

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

March 2010

March Meeting

The next meeting of the Capital District Mineral Club will be held at the New York State Museum on Madison Ave on March 4th, 2010. Please arrive between 7:00-7:15pm so that someone may let you in the normally locked after hours museum doors. The March 2010 Capital District Mineral Club program will be a 'Welcome to the new club members,' Review of the 2010 Gem and Mineral Show, and a PowerPoint Show on the Structure and Trips of the Capital District Mineral Club.

Thanks are Extended

by Bruce Murray

The Show Committee wishes to thank the stalwart poster distribution members who braved the snow, ice, and cold of this winter to place the 2010 Gem, Mineral and Fossil Show posters into the eager hands of representatives of businesses, schools, colleges, libraries, town halls, hospitals, banks, hairdressers, grocery stores, retail stores, New York State buildings, Stewarts stores, auto stores, and drugstores. The recipients were amazed and happy to put up a poster depicting a beautiful Watermelon Tourmaline. The cafeteria representative of New York State Building #4 asked for extra copies, saying, "This is such a beautiful poster, I want to set them up around the cafeteria to brighten up a too quiet room. The Museum's coordinator for the mineral club, Mike Hawkins, brought the tourmaline posters down from the geology department and urged everybody to take some and have them posted. An email address and telephone number was made available and club members reported where and how many posters were given out. The club members who emailed or telephoned their poster distribution numbers and sites in are: Art Collins, Bob Ballard (from Florida, yet), John Futerko, the Murray's, Anne Woods, and Bob Stitham. Other club members picked up the posters and gave them out, but did not send in their names, being the quiet and retiring persons that they are.

Mineral of the Month

Fluorite (CaF₂)

by Curtis Breuer

In the Halide Group and occurring in the isometric crystal system, fluorite is a common mineral in most collections. With one of the largest arrays of color and structures in the mineral kingdom, this mineral has something for every collector! Colors of fluorite include, pink, yellow, green, blue, purple, black, brown, and colorless. Another awesome property sought about by collectors is the phenomenon of fluorescent that was first observed in fluorite and from which it got its name. Fluorite is used in the production of hydrofluoric acid, a catalyst in the manufacture of high octane fuels, and as a flux in steel manufacture. Notable locations are, the Alps (pink octahedrons); England (all kinds, including daylight fluorescent); Illinois and Kentucky; and Oranje River, South Africa. In New York, fluorite has been found in Walworth, Penfield, Niagara Falls, Town of Fine, Star Lake,

and Chestertown to name a few. Common associations in hydrothermal veins are lead, zinc and silver sulfides with barite and quartz. In Pegmatite, cassiterite, topaz, tourmaline and apatite can be found.

Please bring in a specimen of Fluorite to the March meeting. Awards will be given in the following categories: Best Single Crystal, Best Matrix Specimen, Best Association, Most Aesthetic, and Most Unusual. Judging will take place during break; awards will be given at the end of the meeting. Please be sure that your specimen has a label including location, associations, and your name on the back.

Board of Trustees Minutes

by Curtis Breuer

January 30, 2010

Meeting was held at the Alplause Firehouse, 1:00 pm

Attendance: Fred Dobert, Curtis Breuer, Anne Woods, Bill Cotrofeld, Deb Hewson, Jim Palmer, Bruce Murray, Charlene Murray, Paul Breuer, Bob Hartig, Pam Hartig, Mark Kilmer, George Gearhardt, Barbara Gearhardt, Gerry Boileau, Rich Stein, Max Fisher, Joe Almasi, and Bob Stitham.

Chairperson of the Board of Trustees Address: Meeting was called to order by Bob Hartig at 1:20p. Bob first spoke about some problems that need to be addressed: Bylaws need to be followed; dues need to be straightened out; discrepancy in the budget; and should there be a change in the bylaws so that if a board member was ever in arrears of dues, they would be off the board. Bob ended with a strong message that now is the time to decide which way we want the club to go.

Secretary's report: Report from May 31st was given by Curtis Breuer. Barbara Gearhardt made a motion to accept, Deb Hewson seconded, the floor accepted.

Audit Committee report: The report was not given due to the committee not being members.

