

WHITTIER  
**ROCKHOUNDER**  
GEM & MINERAL  
SOCIETY

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**"Touring America's Ghost Towns"**



*So, do you want to help me load this small chunk of kyanite into my car?  
Frank Robin (PLS), Pat Mogan (NOC) and Francine Evanns (PLS)*

# ROCKHOUNDER

## THE PREZ SEZ:

**W**ell, March is here already, it seems it is to be dark and overcast most of the time. But even in stormy weather, rockhounds can still enjoy the hobby. Most have a workshop setup or a corner with a cab grinding unit in it. All you just have to do is unbury it first add water and have a stone to work with. If you have been a rockhound for any length of time, you should have a wide variety of material to choose from.

There are shows to go to. There's always material to buy or bid on. This coming weekend is the Monrovia show and the following weekend is the Pasadena show, both offer many choices of gem material.

Or if you prefer there is a trip coming up. The trip location is to Lavic Siding. There is plenty of jasper of many colors to be collected, who knows you may even find the very rare flower garden jasper. This jasper has chalcedony in it and in the chalcedony are little flecks of multicolored jasper that look like flowers. The trip is going to be on March 24th & 25th.

So even with gloomy weather, there is no stopping a determined rockhound hobbyist. Have fun and be safe!

*Somewhere in California*  
*Joe Goetz*

**WGMS General Meeting  
Thursday, March 22, 2007  
at 7:30 PM**

**"Touring America's Ghost Towns"**

**T**he March program is a video entitled *"Touring America's Ghost Towns."*

**NOTE: We will back in our usual place at the Whittier Community Center.**

Hope to see you there.

*Marcia*



**Intaglios:** The Giant Figures, known to archeologists as Intaglios, pronounced "In-tal-yos", an Italian term which refers to an engraving art process, are located 15 miles North of Blythe on Highway 95.

(See article, "**Blythe's Giant Figures**" starting on page 7)

## **Rockgabbers**

**T**he February project was a teardrop necklace. Although this necklace looks very complicated everybody learned new techniques and made beautiful necklaces. We were happy to see that our new member, Ellen came to Rockgabbers, and made the teardrop necklace. The sound of a dozen people happily hammering their silver on little anvils was great.

In March we will have two projects to work on. In honor of St Patrick, we will make a pair of earrings with a Celtic knot on a shamrock. We will also start on the fabrication of a locket. I've made a couple of them now and learned a lot of dos and don'ts that I can share with everybody.

The next meeting will be on March 17<sup>th</sup> at the Turner's home (St Patrick's Day).

For the earrings, the materials are about 3 inches of 20 gauge silver and about 2 square inches of 26 gauge silver sheet. The required tools are a jeweler's saw, jeweler's files, solder, torch, chain nose pliers, needle nose pliers and a ½ inch mandrel.

For the locket the materials are about 2 square inches of 26 gauge silver sheet, about 2 square inches of 24 gauge silver sheet, about 1 inch of silver tube with 1 mm ID, and 1 inch of 18 gauge silver wire. The tools required for the first half of the project are either a round metal punch set, or a jeweler's saw, a dapping block and small mallet, solder and a torch.

As always we conclude our work sessions with a pot luck dinner. I look forward to seeing everybody at Rockgabbers on St. Patrick's Day.

***Tony Fender.***

**Field Trip Report**  
**Gold Rock Ranch/Indian Pass Road**  
**February 17-19, 2007**

**I**t has been a couple of years since we last visited the Gold Rock Ranch area and it is still pretty much unchanged from the way I remember it. The weather couldn't have been better, 80° F during the day and 60° F during the night. We enjoyed potluck on Saturday and cheery campfires each of the three nights we were there (you know, a field trip isn't complete without a campfire.)

Members of 3 clubs participated in this outing. **Art & Ginger Ragazzi and Hobo** (WGMS) camped in a large tent, **Jay Valle** (WGMS/NOC) had a tent trailer, **Don Ogden** slept in a 1-man pup tent, **Pat Mogan** came with a motor home and a boat (another story), **Don & Kathy Eschbach** and **Don & Ofelia Warthen** (NOC) stayed in cabins at Gold Rock Ranch, and **Frank & Francine** (PLS) had their motor home. (You may have noticed a lot of **Dons** in the group from North Orange County. They are known as "**The Don's of NOC**" and all three came out on the field trip - by the way, my middle name is *Donald* so I am an honorary Don - jv.)

