



The Southwest Gem & Mineral Society

The Southwest Gem

Volume 49 No. 5

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PO Box 17323, San Antonio, TX 78217- 0323

General meetings will tentatively be held the second Tuesday of the month, except in September and December. Board meetings are usually held the second Monday after the general meeting.

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General Meeting: Tuesday, May 13, 2008

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Place: 17018 Silverwood Drive, San Antonio, Texas

Just East of Hwy 281 on Donella Drive

Refreshments

Lee Smith	Wade Smith
Curtis Threatt	Doug Threatt
Claude Townsend	Jim Weedin

If you can not attend, please let Jim Meloche or Debbie Krause know so they can bring refreshments. Thank you for your consideration.



Health Updates of Our Members

We are sorry to hear Tom Banta is still not feeling up to par. Hope to see him better soon.

Uli Railsback has almost completed her treatments and doing great. She is even doing a little gardening. Yummmm!

Greetings from the President

Since our last monthly newsletter, we had a rock hunt trip to Eagle Pass. This was a joint trip with the Geology Club and even some from the Austin and Fredericksburg Rock Clubs. We had a perfect day for the hunt and all found something to cut or treasure.

Our meeting at St. Mary's University was a presentation on Super Volcanoes. It went well and was very informative.

Your Board is continuing to work on preparations for our 2009 Show.

Bob Bowie

Announcements

Claude Townsend will be giving a program on Desert Flora and Rocks for our May meeting. This should be quite a program and a lot of helpful information will be provided.

Upcoming Events

May 3-4 Lubbuck Gem & Min. Soc. Show, Lubbuck Civic Center
1501 Mac Davis Lane

May 24-25 Fort Worth Gem & Min. Club, Will Rogers Memorial Ctr.

Sept. 24-28 AFMS/SCFMS Show & Convention hosted by the Houston Gem & Mineral Society @ the Humble Civic Center

Please let me know of any other events or shows coming up so I can include the information in the newsletter.

Meeting Minutes

President Bob Bowie called the meeting to order @ 7:05 p.m.
Jim Meloche presented the Treasurer's report. Our funds continue to grow.
Thanks for all your dedicated work!

Bob Bowie mentioned the Eagle Pass trip and what a success it was.

Bob touched on the 2009 Show which is set for the 3rd weekend in March '09. It is only two days instead of the usual three because it is spring break week and the kiddos will be out of school.

Bobby Schultz is working on the floor plan. Jim Meloche is working on the budget. Security has been discussed and the dealers have been contacted.

Bob mentioned a website (minrec.org) to visit that is quite interesting. It is about 20-30 slides on the Gypsum Crystal Caverns in Nica, Mexico.
Click on *video*.
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Mini Classifieds

This space will be for anyone wanting to sell something or is looking for something that someone else might be able to help them with.

Gail Hyatt is looking for a flex arm magnifying light for a desk. Call her at 658-5876.

Debbie Krause is looking for used equipment to start slabbing and polishing rocks. Also in an old floor lamp base for a Tiffany type shade. Call her on 659-7125.

Meeting Minutes, con't:

Bob Bowie presented Brother Fitzgerald with a check from our club for \$1,000.00 for scholarships. Bro. Fitzgerald was very appreciative.

The raffle was held. Donated items were primarily supplied by Fernando Loranzo, compliments of Alamo Rock Shop. Also, from a former member, Frank Paradowski (not sure of spelling).

Brother Gene Lane gave the program. He is retiring soon and we gave him a card signed by our members.

Super Volcanoes (SV) are also called *mega volcanoes* or *mega calderas*. Since we have not had a SV in recorded history scientists think we could be overdue.

Scientists have identified nearly 40 sites that could fit into this category. A few of these areas mentioned: Hawaii, Mt. St. Helens Philippines, Vesuvius in Naples, Santorin, Tambora, Indonesia, Krakatau, Crater Lake, Toba, Long Valley, Camp Flegrei, Valles in New Mexico, Mt. Shasta, Medicine Lake and even Yellowstone.

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Meeting Minutes

Some interesting facts:

- * Magma is underground. When it is above ground it is called *lava*.
- * Yellow rock, *rhyolite*, is a SV material
- * Yellowstone is about 600,000 years old
- * The risk we face from SV activity can be shown as an equation: Risk + Probability x Consequences
Probability is small, perhaps 100,000 in any given year.
- * Mt. St. Helens is changing. The lava dome is currently growing.

This presentation contained numerous slides of the mentioned locations, as well as others and many diagram slides. It was a very interesting and informative evening. We enjoyed our time at St. Mary's and thank them for their hospitality.

In ending these minutes I would like to state that facts and names are shown as I understood them. There is, of course, the chance that I have erred a time or two. If so, I ask your understanding. Thank you.

Gail Hyatt

Secretary

Fool's Gold

Ask just about anyone what "*Fool's Gold*" is and the answer will be pyrite. Pyrite is iron sulfide.

On a recent visit to Black Hawk, Colorado, a miner I met told me the story of what *fool's gold* really is and how it got its name. There's a little more to it than just pyrite.

Black Hawk is a mining town located fifty miles west of Denver, near I-70. Its history goes back to the 1850's when gold was discovered in the Colorado mountains. While there was quite a bit of placer gold found in the streams, the bulk of ore was locked up in hard rock.

Where mineral deposits form, there are often two layers of development in the ground. Roughly the top 100 feet is called the oxide layer. Here minerals are exposed to the air and they react chemically with oxygen to form various compounds. When iron is exposed to air it forms iron oxide, better known as *rust*.

Below 100', as water trickles down through the rocks and soil, it picks up sulfur. The sulfur could be just dissolved in the water or it may form a mild acid. As it comes in contact with various other minerals, a reaction occurs that forms sulfide compounds. Iron pyrite is a common example of a sulfide mineral. If there are several minerals in the ground, they can form complex compounds in the ore bed. Back to the story.

The Heide Mine occupies a good portion of the Black Hawk area.

When gold was discovered, miners worked the oxide layer first. The ore was easier to mine and extracting the gold was fairly simple. The ore was crushed, and a process using mercury extracted the gold.

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The boom lasted a few years until the oxide layer was mined out. The sulfide layer was extremely rich in metals, but no process had been developed, which could separate the gold from the other metals.

Boom quickly turned to bust. Some miners sold or traded their claims away. Many simply packed up and left, abandoning their claims and assuming they were worthless.

Some time after the bust occurred, an investor from New York acquired some of the gold claims. He had heard of a smelting process invented in Wales to extract tin and wondered if the process would work for gold. He shipped 20 tons of the sulfide ore to Wales and waited. Finally, a report came back that went far beyond his expectations. The tin process extracted nearly 95% of the available gold from the ore.

The boom was on again! Mines reopened and a huge smelter was built right in the middle of town. Prosperity returned.

Those who had held onto their claims were rich men. The miners who abandoned their claims and left were foolish. And the "*fool's gold*" was there, in the sulfide layer, for someone else to take.

This is what was told to me by a miner. I didn't ask for references so take it for what it's worth.

Joe Noonan