

THE BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE HOUSTON GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY



MARCH BIRTHSTONE: AQUAMARINE

see more on page 7

Aquamarine and Diamond Brooch- Pendant: Public Domain, from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

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HGMS | HOUSTON GEM &
MINERAL SOCIETY

MARCH 2021

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BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Articles are due on the 15th day of the month before the date on the BBG issue.

Copy is due for the next issue by the 15th of this month. Email content to editor@hgms.org



The **BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE**



The Newsletter of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Sigrid Stewart

And I thought 2020 was weird. It started out innocently enough, with warnings of a big winter storm more than a week out. Something about those weather reports was just a bit strident, I thought, and they kept mentioning "polar vortex". Well, many rockhounds are also interested in the weather, as a daily reminder of the physical processes that shape our world, so I started tracking it. By the way, I highly recommend the blog put out by Space City Weather for weather news from fellow weather geeks.

Then they started talking about record low temperatures, snow, sleet and ice. Wow, snow is always fun, right? Yes, a little snow is delightful, and the grandchildren were looking forward to it. Little did they know how cold it would get! It was certainly very cold for Houston, down to about 12 degrees in the area west of Houston where I live. Long power outages led to busted pipes, five on my street alone, and those were all newer houses whose owners wrapped their outside pipes. When all was said and done, the Great Freeze of 2021 cut power to over 3 million Texans, and many were out of power for days. Long lines formed at Home Depot and Lowe's just to get into the stores and shop for plumbing parts. Later they can expect great business to replace the multitude of frozen plants. Boil water notices were issued, adding insult to injury – how do you boil water with no power and no water? Grocery stores were sold out of essentials. I'm pretty sure Texas can do a better job than this.

VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Steve Blyskal

The presentation for the next General Meeting on March 23rd, 2021, will be given by Jennifer (Jenny) King on "Life in Jurassic Seas: Focus on Kimmeridgian Fossils from the Dorset Coast, UK".

This will be my first full month as first vice president, a position that requires I provide talks for the General Meetings throughout the year. I hope to offer a variety of talks for the members but would like member's input on what types of programs you want to see. Programs in past years have been related to Archeology, Fossils, Jewelry construction, beading, minerals and mineral locations, geological features, travelogues featuring geological or paleontological subjects, and space related topics like lunar geology, among others.

Please contact me with your ideas and recommendations for speakers. For the next few months at least our presentations will be on Zoom, so speakers will not have to physically

travel to the clubhouse to give a presentation. This will allow me to go far afield to get speakers. Possibly by the fall we will be having General Meetings at the clubhouse rather than over Zoom.

I look forward to serving the club in this position for 2021 and providing quality talks that increase attendance at the General Meeting.

For 2021, President Sigrid Stewart is bringing back monthly auctions. We will have 5-6 items for auction at each General Meeting. We will send out a preview of auction items in the Sunday E-Blast right before each General Meeting. And Door Prizes are back too! Hope you can join us.

SECTION REPORTS

MINERAL SECTION

The Mineral Section planned a virtual meeting for February 16, 2021, but it was cancelled due to widespread power outages caused by the Great Freeze of February 2021. (Go ahead and laugh, residents of northern states! It was a big deal here!) The planned program on Arizona Wulfenite to be given by Steve Steinke has been rescheduled for next month.

As always, please see the [Upcoming Programs](#) section on the HGMS website to learn more about planned future meetings. Several good programs are lined up. All mineral lovers are welcome!

BEADING SECTION

The Beading Group met on Saturday, February 20th at 1:30 PM via Zoom. Maggie Manley demonstrated making an odd-count peyote bracelet. This program has been posted to Facebook, if you missed it!



Pictured is Maggie's work area and a selection of colorful beads needed to make a peyote stitch bracelet.

All interested persons are welcome to join future calls.

RSVP: Maggiem2@windstream.net and she will send you the Zoom link and project photos.

SCALENOHEDRAL CALCITE WITH RHOMBOHEDRAL TERMINATION MOLDS IN CHALCEDONY

by Neal Immega, Paleontologist

I did it again. I borrowed a specimen from Fred B. and took it home to consult with my mineralogist wife, Inda. As usual, she knew what it was: "molds of scalenohedral calcite with rhombohedral terminations." What? Let's look at the rock.

Apparently, there was a cavity lined with calcite crystals. Later, the cavity was fully filled by chalcedony—then the calcite dissolved, leaving the chalcedony loose but with impressions of the calcite crystals.



Chalcedony showing molds of calcite crystals.



Side view of the above piece showing the chalcedony structure

Okay, now let's address the question of the terminations. Unlike quartz, calcite can have a huge variety of crystal shapes. Some of the most extreme look like flat plates and are called "poker chip" calcite. A more common variety is the scalenohedral crystals, which are known as "dog tooth calcite," pointy crystals that

look like spikes. The picture below shows the "dog tooth " form (scalenohedral) with the tip finished off with a fairly shallow rhombohedral shape.

Experimental studies have found that the crystal shape is altered by—among other things—the CO₂ concentration in the precipitating solution. You can see how this might be because the formula for calcite is CaCO₃.

Look at your collection of calcite crystals, and see how many crystal shapes you can find. A great COVID afternoon study.

Reference:

<https://www.minerals.net/mineral/calcite.aspx>

Lots of crystal shapes of calcite.



© The Arkenstone, iRocks.com

Dog Tooth Calcite showing rhombohedral crystal terminations.
(This is not from the same site as the molds.)

AQUAMARINE

by Don Shurtz,

*Pleasant Oaks Gem and Mineral Club of Dallas
from Chips and Chatter Newsletter 2021/03*

The birthstones for March are Aquamarine and Bloodstone, but this article will concentrate on Aquamarine. The beryl family of minerals consists of Emerald (green), Morganite (pink), Red Beryl, Heliodor – also called Golden Beryl (yellow), Goshenite (clear), Maxixe (deep blue), and Aquamarine (blue). All members of the beryl family have the same chemical composition, beryllium aluminum cyclosilicate. The chemical formula for all members of the family is $\text{Be}_3\text{Al}_2\text{Si}_6\text{O}_{18}$. They all have Mohs hardness of 7.5 to 8.0 and a white streak.

