

Friends of Mineralogy



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"The changing landscape of mineral collecting, a Colorado perspective"

By Daniel Kile

Midwest Chapter Newsletter for January – February 2016



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Chapter Website:

www.indiana.edu/~minerals/

National Website:

www.friendsofmineralogy.org

Affiliations:

THE MINERALOGICAL RECORD
THE MINERALOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA
AMERICAN GEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE
ROCKS & MINERALS MAGAZINE

Our purpose is to organize and promote interest in and knowledge of mineralogy; to advance mineralogical education; to protect and preserve mineral specimens and promote conservation of mineral localities; to further cooperation between amateur and professional and encourage collection of minerals for educational value; and to support publications about mineralogy and about the programs of kindred organizations.



President's Message

Happy New Year to all of you. Another year has passed and I will soon have another birthday. If I'm lucky, I will have another 20; if I'm unlucky, I'll have another 30.

The Chapter is in the best financial condition it has ever been. Last year's slate of officers was reinstated during the annual November business meeting. To avoid the problem of not having a voting representative at the National business meeting in February, our First Vice-president, Randy Marsh was appointed as the chapter representative. [Note: see the meeting minutes below.] He and I will be flying out to Tucson together for the National meetings and the annual Tucson mineral gala.

The board has agreed that we need to develop additional contacts with local universities for additional meeting places and to expand relations with academia. If you know any mineralogy professors that might be amenable to hosting a meeting, I'd appreciate hearing back from you.

I was informed, by the president of FM National, that the response to the call for FM chapters to display minerals at the TGMS show in 2016 was insufficient; therefore, the planned exhibit is cancelled. National will try again in 2017, and with the show theme being "Midwest Minerals," it will be an opportunity for us to really shine and reflect well on the chapter (pardon the pun). Julian Gray is the FM National seminar chair and is responsible for selecting speakers and moderating the Saturday seminar. However, because I'm wearing a couple different hats, I'll have some responsibility for making it happen. To that end, I'd like to put out a call for volunteers to give a 30 minute presentation in Tucson on the Saturday of the main show. Please get back to me if you are willing to participate and I will pass on your offer to Julian. PowerPoint slides would be the preferred method of presentation.

Reggie Rose, Scott Kell, and I attended the annual Ohio Aggregates and Industrial Minerals Association (OAIMA) annual meeting and convention in Columbus in mid-November. We talked briefly with Tim Renneker, of Jurgensen Aggregates, about how to get official recognition from MSHA for the hazard and safety training developed by Scott Kell. We picked up one new member as a result of the event.

The following Saturday, Randy Marsh, Tom Bolka and I checked out the Plano Quarry near Williamsport to see how the collecting would be. While there was a lot of marcasite, it was unstable and generally in various stages of decomposition. It is not suitable for a future chapter field trip.

We have an informal understanding with OAIMA to help support their new educational out-reach program. If you are a teacher, or former teacher, and would like to participate, please let me know. At least start thinking about how you might contribute to the project.

Friends of Mineralogy

From The office of the President

Clyde Spencer

I just received a notice from a friend, Dr. Henry Barwood (known as “Bumpi” to his close friends) of Troy University (AL):

“The University of Manitoba, Canada has decided to defund and close one of the only x-ray mineralogy labs in the world capable of critical analysis and resolution of microscopic particles, and one of the finest x-labs for minerals of any class. For over 20 years this lab has served mineralogists around the world, and has played a critical role in not only mineralogy, but any science depending on fine-particle identification.”

Lastly, Randy has obtained a new banner for the chapter for use at events. You will probably have your first chance to see it if you attend the March symposium at Miami University. Please see the additional membership renewal files attached to this email along with the newsletter.

Annual Meeting Minutes (11/7/2015)

Quorum declared with 11 members present
Randy Marsh serving as pro tem secretary
Meeting called to order

Old Business

None

New Business

1. Election of Slate of Officers

- slate is the same officers as last year, except for the president
- if new nominations, we will have a secret ballot
- No nominations for new officers
- Motion to adopt current slate (moved, Mike seconded, no nays, no abstentions)
- Motion to reinstate Clyde as President (Ed Odell moved, Sharon Fox seconded, unanimous)

2. Appoint Randy Director to Represent Chapter at Tucson

- Mike Royal moved, Ann Cook seconded, unanimous
- Mike Royal offered to be backup

3. Treasurer’s Report

- Three documents were passed out by Jeff Spencer (2015 Financial Report 10/1/2014-9/30/2015 with ending balance of \$3330.54; 2016 Financial Report 10/1/2015-9/30/2016 Projected with ending balance of \$4195.54; and 2015 Financial Report 11/6/2015-Actual with current balance of \$3640.54)
- Created \$1500 surplus last year
- Next year project surplus of about \$840
- Goal is to use this money to support objectives of the chapter
- Suggestion by David Saja to try to get more university student members, perhaps through engaging specific faculty members
- Clyde mentioned we could try to engage 1-2 more universities because we did not meet our requirement of 6 annual meetings last year. There are 3 universities we work with at present – Miami, Wittenberg and OSU.
- Clyde mentioned we have an informal understanding with the Director of OAIMA that we will help them with some of their educational projects. Clyde will try to connect with him on this topic at the upcoming OAIMA conference.



