

Place: **Union Hall**
Meyers Street
Next to Campus Life
In Kettle Falls



Time: 7:00 PM
Third Tuesday
Each Month
(Jan.-Nov.)

The Panorama Prospector

March 2008

Minutes for the March 18, 2008 Meeting

By Ginger Pitman

Our members turned out in force for the last meeting before the show, we had a full house and three visitors. Next meeting Steve White and Leslie King will bring refreshments.

Steve told us of his visit to Loughton, AZ this last month. Silvia gave the treasurer's report and how close we are to drawing for the rock hammers. She will have the many boxes of cash for the show and than the big job of sorting out the show monies and bills after.

Bill Allen gave a report on the progress of the show committee and things look good. We have the cases and tables from The Rock Rollers. It seems all jobs and duty spots have been filled, it is fun when everyone does a part. The only need is for some more cases to be filled. We have 24 so call if you still want one for your "rockhoulder's treasures", a broad subject which can include any of your minerals or rocks.

Diane Rose reminded us of the North Idaho Show at the Kootenai County Fairgrounds in Coeur D'Alene June 7&8.

Rex has done an excellent job of setting up our field trips, there are ample times and places to go all summer long so join Rex and the whole club for a great time. The times and what to find will be printed soon.

Silvia read an email from Broker Allen and his son in CA, to whom we sent local mineral and rock samples after a request for his son's classroom project. Thank you to Bill and Silvia for labeling and sending the generous donation of over 50 samples. Our club did well and they expressed their delight and thanks.

Joe gave a report on his project to put together a sample case of local minerals and finds from our field trips along with maps and articles on how to get to each. He hopes to get the pamphlet proof read and ready for our show, he will also set prices. His real hope is to contact and encourage other clubs to put together a similar project and then we can exchange specimens, maps and information with other clubs to share the fun.

After the silent auction and looking over the interesting things brought to the table to view and share, Bob Bristow gave us our program. He and Lucy had spent 2 weeks in the AZ back country going to about a dozen (continued on page 2)

Saddle Mountain

By Joe Barreca with a lot of help from Rex Barrans



Saddle Mountain is famous among local rockhounds although it stretches the extent of "local". It is a frequent overnight trip for people with an RV. You may be able camp at the Saddle Mountain Wildlife Refuge, it is undergoing some changes however and that may no longer be true.

Saddle Mt has petrified wood, similar to the finds at the Ginkgo Petrified Forest at Vantage where collecting is illegal. There are also some disputes about where you can collect on Saddle Mt. Three sections of land are privately owned. The no-digging areas are well-marked. If you would like to collect in these areas, Orville McArthur of the Hells Canyon Gem Club suggests that you contact Nathan Maughan at Nathan@thequarry.net or phone 509 932-4712, or phone his father Gary Maughan 509-932-4050.

The two main kinds of finds on Saddle Mt are large pieces in substantial rock that need a lot of work to extract, and smaller pieces in shallow soil that are easier to collect. The smaller pieces are in an area near the crest of the mountain around the radio tower. Others such as this huge piece can be found in the canyon near the power lines.

While you are in the area, there is another collectable rock, known as bog opal in the Frenchman Hills Ridge area just north of Saddle Mt. The bog opal is found in dolomite quarries, and the dolomite is also a

(Minutes from page 1)

sites. He had beautiful pictures of cactus and rough dirt roads plus samples from each of the places they could get to. Many of the specimens he had also fluoresce. Looks like they had a good time and great weather, while we were here in the cold and snow.

Let's have a great show and fun together, ready or not here we go!

(Saddle Mt. continued from page 1)



useful polishing compound. (More about that later.)

The rock next to Rex in the top picture is pretty much "The big one that got away". When Rex and Johnie found it, someone had managed to dig around it, put a cable on it and ease it onto this old car hood that was used as a stone bolt. Evidently they couldn't take it to the final step, hoisting it onto a truck that could actually carry it.

The story doesn't end there. Rex and Johnie tried to break off a few pieces of this monster. Not much luck there either. The chisel got stuck deep in the piece. Pieces vary in their friability. Some can be cut safely on a rock saw. Others - particularly the bog opal, are not as

hard and more likely to break into pieces. The next image shows a slab of Saddle Mt petrified wood which has a lot of subtle transparency. A huge variety of wood was found in the area. The



Ginkgo wood from which the nearby State Park at Vantage gets its name, was actually only a very small sample of the whole, but significant because examples of petrified Ginkgo are so rare.

