

The purpose of the Gem, Lapidary, and Mineral Society of Montgomery County MD, Inc. is “to increase knowledge and popular interest in earth sciences, geology, mineralogy, paleontology, lapidary arts, and related subjects.”

## FROM THE EDITOR

As I put together my first edition of *The Rockhounder*, I thank Wendell Mohr for the outstanding job he did for so many years. It is very time-consuming and was obviously a true labor of love.

I extend an invitation to make this an interactive, members’ newsletter. Please think about writing an article about why you joined the club. Was it the hunt for the perfect specimen? Was it the glow of chemicals in the rocks? Was it the finished piece of jewelry? Was it for the camaraderie of fellow enthusiasts? I would also like articles about your experiences, i.e., classes you have taken; field trips you have gone on either with the club or on your own; shows or auctions you have attended. If you are nervous about your writing ability, that’s okay – I will be happy to review and edit as needed. Please don’t hesitate to talk to me about your ideas.

*Kristin Folmaugh*

## REGULAR MEETINGS

Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of the month from September to June. The Society will meet on Monday, January 14, 2013, in the dining room of the Rockville Senior Center, 1150 Carnation Drive, Rockville, Maryland. A short business meeting will begin at 7:45 pm, but the room is available to us at 7:30 pm.

The upcoming meeting shall feature Gary Letcher, a well-respected author of many outdoor guidebooks. His most recent guidebook is titled *Exploring the Waterfalls of the Mid-Atlantic*. His talk will focus on many of the well-known waterfall attractions in our area, along with obscure gems that aren’t so well known. This should be an excellent opportunity to discover and plan some nice local daytrips and weekend trips for the new year!

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

There was no Board Meeting in December. The next meeting will be held Monday, January 21, 2013, at the home of Andy Muir. All Board members are expected to be there. Any member is welcome to attend but kindly let Andy know if you plan to attend at: [amuir21@comcast.net](mailto:amuir21@comcast.net) or phone 301-990-1370.

## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Happy New Year, Everyone!

The world did not end on December 21, as some may have believed. That means your New Year’s resolution to properly label your collection cannot be put off simply because the world was going to end. So get to work, you’re inside anyway, you may as well put your time to good use. Organize, label, and display your collection to make it look its best.

I’ve turned over a New Rock and I resolve to rid myself of duplicate specimens. Currently my house is like a Black Hole, specimens come in but they can never escape. Indeed, even the light reflecting from the specimens cannot escape the Mighty Gravitational attraction that is Andy B.

Deadline for the February issue of the Rockhounder is January 25, 2013.

How about you? What have you resolved to do in the new year? How about asking someone you know, who may be interested, to come

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## REMINDER

If schools in Montgomery County, MD, are cancelled or let out early because of weather on the day of a scheduled Society meeting, the meeting will be cancelled. If in doubt, call the Society President or a Board Member (numbers on the back of *The Rockhounder*).

to our meeting? You could also walk up and talk to someone you have yet to speak with, get to know them. Most of the members and/or visitors don't bite. Please refer the biters to me so that we may publish a list of biters in the future.

Along similar lines the EFMLS (Eastern Federation of Mineralogical & Lapidary Societies) has asked us for ideas on how to attract new members, specifically younger members. The dilemma is that organizations of all types are aging out. How do we attract our replacements? I tried locking the door where the FRA meets, but they still got out. Against my better judgment, I'm thinking of being friendly and welcoming to visitors. What about you? I'm willing to give it a try if you are!

*See you soon, Andy B*

## CLUB MEETING MINUTES: DECEMBER 10, 2012

The December 10, 2012 meeting was called to order by President Andy Celmer at 8:25 pm, with approximately 50 people attending. It was M/S/P to approve the minutes of the November 12, 2012, regular meeting and the November 19, 2012, Board of Directors meeting.

**Treasurer:** Andy Muir delivered the treasurers report. The club is doing well financially, with a small net increase for the month. Andy read a letter of thanks to the club from Ray Kent, who recently donated material to the club for a successful fossil auction. The letter included a special thanks to Wendell Mohr.

