

President's Message
James May - KCMS
President 2023



As we proceed through the month of March, our schedule is very full. We have just finished off consecutive weekends of Stoddard Wells and the 8th Annual Spring Festival at Wind Wolves. The last weekend of March has us scheduled for the Cal State Bakersfield Emergency Preparedness Event, the Rock and Lapidary Workshop, and a field trip out to Lavic Siding to collect beautiful red jasper and a visit to the lava tubes at Pisgah Crater. A busy time for the Kern Mineral Society, but definitely a fun stretch of time. When we get to the 100-degree temperatures of summer, I am sure we will look fondly back at this month.

We had a great General Membership Meeting last week which included a presentation on the Pala Mine in San Diego County by Lynn Agabashian. She spent ten years working in the mine and showed us beautiful samples of lepidolite and tourmaline. I found it interesting that Lynn & her daughter were just on a random visit to the site and going through the stockpiles when a chance encounter led to her working as a tour guide for ten years. Good fortune for sure!

We also look forward to our April Meeting when two CSUB stipend winners will be giving a dual presentation to the membership. They mentioned only that they have a great idea for a presentation, but you will need to attend the April Meeting for the details of the presentation.

Our February field trip on February 18th had us visiting Burro Schmidt Tunnel in the El Paso Mountains east of the Garlock Fault. I found it to be a very fascinating trip back in time when the tunnel was dug and the desert was peaceful.

We also visited the Jasper Agate Hill north of Red Rock Canyon and spent some time collecting some very colorful jasper. There was certainly a lot to collect from this locality. A few of the adventurous members hiked up the ridge line and were treated to great agates.

Steve Fleishauer was kind enough to host a wire-wrapping workshop for our members on Saturday, February 25th. Many of us are brand new to the art of wire wrapping and there was the potential for extreme frustration, but Steve made sure we stayed on course and all of us were pleased with our finished product. Our next Rock and Lapidary Workshop is scheduled for Saturday, March 25th. The rock cutting and polishing equipment will be available for all members to utilize and make cabochons.

Our next field trip will be on Sunday, March 26th to Lavic Siding to collect various types of jasper. It might be our only trip out to Ludlow before summer so please take advantage of the collecting trip. We will also be visiting the lava tubes at Pisgah Crater, the 25,000-year-old volcano that dots the barren landscape.

There are two upcoming CFMS Shows that will be worth the drive to. First there is the Fresno County Show in Clovis this weekend followed by the Mariposa County Show in April.

Thanks 🙏 to those of you who were able to attend and help out at the 8th Annual Wind Wolves Spring Festival on the weekend of March 18th. -- James

Next General Meeting

**Thursday, April 20th at 6:30 PM
East Bakersfield Veterans Hall - Upstairs Room
Address: 2101 Ridge Road, Bakersfield, CA**



