



ROCKHOUND RAMBLINGS

MAY 2023 • PASADENA LAPIDARY SOCIETY® EDITOR: ALYSON NISHIMURA

INDIANA'S CLONE

and the
RAIDERS of the
LAST CAMEL



Photo by Jassim Shanavas on Unsplash

Shhh! Most people don't know this, but rockhounding is an exciting hobby. Such was the case last April, as we zeroed in on locating the last camel, or more specifically, the last piece of dead camel jasper from the Lahontan Reservoir area of northern Nevada.

The water level at Lahontan Reservoir was low, and the roads were dry and dusty. Our trip leader zoomed into the meetup point at 8:31, a minute past the official meetup time. As he stepped out of his dusty pickup truck, I could see we were in for an adventure. He boldly walked up to us and introduced himself to a group of about 20 rockhounds. He was of Cherokee Indian descent, with a bullwhip ponytail and a brown felt, fedora outback hat. Instantly, I was reminded of the legendary Indiana Jones from the Steven Spielberg movie, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, for trip leader Indy was a doppelganger, a clone from the year 1981!

"We're heading out towards the Dead Camel mountains," said Indy, the trip leader, "and we'll be looking for jasper." Beckoning to his truck bed, we saw our targeted specimens, the locally famous, but unknown (to me, anyway) dead camel jasper. Though some specimens were weathered and brecciated, a number of them showed promise, with prominent conchoidal fracturing exposing pristine material.

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Email: info@PasadenaLapidary.org **Instagram:** /PasadenaLapidary
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Pasadena Lapidary Society, PO Box 5025, Pasadena, CA 91117-0025
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 is guaranteed to be published.

Welcome New Members!

We are delighted to have new rock hounds join our society. We welcome Rick Davis, Vicki Davis, Crystal Triplett, and Bill Walls.



Reminder: If you have not renew your 2023 dues by now, there is a \$10.00 extra charge. Please pay in person or send in via US postal service to our PO Box.
\$25.00+\$10.00 for adult member.
\$15.00+\$10.00 for 2nd adult member.
\$10.00+\$10.00 for additional adult or Junior member.

~Sue Pang, Membership Chairman

Meetings

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

General Meetings – Every 3rd Tuesday of the month.

Pasadena Lapidary Society®

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Indiana's Clone and the Raiders of the Last Camel

Indy announced. "The Navy Seals are annexing these hills in the fall. They want to use this land to test missiles and they don't want one of their projectiles to bounce off a mountain and hit a rockhound."

We all nodded in agreement.

Indy continued, "This might be our last chance to visit this site, so get all that you need. When you get out there, you need to be a RAIDER and collect to your heart's content."

I couldn't believe my ears. Those were the words that bring tears to the eyes of any rockhound. We love raiding. Charge! And away we went on our Raiders of the Last Camel expedition!

We followed Indy for close to an hour over dirt roads that were in surprisingly good condition, and by the time we stopped in the Dead Camel Mountains, we were miles from Lahontan Reservoir. Like Indy said in the movie, "It's not the years, honey, it's the mileage." We were a long way out, but raiders like us never hesitate to go where the treasure can be found.

There aren't any camels, no, not even dead camels, in these hills anymore, but they were once imported to the southwest by the US Army in the late 1840's. Though camels were well-suited for Arizona, their surly disposition, and frightening appearance scared the horses. Camels tended to run away at night, and this made them very unpopular with the soldiers. Camels were used by the army until the Civil War broke out, at which time; they were sold at auction or turned loose into the desert. Some of those auctioned animals made it to the minefields of northern Nevada during the gold rush to help carry tailings, however many perished due to the heat and lack of water. Others injured their feet on the rocky soil, dying alone in these desolate hills. The place was then called the Dead Camel Mountains.



Accounts of camels in northern Nevada, persisted into the late 1930s and early 1940s which led to wild tales of ghost sightings in the Nevada desert. One wandering camel reportedly had a human skeleton strapped to its back. Another camel had bright red hair and carried a witch on its back. The tales go on and on, but for now, I will return to the tale of dead camel jasper.

Dead camel jasper is found on the slopes of these hills. Some people say it is named because it resembles the decomposition of a camel, but it's far too beautiful for that. Good pieces of this brecciated rare jasper have a greenish gray jasper background mixed with flashes of red and yellow.

