

**Official Bulletin
of the
Chugach Gem & Mineral Society**

Alaska Pebble Patter
Chugach Gem and Mineral Society
P.O. Box 92027
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CHUGACH GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY, INC.
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THE CHUGACH GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY, INC. maintains memberships in:
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF MINERALOGICAL SOCIETIES
NORTHWEST FEDERATION OF MINERALOGICAL SOCIETIES

THE CHUGACH GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY MEETINGS ARE HELD AT
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
725 WEST 9TH AVE., ANCHORAGE, AK
(Enter the church from the rear parking lot.)

BUSINESS MEETING – 7:30 PM — 2nd Thursday of each month.

POTLUCK MEETING – 6:30 PM — 4th Thursday of each month.

Bring a hot dish, salad, or dessert (plus serving spoon) to serve 5 people.

Also bring your own plate, silverware and drink. But most importantly, bring a rock to show!

Annual membership fees: Individuals - \$15.00; Families (2 or more) - \$20.00; Bulletin Only - \$10.00
Lifetime membership fees: Individuals - \$150.00; Families (2 adults & children under 18) - \$200.00



President's Message

January – February 2006

Greetings everyone,

It looks like winter has returned to Anchorage once again. These mid-season breakups are sure getting old--specifically the sheets of ice on streets and parking lots. Charlotte Lamb, one of our potluck meeting participants, fell on the ice last week and broke her hip. So be careful out there. Summer is coming and we don't need to be nursing any broken bones along the way.

This past weekend the CGMS had a table at the Rony Crafts show in the Ship Creek Center. (The old Post Office Mall.) Thanks to Andre and all the volunteers that helped man the table. The crowds were not as good as last year because the dog races were cancelled. Unfortunately the club was not able to put up any displays since the owner rented out the spaces where the displays were to be. I'm thinking that maybe we need to visit with the Rony committee and get the inside scoop on what we can do to get clubs, like CGMS, back into the Rony mix.

Meantime, Bonnie is trying hard to nail down some field trips for this summer. Firm dates on a few trips have been vexing her, but everything will settle down in the next few weeks. She and the committee have assembled some trips for the summer which are tailored for families and kids. We do need to start grooming some little CGMS rockhounds since many of the rest of us are getting a bit gray around the edges.

Anyway, the most recent edition of the field trip schedule should be on the web site. Be sure to mark mid to late May on your calendar for our clean up at Hatcher Pass. It is our public service workday and even though it is picking up other people's trash it is fun. The Latouche Island trip is still being researched. If there aren't enough participants the trip will be cancelled because it is fairly pricey.

There are plenty of other trips and opportunities to get out with the club and break some rocks though, so come to the meetings and see what's happening.

Happy trails,
Anita

Chugach Gem & Mineral Society
January Business Meeting Minutes

President Anita Williams called the January 12, 2006 business meeting of the Chugach Gem & Mineral Society to order at 7:35 PM.

The evening's guest was Daniel DeCamp.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Recording Secretary – Bea Allen reported that the minutes of the November business meeting were in the current issue of the Pebble Patter and also online on the website, and suggested that members could read them on their own in the interest of saving time. All agreed.

Treasurer - Linda Ewers was not present.

Membership - Jean Kane reported 185 paid members to the Federation, but the actual count as of the meeting was 199. In conjunction with that, Greg Durocher announced he would send future notices only to paid members, and would drop those who requested no e-mails.

Corresponding Secretary - Nancy Danford reported that no mail was received.

Northwest Federation Liaison - Tom Cooper was not present.

Sunshine - Dorothy Arnold was not present, but it was noted that Len Larson, a former longtime member and former editor of the Pebble Patter was hospitalized in Wyoming, where he had relocated. A relative said he had a non-malignant brain tumor but his capabilities were deteriorating.

Newsletter – Sue Hilton reported that the Pebble Patter was in the mail and also online on the website.

Website - Adeline Geldenhuys said the site was being updated and would soon have a better carrier with fewer problems. Upcoming meeting programs were posted on the

website. Adeline said that Elizabeth Bradshaw, a geology student from Michigan, was looking for a summer internship. Anita suggested the BLM as a possibility.

Fieldtrips - Bonnie Hepburn presented a tentative schedule proposed by the committee. She said that there would probably be some changes and also that there were some weekends open for members who were interested in planning and leading a trip. The Juneau trip would probably be changed as the museum was closed. Copies of the schedule were passed out and Bonnie asked for input from members regarding trips.

Programs – Greg Durocher had no report.

Fundraising – Andre Macias had no report.

Scholarships – Steve Jensen was not present.