**EFMLS Liaison:** Wendell Mohr took a well-deserved break, choosing not to report anything.

**Editor:** The new *The Rockhounder* editor, Kristin Lolmaugh, was introduced. She requested articles from the members. Members welcomed the new editor with thanks for stepping forward to help the club. Andy Celmer noted that the club is still looking for a member or members to print and mail the hard copy versions of the newsletter. Please contact Andy if interested.

**Field Trips:** Jonathan Harris discussed upcoming trips including Manassas Quarry and a size-limited trip to the Kensington Mica Mine, the latter to be led by Gerald Elgert. In February there will be a repeat trip to the Geology Department of James Madison University. Bring your unknowns.

**Show:** Andy Celmer announced that volunteer sign-up sheets for the club show will be circulated at the meeting in January. Pat Repik-Byrne announced that sign-ups for club show cases will begin in January. The deadline for cases will be the February meeting.

Joel Rosen administered the drawings for the door prize.

The meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM. The holiday party continued. Thanks to all who brought the many desserts and to those who brought the supplies.

*Jeff Cessna, Secretary*

### WINNER!

Donald Turner was the lucky winner of December's door prize – a beautiful cabochon mounted in silver.

***Congratulations!***



Photos by Wendell Mohr

## MOVE OVER HOPE DIAMOND\*

By Dave MacLean

On Tuesday 4, December 2012, the Metro Section of the *Washington Post* announced that Dom Pedro, a 35cm (14") long obelisk of clear aquamarine beryl with carved starbursts, will be on display in the Hall of Gems at the Smithsonian Natural History Museum beginning 6 December 2012. This obelisk (10,363 carats) is the largest known aquamarine ever found. This obelisk is named after the first two emperors of Brazil.

In the 1980's the original aquamarine beryl crystal was found by two garimpos (prospectors) in Estado do Minas Gerais in a pegmatite. This crystal was 90 cm (36") long and weighed 45 kg (100 pounds). The garimpos dropped the crystal breaking it into three pieces. The mine owner sold the top two pieces and kept the largest, 60 cm (24") long weighing 27 kg (60 lb.).

Henn, a German gem broker and dealer from Idar-Oberstein, Staat Rhineland heard about this gem, visited the owner, and saw it. He recognized that such a stone must not be cut into small stones but cut into one stone. He realized that only Henn's friend and business partner Bernd Munnsteiner could cut this crystal into one piece. In the 1960's and 1970's Bernd Munnsteiner had pioneered a new style seeing big crystals as a sculptor saw a block of marble.

In the early 1990's Bernd Munnsteiner, his son Axel, Herman bank, a dealer, and Tom Henn's son spent several years negotiating to buy the crystal. They "spirited" the crystal out of Brazil. Bernd Munnsteiner examined the crystal for four months and took six months to cut it. In 1993 the obelisk was shown.

The mine owner wanted money and threatened to cut the crystal into small pieces. The German group needed a buyer. Jane Mitchell, a business woman, had seen the original crystal and the obelisk it became. The sultan of Brunei and Saudi Sheiks collect Bernd Munnsteiner gems and hide them away. Jane Mitchell and her husband Jeff Bland bought Dom Pedro and displayed it in Houston and Paris for 13 years. They finally donated it to the Smithsonian. Mitchell and Bland trusted Dr. Jeffrey Post and the Smithsonian as the final guardian of Dom Pedro.

*\*Excerpted from Northern Virginia Mineral Club December 2012 newsletter*

## FIELD TRIPS

**February 2, 2013, Saturday 9 am** – James Madison University Department of Geology and Environmental Science and Mineral Museum; hosted by Professor Lance Kearns. Last year's trip was so successful we have had requests for another trip! Professor Kearns is a valued link between hobbyists and professional geologists. For those who like machines more than experts, Professor Kearns has indicated that the X-ray diffraction machine and Ramen Spectrometer will be available. There is some chance that the LEIS/SEM lab (Low energy electron diffraction and Scanning Electron Microscope) will be open, and of course the JMU mineral museum.