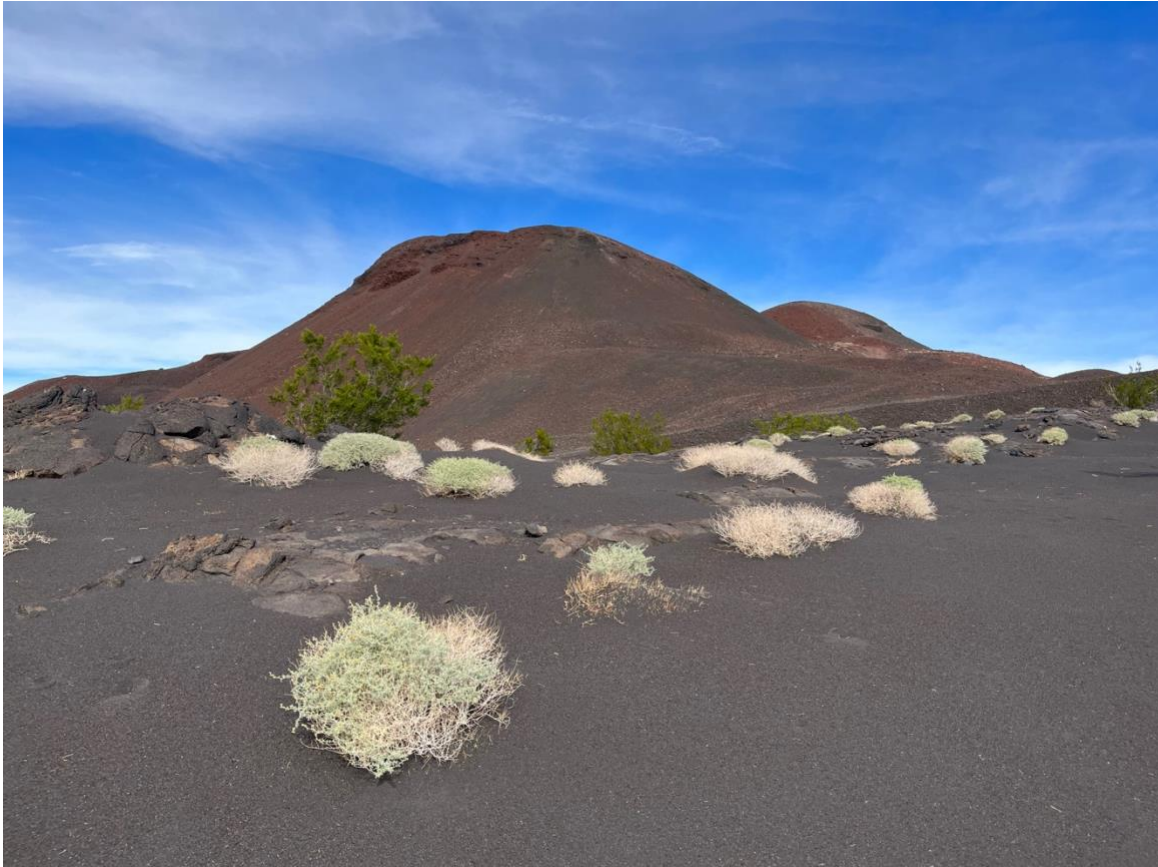
The Burro Schmidt Tunnel



NEXT FIELDTRIP

Sunday, March 26th, 2023

**Lavic Siding and Pisgah Crater
Meet Bernie at Harbor Freight at 7:00 AM**



**Next Rock and Lapidary Workshop
Saturday, March 25th at 9:00 AM
The Fleishauer's House**



Three Unique Perspectives on the visit to Burro Schmidt Tunnel

James May, Donna Rodrigues, and Bernie “Burro” Bentsen

I remember working on a drilling project back in 2002 out at Edwards Air Force Base with a few of my fellow geologist coworkers. After a blown hydraulic hose on the drill rig led to another wasted day, we called it quits early on a hot and sweltering day out in the Mojave Desert. Not wanting to return back to the hotel so early, a group of us decided to head out to *Tonie's place* in the hills as Pete referred to it. We took a short cut through California City and grabbed a quick bite to eat before heading north out to Ransburg Road. I remember following behind Pete's truck as we headed on a seldom used dirt road up into Last Chance Canyon. We had four-wheel drive and we definitely needed it climbing up a few cobbly switch backs and me wondering where we were going. To Pete, it was *Tonie's place*. A safe refuge from the daily grind of working on the unreliable drill rig. My thought and my communication with my passenger Mike was “who would honestly want to live up here in the middle of nowhere,” but there was certainly a calm peacefulness to this place. Mike assured me it was worth the visit as he and Pete had visited before. At that stage of my life, the Mojave Desert was an undesirable location to work and to explore. With time, the desert grows on you, like with many, though.

We finally arrived at this old cabin up in the hills which I assumed was *Tonie's place*. Pete was not much of a talker, and I was just following his lead up the canyon road. I was just told to bring five dollars or better yet ten dollars to give to Tonie for rental of a flashlight to go into the tunnel she managed. When we arrived, the Sun was beginning its lengthy decent over Copper Hill. As we approached the cabin, Tonie came out, smiled, and came up and gave Pete a big hug asking if he brought her any copies of the Shows. He provided her a copy of the famous Deer Creek Show from the 1989 Grateful Dead Tour. To her, Pete was the awesome guy who brought her copies of Grateful Dead shows. She was in her 90's and the primitive living took a toll on her physically, but she had an abundance of life and spirit. I introduced myself to her and we spent some time speaking. She seemed to appreciate having visitors and relished the opportunity to share some uplifting stories. She loved the solitude of living up on Copper Hill but certainly enjoyed those who took the time to visit her. She peppered us with questions about the geology of the El Paso Mountains and the Garlock Fault. I am sure Tonie heard the stories of the geology a thousand times, but she lit up with the history of the rocks and hills.

