



ROCKHOUND RAMBLINGS

NOVEMBER 2022 • PASADENA LAPIDARY SOCIETY® EDITOR: ALYSON NISHIMURA



Photo by Steven Aguilar on Unsplash

~PLS Gives Back~

As the weather began to change and the leaves started to fall, PLS was busy volunteering at the Santa Anita Church's annual Barnhart School Carnival. On the day of the festival, the sky was overcast but the mood was bright and cheery. The carnival was a fundraiser for the local school and PLS was more than happy to provide a fun and educational opportunity for the students, parents, and visitors. During the day, we were entertained by the peacocks that roamed the grounds and enticed by the aroma from the BBQ booth. The PLS tables were filled with bins of rocks, colorful grab bags, shell bracelets, and educational flyers for the kids. Visitors started their own rock collection by filling an egg carton with specimens of their choice.

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Editor: Alyson Nishimura pasadenalapeditor@gmail.com Send articles by the 15th of the previous month for publication in next month's issue. However, no article guaranteed to be published or make the next issue.

General Meeting-November 15, 2022

The November general meeting will occur at 7 pm at The Santa Anita Church, 226 Colorado Street, Arcadia, CA.

Renée Newman will talk about where you can find diamonds in the U. S. and what they look like in the rough, the five basic diamond crystal types and their relative value, and De Beers' new program to help artisanal miners sell diamonds ethically that are traceable from mine to market. Renée's books are used as consumer guides, gemology course textbooks, and appraisal references. She will be selling her books at a discount and autographing them before and after her presentation. Bring cash or a check if you would like to purchase copies of them.

Meetings

Board Meetings – 1st Thursday of the month. Members welcome to join.

Program Meetings – 3rd Tuesday of the month. See details above.

Contact Marcia Goetz at marcia.pls.emails@gmail.com

Pasadena Lapidary Society®

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PLS Gives Back

Nadine walked around holding rocks to lure visitors to our booth and as a result, rocks flew off the table like hot cakes. As the carnival came to a close and the tent and tables were put away, we stood in a circle and reflected on what a wonderful day we had at the carnival. Many thanks to all the members who volunteered their time!

~Editor



Nominations

The Nominating Committee met this year to fill the positions of President and Vice President because of resignations. The slate of nominees will serve their term until December 31, 2023 at which we will resume the regular cycle. The nominees will be President - David Lacy, Vice-President Christian Schulze, and Secretary - Sue Dekany. Voting will be at the November program meeting and installation at the December Holiday party.

~Ellen Ferrell, Chair of Nominating Committee

Workshop-Saturday, November 12, 2022

The Wirework 101 class in October was well attended and participants made some attractive pieces. Cabbage 101 will be held again in November. This may be the last chance for several months don't miss this opportunity! For those interested in chain mail, there will be a quick lesson on box and Persian weaves in the afternoon. All equipment is running, so come join us.

First timers need to RSVP a few days in advance to Marcia at (626) 260-7239 to get directions to the workshop and reserve a space in the orientation and Cabbage 101 classes. Please arrive at 9:00 am because orientation starts shortly thereafter.

The November workshop will be held on Saturday, the 12th from 9 am to 3 pm. Cost is \$5 for the full day or \$3 for a half day.

Access the workshop by walking up the alley on the west side of the building and use the sliding door there. Please do not use the door at the loading dock.

Member-to-Member

For sale, 8" trim saw in great condition. Asking \$600.

If you have something to sell or are looking for something, e-mail Phil at plkslahr@att.net by the 15th of the month to have it included in the next bulletin.





Brad's Bench Tips

SILVER DISCOLORATION

Working with jewelry involves an ever increasing number of skills. Chemistry is one of them that comes into play when dealing with a discoloration on the metal caused by a chemical reaction between it and the environment.

In the case of Sterling silver, there are three discolorations we typically encounter: a tarnish, a firescale, and a firestain. Each is different in its cause, in its cure, and in its prevention. All three have to do with components of the Sterling alloy (92.5% silver and 7.5% copper) and how they react with oxygen and the heat of soldering or with pollutants in the air over the long term. Firescale and firestain also occur in 14k or 18k gold because of the copper content.

Tarnish is a grayish coating that builds up slowly on the surface as a result of a reaction of the silver with sulfur-based compounds in the air. Typically these are pollutants from the burning of petroleum fuels, but they can come from other sources as well. I once tarnished all the silver in my display case by putting a pretty specimen of iron pyrite in with the jewelry. Turns out pyrite has sulfur in it!

Sulfur from air pollution or any other source combines with the silver to form a grayish silver sulfide film on the surface. Preventing tarnish involves keeping sulfur away from the metal. Plastic bags will help, and anti-tarnish strips are available from jewelry supply companies to pack near your items. Tarnish is easily removed by hand polishing with a jeweler's cloth or with one of the products sold for cleaning the good silverware for holiday dinner.

