

"God Bless
America"



THE STREAKPLATE

NORTHERN BERKSHIRE MINERAL CLUB
North Adams, Massachusetts

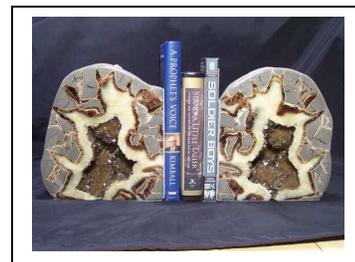
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Important Notice of Meeting Place and Time Change!

NEW DATE: *Thursday, October 21, 2010* **TIME :** **6:00PM**

NEW LOCATION: **The North Adams Public Library**
74 Church St., North Adams

PROGRAM: Desert Rockhounding for Turquoise, Septarian Nodules,
Trilobites and Fish Fossils.



Septarian Nodule Bookends

Welcome New Members!

Nicole Martin Ray Kurpiel Ken Carlsen Robert Laporte

Darlene Bruzzi Meghan Sherman Jerry & Lynne Wilson Jennifer & Austin Street

Club Website Announced

Our club has a website! All members are encouraged to join the website by visiting <http://nbmclub.webs.com>. The website will be a place for members to see upcoming events, post pictures and comments, contact other club members and view current and past issues of our newsletter, The Streakplate. It will also make it easier to reach all members via email with important information about club activities. I strongly encourage all members to create a profile at their earliest convenience. Currently there are several lists going for delivery of the newsletter, including an email list, Facebook list and post office mailing list. I would like to have one electronic delivery format but will still mail to members who are not connected to the web. By viewing The Streakplate via the links tab on the website you will get immediate delivery and the pictures will be of a higher quality than in the mailed version and will be in color. Weblinks will also be just a click away.

Remember the website is a work in process. If there are members who would like to help maintain the site your help would be appreciated. If you have suggestions for improvements please contact me at lmichon@rcn.com or by phone at 413-446-1893.

Field Trips- Field Trips – Field Trips

Diamond Acres in Stone Arabia, NY Saturday, October 2nd

This is a favorite collecting site for *Herkimer diamonds* for many of our members. We will meet at the Big Y parking lot in North Adams at 7:45am on Saturday morning to car pool, it's about a 2 hour trip. For those who wish to meet us there call me at 413-446-1893 or send me an email at lmichon@rcn.com to let me know you are planning to come and for directions if necessary. Here is a link that is posted on the club website describing the collecting site <http://mcrocks.com/ftr06-2/Hayward7-1-06.html> . Sunday, October 3rd will be our raindate if Saturday's weather does not cooperate.

Manhan Mine in Easthampton, MA Saturday, October 16th

This is a lead mine that was first discovered and worked in the late 1600's. Pyromorphite and Wolfenite are the most prized minerals to be collected although there is a long list of interesting minerals that can be found here. Most of what is collected here is micromount material but larger specimens can be found. We will be joined by the president of the Connecticut Valley Mineral club, Andy Brodeur. Andy lives near the mine and will show us the in's and out's of collecting at this location. Here are some websites to visit for more information.

<http://www.mindat.org/sitegallery.php?loc=3832>

<http://www.lmscc.org/Manham%20Mine.htm>

<http://cash-and-treasures-wiki.travelchannel.com/page/Massachusetts>

Again, we will meet at the Big Y parking lot in North Adams to carpool at 8 am. Sunday, October 17th will be our raindate.



Wolfenite on Pyromorphite

American Museum of Natural History-Saturday, January 15, 2011

This will be an all day event to New York City. The Museum has much to offer with 45 museum halls, imax and planetarium. Our focus will be on the Harry Frank Guggenheim Hall of Minerals and Morgan Memorial Hall of Gems. Admission is \$16 for adults and \$9 for children. If we get 20 people or more the price drops to \$13/adult and \$7.50/child under 12 for basic admission. Other pricing is available depending on whether or not we would like to take advantage of show and other offerings. The club has invited the Connecticut Valley Mineral Club and the Bristol, CT mineral club to join us. The plan is to rent a bus and pick them up on our way to the museum. At present the details have not been worked out so stay tuned for more information. The museums website is <http://www.amnh.org/>

Wise Fluorite Mine Field Trip Report

By: Larry Michon

On the last Sunday in August the club held a field trip to the William Wise Fluorite Mine in Westmoreland, New Hampshire. This was a rescheduled trip due to rain the prior weekend. A few hardy souls did weather the rain of the previous weekend lead by Dan Washburn. On this day it was a small but enthusiastic group that met just over the Vermont/New Hampshire line under beautiful sunny skies.