4. Multi-Year Memberships

- Such memberships create issues that are not easily addressed by the treasurer
- Clyde read aloud the pertinent sections of Constitution
- Chapter will only accept annual membership

5. Next Year's Symposium on Midwest Fluorite

- Randy provided the highlights of the upcoming symposium on Midwest Fluorite at Miami University in March 2016

6. Field Trips

- Pretty much the same as last year
- Looking into Plano Road as a new possibility

7. Bi-Monthly Meetings

- Chapter supposed to have six meetings annually
- Randy will add a fall session or two to make sure that we have 6 per year

8. MSHA Training

- Actively working with Scott Kell
- Scott gave two courses last year
- David Saja asked if Scott could come to Cleveland; need to ask Scott
- Goal is to have Scott present, and eventually videotape him, so that the training can be distributed on DVD.
- Tim Renneker (Jurgensen Minerals) will show us, during OIAMA meeting, how to apply to MSHA for authorized Training Plan
- Many possible ways to address the training requirement. Key is that we want quarries to know we are safety conscious.

9. Newsletter

- Follow up in newsletter about getting people to set up relationships with additional universities.

Meeting Adjourned (moved Ann Cook, seconded Janet Clifford)

Treasurers Report

At the Cleveland meeting, I had reported a total membership of 112 for 2015. I had double-counted one member, so our total membership for the year was 111. I had paid the National dues based on a roster of 112, so we have a \$4.00 credit coming for next year.

Randy Marsh sold 3 t-shirts and a coffee mug at the Genoa Field Trip bringing in \$75.00.

I have received 2016 dues payments from 38 members so far. That's way ahead of last year, so it looks like folks are getting the message to not wait. Don't miss a field trip opportunity due to a late payment! If you are unsure of your status, just send me an email at jspencer@jsite.com.

Our current Treasury balance as of 12/14/2015 stands at \$3992.81.

Jeff A. Spencer – Treasurer

Quarry Travel & Event Guide

4TH annual mineralogical symposium. Midwest fluorites, Saturday, March 12, 2016. Miami University. See detailed information on the following pages.

No other event information is available at this time.



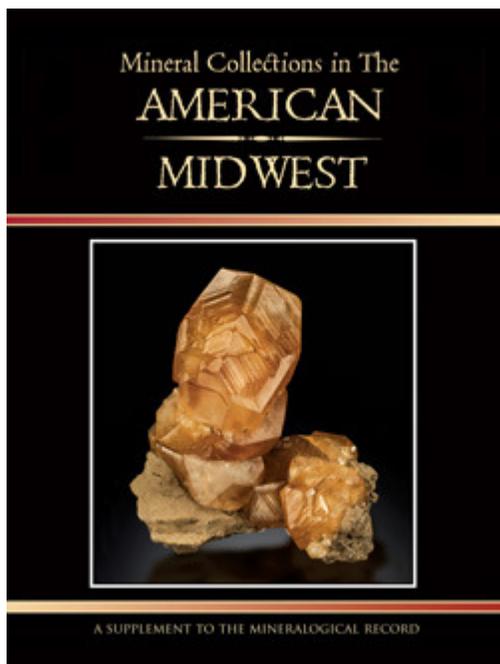
At our March 2014 symposium, member Terry Huizing announced an opportunity for collectors living in the Midwest to participate in a forthcoming supplement to the Mineralogical Record featuring their collections. The Mineralogical Record is a recognized affiliate of the Friends of Mineralogy.

If you are not familiar with this continuing series of supplements, each chapter includes a brief biographical note plus specimen photos and captions that represent the collection. The special supplement publishing cost was funded entirely by the participating collectors.

The resulting 239-page volume was published as a supplement to the July-August 2015 issue of the Mineralogical Record. Terry Huizing organized much of the publication effort.

Members Paul and Janet Clifford, Anne Cook, John Hopkins, Terry Huizing, Jay Medici, John Medici, John Rakovan, Carol Smith and Jeff Spencer all had chapters. There is also a chapter from the Indiana State Museum collection, curated by member Peggy Fisherkeller. Financial support for this chapter was provided by our Liaison Officer, Nelson Shaffer and former President, Bob Harmon.

You can purchase copies of the issue from the Mineralogical Record website. <http://www.mineralogicalrecord.com>



FM on the go.....

Field Trip Reports

GENOA DOMINATED BY WOLVERINES:

As has been customary, late fall trips usually call for thermal underwear. However, this year's weather was more humane and temperature's actually hit the 50s. Possibly because it was chilly, Buckeyes everywhere dropped off the sign - up sheet. At week's beginning 34 FM members were signed up to attend. By field trip time, only 21 showed up. Since temperatures under 50 degrees are more easily endured by our northern brethren, the Wolverine state collectors dominated the photos.

