THE CAPITAL ROCKHOUNDER

Publication of the Capital District Mineral Club, Inc.
Chartered by the Education Department of the State of New York
P.O. Box 12814, Albany, New York 12212-2814

DECEMBER 2004

December Meeting

The December meeting of the Capital District Mineral Club will be held at the Gateway Diner on Central Avenue in Albany. Please make sure you call George Gearhardt to make reservations as soon as possible if you have forgotten to do so. We will meet on Thursday, December 2, 2004. There will be an auction with an 80-20 split on the money. That means 80% goes to the club member, and 20% to the club. We have decided to give this a try to see if we can get higher quality specimens in the auction. This has worked in the past. Give it a try. Each member is allowed to bring 3 items to put up for auction. Acceptable items include anything that has to do with rockhounding that you think another club member might want, and which the Gateway Diner won't mind having in their back room. And yes, as a member of the auction committee, I will be bringing my calculator.

CAPITAL DISTRICT MINERAL CLUB
December 2, 2004
HOLIDAY BANQUET

To be held at the GATEWAY DINER,
899 CENTRAL AVENUE, ALBANY, NY

Preview of specimens from 6:00pm to 7:00 pm
Auction at 8:00pm
Buffet to be served at 7:00pm

TOSSED SALAD
SIRLOIN TIPS
MUSHROOMS WITH MADEIRA SAUCE
CHICKEN OREGANATO
RICE PILAF
GREEN BEANS IN TOMATO SAUCE
STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE
ROLLS, TEA, COFFEE, SODA

$17.00 total (inc. tax & tip)

Reservations and check must be received by November 26, 2004
You may call the Gearhardts at 518-355-0670 or mail your reservations and check to the address below. Please include your name, the number attending, and the amount of money inclosed with your payment. Please make your check or money order out to the Capital District Mineral Club and mail it to the Capital District Mineral Club, PO Box 12814, Albany, NY 12212-2814

Review of November Program

About twenty five members were able to attend the "Mars Landing Update" presented by Dr. John Delano, from the University at Albany Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences. It was a "Power point" demonstration covering the actual landing of the two rovers (Spirit and Opportunity). Why they landed where they did; how they landed; and what they have done since. The types of rocks analyzed and their search for water and other elements. Future plans regarding where and when further exploration will take place. Dr. Delano also gave a time line for the current travels and exploration of the two rovers. A question and answer session followed.

Nominating Committee

The Nominating committee is now looking for volunteers to serve as our club officers. If you or anyone you know in the club would like to be considered for the offices of president, vice president, treasurer, or secretary please contact Barbara or George Gearhardt at (518) 355 0670 or Richard Stein (518) 355 4423. Please get permission from that person before nominating them. Nominations will be presented at the December meeting and voting will take place at the January 2005 meeting. Others may be nominated at the January meeting if you have secured their permission prior to nominating them.

Show Announcement for 2005

February 26th & 27th 2005: Albany, New York, the 12th annual James Campbell Memorial Gem, Mineral & Fossil Show and Sale will be co-sponsored by the New York State Academy of Mineralogy and the Capital District Mineral Club, Inc. It will be held at the New York State Museum at the Empire State Plaza, Madison Avenue, Albany, New York.

The hours will be 10:00AM to 5:00 PM on both days. Free parking. The admission is $5.00 which includes both the Gem, Mineral, and Fossil Show and the New York in Bloom Flower Show.

Volunteers Needed

Our Show is Coming Soon...Time flies and it is once again time to start preparing for the 12th Annual James E. Campbell Memorial Gem, Mineral and Fossil Show. The plan is to move it back upstairs to the Terrace Gallery. So we have

to come up with a new plan and lots of volunteers to help with publicity, dealer set up, cash registers and club tables. More details at the annual Holiday banquet.

For more information (if you cannot attend the banquet), call Mike Hawkins, Geology Collection Manager of the museum at (518) 486-2011 or (518) 473-7154. His email address is <mhawkins@mail.nysed.gov>.

