



ROCKHOUND RAMBLINGS

MAY 2024 • PASADENA LAPIDARY SOCIETY® EDITOR: MARCIA GOETZ

Glimpses of PLS History: 1949–1989

by Karl Stull (Original Article was Published in September 2018)

The Pasadena Lapidary Society has a couple of folders of old documents, doodles, and newspaper clippings promoting our annual shows and monthly meetings in days gone by. The earliest clipping is a Los Angeles Times story from 1952, profiling Joseph Barbieri, a member who taught himself as a boy to knap arrowheads. The last news item in the set, also from the Times, promotes a talk to be given at our March 1988 meeting by Dennis G. Casbier about the desert regions of Arizona, Nevada, and California. That meeting took place at the United Methodist Church at 2428 E Colorado Blvd (a few blocks east of Sierra Madre Blvd) – now a spiritual fellowship center on a still tree-lined street.

As a whole, the notes and news clippings reflect topics we still talk about today: rocks, fossils, the Mojave Desert. During most years, only one or two items appeared in the newspapers, but in 1967 there were 9 items and in 1968 there were 8. Aleta Purcell was president then, and Irma Rogers was in charge of publicity. Aleta was a nurse from Monrovia who had two sons. She also served as treasurer a couple of times.

Some Things Have Changed

There is no mention of a Mr Purcell in the news clippings, which is notable because the PLS of the 1960s was a very married club. Mr and Mrs Tom Mahan collected petrified wood, Mr and Mrs Clarence Greer specialized in rock slab tabletops, Mr and Mrs Charles Schwalzer made jewelry from petrified palm root, and Mr and Mrs Harry Schmidt made cream and sugar servers out of silver with inlays of jade (Harry Schmidt was also an expert faceter). Mr and Mrs Rollo Grover and Mr and Mrs Keith Shivers collected picture jasper.

Married couples are still prominent in today's PLS, but the club now also includes more single parents, who join for the same reasons parents have always joined the club. Many members come to PLS events as individuals, because they like rocks, and don't feel the need to drag a partner along. It's worth asking, whether the club today meets social needs of solitary members as the club back then met the social needs of couples for interaction, recognition, and inclusion.

Tournament of Gems

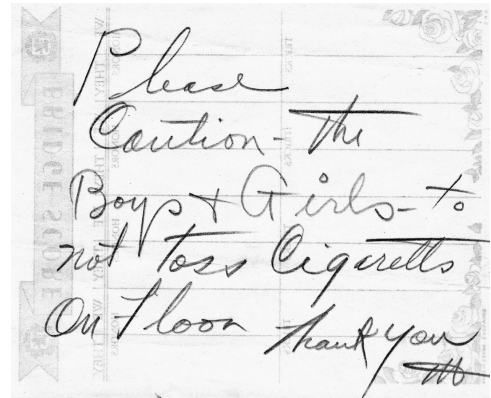
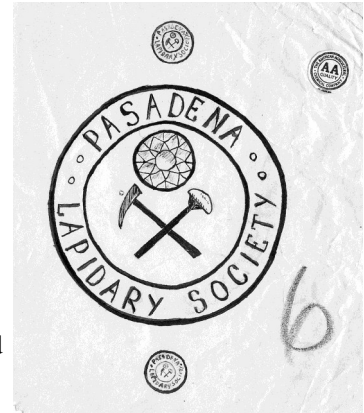
A Los Angeles Times story from February 5, 1956, announced a show of 40 cases of "cut and polished gems, jewelry and mineral specimens" at Farnsworth Park. For the Pasadena Lapidary Society, it was "the first real exhibit the society has staged on its own." In previous years (1952 and 1953), PLS contributed to shows by the Lapidary Association, a federation of Southern California clubs that seems to have fizzled.

PLS put on its second annual show at Farnsworth Park in February 1957. The first was such a success, said President George Lowe, that the club reserved both floors of Davies Hall and added demonstrations of lapidary arts. A highlight of this show was a large map of California indicating where specific minerals could be found, with accompanying examples in rough and polished form. The PLS annual show in the following year – held March 1 and 2, 1958 – was the first to be publicized as the Tournament of Gems.

A hiccup occurs in show publicity for 1963, celebrating the "seventh" annual Tournament of Gems. A furtive count on fingers confirms it should have been the eighth. Either this was an arithmetic error, or the club did not host an annual show in 1962. We have nothing in our newspaper file for 1962.

