



# Conglomerate

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## • **Upcoming Shows**

For the latest information, check out the web site of the Eastern Federation of Mineral and Lapidary Societies:  
<http://www.amfed.org/efmls>.

### MARCH

**20-21: Gaithersburg, MD** - The 42nd Gem Lapidary and Mineral Society of Montgomery County MD Show Hours: Sat. 10am-6pm; Sun. 11am-5pm. Montgomery Co. Fairgrounds. Directions:  
<http://www.mcagfair.com/>

**26-28: Elkridge, MD** - 37th Annual Atlantic Micromounters Conference, hosted by the Micromineralogists of the National Capital Area. MHA Conference Center, Elkridge, MD. Registration & Info: Steve Weinberger, [cscrystals2@verizon.net](mailto:cscrystals2@verizon.net).

**27-28: Chambersburg, PA** - 32nd Annual Gem-Mineral & Jewelry Show, spons. by Franklin County Rock & Mineral Club. Shalom Christian Academy, Chambersburg, PA.

**27-28: Buffalo, NY** - 42nd Annual Show, with theme of "Trilobites Under the Seas of Western New York." Sat. 10 AM to 6 PM, Sun. 10 AM to 5 PM. The Fairgrounds in Hamburg, NY, Market and Grange Bldgs., 5600 McKinley Pkwy. Use the South Park Ave. entrance.

*see next page*

## Next BMS Meeting: Wed., March 24 at 7:15pm

The next meeting of BMS will be held March 24th, 2010 at the Cockeysville Fire Hall social room just off of York road south of Shawan Road. You can find detailed directions at our club web site, [www.baltimoremineralsociety.org](http://www.baltimoremineralsociety.org). The meeting starts at 7:15 p.m. The program is tentatively scheduled to be **Minerals of Alum Cave Bluff**, given by Dennis Coskrin. The meeting will be hosted by Brad and Patty Grant.

## Minutes of Feb. 24 BMS Meeting

President Bradley Grant called the February meeting of the BMS to order at 7:30 p.m. Minutes of the January meeting were approved as printed in the *Conglomerate*. Treasurer Bob Hudgins reported that we remain solvent. Brad indicated that one of his goals for the year was to establish an outreach program for schools. Suggestions made by members include members contacting teachers and visiting classrooms and looking into setting up displays in schools and libraries.

There was no **Unfinished Business**.

**New Business:** Al Pribula moved that BMS send a contribution of \$250 to the Cockeysville Volunteer Fire Hall as a thank-you for allowing us to meet in their hall and to help offset some of their expenses. The motion was seconded and passed.

### Announcements:

- Bradley and Patty Grant will bring refreshments for the March meeting and Bob Hudgins for April and Al Pribula for June.
- The field trip to Churchville Quarry has been cancelled for now because the Quarry is now requiring proof of Miners Safety Certification. Bradley is looking into setting up a certification class here in the area for our members and perhaps members of other clubs.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm and was followed by a "My Favorite Mineral Show and Tell" given by members Jim Hooper, Al Pribula, Jim & Mimi Stauffer, Jake Slagle, Steve Weinberger and Bob Hudgins. Each brought and told about one or more minerals from their collections and told why they were the favorites.

—Carolyn Weinberger, Secretary

## From the BMS President:

I hope to make this a regular feature in *The Conglomerate*. I do enjoy talking about our club. While no one ever accused me of being a great communicator, hopefully what I add to *The Conglomerate* will be some benefit to the club.

This past weekend I went to EFMLS Convention and Delaware Mineral Show in Christiana, Delaware, and it was a great experience. I had a chance to meet other club members to talk about issues impacting our club and I got the chance to establish some new friendships. One of the nice surprises is that our Website won 4th place in the EFMLS Webmasters Contest. What the judges really liked about our website was the information devoted to Micromounting. I would like to thank Carolyn, Steve and Mike for their input for making that section so interesting. I would also like to create another section on our website to introduce people to the Hobby of Rocks and Minerals. I would appreciate feedback from the club about this section.

*see next page*

Admission \$5.00. Children under 12 free. Minerals, Fossils, Beads, Jewelry, Demonstrations, Public and Private Collections. [www.bgsny.org](http://www.bgsny.org). Contact [sbirtz@aol.com](mailto:sbirtz@aol.com).