Aquamarine derives its name from the Latin *aqua marina* meaning “sea-water”. The color can vary from blue to cyan (greenish-blue). As with all members of the beryl family, the color is derived from trace elements caught up in the crystalline matrix. The blue color comes from the presence of iron ions with a charge of plus two (Fe^{2+}). Unlike some of the other members of the beryl family, Aquamarine is often found as clear stones without inclusions. This makes it a valuable stone for jewelry. It also can be found as very large crystals. The largest gem-quality Aquamarine ever found weighs a whopping 243 lbs. It was 19 inches long and 16 inches in diameter. Known as the Dom Pedro Aquamarine, it was found in Minas Gerais, Brazil, and is now in the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History.



Photograph by Don Shurtz of specimen on display at the Perot Museum of Nature and Science

Aquamarines are often heat-treated to remove some of the greenish colors. Heat treating may also change a light blue stone into a darker colored stone, thus making it more attractive in the jewelry market. Most Aquamarine destined for the jewelry market will be heat treated before it is cut. Aquamarine has been synthetically lab-grown, but the good news is that the cost to produce lab-grown synthetic Aquamarine makes it prohibitive to compete with the abundant supply of the less costly natural Aquamarine. That having been said, you still need to be aware of simulated Aquamarines. Blue topaz and zircon

have the same physical appearance and color as Aquamarine and are intentionally mislabeled as the more expensive Aquamarine. Another means of deceiving the customer is with false names. The name Brazilian Aquamarine and Nerchinsk Aquamarine are often false names for blue Topaz. Siam Aquamarine is a false name for a heat-treated blue Zircon, and Mass Aqua is a false name for faceted blue glass dyed to resemble Aquamarine. If you are going to purchase Aquamarine for your jewelry work, deal with a known, reputable dealer.

There are only a couple of profitable commercial uses for Aquamarine. The primary use is for jewelry and as mineral specimens. It can, however, be used as an ore for Beryllium, but it is difficult to extract the metal from the various forms of Beryl. The preferred ore for Beryllium is Bertrandite. The world's largest deposit of Bertrandite is Spor Mountain in Utah; it is not surprising that Utah is the world's largest producer of Beryllium.

Brazil is the leading source of gem-quality Aquamarine. Other key locations for Aquamarine are Afghanistan, Pakistan, numerous locations in Africa, and Russia. Aquamarine is also found in many locations in the US including in the Appalachian Mountains from Alabama to Maine, the Rocky Mountains from Idaho to New Mexico, and Southern California. In Texas, Aquamarine has been found in the Cactus Jack pegmatite northeast of Burnet.

References:

- Aquamarine, mindat.org, <https://www.mindat.org/>
- Beryl, Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/>
- The Gemstone Aquamarine, Minerals.net, <https://www.minerals.net/>

BENCH TIPS FOR MARCH

by Brad Smith

SHARP KNIVES FOR CUTTING MOLDS

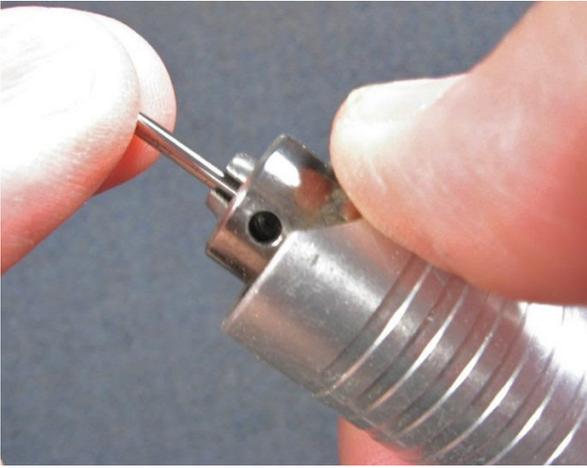
Cutting molds is easier and more precise with a sharp blade. A new Xacto blade is sufficient for cutting RTV molds but is usually not sharp enough for vulcanized rubber. For that it's best to use scalpel blades available from most jewelry supply companies.



The #11 blade is triangle shaped, and the #12 is hawksbill shaped. I find the hawksbill is particularly nice for cutting the registration keys of the mold.

USE YOUR THUMB

When using multiple bits in a Foredom, we often have to deal with several different shaft sizes - the usual 3/32 inch burs, the larger 1/8 inch shaft sizes and of course the many different sizes of drills. For some reason I really dislike having to turn the key multiple times to open or close the jaws of the handpiece chuck.



Close the jaws around the shaft by holding the collar and gently starting the Foredom

So I have two ways to speed up that task. For opening up the jaws, I just remember "four", the number of turns I have to make to open the chuck just enough from the 3/32 bur shaft size to the larger 1/8 bur shaft size.

For closing the jaws around a smaller shaft, there's a neat trick. Hold the new bit in the center of the open jaws of the chuck, put your thumb lightly onto the outer toothed collar of the chuck, and gently start up the Foredom. As the chuck turns, it will naturally tighten the jaws around the bur shaft or the drill bit. Then all you have to do is a final tightening with the key.

Learn New Skills with Brad's "How To Do It" Books
[Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith)



Brad is offering a couple of online jewelry making workshops in March that may be of interest. One is on how to make Castellated Bezels - elegant in a ring, pendant or bracelet. The other is Adding Textures Without a Mill - for those who do not have access to a rolling mill. Please get in touch for more details.

Happy hammering,

- Brad Smith
- BradSmithJewelry@gmail.com

Online Workshop
Castellated Bezels
- Make Your Gemstones Pop -

Saturday March 13th



SHOWS

The Clear Lake Gem & Mineral Society's 45th Annual Show on February 20th and 21st was canceled by the Pasadena Health Department 8 days before the event.