There was definitely no annual show in 1968. PLS put a display case in the Pasadena Central Library in March of that

(Continued next Page)



Above are a couple of items from the PLS President's folder, handed down since 1949. The draft of the club logo has a stamp of the American Agricultural Chemical Company in the upper right corner, probably serving as a graphic model. In the droll note below, referring to PLS members as "the Boys & Girls," the signature could be Vic Armstrong's (PLS president in 1954) or perhaps Tom Mahan's (president in 1957–1958).



Officers and Trustees

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David Lacy, President deeceelink@earthlink.net

Barna Laszlo, Vice President blaszlo0911@gmail.com

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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: Marcia Goetz marcia.pls.emails@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.

Membership!

We are delighted to have new rockhound(s) join our society in April 2024. Frances Comer, Sunja Park, Cheryl Southard and Meridith Southard (*JR) Note: *JR denotes Junior member.

Invite a friend to join PLS! There is a \$10.00 initiation fee for new members. Please pay in person or send in via US postal service to our PO Box. Extra membership donation is always welcome. Reminder! Your membership expires in December. If you haven't renewed your 2024 membership, please send in your dues ASAP, otherwise your membership will be terminated.

\$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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year – an elaborate presentation that included a clock with hands and hours made of gemstones – and headed to Mexico for a field trip. In 1969, the club announced its “11th Tournament of Gems,” 13 years after the first PLS show in 1956.



This year – (Ed. Note 2018) 62 years after the first PLS show – we celebrated the 60th.

Jessie Chittenden was the first PLS president (1948–1949, 1963). She was active into the 1970s, and an early adopter of the pantsuit. Next to Jessie, in bola tie and sansabelt (sic) slacks, Dick Crotty became president (1975–1976) during the Disco Decade. Underneath, we have another pair of presidents: Arlene Billheimer (1977–1978) at right and Grace Cargill (1988–1989). African-

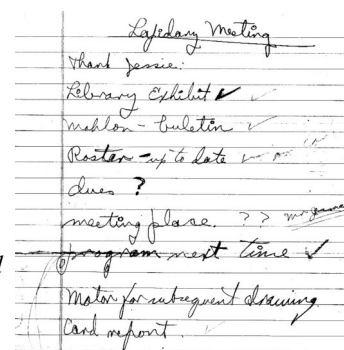


Americans are scarce in the lapidary hobby, and it's worth asking why. PLS is quite diverse, but for Grace's sake – she was one of us – we should be thinking always about the welcoming attitude we offer. Photos, courtesy of Nancy Robb.

From 1956 through 1977, the Pasadena Lapidary Society held its annual Tournament of Gems in the William Davies Memorial Building in Farnsworth Park, Altadena. The building is on the National Register of Historic Places and is still in use for community events.



This distinctive handwriting – with its flagpole p's and circle dotted i's – is that of John Whatley, PLS president in 1951. The “Jessie” to be thanked was Jessie Chittenden, for putting an exhibit in the Pasadena Central Library in 1951, Mahlon Frank and Mrs Robert James were charter members. The unchecked final item(s) on the agenda may forever remain a mystery.



Article Continued on p.3



Article continued from p.2

Before the Winnebago, "campers" bolted onto pickup trucks were preferred transport to base camp. Use your imagination to take a two-step tour inside, and you can guess which facilities were included and which were not. But the camper was a major advance. Field trips "in the early days meant pitching tents and lean-tos, which could blow down through the night" (Pasadena Independent, March 2, 1966). The Field Trip Committee put out a list of camping supplies in 1949 that included "Tent" and "Cot" under the heading "IF DESIRED."

Can you estimate a date for this photo? The ALASKAN camper (name above the door at left) was from the 1960s, according to vintage RV sellers. The blue license plate (right) was first issued for trucks in 1969. That's Ruth Meacham at left, camping it up with Arlene Billheimer. Photo, courtesy of Nancy Robb.



Our First Field Trips: 1949

Feb 12–13 Chuckawalla Springs for agate; jointly with the Los Angeles Lapidary Society (LAPS); 8 PLS members attended, reporting it was "really cold and windy."

Mar 12–13 Last Chance Canyon for petrified wood, opal, and jasper; 25 members: "...we had a really extra fine time around our camp fire."

Apr 2–3 Beacon 13 and the Lavic Beds for jasper; 8 members, with some taking side trips to the Calico ghost town (not yet rebuilt as a tourist attraction) and mine sites.