I remember speaking with her and the mention of being out at the cabin since the 1960s when she came out with her ailing husband who was suffering from TB. He died soon after their arrival and she had been living out there alone in the cabin ever since. I got the distinct impression that she could take care of herself. She showed me a makeshift storage room in which the walls were lined with old newspaper clippings, and I thought the person who may have done this to very eccentric. She seemed to think he was simply using the newspaper cuttings as a source of insulation as she said “what was worse than the summer sun was the cold, windy, and occasionally snowy winters that tested her resolve.” The architect of the room was Burro Schmidt, the man who spent thirty-two years of his life digging out a 2087-foot-long tunnel into the Copper Mountain. A marvel of engineering as it was for the most part dug by hand and shovel. He finally reached the other side of the mountain in 1938. To what end I think adventurous types postulate the most.

We rented out flashlights and headed up the slope to the entrance of the Burro Schmidt Tunnel. I thought it must have been a tunnel for mineral resources, but it seemed to be conduit for those chasing the setting Sun. It seemed like a worm hole to a distant period and place in the old west during the Roosevelt Administration prior to the bombing of Peral Harbor. It seemed to be more a journey of peace than a journey of profit. I do remember the grade up to the Burro Schmidt tunnel entrance and the struggles Mike had with the gradient. Mike was a few years older than I and a frequent smoker, and I was concerned with his struggles climbing the grade. It was soon after he was diagnosed with a terminal illness, and he died only a few months later. That grade must have been a major obstacle for him, but he was determined to keep going and reach the top. *Run with endurance the race that is set before us* as he liked to quote from scripture. I liked Mike very much and I struggled with his passing.

The tunnel was a fantastic journey and the walk into the setting Sun made it worth the journey. There was not much as far as collectable rocks except for some beautiful epidote and the scattering of various green-veined rocks from the trace amounts of copper found on the hill. The termination of the tunnel gives you a beautiful view of the Fremont Valley. When we arrived back, Tonie had the Deer Creek show playing softly and we sat on the porch, enjoyed some lemonade, and took in the whole experience. Tonie seemed at peace and the quite serenity of the place was comforting to me. The Sun was setting, and we knew we needed to head back soon but I could definitely see the appeal of *Tonie's place*. She wanted to know when I would return to visit her and perhaps bring her a copy of a show from my collection. I promised her I would return one day, and we would meet again. Unfortunately, that day would never come, as I found myself busy with work and life, and I found out of her passing approximately a year later. So, when we decided to return to Burro Schmidt some twenty years after I first visited the tunnel it seemed sort of melancholy to me. The disrepair and the endless graffiti on the cabin, or *Tonie's place*, and the tunnel seemed to dig up old wounds.

The highlight of the trip with the Mineral Society was certainly the half-mile long tunnel and the camaraderie with fellow rockhounds. To my it was a promise to return to a place I had promised to return. It was an extreme contrast in perspective. I remember being at peace driving to *Tonie's place* in 2002 and of the pleasant experience of the tunnel. I also remember Mike and I talking. It had a great experience and I wanted to return soon. In our latest visit, I was shocked by the chaos of all the offroad vehicles and the egregious destruction of the land. This was certainly not a peaceful field trip by any stretch of the imagination. I assume it to be a measure of degradation and entropy of nature.

Donna's Rodriguez's Perspective

For me, just getting back to the desert for the first time this year was enough but getting to visit this historic site was all the better. We took the exit from Highway 14 at a small sign that indicated that we were in the right place. We traveled eight miles east and I was mesmerized by the change in color and texture at every turn. The roads were lumpy and bumpy but doable.

I wasn't sure what to expect at Burro Schmidt habitation but what I did see was nothing like what I imagined. The "cabin" was out in the open on a crest with no shade protection. Upon first glance, as we drove by to the parking area and his famous tunnel, I saw what time and vandalism had taken toll on the structure.

