

# THE BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE HOUSTON GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY



**FEATURED MEMBER:  
SIGRID STEWART**

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We continue to streamline the online BBG by removing material that is duplicated on our website.

About Us: <https://hgms.org/>

Upcoming Meetings and Events: <https://hgms.org/events/>

Calendar: <https://hgms.org/calendar>

Officers and Contact Information: <https://hgms.org/contact-us/>

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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](mailto:editor@hgms.org)*



*The*

# BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE



*The Newsletter of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society*

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

*by Nancy English*

Those of you who know my work can agree that it is still elementary. I enjoy the easy to finish projects of the Day Light Section and classes that produce a finished piece of work. I have graduated from "Oh, what a pretty rock!" to recognizing agates from jaspers and minerals from glass. I have a long way to go. I am not a field trip enthusiast. The thought of going to the Tucson Shows overwhelms me. My collection of slabs to create cabs from is already larger than I will ever be able to use. So why, I ask myself, do I enjoy HGMS?

Creating something beautiful out of a matrix covered rock is satisfying. But I have to admit it is the people. All the people that come to the Club to work in the shops, come to Section meetings, and volunteer for the plethora of tasks that keep HGMS running come from different careers, places worldwide, and families. You know that phrase "company culture?" Well, all the cultures of all the jobs, schools, and clans swirl together here to share the love of rocks, fossils, gems, and the art of lapidary.

Not just volunteers, but leaders arise to run Sections and Committees. Mineral Section and Paleo Section programs provide brief but thorough information.

I never get tired of watching someone learn to use the saws and grinding wheels. The proud smiles of accomplishment show on new faces as well as seasoned lapidarist. I always learn something new from whoever is teaching or creating. People (me included) are positively gleeful to see their creations shine with a luster only carefully, continuous polishing can provide.

Wire wrapping cabs also inspires self-satisfaction. I have taken a few silversmithing classes. Now the Lapidary Section provides classes in their meetings. That shop draws the bravest people who use fire to melt metal into submission for the fabrication to hold a cabochon. Although I am not a faceting enthusiast, I honor the work being done in those Section meetings and their all day classes.

The HGMS instructors and shop foremen volunteer to teach us safe ways to create in a safe environment. In 2022, the Board of Directors is committed to documenting safe practices and inventing levels of expertise needed to use the equipment.

I plan to spend more time in the shops this year to hone my skills with the diverse group of members teaching and learning. See you there.

Sincerely, Nancy English

## VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*by Sarah Metsa*

I am sorry to be out this month. Please let me know what you would like to hear about, and contact me if you have a great idea for a presentation.

I hope to present the PowerPoint program I planned to give last month, about the Grotto in Dickeyville WI. Dickeyville Grotto and Shrines were erected in the Village of Dickeyville, Wisconsin on Holy Ghost Parish grounds. They are the works of Father Matthias Wernerus. His handiwork in stone was built from 1925-1930. The shrines were constructed without the use of blueprints and by using stones and materials from all over the world. My niece has some great remote presentations as well.

## UPCOMING SHOWS

Clear Lake Gem & Mineral Show. Sat, Feb 26 – Sun, Feb 27  
Pasadena Convention Center and Municipal Fairgrounds  
7902 Fairmont Pkwy, Pasadena, TX

Get out there and support our sister club!

January 1 - February 28, 2022

Quartzsite Showcase & Swap meet

Hours:

Opened Daily 9-5 - January 1 thru February 28

Promoter: Desert Gardens Holdings, LLC

[dgshowgrounds@gmail.com](mailto:dgshowgrounds@gmail.com)

<https://www.desertgardensrockgemandmineralshow.com/>

Free and open to the public for both wholesale and retail. RV full hook-up and dry camping spaces available. Club field trips with lunch and overnight accommodations can be arranged.

I would love to be going to Quartzite! It is the fifth largest and the longest running rock, gem and mineral show in the world. Hundreds of vendors from around the world sell thousands of rocks, gems and minerals to visitors, wholesalers, and each other.

The 2022 Tucson Gem and Mineral Show presented by the Tucson Gem & Mineral Society will run Thursday, February 10 through Sunday, February 13

If there is a heaven for rockhounds, this is surely it.

<https://www.tgms.org/show>

<https://tucsongemshowapp.com/> Enter the Site for a taste of what we could be doing if not for Covid! There are over 40 shows in the Tucson area this month.

## SECTION REPORTS

As always, please see the [Upcoming Programs](#) section under Events on the HGMS website to learn more about planned future meetings.

## **MINERAL SECTION (3RD WEDNESDAY AT 7:30 PM VIA ZOOM)**

There will be an online Zoom meeting of the Mineral Section on February 16, 2022 from 7:30 - 9:30. Discussion topics will be the recently completed Tucson Show and the upcoming Clear Lake Gem and Mineral Show. Steve Blyskal will present a talk on the Milpillas Mine in Sonora, Mexico, a recent but already classic copper mine with world class minerals. The talk will briefly outline the geology and show examples of the minerals that came out during the short lifespan of the mine.

## **BEADING SECTION (3RD SATURDAY AT 12:30 PM)**

As always, bring beading mat, scissors, wire and wire cutter, round nose and needle nose pliers, thread and beading needle if you have them.

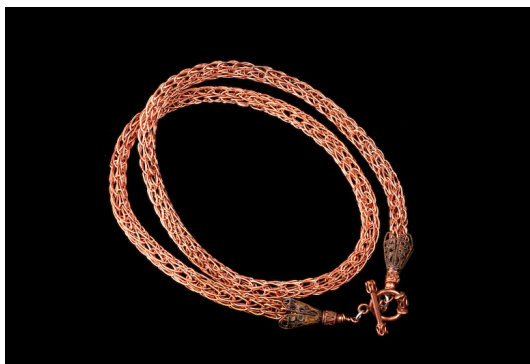
On February 19th we will create unique beads using wire, thread and special shaped beads, such as crescent shaped two-hole beads and seed beads (provided by Beading Section). These beads can be used to create beautiful bracelets and necklaces.

NOTICE: Do you have a bracelet or necklace that needs restringing? The Beading Section will carefully restring your piece at an hourly rate of \$15.00 + materials. Contact [beading@hgms.org](mailto:beading@hgms.org) to make arrangements. All funds will go to the Beading Section. Want notifications about upcoming Beading Group activities? E-mail [beading@hgms.org](mailto:beading@hgms.org) to be added.