Sign up by January 25, 2013, is required to give Professor Kearns a correct headcount. Please sign up earlier if possible by responding to Jonathan Harris at [jgharris7@gmail.com](mailto:jgharris7@gmail.com) including "James Madison University" in the subject line.

Directions: Go West on I-66 to I-81 South. Get off I-81 at Exit 245. Turn RIGHT onto Port Republic Road proceeding to S. Main St. (VA 11) and turn right at the light. Proceed northward on S. Main St. to the 3rd traffic light - turn left onto Cantrell Ave. Proceed over the bridge to traffic light on South High St. (VA 42) Memorial Hall (the old Harrisonburg High School) is directly in front of you. Go straight into the parking lot. The Mineral Museum is around the building to the left (south side) along Grace Street, entrance "E" to the building. After entering the building make an immediate right. The museum is at the end of the hall. Travel Time – about 2 hours and 30 minutes from Rockville, MD.



*Dom Pedro Aquamarine by  
Kathy Hrechka*

## THE LURE AND LORE OF ROCKS: FLUORITE

BY KRISTIN LOLMAUGH

Throughout the ages, people have been fascinated by rocks and gems. They have been prized in jewelry and art, and many people believe that they have healing and protective powers. In this column, I want to give a glimpse into the folklore, history, and healing powers of a different rock each month.

Formerly called fluorspar, fluorite has a wide range of colors including yellow, blue, pink, purple and green. It is an interesting and beautiful stone because often more than one color occurs in a single stone. According to folklore, fluorite was once thought to be the "home of the rainbow" due to the crystal's wide range of colors which many times grow intermingled or side by side.

Often specimens of fluorite and amethyst with similar shades of purple are used in mineral identification classes to illustrate the folly of using color as the sole means to identify minerals. Fluorite has a Mohs of 4, whereas amethyst has a Mohs of 7.

Fluorite is frequently fluorescent and, like its *normal light* colors, its fluorescent colors are extremely variable. The word fluorescent was derived from fluorite since specimens of fluorite were some of the first fluorescent specimens ever studied.

The ancient Egyptians used fluorite to carve statues and scarabs, the Chinese have used it in carvings for more than 300 years.



Source: Arrowwood Minerals. arrowwood.com

In the 18th century, fluorite was powdered in water to relieve the symptoms of kidney disease. Fluorite is said to absorb and neutralize negative vibrations. Healers use it to help with ulcers as well as the respiratory tract by stimulating cell regeneration in these areas. It fortifies bones, improves arthritic or other joint ailments.

It makes one more receptive to the vibrations of other stones, increases concentration, and helps in decision-making. Fluorite helps to open the way for the power of other stones to be effective. It can be used as a meditation stone to help energize the body and raise the power of concentration.

While rock hunting in New Mexico, my sister and I went to a place called Fluorite Ridge. It was located miles down a dirt road near an old concrete structure. This site certainly lived up to its name. We found buckets of fluorite – primarily green with a little purple thrown in.

## FUTURE ROCKHOUNDS OF AMERICA (THE MOCKS) Ages 10-15

**Next Meeting Date:** January 14, 2013

**Time:** 7:45 - 9:00 pm

**Location:** Sunroom Cafeteria, Rockville Senior Center

At the December holiday party, the MOCKS held a Yankee Mineral Swap and enjoyed some good food! We briefly discussed our plans for 2013 and decided we would try to cover the following topics as we continue to work on earning badges. The schedule below is subject to change and contingent upon guest speaker availability.

- January: Fossils (part 1): Geological time scale and (time permitting) curating
- February: Show preparation: Exhibit workshop and touch table review (mineral special effects)
- March: Fossils (part 2) – Guest speaker needed, to be determined



Photos by Kristin Lolmaugh



Photos by Wendell Mohr

*The Rockhounder*

- April: Mineral Identification
- May: Lapidary – Guest speaker needed, to be determined
- June: Maps (different types, reading, making)
- July & August: Summer break, no meetings

The 2013 fall schedule will be determined at a later date.