Generally speaking, all the minerals usually found at Genoa were in evidence. Celestine and calcite led the way. But on this day, Genoa did not give up her specimens easily. Some collectors found special treats, garnering less common pale brown fluorite and sphalerite specimens.

Dave Esch (Ann Arbor, MI) submitted photos of celestine - calcite and celestine - sphalerite combination specimens he found. Frank ("Wolverine Man") Konieczki (Belleville, MI) chipped in with celestine – sphalerite combo specimens. Frank was dressed in proper FM attire and sported his version of the FM logo.

On the Buckeye side of the fence, Mike Royal (Defiance, OH) submitted images of celestine - calcite combos and Randy Marsh (Hamilton, OH) mined out some pale brown fluorite crystal groups.

Over the course of the 2015 collecting season many of you have blessed my camera lens with your finds, a product of your skill. I thank you for those images, because these images and what we find take us all back to the quarry on frigid winter days. See pictures from this trip on the next page.

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

Reggie Rose



Celestine & Sphalerite



Celestine & Calcite

(Dave Esch)



Genoa Fluorite (Randy Marsh)

**FRIENDS OF MINERALOGY MIDWEST CHAPTER
4th ANNUAL MINERALOGICAL SYMPOSIUM
(SPONSORED BY THE KARL E. LIMPER GEOLOGY MUSEUM)**



MIDWEST FLUORITES

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | |
| <p>White Rock Quarry, Clay Center, OH</p> <p>(1.5 in. H x 1.5 in. W x 1.5 in. D)</p> | <p>Auglaize Quarry, Junction, OH</p> <p>(2.5 in. H x 2 in. W x 1.75 in. D)</p> | <p>Minerva No. 1 Mine, Cave-in-Rock, IL</p> <p>(2.5 in H. x 4.5 in. W x 3.5 in. D)</p> |

DATE: Saturday March 12, 2016

TIME: 9:30 AM – 6:30 PM

LOCATION: Shideler Hall, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio

CONTACT: Randy Marsh, VP Programs, FM Midwest Chapter (marsh.rg@pg.com or 513-515-7890)

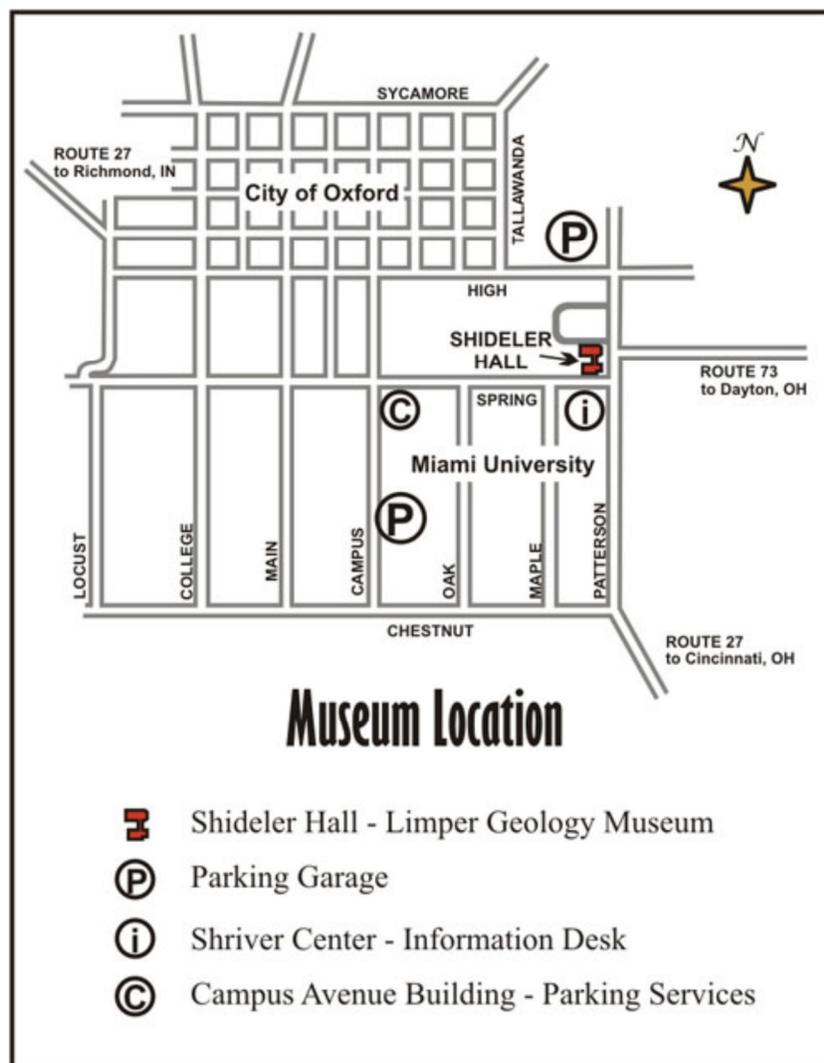
DETAILED AGENDA:

- 9:30-10:00 FM Midwest Chapter Meeting (open to all)
- 10:00-11:00 *Fluorite* – Arvid Pasto
- 11:00-12:00 *Midwest Fluorite* – Jeff Scovil
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch Break and Viewing Time for Specimens
- 1:00-1:30 *Fluorite in Mississippi Valley Type Deposits* – John Rakovan
- 1:30-2:00 *The Significance of Ultramafic Rocks Underlying the Illinois-Kentucky Fluorspar District* – Brett Denny



| | |
|-----------|---|
| 2:00-2:30 | <i>Investigating the Nature of the Primary Ore Forming Fluids in the Illinois-Kentucky District – Stuart Kenderes</i> |
| 2:30-2:45 | Break |
| 2:45-3:15 | <i>Findlay Arch Fluorites – John Medici</i> |
| 3:15-3:45 | <i>The Many Faces of Midwest Fluorites – Nelson Shaffer</i> |
| 3:45-4:15 | <i>Crystallography of Fluorite – Pete Richards</i> |
| 4:15-4:30 | Break |
| 4:30-5:00 | <i>Fluorite Deposits of Kentucky – Alan Goldstein</i> |
| 5:00-5:30 | <i>Selecting Fluorite Specimens & Building a Fluorite Collection: A Mineral Collector's Perspective – Jim Gebel</i> |
| 5:30-6:30 | Tour of Facility and Viewing Time for Specimens |

DIRECTIONS and PARKING: The Limper Geology Museum is located on the Miami University campus just inside the East and West entrances to Shideler Hall on the first floor. Shideler Hall is located west of the intersection of US Highway 27 and State Route 73. Parking on Saturday is free in the lot across from Shideler Hall (Cook Field Parking Lot on corner of 27 and 73). See map below.



Preamble:

Although mineral field collecting in the western U.S. is very different than that in the Midwest on account of large tracts of land that are public property (e.g., National Forests, National Grasslands, and Bureau of Land Management land), many of the issues raised in the following article are nonetheless relevant to collecting in Midwestern states as they pertain to matters of private property access.

The Changing Landscape of Mineral Collecting: A Colorado Perspective

Daniel Kile

I've been collecting throughout Colorado for more than 45 years. Over this time, increasing government involvement pertaining to land use, mining and collecting activities, as well as detrimental activities of some amateur and professional collectors, have resulted in access to collecting localities becoming increasingly restricted, with a consequent and real threat to the future of the mineral collecting hobby. Broad categories of such threats are:

1. Government regulation and oversight
2. Mine remediation and mined land reclamation
3. Land closure (state and federal)
4. Commercial collecting activities

Unfortunately, there is little voice within the mineral collecting community to counter the rising tide of regulation and land closures, especially in comparison to off-highway vehicle (OHV) organizations with hoards of area members and far greater numbers of activists willing to appear at land use hearings; they are also, as noted by a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) officer, heavily financed by Japanese manufacturers. Mineral collectors are simply far fewer in number and much less financially endowed. However, quite frankly, some of the land closures and regulations are a result of the conduct of a few of the mineral collectors themselves.

The following article addresses some of the issues noted above.

Government regulation and oversight.

One used not to hear much about state or federal regulations governing recreational collecting except as pertained to large commercial enterprises. This scrutiny has in recent years descended down to the level of the hobby collector. By contrast, in the 1960s and 1970s, if one had a backhoe and wanted to excavate in the National Forest, one simply went about collecting. The USFS pretty much ignored what was going on. Not any longer.

There were no restrictions enforced at that time, and no required or enforced prerequisite to locate a mining claim, file a Notice of Intent or a Plan of Operations, or post a reclamation bond prior to collecting. Since then the USFS has become increasingly vigilant in regulating land use of all sorts. These regulations have become increasingly stringent, and any activity, including casual collecting (*i.e.*, for personal use) with hand tools on a non-patented mining claim, now requires at a minimum filing a Notice of Intent.

Regulations for mining claims in the 1970s were limited to filing appropriate documents in the county courthouse; the papers were often piled into an un-collated basket for storage, and one needed an exhaustive search through these records to assess the status of a parcel of land one might wish to claim. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) now has all these records archived in an electronic database that is searchable via the Internet. That's certainly an improvement over earlier era of papers "stuffed into a shoebox at the courthouse", but it comes with layers of concomitant regulations, fees, and filing deadlines.

In defense of the seemingly heavy-handed actions of the government, many of these regulations have been in response to egregious behavior by a few irresponsible collectors. I have seen numerous huge holes abandoned by weekend rockhounds, and even worse, piles of trash left behind. In one instance, the USFS has issued a Cease and Desist Order to a prominent Denver area rock club, whose mining claims had been hand dug for many years by countless numbers of club members as well as many other unauthorized collectors; the increasing numbers of unfilled holes finally led the USFS to respond by requiring remediation and a bond posted for reclamation. In the case of another Denver area rock club, illicit highgraders had left an enormous pit on a non-patented club claim that attracted government attention, again resulting in a Cease and Desist Order that required the club to reclaim not only their own work, but also the massive excavation left by the highgraders.

