such as rocks, rough, slabs, cabs, books, or anything pertaining to lapidary or geology, bring it to the meeting! Try to arrive before 6:30 if you wish to put out items for sale.

The rock polishing machines and the trim saw will be available for use after the business meeting is over. Please sign up at the table by the entrance if you wish to use these machines. Machine use will go in order of sign up and length of time allotted will depend on how many members sign up on a particular night. Watch your newsletter every month to see if the polishing machines will be available for use that month.

Former Rock Talk Editor Susan McGowan

by Jerry Johnson

By now most of you have heard about the passing of Susan McGowan. She and her husband Tom were very active members of the Withlacoochee Rockhounds. My condolences go to Tom and his family. I met Susan when she attended one of our adult education silversmithing classes and then later joined the Withlacoochee Rockhounds club. It didn't take much urging to get Susan to volunteer, because she had such a genuine desire to help people. I had asked her to help teach one of the silversmithing classes and the more she learned, the more she wanted to know. After some discussion, she decided to attend an intensive jewelry repair course in Jupiter, Florida. Later she started her jewelry business and convinced Tom to design and setup a web site for her. At about the same time she and Tom said they would publish the *Rock Talk* for the club, and they produced a noteworthy publication. I will remember her for her upbeat attitude to life and that pleasant smile she had...and I will miss her.

Welcome to Another Club Year

by Mike Stone, editor

Welcome to another Withlacoochee Rockhounds club year. Hopefully you all managed to enjoy the summer, no matter where you called home over the past four months. I watched the Florida weather almost daily on www.wunderground.com and saw the temperature down in Florida day after day in the 90s with rain and thunderstorms appearing frequently. That's not the best weather to be out and about digging up rocks, minerals, or fossils. Hopefully many club members were able to continue with their rock hounding, gem making, and related activities in air-conditioned comfort throughout the nasty season.

Peggy and I move north to escape the frightful Florida summer weather, but this summer we had to endure one of the hottest on record up here in Kentucky. On August 28th the daily temperature had surpassed 80 degrees, 100 days in a row and the temperature reached at least 90 degrees 66 times this summer. We spent more time in the house since early June than we did during those frigid winter months back in New Hampshire. After all, it's possible to dress for cold weather, but one can only undress to a certain level in the heat and still remain "decent".

We had a swimming pool put in during the month of June, and using it was a pleasure on those many sweltering days. However, once the pool was finished, I had much work to do building two stone retaining walls, due to the steepness of the slope of our property. When the hole for the pool was excavated, about fifty percent of the material was rock. Some of the chunks of limestone and mudstone were so heavy that the large backhoe couldn't lift them and had to flip, roll, and slide them into what became a gigantic

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Next Meeting, Wednesday, September 8th at the Senior Citizens Club of Hernando County Inc.

Rock Talk

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pile of rocks. Fortunately many of the rocks were small enough for me to move with our tractor, so I had plenty of raw materials for the retaining walls.

All of the rocks in New Hampshire are either igneous or metamorphic; there is no limestone, no sedimentary rocks, and of course no fossils. Building stonewalls in central New Hampshire was much more difficult than in Kentucky, partially because many of the rocks (field stones) had been rounded by the glaciers, so stacking them was a real challenge. Also, trimming these tough, hard rocks required forceful chipping, drilling, or repeated pounding with a large sledgehammer. But many of the rocks from our property in Kentucky can be shaped with a quick blow from a three-pound hammer or broken in two with a few well-placed blows with an eight-pound sledgehammer.

This summer, our rock and mineral collecting was limited to finding a few common fossils in the area that include bivalves, corals, and crinoids. We found no fossils of great importance, but we did manage to increase our collection a bit. We'll bring some fossils with us to a club meeting the fall or winter for those who would like to add to their collection.

