

2004 EFMLS/AFMS CONVENTION & SHOW

by Bob Livingston

Gem and Mineral Society of Syracuse (club Host)

This is our second installment of getting the word out to you. Last month we told you when and where the show is and when and where the meetings are. We tried to give enough info for the early birds to lock in a hotel reservation at the Headquarters Ramada Inn. (Remember for complete package details, you can go to <www.amfed.org/EFMLS> click 2004 Convention and get full particulars, plus all the forms may be easily downloaded.) This time we will tell you what's going to be shaking at the show, and why you should not miss coming to the fabulous Finger Lakes area of upstate New York.

This show is several acres of goodies all in air conditioned comfort in the largest building at the New York State fairgrounds. With all this going for you it can easily be your one-stop shopping site for this summer: you will walk several miles to taking it all in - a wholesale section of 12 wholesalers (valid tax number will be required for entry) and 52 hand-picked retailers from the US and Canada.

You will get to meet dino SUE in all her glory from out West plus see great educational exhibits (with everyone's cooperation we are planning for at least a hundred-strong showing). Here's a sampling of some we already know: the Smithsonian, Carnegie Museum, AE Seaman Museum, New York State Museum, PRI, Penn State and Syracuse U. have all promised fantastic displays. In addition we know there will be world class minerals by pros like Bill Pinch, a phenomenal case of treasures brought up by Dr. Steven Chamberlain from his descent 2-1/2 miles under the Atlantic in the sub, Alvin, fantastic carvings, wow opals, New York State garnets, Art Grant's museum cut stones, coprolites, calcites, quartzes in many forms including Herkimer diamonds like no other, and huge specimens from a Canadian quarry.

Then there are humongous several-thousand carat-faceted stones from the Northwest Faceters guys, the 5800 carat "Dare Devil" CZ won just 2 years back, aquamarine to die for, a large and complete fossilized shark from George Powell, plus the jewelry/metal work exhibits, cabs, faceted stones, minerals, fossils, spheres, carvings, mining memorabilia and whatever that will be brought in to share by you all. Plan on placing yours in competition and stand a chance for a nice bragging ribbon, or better yet a trophy.

Add fossil prep demos, glass beadmaking, faceting, beading, cabbing, daily "Glowing Fluorescent" shows with UV Bob, tools, machinery, supplies, onsite jeweler, wirewrapping, and we have the nucleus of enough to keep you busy for a while.

Lest we forget your kids, we'll have mineral sluicing for them, Strawdarw game, geode splitting, operating gondola car trains (for kids of all ages) and most likely soapstone carving. Top it off with lectures, some hand-made quilts for the ladies, hobby art, gem trees, hourly door prizes, great show prizes, and EFMLS auction of "Good Stuff" on Saturday, food, free parking, a building that is wheel chair accessible, camping on the fairgrounds (reserve early), and several collecting trips and this whole Syracuse adventure takes on a life of its own.

You just can't lose unless you fail to come and be part of the 2004 great gathering of super people - Rockhounds.

Plan to take some extra time and enjoy the sights and pleasures of the Finger Lakes Vacationland for extra bonuses:

- Syracuse China factory and outlet is 10 minutes from the hotel
- Erie canal museum in

Syracuse has full size packet boat

- Boxing Hall of Fame (Canastota) is 25 minutes east from your hotel
- St. Lawrence Seaway and 1000 Islands are 2 hours North
- Tour and "taste" in the beautiful Finger Lakes wine country (25 wineries)
- Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown...Corvette Museum are 2-1/2 hours East
- Learn all about garnet production and collected, 3 hours north at North Creek, NY
- Historic aviation and glider trips, 2 hours South and West
- Museum of Glass, Corning (see world renown Steubenware crystal made), 2-1/2 hours South
- Sail on one of the eleven Finger lakes or enjoy an evening dinner cruise there
- Take in the Museum of Automotive History in downtown Syracuse
- Don't miss Niagara Falls, 2-1/2 hours West
- IMAX Theater and Rosamond Gifford Zoo in Syracuse
- Eastman (Kodak) Museum is in Rochester, 1-1/2 hours West
- Huge 3-story Carousel Mall for shopping, 1-1/2 miles south of Ramada Inn
- Salt Museum (Syracuse got its start pumping and evaporating salt), 2 miles from the hotel
- Stickley, collector-grade furniture factory and showroom, 20 minutes East

Lots to enjoy, lots to see, photo opportunities galore to snap and share back home. Remember, "Memories" are made from all of this. The welcome mat will be out for YOU.

