

Bay Area Mineralogists

April 2004 Newsletter

Next meeting April 14th, 8:00PM
Foothill College, Geology Building,
Room P-24, Los Altos Hills, California
<http://www.baymin.org>



Welcome to the April issue of The Bay Area Mineralogists (BAM) newsletter. The purpose of our club is to further spread the knowledge and interest of mineralogy in our world today and promote awareness in the field of natural sciences as they pertain to the geosciences.

2004 Field Trips

The subject of field trips will be undertaken at the upcoming April meeting. As of now, discussions have been held with the idea of having four trips during the April through November time frame. Locations will be decided at this meeting. A few of the sites up for consideration are The Strawberry Mine tungsten deposit near Bass Lake outside of Fresno; Gold Hill, Nevada for a variety of species and Ely, Nevada for garnet deposits; The Champion Mine in the White Mountains north of Bishop; and at least one annual trip to Clear Creek in San Benito County (stay tuned, we may have something very special here). The goal of the April meeting is to establish dates and a primary contact person for each trip. We are planning and will be conducting several official BAM field trips this year. This keeps club interest at a high level and creates the opportunity for members to get to know each other better, not to mention having fun finding some great minerals. So plan to come to the meeting and have a say in when and where some great trips will be held this year.

Topic for April's Meeting

President Rick Kennedy will head up a discussion on "Minerals and the Internet" for this month's meeting. The outline for the talk will cover the various aspects of buying, selling, and researching minerals on the web from around the world. Plan to share your ideas and experiences as they pertain to mineralogy and cyberspace.

May BAM Guest Speaker

BAM member Gretchen Bynum has contacted a possible guest speaker for the May meeting. John Stockard is tentatively scheduled to speak on the geologic aspects of "Thunder Egg Formation" to our group. If you know of any other guest speakers for future BAM meetings, please contact Editor Dan Evanich or President Rick Kennedy.

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Mineral find of the Month

The mineral find of the month is from Dan Evanich showing a specimen of schist matrix with strontiojoaquinite crystal sprays along with isolated bipyramidal crystals from San Benito County, California. It has literally dozens of yellow crystal sprays and single crystals as well. This specimen shows great coverage for a very rare mineral.



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Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month at Foothill College, Room P-24, Geology Building, Los Altos Hills, California. 8-10pm. Take highway 280 North from San Jose toward San Francisco to the El Monte exit and head west.

And now, for your reading pleasure.....

Field Trip Notes and Images from Bill Spence on The Greenhorn Summit Area near Lake Isabella

The Greenhorn Summit area is part of the Sierras, lying astride highway 155 east of Bakersfield, about 10 miles west of Lake Isabella. It has been the subject of trip reports in old editions of *Gems & Minerals* which focused on scheelite, garnet, epidote and smoky quartz on nearby Black Mountain. In 2003 the inspiration for a trip to the Greenhorns was a photo of a scheelite specimen from the Black Morel claim which resides in the LA County Museum, featured in Tony Kampf's article "The Minerals of California" (*Rocks & Minerals*, Nov-Dec 1994). In addition I had been interested in the antimony nodules being sold by Sharon and Gene Cisneros which came from the Erskine Creek area southwest of Lake Isabella.

I began research of the area using CDMG's County Report #1 (1962), *Mines and Mineral Resources of Kern County*, which provided useful summaries of the specimen potential of several mines in the area, but the Black Morel was not listed. A search of the BLM's mining claims data base did, however, yield the location of the Black Morel, which I determined to be the same as the High Power claim described in Report #1.

The BLM database also indicated that the nearby Big Sugar claim had once belonged to Ed Swoboda and Roland Reed, big time collectors normally associated with pegmatites rather than homely scheelites. I obtained Roland's e-mail address from Cal Graeber and ended up talking with him on the phone. The story was that in the 1950s some other San Diegans had taken some "world class" scheelite-on-quartz-crystal specimens from the Big Sugar, and in the early 90's he and Ed had staked a claim to try to track them down without much success. Roland was gracious enough to send me hand drawn maps that would later prove invaluable in locating the Big Sugar.

Armed with my research and topo maps I went to the Greenhorn Summit in June 2003 with my friend Patrick Doe and Riverside geologist Jim Puckett. Originally intending to camp at the Greenhorn County Park at the summit, we determined it was a bit too dusty (the summer winds were blowing through on the day we arrived), and it cost \$10! We relocated to the USFS Cedar Creek campground about 4 miles west of the summit which turned out to be much more scenic at no cost.

