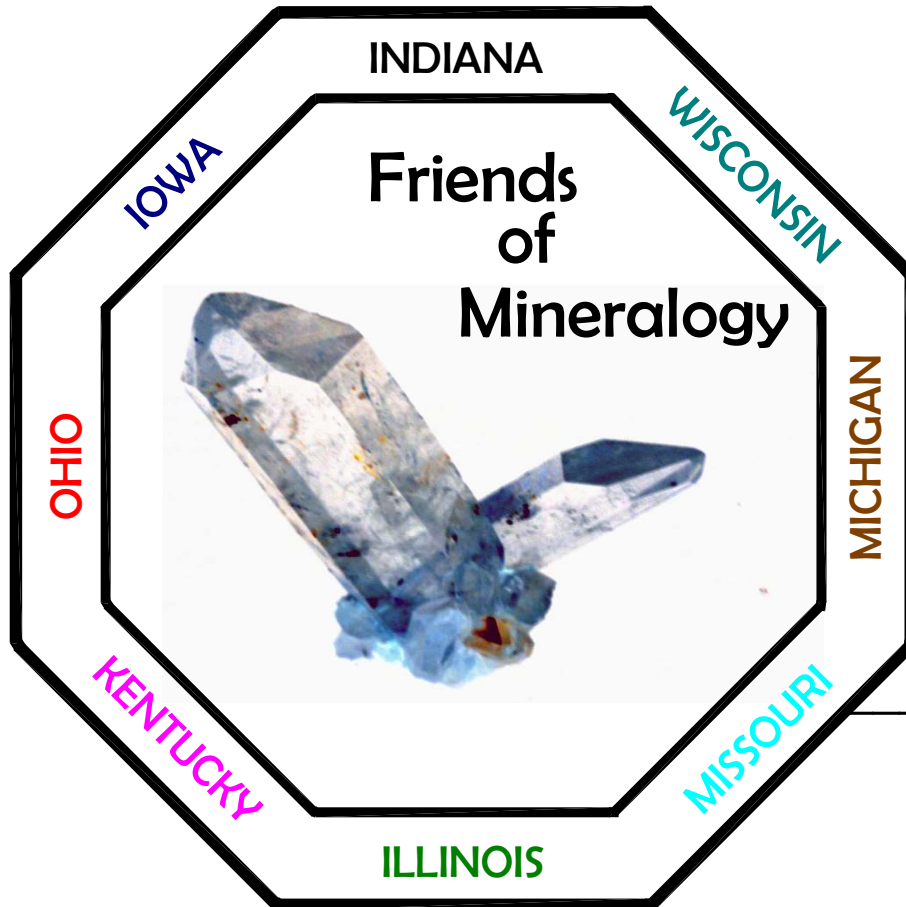


Friends of Mineralogy

Midwest Chapter Newsletter for September – October 2023



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Treasurers Report

2023 Interim Financial Report 8/15/2023

We began the year with \$10,472.12. This included \$555 in 2023 dues for 27 members. We currently have 86 members for 2023 (up 2 from 2022).

We have received new donations of \$233. This brings 2023 revenue to \$1,422.74

On the expense side we have paid \$308.00 in National dues; \$16.00 for 2022(4 members) and \$292.00 for 2023(73 members). We owe National \$52.00 for 13 members.

Our insurance premium of \$650.00 for 2023 has been paid. We also paid \$107.88 for 1 year of web hosting and \$13.90 for website security certification. Our PayPal service fee was \$36.26. Total 2023 expenses to date are \$1,079.78. This brings our current treasury total to \$10,815.08.

Remember, any new members that have not ever signed a Chapter Liability Agreement should print the form, and bring it to your next field trip signed and witnessed. You may find the form here:

<https://www.fommidwest.org/registration-forms/>

As always, contact me if you have any questions.