Another way is to remove it chemically. Put a piece of aluminum in the bottom of a dish large enough to contain your piece. Heat enough water to cover the silver. Mix in 2 tablespoons of sodium carbonate per cup of water and pour into the dish. Be sure the silver touches the aluminum. Sodium carbonate is the main ingredient in washing soda. Read the labels in grocery and hardware stores.

The second type of tarnish is called firescale. It is the dark gray to charcoal colored film that forms on Sterling or other copper alloys like brass or bronze when we heat it with a torch. The copper in the alloy reacts with oxygen in the air to form a dark cupric oxide coating on the surface. Luckily, the oxide is easily removed by dissolving it in a mild acid - generally called a pickle. It's important that we not let firescale form on a solder joint because it will block the flow solder over the joint.

There are two ways to prevent firescale. Most common is to use a flux, a borax-based solution applied to the metal before soldering. When melted, borax forms a thin glassy layer that keeps oxygen away from the metal. A second way is to do your soldering on a charcoal block. Together with the flame, charcoal greatly reduces the amount of oxygen in the area being soldered. In either case, oxygen is prevented from reaching the

metal, so no cupric oxide firescale is formed.

A second oxide can also be formed when soldering copper or a high copper content alloy like bronze or brass. It's called cuprous oxide and is reddish in color. That's why a black looking piece you put in the pickle sometimes comes out red. Problem is that while the black cupric oxide is dissolved by a pickle, the red cuprous oxide is not. The discoloration can be sanded or polished off, but an easier way is to use a "super pickle". This is a mixture of fresh pickle with a healthy shot of hydrogen peroxide from the local store.

I've saved the worst form of discoloration, firestain, for last. Think of firescale (above) as like getting dirt on your shirt that you have to wash off. Firestain is like getting ink on it. The discoloration is not just on the surface, it seeps down and stains the material. Firestain happens when we heat a piece of silver too hot, too long, and/or too many times.

Firestain occurs when the oxides start to build up below the surface of the metal. You generally don't notice it until after polishing. It appears as a darker area of the surface and is easy to spot when viewed under light bounced off a piece of white paper. Because firestain is below the surface, there's no easy bench tip solution. Depletion gilding may work for some pieces. Otherwise, removing it calls for sandpaper and aggressive polishing.

A much better approach for a piece that will require a large number of solderings is to protect the metal from developing firestain by applying liberal amounts of a firecoat. Regular soldering flux will provide some protection but is not as effective as preparations made specifically for the task. Jewelry supply companies offer several commercial solutions, but my favorite is the Prips mixture. I use it every time I intend to do more than two solderings on a piece.

Smart Solutions for Your Jewelry Making Problems:

[Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith)



Welcome New Members!

We are delighted to have new rock hounds join our society. We welcome Andrew H. Davis, Rod Gula, Lara Lund, Llewellyn Lund (*JR), and Freyja Lund (*JR).



As a reminder: We are accepting your 2023 dues now.

\$25.00 for adult member.

\$15 for 2nd adult member.

\$10 for additional adult or Junior member.

~Sue Pang, Membership Chairman



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Happy Thanksgiving!



Dear Members,

We are coming up to the time of the year where the leaves on the trees remind me of the beautiful jaspers that we find....various colors of reds, oranges, yellows, and sometimes with a little bit of green. Fortunately, leaves on the trees don't weigh as much as rocks – we wouldn't be standing under trees when they fall.

November's program will be Renee Newman as she talks about diamonds. Renee is a GIA Graduate Gemologist and has a new book out on diamonds, so it should be a wonderful program. We will also hold elections in the month of November. Normally it would be next year, but we are going to fill the president and vice president positions due to resignations. These positions will be filled for one year and then next year the nominating committee will be looking for people for a 2-year period of time and thus be back on their regular schedule.

This month we had a very active workshop where Ed did his wire wrap class and others got to work on their projects. You never know what you are going to find inside a rock that you cut. We brought a rock that had been overlooked and neglected and just laying around in the backyard into the workshop. It was rather ugly on the outside kind of pithy and nobody seemed to want it. So, we decided to cut it and it was dinobone! What a surprise!

Next month, December, we will be holding our annual holiday party on December 10th. We can start setting up and decorating at 4:00. At the November program meeting there will be signup sheets for what to bring - many of you have traditional recipes you have brought to past parties and we look forward to sharing all that great food. We will also be collecting food items to be given to the church for their outreach program, so if you have some canned or packaged goods that you want to donate start putting them aside. We will also have a gift exchange, installation of officers and fun. Look for more information next month.

Sincerely, Marcia Goetz, *President*

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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