May 13–14 Mule Canyon for petrified palm and rutulated agate; jointly with LAPS; 7 members.

Amazing Fact: The most frequent name for PLS presidents is:

Clarence
1952, 1959 Clarence Chittendon
1960 Clarence Greer
1964, 1966 Clarence Ritter

And this is not counting Clare Beam, 1961

Workshop—May 11, 2024

May Workshop - Wire Work 101 and Grab Bags

The next workshop will be held on Saturday May 11, door opens at 9 am and we need to be cleaned up and out by 3 pm. Cost is \$5 for the full day or \$3 for a half day.

Wire Work 101, presented by Ed Imlay will start at 10. Attendees will create a bead and wire link bracelet, build skills, and learn some useful secrets about working with wire. Bring jewelry making pliers if you have them. Beads, wire and loaner tools will be provided. RSVP appreciated. edimlay@hotmail.com

Assembly of PLS's superb grab bags will also start at 10. These are popular at our show, and Mona is requesting helping hands to fill a couple hundred bags with polished stones and specimens.

Saws, grinders, and other equipment and help using them will be available as usual.

The workshop is open to members age 9 and above. Minors must be accompanied by a member parent/guardian. First timers and anyone who needs an orientation or help with learning to make cabochons needs to rsvp a few days in advance to Marcia 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.

Phil Lahr, Workshop Chair

FYI: In 1985 through the efforts of Bill and Izzie Burns, Whittier Gem and Mineral members, Benitoite was named the official state gem of California.



Member-to-Member

2018 Forest River Wildwood X-lite travel trailer for sale. 23'x8', sleeps 5. Call or text Elizabeth.

8-inch Inland Swap Top. Flat lap has separate attachments to convert to either a trim saw or a glass grinder. Set of diamond laps, and saw blade included. Appears to be new in the box and include all parts. Asking \$300 to PLS. Contact Phil plkslahr@att.net.

Do you want to advertise your equipment here? Submittals for the next bulletin should be sent to Phil by the 15th of the month.





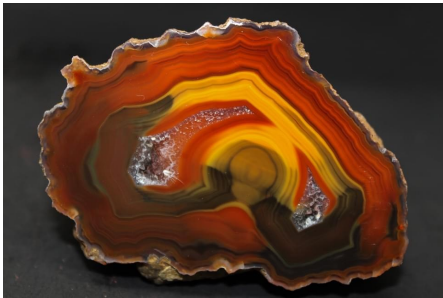
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Pasadena, CA 91117-0025



MAY PROGRAM

Our main speaker in May will be Luis De Los Santos. He will talk about his discovery of Condor agates, his collecting trips to Argentina and the area where those gorgeous agates formed. Condor agates are colorfully tightly banded agates and patterned agate.

*Photo
from Luis
De Los
Santos*



need is some persons who are good/informed talkers for the "lost and wandering" who show up and good watchers for anything out of the ordinary during the show. Regular Security folks will be around during the show so we don't need to be worried about handling disturbances.

In other news, we (PLS members) had been invited to go on a Co-Op member field trip with other CFMS clubs on April 19-21, 2024. Trip was to Hauser Geode Beds, Palo Verde, CA and collected Geodes and/or Porcelain Jasper. Did anyone from PLS go on this trip, and if so, how was it? We also went on the Field Trip (hopefully) with Rex Nishimura out to the Lucerne Valley to collect "Bug-Eye" Rhyolite. Hope this goes well. More Later.

President's Message

Hi Rockhounds! Again, it has been a busy time since I wrote last. 2024 to date has entertained some interesting talks on Stories & Legends associated with Rocks courtesy of Janie Duncan, new information on past doings of Pasadena Lapidary Society, and other forays into the mountains/deserts for "Hot Rocks". Not a bad start for our 75th year in existence.

As I asked last month, what are your thoughts on the history of PLS? Do we have anyone who can write a fair hand and is willing to help write up some articles of the "You Are (or "I Was") There" type? We need to do Something to celebrate the fact of 75 years in existence, as it's not every day that an organization lasts that long, if any does. I think if we can do this before our August Gem Show, this could be a great handout or inexpensive booklet for sale to members or potential members.

Linking all this to the Show, we/I still need some kind of estimate of how many people are interested in helping to get the Show "On The Road" as it were. I particularly am looking for some people to be Security for the Show. What I

Sincerely, David Lacy

Email: info@PasadenaLapidary.org Instagram: /PasadenaLapidary
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WE'RE ON THE WEB!
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