As we made our way up through the woods on the mine road we were met by Tom Kustra, long time club member and avid miner. Tom has been running the mining operation and had agreed to allow us access for the day. In short order we reached the collecting area at the lower reaches of the mining operation. We spread out and got to it. The area was covered in small clear quartz crystals and pieces of green fluorite ranging in size from a quarter inch chip up to about 3 inches across. Of course garden rocks were abundant for those who were interested.



Soon after arriving we were joined by a group affiliated with the Burlington, VT mineral club who happened to be in the area. It was great to see so many rockhounds scouring the hillside and tailings for treasures. After I had amassed a pile of potential keepers I made my way up to the pond at the base of the cliff to join Phil Yerke . We spent some time washing the dirt off to see what the goodies looked like cleaned up. As usual we sorted our finds into leaverites and keepers. Phil had found a nice sized chunk of the green fluorite that would look nice in any collection. Cheryl LeClaire and I collected enough chips to fill a glass jar with shiny green fluorite to put on the windowsill.

Tom Kustra came by and fired up the heavy equipment to expose some new material but it was hard to see any treasures under the freshly moved dirt. Tom suggested we return after a good rainstorm as it would wash away the dirt leaving the fluorite easy to spot.

By this time the heat from the sun was getting intense so the group of us headed up to the top of the mining area to a pile of tailings in the trees. It was an old pile that had not been picked over so we were all pleased to find a keeper or two in the pile.

Right beside us the woods had been cleared and Tom explained his plan. The veins of fluorite run in parallel bands and he believes that there was a lot of new material to be found deep under our feet. Now that the hard work of clearing the land has been done Tom is planning to use his ground penetrating radar to look for anomalies underground to determine just where they should dig. He explained the importance of getting the radar work done before the fall rains come in or it would severely limit the accuracy and range of the radar scans. Tom's goal is to locate museum quality specimens that can sell in the range of \$10,000 and up. It will be interesting to watch his progress. We wish him great success!



Phil and Larry inspect their finds.



Jessica Putnam Phillips moves a boulder while Tristen and Riley look on.



Tom moves fresh material for us.

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“The Club” was founded in 1959. The purpose of the club is to develop and educate students, the community, and our members in the field of mineralogy, including the formation of rocks and minerals, the collection of minerals, their identification and display, and in the lapidary art of cutting, polishing and faceting; and to serve the educational needs of the communities in which club members live.

...from the Constitution of The Northern Berkshire Mineral Club

Elections are coming up

The annual election of officers will be taking this fall and a number of positions need to be filled. President Dan Washburn will be moving to Florida by years end and Cindy Hancock has resigned as treasurer. We will be discussing this in more detail at our next meeting so give some thought as to whether you have the time and interest to fill an officer position in the coming year.

Gem Show Results

Our 47th annual Jewelry, Gem and Mineral show was held at the American Legion in Pownal, VT on September 11th and 12th. The results are as follows:

Attendance – Paid adult admissions at \$4 each totaled 195 breaking down to 122 on Saturday and 75 on Sunday. This does not include children 15 and under.

Revenues

Admissions	\$ 786
Sluiceway profit	140
Vendor Fees	<u>1,680</u>
Total Revenues	\$2,606

Expenses

Advertising	516
Rack Cards	280
Hall rental	850
Balloons	<u>22</u>

Total Expenses \$1,668

Excess of Revenues

Over Expenses \$ 938

Many thanks to all the volunteers and special thanks to the show committee members on a job well done!

We met with the vendors after the show to get some feedback. Most of the returning vendors said sales were less than last year. Whether it was the poor economy or the new show committee learning the ropes is hard to say. In a situation like this it's best to focus on what you can control. Several ideas for improvement were offered. One is to change the name of the show to include Fossils and the word Sale. Maybe something like 48th Annual Gem, Mineral and Fossil Show and Sale.

It was also recommended that we do two mailings of a printed postcard to people who have attended the show. In order to do this we would need a mailing list. This could be accomplished by having a drawing for an item and requiring name and address to enter. We do need to look at better ways to stretch our advertising budget as it cost \$4 in advertising costs for every adult that came to the show. It is clear that more help is needed getting the word out through all the free calendar listings in the newspapers and magazines and that it should be early and often. Using the radio was also suggested. All agreed that work on next years show starts shortly after this years so if you have an interest in planning next year's show please volunteer to join the committee.

We did the mining/sluice attraction for the first time this year and it had a good start. I think more can be done with it in the future to make it even more successful.



Bob Michaels hands out free samples.

Scenes from the show...



