



THE MINERAL VEIN

Official Newsletter of

THE MINERAL SOCIETY OF MANITOBA

JANUARY 2012

Happy New Year!

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY & AUCTION

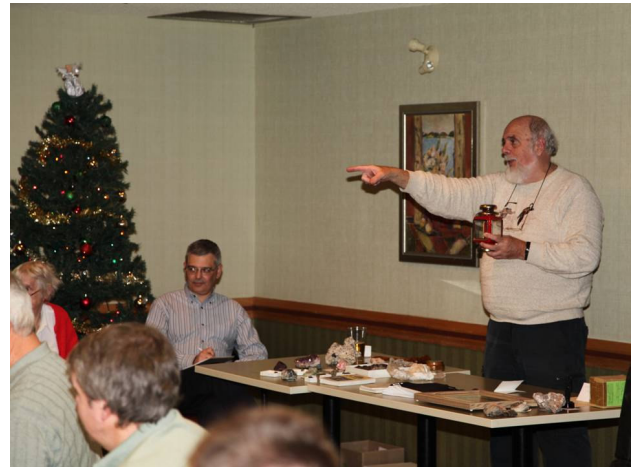
The Mineral Society's 2011 Christmas party and annual fund-raising auction was held December 11th at the CanadInns on McPhillips Street and was another great success. There was a good turnout by the members and their spouses, about 36 in total, who enjoyed a fine meal, good company and the fun and excitement of the auction.



Russ Epp, Lisa Grabowski and Thomas Epp examine the items up for bids at the auction

Thanks so much to all those who donated specimens to this year's auction. In particular, Tony Smith for his wonderful English fluorite and Greek barite specimens that sparked quite the bidding war, and Ed Dobrzanski for his donation of a beautiful, framed sandstone rock slab with delicate dendritic manganese patterns that looked for all the world like a watercolour painting of desert bushes. Once again Tony Smith was at his best urging the bidders to dig a little deeper into their wallets while keeping us all chuckling at the same time. At the end of the

evening we had raised over \$600 for the club which will go mainly towards new acquisitions for the Manitoba Museums' upcoming mineral display.



Auctioneer Tony Smith hard at work while treasurer Brent Thomson records the winning bids.



The MSM's new treasurer Brent Thomson and his wife Karen at the party.

THE MINERAL SOCIETY OF MANITOBA

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The Mineral Vein is published monthly from September to June.

Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month from September to May inclusive at the Manitoba Museum in room P47 on the Planetarium level. They begin at 7:30 PM and feature announcements, an invited speaker and a raffle. Members are encouraged to bring along any new, interesting specimens or specimens appropriate to the speaker's topic.

Field Trips take place from May to September to interesting sites in Manitoba plus neighbouring provinces and states.

Membership: A single membership is \$15 while a family membership is \$20. Memberships run from October to October and the annual dues are payable each October.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

January 4th Meeting. The next meeting of the MSM will be held January 4th at our normal venue, the Manitoba Museum, beginning at 7:30 PM. This meeting will be in Planetarium auditorium, just down the hall from our normal room, P47. The speaker this time will be yours truly, John Biczok, with a presentation on the wonderful *mineral collection of the SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION in Washington, D.C.* This is the national gem and mineral collection of the United States and is of course one of the world's premier collections. It includes a number of priceless mineral specimens plus iconic gems like the Hope diamond. The presentation will also feature a few slides about the wonderful treasures in the neighbouring museums such as the Air & Space Museum and the American Museum of History.



Crocoite from Tasmania on display at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History

THE BURGESS SHALE COMES ALIVE!

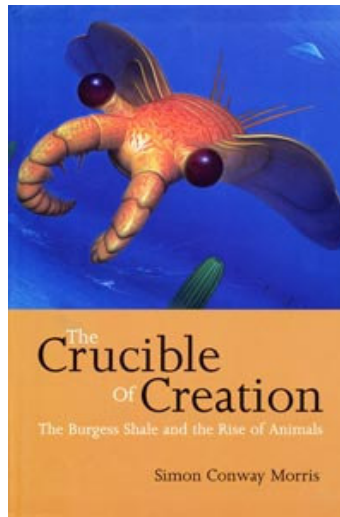
Sea creatures so weird looking that they must be aliens? You would be forgiven for thinking this after viewing the animated reproductions of the fossilized animals from the Burgess shale now featured on the Internet website <http://burgess-shale.rom.on.ca/en/sea-odyssey>

The Burgess Shale site is found in Yoho National Park which is west of Banff in southeastern B.C. and is one of the most famous fossil sites in the world. The creatures found here evolved at the tail end of the "Cambrian Explosion", a period about 540 million years ago when the first complex animals sprang from their much simpler precursors. The Burgess shale fossils offer one of the best views anywhere into this beginning of many modern animal groups. Still though, most of the creatures shown swimming about the Cambrian seas on this website look quite unfamiliar and bizarre to the untrained eye; about the only thing I recognized was an early trilobite!



Burgess shale sea creatures reconstructed in a diorama at the Royal Tyrell Museum.