OLD BUSINESS

Fur Rendezvous – Andre said that as the club was not paying for table space, it would be up to our members who were planning to be vendors to provide a club display and pass out membership applications and field trip schedules. The dates would be February 24th through the 26th at the same location as last year, the former Post Office Mall on 4th Avenue.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

There were no field trip reports.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jean announced that she was sending in an order to the Federation for directories, and if anybody wanted one, she needed for them to give her their order that meeting.

Managing Your Rock and Mineral Collection

Part 1

By Carolyn Stevens

First published in the Alaska Miner
Volume 33, Number 7

For the past three years, a rock and mineral show has immediately followed the Alaska Miners Association Convention held each November at the Anchorage Sheraton. Because rock, mineral and fossil collecting is a natural hobby for those involved in geology and the mining industry, there are doubtless many geologists and mining industry folks “out there” in Alaska (including this editor!) that have some beautiful (and valuable) specimens that are stored (uncleaned, untrimmed and unorganized) in garages and cabinets and other out-of-the-way places. This article is included in this issue of *the Alaska Miner* to help interested rock and mineral collectors forge their rock and mineral accumulations into potentially valuable and useful collections. Material for this article is derived from “Rockhounding Arkansas,” which is located at the following website: <http://rockhoundingar.com/collection.html>.

The topics addressed in this article include: 1) Getting serious with your collection, and 2) The importance of labels. For the next couple of months, *the Alaska Miner* will hopefully include two more articles on the subject of building and managing your rock and mineral collection. Next month, the second article will consider the sizes of collectable minerals and the trimming of specimens for value enhancement. The third article will address the cleaning and display of collected specimens.

If you are truly a **collector** and not simply an **accumulator**, you will eventually have to decide what to do with all your rock, mineral and fossil acquisitions. There comes a time when one must decide what is worthwhile to keep, and what must be deemed “yard rock” or “giveaways”. Unless hard decisions are made, each potential collector will remain only an “accumulator” without ever becoming a real “collector”. Collections are, at the very least, labeled properly. At the very best, a collection is well catalogued and properly stored so that a particular specimen can be easily retrieved to show to an interested party. Having specimens readily available for viewing and appreciation yields much of the satisfaction that a real collection should bring. Like artists and photographers, rock and mineral collectors should have only their very best and showiest pieces in

display cases. (Ultimately, keeping only the best specimens is how a collection is built.)

Three rather funky “technical?” terms applied by rockhounds when assessing potential specimens at collection sites include “trashite”, “leaverite” and “high grade”. “Trashite” refers to mineral specimens that have no value. These should always be left *in situ* (at the collecting site). “Leaverite” means “leave it right where you found it”! Seriously, picking up specimens of minimum or no value at the collection site wastes time, energy and space that the collector could be applying to specimens of real value. (Of course one learns to be more selective with practice.) As one’s collection grows, the true collector should always aim for quality rather than quantity. “High grade” refers to applying a critical eye to your collection and selecting only the best pieces to keep, while disposing of lesser pieces by selling, swapping or giving them away. Better yet, if “high-grading” is practiced at the collecting site, there will be far less “trashite” or “leaverite” vying with better specimens for your time and space.

Effective labeling of the specimens is very important in a good collection. An unlabeled or mislabeled specimen doesn’t have nearly the value that a properly documented piece does. The information on the label should, at the very least, say what the specimen is and where it came from. The more specific the location information is, the more value it adds to the specimen. Location can be a very important clue in determining what kind of rock or mineral (or fossil) a specimen is if it is unidentified. Other relevant information that may be put on the label includes who the specimen was collected by, the date of collection (and/or acquisition) of that specimen, and other special information about the collecting trip or acquisition circumstances.

Computer-generated labels (with the name of the specimen, the locality, who the collection belongs to, and any other relevant notes) can be filled out by hand with a **permanent** pen in your neatest printing. If there is a good possibility that the label might get separated from the specimen, write a brief description of the specimen on the label. Many collectors paint white dots on each sample and assign it a code number (written on the specimen) that corresponds to the label. Take care to not make the label so fancy that it detracts from the specimen itself. Heavier weight paper is preferred for labels since humidity may cause lightweight paper to curl. If your labels are printed on lightweight paper, consider gluing them onto

heavier cardboard so that they will stand up or lie down properly if they are being displayed at a show.

Managing Your Rock Collection **Part 2**

By Carolyn Stevens
First published in the Alaska Miner
Volume 33, Number 8

Last month, in the first of three articles on “Managing Your Rock and Mineral Collection”, the two subjects discussed were on (1) making choices that will make your specimen accumulation into a collection, and (2) the importance of labeling your specimens. This second article of the series will discuss the sizes of collectable minerals and how to trim specimens to enhance their value. The material for these articles is derived from the “Rockhounding Arkansas” website at <http://rockhoundingar.com/collection.html>.