Presentation and Approval of 2010 Budget: The board looked over the 2010 budget. Bill Cotrofeld moved to accept the budget, Mark Kilmer seconded. Discussion: we need rope for our Fonda claim, should it be put into budget? No changes were made; motion was accepted with all in favor.

Old Business: Compile list of Bylaw Changes: Anne is currently working on a list of all Bylaw changes which is a tedious process of going through all of the old minutes.

New Business:

a) *How to handle board and committee members not paying dues?* Gerry Boileau motioned that the club send out a reminder to each member in the

form of a letter in an envelope, that dues are due in early August. George Gearhardt seconded. Discussion: how to send the reminders? Mark Kilmer suggested using postcards. Gerry motioned to amend the motion to read: the club send out a reminder to each member in the form of a postcard, that dues are due in early August. George Gearhardt seconded, all in favor minus one opposed. Gerry motioned that postcards are sent out by Membership Committee in early August. Barbara Gearhardt seconded, after a short discussion, all were in favor.

- b) *Adjusting the membership policy of checks having to clear before membership and cards are granted.* Discussion began with how we can speed up the process of making someone a member. Gerry motioned that receipt of a check is sufficient enough to send out a membership card. George seconded. Gerry motioned to amend his previous motion to read: a check is sufficient enough to send out a membership card, thereby changing the membership policy requiring that a check clear before a card be issued. George seconded, all in favor. Pam Hartig motioned that prior to attending a field trip; a member must be a member two weeks with a membership card. Gerry seconded. With thirteen in favor and four opposed, this motion passed.
- c) *Clarification on the duties of the Treasurer and membership committee.* Discussed who is in charge of membership cards. George suggested doing as he used to do: have Gerry (who picks up the mail) send out the cards as checks come in. Pam motioned that you must fill out a membership form each time that you pay membership dues. George seconded, all were in favor. It was discussed that Treasurer and Membership Committee will accept dues at meetings. Membership accepts dues through mail. Bylaws committee created: Bob Hartig and Mark Kilmer will co-chair the committee. Jim Palmer, Deb Hewson, Gerry Boileau, Bill Cotrofeld and Anne Woods are also on committee.
- d) *Purchase projector for a computer:* Bill Cotrofeld announced that he will try to get a free projector because our club is a 501(c)(3) organization.
- e) *Eliminate petty cash fund now that we can write unlimited checks:* Pam Hartig motioned we eliminate our petty cash fund. Bill seconded, all in favor.

Re-electing Class of 2007 to Class of 2010: Pam Hartig motioned to re-elect the class of 2007 excluding Cheryl Halleran and Ruth Schmidt. Jim Palmer seconded, all were in favor.

Elect new Board members to replace vacancies: It was decided not to elect any new Board members to replace the vacancies.

Elect Chairperson of the Board of Trustees: George Gearhardt nominated Bob Hartig, Gerry Boileau seconded. Gerry motioned to close the nominations. George seconded. Bob Hartig was elected chair.

Treasurer's report: Was partially given by Bob Stitham; however, more would need to be worked out. For the time being: Balance on hand December 31, 2008 was \$7,337.93, receipts \$10,265.50, disbursements \$1,938.46, balance on hand December 31, 2009 was \$8,477.04. James Campbell Memorial Fund has \$823.50.

Bob Hartig motioned a close to the meeting, George Gearhardt seconded, all in favor.

Capital District Mineral Club
Thursday February 4, 2010 Minutes
by Curtis Breuer

Met at the New York State Museum at 7:00p, thirty members were in attendance. Meeting was called to order at 7:36p by President Bill Cotrofeld. Mike Hawkins talked about posters for the show. Bruce Murray started the program of a movie on fossil collecting for Tyrannosaurus. This was followed by a break where the raffle was announced. The raffle made

\$32. Secretary's Report was given by Curtis Breuer and the minutes stand approved with no audit. Treasurer's Report for January and February was given by Bob Stitham; Balance on Hand January 1st: \$8477.04, Dues: \$54; Raffle: \$41.00; Interest: \$0.97; no disbursements, Balance on Hand January 31st: \$8573.01; report stand approved with no audit. No new/old business. Jim Palmer made a motion that the club should buy the software for the membership chair; Richard Hartnett seconded. It was decided to table this motion until next month. Jim Palmer announced about the board meeting. Bill Cotrofeld made a motion to close, Jim Palmer seconded.