## **DAY LIGHT SECTION (1ST WEDNESDAY AT 1:00 PM)**

On February 3rd, Margaret Hardman-Muye will be teaching the group how to make a viking knit chain. See the example at right. The cost is \$5 to be paid at the meeting which will be held from 1 to 3 PM. To register please email Nancy Searle at Daylight@HGMS.org.

The March activity will be making wire wrap earrings.



## **LAPIDARY AND SILVERSMITHING SECTION (3RD MONDAY AT 7:00 PM)**

February 21, 2022 – Money Clip Part 2: construct and finish the project started in January. Participants need to bring their own silver – one 4 x 1 inch piece of 20g sterling (dead soft).

## **GEMSTONES AND FACETING (2ND WEDNESDAY AT 7:00 PM IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM)**

February's topic will be different types of facet machines from around the world, accessories and how to maintain them. Next: getting started with your own gems.

## PALEO SECTION (3RD TUESDAY AT 7:30 PM)

The program will be: "Tips from a Fossil Dealer for Identifying and Buying Dinosaur Teeth"

Jacob Kohr, one of our Paleo section members, will be making this presentation with his own material from Morocco and Hell Creek, Montana. After the meeting you will have a chance to buy specimens.

I am eager to see the presentation on Morocco teeth because I have been burned by dealers at the Tucson show. I am beginning to wonder if Morocco even produces real teeth. Neal

## YOUTH SECTION (1ST AND 3RD SATURDAYS FROM 10:00 AM TO 12:00 PM)

We will continue our regular activities working in the shop.

### DUES REMINDER

*by Beverly Mace, 2nd Vice-President, Membership*

Thanks to all who have responded so quickly for paying your annual membership dues. There are many who haven't paid yet and we hope you will be doing so soon. Keep those dues coming in and remember that if you have a question about your dues please email Beverly Mace at [beverly\\_mace@att.net](mailto:beverly_mace@att.net).

### NEWS FROM NEAL

Texaco Saw: Texaco went on strike the week of January 15th, but it only had a loose screw, a set screw that attaches the pulley for the blade to the motor. Fixed it with Lock-tite on the set screw. I also refilled the hydraulic fluid reservoir with the good used auto hydraulic fluid donated by Cooper. Texaco uses a leaky hydraulic system (the pump and cylinder) and needs additional fluid occasionally. I have not worked on that part for years and it turned out that it was 1.5 quarts low.

On the following Saturday, Texaco developed a problem with its thermal overload switch. It turned out to be the motor. I replaced it and the new one is working fine.

Trim Saw: The trim saw in the back left corner is now operational with new stainless steel parts including 2 zinc flanges made by Cooper. Thanks John!

Broken Rock Clamp: A shop user BROKE the rock clamp on the Frantom saw in the middle of the back row of slab saws and we are going to have it repaired by welding. Please tell me if you know of a good place to have this done.

Wedges: One of our Senior HGMS members used Texaco without getting help from a shop foreman. He did not manage to get the rock clamped. When I told him that he should have used wedges, he said that none of the other saws needed wedges. (What????) He also did not read the instructions for the saw on the lid.

I just about lost it but I did not throw him out of the shop. Ask the Shop Manager about using wedges to secure your rock.

Light switch replaced: I replaced the switch for the light over the sink. It was a 19-cent builder special and I upgraded it to a 74-cent commercial switch. It will outlast the other 50+ switches in the clubhouse. I use \$6 switches for the motors because they put an inductive load on the line that arcs away the switch. Lights are much easier on the switches.

Thanks for the Donation: someone left me a bucket of repair parts including pillow block bearings, pulleys, and a handful of shaft collars. This is stuff I can use. Thanks!

January General Meeting: I was impressed that 25 people came to my presentation on Agate. They were probably wanting Sarah's presentation on the Grottos but I am pleased nevertheless. And someone put a marvelous 3 way connector that handles all the ways a Mac puts out video and translates it to the VGA that the projector expects. Thank you to the computer fairy who made this easy.

## FEATURED MEMBER: SIGRID STEWART

### BECOMING A ROCKHOUND

*by herself*

How did I become a rockhound? Like many small children I loved to pick through gravels for interesting rocks which I would then carry home. But unlike the vast majority of budding 'hounds, I had a mentor – my grandmother was a rockhound. Because of this happy occurrence, instead of being told to throw away those dirty rocks, I was encouraged! My parents would just smile and say, "Look, she's going to be a rockhound like her Grandmother Ruth!"

My grandmother thought that was pretty cool. When she came to visit, she would bring me interesting rocks, many of which I still have today, from the area where she was living out in Paradise, California or from her former home in Kansas. This was wonderful because at the time my family was living in Oklahoma and Kansas, so early on I was exposed to a great variety of minerals, rocks and fossils.



*Ore from Mine near Inskip, California*

When I was eight, my father, a petroleum engineer who worked for Skelly Oil Company, took me out on a rig in Oklahoma with him. While we were waiting for the target zone to be reached, we built a small fire by a pond and fished for bullheads. After it got dark, I took a nap. He woke me up to watch the fascinating core retrieval, with gleaming, oily cores laid out in trays under bright lights for inspection. Eventually I would work in the oil business myself.

The heartland may not have the wild cornucopia of exotic rocks found in California, but



there are minerals to be found. On a family outing on a houseboat on Lake Kanopolis in Kansas, we stopped on a shaly beach. Suddenly I spotted a gypsum crystal. Then another one! I collected quite a few before I started to find pyrite-filled fossils that were really impressive. I treasured those fossils for many years, even after I had to box them up for the move to Houston. Several years after that, I unpacked them and found that they had all decrepitated, leaving nothing but tattered newspaper and grey dust behind. Alas, decaying into sulphuric acid and dust is the fate of all pyrite.



*Gypsum from Lake Kanopolis, Kansas*

We also visited my grandmother's sister, my great-aunt, in Eldorado, Kansas. This lady lived alone and did whatever she pleased. What pleased her was collecting and cutting rocks. She had a little shop with bins of all kinds of rocks and a saw and a grinding wheel. Pretty heady stuff for the 50's, really. I decided then that I was going to do the same thing someday.