Dues Are Due

The Capital District Mineral Club, Inc. has a fiscal year that begins with September 1 and ends with August 31. That means the new year started already. Look at the mailing label on your newsletter and if, after your name, the numbers "8/04" appear, your membership has expired August 31, 2004. Please renew by completing a membership form included in this newsletter or print a fuzzy one from our website (address on last page). Send checks, payable to the Capital District Mineral Club, to our post office box (address on last page), or you can renew at our monthly meeting. You will receive your new membership cards (ours and EFMLS) either by mail or at the meeting. Please note that you must have an up-to-date membership card to participate in the December Auction. You may update on site at the dinner. Please note that if you don't sign up by the end of the year, we will stop sending you your newsletter.

Upcoming Field Trips

It is very cold out there and the insects are frozen stiff, so if there is anyone out there who wishes to go rockhounding in full winter gear including gloves, hats, and mittens, please announce it at the banquet or let me know for future newsletters. Remember, it isn't cold everywhere...just here.

Program Committee

The Program Committee would like to hear from any member willing to give a presentation or knowing someone who may give an intresting talk relating to our hobby. In January we plan to show the video "The Building of the Panama Canal". In February, Richard Stein will again do his "Many Faces of Calcite" program. That leaves March, April, and May open for volunteers. So call George Gearhardt at 518-355-0670 at your earliest convenience and help our club continue to enjoy the hobby. Or if you want to give a presentation, but just can't think of a topic, we can help you with that.

Upcoming Mineral Shows

Nov. 27-28, Newark, DE. Show, Mid-Atlantic States Intergalactic Bead Festival Intergalactic Bead Shows; Aetna Firehouse, 400 Ogletown Rd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; admission $5 Sat., $4 Sun.; contact Ankur Yadav, (888)729-6904; Web site: <www.beadshows.com>.

Dec. 4-5, Johnstown, PA. Show, The White Rose City Intergalactic Bead Festival Intergalactic Bead Shows; Frank J. Pasquerilla Conference Center, 301 Napoleon St.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; admission $5 Sat., $4 Sun.; contact Ankur Yadav, (888) 729-6904; Web site: <www.beadshows.com>.

Dec. 11-12, Fitchburg, MA. Show, Bay Staters Intergalactic Bead Festival Intergalactic Bead Shows; Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel and Trade Center, 150 Royal Plaza Dr.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; admission $5 Sat., $4 Sun.; contact Ankur Yadav, (888) 729-6904; Web site: <www.beadshows.com>.

Dec. 26-30, Quartzite, AZ. 39th annual show, QIA Pow Wow Quartzsite Improvement Association; 235 E. Ironwood Dr.; Wed. 9-5, Thu. 9-5, Fri. 9-5, Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-5; free admission; more than 400 vendors; contact Diane Abbott, P.O. Box 881, Quartzsite, AZ 85346-0881, (928) 927-6325; e-mail:<qia@redrivernet.com>; Web site: <www.quartzsiteimprovementassoc.com>.

The Saga of a Steel Magnolia in Utah

(Reprinted with permission from the author.)

Date: Mon, 12 Aug 1996

Hi All,

Only mad dogs and Englishmen brave the noon day sun. But a rockhound in search of treasure will brave almost any thing. We went to Topaz Mountain on Saturday in spite of the 100+ degree heat forecast. Only 3? weeks ahead of schedule. Well, we were ready to go, so why wait? It was only a 215 mile ride south and west of Layton.

We got off of the freeway at Nephi and drove for about half an hour through land that had been burned in huge wildfires this last month (average speed about 60 mph, you figure out how much land we saw). Very sad to see the land scorched and blackened. Southern Utah is desert, southwestern Utah is really desolate desert. We drove into Delta (population 2998 and the last spot of civilization for a long while) to top off the gas tank before back tracking to take the turn off for Topaz Mountain. You drive for about 20 miles on a two lane marked highway, then you cross an invisible line and the painted lines disappear and you are on a two lane unmarked road for the last 18-20 miles before you turn off into BLM land. Now, this land is flat, really flat. You are driving across a valley floor between two mountain ranges and it is so hot that the mountains are almost invisible because of the heat waves and mirage effect, spooky kinda. It looks like fog, but in this dry climate fog would be impossible.

