



# THE MOUNTAIN GEM

Gem & Mineral Society of Franklin, North Carolina  
October 2020 Newsletter



## Franklin Gem and Mineral Society

### Club Officers and Board of Directors

President: Jane Morgan, (828-342-8703)  
Past President: Al Pribble, (828-342-3119)  
Vice President: Arlon Eldridge, (828-369-5271)  
Secretary: Susan Fritz, (828-524-4936)  
Treasurer: Lake Holland, (828-369-5421)  
Assistant Treasurer: Kathi Walbridge, (802-598-7025)  
Museum Manager: Larry Ellert, (727-455-1849)  
Director (2020): Larry Ellert, (727-455-1849)  
Director (2020): Tom Parker, (828-342-3619)  
Director (2019): Diane Mason, (706-379-1718)  
Director (2019): Tom Sterrett, (828-349-3774)

### Committees

Membership: Tom Parker and Diane Mason  
Museum Curator: Mark Laing, (864-910-1580)  
Curator Emeritus: Fred Plesner, (828-349-4224)  
Museum Gift Shop: Anamay Rossomando (828-349-2807)  
Museum Workshop: Virginia Bennis (631-830-5403)  
Publicity: George Fritz, (828-524-4936)  
Field Trip Coordinator: Marsha Harmon, (828 369-7262)  
Program Coordinator: Kathi Walbridge  
Museum Calendar: Jay Mooney, (678-488-0620)  
Gemborees: Norm Holbert (828-634-0350)  
Education/Tours: Marsha Harmon, (828 369-7262)  
Asst Education/Tours: Ron Rossomando (828-349-2807)  
Web Master: Melissa Barfield (803-724-8312)  
Newsletter Editor: Stacy Walbridge [[fgmseditor@gmail.com](mailto:fgmseditor@gmail.com)]

The Club is a member of the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies and the Southeast Federation of the Mineralogical Societies.



The Gem and Mineral Society of Franklin, North Carolina, is a 501 (c)(3) organization and donations may be tax deductible. Please remember us when planning your estate.

## ZOOM IS HERE

Stacy Walbridge

Although the turnout was small it was a successful first attempt at Zoom for our general September meeting. The October meeting will also be held using Zoom starting at **7:00 pm** with a special guest speaker, Brad Smith. The meeting invitation will be sent by separate email. The Zoom meeting room will open at 6:30 pm if you want to join early (strongly recommended).

## OCTOBER MEETING PROGRAM

### Bench Tips for Jewelry Making

In every field, the top artisans have their favorite ways of solving common problems. Making a piece of jewelry is no exception. Accomplished jewelers have a variety of tips and tricks for saving time and improving the quality of work.

Brad Smith will share his favorite tips from 24 years of experience in the jewelry industry including a decade teaching hundreds of students. They range from soldering and polishing to stone setting and ways to cut costs. The presentation will highlight a few of the "Must-Have" tools for increasing your productivity. It includes a slide show with Q & A followed by a demo of Brad's tool kit for making perfect bezels.

Smith is a studio jeweler, lapidary, author, and jewelry instructor. He enjoys rockhounding, is a long-time member of the Culver City Rock Club, and is the author of five jewelry making books.

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Club Website: <http://www.fgmm.org>

Club Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/franklingems>

Club Newsletter: [fgmseditor@gmail.com](mailto:fgmseditor@gmail.com),

Club Contact E-mail: [franklingemsociety@gmail.com](mailto:franklingemsociety@gmail.com)

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## September 24 General Meeting Minutes

Susan Fritz, Secretary

The meeting was called to order by President Jane Morgan on Thursday, September 24, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. Due to the Covid pandemic, this meeting was held via Zoom.

Participants - Jane Morgan, Arlon Eldridge, Al Pribble, Susan Fritz, Duane Haskell, Larry Ellert, John Hayes, Deborah Wright, George Fritz, Stacy Walbridge, Kathi Walbridge. We also had a guest participant, Angela Riccio, DO, a new physician in Franklin.

Minutes – Jane Morgan asked if there were any corrections and/or additions to the minutes as printed in the February 2020 newsletter. There being none, Arlon Eldridge moved that the minutes be accepted and Stacy Walbridge seconded the motion.