*Fossil tooth found by my grandmother*

When my family visited my grandmother in Paradise, California, and my aunt's family at their inn near Inskip, California, there was real rockhounding to be done. There were gold nuggets in the nearby streams (I never found any) as well as creepy-looking hellgrammites, dobsonfly larvae, under rocks to use for fishing bait, a great activity because you can fish and look at rocks at the same time. There were quartz crystals in cavities in the hills to dig out and miners who came to the inn to talk to. They had gold nuggets!

On family road trips I could be counted on to hide a rock or three under the seat of the station wagon. At any National Park we visited, somehow a rockhound would turn up who was delighted to tell kids what he or she had found. At the Columbia Ice Fields someone explained glacial striations. At the lava tube at Lassen someone told us in detail how they had formed and what other interesting igneous rocks could be found in the area. At Yellowstone a ranger told us agates could be found in the local streams.



The summer after my sophomore year in high school my father was transferred to Denver, which meant a new high school and mountains in our back yard. We had visited Colorado but now we could spend weekends camping and hiking in the summer and skiing in the winter. My

*Biotite specimen from grandmother*



grandmother also moved to Colorado and bought a place with some small cabins near Idaho Springs, surrounded by mines and tailings piles. We collected rocks there and built up the steps and trails with big flat rocks we found. She brought her rock collection with her, and eventually I inherited it. Many pieces were identified with writing on adhesive tape, which I have kept.

I collected a few rocks every year until I went off to college. At the University of Colorado, I majored in Psychology but eventually decided not to work in the field. Almost by accident I started working for a geophysicist in Denver and then moved to Midland, where I worked for a seismic company. I met my first husband, a geologist and rockhound, which reactivated my interest in collecting and visiting rock shops. We moved to Houston for a year and then to Colorado for a couple of years where I could ski (yay!), and I started working on a geology degree at Western State College in Gunnison. We moved back to Midland, and I continued working on my geology degree at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin while working for another seismic company and then Chevron.

But when you are young and married with children and a job, there is little spare time. It wasn't until after my first husband's death that I attended the Midland Gem & Mineral Show. My daughter Jessica was old enough by then that I could get involved, so I did, learning lapidary at the club shop, going on hunts, working with the Midland Show, serving on the Board and as President.

Then came the bad news every oil company employee dreads: we're going to cut back. Chevron went through the usual shuffle, and I was sent to the Houston Wilcrest office. The first month I was there it rained every day, and I think I ran to the window every time to watch it. One day, though, I read an email from a friend in Midland, telling me I should check out the Houston club. It included a web site, and I studied the information about the club, thinking that's great, they have a shop. I looked at the address and a map and wondered why the street names looked so familiar... Fallstone Road, Stancliff Road, Brooklet... Wilcrest! The club was only 6 blocks from my office. I figured that was a sign from God and attended the next General Meeting.

At the meeting I looked around and had to smile to myself; I had found my people!

At the break President Norman Lenz and his wife Susan came over to talk to me, asking the usual polite questions: what are your interests, what do you like to collect, how did you hear about us? I told them about my Midland background and that I wanted to get involved with the Houston club. What did they need? They both started to smile.

I helped with the 2005 show and became Show Chair in 2006. There was of course a committee in place, so all I had to do was learn how to work with a group of great folks and how Houston did it. After a few meetings I started talking to the man who managed the swap area, Steve Blyskal.



*Sigrid and Steve at the Kokernot 06 Ranch*

You can imagine how that worked out because he was also a geologist and rockhound.

We married and today we are still collecting, still traveling, going on rock hunts and vowing to clean out our overloaded garage – someday.

I worked as a Show Chair for 3 years and later as an assistant Show Chair with Scott Singleton. I was Vice-President for 3 years and then President for 3 years, and have served on the Web Committee and as Newsletter editor. I'm cutting back a little now so I will have more time for cutting rocks and figuring out what to do with all that stuff in the garage.



*Sigrid and Steve at Muir Woods, in June 2021*



At left: Sigrid, top, with some of the big stuff found on a petrified wood hunt at Traditions in College Station several years ago. The stump with the hole in it is now in Sigrid and Steve's front yard. It took a Dually pickup to deliver the beast.

## UPCOMING CLASSES

The Board has approved opening classes to the public, although members will continue to receive a discounted price. This is to encourage potential students to become members before they take a class.

In the past it was believed that non-members taking classes would not be covered by insurance, but a review of our insurance proved otherwise.

This month, there are classes for a Tree of Life Wire-Wrapped pendant February 6th from 1:00 to 4:00 PM and a Beginning Wire-Wrapped Pendant class February 20th from 1:00 to 4:00 PM, taught by Joy Lester.

See available classes and register on the HGMS website at:

<https://hgms.org/Classes/Education>

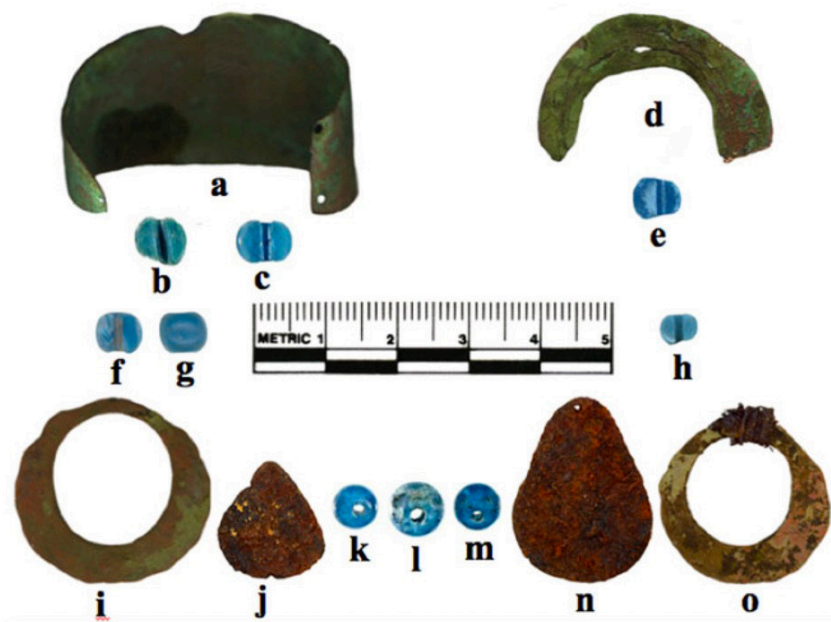
Please send any questions or suggestions for classes to: [Classes@HGMS.org](mailto:Classes@HGMS.org)

# BEADS THROUGHOUT HISTORY

## PRE-COLUMBIAN BEADS IN ALASKA?

What are the earliest European objects in North America? Yes, they are beads. Archaeologists in Alaska found what may be Venetian glass beads over 540 years old. That places them in North America before the first voyage of Christopher Columbus to the Americas. According to Mike Kunz from the University of Alaska Museum of the North and Robin Mills from the Bureau of Land Management, the marble-sized beads arrived at 3 sites along an ancient Bering Sea trade route to the Arctic Ocean by overland transport from Italy. That's over 10,000 miles.