The Indian Pass location is famous for a blue gemstone named dumortierite, also known as California Lapis because better pieces look very much like Afghanistan Lapis Lazuli. We visited several dumortierite sites and explored a few back roads. Blue and purple stuff was found by all.

The other regular stop for this location was to the Bluebird Mine for kyanite. Kyanite is a sky-blue mineral which is relatively soft but can be cut to produce interesting cabs, bookends, etc. **Frank** (PLS club) is an artist who carves 40lb or larger stones to produce abstract and representational carvings. He was looking for large, solid chunks to use in his artwork. This location provides boulders in sizes up to several thousand pounds and Frank finally selected a piece weighing in at about 100 lbs which we helped put into the back of his SUV.

During the weekend we visited two of Mitchell's Southern California Gem Trails locations which I had not tried before. The first was the Midway Wells Geode location. And geodes were found, both on the surface and by digging in the soft ash. Not having split any yet, I can't give you a quality assessment but some of the broken ones were very nice. **Ginger Ragazzi** found a small geode, about 2" across, which popped open, revealing a rosette of spectacular quartz crystals ranging about 1/4" to 1/2" long. Digging geodes is dirty work but lots of fun.

The other new-to-us location which we found and collected at was the Winterhaven Geode site, also in Mitchell's guide book. These nodules appear to be sedimentary in nature, some containing druzy quartz, others with fossils. These "geodes"(?) were collected here, as well as sand spikes and sand concretions. Some agate and jasper was found, too, though not a lot.

Monday morning we had planned a visit to the Opal Hill Fire Agate Mine but the forecasted rain arrived and we hurriedly tore down camp and headed for home instead.

Well, that about wraps it up. The nights were warm and we enjoyed crystal clear skies, suitable for star gazing (**Ginger Ragazzi and Pat Mogan** had long discussions about the true location of the little dipper and several other remembered constellations.) There was good company to be found around the evening campfires and we solved many of the world's problems each night (did I mention that a campout is just not complete without a campfire.) I had a good time and I believe my fellow 'houncers had fun too.

To paraphrase, the worst day of camping/rock hounding is better than the best day of work.

JValle

### **Blythe's Giant Figures**

**T**hey're one of the few unsolved mysteries of modern archeology - pieces of history preserved in the desert on a mesa of the Big Maria Mountains north of Blythe. And most recently, they have been added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Scientifically, they bear the name anthropomorphic geoglyphics. They have been more commonly called the Blythe Giants and are better known to locals as the Intaglios. But the origin of the giant desert figures now protected behind chain-link fences remains a mystery to visitors and scientists alike.

The geoglyphics vary in form, style and size with the largest figure in the Blythe area, a man over 165 feet long, thought to be a giant hunter, being constructed like the other figures in the area through the removal of a surface layer of darkened rock, exposing a lighter soil underneath.

The Intaglio sites are generally located along the Colorado River flood plain, but also found in San Bernardino and Imperial Counties. Many specific

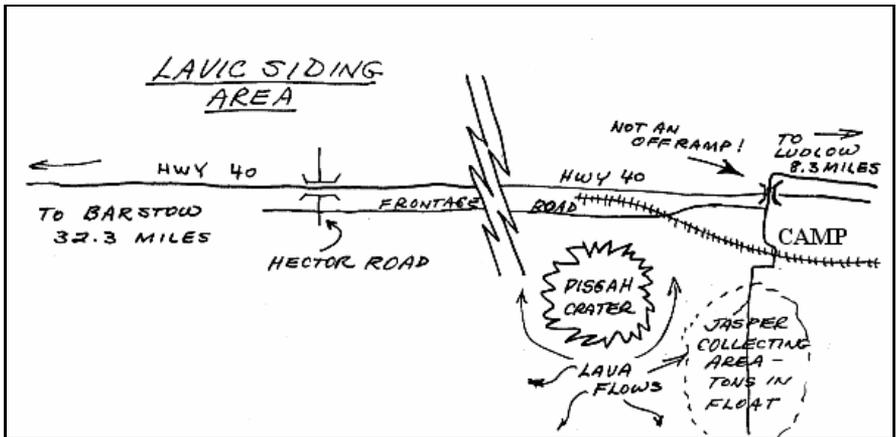
(Continued on Page 9)

**March Field Trip  
Lavic Siding  
March 24-25, 2007**

**O**n March 24-25, we will have a field trip to Lavic Siding off the I-40. Come and collect jaspers in red, green, yellow, orange and brown. Some are mixed color, others have agate "windows" with flecks of color in them. Jaspers are abundant on the campground (!) and in the surrounding area. Also, we may visit the nearby abandoned mines and look for malachite, azurite, chrysocholla, and other South Cady Mountains specimens.