The website was created by the Royal Ontario Museum and Parks Canada and is not only a fascinating glimpse into this critical period in animal evolution but is a great teaching tool with many interesting links to related material. If you'd like to learn more about these important fossils, try reading the book "The Crucible of Creation" by Simon Conway Morris, published by



Oxford University Press. If you're travelling out west check out the cool display at the Royal Tyrell Museum in Alberta or the displays at Yoho Park itself. The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto also has a fine display and even sells models of these ancient creatures.



THE MINERAL PIPELINE *An update on mining projects under development in Manitoba.*

The annual Manitoba mining convention that took place at the Winnipeg convention Centre in mid-November provides an opportunity for us to learn which mineral deposits in our province are advancing towards the mining stage. For mineral collectors this sort of news should be of interest because mines are the source of many of the greatest mineral specimens, not only from Manitoba but around the world. This observation is especially true in a region like ours which has been scraped down to solid bedrock by the glaciers not so long ago, thus removing almost all of those colourful and highly collectable secondary minerals one finds in the surface weathering zones of warmer climes. Many of the development projects reported on at this year's convention have familiar names and a large percentage have previously been in production 20-30 years ago but failed due to low metal prices. With the sustained rise in commodity prices over the past

few years, many of these projects are back on track with new owners and new concepts for mining. The following is a brief description of the deposits reported on at the convention which might be of interest to mineral collectors in future.

LALOR: One of the biggest mineral discoveries in the history of Manitoba, this high-grade Zn-Cu-Au deposit is actually a series of different lenses with variable metal ratios; some are mainly zinc while others are copper-gold or mainly gold. Discovered only a few years ago by Hudbay Minerals after an impressive exploration program, the Lalor deposit is deep but only 3 km northwest of the company's Chisel North deposit and is currently being developed at a cost of more than \$700 million. Full production on this 17 million tonne deposit is expected by 2015. Manitoba collectors are well aware of the large, well-formed garnets, clinozoisite, staurolite, kyanite, arsenopyrite and pyrite crystals that have come from mines in the Snow Lake area; let's hope Lalor lives up to that tradition!



Almandine garnets to 7cm from Snow Lake; Manitoba Museum.

BUCKO MINE: This former nickel producer at Wabowden was put back into production in 2011 by the new owners, a Chinese backed company called CaNickel Mining Ltd. (formerly Crowflight) and is currently struggling to break even. The deposit is one of a series of nickel orebodies found along the Thompson nickel belt and is 100km south of Thompson. The Thompson nickel deposits of course have produced some of the best mineral specimens known from Manitoba, the world-class plates of the acicular nickel sulphide mineral millerite. They have also produced a few cubanite crystals which are comparable to the world's best. These two occurrences were found in small sections of the orebodies so although none have been found at Bucko, we can always hope that the next blast will reveal great specimens there too.

MINAGO NICKEL DEPOSIT: This is another deposit within the Thompson Nickel Belt (near the southern end) with a long history which is



Millerite from the Thompson nickel mines, 3x6x1.5cm. Photo by Cindy Hasler.

now inching its way towards development. The current owners, Victory Nickel, have been granted the necessary environmental and other permits required to begin construction but now face the task of raising about \$595 million to build the mine. The plan is to develop an open pit operation by removing 50m of Ordovician limestone (lots of fossil potential here!) and then 9m of valuable sand which will be sold to the "frac" industry before finally reaching the nickel orebody. Like the Bucko deposit to the north, once mining is underway one never knows when a fault zone will be discovered which might contain millerite, cubanite or other highly collectable minerals. This deposit is north of Grand Rapids, about a 5-6 hour drive north from Winnipeg.

A number of former gold producers in northern Manitoba and also being advanced towards mining again. These include the former ***Puffy Lake mine*** and the ***Tartan mine*** both northeast of Flin Flon, the old ***McLellan mine*** near Lynn Lake, and the former ***New Britannia mine*** in Snow Lake. Most of these were relatively low grade deposits and I am not personally aware of any good quality specimens that came from any of them but once again, all it takes is one fault zone with the right combination of timing and fluids to create high-grade pockets.

MINERAL GALLERY PLANNED



Dr. Graham Young, curator of geology at the Manitoba Museum has confirmed that the museum is now developing a mineral display

that is expected to be open to the public by June 2012! This is very exciting and welcome news for the local mineral collector community and it is a project that the Mineral Society of Manitoba and members of the MSM's museum committee have been assisting with and looking forward to for several years now.

The exhibit cases are now being designed by the museum's Stephanie Whitehouse with input from Dr. Young and members of the MSM. It is expected that they will contain about 12-18 pieces in total, all from Manitoba or within a 500 mile radius of this province. The major pieces slated for display so far include both the 1,000 pound amethyst from Thunder Bay and the 27 cm millerite specimen from Thompson donated by the Mineral Society. It is hoped that most of the pieces will be visually very appealing to members of the public and kindle their interest in rocks and minerals. The MSM is still pursuing another one or two specimens to help complete the display.