MOCKS members are invited to submit the monthly FRA article to *The Rockhounder* to satisfy a requirement in both the Leadership and Communications badges. Trevor has signed up for the April newsletter and Jennifer has agreed to do June.

For more information on the Future Rockhounds of America program, please contact Holly McNeil at [fra\\_advisor@glmsmc.com](mailto:fra_advisor@glmsmc.com) or 301-605-7179.

## MINI MINERS Ages 6-9

**Next Meeting Date:** January 14, 2013

**Time:** 7:00 - 8:00 pm

**Location:** Card Room, Rockville Senior Center

At the December meeting, the Mini Miners enjoyed their holiday party. Please contact Linda Smith at [Tunacat107@aol.com](mailto:Tunacat107@aol.com) or 301-530-5007 for information about joining the Mini Miners or with any questions.

Photos by Wendell Mohr



## WEBSITES OF INTEREST

By Wendell Mohr

**All That Glitters**, at <http://www.sdnhm.org/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/all-that-glitters/>, is a site about an exhibit that ended April 8th, 2012, but still has content to please from the San Diego Natural History Museum. "The Splendor and Science of Gems and Minerals" includes "The History of Gem Finds in California", "The Science Behind Crystal Formations and Their Composition", "The Splendor from Raw Material to a Finely Cut Gem", and the "Highlights of SDNHM's New Gem Exhibition" includes a 3" virtual tour. Follow the "Read More" links and don't miss the "Making of the Exhibit" and "Educational Resources" at the left.

**Dinosaurs in our Backyard**, at <http://www.mnh.si.edu/exhibits/backyard-dinosaurs/index.cfm>, is a top notch Smithsonian site for children and adults. It commences with a painting showing a rendering of our area in the early Cretaceous Period and keyed to it are 18 detailed views and descriptions. Copious amounts of information can be gleaned by following the left side bar topics: Reconstructing Extinct Animals, How Did Dinosaurs Behave?, Revealing Ancient Climate and Terrain, How Do We Know?, What's Left To Discover?, Amateur Paleontologists, and Finding Fossils. Coupled with the treatise are several videos including one by Ray Stanford who has spoken to our group a couple of times.

**Geology on Postage Stamps**, at [http://www.geostamps.eu/Home\\_E.htm](http://www.geostamps.eu/Home_E.htm), by Grubessi Odino, Professor of Mineralogy at the University "La Sapienza" Rome, Italy, features many pictorial stamps. Stamp out boring by perusing stamps organized by subject, such as geology, rocks, fossils, meteorites, minerals and gems, etc. I suggest you use the links at the left which, after initial selection, have drop down menus, some with text on the subject. If you encounter Italian language, you may click on the United Kingdom flag for the English translation.



**2012: The Year in Volcanic Activity**, at <http://www.theatlantic.com/infocus/2012/12/2012-the-year-in-volcanic-activity/100423/>, as the year comes to a close you might enjoy these photos.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### EFMLS WORKSHOPS AT WILDACRES

by Steve Weinberger

We've just had the dates for the two EFMLS 2013 Workshops at Wildacres confirmed for us.

Session #1 will be held from April 8 - 14 with Bob Jones, Sr. Editor of *Rock & Gem Magazine* confirmed as our speaker.

Session #2 will be held from September 2 - 8. As of this writing, the Speaker in Residence has not yet been confirmed.

Classes for both sessions will be available next month and registration will commence on January 1, 2013. We suggest that you do register early as it's likely that both sessions will sell out quickly. Tuition for 2013 will be \$380 per person.

For more information, visit <http://www.amfed.org/efmls>

### JIM SKILLMAN COLLECTION TO BE AUCTIONED

The Chesapeake Gem & Mineral Society will be holding a special auction on Friday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30 pm at the Woman's Club of Catonsville, 10 St Timothy's Ln, Catonsville, MD.