Please bring firewood for the campfire and prepare for a variety of weather conditions.

*Dave Kelty*



**TOOLS:** Rock hammer and collecting bag.

**DIRECTIONS:** Take I-40 east out of Barstow about 32.3 miles and go off at Hector Road. Turn right to the stop sign and go left onto Route 66. Continue about 10 miles to where Rte 66 crosses I-40. **DO NOT CROSS THE FREEWAY.** Instead, turn right and follow the signs to camp.

**NOTE:** Though this is a great place to camp, hotels are available 40 miles away in Barstow. If you want to collect but don't want to camp, this is a viable option.

## **Blythe's Giant Figures**

(Continued from Page 7)

locations are not identified to discourage vandalism, a problem that slowly threatened the Blythe figurines until the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) constructed a chain-link fence around three of the major figures north of Blythe.

The figures were fashioned by Indians possibly thousands of years ago, but their cultural significance is uncertain. Various Indians such as the Mohaves, Aims, Halchidomas, Quechans and Maricopas inhabited the area, but no concrete evidence linking the figures to any particular group has been discovered, even after recent investigations by archaeologists from the National Register and Native American Heritage Commission.

A variety of theories surround the origin and significance of the giant desert figures, which are best seen by air, and were first discovered in 1930 by pilot George Palmer, who reported seeing a giant horse's tracks leading from the Colorado River to the mountains where the figures are located. Theories include religious lore and cultural expressions from the Indians, territorial markers or astronomical graphics. But one author uses the giant figures, found nowhere else on the continent, as evidence for his theory that primitive man was at one time visited by highly intelligent beings from outer space. Eric Von Danagen, in his *A Chariot of the Gods* and the movies that followed its release during the early 1970's, theorized that man was visited while the planet was relatively young and homo-sapiens were primitive.

He claims that the giant desert figures can be seen only from the air where the original calculations for the proportioned geoglyphics were made and given to the Indians below who followed the instructions in carving out the figures, scraping as deep as six inches into the rocky desert floor. He added that the figures can be seen from the ground, but make sense only when viewed from the air, and were possibly some sort of landing guide for the extraterrestrial visitors.

Most Intaglios were made by scraping the darkened rock on the desert floor to reveal a tan- colored soil beneath and have weathered thousands of years of rain, wind, scorching desert sun, and most recently, off-road vehicles. The longest figure in the Blythe Intaglios is nearly 167 feet long and the only other similar figures in the desert have been found at Nazca, Peru, also mentioned in Von Danagen's book.

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## **Field Tools for the Rockhound**

**A**ppropriate tools will make your rockhounding trips easier and safer. You will not, however, need all the tools we list! Pick the ones you need for your particular expedition.

### **Collecting Tools**

(Note: marking tools with bright or fluorescent paint helps keep you from losing them)

- **Crack hammer (2, 3, or 4 lb):** This is for breaking medium-sized rocks and for driving your chisels. Go with the largest hammer you can comfortably handle.
- **Crowbar or pry bar:** A basic tool every rockhound should have. 22" pry bars are good basic tools, although 30" and larger are needed for really heavy work.
- **Hand chisels, wide-ended or pointed:** Another basic tool, and you should have a good-quality set of them. Carbide-tipped ones will make your work easier, although they are quite expensive.
- **Geologist's pick (hammer/pick):** A standard tool used for prying (not hitting rocks unless you want only a small chip) and as a handy guide to scale in photographs! Some manufacturers, such as Estwing, also offer geologist's hammer/chisels, as well as belt sheaths for both tools.
- **Sledge hammer (12 to 16 lb) or Mason's hammer (6 to 8 lb):** For breaking big rocks. Again, go with the largest you can comfortably handle (and haul). The sledge hammer often is more effective if you cut the handle off at 18".
- **Pocket tools:** These are used to extract specimens from deep pockets, and will go a long way toward saving your hands. Some possibilities are a commercial pocket tool, an 18" screwdriver, an ice pick, or a modified garden claw.
- **Paintbrush/whiskbroom/toothbrush:** These are used to clean specimens, to help you evaluate them.
- **Tools for fine work:** Possibilities are spatulas, surgical knife, palette knife, sieve, dental picks, geologist's trim hammer.
- **Other tools:** Hoe pick, bricklayer's (splitting) hammer, shovel, trowel.