As we carefully went in and around the cabin through a gauntlet of up-turned nails and splintered wood we entered a room that momentarily too me back in time. This room, out of all the rooms there, had a personality and a sense of its habitation. On the walls and ceiling were remnants of its dweller's everyday life. Evidence of what he ate, used, and read were tacked onto the walls and ceiling as insulation. He ate Rice Krispies, Flap-jacks, Graham Crackers, Sunsweet Prunes, Brookfield Eggs, Soda Crackers and drank Hills Brothers Coffee and Lipton Tea. He used Arm & Hammer Baking Soda and Diamond Matches. This individual, based on the age of newspaper clippings was Burro Schmidt.

I assume that Burro read the newspaper "the Bakersfield Echo", then he tacked it onto his walls, insulating this room. The dates, that I could discern were from around 1923. If I were a historian, I could've done research on that period of time just from reading those walls.

Walking around the back we found another clue about his life there. It appears that Burro Schmidt had company as evidenced by the pink and blue toilet seats in the outhouse.

Around the front I noticed a round rock cemented structure that held a non-rusting metal container. Could have served as a cistern for their water supply? There were still recognizable items such as a stove and a tank in the back that

might've been for propane. It now bore the words "GERM" other than the above mentions items, no traces of habitation were visible.

In spite of the damage to the structure and the changes in graffiti; over the years, I could still feel that someone called this place home. In many ways, those covered wall told a story, fuel for the imagination.

Bernie Bentsen's Perspective

On a great day on Saturday, February 18th, the KCMS and the SJVLS went on an adventure/field trip. We were on our way to see an historic site, Burro Schmidt Tunnel and afterwards we would go to a Jasper/Agate hill to collect rocks.

There are two ways to get to the tunnel. It was decided the best way was from Highway 14. BLM recommended 4-wheel drive, especially with all the rain we had, but online it says high clearance 2-wheel drive was ok. We had 5 vehicles going and I was the only one with 4-wheel drive. I was worried all the way to the tunnel if someone got stuck. We hit some pretty bad sandy areas, but everyone did a great job in the sand, especially when I took a wrong turn. One turn had a great sign which way to go and others did not. The good thing was we found an old mining camp that we checked out. We eventually got to the mine. When we got there, one vehicle was parked at the entrance. When we left there were 45 off-road quads around the entrance. Some went all the way through to the end of the tunnel and others checked out the cabins. The view was amazing. Now a little about Burro Schmidt Tunnel.

Burro Schmidt said that he would "never haul his ore to the Mojave smelter down that back trail" using his two burros. Thus, he began his tunnel in 1900. The tunnel was about 6 feet tall and 10 feet wide. It was cut through solid granite bedrock and required little shoring. However, Schmidt was trapped many times by falling rocks and injured often. He eventually installed a mining cart on rails.

In 1920 a road was completed from the Last Chance Canyon to Mojave, eliminating the need for the tunnel, but Schmidt claimed to be obsessed with completion and dug on.

By 1938 he had achieved his "goal", having dug through nearly 2,500 feet, almost ½ mile of solid Granite using only a pick, a shovel, and a four-pound hammer for the initial section, and carefully placed dynamite with notoriously short fuses for the majority portion. It was estimated that he had moved 5,800 tons of rock with just a wheelbarrow to complete his work. The ownership of the mine is still in the court system.

We left and headed back out to the entrance of the mountains to a site called Jasper/Agate Hill. Plenty of Jasper is found mainly on the left side of the hill and the Agate is usually found on the top. Several went all the way to the top and others went for Jasper. I went for the Jasper as there are many pieces big enough for spheres. I did also find some nice pieces of Agate without going all the way to the top. Even halfway up the hill, the view was also amazing here looking down into the valley. After about two hour we headed back home. The weather was a perfect day for our field trip.

Thank you everyone for another great adventure.