“STANDARD” SPECIMEN SIZES

Specimens are commonly organized, traded and sold in units called “beer flats”. Beer flats are the two-inch high cardboard boxes that are disposed of once the six-packs have been removed and stocked on the store shelves. These approximately 11” x 17” boxes are ideal for storing all but your largest specimens. These boxes, standardized and accepted among rock collectors, hold commercially available white paper boxes of various standard sizes that are specifically sized to fit within the beer flats. A good way to store your extra specimens is in beer flats. And, if you have many specimens stored this way, you will probably need heavy-duty shelving, like metal shelving of angle iron that can be screwed into wall studs.

Macro Specimens

Several sizes are recognized for collectable specimens. Size is important when you are making decisions about what to collect and how you’re going to do it. Most people have limited space in which to house their collection; therefore the size of what they collect is a serious consideration. 1000 thumbnail specimens, for example, will fit into the same space that only 50 hand specimens will occupy. (If you have unlimited space, of course, then specimen size is not an issue.) If you can’t keep the big pieces, then a perfect alternative is to go for the smaller sizes. Collectable specimen sizes are grouped

into two separate categories: Macro specimens and micromounts. “Standard” macro specimens are categorized as **Thumbnails (T/N)**, **Miniatures**, **Hand Specimens** and **Cabinet Specimens**.

Thumbnail-size specimens (abbreviated T/N) must fit into a 1 cubic inch plastic box. (These little commercial plastic boxes are called “perky boxes”; they are excellent for protecting your small specimens and for keeping them neat and clean.) The next size larger than a thumbnail-size specimen is called a **miniature** specimen. This size fits into a 2 cubic inch plastic box. (These plastic boxes are available commercially from Wards or other science or lapidary supply companies.) If the specimen is too large to fit into the 2” box, but is smaller than a grapefruit, then it is considered **hand specimen** size. If the specimen is bigger than a grapefruit, but still small enough to pick up and place on a shelf or in a cabinet, then it’s considered a **cabinet specimen**.

Micromounts

Micromounts (abbreviated M/M) are defined as any mineral that requires magnification for viewing the crystals, no matter what size the matrix may be. A micromount may therefore range between being a tiny chip with good crystals on up to a boulder-sized rock with fine crystals that need magnification for observation. The critical factor determining whether a specimen is a macro specimen or a micromount, therefore, is the magnification factor. If a person really desires to collect the best crystals of any mineral, then one necessarily has to collect micromounts. During the collecting process, you may collect from boulders containing micromount crystals that can be trimmed down later to a more suitable size. Micromount crystals are flowers of the mineral world because the crystal shapes and forms are much more perfect than they are in larger specimens.

TRIMMING SPECIMENS

The purpose of trimming specimens is to remove excess material and improve the overall quality of a specimen by removing damaged areas that detract from the general aesthetics of the piece. Disposing of extra matrix or removing unattractive parts of your specimens will enhance not only the appearance, but also the value of the pieces. Sometimes just effective trimming of a specimen can turn a very ordinary piece into a real showpiece. Effective trimming takes both study

and courage, but with practice, the results are very rewarding.

Remember the rockhound terms “trashite” and “leaverite” as defined in the first article? They both refer to essentially worthless specimens that inexperienced or overzealous rockhounds wind up with in their accumulated piles of potential specimens. The author of the “Rockhounding Arkansas” article (from which this material came) suggests that “specimen trimming practice” is an excellent use for the waste material in your collection! After you have finished reading this article, try trimming a pocket of broken crystals out of a piece of waste rock just for the experience.

Initial trimming of specimens should begin in the field. Serious field trimming can employ an 8-pound sledgehammer and a 4-pound crack hammer, if you are willing to haul them to the collection site! (Be sure to wear safety glasses!) You will discover that many materials will not be able to stand the shock of such heavy duty trimming. Learning what materials can and cannot stand the sledgehammer treatment will become much more obvious with experience. Some knowledge of the matrix and its particular nature is essential in the trimming process of each specimen. Though you will surely ruin some specimens in the learning process, you will also learn how to greatly improve some of your specimens. Do NOT work on a good quality specimen until you have gained some experience in trimming average quality samples.

Trimming Tools

Many different tools can be used in trimming specimens. Simple hammers, various chisels and tile trimmers can be supplemented by screw-type pressure trimmers, hydraulic pressure trimmers, and/or diamond saws. (It should be noted that veteran mineral collectors generally dislike saw-cut surfaces on their specimens. Many geologists, however, consider a sawn surface an advantage. Never trim a specimen just so it will sit up nicely; specimen stands are preferable for that purpose.) The variety of useful trimming tools is limited only by one's pocketbook.

C-clamp type trimmers, either screw feed or hydraulic, are available on the Internet at: <http://www.rocktrimmer.com>. The smaller one is less than \$100 plus postage, and the larger hydraulic one is about \$600 plus shipping. Other similar C-clamp and I-beam type trimmers are also available at: <http://attminerals.com/equipment.htm>.

