



The Helena Mineral Society Newsletter



Gem, Mineral, and Geological Education and Experience

January 2009

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From The Editor:

. This month I will talk about garnets, January's birthstone. Garnets belong in the Neosilicate group. There are six divisions for garnets; Almandite, Pyrope, Spessartite, Grossularite, Andradite and Uvarovite. Garnets are fairly hard but brittle and tend to shatter into small cubic fragments. The specific gravities are fairly high, 3.58 to 4.32, making them easily recovered in a gold pan or shaking in water to concentrate.

Garnets come in many colors, from clear to black. The most sought after color is green followed by orange. For years, garnets were thought to come in any color except blue but, blue garnets have been discovered in Africa.

Garnets are a very common mineral close to Helena. Grossular garnets are found at the Crazy Sphinx Mine up Dry Gulch. Fine gem quality Pyrope garnets are found in the gravels of the Missouri River. Almandine, Pyrope, and Rhodolite garnets are found from the Alder – Virginia City area to Dillon along the Ruby River, Ruby Lake and Sweetwater Creek (where HMS goes to collect for the Garnet Hunt).

Other collecting areas include, Scratch Gravel Hills, Pat's Gulch, Whiskey Gulch (near Butte), Delmo Lake pegmatites, and Lowland Creek west of Bernice.

The crystal structure in all species results in ball-like individual or spherical masses when enclosed in rock. Crystal forms are primarily dodecahedron or trapezohedron. Many crystals are one form or the other, but combinations occur, resulting in beautiful crystals.

Garnets come in sizes from micro to fist size or larger. The bulk are used as abrasives, but many are collected or faceted for jewelry.

**Helena Mineral Society
Officers for 2007-2008**

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Historian: Phyllis Smith

Field Trip Chairman: Martin Landry
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Show Chairman: Gary Parisi
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Newsletter Editor: Gary Parisi

HMS is going green! If you would rather view the newsletter on line at the web site, (www.helenamineralsociety.org), please contact Andy or Jim by phone or email.

Phyllis Smith is taking applications for a wire wrapping class scheduled for Feb. 7, 2009. To sign up, contact her at 475-3127.

Phil Walsh will be teaching a mineral identification class at Helena High School starting Feb. 10, 2009 from 7 to 9 PM. The application form is in the Jan. 11 Helena Independent Record. If you are new to the club, need a refresher or just want to get out of the house, this class is for you. Cost is \$60.00. Sign up now!

Dates for the 2012 HMS show have been secured at the Civic Center. They are April 13 – 15, 2012. Hope to see you there.

The bylaw changes that were brought up at the November meeting were discussed and voted on. Both were passed. The membership due date is now April 30. Those who have paid dues for the coming year will not owe dues until April 2010, what a deal.

It was voted to create a Membership Chairperson position. Jim Bruce will serve in that capacity. Soooo, HMS needs a volunteer to take over as secretary for the remainder of Jim's term.

The Christmas party was a big hit at the new venue. We will have it there again this year.

On these cold days, if you are looking for something to do, grab bag material will be needed so sort and break rocks or throw some in the tumbler.

If you have pictures of field trips from last summer, either digital or film, please contact me. I need some new ones for the sides of the showcases at the April show. I have the ones from last year, but some new ones would be nice.

A few photos from 2007 and 2008



Fossil collecting on Hogback Mtn
August 2008



Quartz Hill Mine, near Dewey, MT
July 2007



Looking at mineral specimens before heading to the Elkhorn Mine at Elkhorn, MT. Sept. 2008



Bear Grass near Lincoln, MT
July 2007

Meetings

The Helena Mineral Society meets at the Mountain West Bank located on Montana Avenue between Aspen and Poplar. Meetings are the second Thursday of every month at 7:00 pm. There is no regular meeting for the month of December. See you there! Friends, guests, and new members are always welcome

To place a classified ad, please see me in person at one of our regular meetings or you may e-mail me (Gary) with your information at gjparisi72@yahoo.com. Ad will run in the newsletter for that month only unless specifically requested to run longer.

Pictures and Articles Needed:

If you have a picture that you want to share, please send it to me, along with a short description of the activity, where it took place, and when, and I'll put it in the newsletter. If you'd like to share your field trip adventures with those members who are unable to attend, please feel free to contribute to the newsletter. Just e-mail me your experiences, and I'll make sure they're entered. Remember, this is your newsletter, and your contributions make it better.

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