The auction will feature cutting material collected by Jim Skillman, a well-known Baltimore area lapidary. Jim is moving into an assisted living complex and has to sell much of his collection of slabs and chunks that he amassed over a period of 50+ years in the hobby.

Also up for auction will be lapidary equipment including a Titan capping unit, a trim saw and some tumbling equipment and Lapidary cutting material - rough, slabs, books, excellent agates, jaspers and more.

Additional information will be available on the club's website.

**JANUARY 9, 2013 – Jewelry Basics;** 1 session; ages 12 and up; learn the basics of making necklaces and bracelets from using crimp beads to choosing stringing material.

Then make a double strand necklace. Once you know the basics, you can make your own one of a kind design. \$10 material fee due to instructor in class.

<https://recweb.montgomerycountymd.gov/Activities/ActivitiesDetails.asp?aid=25,339>.

**JANUARY 9, 2013 – Gemology (Advanced);** taught by our member Tim Morgan; 7 sessions; ages 10 and Up; prerequisite: Beginner or Intro Class - Interested in gemstones, but already know a little something about them? Want to learn more? Curious about gemstone lore and stories? This class examines gemstones and gemstone groups. Examples and hands-on specimens to 'play' with each morning. Perhaps a guest speaker, maybe even a field trip. <https://recweb.montgomerycountymd.gov/Activities/ActivitiesDetails.asp?aid=41,231>.

**JANUARY 10, 2013 – Gemology I Introductory;** taught by our member Tim Morgan; 7 sessions; ages 18 & Up; want to know about those gems you have on your rings, necklaces, bracelets, brooches? Curious about how gemstones came to be? Beginning Gemology, organized around the Mohs' scale of hardness, is an introduction to gemstone study. There are hands-on specimens and examples to examine during each class.

**JANUARY 11, 2013 – Auction of Jim Skillman Collection** – The Chesapeake Gem & Mineral Society will be holding a special auction on Friday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30 pm at the Woman's Club of Catonsville, 10 St Timothy's Ln, Catonsville, MD.

**JANUARY 16, 2013 – Beginning Wire Work;** 1 session; ages 12 and up; learn how to work with wire to make loops, spirals, coils and more for all your jewelry projects. Discover what tools are required, how to select wire, and where to purchase your materials. After practicing the various techniques, make an easy to do wire bracelet with glass beads, finished with a handmade clasp. \$10 material fee is due to instructor at class.

<https://recweb.montgomerycountymd.gov/Activities/ActivitiesDetails.asp?aid=51,081>

**JANUARY 23, 2012 – Earrings, Earrings, Earrings!;** 1 session; ages 12 and up; tired of never having just the right earrings to go with your favorite clothes? Learn the basics of earring construction from making loops, choosing the tools to making some one-of-a-kind earrings to add to your jewelry collection. Complete several pairs in class. \$10 material fee is due to instructor at class.

<https://recweb.montgomerycountymd.gov/Activities/ActivitiesDetails.asp?aid=31,683>

**FEBRUARY 2, 2013 – "Volcano Breath"** Smithsonian's Stars Lecture Series By Liz Cottrell, Director, Global Volcanism Program, National Museum of Natural History at the Air and Space Museum in Washington in the Albert Einstein Planetarium. Saturday, 5:15 pm to 6:45 pm. Lecture is free but tickets are required. Event is currently booked and no further advanced tickets are being issued. You may arrive at the Welcome/Will-Call desk half an hour before the event starts to see if seating is available the evening of the event. Or try [airandspace.si.edu/reservetickets](http://airandspace.si.edu/reservetickets). Information: 202-833-2398 or e-mail [nasmpubliclectures@si.edu](mailto:nasmpubliclectures@si.edu).

**FEBRUARY 2, 2013 – Field Trip** to James Madison University Department of Geology and Environmental Science and Mineral Museum; Gem, Lapidary, and Mineral Society of Montgomery County MD, Inc.