Collectors Corner - Specimen Storage
by Curtis Breuer

Continuing on from last month's edition of "Collectors Corner", we will next talk about the storage of specimens. Often times, many collectors spend countless hours collecting and acquiring unique specimens, and only a few minutes to throw the specimens into a disorganized soda box and stuck on a shelf in the basement. However, this is not a good practice and it is easy to change.

If you followed last weeks Collectors Corner, you now know the importance of cataloguing and labeling specimens. Well, now you need to organize your catalogued specimens. The method that I suggest will cost a little bit of money (depending on the size of your collection); however, it is my opinion that a nice, neat, and organized collection makes you proud to show off those flats of great material! Just follow a few simple steps, and your collection will be extremely organized and finding specimens in it will be a breeze.

First step is going online and purchasing white fold-up boxes or cotton filled boxes (get a few sizes such as 2x2, 2.5x2.5, 3x4). While your at it, get some nice white flats with a top and bottom (3" thick will hold most specimens). Second, put one specimen in each white fold-up box and organize the specimens in one of the white flats. Third, label each flat with an identification number. Lastly, bring out that catalogue and mark off what flat each specimen is in. I guarantee this will be the fastest way to find a specimen! To do this to an entire collection would take some time; thus, do it in parts. Buy what you can afford and in time, your collection will be completely organized.

After all the flats are full and clearly labeled, it is now time to store these boxes that you worked so hard on. I suggest building, purchasing, or cleaning off a set of shelves strictly for mineral storage. Then, stack flats in an ordered manner (ID #'s in numerical order). Now, whenever you need a specimen out of your collection, you only need to look it up in your catalogue and grab the corresponding flat.

At the next meeting, I will have one of my flats of my collection and my catalogue as an example to show you the potential of organizing a collection.

Look forward to next Collectors Corner where we will discuss expanding your collection and acquiring new specimens!

Economics of Selling Minerals, 2010
by Don Kauffmann

While skimming through Mindat.org, a rather interesting subject popped up on the Message Board. The question was raised, Is economic downturn hurting mineral sales? It was worthy to note comments provided by over a dozen respondees.

The initial message thread was posed by a collector whose business of some three decades in home building design has been "devastated" by 2009's "economic downturn. This collector, apparently in some desperation, had hoped to "sell a few minerals on consignment" through local shops. Unfortunately, those shop owners were also hard hit by trickle down recession.

Mindat's founder, Jolyon Ralph, was first to respond and put things in perspective. He stated that "high end is not suffering". People who see mineral collections as "safe" compared to returns on low interest CD's or bank accounts are investing in "classic" pieces. Also, sales in "very low end" minerals such as spiritual healing stones and talismans were seen to be brisk as tough times apparently stimulate turning to belief in such items to bring a "change of fortune" for economically suffering believers. Last but not least, Jolyon reported that "mid-end" minerals were "suffering badly". Sometime collectors and consumers apparently were not interested in paying sums, ranging from tens of hundreds to fractions of thousands of dollars for pretty or interesting rocks.

Maine's "Woody" Thompson of Maine Geological Survey placed a dim perspective on mineral sales in his state. He reported that an acquaintance in a nearby coastal mineral/jewelry gift shop declared, "the market for mineral specimens has nearly vanished." But at the same time "demand for lucky stones is stronger than ever."

A Pennsylvania dealer whose daughter works in New York City reported, prior to important post-Thanksgiving sales, "a lot of her customers were going for electronics . . . and not jewelry." (diamonds) He stated that in his area fewer homes were being constructed, fewer migrant workers were seen, local restaurant chains were trying to tempt customers with discounts. He noted fewer cargo containers on the docks of New York. In all . . . a sign of hard times in America.

Our PA friend also offered some worthy advice to dealers, current or prospective. He warned that dealer inflation of specimen prices at this time is potentially damaging, citing "\$40 specimens priced at \$400." He suggests that buyers of some experience are sensing actual value of marketable specimens and shopping around. This potentially has hurt "mid-end" sales mentioned by Jolyon.

However, economic news for mineral dealers wasn't all bad. This was evidenced by several dealers who jumped in on the thread dialogue.

One fulltime dealer believed that while hobbist sales may be suffering, his business is thriving. Contrary to reports of dire profits taken in by "mid-range" dealerships as reported by Mr. Ralph, this entrepreneur stated the past year "has been our best year ever." He cited success in internet sales that apparently supplemented his show sales.