The Conroe Show: The Texas Mineral and Fossil Spring Show will be held April 23-25, 2021 at the Lone Star Convention Center and Expo in Conroe, TX. 9055 Airport Road, Conroe, Texas 77303.

PURPOSE OF HGMS

The objectives of this Society are to promote the advancement of the knowledge and practice of the arts and sciences associated with the collecting of rocks, minerals, fossils, artifacts, and their identification and classification; the general lapidary art; the collecting and identification of gemstones; the designing and execution of jewelry or metalcraft; and to provide the opportunity to obtain, exchange, and exhibit specimens and rough or finished materials.

Membership dues are \$40 for an adult membership, \$60 for a couple, \$75 for a family (including all children aged 5-18). \$25 for a youth membership (ages 5-18), and \$500 for an adult life membership.

Advertising rates: \$70 for 2 months, 1/4 page; \$150 for 6 months, 1/4 page.

MEMBER: American Federation of Mineralogical Societies and South Central Federation of Mineral Societies.

All meetings are held at the Clubhouse which is located at 10805 Brooklet near the intersection of Highway 59 (Southwest Freeway) and Sam Houston Parkway (Beltway 8) at 10805 Brooklet, Houston TX 77099.

See the calendar inside the back page for when the different Sections meet. The General Meeting is the fourth Tuesday of each month (except December) at 7:30PM.

Currently most meetings are virtual. Visit our web site, <https://hgms.org>

MY FAVORITE BEACH SAND DISCOVERIES

*by Kathy Hrechka, Editor
The Mineral Mite January 2021*

It is hard to imagine getting bored at a beach, but that is what happens to me at times. I began to observe the sand. Even though I am not a sand collector, it is all geology. When I observe these sands under my microscope, I realize how each beach is unique. Some samples that intrigue me include Cancun, Juno Beach in Florida, Bermuda, and the Big Island of Hawaii.



Cancun Beach in Mexico: The main chemical composition of sand particles was confirmed to be calcium carbonate. This sand feels like sifted flour.

Juno Beach in Florida: The main chemical composition of sand particles turns out to be quartz. Cell phone photomicrography by Kathy Hrechka



Bermuda's Pink Sand Beach

The pink sand is made of red-shelled foraminifera, bits of coral, and crushed shell mixing with regular sand. Offshore Bermuda lies a coral reef, which thrives from the warm waters of the Gulf Stream.

Black Sand Beach, Hilo: Big Island of Hawaii
The famous "black sand" beaches of Hawaii were created virtually instantaneously by the violent interaction between hot lava and sea water. Olivine grains eroded from the lava.



Dr. Von D. Mizell-Eula has researched the sand from Johnson State Park, Dania Beach, Florida. Offshore are sandy shallows and three reef systems at ~300 yards off, nearly half-mile, and over two miles out. Beach contents are mostly dredged material from Pleistocene sources offshore.

Biogenic grains include forams, coralline algae, sandy worm tubes, barnacles, micromolluscs, and interesting button-like bryozoans. Background grains are tiny quartz grains.

Photo by Leo Kenney



Adapted from the Wayne County Gem and Mineral Club News, Newark, NY January 2021
Home - WCGMC.ORG www.SplendidSands.com

SUN-FADED AGATE NODULE

by Neal Immega

Please look at this article on the Web site to see the nodule in color.

I bought this cut and polished blueish nodule at a club auction. Mat Dillon thought that it probably is from Mexico. I thought I might give it to a relative as a birthday present but never got around to it. The pair lay in my backyard for the next 15 years, one face up and one face down. The one on the left was exposed to the sun. Notice that the pattern looks better but the blue color is faded. I like the faded version best because the contrast is improved. I did not realize that a hard, solid agate could fade. Now that I think about it though, I remember removing old labels from petrified wood slices and seeing darker material behind the tags.



The books on agate usually say the blue color comes from very small saline inclusions, just as the sky is blue because blue light is scattered by dust and air molecules in the atmosphere. I am amazed that an agate could change that much. I guess I should have expected it because I see enough unnatural colors in dyed agate.

SCFMS AND AFMS CONTEST RESULTS FOR HGMS

Congratulations to the following HGMS members for their writing skills! Mike Sommers received a 1st place from the SCFMS for his Midlothian article, and Susan Burch received a 1st place from SCFMS and 2nd place from AFMS for her puzzle. Phyllis George once again received awards for her work on the BBG, an SCFMS rank of 3 and AFMS rank of 2. Al Robb received a 2nd place for a Paleo piece. Neal received a rank of 3 from the SCFMS and some Honorable mentions. Nancy Engelhardt-Moore and Kim Fuselier also received 3rd place awards.

Results for HGMS Entries in the 2020 SCFMS and AFMS Editors and Authors Contest				
SCFMS Rank	AFMS Rank	Name	Title	Month, 2018 or 2019
Large Bulletin				
3	2	Phyllis George	The Backbender's Gazette	Oct. 2019
Advanced Adult Articles				
3	HM	Neal Immega	HGMS Africa Outreach	April 2019
2	HM	Al Robb	HGMS Paleo Section Supports National Museum of Geology in Mozambique	Aug. 2019
1	HM	Michael Sommers	Midlothian Field Trip: Great Day—No Rain!	Sept. 2019
Adult Articles				
4		Nancy Fischer	Sublette County Rock Hounds	July 2019
Adult Poetry				
5		Edward Clay	From Stone	May 2019
9		Terrell William Proctor, J.D.	Your Club's Show	Dec. 2019
Feature—Written				
3	8	Nancy Engelhardt-Moore	Archaeology Section	Dec. 2018
HM		Neal Immega	Lost in the Stacks—Brief book reports of books I took with me on the road	Sept. 2019
4		Jay Roussel	Archaeology Section	May 2019
HM		Sigrid Stewart	Finding the Unexpected!	Dec. 2018
Feature—Drawn				
1	2	Susan Burch	Don't Take Me for Granite—Rock and Mineral Puzzle	Dec. 2018
	3	Kim Fuselier	Name the Backbender's Mascot	Oct. 2018

Congratulations to all our talented members who have entered articles, poetry and drawings, and who continue to work on our newsletter.