The Trimming Process

Matrix has properties that are often quite different than the properties of the collectable minerals formed on or within the matrix. The matrix may be soft and punky, brittle and fractured, compact and extremely hard, or uniform and predictable—or any combination of these characteristics. The strength of the crystals that the trimmer is seeking to recover should be carefully considered. Are they brittle? Do they cleave easily? Are they firmly attached to the matrix? Or is the attachment very fragile? The properties of both matrix and crystals can be easily ascertained by tapping with a rock hammer on a poor quality specimen of the same type.

When working on a **hard, uniform matrix** in the field, start with an 8-lb sledgehammer to remove bulk from the potential specimen. Work AWAY from the intended specimen and NOT opposite to it to minimize shock. Once it is reduced to a reasonable size (and depending on the scarcity and delicacy of the crystals), either reduce it further with a 4-pound hammer or wrap it up to take home for the final trimming stages. There the pressure trimmer, chipping hammer (etc.) can be used in a more controlled environment. Should the boulder be too large even to use a sledgehammer on, then it is probably best to work with a hammer and chisel around the edge of the crystal-bearing pocket. Sometimes only a couple of miniature specimens can be recovered from the best part of a crystal pocket that is impossible to collect as a whole. These recovered specimens should be handled very carefully and wrapped in toilet paper (a great wrapping paper for delicate specimens!) for transporting from the collecting site.

Working with a soft and/or fractured matrix is completely different than working with the hard, uniform matrix. The collector/trimmer must carefully examine the entire specimen. If a crack goes through the crystal pocket, it will be apt to split. But if there is no crack, then light tapping on the back side of the specimen, with strokes going **parallel** to the long direction of the pocket (NOT at right angles to it!) will afford the best chance to chip away excess material.

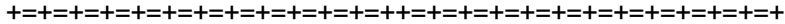
A pressure trimmer is sometimes essential on some specimens of either hard or soft matrix. This type of trimmer is especially effective because of the highly directional planar pressure (“pinch”) that it applies to the matrix. Several brands of screw-type trimmers are available. The size of specimen

The American government has refused to ban the production, distribution, or use of this damaging chemical due to its "importance to the economic health of this nation." In fact, the navy and other military organizations are conducting experiments with DHMO, and designing multi-billion dollar devices to control and utilize it during warfare situations.

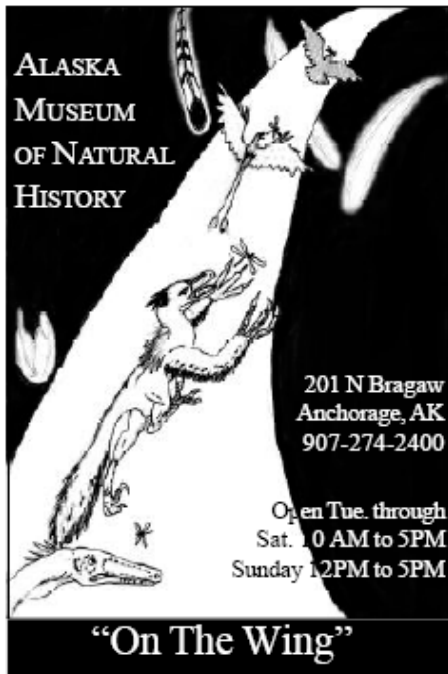
Hundreds of military research facilities receive tons of it through a highly sophisticated

underground distribution network. Many store large quantities for later use.

The Horror Must Be Stopped! Act NOW to prevent further contamination. Find out more about this dangerous chemical. What you don't know can hurt you and others throughout the world. Write your elected representatives today and demand that they ban this pernicious product once and for all.



"On The Wing," A New Exhibition Now Open at The Alaska Museum of Natural History



Birds and bones are featured in the new exhibits at the Alaska Museum of Natural History. Come see the "just hung" complete Beluga whale skeleton swimming from the ceiling. It is a marvel of assembly done by volunteers Cindy Schraer and her husband who had to mold a few missing parts. It is part of the Vertebrate Design exhibit comparing moose, dinosaur, whale and human skeletons. A "Bird-Dinosaur Connection" gallery features the feathered dinosaurs that have caused such a stir. The "Bird Migration" gallery provides an up close and personal experience with our beautiful Alaskan birds, fun interactive displays and some amazing facts. Birds as the inspiration for unique pieces of native art and the use of bird bones are shown in the archaeology gallery. A smaller exhibit features invertebrate fossils that have created a mystery at the Bering Glacier. The Museum offers special activities for children every Friday at 11:00 a.m. It is open six days a week: Tuesday - Saturday from 10:00 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5:00 p.m. It is located at 201 N. Bragaw. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for children. Call 274-2400 for details.

