

SACRAMENTO MINERAL SOCIETY HISTORY

By Antonia Barry (updated by Alyssa Meiszinger)

In 1935, with the opening of McClellan Air Force Base in Sacramento grabbing the headlines, the Northern California Mineral Society of San Francisco approached two Sacramentans with the idea of establishing a Sacramento Branch of the Society. Mr. J.B. Nichols, a nationally known mineralogist and Mr. Allen Nicol, a mineralogist for the California Division of Highways went to work and held the first organizational meeting on February 29, 1936 at the Travelers Hotel. After paying \$2.50 for the Mirror Room they started the Society that night with a lucky 13 members. The hotel is still standing at 5th and J Street 102 years after its opening.

The first meeting was held on March 26, 1936 at Sacramento Junior College and sponsored by Bausch & Lomb. The door prize was a polished specimen of jasper cut from a core from the foundation of the Golden Gate Bridge. After severing ties with the San Francisco group the club was finally christened as the Sacramento Mineral Society in 1938. The club continues to honor this name today.

Over the years meetings were held at Sacramento JC, the Chamber of Commerce and the Clunie Club House. Pictures from the era show men in suits and hats and ladies with white gloves. Field trips were made every year using canvas tents and the classic cars of the time. Now we have campers and nylon tents and continue the field trip tradition at several times a year.

Early gem shows were held at the Crocker Art Gallery, Clunie Auditorium, Turn Verein Hall and then finally at the old State Fairgrounds. Like today, there were vendors and exhibits. Unlike today, there was no admission charge and there were three days of serious lectures on mineralogy, geology and lapidary. The display cases that we still use today were originally built in 1960 and 1961.

In 1969 the Sacramento Mineral Society extended Special Honorary Memberships to Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins and Edwin Aldrin Jr. in recognition of having participated in the longest field trip on record for rock collecting on the moon. Those lifetime memberships are still valid.

Notices of meetings, field trips and shows were posted in the Sacramento Bee and handled by penny post cards. By 1975 the show was moved to Cal Expo and admission was \$1.00. In 1968 the club started judging exhibits of minerals, geology and lapidary work at the Sacramento Bee Science Fair. The shows at Cal Expo took up 3 buildings and had impressive displays of jade, crystal and petrified wood. The 50th anniversary show in 1986 was held in eight buildings of Cal Expo and each building was a complete show in itself!

Mineralogy classes were part of the educational meeting nights and lapidary classes were offered. We still offer an educational meeting on the second Thursday of every month which is open to members and the public. Classes are often offered to members and sometimes the general public. The most popular classes have been a basic cabochon class, wire wrapping, metal stamping and metal etching classes. A rock painting class, gemstone Ming tree class, and an agate suncatcher class should be coming in 2023!

Our club maintains a lapidary workshop that is open three times per week. There is great camaraderie among rockhounds and the social aspect of the club is fun and enriching.

We currently have about 100 members. Our 86th annual Sacramento Gem and Mineral Show will be held October 29 and 30, 2022 at the Scottish Rite Temple, 6151 H Street, Sacramento, CA and the hours are Saturday 10am-5pm and Sunday 10am-4pm, rain or shine. We will have over 30 vendors, a kid's activity area and various demonstrations. The show will have a slight nod to the approaching Halloween holiday with a lighthearted Halloween theme, and kids in costume get a prize at the door. There will also be exhibits, a snack bar, food truck, our famous Spinning Wheel and the big Raffle!