CLEANING SPECIMENS WITHOUT CHEMICALS

FROM ROCKNGEM.COM/CLEANING-SPECIMENS-WITHOUT-CHEMICALS

JANUARY 2021

by Jim Brace-Thompson

Do you have specimens like desert roses, quartz crystal clusters, or geode halves that sat for eons in the open before being collected? If so, those specimens probably have baked-in dirt, grime, desert varnish, or encrustations from moss and lichens. Scrub as much as you may with a toothbrush and pick away with a dental pick, yet grime remains lodged within cracks and crevices of mineral and crystal structures. What to do?

A friend suggested a sure-fire way to clean specimens such as chalcedony desert roses with baked-in grime: soak them in a solution of diluted muriatic acid. Muriatic acid is sold with swimming pool supplies in hardware stores. It is used by rockhounds who dilute it with three parts water to one part acid to dissolve calcium or organic encrustations such as lichens. However, acids are dangerous to work with and to dispose of and thus are not especially recommended. Again, what to do?



A newly discovered chalcedony desert rose packed with dirt and grime.

Another friend suggested a much safer and more earth-friendly method of cleaning chalcedony desert roses and minerals with sturdy crystal structures. Start by soaking your specimen overnight in water and detergent, such as dishwashing liquid.

Then use a dental water flosser or oral irrigator. Almost instantly, baked-in dirt and grime will disappear.

This suggestion is a messy process. It is best done outdoors, and you may want to don a rain slicker and goggles, if not a snorkel! Water will splash all over, but it will get the job done. Only do this with rocks and crystals that are sturdy and will not dissolve in water or be dislodged by the flosser's shooting spray. The result will be a clean and beautiful specimen.



A thoroughly cleaned chalcedony desert rose.

READ ON FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CLEANING TECHNIQUES!

USING A WATER GUN

by Steve Blyskal

What I like to use instead of a dental water flosser is the high-pressure water gun, which has become popular over the last ten years. This high pressure “gun” was developed by the dry cleaning industry to shoot solvents at high speed into hard-to-clean fabrics. With slight modification, these guns can be adapted to spray water and clean rocks and minerals. When they first came out, they cost hundreds of dollars and were made in Europe. Soon inexpensive Chinese copies were available for much less, and now it is possible to find one for about \$75 from many different sources, including eBay. They are also called fabric or spot cleaning guns.

These guns consist of a reservoir and intake tube, and a metal body with trigger handle. The body contains a high-power magnet that takes the water, compresses it and shoots it through a narrow adjustable nozzle.

Using one of these guns effectively takes practice and some safety considerations.



1. Always wear ear protection, as the compression process is very loud.
2. Always use eye protection, either goggles or a face shield. The high pressure can break off pieces of rock or dirt and fling them at high speed.
3. Always use a heavy-duty chemical-resistant glove on the hand holding the specimen. Even wearing a glove, the blast of water hurts when it hits.

The water gun will get hot during use, and after half an hour, it should be allowed to cool off. Pushing the gun too hard will cause it fail permanently. After use it is important to get water out of the compression chamber since it was designed for dry cleaning fluids and the spring inside will rust.

Stick the intake nozzle into a jar of denatured alcohol and run the unit until a spray of alcohol comes out the tip. Shut off the gun and let it air dry. This should extend the life of the spring. I have been using my gun for many years now without problems because I always clean it with alcohol.

These high-pressure cleaning guns should be used outside since they are rather messy. You will need a 3-prong electrical extension cord. I always wear old clothes and shoes and a shop apron. They are great for cleaning Arkansas quartz, Colorado and Texas

feldspar, New Jersey prehnite and West Texas agates – all hard minerals. Do not use on soft minerals or anything delicate as the pencil-thin water beam can demolish crystals and matrix. This is an extremely effective cleaning tool if used on the right minerals and with safety in mind.

For more information, check out discussions on water guns on mindat.org.



BEFORE AND AFTER

I'm known in the club as the Prehnite Guy, so often any mention of prehnite is met with groans. I will take this opportunity to show some before and after photographs of one of my specimens, prehnite from Libodrice, Bohemia in the Czech Republic.



*Before Cleaning:
dirt is visible
between crystals*

*After Cleaning:
much improved!*



HOUSTON GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

FEBRUARY 2, 2021

by Nancy English

X	President—Sigrid Stewart	X	Beading— Maggie Manley
X	1st Vice President - Steve Blyskal	X	Day Light— Fred Brueckner
X	2nd Vice President— Beverly Mace		Gemstones & Faceting—Randy Carlson
X	Treasurer— Michele Marsel	X	Lapidary & Silversmithing—Phyllis George
X	Secretary—Nancy English	X	Mineral—Steve Blyskal
X	Archaeology— Vacant	X	Paleontology—Mike Dawkins

President Sigrid Stewart called the Zoom meeting to order at 7:41 p.m. A quorum was present.

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

The shop is only available for use by appointment if a Shop Foreman is available to supervise operation of the machines. Contact Neal Immega at nealimmega@gmail.com to schedule an appointment. The HGMS clubhouse remains closed in order to minimize the danger of spreading the Coronavirus. The Board of Directors will determine when it is safe to reopen. Some Sections are scheduling virtual meetings. The Tuesday February 23 and Tuesday March 23, 2021 General Meeting programs can be experienced virtually. Classes will not be scheduled until the Club reopens.

Approval of Minutes: Maggie Manley moved to approve the January 5, 2021 minutes that were emailed to the BOD on February 2, 2021. Steve Blyskal seconded the motion and it passed.