FEBRUARY 25th Rock and Lapidary Workshop







UPCOMING ROCK, MINERAL, AND GEM SHOWS



UPCOMING ROCK AND MINERAL SHOWS – SPRING 2023

March 24, 25 & 26, 2023 – Clovis, CA

Fresno Gem and Mineral Society

The Clovis Rodeo Grounds, 748 Rodeo Dr., Clovis, CA 93612

Hours: Friday & Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM

3rd Annual Central Valley Gem and Mineral Show sponsored by the Fresno Gem & Mineral Society. We present a great show for viewing, learning about and purchasing minerals, fossils, gems, beautiful handmade jewelry & much more! Educational and fun for all ages! Come out and tickle your inner rockhound! Free Parking and Free Admission

Contact: danielblom096@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.fgms.online>

March 25-26, 2023 – Angeles Camp, CA

Calaveras Gem and Mineral Show

Calaveras County Fairgrounds, 2465 Gun Club Road, Angeles Camp, CA 95222

Contact: clairemathison1@gmail.com

Website: <https://calaverasgemandmineral.net/>

April 1-2, 2023 – Vista, CA

Vista Gem and Mineral Society

Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum, 2040 N. Santa Fe Ave., Vista, CA 92083

Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM

Cabs, Slabs and Rough, Jewelry

Website: <https://vistarocks.org>

April 8-9, 2023 – Mariposa, CA

Mariposa Gem and Mineral Show

Mariposa County Fairgrounds, 5007 Fairgrounds Rd., Mariposa, CA

Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM

Contact: mgmc@sti.net

Website: <http://mariposagemclub.org>

KCMS CLASSIFIEDS

KCMS is proud to announce the addition of a Classified Ads Section to the Pseudomorph Newsletter!!

Calling on all members who have any items that they want to sell or those looking to buy.

Rocks, Minerals, Rock Saws, but that's not all!! We will also accept Lawn Equipment, Electronics, Homemade Crafts, etc.

The Pseudomorph Classifieds will not be limited to only rock & mineral related items, but to any items members are looking to sale.

When making a classified ad for the newsletter be sure to include:

- Description of Item
- Asking Price
- Contact Information
- Picture(s)

Pictures are not necessary but will be added if provided. Please send photographs in JPEG (.jpg) format if possible.

Classified Ads for the Pseudomorph are due to the editor no later than the first Thursday of each month, via Email or by U.S. Mail.

James May, Editor
Email geojim9@hotmail.com

If you have any ads, you want added to the next Pseudomorph, please email me the details and I will post.

Don't Forget the BREAKFAST CLUB

The first Wednesday of each month, year-round, KCMS Members and occasional guests meet at 8:30 AM at Lorene's Coffee shop at 23rd and Eye streets in downtown Bakersfield. Everybody is welcome to attend!

-- Dalia Hernandez



KCMS Monthly Meeting

Please join the KCMS at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 18th at the East Bakersfield Veterans Hall located at 2101 Ridge Road in Northeast Bakersfield. We hope you can attend, and visitors are always welcome.



Kern County Mineral Society

is a Charter Member of the
California Federation of Mineralogical Societies

and is affiliated with the
American Federation of Mineralogical Societies



The Kern County Mineral Society, Inc. was organized in 1935 to promote the study of mineralogy and allied earth sciences, to collect and study minerals and rocks, to study and practice the techniques of jewelry making, to promote good fellowship and good citizenship and to promote education in the earth sciences. Membership dues are \$20 for singles, \$25 for couples.

KCMS WEBSITE: <http://www.kerncountymineralsociety.org/>

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KCMS will email a free .pdf subscription to any high school, college, or university student who wishes to receive it. Just email a request to geojim9@hotmail.com

Articles for *The Pseudomorph* are due to the Editor no later than the first Thursday of each month, via Email, via Facebook, or by US Mail. Please send photographs in JPEG (.jpg) format if possible, and text as Notepad, Word, or other simple text for me to paste and edit.

James May, Editor
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FUN, GAMES, & FIELD EXCURSIONS



MARCH'S MONTH'S MYSTERY SLAB

Here is this month's mystery slab. Please submit your answer to kerncountymineralsociety@gmail.com and geojim9@hotmail.com. Each month's winner will be placed in a drawing at the end of the year for a special prize. Last month's winners were Anita Andersen, Monica Hinsen, and Maricruz Vasquez who correctly identified the slab as rhodochrosite. Nice work Anita, Monica, and Maricruz.



Mystery Slab Hint: Little more difficult this month. This would be a metamorphic or altered granite with beautiful green epidote and feldspar crystals with a splash of quartz. Its unique name comes from the mountain range in North Carolina where it was originally discovered.

To make sure you are credited with the correct answer, please email the Kern County Mineral Society and James (see email addresses above). We would like to keep track of those who get the correct identity of the mystery slab each month.