Another piece of jewelry found with the beads, a metal bangle, was wrapped in twine. Radio-carbon testing dates the twine to the 1400's. It seems that Italian luxury goods had a high trade value even hundreds of years ago. Craft articles could have been traded along the Silk Road to China and on to the Far East of Russia. Exactly how they might have made it across the Bering Sea and ended up at Punyik Point in the Brooks Range is not known, but never discount the zeal of a bead lover.



*Blue Glass beads, copper bracelets, and iron pendants. (Image credit: M. Kunz and R. Mills)*

### References:

<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/alaskan-archaeologists-uncovered-venetian-glass-beads-date-back-540-years-meaning-made-north-america-columbus-1945050>

<https://alaska-native-news.com/blue-beads-in-the-tundra-the-first-u-s-import-from-europe/53859/>

Of course, not everyone agrees:

<https://www.livescience.com/blue-glass-beads-predate-columbus-in-alaska.html>

## ANCIENT OSTRICH SHELL BEADS

Is it fashion or an instrument of social cohesion? Style or money? These are some of the questions that arise when archaeologists contemplate some of the oldest beads found to date: 50,000-year-old hand-made ostrich shell beads from Southern and Eastern Africa.

More than 1500 beads have been excavated at 31 different sites in this area. The beads are very similar, having the same diameter and thickness despite the vast distances between the various sites, suggesting a common social network and widespread contact. Could they have represented bride wealth or functioned like Native American wampum between tribes? The cultures that produced these artifacts seem to have vanished or relocated about 33,000 years ago following climate changes.



Photo © Jennifer Miller

This information is from an article by Sarah Cascone in Artnet News.  
<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/stone-age-social-network-2062268>

## NOT SO ANCIENT OSTRICH SHELL BEADS

The modern San people in Africa make today make beads of ostrich eggshells. Finding one was considered to be good fortune; one egg could feed a family! The shells were also useful to hold water or food and valued for bead-making. Chips of shell are rounded by springbok horns (or modern nail-clippers, whatever!) and then a small awl is used to make a hole in the center. Next the beads are strung and laid across a board and hand polished. Native American heishi were made in a similar manner.

References:  
<http://www.womensworkbw.com/osbabout.htm>



Modern Beads for sale on Reference Site

## REALLY ANCIENT BEADS



Also from Artnet News, in another article by Sarah Cascone:

In Morocco, where some of the oldest Homo Sapiens fossils have been found, archaeologists recently discovered truly ancient beads: 150,000-year-old snail-shell beads, which may have been worn as a necklace or earrings, or sewn onto clothing.

Photo by Abdeljalil Bouzouggar, courtesy of the University of Arizona.



The 33 half-inch-long snail shells were found in a cave discovered in 2004 near the city of Essaouira and dated using uranium-series dating. Some of the shells show traces of red pigment. These beads may have been worn as earrings or on a necklace.

References:

<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/worlds-oldest-jewelry-morocco-2037635>

For more detail, see: <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abi8620>

## SEEKING

*by Edward Clay*

In stone that hint of color—  
shaping and sanding,  
to find what is inside.

To bring forth the instinct  
that trained and experienced eye saw.  
This is the subtle skill  
of being a lapidary artisan.

Some do it only for money,  
Some create or bring forth  
beauty the creator placed.

Whatever motives are for you...  
new and old in this path.  
You aid others to see beauty  
in this world from this world.

These are my words.  
I do believe them, as I am always  
Seeking.

## BENCH TIPS FOR FEBRUARY

*by Brad Smith*

### MAGNETIC TOOL BAR

An easy way to keep all your files organized at the bench is to use a magnetic tool strip. They're not expensive and help keep a lot of small tools from cluttering the bench top. I got a couple of them from Harbor Freight for about \$5 each. See <http://www.harborfreight.com> and search on-"magnetic-holder"

My only regret was putting some of my small drills on the magnets. The drills got a little magnetized and now stick together when I carry them in a bottle in my toolbox.



## SILVER DISCOLORATION

Working with jewelry involves an ever-increasing number of skills. Chemistry is one of them that comes into play when dealing with a discoloration on the metal caused by a chemical reaction between it and the environment.

In the case of Sterling silver, there are three discolorations we typically encounter: a tarnish, a firescale, and a firestain. Each is different in its cause, in its cure, and in its prevention. All three have to do with components of the Sterling alloy (92.5% silver and 7.5% copper) and how they react with oxygen and the heat of soldering or with pollutants in the air over the long term. Firescale and firestain also occur in 14k or 18k gold because of the copper content.

Tarnish is a grayish coating that builds up slowly on the surface as a result of a reaction of the silver with sulfur-based compounds in the air. Typically, these are pollutants from the burning of petroleum fuels, but they can come from other sources as well. I once tarnished all the silver in my display case by putting a pretty specimen of iron pyrite in with the jewelry. Turns out pyrite has sulfur in it!

Sulfur from air pollution or any other source combines with the silver to form a grayish silver sulfide film on the surface. Preventing tarnish involves keeping sulfur away from the metal. Plastic bags will help, and anti-tarnish strips are available from jewelry supply companies to pack near your items. Tarnish is easily removed by hand polishing with a jeweler's cloth or with one of the products sold for cleaning the good silverware for holiday dinner.

Another way is to remove it chemically. Put a piece of aluminum in the bottom of a dish large enough to contain your piece. Heat enough water to cover the silver. Mix in 2 table-spoons of sodium carbonate per cup of water and pour into the dish. Be sure the silver touches the aluminum. Sodium carbonate is the main ingredient in washing soda. Read the labels in grocery and hardware stores.