## **Transportation of Specimens**

- **Field bag or internal-frame backpack:** To carry all your stuff! If you anticipate carrying a very heavy load, a properly adjusted internal-frame backpack will make your life easier. (Some rockhounds use a large-wheeled handcart or the like when collecting in areas where the terrain is not too rough.)
- **Newspaper or other wrapping paper:** Dumping all your specimens in together is a good way to damage them. Wrap each separately to protect them. Don't use newspaper for fluorescent specimens unless you wrap them in plastic first, as fluorescent dyes can sometimes rub off on your prizes.
- **Collecting bags:** Used with wrapping paper to protect fragile crystal groups.
- **Tubes, boxes, etc.** for fragile specimens.
- **Bucket:** Can be used inside your pack or field bag to protect the fabric from tools, as well as to carry the specimens you don't have room for in your pack on the way home.

## **Personal/Safety Equipment**

- **Safety goggles:** Hitting rocks creates high-velocity chips. Protect your eyes!
- **Heavy gloves:** To shield your hands from nicks and scrapes.
- **Hard hat:** This is a necessity on any rockhounding trip where overhanging or falling rocks are a possibility.
- **Polarized sunglasses:** These will both protect your eyes from bright sunlight and help you identify specimens by blocking glare.
- **Sturdy walking shoes:** Collecting areas generally have rough footing. Ankle support, lug soles, and steel toes are recommended.
- **Sun hat:** If a hard hat is not needed, protecting your eyes and skin from the sun is still a good idea.
- **Drinking water, lunch, first aid kit, snake bite kit, sunscreen, etc.**

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## **Field Tools for the Rockhound**

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### **Specimen Identification**

- **Field guides:** Bring the appropriate field guide for the specimens you are hunting (crystals, fossils, general rocks and minerals, etc.).
- **10x loupe or magnifying glass:** A good quality lens is an important aid, particularly for identifying small crystals and fossils.
- **Magnet:** Meteorites and iron-bearing rocks such as magnetite will attract a small, handheld magnet such as a refrigerator magnet. (A metal detector can be a good investment for a serious collector of meteorites -- or of gold or other metals, for that matter!)
- **Vinegar:** A few drops of vinegar on your specimen will form bubbles if carbonate is present.
- **Streak plate:** The color left when a rock is rubbed on a streak plate can help you distinguish between similar-appearing minerals. An unglazed porcelain tile (such as the back of a bathroom tile) can be substituted for a standard streak plate.
- **Moh's hardness scale with test items:** You can use a regular Moh's hardness kit, or you can use an informal approach. For example, window glass is Moh's 5½ and a steel file is 6½.
- **UV lamp (short-wave and/or long-wave) and viewing bag:** These are used for identifying fluorescent minerals. A black plastic sheet can be used in lieu of the viewing bag. For more information on this, see UV Light and Fluorescent Minerals.

### **Navigation & Record-Keeping**

- **Notebook and pen or pencil:** You should keep a record of where each specimen was found, along with any other relevant details.
- **Bearing compass and altimeter:** Noting an altitude reading and a bearing course on a good landmark can make it easy to find your prime collecting site on future trips. They also are handy when you must bushwhack a trail in rough country with the aid of a topographic map.
- **GPS:** An alternative to compass and altimeter, although the cheaper

units are not as accurate as we might wish!

- **Maps and/or guidebook:** Guidebooks for your state will list a number of collecting sites, along with what can be found there and directions for reaching each site. Topographic maps can help you find your way, particularly in rough territory.
- **Permission to collect:** Always get permission to collect on private land!
- **Camera:** Record site locations and celebrate your trophy specimens.
- **Adhesive tape:** Use this for labeling specimens.

*<http://www.mamasminerals.com/lmrhrocksfieldtools.html>*

### **Blythe's Giant Figures**

(Continued from Page 9)

Only recently the giant desert figures, a favorite visiting spot for winter visitors and travelers on US 95, have been named to the National Register of Historic Places in Washington D.C., after a lengthy qualification process which began in 1978.

The nomination of the figures represented a digression from tradition in that most places on the National Register are building, are whose locations are fairly well known. Experts on the survey concluded that some of the figures may be Prehistoric, while others were done after the Spanish introduced the horse to the area.

