

SEPTEMBER BAM NEWSLETTER 10/01/03

Next meeting October 8th

Welcome to the September issue of the Bay Area Mineralogists newsletter. This issue continues to be a work-in-progress on the new monthly format. Several new articles will be included here, with more to come in future issues. The purpose of our club is to further spread the knowledge and awareness of mineralogy in our world today and to promote awareness and teaching in the field of natural sciences as they pertain to the geosciences.

RECENT CLUB ACTIVITIES

The annual BAM picnic was held at the home of Dan and Sharyn Evanich on September 7th with about 30 members and guests in attendance. This event served as the September BAM meeting with an informal review of old business and new. President Rick Kennedy suggested that BAM further explore a possible field trip in early November. We will propose and review ideas for trips and guest speakers at the next BAM meeting to be held on Wednesday, October 8th at Foothill College in Palo Alto starting at 8pm.

Contacts & Information

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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 to the college.

MINERAL FIND OF THE MONTH

This month's mineral find actually occurred several months ago when President Rick Kennedy was busily etching a bucket of Gem Mine material purchased from Steve Perry and John Veevaert of Trinity Minerals. From this batch came piece of rough showing some promise, although limited. After some time etching, out came a 4cm Benitoite crystal! Unfortunately, the crystal was too damaged to retain as a mineral specimen, but two pieces of facet rough were extracted and sent to the cutter. What you see below is the result of the find. The largest is a world-class gemstone of 5 carats and the smaller is about 2 carats. Not bad, considering that there are probably not more than 25 or so known Benitoite gem stones of 5 carats or more in the world! There continues to be more mine-run material available for those of you who are interested in Benitoite, neptunite, and other associated minerals from The Benitoite Gem Mine.



EDITORIAL COMMENTS, ETC.

This issue of the BAM newsletter contains new article formats as well as new subject matter. Some of these may stay and some may go, depending upon member feedback. Please feel free to give me your suggestions. Plan to attend the next meeting on October 8th at Foothill College at 8pm. Bring articles, product or service reviews, and suggestions.

MINERAL COLLECTOR SERVICES AND SUPPLIES

Looking for a high quality mineral cabinet? At the recent BAM picnic, several members expressed interest in having a custom mineral cabinet similar to Dan Evanich's. If you are interested in having a cabinet made similar to the one shown here, let Dan know at any of the meetings or call him at his home phone listed in this newsletter.



In an effort to provide entertaining articles and writings of interest to the mineral collecting community, we are re-printing some of the field notes written by BAM member Fen Cooper. He chronicles one of his and Gail Dunning's early visits in 1963 to Majuba Hill Mine in Nevada. All members are encouraged to contribute material that is beneficial from an educational standpoint as well as details on collecting experiences they have had in the field. Contact the editor, Dan Evanich, either by phone or email and submit your articles.

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

November 26, 1963 – Tuesday

Jack had told us that Majuba Hill would be worth some time but to be careful underground. We decided to check out the dumps today and then go into the Copper Stope tonight since it doesn't make any difference how dark it is outside as its always dark underground. After a quick reconnaissance of the area we decided that before we lit for the night we would move camp to the top of the dump near the adit entrance as there is a very nice spot to camp there.

The dump proved interesting but a lot of the specimens were dinged up. I started looking at the larger chunks that had rolled off the dump and were scattered on the hillside below it. After about half an hour I found a boulder that contained seams of very nice pharmacosiderite crystals. The crystals were small, rarely exceeding one eighth of an inch but were undamaged and the apple green pharmacosiderite was often associated with dark smoky quartz crystals and this made for some exceptionally nice specimens. I also picked up a couple of fairly decent scorodite specimens so this area has some good stuff scattered around in it.

When Gail and I got together for lunch he had some fairly decent olivenite specimens and a couple of minerals I wasn't sure of. We drove the camper up onto the dump and got settled in. Since we had a late lunch we decided to explore a bit underground and spent what was left of the afternoon wandering around. Gail found an area that was a breccia zone in rhyolite that contained some very nice olivenite crystals but we didn't really get a chance to explore that much as it was getting late. I had a copy of the Myler Mine report in the camper and it quickly became evident that if we wanted to find anything we had to do a little reading.

Today marked the end of our "fresh" food so tonight our menu is steak, fried potato's and onions and frozen (used to be anyway) peas with a piece of mom's applesauce cake for dessert. We opened one of our finest vintage cans of Hi C grape juice fresh out of the ice chest and while I cooked dinner Gail settled in with a little light reading. Unites States Geological Survey Bulletin 1045-I, Geology of Majuba Hill, Pershing County, Nevada. After dinner he announced that where we wanted to be was a place called the "Copper Stope". This rang a bell with me as Jack Parnau mentioned the area as the place to collect but also added that it was "scary as hell" and to be careful in there.

We broke out our hard hats, flashlights and other gear and looked at the adit portal. It was heavily timbered but the timbering looked good so in we went. Gail was the expert so he led the way while I kept a wary eye on the ceiling. There was little fallen rock on the floor and the mine was a lot less scary than the Stayton Mine. Gail kept grunting and pointing and after a while we found ourselves standing at the end of a tunnel looking into a large potato shaped hole in the ground. It must have been seventy to one hundred feet high and about forty by twenty feet wide at the bottom where we were standing. The rock is composed of shattered iron stained rhyolite and copper minerals occur in seams in the rock.

Jack had told us that the place was continually changing so the best way to collect was just to look for a mineralized seam and start digging. Gail and I both did this and after a short time I got into a seam of arthurite while Gail started finding some nice clinoclase. While specimens were not abundant by nine we had both filled our sacks with arthurite and clinoclase and had even found a little chalcantite that was fairly nice. Jack was right about the place though. It is the best place to collect and its kind of disconcerting to be digging away with your world limited to the area your flashlight beam covers and to hear a “whump” from who knows where caused by who knows what. A situation like that certainly provides stimulus to your imagination.

We were both getting tired, our sacks were full and our imaginations were stimulated and we both figured its time to vamoose.

BAM Member's Majuba Hill Mine Trip August, 2003

Several BAM members visited the Majuba Hill Mine in late August this year. Spending time collecting underground in both the Copper Stope and the Tin Stope were Dan Evanich, Bob Herold, Chuck Trantham, and John Magnasco. The mine still requires great care and caution at all times. The Tin Stope was in somewhat weathered condition on top with a makeshift wood scaffolding that allowed some access to the upper wall. The scaffolding has become very unstable over the past two years and will not take the weight of even one person. There are two workable areas on top that still are yielding clinoclase and olivenite specimens worthy of any display cabinet. The Copper Stope has not changed much during the past two years, but there were numerous signs of visiting collectors in recent time. One of the best finds came from Copper Stope; a large cabinet size specimen of undamaged apple-green colored arthurite with coverage of 3” by 4” across. It was possibly left by Fen and Gail some thirty years ago as a junk rock. Anyhow, it now shows very well in Dan's display cabinet.

We began our trip stopping at the Willard Mine, just south of Majuba Hill Mine off of Interstate 80 and a couple of miles north of Lovelock, Nevada. The phosphate pit at the mine still provides decent specimens of wavelite and a rarer mineral, fluellite. The fluellite crystals are found measuring to about a quarter inch. The only casualties of the entire trip were John Magnasco's left rear tire and Bob Herold's non-functioning “spud-gun”. All in all, the trip was a productive and fun event even though Bob Herold still would not relinquish his crown by being dethroned in our nightly “Oh Hell” card games.