The second type of tarnish is called firescale. It is the dark gray to charcoal colored film that forms on Sterling or other copper alloys like brass or bronze when we heat it with a torch. The copper in the alloy reacts with oxygen in the air to form a dark cupric oxide coating on the surface. Luckily, the oxide is easily removed by dissolving it in a mild acid - generally called a pickle. It's important that we not let firescale form on a solder joint because it will block the flow solder over the joint.

There are two ways to prevent firescale. Most common is to use a flux, a borax-based solution applied to the metal before soldering. When melted, borax forms a thin glassy layer that keeps oxygen away from the metal. A second way is to do your soldering on a charcoal block. Together with the flame, charcoal greatly reduces the amount of oxygen in the area being soldered. In either case, oxygen is prevented from reaching the metal, so no cupric oxide firescale is formed.

A second oxide can also be formed when soldering copper or a high copper content alloy like bronze or brass. It's called cuprous oxide and is reddish in color. That's why a black looking piece you put in the pickle sometimes comes out red. Problem is that while the black cupric oxide is dissolved by a pickle, the red cuprous oxide is not. The discoloration can be sanded or polished off, but an easier way is to use a "super pickle". This is a mixture of fresh pickle with a healthy shot of hydrogen peroxide from the local store.



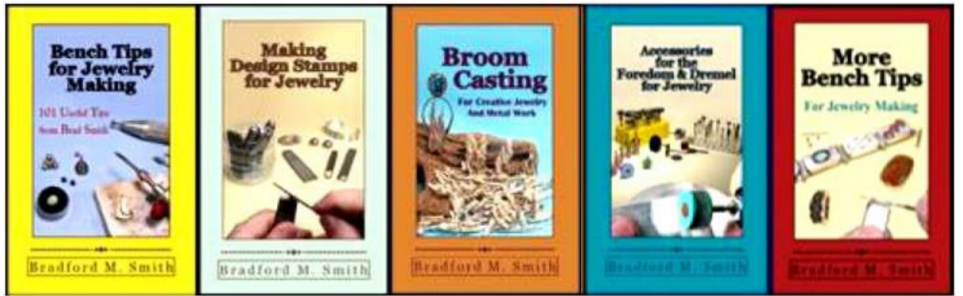
I've saved the worst form of discoloration, firestain, for last. Think of firescale (above) as like getting dirt on your shirt that you have to wash off. Firestain is like getting ink on it. The discoloration is not just on the surface, it seeps down and stains the material. Firestain happens when we heat a piece of silver too hot, too long, and/or too many times.

Firestain occurs when the oxides start to build up below the surface of the metal. You generally don't notice it until after polishing. It appears as a darker area of the surface and is easy to spot when viewed under light bounced off a piece of white paper. Because firestain is below the surface, there's no easy bench tip solution. Depletion gilding may work for some pieces. Otherwise, removal calls for sandpaper and aggressive polishing.

A much better approach for a piece that will require a large number of solderings is to protect the metal from developing firestain by applying liberal amounts of a firecoat. Regular soldering flux will provide some protection but is not as effective as preparations made specifically for the task. Jewelry supply companies offer several commercial solutions, but my favorite is the Prips mixture. I use it every time I intend to do more than two solderings on a piece

**SMART SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR JEWELRY MAKING PROBLEMS:**

[Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith)  
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and Mineral  
Society



# HOUSTON GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

**JANUARY 4, 2022**

*by Michele Marsel*

X	President— Nancy English		Beading— Maggie Manley
X	1st Vice President—Sarah Metsa	X	Day Light—Fred Brueckner
X	2nd Vice President—Beverly Mace	X	Gemstones & Faceting—Randy Carlson
X	Treasurer—Michele Marsel	X	Lapidary & Silversmithing—Richard Good
	Secretary—Sharon Halton	X	Mineral—Ray Kizer
	Archaeology - Vacant	X	Paleontology—Mike Dawkins

President Nancy English called the Zoom meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. A quorum was present.

Non-voting members in attendance: None

## **PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS:**

I appreciate this opportunity to serve HGMS as President. I realized long ago that I am only as good as the people I work with perceive me. Right now, I bet that is a mixed bag. I am confident in the new Board. I know some of us have been looking forward to the changes we are planning for in 2022.

Thanks to Michele Marsel and her tireless work we have the momentum now to tackle the hard stuff. January will be a month of financial activity: new signatures on accounts, new insurance policies and equipment riders, new budgets for the Club and the Show. My car is gassed up and I am ready to meet bankers and present my knowledgeable executive team.

Last month's meeting lasted two hours and fifteen minutes. Going forward I hope we will try to be succinct with our comments. We are all interested in your Holidays and life events. Please, plan to stay after we adjourn and share with those of us that can stay to visit. I will be there.

Approval of Minutes: Outgoing Secretary Nancy English acknowledged there were still grammatical and spacing errors in the minutes she sent on January 3. She will make the corrections and resend a final copy to the Board.

Motion: Sarah Metsa moved to accept the December 7, 2021, Board Minutes as corrected and sent after tonight's meeting. Ray Kizer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (8 votes).

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Michele Marsel sent the Treasurer's Report to members on January 4, 2022. The 2021 year-end closeout is in progress and a final 2021 Financial

Report will be available for the February Board meeting. The Board discussed preparing an HGMS Annual report to include a list of accomplishments along with a simple financial statement to be available to members.

Motion: Sarah Metsa moved to advise members when the prior year financial report is available and inform members they may request a copy from [treasurer@hgms.org](mailto:treasurer@hgms.org) (Treasurer will send non-editable pdf). Randy Carlson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (8 votes).

Michele noted the Bank signature update meeting will be scheduled after Secretary Sharon Halton's return from vacation on January 6. Beverly Mace agreed to retain her signature authority so she may sign checks for the movers during the Annual Show.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

BBG Committee: Beverly Mace will notify members when the online version of the BBG is available on the HGMS Website.

Donations, Sales, Auction Committee (DSAC): The Donations Committee is still struggling to dispose of the Helm 50/50 donation. Considering our learnings from working with this split donation, the Committee has revised its policy (copy emailed to the BOD) to state we will no longer accept split (50/50 or otherwise) donations except for commercial equipment in saleable condition or requiring minimal refurbishment. The Committee vacated its storage unit at end of December 2021. We had a successful holiday auction with twenty-five handpicked quality items.

