



# Diablo Diggins

Monthly Newsletter of the Contra Costa Mineral & Gem Society

**"We Dig Rocks"  
Since 1950**

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## President's Message

This has been a Topsy-Turvey year so far. CCM&GS is rolling right along even without a full compliment of officers. We have a beautiful new location for our monthly meetings. They are now held at 6008 Center Street in the beautiful city of Clayton. The city fathers are very August 2022 Presidents' Message

This has been a Topsy-Turvey year so far. CCM&GS is rolling right along even without a full compliment of officers. We have a beautiful new location for our monthly meetings. They are now held at 6008 Center Street in the beautiful city of Clayton. The city fathers are very enthused about getting us involved in our new base city. They may even have a new show location for us next year so keep your fingers crossed (and your toes and even your eyes.)

We can use all the help we can get.

This month, in the spirit of something new, instead of a regular program, we are going to hold the annual spring picnic, which we missed this spring, in the summer and in the evening. Our new location has a beautiful patio so we can enjoy the summer evening. Please bring a dish to share and samples of what you like to do that is rock related. Everyone who brings a rock related item (cab, faceted stone, jewelry, specimen, painted rock or whatever) will be invited to talk about it, why they like rocks, and what they like to do with them. You can even speak if you do not bring a rock. We will also have rocks and paints so everyone can paint their own rock to take home and the club will sponsor a bingo night with rocks for prizes. We are also asking you to bring friends who might be interested in what we do. Don't forget to bring plenty of food. The club will provide plates, cups and utensils.

Let's get ready to have some fun! Party!

Kelly

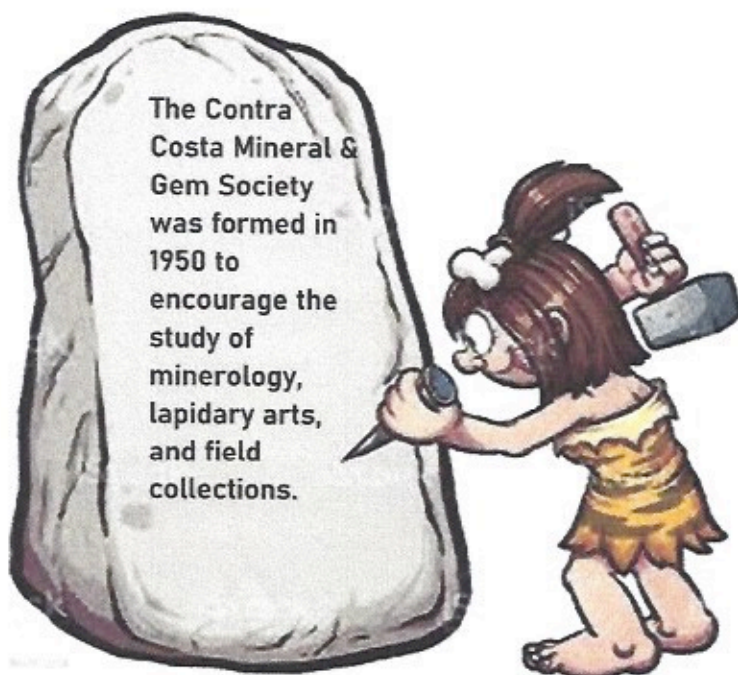


## August Birthdays

Vikki Hotopp 8/16

## August Anniversaries:

Donna Albrecht 8/16



## Clayton Quarry

Believe it or not, Clayton has an active commercial mine. You see it every time you drive into town. The Clayton Quarry has been mined since 1947 for construction aggregates, specifically a very hard gray stone. Two partners, Harrison and Birdwell, developed mining for construction aggregates on Mount Zion to meet increasing construction demand at the end of WW2 on a site known for stepping stones and garden rock for many decades. Rocks from this same site build the first winery in Clayton, which is now Clayton's City Hall. However, as we all know, this was not the first mining, nor the most productive mining activity to occur in the area. The discovery of coal in approximately the 1850's brought about the first commercial mining and the subsequent settlement of coal mining towns such as Stewartville, Somersville, and Nortonville.

The discovery of coal also led to additional prospecting wherein mercury and copper were discovered. It has been written that a "copper rush" occurred in the 1860's around Mount Diablo.

Copper was never found in significant quantity to make commercial mining worthwhile but the Mt. Diablo mine did produce mercury until the 1950's. Gold and silver were also reported in various assays but, again, none was ever found in significant quantity to make commercial mining worthwhile.

As a result of the search for the precious metals, mines and/or claims with names such as Great Republic, Superior, Pioneer, Horse Shoe, Rising Sun, San Carlos, Rough and Ready, and numerous others were developed. Today, the diggings of the Mount Zion Copper Company, Summit of Zion, San Pedro, and a few other mines can still be seen.

In 1947, Harrison and Birdwell developed the Clayton quarry. The first excavation was behind the current shop building, but it was shortly moved to the east and south because of better rock on that side. In 1954, Harrison and Birdwell sold out to Pacific Coast Aggregates (later named Pacific Cement and Aggregates), who in turn sold out to Lonestar Industries in 1965.