Next month, we will tie-up some loose ends and take it up "another notch" with Field Trip opportunities.

from *EFMLS News* (3/04)

LOUD & CLEAR

by George Loud, EFMLS/AFMS Chair

H.R. 2416 - Paleontological Resources Preservation Act

Congressman (or Congresswoman) _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

As I write this in mid-January, H.T. 2416 is "stalled" in several House committees, including the Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands, the Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health, and the Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans, all subcommittees of the House Resources Committee. The companion bill in the Senate (S546) passed on voice vote and some predicted smooth sailing through the House. However, by letter, email and telephone, opponents of the bill were able to get sufficient information to House members on the key committees to at least delay the legislation. In my early teens (several years ago) I collected a rock only recently confirmed by a professional paleontologist to be petrified bone. Take the problem of identification, add the problem of ignorance of boundaries of public lands, and mix in the draconian criminal and civil penalties of H.R. 2416, and we have a mix likely to cast a chill on all collecting on public lands.

For example, H.R. 2416 provides for forfeiture of "all vehicles and equipment of any person that were used in connection with the violation" (Section 11(b)). We have such a forfeiture provision in statutes dealing with drug trafficking, but fossil collecting?

The following is representative of letters I have sent to over 50 House members:

Re: "Paleontological Resources Preservation Act"

Dear Congressman (or Congresswoman) _____

I am writing in opposition to the captioned bill. I serve as Chair of the Conservation and Legislation Committee of the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS), a national organization of "rockhound" clubs, representing about 50,000 rockhounds throughout the United States. I offer a wager to any of your colleagues inclined to support H.R. 2974. I will bring a group of ten (10) rocks, including one vertebrate fossil, to any location in the National Capital area at a time of their choosing. My bet is that they cannot identify the vertebrate fossil within a reasonable period of time. Yet H.R. 2416 would require such skill of ordinary citizens and impose draconian penalties in the event of failure. The Senate companion bill (S546) has already passed the Senate. Here's what Washington Watch had to say about S546: "Bad Bills S546 Anti-rockhounding bill titled the "Paleontological Resources Preservation Act" places severe penalties on recreational rockhounding, would permit only "experts" to disturb public land surfaces. Allows for seizure of private vehicles, camping equipment and anything else the government wants to grab for even minor violations. This bill assume that big brother government has all the answers, even though some of the greatest discoveries of dinosaurs in pre-recorded history has been done by private individuals." Frankly, I was surprised that the forfeiture provision for seizure of vehicles and other property of the malfessor (without right to trial?) is also provided for in the House bill, even if the violation is characterized as a "civil penalty", i.e. does not rise to the level of a crime (misdemeanor or felony). The forfeiture provision would put erring fossil collectors in the same peril as drug dealers. What else is wrong with H.R. 2416? Answer: a lot. For example, Section 9 "Prohibited Acts: "Penalties - False Labeling Offenses" provides "a person may not make or submit any false record, account, or label for, or any false identification of any paleontological resource excavated or removed from Federal lands." Pity the poor collector or curator, amateur or professional, who mistakes a *Psittacosaurus* bone for a *Chasmosaurus* bone. Such misidentification can make a criminal. Thankfully, I only collect minerals which I all to often misidentify. I also object to Section 15 of the bill entitled "Saving Provisions", Provision 3 which specifies that the bill does not apply to "amateur collecting of a rock, mineral or invertebrate or plant fossil that is not protected under this act." I wish to specifically address the situation here in Northern Virginia where I have lived for over 30 years. During this time I have received numerous inquiries from Scout leaders at a loss as to where to take scouts to collect geological materials and fulfill the requirements for a merit badge in geology. I have always directed them to Westmoreland State Park (a Commonwealth of Virginia Park) where fossils can be collected along the Potomac shoreline. I personally have led "Indian Princess" (YMCA/YWCA) groups on such collecting trips along the shores of the Potomac. On one such trip, which I vividly recall because my own daughter was present, every one of the approximately ten children found at least one fossil shark's tooth. Other materials collected included fossil whale bone. The kids were thrilled and took their treasures into their schools for show and tell sessions. Please understand that this activity would not have been possible if the Potomac shoreline was in a National Forest subject to the provisions of the legislation as proposed in the form of H.R. 2416 because all of the fossils collected by the kids on the trips I have described were vertebrate fossils. I could also relate my own experiences as a youngster collecting vertebrate fossils in creek beds but I do not wish to belabor the point. I recognize that current BLM and Forest Service regulations prohibit the collecting of any vertebrate fossil without a permit, however, I believe that this policy is wrong-headed and certainly should not be made statutory law. Young kids and old kids should be free to collect common vertebrate fossils as well as common invertebrate fossils on public lands. Fossil collecting is and has been gateway to the sciences, i.e. it is often one's first hands-on experience with anything science related. For the foregoing reasons I urge you to oppose H.R. 2416.