Some years before that, a prominent California collector/dealer had operated a mine in the Crystal Peak area with power equipment under a USFS permit and bond. However, when the claimant was finished with the operation, he simply walked away from the property, which now featured a massive open pit on a hillside that was visible for miles, leaving the forest service with an extensive reclamation project funded by additional taxpayer dollars. As a result, bonds set for mining activities in the area are now set higher than ever before.

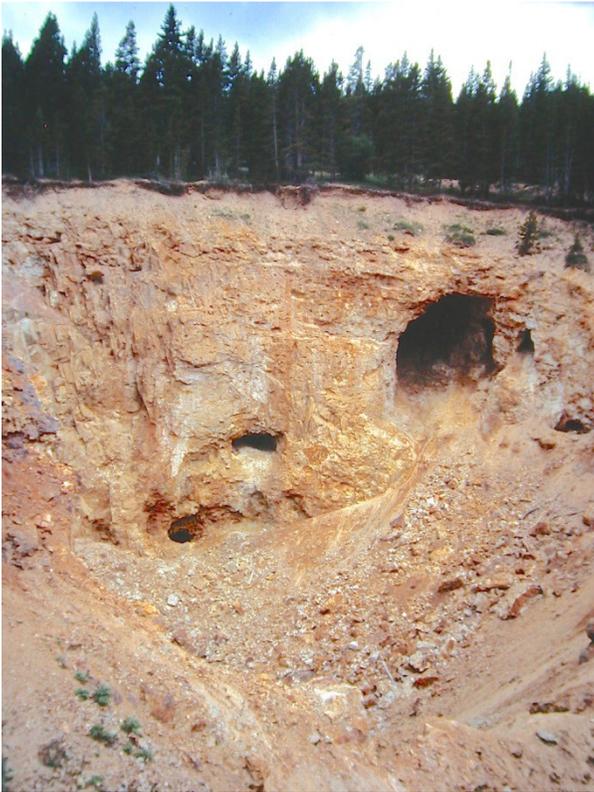
Moreover, the State of Colorado has recently added another layer of bureaucracy to the situation by invoking their own set of requirements for posting reclamation bonds. This requirement was formerly limited to big mining companies, but has now trickled down to small-scale miners and weekend recreational collectors, in part on account the attention drawn by the crass commercialism shown on the Prospectors Show that has been broadcast on The Weather Channel (see below). Accordingly, although recreational collectors can still casually collect in Colorado, those selling even a small fraction of their finds may find themselves subject to additional state scrutiny, paperwork, and attendant reclamation fees.

The situation represents a "Catch-22": If one wanted to systematically dig in an area, one would theoretically need to file a non-patented mining claim with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and also file additional paperwork with both the USFS and relevant County office. If you sold a specimen, you'd also need a state reclamation permit. Alternatively, with a recognized mining claim, if you didn't sell anything, you'd be technically in violation of the "prudent man" theory of the 1872 mining laws, which would effectively invalidate the claim. The hobby collector, not wishing to deal with government entanglements, is caught in the middle, inasmuch if a claim on a productive area is not filed, the collector may well be pre-empted by someone else filing a claim on that spot.

Mine remediation and reclamation.

Activity by the Bureau of Mined Land Reclamation in Colorado first came to my attention in 1988, with the filling in of the Alice mine, a large open-pit mine last operated in the 1930s that was an exceptional locality for sulfide minerals, including chalcopyrite and pyrite, with siderite and quartz, with the occasional micro-gold

crystal. It took 500,000 cubic yards of earth to accomplish this feat, creating two manmade lakes in the area. This agency is funded by 'invisible' taxes on mined coal; the original intent was to remediate eastern coal strip mines, but the remediation was extended by the agency to encompass hardrock metal mines in the western states as well. Bureau managers (as well as environmental groups) have thus diligently gone about convincing the public that every mine is dangerous and in need of reclamation for the safety of all. My take: It's all about job security.



Alice mine in the 1970s, before remediation



Alice mine, after remediation, 1988

There is no doubt that past activities by large profit-minded mining companies has led to environmental problems, a textbook example being the Summitville mine debacle where a Canadian company abandoned the property leaving massive contamination of waterways. However, the pendulum now seems to have swung too far the other way, with remediation and reclamation being carried out on a scale that is rapidly erasing our western mining heritage, which is sometimes troublesome considering that there are few or no data recorded that document contaminant levels *prior* to mining activity.