Treasurer Report: Treasurer Michele Marsel sent financial reports in a suggested new format to members on February 2, 2021. The former Quicken software has been replaced by QuickBooks. The Quicken data has been transferred to QuickBooks. Michele shared the financial reports on the Zoom screen for discussion explaining that this is a different format than we have used in the past. It is simplified and presents the YTD summary grouped by categories and committees. It shows how revenue and expenses are tracking against budget. The budgeted entries are only proposed but included so the BOD can see how the % column works. Very few transactions were actually paid in January. The advantages of QuickBooks are the ability to tag the contractor payments for 1099s, expanded and custom reporting, and the ability to allow our CPA to log in and view our data. Rodney Linehan prepared 2020 1099s for HGMS contract workers. Michele also reported on the results of the follow-up list Tatyana Kuhne left when she resigned.

- CubeSmart closed the second storage unit account. They had already refunded the December payment.
- Lee Thompson Co. received final payment for the second HVAC unit.

- Dunn Southwest payments are caught up.
- Final 2020 payment checks to Lauren Blyskal have been sent to Beverly Mace for a second signature.
- There were several checks that had not cleared at 2020 year end. All but one has now cleared; a member expense reimbursement check was reported as not received. A replacement check will be issued.
- There was an open amount in the HGMS badges category. Beverly was waiting on enough requests to make an order. She is preparing the order.
- The \$621 unidentified deposits were from the Holiday Auction money.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

BBG Editor/Newsletter Committee: Beverly Mace will notify members when the online version of the February 2021 BBG is available on the HGMS Website. The paper copy of the BBG will be mailed after it is printed. Sigrid Stewart plans to post the BBG to the website and forward to the printer on February 3, 2021.

Budget Committee: Michele Marsel reported that the committee met on January 21, 2021. Committee members are Sigrid Stewart, Michele Marsel, and Nancy English. The preliminary budget was emailed to BOD on January 31, 2021 for review.

Donation (and Auction) Committee: Michele Marsel noted that the Committee did not meet in January. An auction may be possible by the end of March. The committee needs to evaluate the auction software. There is plenty of material to auction.

Education Committee: Members can find links to online projects in the Sunday E-blasts sent by Jim Kendall. Maggie Manley posts beading projects there and on Facebook, also.

Scholarship Committee: Mike Sommers reported via email that it is too soon for a report on activity. He is waiting for final word on the Scholarship amounts from the budget committee. Later in the meeting the Board agreed to maintain the scholarship funds as previously planned: two HGMS scholarships, one for \$2,500 and one for \$1,000; and one \$750 scholarship donated by a member.

Show Committee: No Report

Volunteer Coordination: Nancy English is concerned about exposing our volunteers to crowds too soon. The Clear Lake Gem & Mineral Society Show is in late February and Texas Mineral and Fossil Spring Show in Conroe is in April. The Board agreed to wait to recruit volunteers for outside events until the HGMS clubhouse is reopened.

- CLGMS in-person 45th Annual Show on the weekend of Saturday, February 20 and Sunday, February 21, 2021 was cancelled.
- The Conroe Show: Steve Blyskal said the Texas Mineral and Fossil Spring Show will be held April 23-25, 2021 at the Lone Star Convention Center and Expo in Conroe, TX. 9055 Airport Road, Conroe, Texas 77303. Michele Marsel suggested HGMS Show flyers could be placed on a table for people pick up there. Steve Blyskal said Scott and he will be passing out flyers to dealers.
- Nancy English complimented the volunteers who make up the Board of Directors. She appreciates the volunteers willing to be on the Board. They continue to work diligently to maintain all the moving pieces that keep HGMS functioning day to day and planning the future.

Web Site Committee: Michele Marsel reported that the website migration from HostGator to Nexcess is completed. As of February 1, the committee is still troubleshooting internal web form notifications with Nexcess. Everything else appears to be fine. Email addresses are linked and active.

SECTION REPORTS

All In-Person Section Meetings are canceled until further notice.
Some Sections conduct virtual meetings.

Archaeology Section: first Thursday, 7:30 p.m. February 4, 2021. Although this Section is not part of the HGMS schedule anymore, the Moore's are providing programs for other venues and would be happy for any of HGMS members to join them. Contact Nancy Engelhardt-Moore to be added to her notification list. Sigrid Stewart will post a request for a new Archaeology Section Chairman in the upcoming BBG. In the meantime, the Section will be moved to the bottom of the "Upcoming Events" list on the HGMS website and in the minutes. The Board will wait for a couple of months to see if a new chairman volunteers. If not, the business cards, trifold brochure, bylaws, Facebook, and website will need to be updated to remove the Archaeology Section.

Beading Section: third Saturday, 1:30 p.m., February 20, 2021. Maggie Manley will demonstrate the making of a Two Drop Peyote bracelet in multiple complementary colors. Maggie was pleased with the attendance of the January Zoom meeting. The project was simple. The February project is more complicated. Maggie is looking for a way to place the camera above the work so students can see what she is doing more clearly.

Day Light Section: first Wednesday, 1:00 p.m., February 3, 2021. No program planned.

Gemstones and Faceting Section: second Wednesday, 6:30, p.m., February 10, 2021. The February meeting will feature Oregon Sunstone, and for March 10, 2021, North Carolina rubies and emeralds will be in the spotlight. Randy Carlson will add names to his virtual meeting email list as requested. Contact him at faceting@hgms.org.

Lapidary and Silversmithing Section: third Monday, 7:30 p.m., No program planned.

Mineral Section: third Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., February 17, 2021. Steve Blyskal announced that the February speaker will be Steve Steinke, who will talk about collecting Wulfenite in Arizona mines. Steve intends to have an interesting program speaker each month. He sends announcements directly to members of the Mineral Section. If anyone wants to be on that list, please, contact him at mineral@hgms.org.

Paleo Section: third Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., No program planned. Neal Immega recently gave a well-received program to the Ft. Worth Gem and Mineral Society about the Chicxulub impactor, that killed the dinosaurs.

Youth Section: first and third Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. to Noon., No programs planned.

OLD BUSINESS

Auction Items from the January General Meeting. Steve Blyskal will return the auction items to the HGMS Clubhouse next week so winners can pay for them and pick them up.