#### APRIL

**17-18: West Mifflin PA** - 2010 Monongahela Rockhounds Gem Mineral and Fossil Show. Sat.: 10am-6pm; Sun.: 10am-4:00 pm. at West Mifflin Volunteer Fire Company, #4 Skyview Hall, 640 Noble Drive, West Mifflin PA 15122. Web Site: [www.monongahelarockhounds.org](http://www.monongahelarockhounds.org) or call 724-327-8618.

**24-25: Franklin, NJ** - 38th Annual NJ Earth Science Gem & Mineral Show (& Outdoor Swap). Co-sponsors: Franklin-Ogdensburg Mineralogical Society, NJ Earth Science Association and Sterling Hill Mining Museum. At Franklin Borough School, 50 Washington Ave. <http://sterlinghillminingmuseum.org/visitorschedule.php#events>

Visit <http://www.amfed.org/efmls> for more information.

#### Baltimore Mineral Society

Mike Seeds, *president*, 717-285-3745; Bradley Grant, *vice president*; Bob Hudgins, *treasurer*; Carolyn Weinberger, *secretary*; Larry Krause, *newsletter*, 410/828-0024.

E-mail news or questions to: [mseeds@fandm.edu](mailto:mseeds@fandm.edu) or [managingeditor@verizon.net](mailto:managingeditor@verizon.net)  
Write c/o 1106 Gypsy Lane West Baltimore, MD 21286.

#### FIELD TRIP INFO:

E-mail [Edmund.A.Goldberg@usdoj.gov](mailto:Edmund.A.Goldberg@usdoj.gov) to learn about upcoming mineral field trips.

The mineral show at the convention was also very nice. Its theme was "Minerals from all 50 States." The displays from the different states were very interesting. At the show you also had people selling mineral specimens and jewelry. I couldn't find that certain Smithsonite specimen, but I will keep looking.

While we are still working to line up trips to quarries, don't let that stop you from going out. With the warmer weather coming, being able to spend part of your day outdoors is a great way to get some exercise and take your mind off of work.  
—Brad Grant

## Collecting Trip: Hunting Hill Quarry

There will be a trip to Hunting Hill Quarry at 8:15 a.m. on March 28th. If you are interested in attending, you need to have your dues paid and be at least 18 years of age. Brad Grant will have directions and details available when we get closer to the trip.

## Kudos!: BMS Web Site



Brad Grant

President and Webmaster Bradley Grant entered the BMS Website in the 2010 Web Site competition sponsored by the Eastern and American Federations. In case you've not visited there yet, the URL is [www.baltimoremineralsociety.org](http://www.baltimoremineralsociety.org). Bradley began working on the website in late 2009 and it's really a very good one.

Bradley's efforts earned him a 4th place in the first stage of the competition. While not enough to "move up" to the AFMS judging, Bradley did score very well and received several good suggestions that he says he will use to improve our site. Both Bradley and Patty were at the Editors and Webmasters breakfast at the EFMLS Convention in Delaware, and it was a delight to be able to present the award to him in person...and to see our group gain the recognition that it deserves.

A few members have contributed paragraphs on various subjects and photos of their minerals, but Brad could use more. If you have information about collecting techniques, mineral care, display suggestions, exhibiting hints, etc., or photos of your favorite minerals, send them to Brad.  
—Carolyn Weinberger

## Shoobox Adventures: Sulfur Sulfur Burning Bright

When I'm at my microscope bench, I leave the room lights off and work under a desk lamp. With a little Mozart playing, that makes a cool, dark, restful workspace. So you can understand the shock when I pulled a specimen out of the shoobox on the end of my bench and it transported me into a burning coalmine.

The label said, "Sulfur, Star Mine, Rosedale, Alberta, Canada." A more elaborate slip of paper explained that the mine closed in 1957 due to an underground fire, and that it was still burning in 1981 when the specimen was collected by clearing a few rocks away from a vent where hot gases were emerging. The slip concluded by warning that the gases emerging from these vents are hot enough to burn skin and clothing.

see next page

### —BMS MEETING SCHEDULE—

7:15 P.M. 4th Wednesdays at Cockeysville Volunteer Fire Hall, York Road just south of Shawan Road. No meetings in Oct. (Micromount Symposium); December (BMS holiday party), May (BMS Picnic).

### —It's time to renew your BMS Membership!—

Individual memberships \$10; family memberships \$15. Send payment along with your name, list of family members if applicable, address, phone and e-mail to: **Bob Hudgins, 6713 Balmoral Overlook, New Market, MD 21774**. Or: renew at the next BMS meeting!