On day 1 armed with recently acquired metal detectors, we drove from Kernvale at the south end of Lake Isabella up Erskine Creek to find the Tom Moore Mine, the source of the antimony nodules. Erskine Creek Road is a good dirt road serving two ranches out in the boonies. Our first lesson was that the forest service (I assume) is actively trying to restore the landscape and is removing old access roads in many places. The road crossing Erskine Creek and leading to the former Tom Moore Mine is one of those. Without realizing it, we actually stopped and had lunch where the access road had previously joined Erskine Creek Road. Ultimately we drove to the end of Erskine Creek Road where we encountered a locked gate at the Liebel Ranch (a beautiful setting). We parked and crossed the creek on foot and headed up the slopes of Laura Peak, a smallish mountain. Being more physically fit than I, Patrick and Jim followed an old trail up and around the peak. I insisted the Tom Moore wasn't up that high and stayed at a lower elevation. Indeed the "mine" was where I thought. It consisted of a series of trenches running laterally across the lower southwestern slope of the mountain. I found a few samples

of what I assume are massive stibnite but not antimony nodules. The metal detectors were useless, probably because we were inexperienced with them. John Magnasco later pointed out that antimony is a semi-metal, and that may also have something to do with it. Interestingly although the mountainside is mostly barren of anything but scrub, the hillside to the west of the one where the Tom Moore is located has an uneven row of trees which appear to follow a continuation of the line along which the Tom Moore trenches were dug, suggesting to me that the trees may follow a line of mineralization. Having run out of drinking water, we gave up the Tom Moore for a later time. (The Tom Moore Mine was once patented, but its current ownership status is unknown.)

On day 2 we went looking for the Big Sugar. The topos indicated it to be a couple miles north of the summit adjacent to a forest service road which, as it turns out, is a favorite with dirt bikers. When we reached the headframe of the Black Sambo claim, we realized we'd gone too far. At that time Roland's hand drawn maps became invaluable. Again the forest service had obliterated the junction of the primary road and the Big Sugar access road, and much of the latter has begun to reforest itself with manzanita, pine and other shrubs. We predicted from Roland's map where the old access road should be and climbed until we found it. While Patrick and Jim followed the old trail up and around the peak, I again stayed where the topo map indicated the Big Sugar should be and found an open cut of about 30-50 feet (with the claim marker). The rocks were primarily typical skarn materials, but the deposit is notable for massive white vein quartz enclosing crystals of epidote. (These materials were scattered around the site. County Report #1 had noted the Big Sugar as the source of "unusually large and well terminated epidote crystals".) The claim appears to have a heavy overburden of soil; dynamite and a lot of earth moving would probably be required to explore the deposit further. I brought back one well-formed epidote of about 2" on quartz. Other than that, we decided to move on.

On our way to dinner in Kernville we tried to locate the road to the Huckaby aka Black Mountain King Mine with no luck. The Huckaby is the mine most frequently described in the old rockhound mags and has presumably been visited by hundreds or thousands of crystal seekers.

On day 3 we decided to find the Black Morel by following the high tension lines from the summit to the approximate elevation of the mine and then hiking north about 100 yards. Patrick and I were able to do this as planned. Jim continued down the hill another _ mile and we didn't see him again for another couple of hours. The Black Morel is mostly an open cut with a single tunnel that has been bulldozed shut. Much of it is overgrown. We found several silver 357 casings there and assumed the Lone Ranger must frequent the area. While exploring, I noted that a very serviceable dirt road came up to within 50 yards of the face we had discovered. I hiked this road and found myself on highway 155. This road was not indicated on any of the maps we had. Over my protests, but to my relief, Patrick hiked up the hill to the Jeep and brought it back to the claim (along with Jim who was by then hiking on the highway). For anyone wishing to visit the Black Morel, this road provides easy access.

As with most or all of the Greenhorn scheelite prospects, the typical assemblage at the Black Morel is garnet/epidote/quartz adjacent to a limestone pendant. We scoured the dump and then located a couple of cavities filled with decomposed rock which could be removed by simple digging. The larger of these was about 18" diameter by 24" deep. The fill material (coarse dirt, really) from these cavities appeared to be mostly garnet, judging by its color. At

the top of the pocket there was what appeared to be a hard, tan-colored, bladed stalactitic material (massive garnet in a state of dissolution, I theorize). At the bottom there were a few crude, misshapen quartz crystals sometimes associated with epidote or (in Jim's judgment) clinozoisite and a carpet of a green, felted material that I took to be actinolite. Not finding any of the obvious 1" scheelites we had hoped for, I removed a couple of the quartzes and put a sampling of the pocket contents into a bucket for transport home. (The folks at the Cryo-Genie had taught me to save the contents of a pocket, cuz you never know what's there.) Under UV light at home I discovered that the pocket dirt contained substantial quantities of minute blue-fluorescent disseminated scheelite, and indeed there were small scheelite crystals residing IN the actinolite from the bottom of the pocket, which I later found could be exposed by judicious use of a water gun to blast away the actinolite. Unfortunately most of these crystals are of irregular shapes and internally fractured. Unless sealed with cyanoacrylate before water blasting, they tend to disintegrate. The largest scheelite crystal found is about 1/2". A couple of thumbnails in the range of 1/4"-5/16" show typical scheelite form. Most are barely 1/8" in any dimension. Another notable crystal at the Black Morel was clinozoisite (?) in assemblages of blades up to 4". Unfortunately these were extremely fragile and could not be removed from the host rock without completely crumbling them.