Now the dangerous part begins. I stopped the truck and got out. It was time for Katherine to drive (she is 16+ so it was time to sacrifice my nerves...drugs, I forgot my drugs!!!) Well, the upcoming 20 miles were straight as an bent arrow and there wasn't much that she could get into, or off of either. I think she killed off most of the hamster population in Utah squealing for joy. That's an in joke cause she sounds like a hamster when she gets excited. She got into the drivers seat and we got on our way at a sedate 15 mph, with a pronounced swerve to be sure, but we all have to learn some time. After 5 miles, or so, the swerving stopped, mostly, and I stopped begging for Dramamine. After about 30 minutes a car actually passed us (doing at least 80 mph), amazing actually, no crash. Another car from the opposite direction passed us after a bit and no head on collision took place. Someone must have been doing something right.

There were no animals in sight and only a few small birds were in the sky. There is no open or apparent water out here. We eventually got to the last turn off. By now we have passed a number of

unmarked roads. Road is a euphemism for two tire ruts in the desert this far out from town.

The BLM has a nice sign that directs you to turn into the Topaz Mountain area. It is set aside for rockhounds and you can only use hand tools to collect the topaz. Did I tell you that you can get topaz, garnet, red beryl, and other goodies here? Well, I thought that dynamite was a hand tool, but I didn't have time to get any and I couldn't find any M80's, so that left me with the rock hammers, chisels and pry bars. Drat.

I took over driving at this point. The first 1/2 mile is gravel road and looks fine. Looks are deceptive. At 5 mph it was okay, at 10 mph any fillings you had have long since vibrated out and the connections to your pace maker have come loose. Five mph is just fine. At long last you reach a nice sand road with 'do not litter' signs every mile or so, this tells you that you are going in the right direction cause there are no other signs and the USGS maps don't show any other markings. Oh, if I forgot to tell you, the 2 wheel drive portion ends at the gravel road. If you don't have 4 wheel drive forget it, you won't make it, don't even think to try it. As you get closer to Topaz Mountain the road gets much worse. I am grateful to the kind individual who scanned in a photograph of the mountain on the net. It helped a lot in locating our final destination because nothing is marked out here. The gully (road) that leads into Topaz Valley gets narrower and rockier. The sand has the quality of fine powder and it is extremely slippery. There are big boulders every where for the unwary to run into and your 5 mph speed limit is still just fine.

It's about noon, the sun is full out, the sky is a vivid blue and it is dry beyond belief. It took a bit of doing, but we got into a nice camp site. Nice is defined by a semi-level area with minimal rocks to move. We parked the truck between two juniper trees to take advantage of the slight shade that it offered. The heat in the open is brutal. There were about six other trucks in the valley when we arrived, a veritable crowd. Katherine and I set up camp and then put our loungers in another patch of shade and did what Southern ladies have done for years...we flapped our fans, munched bon bons and read a good book. After all, it was too hot to run around and smash rocks. By 2pm only three vehicles (including us) were left in the valley and no one else came after we arrived. We dozed away most of the afternoon and just enjoyed the peace and quiet. The sounds of sledge hammers in the distance was actually pleasant. A man up on the knob was having a wonderful time with a hammer for hours.

Let me describe the valley a little better. This is volcanic country and there are eroded volcanic pipes and cones all over the place. Lava made Topaz Mountain happen. The valley is a semi circle of high walls, fluted with steep canyons, and the knob sits in about the middle. The knob is a giant glob of lava that looks like taffy that was poured onto a pan and then forgotten. It flows in waves and curves of frozen stone that stands about 200 feet tall and is about 1/4 mile oval. Because this lava is the composition that it is, it is full of holes and very light for it's weight. The best topaz is found inside the rock in a hole. You have to break the stone to find the hole that hopefully has crystals formed in it. Well, erosion over time has done a fine job of spreading tiny topaz crystals all over every where. Every thing glitters here, the dust on the road/gully, the rocks, the hills..... Just walking around is an incredible sight. Every step you take in the loose shifting sand makes these tiny crystals sparkle in the strong sunlight. There are two gravel fields on the side of the knob that are good prospecting areas. Gravel is defined by rocks the size of my fist up to and bigger than a five pound bag of flour. There is one wall of the canyon that is totally covered by rubble and a fault line in the rock is very visible in the middle of the field. It's tricky walking around here. We climbed to the top of the knob to look around before deciding to stay where we were and not go farther into the valley.

