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# Bay Area Mineralogists

## November 2011

November 9, 2011, 7:00 pm  
USGS Menlo Park, Bldg 3, Rm 3-237  
<http://www.baymin.org>



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The Bay Area Mineralogists assemble on the second Wednesday of every month during the school year, unless diverted by extenuating circumstances. We now meet at the USGS Menlo Park in Building 3. See campus map at <http://online.wr.usgs.gov/kiosk/mparea3.html>. Our room is located in Building 3, second floor where this map says "Conference Room" – note that the front doors are locked and you will have to come up the stairs on the Middlefield side of the building. Parking is free.

### **BAM November Program:** **Jean DeMouthe** **"Gems: A Mineralogical Perspective"**

This month we have the good fortune of hearing from Jean DeMouthe, the Senior Collections Manager for Geology at the California Academy of Sciences in SF. Her topic is going to be gemstones, but not just as baubles; in her words, "Since this group is pretty knowledgeable about minerals, I'm going to speak about gem materials in terms of their geologic origins and their mineralogical properties. I will also discuss how the properties of each species influenced the way it has been used. Modern uses of

ornamental stones are often influenced by historical uses, which were in turn affected by a mineral's availability and properties. And there will be lots of nice pictures."

If you're looking for something on theme for show-and-tell, bring anything that qualifies as a gem or ornamental material – rough or cut. Bonus points for local material like the Morgan Hill "poppy" jasper or Monterey nephrite.

Jean describes her role at the Academy as "...the head librarian for the rocks. I maintain the geology collections, keeping them organized, documented, safe, and accessible." She also teaches graduate courses in collections care and management at SFSU, and works half a day per week as the review geologist in the Building & Planning Dept of San Mateo County.

### **Some Collected Thoughts on Collection Curation**

With an expert on the subject coming to this month's meeting, it seemed like a perfect time to pull in some reminders and ideas on keeping one's collection properly curated. This is a little longer than the usual BAM column, but the personal experience adds real color to the topic.

This subject owes its kickoff to Sharon Cisneros, who sent along the following commentary over a series of e-mails. [*Editor's note: I've made some rearrangements and minor edits to the original content for flow.*]

I decided to elaborate on the problem about collection cataloguing a little, just in case

anyone cares about “what to do and why”. This is a result of my thoughts on the lack of attention Jack Parnau and Ed Oyler paid to labeling their collections.

With a lot of self-collected specimens, both Jack and Ed did not provide labels for posterity. Ed was particularly lax with labeling – he remembered everything and he could tell you anything you wanted to know about localities, but didn’t bother to make precise labels for many of the specimens in his collection. On some of Jack’s field collected flats, it took me nearly 10 years to get all of the specimens sorted out. I am not kidding. I often took specimens from Jack’s collection to Ed’s house during visits, to see if Ed recognized where something was from!

Luckily, I got to Dick Erd while he was still alive so I did get him to make complete collection records before I sold his collection. I also encouraged Ed to make labels for individual specimens we sold for him over the years while we were selling his collection, but unfortunately he passed away before he finished working up his collection labels – too little, too late!

In this regard, the biggest crime I witnessed was what happened to Ed Oyler’s mineral collection. On the day of the sale of his collection, after everyone bought the specimens they wanted, the remainder of his collection was dumped from the collection cabinet drawers, unloaded from the shelves in his display cases, and just dumped into big boxes that the Santa Clara Valley G & M Society club members provided. They had a good motivation, but no knowledge. The club used all of Ed’s personal collection, and his field collected material for kids’ grab bags. So it was recycled, in a sense, but all of the historical information and the important locality data that should have been saved over the 50+ years Ed was interested in minerals, was literally trashed in one afternoon!

It is extremely important to prepare your mineral collection labels with as much data as you can, and encourage everyone else to do so. Cataloguing should be an important part of your collection record keeping. Your collection label for each specimen should

include at least the following basic information:

1. Names of the minerals present
2. Locality where the specimen was found.
3. Your name, and city where you live, for historical purposes, if desired.