## Other Local Clubs

### Chesapeake Gem And Mineral Society, Inc.

(<http://chesapeake.rockclub.us/>) meets the 2nd Friday of each month except August at 7:30 P.M. Women's Club of Catonsville, St. Timothy's Lane & Old Frederick Rd; Catonsville, MD.

### Gem Cutters Guild of Baltimore, Inc.

(<http://www.gemcuttersguild.com>) meets the 1st Tuesday of each month except January, July and August at 7:30 P.M. at Meadow Mill at Woodberry, 3600 Clipper Mill Rd., Suite 116; Baltimore, MD

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New Market, MD 21774  
Or: renew at the next BMS meeting!

## Write for "The Conglomerate"!

Send your observations to [octahedron1@mac.com](mailto:octahedron1@mac.com) or [mseeds@fandm.edu](mailto:mseeds@fandm.edu) for inclusion in *The Conglomerate*. Don't have email? Hand in your submissions at a meeting or by snail mail.

Mine fires are not that unusual, especially in coalmines, and once a mine catches fire, it is almost impossible to put out. There are at least three dozen burning mines in Pennsylvania right now, and hundreds of thousands around the world. Mine fires are very common in less developed countries where safety standards and working conditions are poor, but there are plenty of mine fires in the United States. Mine fires can be started by natural causes, such as lightning or even spontaneous combustion of rich ores, and once started, they burn for very long times.

When coal burns, the temperature in the mine can reach very high temperatures. Sulfur is an impurity in coal and would burn at high temperatures, but with the limited oxygen in a burning mine, a lot of the sulfur leaks out of natural vents in the form of sulfur vapor mixed with other exhaust gases. When the gases hit the cooler air, the sulfur condenses from a vapor directly into a solid and can form crystals or amorphous solids on rocks around the vent.

I have a specimen covered with dipyrnidial sulfur crystals that my daughter collected from a vent over the Centralia, PA mine fire when her geology class visited the area. The Centralia fire is famous. It started in May 1962 when people burning trash at the local dump accidentally set fire to an exposed seam of coal. By August of that year, the fire had burned down into the underground workings, and over the years the ground began to buckle, subside and collapse. The town of 1100 had to be abandoned, most buildings have been torn down, and only a very few residents remain. The town even lost its zip code. What's left of Centralia is now marked by numerous vents where hot gases leak upward even in the middle of the highway. Approaching such a vent can be dangerous because the ground can collapse and drop you into the hot gases.

The specimen from the Centralia fire is nicely crystallized sulfur with individual crystals about 1 millimeter in length. The specimen from the Star Mine is more amorphous, with lots of tiny blobs sticking up from the matrix. If you turn the specimen under your 'scope, you can see lots of flashes of light from crystal faces, but there are no complete crystals. Apparently the sulfur atoms were trying very hard to form crystals under conditions that weren't quite right.

The Star Mine was located in the Drumheller Valley, a famous coal mining area in Canada. There were 139 coalmines in the valley between 1911 and 1979. Today, all are closed. The web provides no information about the fire and just says the mine closed in 1957.

The town of Rosedale is located across the Red Deer River from the Star Mine, and in 1931 an aerial tramway once used to haul coal to the tippel in Rosedale was converted into a 117-meter-long suspension bridge for pedestrians, which allowed miners to walk to the mine instead of going to work by rowboat. Judging by Rosedale's official web site, the Star Mine Suspension Bridge appears to be the single distinguishing feature of the town, which has now been incorporated into the larger community of Drumheller. Evidently a burning coal mine doesn't make a great tourist attraction. There is an obvious difficulty in conducting tours.

—Mike Seeds

## Wildacres: 2010 Spring Season

Spring dates for Wildacres are April 23-29. BMS's own Bernie Emery will be teaching Basic and Intermediate Cabochons. Other workshops include Chainmaille Jewelry, Exhibiting and Judging, Faceting, Basic and Advanced Fused Glass, Jewelry, Kumihimo, Mineral Identification, Scrimshaw, Basic and Intermediate Silversmithing, and Wirewrapped Jewelry. The speaker in residence will be Bob Jones. Facilities are heated. Meals are served family style. Sleeping rooms have private baths and have either two twin beds or one double and one twin bed. The session costs \$350, including lodging, meals, and instruction. Registration form is available at <http://www.amfed.org/efnls/regform.pdf>. Call Pamm Bryant at 804-457-4698, or email her at [pjbryant6@juno.com](mailto:pjbryant6@juno.com).

*Once a mine fire gets started, it can burn for a very long time.*