By the time the sun was down behind the top of the mountain we were ready to venture out and explore the area. Also the temperature dropped dramatically when the sun went out of sight. Hiking around with a load of steel hammers and other paraphernalia, not to mention the water bottles that never for any reason are more than an arm reach away, is just plain work. So, to make it more fun, we picked and poked at almost any thing that caught our attention. In reality, we found more crystals laying in the dirt than we got from breaking rock. Now where is that blasting powder when you need it? Well, after a while it was time to fix dinner so we headed back to camp. Fortunately, we did not meet the acquaintance of any of the local rattle snakes.

I am willing to accept many things in a remote camp...except hot dogs. You will never find a hot dog in my camp kitchen. Katherine planned pork chops with apple raisin filling for the evening, I helped a little. Getting the fire going was my main contribution. (big grin) OH!! I forgot to tell you that Katherine made several batches of fresh bread on Friday for us to bring along. This is after all, a high class camp site. After dinner, the show began.

Katherine and I put our lounge chairs out in the middle of the clearing and relaxed with a tall glass of distilled water with a twist of lime while the light faded across the valley and left the tops of the mountains in darkness. Then, minute by minute, the stars began to emerge from the thickening gloom. The air was so clear that you could see colors and sizes of the different stars as they twinkled into life. In about an hour there were so many stars out that it looked like a mist had settled over the valley. The milky way was a blazing swath across the sky. Then, the show really began. The Earth is passing through the Perseid Meteor Shower as we speak. We saw two flaming meteors streak across the sky. It was a sight that we had never imagined was possible to see. Sitting there in the darkness and watching the fiery streaks in total silence was awesome. It would not have been possible to see any thing like it on the east coast. Eventually, we decided to get to bed. It had been a long day and you can only absorb so many miracles at one time.

Now, as previously stated, this is a high class camp site. We brought our high tech dome tent, high tech sleeping bags ready to keep the desert chill away, and best of all (in my opinion) a high tech air mattress to promote a good nights rest. Sleeping on rock is not my idea of fun. Well, we were both tired puppies and we wasted no time, or battery power, in getting to bed.

Sunday morning arrived with my digital watch singing in my ear. Actually, it beeped and I got it quick before it woke Katherine. It was still dark when I got up. Watching the sun come up is a favorite event for me. I got the fire going and made cocoa. Now for the fun. I got Katherine up. (another evil grin) The sun came over the rim of the mountain in an explosion of light and heat. The muted

colors blazed for a while before resuming their usual appearance. Our high tech tent became a high tech oven in the direct sunlight. Katherine broke camp while I fixed breakfast. Bacon, omelet, home fried potatoes and toasted bread made up breakfast without a hot dog in sight. I brought lots of lemons and limes for our water supply, too. Citrus is very refreshing in this heat. Even cocoa gets a bit much at 100+.

OH!! We saw a brown bunnie across the hill from our camp site this morning. It was the first animal that we have seen here. Now this might not be exciting, but an entire herd of his buddies had been through the valley leaving droppings the size of cantaloupes behind them. I was afraid that the bunnie might come to breakfast and bring his friends with him.

After breakfast, we packed the truck and went back to exploring the valley and hammering at the rock. By 10 o'clock it was too hot to do more, so we decided to head out.

Once again, the road(narrow, rock lined gully) presented a challenge. There are a number of roads around the valley, as luck would have it we took the wrong one. Not to worry, the truck was in 4x4 mode and we just went in what I thought was the right direction. Bingo! We found the right turn-off (the one with the do not litter sign). However, the 200 feet in front of the turn-off looked impassable even for us. No problem. I got out and walked around and found another gully (road) and we were back on the right track.