Jeff Spencer - Treasurer

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FM Midwest Chapter

Newsletter

Ten years ago, shortly after becoming president of the chapter, I approached Tom Bolka about being our newsletter editor. He graciously agreed, and I appointed him to the position of newsletter editor. Every two months he has published a newsletter without missing an issue or even being late. In the beginning, he even had to mail a number of copies. He has done an exemplary job! I wanted to take this opportunity to thank him personally, and on behalf of the chapter, for the time he has put in and for raising the standard for the quality and appearance of our newsletter. I didn't expect him to stay on the job as long as he has. However, he feels that the time to step down has come and, as he put it to me, get some "new blood" with new ideas.

Some question the value of a newsletter today with electronic communication. I think that a newsletter has value to an organization for several reasons. One is that the members expect to see something every two months, and if it doesn't show up, it suggests a problem with one's email account. Infrequent, sporadic communications might result in some messages being missed, especially if it ends up in one's spam folder. Another reason for having a regularly scheduled newsletter is that it provides some impetus for contributors to take the time to put their missives together. There is nothing quite like a deadline to motivate people. Another bonus is that it provides a summary history of activities and makes the job of the National newsletter editor easier by putting important information in a convenient place to search. One thing that I would like to see is regular field trip reports with pictures. Reggie Rose used to provide them, but it has been a while since I have seen one. However, it doesn't have to be Reggie's responsibility alone. Johan Maertens has provided us with some excellent field trip reports.

If you agree that a newsletter is important, or at least desirable, then we will need a volunteer take over the job. I'm sure that Tom will be helpful in getting the new person started and up to speed. I've always been supportive of Tom, and I'm willing to continue to help the new person as well.

As I hope that you are aware, we have been coasting for some time without a president or vice-president. If the newsletter editor position goes unfilled as well, the long-term prospects for the chapter are not good. We very much need volunteers!

Clyde Spencer
Past-President

Tools for Trimming Minerals
Clyde Spencer
2023

[The following is an edited summary of email exchanges between members of the South East Micromounters Group and myself; used with permission of the participants.]

Quintin Wight: Clyde

I use ceramic tile nippers. They usually have tungsten carbide teeth, and are cheaper to buy.

Herwig Pelkmans: Quintin

One of the things I did not like about the ceramic tile nippers. I found that the max distance between both "jaws" when opened completely is quite limited, as is the space inside the jaws.

That of course translates to: OK for smaller samples, but not handy or even impossible for trimming somewhat larger rocks. That's where hoof trimmers can come in, I guess.

Quintin Wight: All

My tile trimmers (attached) open a full inch. I bought them at a local hardware store many years ago, and they are still as good as ever.



Mike Howard: Quintin Wight

Quintin, those trimmers are a bit different in shape of the nipper blades than the ones I have encountered. Very interesting!

Quintin Wight: Mike

Yes. In shot #1 below, you can see that when fully compressed, the teeth don't meet. That stops them from smashing into each other on a hard break. You can also make out the tungsten carbide teeth. In shot #2, you can see that the head is offset to give a better grip on the subject without interference from the pivot. They work well.

Clyde Spencer: All

My 14" hoof trimmers are one of my most useful tools for trimming limestone specimens. I can take off edges up to about 1/2". Only when I can't reduce it with the hoof trimmer do I resort to my hydraulic-jack trimmer. I also use a small pair of electrician's side-cutters for more delicate work.

Mike Howard: Clyde

HA HA, glad to know I am not the only person who used those type of trimmers! I have two sets, one with 9-inch handles and the other pair is 14" like yours! And, for very delicate work, I have both jewelers nips and side cutters! I wore out two Yost trimmers over the years, and I managed to locate a Chinese knockoff, but it is about 30% larger and has a little more slack in the works, which actually works to its favor. Tight tolerances are good, until they start wearing too much! I have trimmed many a specimen down to fit in a perky 1.25" cube with those tools! And getting rid of waste matrix can make a specimen set much more aesthetically for mounting! HA HA much of my trimming has been thin vuggy pieces of syenite...and when trimming with the 9" trimmer, I have to be very careful or I will pinch the palm of my hand!