Case Replacement Committee: No report

Education Committee: Michele Marsel shared that the Website Committee determined that it is not technically feasible to implement a process to apply the class bi-level pricing upcharge to a membership application. It would require extensive and expensive work.

Motion: Michele Marsel moved to amend the motion made under Education Committee at the December 7, 2021, Board Meeting regarding bi-level class pricing to read:

I move to implement bi-level pricing for classes in 2022 for a one-year trial period. Non-members will pay a higher price than members for classes. The upcharge will be determined by the price of the class. The price difference will be added to the Education Revenue. Non-member students wishing to use the shops after they have completed the class must become members. Sarah Metsa seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (8 votes).

Nancy English suggested Ray Kizer consider teaching a cabochon class. He is concerned about the quality of shop grinding wheels and wants to wait before making a commitment.

Membership Committee: Beverly Mace reported new members in December: four singles, two couples, one family, and two youths. There were three single renewals as well.

Publicity Committee: Sarah Metsa reported the eBlast newsletter has been going out weekly; the Committee is working on new plans for 2022 and Sarah requested

suggestions from the Board on what we specifically want to promote – what is the end goal for our publicity? Nancy asked Board members to think about this for discussion at the February Board meeting.

Michele suggested that Sarah send a reminder to all Section and Committee Chairs about submitting information and updates for the weekly eBlast, HGMS Website Events page, and the BBG through [news@hgms.org](mailto:news@hgms.org). She forwarded Sarah the sample that was sent last year.

Clubhouse Committee: With help from Clyde McMeans and Fred Brueckner, all fire extinguishers have been recertified or replaced, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors have been installed, and photoluminescent Exit signs have been installed. Some additional lighted signs and exit path marking may still be needed.

Scholarship Committee: The remaining \$1750 of 2021 Scholarship funding was disbursed to Tarynn Fossati's school in December toward her Spring Semester at SHSU. The Committee budget request for 2022 is for \$7500 (3 scholarships of \$2500 each).

Motion: Michele Marsel moved that we increase our Club Scholarship funding to \$7500 per year to be awarded as three - \$2500 scholarships. She noted that funds previously budgeted to BBG publishing would be reallocated to cover the bulk of the increase in the Club budget. Ray Kizer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (8 votes).

School Kit Committee: No report. Ray Kizer mentioned he needed a printer to help this Committee with specimen labels. Michele Marsel told him to pick up the laser printer on the table in the back of the main room which did not sell at auction. This was an old printer from the Club office.

Show Committee: The final 2021 net revenue was \$19,039. President English will ask Scott to submit the 2022 Show Budget by January 26 to allow time for review before the February vote to approve the 2022 Budget.

Website Committee: Michele Marsel reported the next meeting is scheduled for January 13. The Classes page has a new look and functionality to accommodate the move to 2-tiered class pricing.

## SECTION REPORTS

Nancy English requested that going forward Section Reports be primarily about areas where the Sections have special programs or classes, accomplishments, or issues they want to bring to the Board's attention. The regular monthly programs are displayed on the Events page of our Website, the weekly eBlast, and appear in the monthly BBG. Eliminating this redundancy will save time in the Board meetings and reduce repetition in the BBG. So, beginning in February 2022 programs will no longer be reviewed at each Board meeting or included in Board minutes.

Beading Section: third Saturday, 12:30 p.m., January 15, 2022. In-person meeting. No report.

Day Light Section: first Wednesday, 1:00 p.m., January 5, 2021. Members will reorganize the Day Light supply cabinets.

Gemstones and Faceting Section: second Wednesday, 7:00, p.m., January 12, 2022. Randy announced that Logan Wilcox ("L.T.") has agreed to become the new Section Chair and that all ten active Section members had approved. Randy will continue as Board Representative for the Section. L.T. supported the Faceting Section at the 2019 and 2021 HGMS Annual Shows for all three days each year as a non-member volunteer. L.T. will officially join HGMS to become Section Chair. He would like to resume in-person meetings at the Club and plans to focus on working through faceting topics in Tom Herbst's excellent set of faceting books.

Lapidary and Silversmithing Section: third Monday, 7:30 p.m., January 17, 2022. We will begin the 2-part Money Clip set with Cabochon project. Part 1: Cut a cabochon of Petrified Wood to fit the money clip. Material will be provided. You may use your own alternate material, and it should be hard and durable (agate or other MOHS 7.0 or higher). Mineral Section: third Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., January 19, 2022. Program TBD.

Paleo Section: third Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., January 18, 2022. Program TBD.

Youth Section: first and third Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. to Noon Next meeting. There was no meeting on January 1, 2022. The next meeting is on January 15. Beverly Mace reported the January 15 meeting will focus on cabochon making.

Archaeology Section: Dormant; no report.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Covid 19 Protocols: The Board discussed the suggestion to return to masks for everyone policy, regardless of vaccination status, in light of the highly transmissible Omicron variant and CDC recommendations. Neal Immega was consulted prior to the Board's decision, and he supports returning to masks for all in the building.

Motion: Ray Kizer moved to reinstate a policy requiring everyone to wear a mask inside the Clubhouse, regardless of vaccination status. Sarah Metsa seconded the motion. The motion carried (6 in favor, 1 opposed, 1 abstained).

We will continue to provide low-cost, disposable masks for anyone arriving without their own. Anyone who fails to comply with the mask-wearing policy may be asked to leave by Shop Supervisors, Section Chairs, Instructors, and others in charge of activities within our building. Michele will arrange to have a new sign made for the Club entry door.

Fidelity Bond: Treasurer Marsel sent an updated quote for this new insurance product with the December Financial Reports. She confirmed there is no limit to the numbers of volunteers covered by the Bond. This will protect HGMS from online fraud and give us coverage for funds in transit (money to and from our Annual Show primarily).

Motion: Michele Marsel moved to proceed with a Fidelity Bond to cover HGMS Volunteers who have access to, or transport Club funds as quoted through Travelers Option 1 for a one-year period for a premium of \$689. Randy Carlson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (8 votes).