When we got back on the real live, paved road, we switched places and Katherine drove the next 35 miles. This time with only a little, occasional swerving, and at a respectable 25 mph. Today we saw two prong horn antelope as they bounded across the road in front of us. Katherine learned all about turning the head and hands at the same time while driving a moving vehicle. We all have to learn. Right? Eventually we made it back to the main highway. While sitting in the passenger seat, I had time to reflect on the terrain that we were passing through. This is a harsh environment. It will kill you in a heartbeat, and then celebrate your return to the ecosystem in the next. With planning, you can not only survive, but enjoy the stark beauty of the desert and mountains. It was refreshing and satisfying to know that we had not had any harmful incidents during the trip. The whole experience was grand. We will be back to Topaz Mountain later in the year. (hopefully with hand held dynamite) :-)

Our trip back to Layton was uneventful and we got back in time to unload the mountain of stuff necessary for desert travel and then relax for the evening.

Next? Who knows.

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<www.spherestoyou.com> We are the world's largest emporium of mineral spheres and natural mineral marbles... our phone number is (818) 991-5143 and email <spheres@spherestoyou.com>

A Field Guide To Mineral Collectors

By John Betts.

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Many of you reading this are new members and new to collecting on club field trips. As you go collecting how do you know who to ask for advice?

Here is a field guide to mineral collectors and how to spot the people that know what they are doing and those that do not. I apologize in advance that, for the purposes of this guide, all gender references will be male. Perhaps in the future we will have a female equivalent.

All characters are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons is coincidental.

Mr. "What did you get?" This collector goes around all day asking "what did you get" in the hopes that you will ask him the same question. This gives him the opportunity to pull out either a piece that he discovered with beginners luck, or a piece you threw away two hours ago or a piece that he picked up at the mineral store down the road and now he claims to have found it. This collector is often new to field collecting and has not been humbled by collecting next to real collectors.

Indiana Jones This is a real collector. Did you ever wonder how these locations we visit were discovered? It is this guy. He searches out old locations or breaks ground at a new location, a true prospector. They can be spotted because they have the right tools for the job and know what they are looking for in advance. We do not have many of this type in the NYMC anymore. You can spot them on a dig because they are not talking, and have their head in a hole. They have been in pockets that they could stand in and know what pocket mud is (and pocket mud can found under their finger nails). You never know until the end of the day what they have found because they don't advertise their finds out of fear that a claim jumper (see Leech) will try to move in.

Sight Seer This person is using the trip to get out of the city and doesn't really care about collecting minerals. He thinks the NYMC is a travel agency to arrange his vacation. Often the loudest complainer, the first to suggest quitting for the day, and most likely to get lost because he was wandering away from the collecting location.

Paul Bunyan This is the biggest and baddest (in the good sense) of all collectors. He swings the biggest hammer you ever saw. You are not worthy of carrying his tools. He cannot walk by a construction sight without dreaming of pneumatic jack hammer, back-hoes and 100 ton hydraulic jacks. No rock is too large to tackle, even if it is barren. This collector play the odds, knowing that one trip in ten he will break into a good pocket and the pocket will have twenty times the quantity and quality of the junk the rest of us are picking up off the ground. At night this collector can be found at the nearest pizza parlor with a large supreme pizza and a six-pack of beer planning out the next days work.

Borrower This collector thinks that the list of tools prepared for each trip is a multiple choice. He brings only half of them. Can usually be spotted adjacent the field trip director so that he can borrow his tools. Has a habit of quickly disappearing after breaking a sledge hammer handle or bending a crow bar. Chronic amnesia causes this collector to never offer to pay for damages, never remembers what tools he needs to get for the future, and always forgets to say thank you.

Pebble Pup Always the youngest person on the trip and always the one to get the best specimen, usually lying on the surface where it was kicked by all or the other members on the trip.

What's This? Total lack of preparation and research causes this collector to have no idea what he is looking for or what he has found. Forgets to bring a field guide or the field trip announcement so he can figure it out for himself. Instead he can be seen lurking near the field trip director asking "what's this?"

20/20 Hindsight This collector has many years of collecting experience and they were all better than the trip he is on now. At least that what he thinks. He is fond of talking about collecting locations that are now built over by condominiums or super-highways. Does not recognize the

passage of time. Never looks at his old specimens that he has boxed up in his garage to see if they really are as good as he remembers.