Mike Howard: Quintin

The hoof trimmers are in the 2nd picture, the rule is there so you can see the max opening on them...2.25" for the large pair and 1.5" for the smaller pair. The small pair have been heavily used to the point that when closed, the handles are within 1/4" of each other, thus the pinching effect! These are very useful on thin, brittle, or crumbly matrix specimens. Like you said the ceramic tile SiC trimmers are fine but do not open much over 3/8th inch, so their use is very limited. After all, they were designed to trim ceramic tile, not rocks!

Trimming rock with any trimmer requires experience and patience, and some knowledge of how the rock will respond to applied force. I do like Jim Daly's Hydraulic German made trimmer. It is great for putting incremental pressure on the rock so the shock of breaking is not as much as the screw type, but the Chinese one cost me about \$50 a few years back and the German Hydraulic trimmer is nearly \$1,900 the last time I checked! I would rather spend my money on a couple of dozen nice fluorescent specimens than that trimmer (particularly at my age and the fact that I no longer collect, just silver pick and trade.)



J. Michael Howard, photographer

Herwig Pelkmans: Mike

Regarding these hoof trimmers: any specific brand you can recommend?

Looking at a few, I notice there is quite a price range, this one being quite expensive:

<https://www.centaurforge.com/GE-14-Original-Style-Hoof-Nippers/productinfo/14GE/>

Regarding pinching your hand: best to use a cloth to cover the rock and the head of the trimmer before putting pressure on it. That will not only keep all the fragments close, but it will also keep you from pinching your hand.

Clyde Spencer: Herwig

The one I have was made in the USA and was not particularly expensive. I have had it for several years and it will probably outlive me. I've touched up the edge on the jaws a few times. So, I'd go with the cheaper one -- unless it was made in China.

Mike Howard: Herwig

The hoof trimmers have their limits, but more due to the strength of the operator! Here are 3 pictures...first is of my Chinese knockoff Yost trimmer.....about 30% larger than the Yost. Note the springs to aid with retraction when opening....max opening 4" vertically, but I almost never use that full amount...the rock must be limestone or something with less tenacity to use the full opening. Width is about 4.5 inches horizontally between the vertical bars. I have trimmed 100s of specimens with this trimmer, after my two Yosts finally cratered.

Stan Bogosian: All

I'm on my second hydraulic ZUBER, and have to say it has been worth every penny. For finer trimming, I use a Swarf Systems "mini" screw-type trimmer. And yes, I also have a tile trimmer, which I use maybe three times a year. Agree with Herwig, the jaws don't always open far enough.

Quintin Wight: All

I should fill in the picture. I also use a Yost trimmer (I bought that from Bill Yost in 1972), a five-ton hydraulic monster for bigger pieces, and a truly useful little 50 G hammer I bought in Fiesch, Switzerland, in 1966 (see below). It has a wooden shaft, and though the edges of the square striking face have worn slightly, it doesn't show a trace of mushrooming. That's real heat-treating! I use it on pieces held in my palm. The handle looks a little short because I've broken it twice over the years. It has trimmed a lot of rock!

Mike Howard: All

At one time a few years back, my friend Henry de Linde designed and had built by a local welding shop, a 5-ton hydraulic splitter. When he moved away, he sold it to Charles Steuart, another geologist friend of mine. Even later, he sent on consignment to a rock shop in Mt. Ida. There I saw it, called Charles and asked what he had to have for it. We agreed on a price of \$100, thus it came into my possession!

I had it for about 10 years and broke lots of rock with it, but when I retired and quit collecting, I decided to sell it. That is about the time RV Stevens AKA Big Bob came by for a visit. He saw it and wanted it so he bought it from me.... for \$100. I never had to do a thing to it! I had it mounted on a 3 ft. diameter oak tree round, so we pried it off of there and he hauled it away. I broke down a lot of 1 ft. boulders of vug-bearing nepheline syenite with it, and a lot of the vuggy brookite quartz host rock from the Christy pit too!