A portion of the land where the figures are located is privately owned, but the figures north of Blythe are on BLM land and fall under Federal Protection. Visitors will find a graded dirt road that winds up to the top of the mesa and two fenced areas containing two of the Giant Drawings, a man and four-legged animal with what appears to be a snake at its feet.

While most visitors agree the figures are probably more striking when viewed from the air, they also feel they are privileged to view a part of history that still remains etched in the desert floor forever.

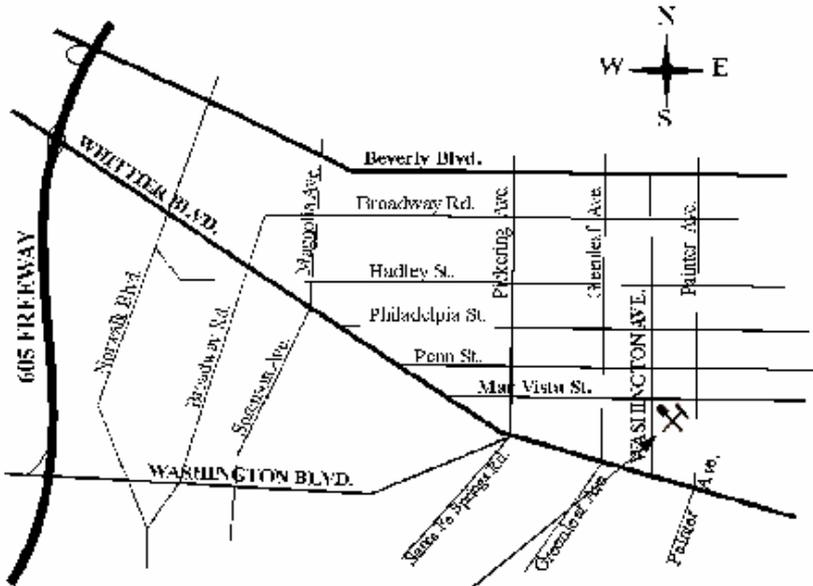
\* More information may be found in the September, 1952 edition of National Geographic.

*<http://www.blytheareachamberofcommerce.com/intag.htm>*

**Upcoming CFMS Gem Shows**

- Mar 3-4**      **Arcadia, CA.** Monrovia Rockhounds  
Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanical Garden  
301 N. Baldwin Ave.  
Hours: 9 - 4:30 both days
- Mar 3-4**      **Ventura, CA.** Ventura Gem & Mineral Society  
Seaside Park, Ventura County Fairgrounds,  
10 W. Harbor Blvd.  
Hours: Sat. 10 - 5; Sun. 10 - 4
- Mar 9-11**     **Stoddard Wells, CA.** Victor Valley Gem & Mineral Club  
Held off Stoddard Wells Road in Apple Valley  
Tailgate Map (Google): N34.670650 W117.108983
- Mar 10-11**    **Escondido, CA.** Palomar Gem & Mineral Club  
Army National Guard Armory  
304 Park Avenue, Escondido, CA  
Hours: Sat 10-5, Sun 10-4
- Mar 10-11**    **San Marino, CA.** Pasadena Lapidary Society  
San Marino Masonic Center  
3130 Huntington Drive  
Hours: Sat. 10-6 Sun. 10-5
- Mar 16-18**    **San Bernardino, CA.** Orange Belt Mineralogical Society  
Western Regional League Ballpark,  
6707 Little League Drive  
Hours: Fri, Sat. 9 a.m. to dusk; Sun. 9 - 4
- Mar 23-25**    **Bakersfield, CA,** San Joaquin Valley Lapidary Society  
Indoor Show/Outdoor Tail Gate,  
Kern County Fairgrounds  
Hours: Fri. 9 - 8; Sat. & Sun. 9 - 5
- Mar 31 - Apr 1** **Torrance, CA.** South Bay Lapidary Mineral Society  
Ken Miller Recreation Center  
3341 Torrance Blvd.  
Hours: Sat. 10 - 5; Sun. 10 - 4

**WGMS MEETING LOCATION!**  
**Whittier Community Center**  
**7630 Washington Ave. Whittier**



**MAR VISTA & WASHINGTON AVE.  WHITTIER COMMUNITY CENTER**

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**Affiliations**



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**Meeting Date: March 22, 2007 at 7:30 PM**  
**Location: Whittier Community Center**  
**(see page 4 for information)**