To get there from Stevens County, you drive down to I-90 and then west to the bridge that crosses to Vantage. On this side of the bridge you turn south on State Route 243. At Road 24 West you turn east through Mattawa. 1 mile past Mattawa you turn left up Road R. This road will wind up the mountain to the Radio Tower. When you come to a place where the road splits into 2 parallel roads, stay to the left. Before you get to the top, near the power line there are some diggings on the west side of the road. This is where the big specimen shown to the left was found. It was in the hole shown below.

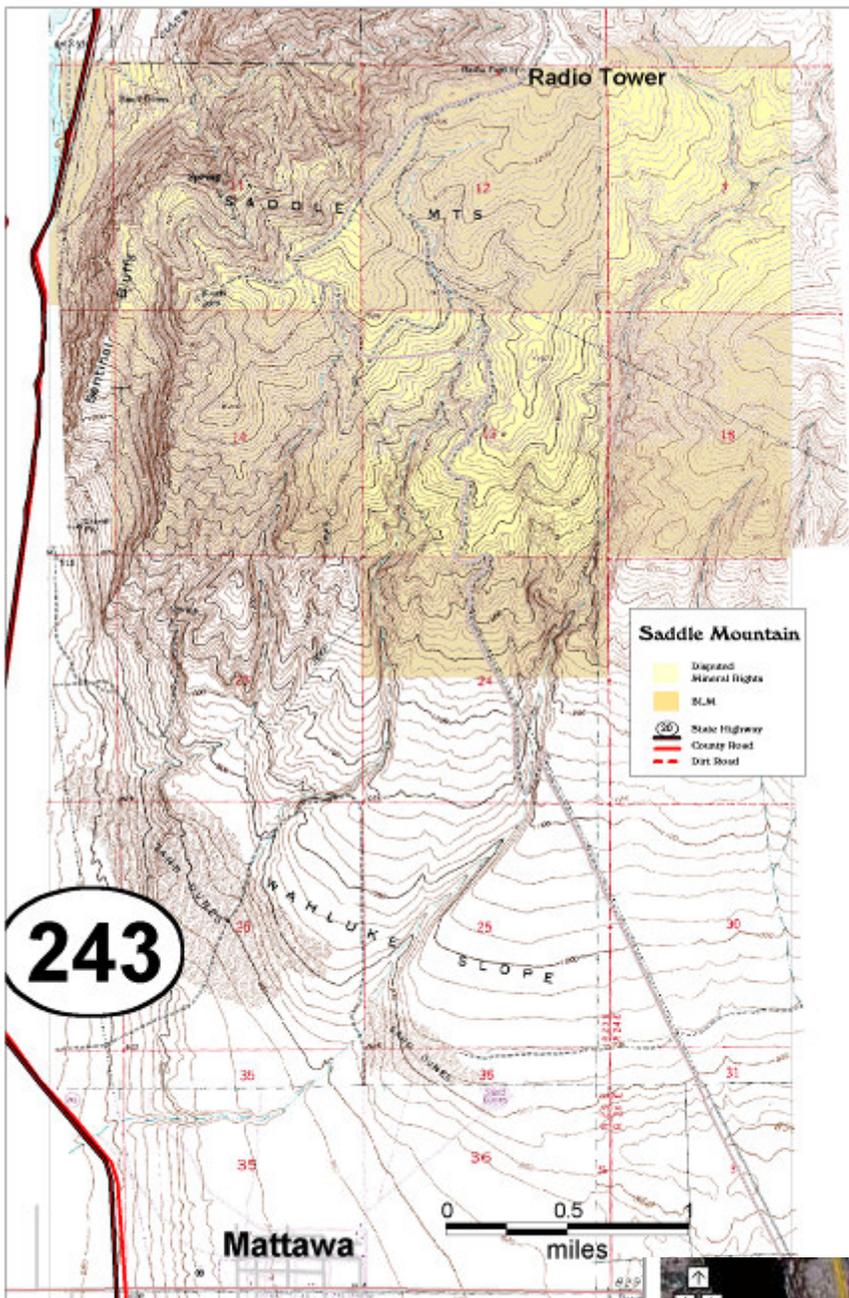
There are spots to dig all over this mountain, be prepared for hot weather if you go in the summer.

