

# The Rockytier

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L u b b o c k   G e m   a n d   M i n e r a l   S o c i e t y

## Monthly Meetings

### General Meeting:

Tuesday October 6, 2020. 7 pm at Forrest Heights United Methodist Church, 3007 33rd Street, Lubbock, Texas.

### Board Meeting:

Tuesday October 13, 2020. 6:00 pm dinner, 7:00 pm meeting starts at The Red Zone Café, 3602 Slide Road, Lubbock Texas.

Everyone is welcome at either meeting!

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## Upcoming Shows

### February 2021

26 - 27 Plainview, TX

### September 2021

25 - 26 Lubbock, TX

Be sure to confirm before going

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## Message from the President

Greetings.

The end of the year is fast approaching. Given the year we have experienced, I know most of you agree with me on wanting it behind us.

But before we put this year in the history books, we still have a few more things to accomplish.

November is our officer elections. Please reach out to Walt or myself if you are interested in holding office. We are a small club and depend on members being active and holding office to continue our growth, and really our existence. If you can hold office, we need you to volunteer to do so.

Our December meeting is usually our Christmas Party. I would like to return to as much normalcy as possible. So I want to encourage having the party. It will probably be a smaller one than we normally have, but I would still like for us to celebrate the holidays with our party. Please let me know your wishes. This is your club and I will follow the wishes of the majority of members who have been attending the meetings.

Valerie and I continue the search for properties by driving around town and via online services. So far, we have not had luck finding a place for the club to call home. I encourage you to keep searching and let's see if 2021 sees us with a place where we can put down roots and grow the club.

In the next meeting, we are going to use a different virtual meeting platform, WebEx. Here is the link - <https://accentcare.webex.com/meet/ValerieZinkAccentCare.com> room number 668 876 728 (We have acquired a camera and microphone to help improve the experience for remote viewers.)

Please join the call. We want to discuss new ideas for the future of the club. Along those lines to truly explore this idea, we will need the assistance of an attorney. If anyone knows a lawyer that would help us for low or no cost, please let us know. To find out this new exciting idea, tune in to the next meeting. Hope to see you soon, either in person or virtually. Sincerely, Michael T. Zink, President

Website: [www.LubbockGemAndMineral.org](http://www.LubbockGemAndMineral.org)

Facebook: [@LubbockGemAndMineral](https://www.facebook.com/LubbockGemAndMineral)

## A Mineral That Was as Good as Gold

Once upon a time, a mineral we now consider common was “worth its weight in gold” - literally! That mineral is halite, more commonly known as salt. NaCl. It is a critical nutrient to all animal life, including humans. In fact, it is so important to survival that one of our four tastes was developed to detect it. (We can actually taste only four things: sweet, sour, bitter, and salty. Flavor, what we usually think of as “taste,” is actually a combination of taste and aroma, i.e., what we smell.)

The phrase “not worth his salt” comes from the ancient Greeks when salt was used to pay for slaves. Roman soldiers were sometimes paid in salt. In fact, our word for monetary payment for work, “salary,” comes from the Latin for salt-sal. Our word “salad” (from the Latin “saltar,” meaning “salted”) comes from the Roman habit of salting their fresh greens.

Today, many town names reflect their origins as sites of ancient or medieval salt mines or salt springs. “Wich” or “wytych” is the Old English word for “brine well” (what we now call a salt spring) and is seen in names like Northwich and Middlewich. The German word for salt, “Salz,” appears in Salsburg (“salt city”), a large city located on the Salzach (meaning “saltwater” or “brine”) River.

As with many precious materials, ancient lore grew around salt. It was so precious that the spilling of salt was deemed by the ancient Romans to be the work of the Devil. Salt thrown over the left shoulder (where evil lurks) was believed to drive the Devil away.

By Homer Eshbaugh, from MWF News, November 2008



Photos by [Đá Cuội](#) from [Pexels](#)



## Howlite

In 1868, Henry How, a Nova Scotian chemist, geologist, and mineralogist, was approached by local gypsum miners. They told him about a mineral that was harder than gypsum and was found throughout their mine. He went to the mine to extract the opaque, whitish lumps that were a little harder than gypsum (Moh's Scale of 3.5). Not long after How's findings had been published, James Dwight Dana named the new mineral 'howlite.'

Most howlite is found in the form of misshapen lumps that greatly resemble heads of cauliflower. The largest of these nodules can weigh more than 125 pounds. These howlite nodules ordinarily resemble porcelain with dark veins of usually gray, black, or brown although pure white howlite can also be found. Some nodules may also have translucent howlite crystals. Howlite in crystal form is very rare though. Average howlite crystals are tiny, measuring less than a half-inch long.

Even though howlite is still extensively mined in Canada, California is the world's largest source of howlite today. Howlite is found in large amounts from Los Angeles County, California to Clark County, Nevada. Tick Canyon in Los Angeles County is one place that transparent crystals have been found. Iona, Nova Scotia is the only other known location for you to find transparent howlite crystals. Massive howlite in nodule form can also be found in Germany, Mexico, Newfoundland, Russia, and Turkey.