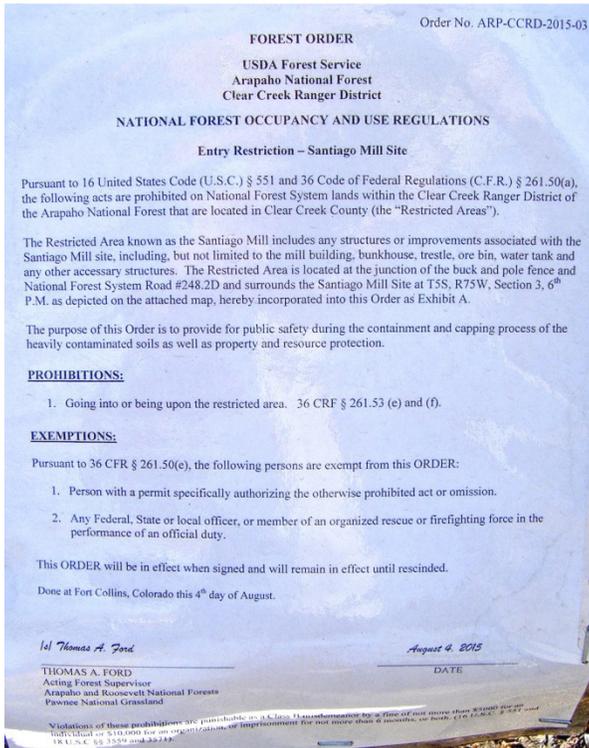
Area mines in Leadville were designated some years ago as a superfund site, which resulted in an exhaustive remediation of countless mine dumps. Remediation included removal or relocation of entire mine dumps, or capping the dumps with landfill, the latter of which in one case resulted in an idiotic terraced pyramid, locally called the "wedding cake", in a misguided attempt to artistically render the new cap "realistic". In addition to eradicating much of the mining heritage of the area, numerous collecting localities were completely destroyed.

The Gold King mine spill in the summer of 2015, resulting in contamination of vast stretches of the Animas River, was caused by ill-advised EPA work at the portal. The railing from various environmental organizations and lawyers created a level of adverse publicity (fueled by newspaper editorials and articles) sufficient to induce

the Silverton town board to consider applying for superfund status. If implemented, it will doubtlessly result in a massive reclamation project that will again eradicate mining history and obliterate numerous mine dumps and collecting localities in the area, much as they were in Leadville.

I recently discovered, in August of 2015, another assault on a collecting locality, this time by the USFS. The Santiago mine, located at ca. 12,000 feet above timberline above Georgetown and operated as late as the 1940s or early 1950s, contained small but collectible pyrite crystals in the dump, and though not spectacular, constituted another interesting mineral locality in the state. It is now targeted for remediation, which means the mine dump will be covered or removed, compromising the mining heritage of the area and eliminating any further opportunity for collecting minerals.

Warning signs, intended to intimidate visitors, were posted about the horrific dangers of arsenic, mercury, and lead, all of which is intended to intimidate the uninformed public by stating that these toxic compounds will be carried home in dangerous quantities on one's shoes just by walking on the dump (see documents below; it brings to mind the Wizard of Oz ... "arsenic, mercury and lead, Oh My!"). In earlier years I risked life and limb nonetheless and searched the purportedly incredibly toxic dump anyway, with imminent death awaiting from exposure to toxic metals. Luckily, I am still alive. However, with no visible Pb-bearing minerals in the dump, one wonders from where the lead originates!



Recently posted warning and closure signs at the Santiago mine, August 2015

Recent headlines in The Denver Post have now reported a proposal to further tax mine operators (Denver Post, 12-3-2015): "Western senators including Michael Bennet this month launched legislation to reform the nation's 1872 mining law and require companies to pay fees to create a cleanup fund for abandoned inactive mines." This amounts to a royalty on all minerals extracted, and one now wonders if this will be extended down to the hobby collector level and pertain to all non-patented claims.

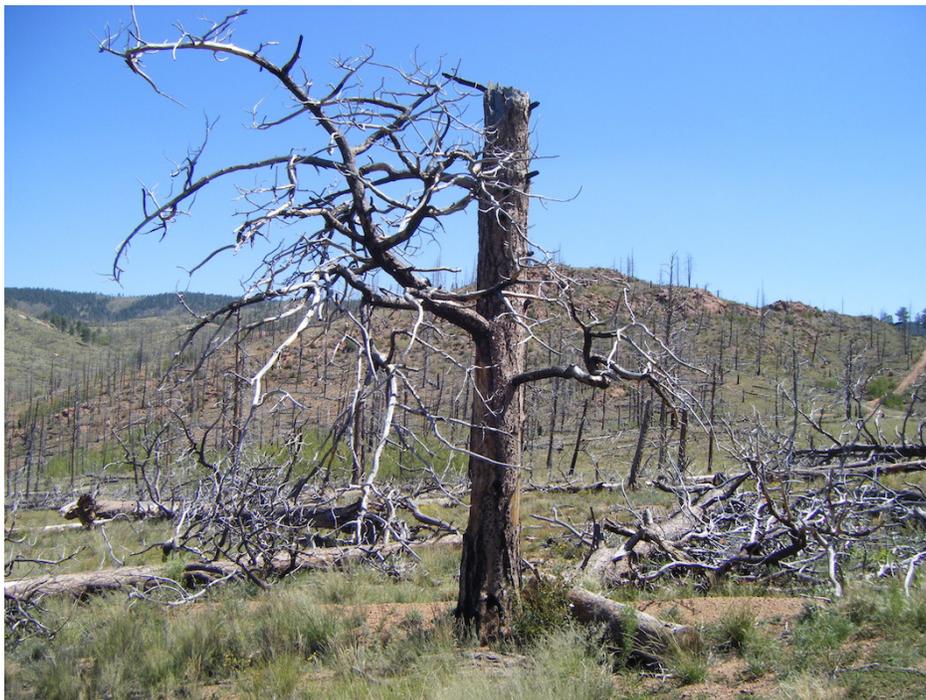


Land closure.

