Rockhound Ramblings

AUGUST 2020 • PASADENA LAPIDARY SOCIETY® • PASADENA, CA

President's Message

Dear Fellow Members,

The Covid-19 virus has kept us all isolated and unable to get together to share our love of lapidary and our friendships. I am hoping that things will get better soon. This has been so hard for all of us.

There is not much to report but we will try to stay in touch as much as possible. I am always available by phone or by text or email if you have any questions or just want to reach out to check on your fellow members.

We will have a board meeting August 6th at 6:00 pm via Zoom. Board members will receive an access number to join the meeting. I hope all board members will make an effort to join in. I will distribute a copy of the minutes from our last meeting in March, an agenda and any other pertinent information for the meeting.

We will not be able to have workshop nor will we be able to have our general membership meeting. Your bulletin will have lots of good information which I hope you will enjoy. I hope this will make up for the lack of programs.

After speaking to the other board members, it seemed to be the consensus to postpone the Rockhound of the Year election until next year.

We have postponed the annual show until March 2021, however, that will depend on our health and safety situation. The venue has been reserved in the event things work out. I would like to see a display case of items that our members have made during this lockdown. We will call it our quarantine case.

Everyone please stay home and stay safe.

– Ellen Ferrell, President

#

Pasadena Lapidary Society®

The name Pasadena Lapidary Society (PLS) and its associated logo are registered trademarks of The Pasadena Lapidary Society, Inc.

© 2020 The Pasadena Lapidary Society, Inc. Text, images, and other content in this publication are property of The Pasadena Lapidary Society, Inc., except for content that is in the public domain or is used with permission of the copyright holder or qualifies as fair use under copyright law. *Rockhound Ramblings* is available on the PLS website and may be freely linked to, but other distribution or re-publication, in part or whole, is prohibited unless written permission is granted by The Pasadena Lapidary Society, Inc.

#

Inter-federation field trip to Blue Forest and Fossil Safari (June 12-15, 2020)

By Sandie Fender

Collecting Blue Forest wood and fish fossils has always been on our rock collecting bucket list, so we joined Doug True of the NFMS to the Blue Forest site in Fontanelle, WY and the fossil quarry in Kemmerer, WY. The plan was to dig for agate at Blue Forest for a few days and then proceed to the Fossil Safari in Kemmerer. After that we would head to Seattle for a family rendezvous with our daughter.

Tony and I left Pasadena on Sunday, June 7 in the late morning. RV's don't like wind so our plan was to try to catch the late afternoon tailwind to Las Vegas. We were successful most of the way. We arrived in Las Vegas ahead of schedule and found a campground to stay in. Then the wind really started!! It blew to almost hurricane level most of the night. Our motorhome was rocking and rolling all night and no one slept.

On Monday, June 8, we were hoping to get as close to Salt Lake City as possible, but we fought a headwind with side gusts. Finally, we called it a day and found a very quaint campground in Fillmore. Luckily, the wind died down that night and we slept.

We continued our drive through the mountains of Utah and into Wyoming on Tuesday but the winds were still blowing making our drive somewhat difficult. We spent the night at a nice campground in Lyman, Wyoming where the wind finally stopped!

On Wednesday, June 10, we drove through the town of Green River, WY and onto the Blue Forest collecting area. We followed the directions to the site and "checked out the area" since we hadn't been there before. We found surface brown pieces of petrified wood and some with blue chalcedony, but we knew this wasn't *the* Blue Forest wood.

On Thursday, June 11, we tried to follow some other directions we had to collecting areas and found the Blue Forest wood area. We dug around for a while then headed back to the motorhome for lunch. After lunch we spotted a large 5th wheel and a travel trailer heading in. We jumped in the Jeep and followed them to the field trip camping area. This was our field trip leader Doug True and friends.

There were people from all over the U.S. Four different federations were represented on this trip. CFMS, Northwest Federation, Rocky Mountain Federation, and Midwest Federation. On Thursday afternoon we started digging. Digging at Blue Forest is interesting, you push a rod into the ground until you hit something hard, hopefully this is the ash cap over the wood and not a lake quartzite. Tony and I started probing and hit several quartzite rocks before we hit the cap only about 6 inches from the surface. Most people dig at least 3 or 4 feet before

Continued on next page…

Officers, Trustees, and Committee Chairs

Ellen Ferrell, President	(727) 512-0381	Ellenbf2007@aol.com
Michelle Vandenbroeck, VP	(213) 926-8060	vndnbr7@aol.com
David Lacy, Secretary	(626) 339-3240	deeceelink@earthlink.net
Philip Lahr, Treasurer	(818) 926-3163	plkslahr@att.net
Sue Pang, Federation Dir.	(310) 889-8480	sp2019pi@gmail.com