Cleaning Service for Club: No update

Former Officer Commitments: With Steve and Sigrid stepping away from the Board, Nancy asked them what committees they are willing to continue with.

Sigrid Stewart communicated via email ahead of the Board meeting she will continue to participate in the Committees she is part of: Scholarship Committee, Case Replacement Committee, Show Committee, and Website Committee.

Steve Blyskal also communicated via email ahead of the Board meeting he will participate as School Collections Chairman, Mineral Section Chairman, and Show Dealer Chairman.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **2022 Budget:**

The draft 2022 Budget was mailed to all BOD members along with the Treasurer's Financial Reports for December 2021. Nancy English noted we will be reviewing the budget in detail in February. At tonight's meeting specific questions from Directors who have already reviewed it can be discussed.

Otherwise, Nancy asked for questions to be sent to her and Michele throughout the month so we can be prepared for quick conversations about items in February. The only item specifically discussed was Scholarship funding (addressed in the Scholarship Committee report, above).

Close Archaeology Section: This section has been dormant for a full year. On multiple occasions throughout 2021 notices have been published on the Website Section page asking for interested parties to step forward and keep the Section going. No one has responded to the request for a new Archaeology Chairman.

Motion: Sarah Metsa moved to close the Archaeology Section. Mike Dawkins seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (8 votes).

Beverly Mace noted we also need to remove references to the Archaeology Section from the online and downloadable HGMS Membership forms. Ray Kizer stated all reference to the Archaeology Section also need to be removed from the HGMS Website.

Move the Chase Bank HY savings balance to Prosperity Bank: Treasurer Marsel explained that the Chase HY Savings account has not been accessed at all in 2021. She suggested combining the funds in this account with the Prosperity Bank account we refer to as the Building Fund.

The combined balance will be approximately \$67,000 and will be redefined as a Capital Repairs & Improvements account. Monies will be used for large expenditures for remediation items identified in the Pathfinder Risk Assessment, and in the future for both planned and unplanned large repairs such as roof or A/C replacement. The Prosperity account pays higher interest than the Chase account.

Motion: Michele Marsel moved to consolidate and close the existing Chase HY Savings Account with a current balance of \$38,733.99 into the existing Prosperity Building Fund Account. The combined balance of approximately \$67,000 will be designated to be used for Capital Repairs and Improvements. Ray Kizer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (8 votes).



Update HGMS Chase Bank account signers and authorities for 2022:

The outgoing officers from 2021 are:

President Sigrid Stewart

1st Vice President Steve Blyskal

2nd Vice President Beverly Mace (remains for 2022)

Treasurer Michele Marsel (remains for 2022)

Secretary Nancy English

The incoming officers for 2022 are:

President Nancy English

1st Vice President Sarah Metsa

2nd Vice President Beverly Mace (remains for 2022)

Treasurer Michele Marsel (remains for 2022)

Secretary Sharon Halton

Motion: Michele Marsel moved to update the bank account signers and authorizations on the HGMS JP Morgan Chase Bank, N.A. accounts as follows:

- Signer Sigrid Stewart, 2021 President, is to be removed from all accounts.
- The existing deposit card for previous (2020) Treasurer Tatyana Kuhne is to be removed.
- For the account CLUB BILL PAY CHECKING ending in 7598, signers will be President Nancy English, 1st Vice President Sarah Metsa, 2nd Vice President Beverly Mace, and Treasurer Michele Marsel. Secretary Sharon Halton will be administrator.
- The account "PAYPAL" HIGH YIELD SAVINGS ending in 5510 signers will be President Nancy English, Treasurer Michele Marsel, and 1st Vice President Sarah Metsa. Secretary Sharon Halton will be the administrator.
- Debit cards are to be issued on the Checking account ending in 7598 for President Nancy English and Treasurer Michele Marsel.
- The High Yield Savings account ending in 5775 is to be closed as agreed in these January 4, 2022, minutes. The funds will be transferred into Checking account 7598 and then moved by the Treasurer into the Club's Building Fund Account.

The motion passed with 8 votes in favor, no opposing, no abstentions.

Insurance Committee

During the December Board meeting the results of the Insurance Committee investigation about coverage and liability at the Show and the Club was not recorded. President English wants these minutes to show those results.

The key findings of the overall insurance review are:

1. Coverage for field trip activities is provided only under the SCFMS policy
2. Liability (including personal injury) coverage for our Annual Show is provided only under the SCFMS policy and extends to members as well as non-members.
3. Property damage up to \$300K for rented venues (Humble Civic Center) is included under our Hanover policy
4. The Hanover policy covers liability (including personal injury) for ANYONE on our premises. Members, non-members, and guests are covered equally for all activities. In addition, the Insurance Broker, Pathfinder's courtesy risk assessment resulted in three areas that need attention this year. Michele Marsel sent an actual risk report provided by Pathfinder to the BOD for review. She sent a second attachment categorizing the points on the original report as follows:
  - Physical Remediation– repair, replace, adjust, or add new items in the building to

mitigate the risk of loss and bring the building into code compliance to avoid fines or risk of insurance claim denial.

- Documentation & Labeling– includes labeling containers properly, obtaining and posting Safety Data Sheets.
- Policies & Processes– review existing, develop new documentation designed to avoid both injury and equipment damage. Includes training requirements, developing an easy way to know who has been "trained" and establishing enforcement processes and sanctions should they be necessary.

## **NEW 2022 COMMITTEES TO BE FORMED BY PRESIDENT ENGLISH**

In response to the Risk Assessment report, President English discussed forming a Safety Committee as a new Standing Committee to address needed remediation and assure we remain compliant. Richard Good suggested we have one overarching Health, Safety, and Environmental ("HSE") Committee with subcommittees to address the specific items noted below.

- Safety – performs annual review for overall compliance
- Shop Policy/Training – 2022 Committee to address issues from Pathfinder Risk Report (review written materials from other Clubs, interview key HGMS contributors, develop policies including suggested enforcement processes and non-compliance sanctions)
- Club/Shop Remediation – 2022 Committee to address issues from Pathfinder Risk Report; get estimates, coordinate work, coordinate with Neal Immega. We will be looking for help to find the right contractors and oversee approved work, not DIY work.

Board Members Nancy English, Sarah Metsa, Ray Kizer, Richard Good and Michele Marsel agreed to participate in an initial strategy and planning session for the new HSE Committee. Other HGMS members were suggested for the HSE Committee. Nancy and Michele will contact them.