Aside from closure of land encompassing mineral localities due to remediation, access to many other localities (*i.e.*, road closure) has been either eliminated or otherwise compromised for both public and private property, largely on account of reckless ATV off-road traffic, but too often due to egregious activity by commercial or hobby collectors.

Road closure has long been championed by various environmental groups, and such groups have effectively influenced government responses to issues such as cited above. As an example, the U.S. Forest Service has closed numerous roads in the Crystal Peak-Lake George areas, even those that were originally created by the Forest Service, in response to an increasing amount of ATV traffic and consequent degradation of the terrain; access to mineral collecting localities thereby became 'collateral damage'. The tenacity of environmental groups is evidenced by a posting on the Internet listing the names and addresses of all non-patented claim owners of record in the Crystal Peak area as being "enemies of the South Platte watershed".

Note that while I don't appreciate the increasing layers of bureaucracy affecting the hobby, I recognize the necessity of regulating the excesses of a few irresponsible individuals (ATV owners, large-scale mineral collectors, litterers, *etc.*). However, despite the government's attempts to control reckless use of the national Forest, nothing has degraded the region to a greater extent than the massive Hayman fire of June, 2002, which burned more than 138,000 acres, and was started (some say intentionally) by a USFS employee. Almost all of the pegmatite districts in the Pikes Peak batholith were devastated. This event, on account of the considerable number of downed trees, has rendered auto and even foot travel in many areas difficult to impossible.



View of the Crystal Peak-Lake George area following the Hayman fire of 2002

Road closures in the Crystal Peak area and many others affect prospecting to the extent that long hikes with heavy packs and tools are now required to reach many localities hitherto easily accessible by road. Needless to

say, such closure affects more the older collectors, many of whom are no longer able to easily hike long distances over rough terrain. So much for the concept of universal access (and here I thought that Federal regulations precluded bias against the elderly and handicapped!). The net result is that all travel in the Crystal Peak area is now restricted to a few major arteries, funneling increasing numbers of people into a smaller and smaller area – not a pleasant outcome for those seeking a bit of weekend solitude. Non-system roads that formerly accessed claims can now only be used by claim owners who post a reclamation bond, even if the Forest Service originally put in the road! The road closure situation is compounded by the fact that it is now illegal to camp more than a vehicle width off the road! Thus, on a weekend one can enjoy a front-window view of all the ATV traffic.

In another part of Colorado, a collecting area for calcite and barite in the southeastern part of the state was temporarily closed some years back when a rock club sponsored a field trip to the area, which is on National Grasslands (surprisingly, despite few trees on the landscape, the USFS administers such grasslands). Local ranchers, generally used to few people in the area, were apparently alarmed to see numerous travel trailers and a dozen or more vehicles driving off road everywhere. Forest Service authorities were notified, who responded by closing the area to collecting except by permit. As far as I am aware, the dust has since settled, and some years later regulatory mandates were apparently no longer being enforced. The conclusion here is that large groups of collectors can indeed attract unwanted attention of local landowners or authorities; discretion is always recommended in uncertain areas.

Another interesting discovery is that in Colorado collecting minerals in an area designated as a State Wildlife Refuge is illegal. This affects any state refuge, but most notably those in several localities in Ouray and Montrose counties. Of special note is that while one cannot disturb any geological feature, one can hunt wildlife in a wildlife refuge!!! Go figure.

A proposed road use plan, due to be implemented in the near future (if not already) will affect access to mineral collecting in some areas of the Book Cliffs north of Grand Junction – a locality long noted for world class water clear barite crystals. Some of the network of roads and trails is being left open for ATV use, but much of the area is designated for road closure, making access to these areas far more difficult.

Another example of a recent land closure is the Stoneham locality, world famous for blue barite crystals, some of which are on a contrasting matrix of pale-yellow calcite. For many years collectors have been intermittently getting permission to collect from a nearby property owner. I was surprised to read in a recent rock club newsletter, however, that the locality has been closed by the State of Colorado Land Board. A long phone conversation with the regional manager revealed that much of the collecting locality was on or accessed through state school section land. Largely on account of extensive un-remediated excavations, and in order to bring more money into the state school fund, the manager has closed the property unless someone is willing to lease the mineral rights from the state, and continually monitor the area for unauthorized collecting.