Since "central Washington was once vastly different from what it is today. About 15 million years ago, during what geologists call the Miocene Period, the region was wet and humid, dominated by swamps and shallow lakes surrounded by forests. Moisture-loving trees such as swamp cypress grew on the edges of the lakes, while deciduous trees such as ginkgo, maple, walnut, oak, sycamore, and horse chestnut flourished on the hillsides. Higher elevations supported thick stands of Douglas fir, hemlock, and spruce." (from historylink.org) The Columbia Basin is the site of the last and largest flood basalts. Unlike erupting volcanoes, lava flowed freely from large cracks in the earth's mantle. The trees in this area had been washed by floods into a lake impounded behind the basalt. When hot lava poured into this lake, the trees covered by water and



Johnie Pitman in the pit left by the rock.

mud were not destroyed, but instead were incased in a rich mineral soup that eventually replace all the wood with silicates.

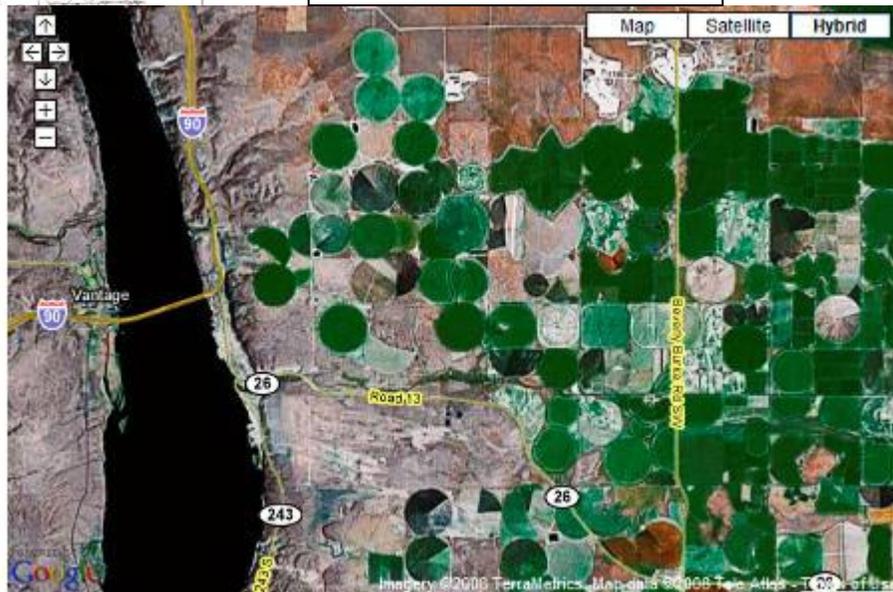


243

Saddle Mountain
 Degraded Mineral Rights
 S.M.
 State Highway
 County Road
 Dirt Road

Map of Mattawa and Saddle Mt.

Here is a Google map of the French Hills bog opal site. It is just north of Saddle Mt. Take Hwy 243 and turn North East on Beverly Burke Rd. You will cross Hwy 26. If you are coming from the north, you can go west on Hwy 26 and then north on Beverly Burke Rd. Continue north through the circle irrigation fields toward the intersection with French Hills Rd. As you get up onto French Hills before the intersection, there will be white dolomite quarries on either side of the rd. They stop



Map of French Hills

work on Sundays, so that is the best time to look for bog opal. It is a waste product in the production of diatomaceous earth. **“Diatomaceous earth** is a naturally occurring, soft, [chalk](#)-like sedimentary [rock](#) that is easily crumbled into a fine white to off-white powder. This powder has an [abrasive](#) feel, similar to [pumice](#) powder, and is very light, due to its high [porosity](#). The typical chemical composition of diatomaceous earth is 86% [silica](#), 5% [sodium](#), 3% [magnesium](#) and 2% [iron](#).” Diatomaceous earth consists of fossilized remains of [diatoms](#), a type of hard-shelled [algae](#).” (Wikipedia) Incased in these high-silica diatoms, wood in this ancient bog also petrified. The diatoms themselves make good polish. You can start tumbling rocks at about 60 to 90 grit, after 6 weeks that wears down to 600 or so. Then after you clean the rocks put them in a vibrating tumbler and add a thin slurry of diatomaceous earth the consistency of skim milk. In 10 days you will have a good polish.

You can continue north from here back to I-90 through George on the “R” Rd on the way back. (You can see the quarries in white under the words “Map and Satellite in the map below.)