Golden Pick He has a backpack filled with credit cards used to purchase minerals at the local rock shop. Breaks into a sweat easily at the thought of swinging a hammer. His criteria for a good field trip is a pool and remote control TV at the motel.

Braggart Again, this collector has not been humbled by collecting next to a real pro. He walks around and, without you asking, will pull out to show you hundreds of fragments of crystals that you threw away two hour ago. The braggart does not collect quality, he collects quantity. Can often be heard saying "well it's not much, but it counts". The braggart thinks he is in a competition, but in a real competition, he would not last until lunch.

The Workhorse Motto is run silent, run deep. Slow and steady. He starts in at one spot and sticks to it throughout the day. If there is a specimen to be found he will get it.

First Timer Expects the location will be littered with 1" gemstones. After the inevitable beginners luck discovery of a 1" gemstone, he finds it is all downhill. Becomes a poker.

Poker Plants himself on the ground and pokes around usually with a stick he found at the site. Always comes away empty handed and is usually the most vocal about the failure of the club to plan good trips.

Got it, Done it, Been There This is truly the hardest type of collector to spot because he seldom actually goes collecting. He was there twenty years ago and collected 5 pounds of stuff then. It was crap then and he does not need more crap, even if there was a major recent discovery. When the Plumbago mine discovery was made at Newry, Maine you could hear a collective "Ha, there ain't nothing up there!" from these guys all over New England. When confronted with specimens from new discoveries exclaims loudly that they were better in the old days.

Pseudo expert No, this is not a collector of pseudomorphs. This is the guy that that looks over your shoulder (often while poking the ground with a stick - see poker) and tells you that you are using the wrong tool or working the wrong zone. Often has odd theories about pocket zones involving the Coriolis Effect, left hand quarks, or cold fusion. No amount of factual articles can sway this guy from his theories. And he never actually does any collecting, he prefers to direct others.

Vampire This is the rarest collector of all to be seen in the field. He is a nocturnal collector that only collects in active quarries at night. Can be spotted with essential camouflage outfit, flashlights, lawyers phone number and bail bond card. Never collects at any location open to the public. Only knows the back entrance into a quarry and has memorized the work hours of each quarry. This collector always has the best specimens.

Leech This collector attaches himself to the side of any successful collector in the hopes of benefiting from their hard work. Can easily spotted saying "Let me squeeze in here". When dump digging is fond of rubbing shoulders with the collector he is attached to. This collector never actually finds anything except Leaverites (as in "leave it right there"). His bad habits comes from being used to parallel parking in the city.

Field Trip Director This guy is the collector most likely to loose his patience and temper, especially after being asked the same question that he just answered ten times. Often mistaken for a travel agent by other members too lazy make their own arrangements. Can be identified by the bags under his eyes resulting from members calling his home late at night and early in the morning.

Perfect Club Member This is the ideal collector ("low maintenance" in field trip director lingo). He understands that this is a group effort and does not think of himself first. He can be spotted giving away crystals to others, sharing food and water, lending a hand to others to move large rocks. He never complains to the field trip director when it is too late to change the situation. He brings everything on the tool list, nothing missing, nothing extra. He knows his physical limits and only participates at locations that are appropriate. He arrives early at the meeting location, collects steadily all day, he maintains his interest past 2:00 P.M. and is the last person to stop collecting. He has a car and always bring another member who doesn't with him knowing it is an opportunity to make a new friend. Always thanks the van driver and field trip director at the end of the trip.

This article and others can be found at Mr. Betts website:
<http://www.johnbetts-fineminerals.com>

CAPITAL DISTRICT MINERAL CLUB
P.O. Box 12814
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MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name(s) _____ **Phone** _____

Street _____ Email _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Membership Type: Family _____ Individual _____ Single _____

Dues are $20.00 Family membership; $14.00 Individual membership; $5.00 Student membership

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The purpose of our club is:

- To promote and encourage the study of mineralogy and other applied sciences.
- To cooperate with educational and scientific institutions in order to bring about a better and more general understanding of earth sciences.
- To provide a program with suitable speakers for scheduled meetings.
- To sponsor, direct, and assist in the planning of excursions to mineral localities and other places of geological interest.
- To cooperate with organizations whose purposes are similar to those stated in the foregoing items.