Trustees Marcia Goetz, Chris Kyte, Joe Goetz

Committee Chairs

Annual Show	Ellen Ferrell Michelle Vandenbroeck (Co-Chair)	**Education**	Joan Harrison
Bulletin	Jared Nishimura	**Historian**	TBA
Display Table	Ferdie Sanchez	**Librarian**	Jennifer Jang
Field Trips	Rex Nishimura	**Publicity**	TBA
Hospitality	Mona Ross	**Sunshine**	Ellen Ferrell
Membership	Yvette Fitzgerald	**Ways & Means**	Philip Lahr
Social Media	Elizabeth Weston	**Workshop**	Carolyn Duncan
Technology	Ben Shutman		
Webmaster	Elizabeth Weston		

Membership

Membership per calendar year is $25; for additional adults at the same address, $15. Junior members are $10. There is an initiation fee of $10 per person to cover costs of name badges, etc.

Renewals are due in October and delinquent after December 31. Mail checks to PO Box 5025, Pasadena, CA 91117-0025.

Meetings

**** Editor's Note: All meetings are *canceled* for August.****

Board Meetings – 1st Thursday of the month
7 p.m. at Matt Denny's Ale House
145 E Huntington Dr, Arcadia
Dinner at 6 p.m. PLS members are welcome.

Workshop – 2nd Sunday of the month
9 a.m.–5 p.m. $3 for half-day, $5 for a full day. Equipment instruction, liability waivers, eye protection, and closed-toe shoes are required. For directions, please call **(909) 455-4360** (cell) or **(909) 593-2781,** or email **gem.quest38@gmail.com**. Bring lunch!

Junior members 9 and older are welcome with adult supervision.

Program Meetings – 3rd Tuesday of the month
Doors open at 6 p.m. Meeting is 6:30–8:45 p.m.
Pasadena Central Library, 285 E Walnut St.

Contact Us

Email: info@PasadenaLapidary.org **Instagram**: /PasadenaLapidary
Facebook: Pasadena Lapidary Society **Twitter**: @pasalapidary

Pasadena Lapidary Society
PO Box 5025
Pasadena, CA 91117-0025

Editor: Jared Nishimura pasadenalapeditor@gmail.com
Send articles by the 15th for publication in next month's issue. Very short items can get in as late as the 22nd but are not guaranteed to make the next issue.

Continued…
finding any ash cap. We started digging and found an algae covered piece of wood. Dusting it off, we could see the black wood with the blue chalcedony outer layer. The wood was about 2 inches in diameter. We kept digging and found some more of the limb.

On Friday we went back to our hole and continued digging. I kept digging in this hole while Tony looked in other areas. We stopped for lunch, leaving our tools in our hole. After lunch, I decided to go back and dig some more. I turned our hole a little to the right and found the next piece of the limb. Still only about 6 inches from the surface. I went back and got Tony so he could dig this piece out. It was just as beautiful as the first section. Even though we had another few days of digging, we were more than happy with our finds. Saturday morning, June 13th was a travel day so we packed up and drove 60 miles, through hilly and treeless terrain to Kemmerer and found an RV park to stay in. We unhitched and drove to the collecting area to ascertain the road conditions and locate the private fossil mine. The roads were good and we even reunited with a Kansas family that we met at the Blue Forest.

Sunday morning, we headed for the mine, paid our fee and started collecting. Collecting here is done two ways, you can remove your own limestone slabs from the wall, or you can split the slabs the miners have laid out in the middle of the ground. We chose the ground pieces.

The owners of the mine are very helpful, giving chisel rock hammers and wedges to use to split the rock. They also come by and check on you to see if you are finding anything. One of the owners even brought over several limestone chunks for me to split!

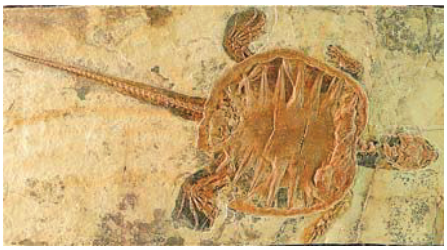
Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

While we were there, one of the shareholders, digging on the other side of the hill, found a turtle! Everyone stopped working and we all went to see it and take pictures. By noon, we had more fish than we expected to find and were very happy with our finds. We went back to the motorhome and started our journey to Seattle. Driving from Wyoming into Idaho was very scenic and we went through many little towns with a lot of Oregon Trail history. We stopped for the night in Declo, Idaho on the banks of the Snake River. The next day we drove into Washington then onto Seattle to visit with our daughter.

What a wonderful trip and we are very happy with our finds! Thank you Doug and everyone else.

Program Meeting – Canceled

General meetings remain on hold due to Covid -19.