An acquaintance of mine from Massachusetts who is a part time dealer experienced a "decent year . . . in low-end to mid-range minerals" for the few shows in which he dabbled. Although details are few, apparently Tucson 2009, being early in the economic panic, was not so special for him.

In the United Kingdom, a major dealer in wholesale minerals/specimens reported "in the past couple years demand has outstripped the supply." He also stated a "pretty much sold out" experience at Tucson 2009. His show sales are also supplemented by internet transactions wherein he stated, "internet sales of wholesale material from this summer's mining

have been stronger than ever."

From the Message Board sampling there was no actual indication as to how many respondees relied on mineral income exclusively as a livelihood. Most were clearly obvious. Generally, most respondees apparently subsidize mundane jobs, careers or lifestyles with mineral shows/sales. Overall feeling from hobbist sellers and fulltime dealers depended on range of pricing for success or deminished return on sales. There was no genuine formula for success at any level.

One seller stated that his "real job" was as a lecturer in the field of chemistry on the West Coast. Another contributor was reported as being a bookstore employee.

A third collector/seller indicated that her field collecting was helped by "online sale of our spare material." Her range of success being in the "mid-range."

A veteran of nearly two dozen shows from the eastern part of our Great White North reported "sales were up better than 10% this year." He suggested that the key to mineral sales was availability of "discretionary" income by customers who had stable (layoff free) incomes. He further offered that customers searching for mineral specimens shopped for quality and affordability of price depending upon what they had to spend. He expressed doubt that economic conditions had any real influence on demand for fossils of minerals. Perhaps it can be observed that once "hooked" a collector searching for fossils/minerals will make purchases according to whatever he/she can best afford.

Our originator of the thread dialogue suggested that economic conditions may fluctuate by region. Struggling tourism and politically depressing regulations on producers of natural resources in his home area have hit the economy hard. Home design, building, buying and land sales once stimulated by a once vast natural gas industry were almost non-existent. Never having sold a mineral out of his collection, he finally discovered that a few sales supplemented him and his family in the downturn.

Perhaps the best barometer of mineral sales potential is to take a look at the area you sell. If you have past sales in that area, talk to a friend, acquaintance or business owner to determine what the economic climate may be. Depending upon response of your survey, you may have to adjust prices/stock to stimulate sales. If the area poses a potential tough sales climate such response may mean at least a degree of success. Willingness to accept a smaller profit margin will allow you as well as your customers leave the show with a smile.

Best advise . . . if you want to sell minerals . . . learn from those who have had long term business success in mineral/jewelry/fossil sales. Study area economic climate at your sale location. If you aren't in for life staples, price modestly at best but don't give away classic pieces for the sake of a sale. Provide a variety of mineral specimens in various price ranges but lean heavily toward lower and lower to mid-range specimens. Eventually you will acquire enough experience to sell some mineral heavy hitters which will boost you into the higher range areas.

*Article inspired by Mindat.org Message Board of Dec 18, 2009. Thanks to Mark M.; Jolyon R.; Woodrow "Woody" T.; Joe P.; Steve H.; Mark G.; Jesse F.; Adam K.; Blair C. and Maggie W.



Flower show exhibit from 2010 show. Note how the bottom looks like petrified wood and the flowers were chosen to look like ammonites.

Officers:

President	Bill Cotrofeld	802-375-6782
Vice Pres	Debra Hewson	802-379-1636
Secretary	Curtis Breuer	518-338-6266
Treasurer	Robert Stitham	518-755-2255

Newsletter Staff:

Anne Woods	schmanie@albanyrockclub.com	
Don Kauffman	- articles	
Richard Hartnett	- articles	
Curtis Breuer	- articles	
Teresa Breuer	- distribution	

Website:

<http://www.albanyrockclub.com>

All submissions to the newsletter must be in my hand before the 18th of any given month, or they will be used in the next subsequent newsletter.

- 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.

The Capital Rockhounder and the Capital District Mineral Club are not responsible for the accuracy or authenticity of any information in the articles printed in this newsletter. Nor are the opinions here expressed necessarily those of the officers of the Capital District Mineral Club nor of the Newsletter Staff as a whole.