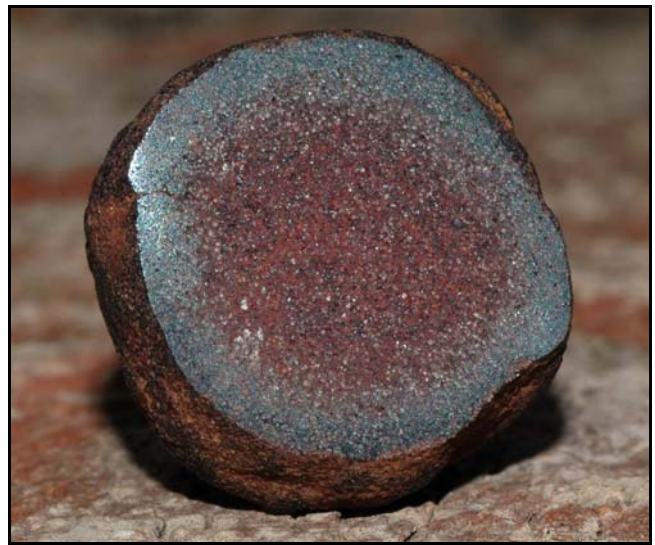


A nice piece of fossilized coral.



Moqui marbles

Over the past few years while looking over washed out areas near our property, we've been finding peculiar looking small spheres. Their specific gravity is slightly heavier than an average piece of limestone (determined by hefting), and strangely enough, some of these spheres are attracted to a magnet. We'd like to think that they are alien and fell out of space, but we knew that was not likely the case. After doing a bit of searching on the Internet, we came up with a likely identification. It appears that they are hematite or goethite concretions, called Moqui marbles in Utah. These spheres were used by American Indians as Shaman Stones. The Indians would throw them into sacred fires and the little spheres would explode. It is said that the Indians used them for healing and for balancing. EBay sells them by the bag.



A Moqui marble (3/4 inch diameter) that has been ground flat and polished. Notice the shiny metallic outer area and sandy, iron oxide colored interior.

Check out Our Website

<http://withlacoocheerockhounds.com/>

Florida Rock and Gem Show Dates May—October 2010

October 1-3--SARASOTA, FLORIDA: Show; Frank Cox Productions; Municipal Auditorium, 801 N. Tamiami Trail (Hwy. 41); Fri. 10-5, Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; gems, jewelry, beads; contact Frank Cox Productions, 755 S. Palm Ave. #203, Sarasota, FL 34236, (941) 954-0202; e-mail: frankcox@comcast.net; Web site: www.frankcoxproductions.com

NC farm Produces Emerald Shaped into Massive Gem

by Emery P. Dalesio, Associated Press Writer, Yahoo News

An emerald so large it is being compared to the crown jewels of Russian empress Catherine the Great. It was pulled from a pit near cornrows at a North Carolina farm. The nearly 65-carat emerald that its finders are marketing by the name "Carolina Emperor" was pulled from a farm once so well known among treasure hunters that the owners charged three dollars a day to shovel for small samples of the green stones. After the gem was cut and then re-cut, the finished product was about one-fifth the weight of the original find, making it slightly larger than a U.S. quarter and about as heavy as an AA battery.

The emerald compares in size and quality to one surrounded by diamonds in a brooch once owned by Catherine the Great, who was empress in the 18th century. Christie's auction house in New York sold the brooch in April for \$1.65 million, said C.R. "Cap" Beesley, a New York gemologist who examined the stone.

While big, uncut crystals, and even notable gem-quality emeralds have come from the community 50 miles northwest of Charlotte called Hiddenite, there has never been one so big. "It's worthy of an imperial treasury. It is the largest cut emerald ever to be found in North America," Beesley said in a telephone interview from Myanmar, an Asian country rich in precious gems.

The discovery is a rarity for emeralds not found in the rich veins of South America and Asia but in North America, said Robert Simon, owner of Windsor Jewelers in Winston-Salem. "Most of the stones that have come out [of Hiddenite] have not been gem-quality that I would mount in jewelry," said Simon, who was part owner of a 7.85-carat, dime-sized emerald found in the same community in 1998 that has since been set in jewelry and sold to a private owner.