We returned home the following day.

Fearing that we might have left valuable material behind, I returned to the Black Morel a month later with my wife, Lynnet. We gathered the rest of the Black Morel pocket contents for transport home, but it appears that most of the scheelite had been gathered up on the first trip. A thunderstorm helped to cool things off in the late afternoon, and it forced us to drive to a higher elevation to gather firewood for our shishkakob. On our second day we looked for the Huckaby and did indeed find the access road which I suspect is primarily used for accessing the high tension pylon on the hill. Not knowing that the road would be drivable with adequate turnaround room at the top, we hiked up in 107 degree heat. We found a small dump area and a blocked adit. The material on the dump was completely unremarkable. The heat on the previous trip had been uncomfortable, but on this hike I truly appreciated the wisdom of Fen's advice to "collect in the shade". (The access road is actually easy to spot if you're coming west from Lake Isabella on highway 155. A yellow 25mph sign is posted at the junction of the two roads, about 3 miles before the summit. Heading east from the summit, you'd have to be looking over your left shoulder to see it.)

General Observations:

There are many old scheelite prospects in the Greenhorn Summit area, none of which is currently under claim. Documentation of these claims in the above resources is quite thorough. Prospects for finding epidote, crude garnets and modest scheelites are good. Finding claim locations is hindered by the government's active effort to restore most of these claims to their natural state. Forest service employees we met seemed to be primarily concerned with fire prevention and didn't seem to know anything about the mines. Despite the conifers, this area has desert heat in the summer, so spring or fall collecting is best. Highway 155 between the Greenhorn Summit and Lake Isabella is extremely steep; use low gear and don't try it with wimpy brakes. The County Park offers camping in a dusty setting with plumbing. The forest service campground is prettier and free. Both campgrounds operate on a first-come-first-served basis, but we were told that the County park is never booked full. The residential community of Alta Sierra is located at the summit, but there are no indoor overnight

accommodations and only one restaurant which does not keep regular hours. There is a Forest Service station at the summit. There are no stores or gas stations within 10 miles of the summit.

Photo Captions:



Campsite at Cedar Creek



End of Erskine Creek Road and Liebel Ranch.

View NE toward Laura Peak. Approximate location of Tom Moore Mine indicated.

Patrick & Jim in the middle of the road to Big Sugar. We didn't know it at the time, but the claim was in the trees directly behind them.



Patrick next to our scheelite hole at the Black Morel.



Wider view of the primary opencut at the Black Morel. Our hole is at the middle right of the photo. The light spot in the trees at the upper center indicates the

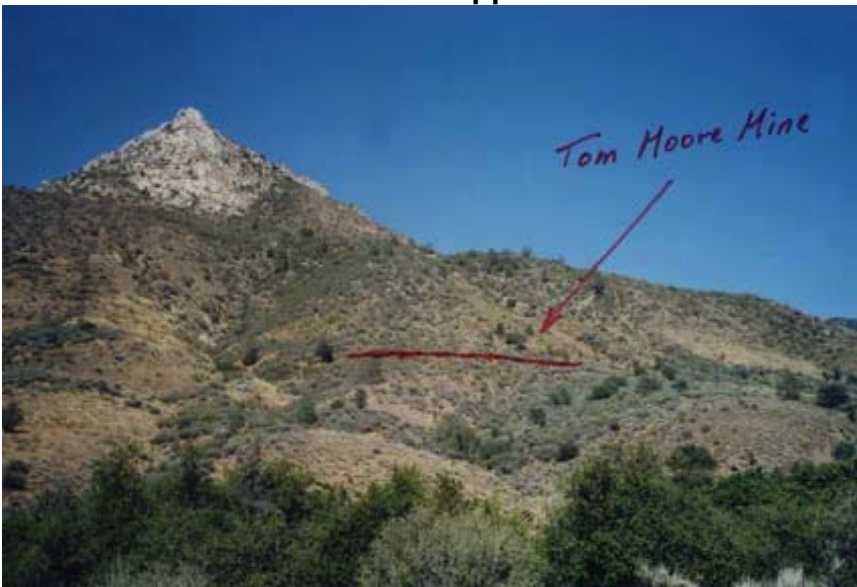


cleared power line corridor to the south.

Junction of 155 and Huckaby Mine access road.



View NE toward Laura Peak. Approximate location of Tom Moore Mine indicated.





Lynnet in front of the Huckaby Mine adit.

The Location Map.