**FEBRUARY 2, 2013 – Basic Precious Metal Clay** – Patuxent Lapidary Guild; register by January 14; 9AM to 5PM with a lunch break; PLG workshop, 169 Defense Highway (lower level in back), Annapolis, MD. Learn how to create unique jewelry with Precious Metal Clay by molding and shaping this versatile material. Students will complete at least 2 or more silver projects. For more information, call or email the instructor, Donna Madej, at [littlewings@mdonline.net](mailto:littlewings@mdonline.net) or 410-215-1774.

**FEBRUARY 3, 2013 – Silversmithing: Ring or Pendant with a Bezel** – Patuxent Lapidary Guild; register by January 14; 9AM to 5PM with a lunch break; PLG workshop, 169 Defense Highway (lower level in back), Annapolis, MD. Some silversmithing experience is helpful but not required. This class is for beginners or a refresher for everyone, please be prepared to focus and work hard. Students will make 1 bezel set stone with a bail OR simple ring shank. For more information, call or email the instructor, Donna Madej, at [littlewings@mdonline.net](mailto:littlewings@mdonline.net) or 410-215-1774.

**FEBRUARY 10, 2013 – Copper Cuff** – Patuxent Lapidary Guild; register by January 28; 9AM to 5PM with a lunch break; PLG workshop, 169 Defense Highway (lower level in back), Annapolis, MD. Students will make one cuff bracelet. Students will work on jeweler's saw skills, soldering, riveting and finishing techniques. Students may bring their personal tools if desired. Some silversmithing experience is helpful but not required. This class is intensive, please be prepared to focus and work hard. Students will create their own designs. For more information, call or email the instructor, Donna Madej, at [littlewings@mdonline.net](mailto:littlewings@mdonline.net) or 410-215-1774.

**FEBRUARY 16, 2013 – 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Mineral, Jewelry & Fossil Show** sponsored by the Southern Maryland Rock & Mineral Club. The Show Place, Marlboro, MD. For more information, visit [www.smrmc.org](http://www.smrmc.org).

**FEBRUARY 17, 2013 – Brooch with Pin Back** – Patuxent Lapidary Guild; register by February 1; 9AM to 5PM with a lunch break; PLG workshop, 169 Defense Highway (lower level in back), Annapolis, MD. Some silversmithing experience is helpful but not required. Students will make 1 Brooch with or without a gemstone. Students will fabricate from sheet silver and wire all working parts. For more information, call or email the instructor, Donna Madej, at [littlewings@mdonline.net](mailto:littlewings@mdonline.net) or 410-215-1774.

**FEBRUARY 20, 2013 – Stone Sculpture;** 10 sessions; ages 16 and up: Basic Instruction in the use of stone tools and the types of stones. Learn to hammer, chisel, sand and finish. Furnish your own tools, supplies and stone. Necessary tools and materials will be discussed at the first class. Bring gloves and safety glasses or goggles to first class for hands on experience.

<https://recweb.montgomerycountymd.gov/Activities/ActivitiesDetails.asp?aid=41,181>

**FEBRUARY 23, 2013 - Enameling on PMC Back** – Patuxent Lapidary Guild; register by February 11; 9AM to 5PM with a lunch break; PLG workshop, 169 Defense Highway (lower level in back), Annapolis, MD. Learn how to create unique jewelry with Precious Metal Clay and enamels. You may bring previously crafted PMC items to this class for enameling. If you have your own PMC tools and would like to bring them for your personal use, you may. We will cover 1-color enamel and multiple color enamel on PMC. Enamel will be applied using a torch and kiln. For more information, call or email the instructor, Donna Madej, at [littlewings@mdonline.net](mailto:littlewings@mdonline.net) or 410-215-1774.

**FEBRUARY 24, 2013 – Filigree Earrings** – Patuxent Lapidary Guild; register by February 5; 9AM to 5PM with a lunch break; PLG workshop, 169 Defense Highway (lower level in back), Annapolis, MD. Silversmithing experience is helpful but not required. This class is intensive, please be prepared to focus and work hard. Students will make 1 pair of filigree earrings. Students may bring personal tools if desired. Please contact the instructor with any questions. For more information, call or email the instructor, Donna Madej, at [littlewings@mdonline.net](mailto:littlewings@mdonline.net) or 410-215-1774.