Terry Ledford, 53, found the roughly 2-inch-square chunk rimmed with spots of iron a year ago on a 200-acre farm owned by business partner Renn Adams, 90, and his siblings. The rural community of Hiddenite is named for a paler stone that resembles emerald.

"It was so dark in color that holding it up to the sun you couldn't even get the light to come through it," a quality that ensured an intense green hue once the stone was cut with facets that allowed light into the gem's core", Ledford said.

"The North Carolina stone was cut to imitate the royal emerald. A museum and some private collectors interested in buying the emerald have been in contact", Ledford said.

"Modeling an empress's emerald is likely to have less influence on the North Carolina stone's sale price than its clarity, color, and cut", explained Douglas Hucker, CEO of the American Gem Trade Association, a Dallas, Texas-based trade association for dealers in colored gems. "A 65-carat cut emerald from North Carolina is a big, big stone," he said. "But once an emerald is cut, it's subject to the same type of market conditions that any emerald would be."

Emeralds are part of North Carolina's mineral claim to fame, though other places in the U.S. also are rich in gems. Maine mines have yielded aquamarine and amethyst, Montana bears sapphires, Idaho is known for star garnets, and Arkansas has diamonds.

"It's not fully known why small, subterranean cavities containing emeralds formed in central North Carolina", said geologist Michael Wise of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, who has studied the underground world around Hiddenite for years.

"Emeralds are produced where a superheated fluid carrying the element beryllium migrated through rocks that contain chromium. This doesn't happen frequently," Wise said. "The conditions have to be just right to make an emerald. It happens to be the case at this particular place," according to Wise.

Adams said decades ago when his parents owned the farm, they allowed anyone with a shovel to dig for emeralds on the property for \$3 a day. Virtually all of it was too full of flaws to be cut into precious stones and was mostly sold to mineral collectors.

Ledford said they don't plan to quit after pocketing the profits from their big find. "We'll definitely keep on mining," he said. "It would be good to know you don't have to go and could do it for pleasure. You feel like you've got to find something to survive but since we found this emerald, once we get it sold, there will be less stress."



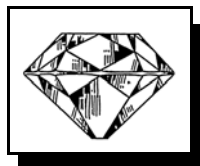
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Withlacochee Rockhounds

Purpose

We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to foster interest and promote knowledge of minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary arts, and earth sciences, through regular meetings, informative programs, workshops, and field trips. PLUS our Annual Gem and Mineral and Jewelry Show. Membership is open to anyone sharing such interests.

Dues

Dues are \$25.00 annually for a family and \$15.00 annually for a single member.

Club Meeting Location and Time

Senior Citizens Club of Hernando County Inc., behind Brewers Funeral Home on the east side of US 19 in Spring Hill, FL. The meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 PM.

2010 Club Officers

President.....	Ralph Barber.....	352-200-6852.....	barbersbloomers@hotmail.com
Vice President.....	Kelly Johnson.....	352-688-9399.....	
Secretary.....	Danielle Thornton.....	352-683-5107.....	surferchick03@hotmail.com
Treasurer.....	Janet Wheeler.....	727-938-3664.....	ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com
Rock Talk Editors.....	Mike Stone/Peggy Burns.....	603-524-0468.....	n1ve@amsat.org
Web Master.....	Ralph Barber.....	352-200-6852.....	barbersbloomers@hotmail.com
Mailing Reporter.....	Melodye Steverson.....	352-683-9496.....	melodye@designsbymelodye.com
Membership Chairman.....			
Program Coordinator.....	Melodye Steverson.....	352-683-9496.....	melodye@designsbymelodye.com
Program Coordinator.....			
SFMS Stamp Program.....	Flora Barker.....	352-527-9844.....	fbarkerrocks@tampabay.rr.com
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