Treasurer – Lake Holland was not able to participate this evening but Susan Fritz reported on what Lake had stated during the Tuesday Board meeting (via Zoom). We are in the plus column with all of the major bills having been paid. Jane Morgan inquired as to whether or not the signature card at the bank would need to be changed and Susan Fritz stated as far as she knew the names could remain the same and that the only time we need to have a new signature card is when officers change.

President – Jane Morgan announced that the next meeting would be held at 7:00 p.m. instead of 6:30 since it seems to interfere with dinner. She inquired about gardening around the museum.

Vice President – As discussed during the Board meeting this past Tuesday, Arlon Eldridge tried to contact County Commissioner Ronnie Beale regarding having the county pay for any work that may be done underneath the museum. He noted that Commissioner Beale will be retiring at the end of this year.

Museum Manager - Larry Ellert reported that the alarm went off again today. He stated that he, John Hayes and Al Pribble met with Frontier and a new modem with a new password has been placed. The security system is now on and the motion sensor in the back has been replaced. They are meeting again next Tuesday. Jane Morgan suggested a camera to record museum comings and goings.

Workshop Manager – Virginia Bennis did not participate tonight. John Hayes stated he did what he promised and went to Lowe’s to check out prices for dehumidifiers. They have two - \$189 and \$219. He also checked prices on Visqueen for the meeting room and the back part of the museum, which he estimated would run around \$100. There is also a spray at \$8 bottle. Three bottles are estimated to be needed.

Gem Show – Norman Holbert did not participate this evening. Arlon Eldridge stated that dates for the 2021 gem shows are already set. Right now he said the Community building is open at a reduced capacity.

Publications – Stacy Walbridge announced the newsletter deadline would be October 22.

Publicity – George Fritz said he had not heard from any welcome centers in over a year as they generally contact him for more museum brochures, noting that tourism is way down.

The Gem & Mineral Society of Franklin, NC, Inc.  
Minutes – September 24, 2020 – Via Zoom - General Meeting  
Page Two

Programs – Kathi Walbridge said that tonight we will have a power point presentation by Stacy Walbridge on collecting in the Sonoran Desert. For the October Zoom meeting we will have a guest, Brad Smith, author of Bench Tips, who will share his favorite tips from over 24 years of experience in the jewelry industry as well as his 10 year history of teaching.

### NEW BUSINESS:

John Hayes stated the invoice from Chamber of Commerce for \$75 arrived in the mail. He noted that the C of C still owes us \$300 from the BBQ.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by President Jane Morgan at 7:00 p.m. It was again noted that next month’s meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. (instead of 6:30 p.m.).

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The meeting was then followed by a power point presentation by Stacy Walbridge on collecting in the Sonoran Desert.

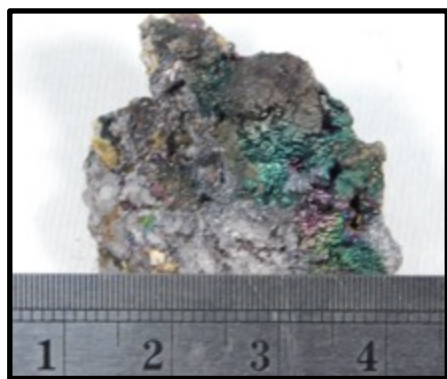
## GRAVES MOUNTAIN

Article and Photographs by Stacy Walbridge

The temperature in Franklin was in the high 30s when we left for Graves Mountain on Saturday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, but with a lot of sun in the forecast it promised to be a great day for collecting. When we arrived at the mountain the temperature was climbing to the low 60s making it perfect for a day at the mountain.

After signing in and filling out the numerous releases Kathi and I opted to search the color pit looking for lazulite and iridescent hematite. A 20 minute hike up the mountain brought us to the site where we began to surface collect some of the tailings along the southern edge of the pit.

Within minutes we were finding small pieces with color, keeping some of the prettier ones. Kathi stayed low while I crabbed up the tailings to examine a hole where previous collectors had dug. There was a vein of hematite evident on one face that I started to follow with a hammer and chisel. Unfortunately, after an hours work there was no color to be found so I moved on to other tailings.