2021 Budget – Treasurer Michele Marsel shared the proposed budget on screen. Highlights of the discussion follow.

- The 2021 Show budget will be impacted by \$6,500.00 of 2020 Show web services that were not paid until 2021. This will also affect our overall bottom line for 2021.
 - Web services contract fees are budgeted at approximately half of 2020's expenses.
 - Beverly Mace noted we pay \$425 every 24 months for our bulk mail/address checking service and this will come due in July 2021. This is used for all club bulk mailings.
 - The USPS bulk mail indicia (permit) is renewed annually for \$240.00.
 - Beverly Mace reported we have sufficient mail banding supplies until 2022.
 - The Board agreed to continue to mail the BBG to members who want a hard copy.
 - Unused mailing labels for the 2020 Show will cover the BBG labels for 2021.
 - Steve Blyskal, Chairman of the School Collections Committee, asked for a \$300 budget amount to pay for the sets of craft boxes used for the School Collections mineral display boxes. They only need to be made every four years. In past years, the display boxes were used by the Education Outreach Committee to take to schools for mineral programs. -
 - The Board agreed to continue our Scholarship activities at 2020 levels because this is part of our primary organizational purpose of education.
 - There was a 25% drop in membership dues revenue between 2019 and 2020. Michele projected another 25% drop for 2021 due to pandemic drop off.
 - More income is budgeted for auctions. Although the Show auction revenue was cut in half in 2020, the non-show auctions more than doubled. The Auction Committee is planning at least two online auctions in 2021.
 - There is an expense budget for the Donations and Auctions Committee- that will provide for supplies to store and display the items.
 - Each Section is allowed one magazine subscription paid for by HGMS. Michele will verify the subscription for Lapidary. Phyllis noted it should be Rock & Gem, not Lapidary Journal.
 - The Utilities will be listed separately so the electricity bills can be monitored.
 - A Studio Readiness budget to keep the shops in good working condition for classes was included in the 2021 budget for the Education Committee.
 - The budget includes money needed to replace the hot water heater.
 - Fred Brueckner suggested a clarification for unbudgeted amounts spent for unforeseen financial obligations particularly when they cause a budget deficit.
- Nancy English moved to accept the proposed budget as discussed and updated. Phyllis George seconded the motion and it passed.

New Officers: President Stewart announced that Michele Marsel has been serving as acting Treasurer and is willing to assume the permanent position of Treasurer, leaving the position of 1st Vice-President open. Steve Blyskal is willing to serve as 1st Vice-President. For the time-being, he would be both 1st Vice-President and Mineral Section representative. He would, however, only get one vote. He stated that he will not be HGMS President in 2022. Steve will encourage another member of the Mineral Section to be the Board representative.

Mike Dawkins moved to appoint Michele Marsel as Treasurer and appoint Steve Blyskal as 1st Vice President for 2021. Maggie Manley seconded the motion and it passed.

Reopen Clubhouse: At the January General Meeting, President Stewart suggested that the Clubhouse will not reopen until the COVID-19 virus monitor is green for Harris County and the surrounding counties register green. Michele Marsel asked Neal for his input and he indicated he might be comfortable with Level 3. At tonight's meeting there was a strong indication that most Board members agreed with waiting until Level 4 is achieved in Harris and the surrounding counties before reopening the Clubhouse. Most felt it was too early to predict the opening date.

No motion was made, and the consensus was to reopen the Clubhouse when Level 4 is achieved as described in the link from Ready Harris. <https://www.readyharris.org/Stay-Safe>

Level 4: Resume Normal Activity

Level 4 signifies a minimal and controlled level of COVID-19 in Harris County, meaning new chains of transmission are limited and quickly broken or a vaccine and/or treatment has been developed and widely deployed. At this level, residents may resume normal contact with others unless sick.

The Board will revisit the subject of reopening the Clubhouse for meetings, classes, and unrestricted use of the shop at each board meeting.

Theft of Trailer Containing Display Cases: update on trailer/cases theft; BOD members were asked last month for ideas on replacing cases. President Stewart asked for volunteers to research new cases. Since no one stepped forward she postponed this project until March or April. Beverly has some information about the cases. Sigrid will contact McGarry's office to get any plans or designs they have. Steve Blyskal will video the cabinet being put together for the Insurance company. He also knows a cabinetmaker to enlist to make an estimate on the cost of building them by hand.

Bylaws update. Nancy English suggested that updating the bylaws be put this off until summer.

NEW BUSINESS

The next Board of Directors meeting will be the first Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. March 2, 2021. The next General Meeting will be Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. February 23, 2021. Steve Blyskal is pleased to announce that Deidre Prince and Burton Dworsky are speaking on "The Origin of Mineral Names." This is actually a funny presentation, as well as being scholarly.

Adjourn: Michele Marsel moved to adjourn the meeting. Mike Dawkins seconded the motion and it passed. The meeting adjourned at 9:42 p.m.

HOUSTON GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING MINUTES FEBRUARY 23, 2021

by Nancy English

President Sigrid Stewart called the meeting to order at 7:27 p.m. She welcomed thirteen attendees. Michael Cox is a new member joining the Zoom General Meeting for the first time from his home in California. He is in the process of hauling equipment and 800 pounds of rocks in multiple trips to his new home in Sugar Land, Texas. He looks forward to meeting like-minded people at HGMS.

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

President Stewart reminded attendees that the auction items and door prize were featured in the February 21, 2021 E-blast. The auction will be held between Old and New Business. The drawing for the Door Prize will happen after that.

Theft of Trailer Containing Display Cases: We are still waiting on a report from the insurance company about our stolen trailer and display cases. President Stewart invited all club members to send us their ideas about replacing at least some of our display cases. She asked if there are any carpenters or cabinetmakers among our members? Neal Immega said he is a cabinetmaker. Sigrid recommended light-weight cases which can be stored in the attic, and then take to the show venue along with other material, rather than purchasing a new trailer. It is expensive to store a trailer, and as it turns out, not very secure. A boat storage place was recommended.

Approval of Minutes: Steve Blyskal moved to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2021 General Meeting as posted in the February 2021 BBG. Fred Brueckner seconded the motion and it passed.