Yours truly,
George Loud, Chair, Conservation and Legislation Committee

Addendum

This afternoon (January 15th) I received a telephone call from a congressional aide who cautioned me that, in his opinion, the 14 co-sponsors of H. R. 2416 are likely to push to clear the bill from committee in the near future. Accordingly, it is not too late, indeed it is an opportune time, for you to write your congressperson to express your opinion of the bill.

from *EFMLS News* (3/04)

AGATE DAYS AND AGATE WAYS IN MOOSE LAKE, MINNESOTA

by W.C. McDaniel

With the finesse and precision comparable to Martha Stewart spreading foie gras on a slice of baguette, the driver of a ten-ton dump truck raised the bed, slowly opened the tailgate, and with a wailing siren police escort drove up a two block section of Elm Street in Moose Lake, Minnesota, spreading gravel containing 350 pounds of Lake superior Agates and 1,200 (\$300) quarters. It only took a few seconds to complete the run. An eager crowd of thousands stood by, restrained by a long yellow rope on each side of the street. Young and old. Large and small. Some with buckets. Others with bags. A few with kneepads. The Agate Stampede was poised and waiting for the signal.

BOOM! A recorded cannon blast roared. The ropes dropped and two city blocks of heads, arms and legs rushed to the middle of the street. Decorum was genteel. No knocking down of tykes by adults. No cannon ball dives or belly flops into the pile of gravel. No smashing of eager fingers by large feet. Although I heard of one guy wearing rubber cleats, only to be rebuffed by a stern-faced and determined mother. With their behinds and fannies extended upward or outward, eyes and noses to the pavement, the crowd pursued the treasures of the earth and of the U.S. monetary system. Agates went into buckets and bags. Quarters secretly squirreled away into pockets. The hunt continued for some time as every last rock was closely examined and moved to see what was underneath. Soon the large throng had departed. A return that evening to the scene of the stampede found no wayward rocks or rolling coins. A thin dust veil was the only visible evidence of this marvelous and enjoyable stampede of rockhounds.

Three blocks from the Agate Stampede a quieter but equally active event was taking place on the grounds of the Moose Lake School, the 34th Annual Agate Days, a Gem and Mineral Show celebrating the Lake Superior Agate. In just a little over a billion years, this colorful agate has moved from a great geological happening to become the Minnesota state gemstone and into the hearts, minds and wallets of many folks. Agate Days features three events: the agate Stampede, tailgaters, and a gem and mineral show.

The tailgater's section, located in the school parking lot, contains the dedicated and persistent agate hunters and lovers. These are the folks who get up at dawn looking for the farmer plowing the field, checking gravel pits, returning to old and going to new haunts, checking estate sales and some scuba diving into the chilly waters of Lake



2003 Agate Days in Moose Lake, Minnesota.
Photographs by W.C. and Cornelia McDaniel.

Superior. They arrive, spread out tailgates and tables full of eye popping agate specimens. Some attendees were observed walking around carrying a briefcase. Was it cash for their day's purchases? A quick flick of the wrist and the case snapped opened to reveal a choreographed display of their agate collection. The briefcases paled when compared to the collector walking around carrying a long gun case; opening to reveal rows of agates nestled in the friendly confines of a crate of foam. His agates, along with many others, have a curious and intriguing association, they have a provenance that includes a name (for the agate), date of discovery, location, original finder, previous owners and current owner. They should publish their own agate cards (i.e. baseball cards).

Two things were evident. First, pricing is not for those who want to hold on to your money as the big specimens (1/2 pound and up) were priced several hundred dollars, with the highest single price observed was \$1,700.00. Size, condition, color and originality all influence the price. Second, there two are distinct camps of opinions on what to do with these agates. The first camp considers any permanent alteration of the agate through lapidary work a crime against geology. This is especially true for large specimens. Although many of them will put baby oil or mineral oil on the agate to enhance their presentation and appearance. This is easily reversed. The second camp are those who change (or as they would prefer, enhance)