Green and Purple Iridescent Hematite  
– 2.5 cm

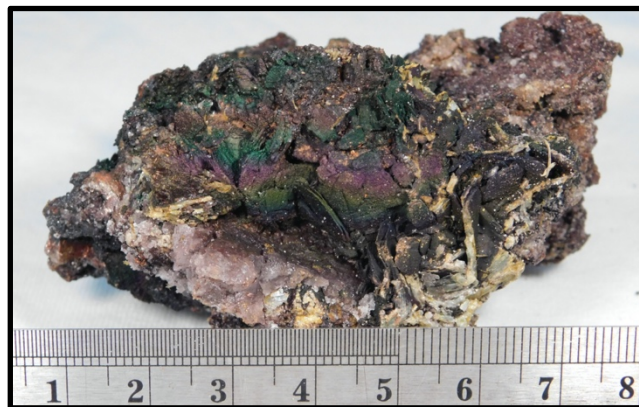
While I was on one side of the pit Kathi was surface skimming the other side and finding some color along with pyrophyllite. This was the first time that we found pyrophyllite at the bottom of the color pit.



6 cm Wide Iridescent Hematite on Quartz  
Matrix

Several of those pieces are now sitting in a mixture of Elmers Glue-All and water to stabilize the delicate flower like sprays.

We finished the day with several pieces to bring home but more importantly enjoyed the great fall weather outside doing what we love.



Purple and Green Iridescent Hematite with Traces  
of Pyrophyllite

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## OCTOBER BIRTHSTONES:

### Opal & Tourmaline

Article and Photos Courtesy of

<https://www.gia.edu/birthstones/october-birthstones>

## Opal

The name of this, the traditional October birthstone, is believed to have originated in India (the source of the first opals brought to the Western world), where in Sanskrit it was called *upala*, a “precious stone.” In ancient Rome, this became *opalus*. Most opals are valued for their shifting colors in rainbow hues – a phenomenon known as “play-of-color.”

The October birthstone’s dramatic play-of-color has inspired writers to compare it to fireworks, galaxies and volcanoes. Bedouins once believed opal held lightning and fell from the sky during thunderstorms. Ancient Greeks thought opals bestowed the gift of prophesy and protection from disease. Europeans long maintained opal to be a symbol of purity, hope and truth. Hundreds of years ago, opal was believed to embody the virtues and powers of all colored stones. Opal is also the stone given to celebrate the 14th wedding anniversary.

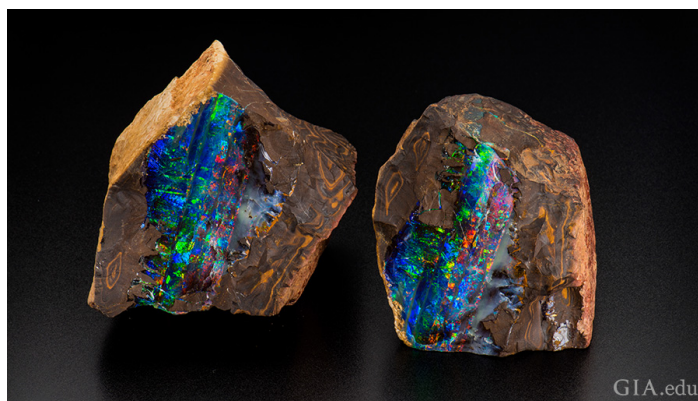
### Where is it found?

The opal birthstone can be found in many places. The fields of Australia are the most productive in the world for the October birthstone. Ethiopia, Mexico and Brazil are also important sources. Additional deposits have been found in Central Europe, Honduras, Indonesia, Madagascar, Peru, Turkey and the United States.

Lightning Ridge, a small town in New South Wales, Australia, is famed for producing prized black opal. A dry and rocky region softened only by small trees and scrub brush, Lightning Ridge gets little rain and bakes in the scorching summer temperatures. The climate is

so unforgiving that miners often live underground to find respite from the punishing heat.