As a parting comment, numerous mines, quarries and other private properties are being closed at an increasing rate, not only in Colorado but also in the Midwest, where collecting localities can be hard to come by. Although such closure is often due to government or OSHA regulations, much is our own fault ...we now live in a highly litigious society, willing to blame anyone but ourselves for our own misfortunes. We have also become a zero-risk tolerance society. The confluence of too many lawyers as well as a lack of personal responsibility has led many property owners to conclude that it is simply not worth the risk to allow collectors onto a private property.

Commercial collecting activities.

Disclaimer 1: These comments pertain mostly to individual part-time collectors, not to some of the responsible full-time professional collectors operating with power equipment.

Disclaimer 2: I have never watched the Prospectors Show; I would probably become physically ill if I attempted to do so. But I have heard numerous accounts from a lot of collectors about this show, none of which was favorable.

In earlier years, I recall some rock club members condemning the chase for the "almighty dollar" by the hobby collector. Point well taken. However, commercial mineral collecting has been around since before the California Gold Rush. On a large-scale commercial basis, such activity has provided the collecting community and museums with exceptional specimens that would not otherwise have been brought to light (the Sweet Home mine near Alma and the Smoky Hawk operation in the Crystal Peak area come to mind, among others worldwide). Too often, however, when a profit-only motive extends down to the 'hobby' level, it becomes problematic. Before about 1990, when the price of amazonite specimens skyrocketed due to the influx of wealthy collector/investors, one could freely hike many areas of the Crystal Peak-Lake George area in search of solitude and minerals without being molested. Now, especially after the airing of the Prospectors Show, with exorbitant claims of high mineral values and emphasis on the ostensible monetary rewards of collecting, legions of profit-minded and mercenary collectors have been inspired to file mining claims or highgrade existing claims in the Crystal Peak-Lake George area (as well as other localities in the state), seeking their fortune based on unrealistic specimen appraisals and fantasies of easy finds. Almost all the ground in the Crystal Peak area is now covered by mining claims, with new claim stakes sprouting like mushrooms. Incidents of claim jumping and poaching have become commonplace. In my opinion this show has promoted the influx of undesirable elements to the hobby.

Mine swindles and nefarious activity are nothing new in the Crystal Peak area of Colorado – they have been going on since I arrived on the scene in the early 1970s, and undoubtedly before that. I have encountered my share of scoundrels, claim jumpers, highgraders, and other nefarious individuals of questionable character in my years of collecting in this locality. The situation is indeed reminiscent of tales from the gold rush days in the western U.S.! In the 1970s a con artist (who may be still operating in the area) erected an illegal cabin at the old Whitmore Gem Mines site and proceeded to tell prospective collectors that public access to the road passing through was closed, and worse yet, proceeded to sell mine claims to unsuspecting individuals, including to a retired military person that I met, who told me that he was assured he could build a house on his new claim, and that there was even gold on the property (!) – he showed me a handful of "rich ore" that he was going to take to an assay office in Cripple Creek to have analyzed for gold. The "ore" contained distinctive flakes of weathered biotite! He had even erected an elaborate wood fence along the road to block public access to the land. The Forest Service eventually disassembled the fence, as well as a cabin built elsewhere by another individual who purchased a property from the same swindler. He also had been told that building a cabin in the National Forest was perfectly legal, and that one indeed had more property rights on a mining claim than on private property. The USFS eventually removed this cabin as well as the hovel built by the swindler.



“MY CLAIM, SIR!”

***"A prospector defends his claim at the Comstock Lode, 1861."
Lithograph from Harper's Monthly Magazine, January 1861***

In more recent years, wire fences and 'Private Property/Keep Out' signs were erected by a non-patented claim owner near the Forest Service entry gate near Crystal Creek in the Crystal Peak area. Owning mineral rights on a non-patented claim does not extend to surface property rights; the USFS had to resort to armed intervention and legal action to settle this and other issues with the claimant.

Ongoing conflict in the area is evidenced by a large sign that was erected last year (2014) near the entry gate on the USFS public access road to the Crystal Peak collecting area, implying that it was a private road. Someone apparently disputed this assertion and responded by vandalizing the sign shortly thereafter by painting two skull and crossbones over it, with the words “Bite Me.” It was certainly entertaining, but also an indication of the heightened tension in the locality. The sign was soon thereafter torn down, apparently by another disgruntled collector.



Signage at the entry to the Crystal Peak area

In a last example of restriction of access to formerly productive collecting areas caused by a few irresponsible mineral collectors, continued trespass by a few individuals in recent years who insisted in using a metal detector to search for gold in a restricted mine dump east of Leadville resulted in closure by the company of the entire Ibez mine complex area to all.

Conclusions.

Many collecting localities have been eradicated by government sponsored road closures, remediation, and other activities. Some of this can be traced back to destructive actions of the general public, as well as some of those in the mineral collecting community, and also to a heightened emphasis on profit-making versus simply enjoying scenery and solitude in the field and the beauty of a crystallized mineral.

The decline of field collecting opportunities may in the future result in fewer active participants at the rock club level. Accordingly, mineral collecting will increasingly evolve toward collectors whose only option will be to purchase mineral specimens.