The next Board of Directors' meeting will be the first Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., February 1, 2022. The January General Meeting will be on the fourth Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., January 25, 2022.

Sarah Metsa will present a PowerPoint program about the Grotto in Dickeyville, WI. Dickeyville Grotto and Shrines were erected in the Village of Dickeyville, Wisconsin on Holy Ghost Parish grounds. They are the works of Father Matthias Wernerus. His handiwork in stone was built from 1925-1930. The shrines were constructed without the use of blueprints and by using stones and materials from all over the world.

Adjourn: Michele Marsel moved to adjourn. Sarah Metsa seconded the motion and it passed. The meeting adjourned

## **HOUSTON GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 2022 *by Sharon Halton***

President Nancy English called the January 2022 General Meeting to order at 7:30. The meeting was a hybrid of Zoom and an in-person meeting with a total of twenty-two

in-person attendees including three new members, two guests, and seven members by Zoom. Tricia Pollard recently joined HGMS to slab petrified wood to make her new fireplace surround. James Eleckles and his grandson Nathan Eleckles came to the club for the first time for the General Meeting and decided to join. Guests, mother and son, Janet and Kunle Adeynri were drawn to the meeting by mother's interest in rocks.

### **PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS:**

President Nancy English welcomed the attendees and spoke of the productive session of the January Board of Director's meeting. She reminded us that the Board of Directors has reinstated the use of masks in the club at all times due to the increase in Covid 19 in the community. Nancy is enthusiastic about the results of the January 4 BOD meeting.

There were six motions approved during this meeting and other matters of interest were discussed.

1. The Treasurer will prepare an abbreviated Annual Financial report to include a list of accomplishments. Members will be able to request a non-changeable pdf report to be emailed to them.
2. The Board implemented bi-level pricing for classes in 2022 for a 1-year trial period. Non-members will be able to take HGMS classes but pay a higher price.
3. All fire extinguishers have been replaced or recertified, smoke and Co2 detectors have been installed. Photoluminescent EXIT signs have been installed but will be replaced with lighted signs. Exit pathways still need to be added.
4. The Club Scholarship funding was increased to \$7,500 per year. HGMS will award three \$2,500 scholarships in 2022.
5. A Fidelity Bond was purchased through Travelers Insurance to cover HGMS Volunteers who have access to club funds and are tasked with transporting funds from the annual show to and from the bank.
6. The Board dissolved the Archeology Section.
7. Two bank accounts were consolidated and designated for Capital Repairs and Improvements. This fund will give HGMS a healthy amount to spend on the coming changes.
8. The Board established a Health Safety and Environmental Committee to oversee the Capital Repairs and Improvements suggested by our insurance brokerage, Pathfinders. The committee met on January 20, 2022. Sarah Metsa volunteered to chair this committee. More volunteers will be needed to help with this comprehensive project. A Silent Auction was opened at 7:00 pm with six items for sale. Final bids can be made during the break and winners can pay after the program.

Approval of Minutes: Sharon Halton moved to approve the minutes of the November 23, 2021; General Meeting as published in the December 2021 BBG. James Wark seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

### **COMMITTEE AND SECTION REPORTS**

President English reminded everyone to keep up with the Section meetings and programs in the BBG calendar on the Website (<https://hgms.org/events>) or in the weekly eblast. She reminded members who are new or not receiving the eblast to contact the Publicity Chair at [news@hgms.org](mailto:news@hgms.org) and put the following in the Subject Line: "New Member to be added." She also stated that in the body of the email the member should state that they are not receiving the eblast on Sundays and include their name and email address.

President English invited Section Chairs and Standing Committee Chairs to make any additional announcements.

Donations, Sales, Auction Committee (DSAC): Michele Marsel reported that seven members volunteered to help on Saturday to weigh and package one-pound and three-pound bags of material that will be put online for sale. Before they are offered to the public, members will be notified of an opportunity to buy them. Any volunteers who are interested in helping with the DSAC group, either on an "on-call list" or as a member of this group can speak to Michele directly or send an email to [donation@hgms.org](mailto:donation@hgms.org).

Show Committee: Scott Singleton has agreed to be the Show Chairman for 2022.

Web Site Committee: Scott Singleton asked President English to announce that Michele Marsel and Lauren Blyskal did a stellar job during December getting e-Commerce set up to separate the Education payments and Paleo Book sales and set the club up to be better prepared to utilize the internet.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

President English asked members to look for the progress of Old Business items in the Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes in the latest BackBender's Gazette (BBG) on the HGMS Website <https://hgms.org> under Publications.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

The next Board of Directors Zoom meeting will be Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. February 1, 2022.

The next General Meeting will be Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. February 22, 2022. The program will be announced on the weekly eblast.

Sharon Halton will provide Refreshments.

Door Prize Drawing: Nathan Eleckles (a new youth member) was asked to draw the winning numbers for the door prizes. James Wark won the first prize, a fist-sized piece of rough agate. Sharon Halton won the second prize, a polished agate slab. Sharon gifted it to Nathan Eleckles.

The Show-n-Tell portion of the meeting was postponed until after the program.

Adjourn:

James Wark moved to adjourn and Will Heierman seconded it. The motion passed with unanimous agreement from the attendees.

Before President English adjourned the meeting, she reminded members of three things: "Feed the Kitty" for refreshments which were provided by Neal Immega. Place final bids on the Silent Auction Items, to be paid for after the program. Take time to thank the volunteers who made this meeting possible and who maintain HGMS all year round.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Program:

President English introduced the speaker, Neal Immega. He reprised his talk on agates from the 2019 Agate Expo in Austin, Texas. He noted that there were many beautiful agates but that their owners were extremely proud of them. He showed examples from different dealers' booths and from the exhibits. He also gave information on different types of agates and the locations where the agates are found.

At one point during the Expo Neal tried to buy a Lake Superior agate to cut, but the dealer was horrified and would only sell him broken pieces. You aren't supposed to cut good Lakers! Steve Blyskal brought 3 flats of agates for show and tell related to the talk, some of which were purchased at the Expo. He also offered many pertinent comments about agates and jaspers.

Sonja Janysek brought some agates from South Texas for Show & Tell. Afterward, members paid for their Silent Auction wins.