In 1988, Lonestar partnered with RMC of London, England. Today the quarry is owned by RMC Pacific Materials, a wholly owned company of RMC Ltd. of England. The quarry is located on Mount Zion and the material mined is diabase, a hard, durable rock used in the construction of roads, buildings, rail lines, dams, and levees. Over 25 different products are made to supply construction needs.

The State of California has designated Mount Zion as a mineral reserve to be used to supply the construction needs of Contra Costa County. Of all the rock shipped out of the quarry, typically 72% of it goes to public sector projects. Some of the specific projects we have been involved in are B.A.R.T. (50% of all the rail ballast came from Clayton), Interstate 580 & Interstate 680 freeways, Highway 4, Highway 24, the new Giants Stadium, the Los Vaqueros Dam, Concord Naval Weapons Station, Delta levees, and many other projects.

The Clayton Quarry has been in continuous production for over 50 years, and expects to be producing for many years to come.

#### Interesting Facts:

1. Mount Zion was also known as "Pyramid Hill".
2. Elevation of Mount Zion is 1635 Feet.
3. Minerals found in the quarry are malachite, azurite, iron pyrite, magnetite and calcite.



## Club Album: Our First Meeting in Endeavor Hall



Our first meeting at our meeting site was a great success. It was well attended by both club members and the public, including Mr. Diaz of the Clayton City Council. After a very short business meeting, Mr. Kennedy offered a very lively discussion on the special opals of Nevada. Members of the club brought examples of their work and presented a formidable array of our hobby. Our next meeting is Monday, the 8th of August at Endeavor Hall. Please bring enough food for twice the number of people you bring, and bring an example of your best work. It is a food and art potluck. LET US PARTY PEOPLE.



## Serious Leisure

"Hobbies take on this aura of being good, useful, appropriate, and socially sanctioned. Something you should—the word here is *should*—be doing," Steven M. Gelber, a historian and the author of *Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America*, added. "And if you're one of those slackers that doesn't have a hobby, then you are suffering from some kind of a moral weakness or failing."

Upon reflection what is our club? We are a group of hobbyists, so maybe the warm days of August are a good time to contemplate the value of having a hobby. A hobby has not always been something to aspire to. Up until around the 1880s, the word was used to refer to any sort of preoccupation, which could be positive but could also be an obsessive fixation, as in "riding a hobby horse." As the human condition changed and improved, the concept of a hobby evolved to define a wholesome, enriching form of leisure and the most virtuous way for a person to spend their free time. In essence, a hobby became the symbol of the value of leisure made possible by improvements in production.

In scholarly circles, the hobby is defined by oxymorons: "productive leisure," as Gelber calls it, or "serious leisure," a term coined by Robert Stebbins, a professor emeritus of sociology at the University of Calgary. Under Stebbins's serious-leisure framework, entertainment and socializing are too passive to be considered hobbies and would be classified as "casual leisure." Serious leisure, on the other hand, requires effort based on special "knowledge, training, or skill," and people often try to make progress and get better at it over time.

Serious leisure is enriching; it brings a different kind of satisfaction than either relaxation or paid work. Research shows that leisure activities, including hobbies, are linked to better physical and mental well-being. Hobbies make us happier and healthier.

Serious leisure serves an additional community purpose during times of economic stress. During the Great Depression, when huge swaths of the population were out of work, hobbies were the answer to the question of what to do when there was nothing to do—"a job you can't lose," as one 1933 magazine article put it. In the '30s, advocacy groups dedicated to the promotion of hobbies sprang up in American cities. Hobby-themed radio shows and newspaper columns populated the media. *Hobbies* magazine even proposed that crime would be lower if everyone had a hobby.

A decade later, hobbies became the solution to not just idleness but the existential dread brought on by World War II. In 1942, a doctor named William Menninger published a paper in *The American Journal of Insanity* (which was later renamed *The American Journal of Psychiatry*) called "Psychological Aspects of Hobbies: A Contribution to Civilian Morale." In it, he wrote: "... at present, most individuals are aware of a feeling of unrest and mild anxiety; of some degree of personal and economic insecurity; of concern regarding some member of the family or close friend in the armed forces." The need for leisure and recreation, he concluded, was paramount. But ideally, of course, that leisure would be "constructive and intelligent." Our current economic crisis and pandemic could be equally benefited by an increase in serious leisure activities, but sadly many pursue virtual leisure rather than a physical hobby.

So, taking our leisure time seriously benefits us, by challenging us to a physical accomplishment. We are united in finding this challenge in the most durable of nature's resources, stones and rocks. As a community that builds and supports each other, we magnify the positive aspects of having a hobby. In this time of national need, of on line obsession, and of painful isolation we have an obligation to share.

Education is a big part of why we exist as a group. Pursuing our hobbies, whether they be cabbing or faceting, beading, rock painting, or identifying rock make us happier and healthier people, but we need to teach others so they can gain the same benefits. Let them see how much we achieve and how happy it makes us. Invite them to participate and to play at our various hobbies. Thus, we have rock shows and we invite the public to join us. We teach and we mentor our particular skills. We invite others to join us. Let us start at this meeting by sharing our individual avenue of serious leisure.