Howlite's main claim-to-fame is that it is so porous and accepts dyes so well. Most of the howlite that is mined today is used exclusively for dyeing. Natural howlite is always white, grey, or brown. Any other color has been dyed. It seems as though the first instance of dyed howlite was an accident, but it was soon discovered that, if the proper shade of dye was used, common howlite could be treated to look like turquoise. The natural howlite is bleached and then heated in pressure cookers with blue dye. A little tumbling with a wax-like resin and you have inexpensive stone beads that greatly resemble turquoise.

Dyeing the howlite a darker blue gives you an inexpensive lapis lazuli. Red dye will give you a coral substitute that can be used without destroying natural coral beds. The problems start happening when howlite is sold to an unsuspecting customer. A good test would be to take a knife to the stone in an area that won't show a scratch as much. If the blade scratches the stone, it can't be turquoise. But



Howlite Cabochons, natural & dyed. - W. Beneze



SCFMS 2020 Convention

**The Tri-City  
Gem & Mineral  
Society Annual  
Show has been  
cancelled.**

The annual meeting  
for the SCFMS  
Convention will be  
held Via zoom.



[www.scfms.net](http://www.scfms.net)

AFMS 2020 Convention

**The Knoxville Gem &  
Mineral Society's An-  
nual Show has been  
cancelled.**

The annual meeting for  
the AFMS will be virtual.



[www.amfed.org](http://www.amfed.org)

even if the blade doesn't scratch the stone that doesn't mean that it's not howlite that has been coated with a very hard epoxy-resin. Most vendors would rather have repeat business than make a quick buck, so you generally don't have to worry about it. Just keep this in mind if someone offers you a huge piece of turquoise at a ridiculously cheap price. Blue howlite is sometimes referred to by the trade name, "Turquenite."

If you see plain white or grey stones that are being sold as natural howlite, that's probably exactly what it is. Undyed howlite can be used to make extraordinarily beautiful beads and pendants. It can be carved into animal shapes, polished into globes, or cut into beads that look really good when paired with wood. A lot of the Native American styles of jewelry look appealing when howlite is used instead of the usual stones. You can even find rings that have been carved out of a single stone.

Caring for your howlite is relatively easy. Avoid temperature changes and temperature extremes. The heat of an oven can weaken howlite, making it more fragile. With its low hardness, almost every gemstone and metal will scratch it. Household cleaners do not need to be used when you are wearing a stone as porous as howlite. And stay away from mechanical jewelry cleaners. Even wiping dust off of a soft stone, like howlite, should be avoided. Most dust contains a little bit of quartz which, like with any soft stone, will scratch the finish.

By John Bennett from Delvings Vol. 70 #6, 6/17, via Gritty Greetings Vol. 57 #1, 1/17



Howlite slab. W. Beneze

## Collecting Howlite an hour North of Los Angeles



VGMS collecting at Tick Canyon back in 1957

For decades rockhounds have collected tons of howlite from the dumps of Tick Canyon. To this day, tons of howlite still overflow at the mine dumps, dormant for over 100 years.

This location amazingly easy to find, park, and collect. The borate mine in Tick Canyon is called the Stearling Borax mine, which had its own mini railroad, a “dinky” sized rail, hauling borates out of the canyon to the station in Lang. The by-product of colemanite mining at this location was an odd soft white material, with thin black spiderweb-like inclusions running throughout. This material, Howlite, has no economic worth, as it is not an ore of borax, it is found littering the mine dumps.

The old mining area is now fenced off with no trespassing signs. Years ago, this main area was a common field trip location for clubs from all over Southern California. Uncommon minerals like Priceite and Veatchite could be found on the dumps, along with softball-sized cauliflower-shaped howlite nodules. You would think that with the original mine dump off-limits, collecting would be impossible.

Something wonderful for mineral collectors, a large amount of the dump was pushed to the other side of Davenport Road, into the canyon below. This huge dump pile is full of howlite, as we found out visiting this location on December 23rd, 2012. Forty pounds of howlite was gathered in what seemed like no time, with no digging required. The howlite was everywhere, even down the wash dozens of feet from the main dump pile.

Howlite is soft enough to carve easily, yet hard enough to be a popular lapidary item for cabbing, tumbling, and polishing.

This location is a perfect place for anyone, it is easy, interesting, and filled with desirable minerals!

Story & photo from <http://WhereToFindRocks.com> used with permission

The LGMS is a 501c (3) Educational Organization and can provide you with a tax write off for your donation! Like all non-profits, we rely on the generosity of people that contribute time and money to help promote our cause.

If you don't have time for meetings, but would like to contribute, we accept monetary donations, rock and mineral collections, tools and equipment, and even your collected "yard rock".