Clyde Spencer: Mike

I think I remember seeing that press outside, behind your house. You wisely put some heavy carpet over it to keep the shrapnel from wounding you.

I bought a 3(?) ton hydraulic press from Harbor Freight and Tools and then bought a Chinese, wide cold-chisel that I cut down It works well for most things. I also bought a carbide hacksaw blade that I use to notch big pieces to seat the cold-chisel blade, and encourage it to break where I want it to break.

I also made a small trimmer out of a hand-operated bearing press (Again from Harbor Freight), but ended up not using it much.

Mike Howard: Clyde

Yes, that was the one! If you broke a rock of any size, you needed to wrap the lower half of the machine with carpet! HA HA Besides protecting me, it also kept the shards from flying away into the bushes and me from having to hunt for them!

Mike Howard: All

But I found NO mineral trimmers available, even that fancy German one is no longer made. So, I decided I would see if I could find anything that I could adapt to make one, and this is what I came up with. You can look it up at Home Depot, but today it shows it is OUT OF STOCK! I wonder if I purchased the last one. It is: Black Bull 6-ton A-Frame Shop Press 806472. I have a few pictures of it and my ideas about how to modify it for a relatively inexpensive mineral/rock trimmer. It is no lightweight at 47 pounds unassembled. Cost with free home delivery was \$119.

Here are my thoughts on modifications. In the reviews, several said it was rickety, well obviously, they did not tighten down all the nuts and bolts! But once I get it assembled, and all squared up, I will take it to a local welding shop and have the critical joins wire welded.

The other modification is on the end of the press ram rod. I will take it, before assembly and locate two carbide tipped masonry chisels, have them cut off and one welded on the end of the push rock and the other welded on the bottom plate so I can have chisels top and bottom on any standard rock trimmer.

I expect to come in under \$170 on this little project and though it is not really very portable, when we have the CUSMMS back here in Arkansas next year, I will have it on hand for those wanting to trim their specimens. By then I hope to have had enough experience with it to let everyone know if it was worth the price or not.

Fortunately, there are a couple of YouTube videos that show how to assemble it...pretty amateurish but still better than just a static diagram! HA HA



J. Michael Howard, photographer

Herwig Pelkmans: All

And FYI: the trimmer that Stan mentioned, the SWARF trimmer, is still being made in the US by Ted Hadley (thadley01@yahoo.com).

I bought one too, and am very satisfied with its ease of handling and overall performance.

Clyde Spencer: Mike

The A-frame press you bought resembles the one I bought from Harbor Freight & Tools a few years ago. I made some modifications that you might want to consider. I bought a Chinese-made, wide cold-chisel, also from HFT. I shortened the shaft of the steel cold-chisel. (And, lost an expensive polycrystalline diamond, lathe tool bit in the process because I started with a hexagonal shaft.) I then machined a collar with my lathe to fit the cold-chisel and the plunger under the hydraulic jack platform. The collar has setscrews. This allows me to rotate the blade to align with any natural cracks while taking advantage of the full width of the platform. I chose a steel cold-chisel because it can be sharpened after removing it from the collar, should it become dull or chipped. I purposely avoided carbide because, while it is very hard (and hence difficult to sharpen), it also tends to be brittle. After a few years of busting some tough rocks, I haven't had a need to dress the upper cold-chisel.

I didn't make another bit to go under the specimen. I imagine just putting a length of steel angle iron under it should be adequate, although I haven't really found that necessary. The press came with a couple of iron spacer blocks that I just place at the outside of the specimen, leaving the center, where I want it to break, unsupported.

Before you go to the trouble and expense of having the frame welded, you might want to consider just applying (slow curing) epoxy to all the areas where the bolts are, to keep it from moving. I didn't do that, and haven't had any problems. I think that you are right that the people who complained about their frames being rickety just didn't tighten their bolts enough.