## NOTES FROM MEMBERS

Cynthia and Alf invite folks *by appointment* to an Open House of their Rock Room for swap or general barter, preference for hand-made items or other rocks etc., not “U.S.D.” or “Legal Federal Reserve Note” ‘sales.

Cynthia in particular is also interested in locating someone willing to do slab cutting in exchange for

some of the material that they cut. She can provide photos but usually first-hand provides better visual of the myriad shapes, sizes, and types of in the rough we have to choose from.

For directions, call 240-782-1237 or e-mail:

[given.cynthia@his.com](mailto:given.cynthia@his.com).

## FIELD TRIP FOLLOW-UPS

### Lamberton Branch by Gerald Elgert

The day began with a few high clouds that soon cleared to reveal a beautiful bright and clear blue sky, just the perfect weather for collecting during a late fall day. Five hardy souls met in the Kemp Mill Shopping Center in Wheaton: Mike Smith, his son, Conrad and Sam Linton from the GLMSMC, Lyle Peterson from the Maryland Geological Society and Gerald Elgert, a member of both clubs.

We were to explore the lower reaches of the Lamberton Branch, a small stream that crosses a complex pegmatite about a quarter mile southwest of the old Kensington Mica Mine. This stream follows Lamberton Drive to a meeting with the larger Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River that in turn flows through Maryland before entering the Potomac River in Washington, D.C.

One of my goals for the day was to find cubic garnets in the feeder stream. Jack Nelson, writing on the website of the *Georgia Mineral Society*, mentions that he had found cubic garnets there and in the Rock Run stream that flows into the Potomac near Great Falls. It is interesting that both streams run through similar pegmatite dikes but only Rock Run contains any gold. This is exactly the area where we were exploring, but alas, no cubic garnets were to be found (nor any gold, either). Conrad found some brownish-red masses in feldspar that could have been garnet crystals. Earl Shannon, writing in *The American Mineralogist* mentions finding garnets with “imperfect faces,” that were altered to manganese oxide. These could have been the garnets that Conrad was finding. Spessartine garnets have been found here, as well, but for some reason, not today. I have noticed this tendency for stream sites to produce abundant float, at times, and at others for a paucity.



Schorl by Gerald Elgert

Mike Smith walked a short distance upstream of the confluence of the two streams and found numerous bore holes in the rocks there. Whether or not these are from excavations at the close-by Kensington Mine or from a WSSC pipeline that follows the Northwest Branch stream trail remains to be learned. Sam Linton was rewarded with finding chunks of mica schist laced through with crystals of Schorl, a form of tourmaline. Lyle Peterson found a well-defined crystal of book mica. The mica from the mine was of great economic importance, both in the electrical industry as an electrical insulator and also for the “glass” windows on the doors of Franklin Stoves as it has great resistance to heat and doesn’t melt. In Germany it was known as Eisenglass, a trade name by which it is still commercially available.

There is still room for considerable exploration of this area. Bernstein, in *Minerals of Washington, D.C. and Vicinity* notes that, “The Kensington Mica Mine should probably be classed as an obliterated locality, as little evidence for its existence can still be found.” While this is true, there are still areas where the pegmatite dikes are exposed and the dumps as small pits and mounds. We’ll have to await another field trip to explore these possibilities.

### References

- Bernstein, Lawrence R., *Minerals of Washington, D.C. and Vicinity*. (1972), p. 88., U.S. Government Publishing Office, scanned copy from the U.S. Geological Survey, Reston, VA, <http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/1976/0849/report.pdf>
- Nelson, Jack. *Cubic garnets found in Maryland and Virginia streams*. (2012). <http://www.gamineral.org>
- Shannon, Earl V. *American Mineralogist*, Vol. 11, (1926), No. 2, February, p. 35. [http://www.minsocam.org/msa/collectors\\_corner/amtoc/toc1926.htm](http://www.minsocam.org/msa/collectors_corner/amtoc/toc1926.htm)



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