Speaking from personal experience, I can tell you that displays like this one can make a great impression on children, sparking a lifelong interest in minerals and the earth sciences. As an 8-year old child I visited the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and was awestruck by a 2m wide mica crystal hanging on the wall. I've been collecting rocks and minerals ever since and chose to become professional geologist as a result. The Manitoba Museum attracts 300,000 visitors per year, including 100,000 children so let's hope this new display has the same affect on some of them as the ROM did on me!



"Reflecting" on a 2m wide mica crystal in the ROM

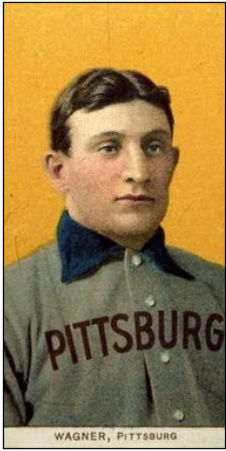


ROCKHOUND COLLECTABLES:

CIGARETTE CARDS

Cigarette cards were first issued in 1875 by the US-based Allen and Ginter tobacco company. Much like baseball or hockey cards in chewing gum packs, cigarette cards were small trading cards typically with colour images on one side and a descriptive text on the reverse. In England, the W.D. & H.O. Wills company began issuing advertising cards with their cigarettes in 1887 and John Player & Sons was the first to issue a set of general interest cards with the release of "Castles and Abbeys" in 1887. The cards quickly became very popular in England and to this day there seem to be a number of major card sellers and clubs based there.

Sets of cigarette cards commonly consist of 25 or 50 cards depicting the same theme but some series had over 100 cards. The cards are about 1 ½ x 2 ½" in size. Some of the most common themes were sports stars, "beauties" (famous actresses, models, etc.), nature, the military and cities. Complete sets are available on a number of websites and the prices range from about \$50 to several thousand dollars. The holy grail of cigarette cards is of course the famous 1909 card of the great baseball player Honus Wagner. Wagner was a dedicated opponent of smoking and demanded that the printers destroy all of his cards but a few slipped

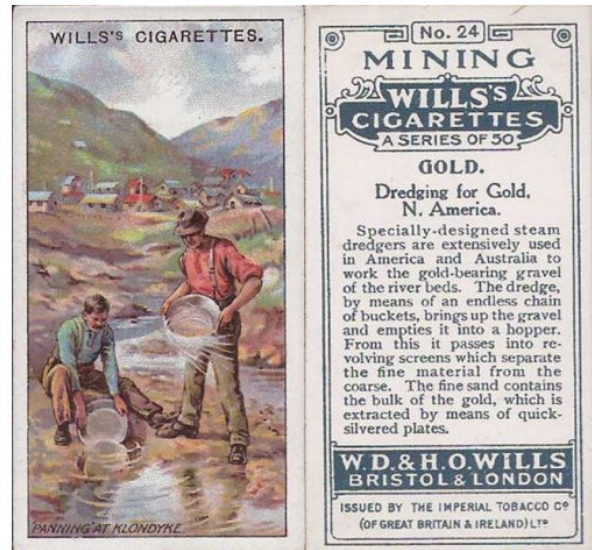


out. One of these in near mint condition sold in 2007 for a record \$2.8 million!

The only set that depicts a geological or mining theme that I've come across so far was issued by Wills in 1916 and currently sells for about \$75-100. The complete set contains 50 cards. The subjects covered within the set are as follows:

Coal mining, China Clay, Asbestos (from the mines in Quebec), Gold (including the Klondyke in the Yukon), Diamonds, Copper, Marble, Iron, Mica, Oil, Platinum, Plumbago (lead), Radium, Rubies, Salt, Sapphires, Silver, Tin and Turquoise. There is a lot of interesting information printed on the backs of the cards including the economic value of the production and uses of the minerals. Some of the cards like these have become valuable historical references and are used today by researchers and historians.

If anyone else comes across another set with a geological theme please let me know. I am in no way knowledgeable about this field and would love to hear from anyone who is!



Panning for gold in the Klondyke (Dawson City, Yukon). Issued by W.D. & H.O. Wills, 1916.

MEET YOUR EXECUTIVE



Brent Thomson is the Mineral Society's treasurer for 2011-12. He was elected at the annual general meeting this past October and replaces Jack Bauer who stepped down after serving in this role for the past 2 years (and who was preceded himself by his wife Evelyn for two years). Brent was born and raised in Winnipeg and has had a lifelong interest in rocks and minerals. It started with the railway tracks behind his house which gave coal, gypsum and dreams of finding valuable minerals there. As a young student he took a number of geology courses but with time changed to life sciences and ultimately became a medical doctor. He graduated as a doctor in 1984 and later specialised in the field of Occupational Medicine. Brent has collected rocks, minerals, fossils and cut gems for 45 years and first learned of the Mineral Society on the Internet, joining up in the Spring of 2011. He volunteered to serve on the executive this past Fall. Brent's collection is mainly minerals but he is looking forward to learning more and more from members of the MSM and upgrading his overall specimen quality and variety.



Cigarette card collection album.