COMMITTEE/SECTION REPORTS

In the interest of time, President Stewart asked members to look for reports of future Section meetings and presentations in the BBG, on the website <https://hgms.org>, or by reading the weekly E-blast from Jim Kendall. If you are a member and not on Jim Kendall's e mail list, please contact him at kendallja@att.net and ask to be added. President Stewart invited other Section Chairs and Standing Committee Chairs to make any additional announcements.

The Mineral Section meeting scheduled for February 17, 2021 was cancelled due to widespread power outages and predicted low attendance. It has been rescheduled to March 17, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.

The Beading Section held a meeting on February 20, demonstrating the crafting of a peyote stitch bracelet. A recording has been placed on Facebook.

OLD BUSINESS

President Stewart asked members to look for the progress of Old Business items in the BOD Meeting Minutes in the latest BBG.

2021 Budget: Treasurer Michele Marsel presented a 2021 budget draft to the Board and it was accepted with some changes at the February 2, 2021 Board Meeting.

Building Issues: President Stewart said that at the January General Meeting, we talked about reopening the Clubhouse. We are not going to reopen until the Coronavirus pandemic is largely behind us. We want Harris and surrounding counties to get to Level 4 "resume normal activity". We are not there yet. A lot of people over 65 years of age are getting vaccinated. But one can still catch it and pass it on to younger friends who have not been vaccinated. We will continue with low activity at the clubhouse until we have some kind of herd immunity with most people vaccinated. Even then it might be a good idea to wear a mask. There is a link from Ready Harris describing the Levels. <https://www.readyharris.org/Stay-Safe>

Level 4: Resume Normal Activity

Level four signifies a minimal and controlled level of COVID-19 in Harris County, meaning new chains of transmission are limited and quickly broken or a vaccine and/or treatment has been developed and widely deployed. At this level, residents may resume normal contact with others unless sick.

President Stewart and members of the Board agree that it is too soon to relax restrictions on both mask wearing and limiting the number of people in the Clubhouse to five. If we are lucky, achieving herd immunity and Level 4 will allow us to have our annual show in November.

Membership Dues: Time to renew your HGMS membership for 2021.

New Officers: During the February 2, 2021 Board Meeting, Michele Marsel was appointed as the permanent Treasurer for 2021. Steve Blyskal was appointed to take her place as First Vice President. For the time-being, he will be both 1st Vice-President and Mineral Section Representative. He will, however, only get one vote on Board motions. Steve will encourage another member of the Mineral Section to be the Board representative. He stated that he will not be HGMS President in 2022; the Club needs to continue to look for a new President for 2022.

Shop News:

- Sharon Halton will open the Shop on Fridays from 10:00am-3:00 p.m. for the first 4 people who call or text her at (504) 352-0666. She can help people with cabochon making or other special projects. If you cannot make it on Friday, give her a call; she may be able to set up something else for you.
- Remember, the HGMS Shop is ONLY open to members by appointment at this time. Call Neal Immega or Sharon Halton. Mask use will be strictly enforced.
- Neal reported via the Sunday E-blast: The clubhouse survived the freezing weather very well. Neal wrapped the pipes before the freeze. Thank you, Neal for your steadfast commitment to the HGMS clubhouse. Sigrid Stewart and Steve Blyskal checked on the clubhouse on Saturday. Thanks to a running pipe in the men's restroom, the pipes did not freeze.
- Plans are being made to make the HGMS shop available by appointment only on Saturdays starting in March. Michele Marsel and Steve Blyskal will open the shop on opposite Saturdays.
- Neal is working in the Library to improve it.

Show Committee: The Clear Lake Gem and Mineral Society Show was cancelled by the City of Pasadena Health Department eight days before the show was scheduled to open on February 20 and 21.

Web Site Committee: The website migration from HostGator to Nexcess is completed. The committee is working on some projects that were needed before the change to Nexcess.

Auction: Items were pictured in the Sunday E-blast on February 21, 2021. Steve Blyskal served as auctioneer. 6 items were auctioned for a total of \$60. Winners may pay for and pick their items up at the clubhouse on Tuesdays/Thursdays by contacting Neal Immega for an appointment, or during Saturday shop (email SaturdayShop@hgms.org for an appointment).

Door Prize Drawing: Burton Dworsky and Deidre Prince won the blue agate partial nodule with druzi center pictured in the February 21 E-blast.

NEW BUSINESS

The next Board of Directors meeting will be Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. March 2, 2021.

The next General Meeting will be Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. March 23, 2021. Jennifer (Jenny) King will present a program on Life in Jurassic Seas: Focus will be on Kimmeridgian Fossils from the Dorset Coast, UK.

Show-n-Tell:

- Nancy English promoted a new coffee shop in the Spring Branch area. Cambrian Coffee, between Blalock and Campbell on 9461 Hammerly Blvd, is owned by Brian and Gemma Hinkle, who are members of the Houston Geological Society. Coffee is rich and strong, scones are terrific. Brian said they would be interested in doing a program for us sometime. Nancy will forward information to Steve Blyskal. Inda Immega complemented a program she saw of Gemma Hinkle's.
- Fred Brueckner showed a huge piece of charoite with beautiful purple shades.
- Michael Cox showed an ocean jasper polished on both sides. He also had an Australian Noreena jasper polished on both sides. His Biggs jasper from Oregon comes from an extinct location.
- Steve Blyskal has received thirteen packages of minerals from Germany that had been lost in the mail since November 2020. He showed three fluorites, a stilbite with prehnite and epidote from Mali, a diopside from the Congo, hematite from Morocco, siderite from France, goethite from Coon Creek Arkansas, barite on fluorite from the Minerva mine in Illinois, fluorite from Baluchistan, Gallego agate from Mexico, and Coyamito agate from Mexico.
- Fred Brueckner showed two beautiful head-sized nodules of rhodochrosite.