Other important data for cataloguing would be:

1. Catalogue number (number you put in the catalogue, and apply to the back of the specimen) for identification purposes
2. Notes on where the specimen was obtained (dealer or collector’s name)
3. Collecting data if you personally collected the specimen
4. Date acquired
5. Purchase price, if purchased (or trade value)
6. Chemical composition and crystal classification, if desired
7. Physical description of the specimen, and notes about its attributes
8. Current market value (helpful if you ever want to sell or exchange the specimen – or if your relatives want to sell it after you are gone!). This should be updated every 5 years.

Then, in another 100 years or so, your collection will be remembered as an important collection, especially if you have printed catalogue cards with your name on them, while collector Joe Blow’s specimens will just be a rock collection without history or pedigree! Think of your relatives, too. When you are gone, who will remember where your specimens are from, how much you paid for them, or even what they are?

Pass along this important information to other collectors. We are all just the temporary custodians of the specimens in our collections. Think of THEIR futures – the specimens will be around long after we are gone!

*[Editor’s note: I totally second Sharon’s nomination on the Oyler collection. At the sale in question I bought one of his cabinets, which came complete with who-knows-what random specimens and detached labels. Killed me every time I threw them out, as I always imagined it was some rare mineral he’d identified. And I do wonder about kids’ grab*

*bags culled from the collection of a guy who specialized in California mercury minerals...]*

President Spence weighed in on the topic as well:

Concerning "Locality", this should be as specific and honest as possible, especially in the case of self-collected material from lesser known locations. Ultimately the purpose of this information should be to enable later collectors or geologists to return to the site. Too often collectors guard this information, keeping it in memory or attributing it to fictional locations (or wrong locations), and the truth is difficult to establish after the collector's death or mental decline.

An example of this is the uvarovite location at Marsh Flat in Tuolumne County. Al McGuinness and Chuck worked this area and sold specimens labeled "Jacksonville", apparently never knowing the mine had a name. Only by grilling Chuck about field markers were we able to determine with reasonable certainty that they were working the Buckhorn Claim.

For those who subscribe to the Mineralogical Record, Rock Currier published a nice series of five articles between v38 #4 and v39 #3 (2008-2009). He also posted an article on labels at (<http://www.mindat.org/article.php/1263/Making+Labels+for+Mineral+Specimens>) and participated in a separate labeling discussion (with some nice examples) at <http://www.mindat.org/forum.php?read,60,137541,137541.quote=1>

And just remember: the moment you get hit by a bus renders every unlabeled rock you recognize on sight into yet another paperweight... label those rocks!

## **Crystal Gazers' / BAM Holiday Party 2011 Edition**

With the high levels of membership overlap in mind, the Crystal Gazers are continuing the tradition of running a combined holiday party with BAM. As per the last few years, it will be held early in the season (Saturday, December 10) in the community room of Si and Ann Frazier's Albany apartment complex, running from 5pm to 9pm.

Much like BAM's September picnic, there will be a benefit auction. Food will be bring-a-dish potluck. Plan on carpooling and probably a short walk down the street, as parking is extremely limited in the complex.

The Fraziers need to hear from folks by Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>, both for a headcount and to speed things along with a name list for the security desk. Please contact either me or the Fraziers directly ([siannfraz@aol.com](mailto:siannfraz@aol.com)) with your RSVP and to receive more specific directions to their place. Come on out – it's always a good time!

## **Upcoming Shows**

November 5-6  
52nd Contra Costa Mineral & Gem Society  
Centre Concord, Clayton Fair Shopping  
5298 Clayton Rd, Concord  
10am to 5pm daily

November 11-13  
Sacramento Mineral Society Show  
Scottish Rite Center, 6151 H St.  
Fri. & Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 10am-5pm

November 12  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vallejo Gem & Mineral Society Show  
Vallejo Veterans Bldg.  
420 Admiral Callaghan Lane, Vallejo  
Sat. 9am-5pm

November 11-13  
"Fall West Coast Gem & Mineral Show"  
Martin Zinn Expositions  
Holiday Inn-Orange County Airport  
2726 S. Grand Ave, Santa Ana  
Fri. & Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 10am-5pm

November 19-20  
Livermore Lithorama  
Livermore Valley Lithophiles  
3131 Pacific Ave, Livermore  
Sat 10am-5pm; Sun 10am-4pm

## **Letters to the BAM Editor**

Please send your comments, content, compliments, and/or complaints to Don Windeler, [don.windeler@rms.com](mailto:don.windeler@rms.com), 650-591-1644.