– Michelle Vandenbroeck, Vice-President

Workshop – Canceled for August

Unfortunately, the August workshop is canceled due to government's order. Hope to see you in September!

Member-to-Member

This month's Member To Member will switch from helping you build out your home workshop to helping you display your exotic minerals or hand crafted treasures. The club recently received two nice lighted wooden display cases, an upright case 25 inches high and 19 inches wide with two shelves and a slant case four feet long, two high and two deep. Liners, lights, and lock with key included. Asking $40 each OBO.

Much of the equipment advertised in recent bulletins is still available and new items have come in too. Contact Philip Lahr at plkslahr@att.net for a document with photos and details. Also contact Phil if there is something you are looking for or if you want to be notified of opportunities to purchase equipment or other items before we pass the information on to dealers.

#

Care and "Feeding" of Opals

By David Lacy

Opals, being a hydrous silicate, are very susceptible to dehydration and cracking. For example, the Yita Ridge chocolate opals have a bad tendency to crack when drying. Most Welo opals are hydrophane and tend to lose color when wet and regain color when dry. Of course, the opposite can be exhibited also, as I found out when ogling a particularly gorgeous Welo opal and being told that it would only show the bright colors when wet! Australian opals are not immune to cracking when drying, either. Some dealers try "curing" their opals by placing them in small sealed plastic bags, putting them in a stable atmosphere, and hoping and praying!

Cleaning of opals tends to be more of what not to do, rather than what to do. For example, cleaning opals should not involve extremely hot water, steam, harsh soaps (like bleach), or gritty cleaners. Any sort of acids will damage your stone, as the opal could potentially absorb it which could result in the dissolution of the stone. Ultrasonic cleaning machines are also not recommended. After all, what good would it do if you shake the stone to bits trying to get it clean?

Cleaning of opals is pretty basic – just wash carefully with warm water with maybe a little mild soap. Caring for opals is pretty simple– do not hit them against anything hard! Tumbling opals with other, harder stones is not good, either. Stones/objects harder than Mohs 5 – 6.5, like agate or steel items are liable to scratch an opal. Additionally, extreme temperatures and high/low humidity extremes are also potentially damaging to an opal, so keep the stones away from them if you want to keep them intact.

Downieville and the Tahoe National Forest

By Tennyson Kwok

The original "Rock Hounds" of California were gold miners. Much of their activity was in Northern California, including an area now known as the Tahoe National Forest, northwest of Lake Tahoe. Downieville is an old mining town located in the Tahoe National Forest and is about 60 miles north of Truckee. A good friend of mine is an amateur gold prospector and owns 85 acres nearby, a former mining claim. He showed me around the area.

The drive from Truckee to Downieville has lots of sights to see, including vast landscapes, pristine forests, and rivers, lakes, and streams. Many towns along the way, like Sierra City, have an old mining town feel. During my visits, I especially enjoyed using the logging roads to go from one town to another. Every few miles you find remnants of mining operations, support buildings, and sometimes a cemetery.

SAFETY NOTE: Roads between towns are paved. On back roads, 4WD and maps are recommended. My Jeep's GPS had the logging roads well covered.

Many of the mining towns have colorful histories, and generally offer indoor and outdoor museums with displays of history and equipment. Also, there are numerous mine sites you can visit. Some of the mines used hydraulic mining methods, so there are locations where the hillsides show the wrath that hydraulic mining did to the terrain.

Gold Rush Towns and Artifacts

Downieville's current population is under 500, but it boasted up to 5,000 in its heyday as a Gold Rush town. It even filed as a candidate to become the capital of California in 1852, but lost to Sacramento by only 10 votes.

In Downieville, there is a functioning cannon at an overlook known as Cannon Point. Lodging is available and the city hosts summer mountain bike events annually.

In the general area around Downieville, there are many mines and mining towns that can be accessed by dirt roads maintained by the Forest Service. One town, Allegheny, has a mine still operating called the Sixteen to One Mine. Sierra City, only 13 miles east of Downieville, has the excellent Kentucky Mine and Museum, with mine tours and a functioning stamp mill.

Collecting small amounts of rock for noncommercial use is allowed in the Tahoe National Forest. Quartz, agate, and obsidian are common, but be sure you are not infringing on an active mining claim or private property. It's possible you could find a gold nugget, but great scenery and fascinating history are the rewards you can count on in a vacation to this area.

Pasadena Lapidary Society, Inc.
PO Box 5025
Pasadena, CA 91117-0025

#

Mojave Burro
Photo Credit: Cindy Sullivan

Cleaning up and found a rock with a face (Left)! Can you find it? Here's a close up (Above). An alien hiding in the rock. Material unknown. Photo Credit: Joe and Marcia Goetz

Editor's Note: Submit your quarantine projects to the PLS Bulletin!