We also have an Endowment fund at Texas Tech that provides for a scholarship to students in the field of geology and earth sciences; Donations can be designated to that fund.

We have a building fund that will help us acquire a permanent place to hold meetings, house our workshop, and establish a museum of rocks and minerals. If you have a building or land that could help us reach this goal, please contact us today

## General Meeting Notes    September 1, 2020

Michael Zink called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm. There were 12 members present and 2 guests.

There was some discussion about the show and how we did financially, and how the dealers did. Overall a good show with good replies from the dealers, with most saying they would like to come back.

We discussed the upcoming Garden & Arts Festival and what we would be doing. Volunteers should be available from 8:30 for setting up until 5:30 to take down and need to wear a mask.

Our dues and insurance payment to the SCFMS is based on membership and is due this month. We have 57 adult members and 2 children.

Michael talked about the building fund and reminded everyone to be on the lookout for property for the club.

Since we can not use the Carillon party house for our annual cook-out, we discussed having a BBQ in a park. We settled on September 26th, starting at 10 am, probably at Mackenzie park, more information to follow.

Michael adjourned the meeting at 7:54 pm.

Sabrina Krieger, Secretary

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## Board Meeting Notes    September 8, 2020

Michael Zink called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. There were 8 board members, 2 regular members, and 2 guests present.

Sabrina read the minutes of the last meeting. Tim motioned to accept the minutes as written, Mark seconded, motion passed.

Tim gave the financial report.

There was some discussion about property. Everyone should keep looking.

There was some discussion about funding, metal recycling is ongoing, and Amazon Smile is being used by several members.

Michael and Valerie found a place at Mckinzie park for our BBQ on the 26th. Heading east on Broadway, take the first turn into the park, and immediately to the left, there are picnic tables where we will gather.



Board Meeting notes continued.

We discussed the upcoming Garden & Arts Festival and what we would be doing. Volunteers should be available from 8:00 for setting up until 6 pm to take down and need to wear a mask. A sign-up sheet will be posted to the forum on the website.

We will try to use web-X for the next monthly meeting since zoom is troublesome. There was some discussion about getting the monthly meeting back to normal. Rock raffle, JALAF, or show and tell, and a presentation should happen no matter how many people are there. Some folks don't carry cash, so the raffle is not feasible for them. Walt said that we can use Paypal at any time, just let him know you want to contribute.

Michael adjourned the meeting at 7:55 pm.



Sabrina Krieger, Secretary

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## Garden and Arts Fall Festival

The annual fall festival held each year at the garden and arts center was on September 12th. The LGMS had a spot on the outer row of booths in front of the live stage. We had a big shade tree, which was pretty handy for the afternoon, and two empty booths beside us. While the stage performers provided us with musical entertainment throughout the day, we handed out brochures about the club. We had a bucket of partially tumbled stone and small slabs that we let folks pick through to find the one they needed to take home. Valerie brought several fluorescents and a dark box along with her UV flashlight for a display. It was a good day; I enjoyed meeting new people and talking about the club. Perhaps we will gain a few new members.

Walt Beneze



The LGMS meets at 3007 33rd Street, Lubbock Texas on the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm. Membership is open to all interested parties. Visitors are always welcome! Annual dues are \$20 for Adults, \$10 for Students 16 years and older, \$5 for Students up to age 15, or a Family Membership for \$40. Exchange editors are free to copy anything of interest from The Rockytier provided credit is given to the author of the article and The Rockytier. Any content in this newsletter not attributed to someone else is from the editor.

The Lubbock Gem & Mineral Society is a non-profit organization recognized under section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as an educational entity. Donations in any form are tax deductible.

The purpose of this society shall be:

- ☐ To bring about a closer association of those persons interested in the earth sciences and lapidary arts.
- ☐ To increase, document and disseminate knowledge about geological materials including rocks, minerals, gems, fossils, historic and modern cultural lithic artifacts.
- ☐ To encourage the study, collecting and display of rocks, minerals, gems, fossils, artifacts, and the performance of lapidary and jewelry arts.
- ☐ To provide guidance, education and information; share ideas and techniques; and assist in the development and refinement of skills through the combined resources, knowledge and experience of the Society's Members.

Elected Officers & Directors who are voting members of the Board of Directors:

President	Michael Zink
Past President	Walter Beneze
Vice President	Mica McGuire
Secretary	Sabrina Krieger
Treasurer	Timothy McIntire
Director (first year)	Yvonne Hoffman
Director (first year)	Jennifer Philips
Director (second year)	Mark Smith
Director (second year)	Lisa Smith

Appointed voting Board Members:

Membership Chair	vacant
Club Workshop Chair	Dave Swartz
Show Chair	Walter Beneze
Newsletter Editor	Walter Beneze
Field Trip Chair	vacant

A Membership Directory w/contact info is on the website. You must be logged in to see it.

The Rockytier    October 2020

### Lubbock Gem and Mineral Society

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