Mike Howard: Clyde

Thank you for your suggestions. I discovered one thing, carbide tipped chisels are damn expensive! In the order of two would cost me nearly as much, in fact maybe more, than this entire set up! I will go with just regular steel cold chisels...since I have no metal working equipment in my shop. I will take this rig to a metal shop, and explain what I want done. Due to your experience of not having to resharpen that upper bit after several years of use, I plan on having the rod shortened by the same amount as the chisel adds and having it welded into place. The bottom chisel will be welded to one of those plates. I did measure the diameter of the vertical push rod and it is 1" so I am thinking of buying a couple of 1" chisels. My small screw type trimmer uses 3/8" chisels, and I have never even chipped one.

I believe this unit is exactly the same one you bought from HF&T, but they have none in stock, and just imported under a different name.... HA HA The Chinese do that a lot! HF&T lists it on their web site, but every time I checked it was out of stock.

Anyway, yesterday afternoon I started to put all the bits and pieces together, hand tight. Between the parts diagram, the drawing and the picture on the box, I was able to figure it out. I have not yet attached the upper "A" portion to the body as that looks to be the fiddliest part of all. And I need to get the chisels attached before doing that.

As far as the collar and such, I just plan on rotating the specimen to the best "pinch" position. My very small screw vise has that rotation option for the lower bit, but I have never used it. Just have both bits aligned with each other.

Mike Howard: All

I previously sent everyone pictures of this rock trimmer project, the 6-ton hydraulic trimmer, and pics of my small Chinese made trimmer and a couple of horse nail trimmers that I use occasionally. So here are pictures of both the finished rock trimmer and two other trimmers I had that I finally located...now everything sits on one bench so I do not have to look all over creation to find them when needed! HA HA

The first pic is of a steel nut cutter with an open jaw of 1 inch. This is a handy portable size, but you also have to carry a crescent wrench with you to use it. Also in the same picture is my tile cutter, this works well for up to 5/8-inch nipping of sharp edges and slivers. Needed for it is either a bandana or small towel to wrap around the cutter head once you are holding the piece in position as this sometimes needs two-handed operation and the pieces may fly away, if not wrapped!

The rest of the pics show.... 2nd picture shows the upper portion of the A-Frame, note the welded joints, the painting of the relief valve so that I can see it more easily that if it was black on a black background, and the 1" C-clamps holding the jack in place. These may be removed later as I have purchased but not yet received some 2" spring clamps. The 3rd picture shows the lower half of the rock trimmer and the alignment of the chisels for breaking a rock! The 4th picture shows the spring clip I bolted to the side of the press to hold the copper release pipe and the new jack lever bar. The last picture shows a close up of the alignment of the chisel bits for breaking rock. Note the 2 one-inch C-clamps being used to hold the lower plate in proper position. These also may be replaced with several spring clamps once they arrive.

This unit came with a single piece release and lever jack bar, but it was like 30" and actually did not fit into the jack properly. Previous bottle jacks I had had two - piece handles, so I just custom made them, and I like the way they nest on the side of the unit.

Anyway, not counting the spring clamps, I am finished with this unit and think it is ready to work with when I get some suitable material. Anything smaller than 2 inches, I will continue to break with my screw trimmer.



J. Michael Howard, photographer

Herwig Pelkmans: Mike

Very interesting, Mike. So, what is the height of the rock you can still easily get between both chisels? Have you already done a test with a big tough rock that large?

What I would change are the clamps holding the lower plates. I would replace them by 4 good sized bolts (one on every corner; not welded, of course).

Right now, those clamps might be in the way of the (large) rocks you will be trimming, and it will also be more sturdy.



Friends of Mineralogy National 2023

Mojave Trails National Monument

Greetings Friends,

Members may be interested in the discussion of rockhounding at Mojave Trails National Monument. An article regarding the matter (linked below) has been published in the Los Angeles Times. Two southern California groups have asked for support in sharing this article, as readership metrics may be used to indicate public interest.

Respectfully,
Mark Jacobson, President

Click on the link below to see the Los Angeles Times article

<https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2023-07-16/rockhounds-fight-for-access-to-jewels-of-california-desert>

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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.