Australia is also a source of other types of the October birthstone. White opal is found in the White Cliffs area of New South Wales, as well as in Mintabie, Andamooka and Coober Pedy in South Australia. Boulder opal, which comes from only one location in the world, is mined in Queensland.



Two pieces of boulder opal that is found only in Queensland. Photo: Robert Weldon/GIA

In Ethiopia, the October birthstone is found near the village of Wegel Tena, in Wollo Province. Travel 340 miles (about 550 kilometers) north of the capital Addis Ababa and up 8,000 feet (2,400 meters), where miners pry opal from shafts dug into the side of a plateau. Gems unearthed here range in body color from white, yellow, orange and brownish red to “chocolate” brown. Some of the opals show play-of-color. Another mine, in Ethiopia’s Shewa Province, yields the coveted black opal, as well as orange, white and crystal opal. Its treasures are buried in steep cliffs that tower over the landscape.

Querétero, a state in Mexico, is known for producing fire opal in yellow, orange and reddish orange to red, some with good play-of-color. The mines are a tourist destination, and getting to them requires taking a dirt road through dense forests of pine and oak, past scrubby plateaus of cacti and shrubs, and up winding mountain roads.

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## Tourmaline

Tourmaline is the newer October birthstone. The name comes from the Sinhalese word toramalli, which means “stone with mixed colors,” because it often has multiple colors in one crystal. Very few gems match tourmaline’s dazzling array of colors. Perhaps this is why ancient mystics believed this October birthstone could inspire artistic expression – it has a color palette for every mood. Among the most popular are the pink and red rubellites, the emerald green “chrome” tourmalines, and the neon green and blue-to-violet “paraíba” tourmalines.



Suite of multi-color tourmaline. Photo: Robert Weldon/GIA

Because of its vast range of colors, tourmaline was often mistaken for other gemstones. One of the “rubies” in the Russian crown jewels, the “Caesar’s Ruby” pendant, is actually red (rubellite) tourmaline. A Spanish conquistador found green tourmaline crystals in Brazil in the 1500s and confused the stones with emerald. These and other cases of mistaken identity continued for centuries until scientists recognized tourmaline as a distinct mineral species in the 1800s.

## Where is it found?

This October birthstone is most commonly found in Brazil, but it is also mined in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kenya, Madagascar and Mozambique (among other countries in Africa). California and Maine are

historically important producers of fine tourmaline in the United States.

Most of the tourmaline mined in Brazil over the centuries comes from pegmatites in the state of Minas Gerais. These subterranean intrusions of magma are the source of a virtual kaleidoscope of gem minerals. In the late 1980s, however, electric green, blue and violet tourmalines entered the gem market from pegmatites in Brazil’s Paraíba State. Scientists found that the intense colors were caused by trace amounts of copper, which had previously not been recorded as a coloring agent in any other tourmaline. In the early 2000s, Paraíba-type copper-bearing tourmalines were also discovered in Mozambique and Nigeria. Overall, prices for the best Paraíba and Paraíba-type tourmalines easily surpass other tourmalines due to their vivid hues, higher color saturation and greater rarity.

In the United States, both Southern California and Maine host several pegmatite districts. For more than a century, they have sporadically yielded large quantities of tourmaline.



Old tunnel entrance at the Tourmaline King mine. Photo: Brendan Laurs

Maine’s first major tourmaline deposit was discovered in 1820 at Mount Mica in Paris, by two young boys exploring the local area. Even today, a quarry at Mount Mica intermittently produces various colors of gem tourmaline. The Dunton mine, near

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Plumbago Mountain, is the most prolific producer of tourmaline in Maine.

In 1898, California's first commercial tourmaline mine opened at the Himalaya pegmatite in the Mesa Grande district – famed for the production of fine rubellite. To feed Empress Dowager Cixi's obsession with the vibrant color, San Diego mines sent 120 tons of gem rubellite to Imperial China between 1902 and 1910. With the death of Cixi in 1908 and the subsequent overthrow of the Qing dynasty, the heyday of tourmaline mining in California ended. Today, only a few mines in San Diego County occasionally produce gem-quality tourmaline.