Our group split up when we got to the jasper fields, so we followed a rather fit looking rockhound gentleman, walking ¼ mile past him before stopping in a weedy ravine. There were large boulders of surface jasper everywhere and we spent several hours looking for gem quality specimens. Unfortunately, the best jasper pieces were over 200 pounds, or about 5x the load capacity of my back. The smaller pieces were heavily fractured, so we began digging near a pile of larger rocks. The ground was sandy and I excavated a large pit in a matter of minutes. After another 10 minutes of futility, I took a break and went to sit on the aforementioned rock pile of large rocks.





My break was short as something was watching me. There, sitting next to me, was a small snake. Snakes! I hate snakes! Why did it have to be a snake? But there it was, a brown and white serpent guarding a multi-colored piece of jasper. He laughed at me while his forked tongue tried to assess my intentions. The more I looked at him, the bigger he seemed to get. He then slithered toward me with disdain, daring me to do something. Of course, I did what any intrepid explorer would do. I leapt out of the way of the beast, and he found refuge in a squirrel hole under a bush. I then returned to collect the serpent's jasper.



As fortune would have it, the snake had led us to a beautiful piece of jasper, and after carefully checking around for any of his friends, we dug out our last piece of dead camel jasper and headed back to our truck. Trip leader Indy told us we had found the best piece of the trip and that a few slabs of it would pay for our gas. That's great news, because we definitely want to raid the Dead Camel Mountain again this summer.



I'm not sure when I can get back up there, but the warm, summer weather will surely bring out a variety of slithering, creepy critters. We'll be on the lookout for more snakes and maybe even that witch mounted on the red camel.

And that is how Part 1 of this story will end-- before the footsteps of eager rockhounds are replaced by the tromping of Navy Seal boots, being worn by America's best heroes. Although our time in these mountains is limited, the legend of Dead Camel jasper is alive and well, waiting for the next raider to harness the spirit of Indiana Jones, head out in search of adventure, and become the next Indiana Clone. 'till next time, ~Rex

General Meeting - May 16, 2023

The May general meeting will occur at 7 pm at The Santa Anita Church, 226 W. Colorado Blvd, Arcadia, CA.

Sue Pang will present the Rock of the Month talk on pearl. Sue Pang worked for one of the largest pearl company in California and will discuss how to identify cultured pearls from fake pearls, the best season to buy pearls, and how to wear pearl necklaces.

This month, Tarun Adlakha (who is from India), will speak about paledolia and the wonderful world of Indian Dendritic agates. Tarun Adlakha is known to have the finest horde of natural dendritic agate in the world with over 300,000 cabochons and specimens, some of which have been displayed at prestigious gem shows and museums around the world and used by some of the leading designers. Tarun has accumulated a large number of stones with unusual patterns mimicking birds, animals, landscapes and mythical characters in a sort of a fantasy wonderland in agate. This talk will focus on the history, mining, and cutting of these agates followed by a descriptive slide show of the unusual stones from his collection. We hope to see you there!



Member-to-Member

This month we have two different vibrating tumblers for sale. One is an Ultra Vibe 10 for \$80, the other a Lyman 600, which is a predecessor to the Tumble Vibe 5, for \$50. Both come with extra bowls which saves some cleaning effort between steps. If you haven't tried a vibrating tumbler, they are great for the later stages of tumble polishing after the rocks are smoothed in a rotary machine. Contact Phil at 818-926-3163 or plkslahr@att.net



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

~Phil Lahr

Field Trip to North Edwards, CA—May 6, 2023

The month's field trip will be to Brown/Castle Butte, the Sierra Pelona travertine claim, and the Rio Tinto visitor center in Boron. This area is known for a variety of minerals, and we hope to find agate, bloodstone, travertine onyx, ulexite, kernite, and petrified wood. High clearance truck or suv is recommended. For more information, please contact me at rexch8@yahoo.com with the subject line "North Edwards field trip."



~Rex

Workshop – May 13, 2023

The May workshop will be held on Saturday, May 13, from 9 am to 3 pm. Cost is \$5 for the full day or \$3 for a half day.

Advance warning: The date of the June workshop has been changed to SUNDAY, June 11.

There are no formal classes this month, but we are always happy to help you through the cabbing process and can also help anyone finishing last month's project. With a little luck, we will also put the marble maker to work.

First timers and anyone who needs an orientation or help with learning to make cabachons needs to rsvp a few days in advance to Marcia at (626) 260-7239 to get directions to the workshop and allow us to schedule an instructor. Orientation will start about 9:30 am but come a little early.

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. The troll underneath the ramp didn't eat anybody last month. Let's keep our streak intact.

~Phil Lahr



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



April 2023 PLS Workshop



Apr 22, 2023 PLS members and mayor of Pasadena at Science Fest

April 2023 General meeting



Thanks to Sue Pang for the pictures!

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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