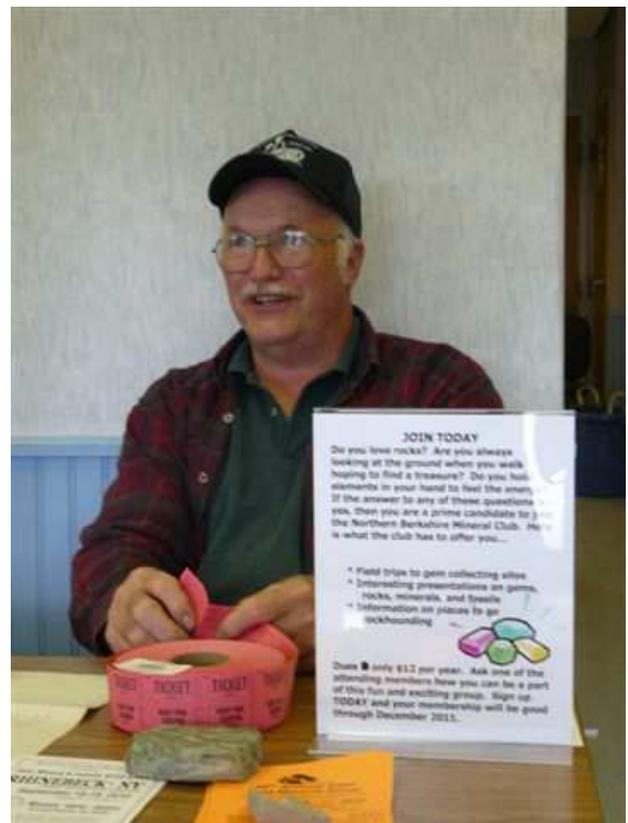
Ron and Emilie Kendig at their booth.



Tom Taaffe's fossils on display.



Riley Putnam Phillips at work at the sluice.



Fearless leader Dan Washburn serving up tickets and a smile.

Septarian Nodules

Septarian Nodules were formed about 100 million years ago when the Gulf of Mexico reached what is now Southern Utah. Sea (shell) life, killed by volcanic eruptions settled to the sea bottom. Tide and wave action rolled these shells in the sticky volcanic mud where they acquired a thick coating of gray mud. As the oceans receded, these nodules were exposed to the atmosphere where they dried, cracked and shrank. Later, sea level rose, depositing more sediment on these now rock-hard, cracked, hollow mud bolls or nodules. Calcite minerals were deposited in the cracks and hollows by sea water slowly percolating into the nodules. A thin wall of the yellow calcite was altered into brown aragonite, dividing the gray bentonite clay exterior from the yellow calcite center. From the Latin word for this dividing wall, Septum, the nodules are called "Septarians".

The Hunt for Septarians

One of the best places in the world to collect Septarian nodules is in southern Utah right outside the east gate of Zion National Park in the town of Orderville. This past spring Cheryl LeClaire and I were on a rockhounding/national park tour of the Southwest and spent a day in the field looking for Septarians. We began our hunt with a quick stop at Joe's Rock shop in town. We met with Ken the owner to inquire of collecting locations that were open to the public. Ken drew us a map but was quick to point out that the Septarian collecting area had been mined extensively and they were getting hard to come by. The Septarians are only found in a few places and in a rather narrow band of earth when they are found. Undaunted we made our way up to the collecting site. It was a large quarry but we were the only people out that day. We wandered around the vast area poking, prodding and climbing the steep dried mud walls. We found lots of broken pieces but not many whole septarians. Eventually we made our way around to another side of the hill where we walked the road with little luck. It wasn't until we started searching the area where the mud and clay had been moved by the heavy equipment that we started having luck. By the end of the day we had nearly a dozen septarian nodules of varying sizes.



We then made our way back to see Ken where he inspected our finds and proclaimed we had an impressive haul. For \$5/cut Ken went to work opening up our Septarian nodules. He's obviously done this many times before as he would cut them in two but keep the halves together as he passed it on to us. We then had the honor of turning the two halves over to see what was inside. It's always a thrill to open up a pocket or in this case a Septarian nodule to see what treasure the earth is revealing to us for the first time ever. All of them had interesting patterns but the most desirable ones had openings in which you can see calcite crystals. One exceptionally large specimen was big enough to turn into a handsome pair of bookends. We got another thrill when Ken asked if we wanted to cut our own Septarian. Cheryl donned an orange rain poncho, as the cuts are made with a wet saw, while I took this as a photo opportunity. Cheryl went to work and was

soon making cuts like a pro. After the cuts were made we selected the best specimens and left them with Ken to polish and mail back to us. We took some home with the intention of learning how to polish them ourselves. If you are ever in that part of the country I highly recommend you spend a day hunting for septarians.



Ken watches Cheryl cut her Septarian.



Septarian Nodule display at the Gem Show