Adjourn: Nancy English moved to adjourn. Steve Blyskal seconded the motion and it passed. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Vice President Blyskal introduced Deidre Prince and Burton Dworsky, speakers on "The Origin of Mineral Names." Deidre has been a member of HGMS almost as long as she has been alive. Her parents were Dalton and Consie Prince, members of HGMS since 1977, and dealers at the HGMS shows with the first geode cracking booth. Deidre has been into the Cave of Swords in the Naica Mine of the Mexican state of Chihuahua. Then she met Burton, who knew nothing about rocks, but quickly became interested in rocks and traveling. Together they researched the "name-ology" (naming of rocks). It was an informative and entertaining talk.



*Royal
Imperial
Jasper*

*Zacatecas
Mexico*

Copyright Steve Blyskal 2019

2020 HGMS OFFICERS

President	Sigrid Stewart	President @HGMS.org
First Vice President	Steve Blyskal	Programs@HGMS.org
Second Vice President	Beverly Mace	Membership@HGMS.org
Secretary	Nancy English	Secretary@HGMS.org
Treasurer	Michele Marsel	Treasurer@HGMS.org
Archaeology Section Board Member		Archaeology@HGMS.org
Beading Section Board Member	Maggie Manley	Beading@HGMS.org
Daylight Section Board Member	Fred Brueckner	
Faceting Section Board Member	Randy Carlson	Faceting@HGMS.org
Lapidary Section Board Member	Phyllis George	
Mineral Section Board Member	Steve Blyskal	Mineral@HGMS.org
Paleo Section Board Member	Mike Dawkins	Field_trips@HGMS.org

HGMS SECTION CHAIRS

Archaeology Section Chair	Robert Moore	Archaeology@HGMS.org
Beading Section Chair	Kim Fuselier	Beading@HGMS.org
Day Light Section Chair	Nancy Searle	Daylight@HGMS.org
Gemstone & Faceting Section Chair	Randy Carlson	Faceting@HGMS.org
Lapidary & Silversmith Section Chair	Anthony Lucci	Lapidary@HGMS.org
Mineral Section Chair	Stephen Blyskal	Mineral@HGMS.org
Paleo Section Chair	Neal Immega	Paleo@HGMS.org
Youth Section Chair	Beverly Mace	Youth@HGMS.org

HGMS APPOINTED POSITIONS

Assistant Show Chair	Clyde McMeans	
Assistant Show Chair	Sigrid Stewart	
Backbender's Gazette Editor	Sigrid Stewart	Editor@HGMS.org
Clubhouse Chair	Neal Immega	ClubhouseChair@HGMS.org
Day Light Contact Person	Nancy Searle	Daylight@HGMS.org
Donations	Neal Immega	Donations@HGMS.org
HGMS Education Chair	Maggie Manley	Classes@HGMS.org
Lapidary Templates	Mary Ann Mitscherling	Templates@HGMS.org
Librarian for Main Library	Neal Immega	Librarian@HGMS.org
Publicity Chair	Sarah Metsa	Publicity@HGMS.org
Scholarships	Mike Sommers	Scholarship@HGMS.org
Show Chair	Scott Singleton	ShowChair@HGMS.org
Trade Show	Scott Singleton	Tradeshow@HGMS.org
Trade Show	Sigrid Stewart	Tradeshow@HGMS.org
Volunteer Coordinator	Nancy English	VolunteerCoordinator@HGMS.org
Webmaster	Lauren Blyskal	Webmaster@HGMS.org
Youth Section Assistant	Elizabeth Guynn	Youth2@HGMS.org

MARCH 2021

SUN 28	MON Mar 1	TUE 2	WED 3	THU 4	FRI 5	SAT 6
● 10am Shop by appt	First Day of Women's I	● 11am Shop by appt	● 10am Shop by appt	● 10am Shop by appt		● 12pm Shop by appt
7 ● 10am Shop by appt	8	9 ● 11am Shop by appt	10 ● 10am Shop by appt ● 6:30pm Faceting	11 ● 10am Shop by appt	12	13 ● 10am Shop by appt
14 Daylight Saving Time : ● 10am Shop by appt	15	16 ● 11am Shop by appt	17 St. Patrick's Day ● 10am Shop by appt ● 7:30pm Mineral	18 ● 10am Shop by appt	19	20 ● 12:15pm Shop by a ● 1:30pm Beading
21 ● 10am Shop by appt	22	23 ● 11am Shop by appt ● 7:30pm General Mt	24 ● 10am Shop by appt	25 ● 10am Shop by appt	26	27 ● 10am Shop by appt
28 ● 10am Shop by appt	29	30 ● 11am Shop by appt	31 ● 10am Shop by appt	Apr 1 ● 10am Shop by appt	2	3 ● 12pm Shop by appt

APRIL 2021

SUN 28	MON 29	TUE 30	WED 31	THU Apr 1	FRI 2	SAT 3
● 10am Shop by appt		● 11am Shop by appt	● 10am Shop by appt	● 10am Shop by appt		● 12pm Shop by appt
4 Easter Sunday ● 10am Shop by appt	5 Easter Monday	6 ● 11am Shop by appt	7 ● 10am Shop by appt ● 1pm DayLight:canc	8 ● 10am Shop by appt	9	10 ● 10am Shop by appt
11 ● 10am Shop by appt	12	13 ● 11am Shop by appt	14 ● 10am Shop by appt ● 6:30pm Faceting	15 Tax Day ● 10am Shop by appt	16	17 ● 10am Youth:cancel ● 12:15pm Shop by a ● 1:30pm Beading
18 ● 10am Shop by appt	19 ● 7:30pm Lapidary:cc	20 ● 11am Shop by appt ● 7:30pm Paleo:canc	21 ● 10am Shop by appt ● 7:30pm Mineral	22 ● 10am Shop by appt	23	24 ● 10am Shop by appt
25 ● 10am Shop by appt	26	27 ● 11am Shop by appt ● 7:30pm General Mt	28 ● 10am Shop by appt	29 ● 10am Shop by appt	30	May 1 ● 10am Youth:cancel ● 12pm Shop by appt

THE BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE

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