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## UPCOMING SHOWS

### 7-8 November 2020: Plant City, FL

Tampa Bay Mineral and Science Club

Show Hours: Saturday to Sunday 10am - 5pm

Strawberry Festival Expo Hall

303 N. Lemon St, Plant City, FL

Admission: \$5 adults, free for children under 12 accompanied by an adult

[www.tampabayrockclub.com](http://www.tampabayrockclub.com)

### 14-15 November 2020: Melbourne, FL

Canaveral Mineral & Gem Society

Show Hours: Saturday to Sunday 10am - 5pm

Melbourne Auditorium

625 Hibiscus Ave, Melbourne, FL

<https://www.canaveral-mgs.com/our-show.html>

### 20-22 November 2020: Raleigh, NC

Treasures of the Earth

Show Hours: Fri Noon to 6, Sat & Sun 10am - 5pm

NC State Fairgrounds

1025 Blue Ridge Blvd, Raleigh, NC

<https://www.canaveral-mgs.com/our-show.html>

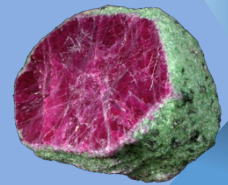
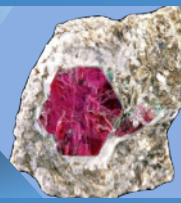
## HOW TO CRACK A GEODE

Fred Plesner, Curator Emeritus

1. Geodes don't crack and open at their best when wet, damp or just dug out.
2. Using a flat hard surface roll your geode like a bowling ball. It should stop with the heavy side down. This will help you decide where to start cutting or cracking.
3. Use protective gear. Goggles or a face shield are must.
4. Geodes can shatter so open spaces are the recommended space for this type of work.
5. If all you want is a bunch of small pieces put your geode in a sock and hit it with a claw hammer.
6. A diamond saw is recommended. Just make sure the blade has diamond in it or you will just ruin a carbide steel blade and make sure you have a lubricant. Yes, tile saws usually have a diamond blade, just make sure before using.
7. Use a geode cracker, essentially the old cast iron pipe cutter Just wrap the chain around the geode, fasten it into a notch and apply pressure to the to the lever
8. The no tools method. This works best with geodes that are 2" to 5" in diameter. Examine the geode carefully for a crack then grasp your geode with the three middle fingers on top and the thumb and little finger on the sides. (Please no finger on the bottom, not if you value them, anyway). Gently tap the geode on a hard surface, rotate slightly and tap, repeat. Look for a crack. Once a crack has been spotted tap just ahead of the crack, never on the crack.
9. The hammer and chisel method. Take your geode outside to a hard surface, a concrete drive, etc., a wooden surface is not recommended as there is bounce in it and you may need three hands for this. Holding your geode with your third hand take a cold chisel and strike it with the hammer lightly. Don't try to break it open now....Rotate the geode about a half inch, place the cold chisel in line with where you just hit and strike it again lightly with your hammer. By the time you have hit the chisel all the way around your geode it should be ready to crack open. If it hasn't begun to crack open start around the circumference again, only this time strike it just a bit harder. It's slow but don't get in any hurry. If done right it will eventually crack.

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Fine Gemstones & Jewelry  
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**Earl McGaughey**  
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**CLOSED SUNDAYS**

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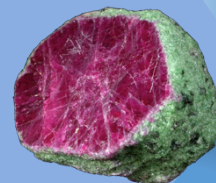
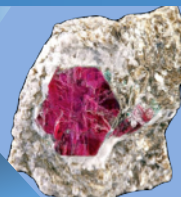
Amiee Bailey, General Manager  
Sonja H. & Arlon Eldridge, owners  
email: cowee@yahoo.com  
web:www.coweemtnrubymine.com

**October Board Meeting**  
**7:00 pm Tuesday, October 27, 2020**

**October General Meeting**  
**7:00 pm Thursday, October 29, 2020**  
**This will be a Zoom Meeting**  
**Bench Tips**  
**By**  
**Brad Smith**

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**November Newsletter Deadline is  
Thursday, November 12, 2020**

## *Franklin Gem and Mineral Museum*

25 Phillips Street, Franklin, NC 28734

