

December

IDENTIFICATION -- How to Use Physical Properties in Identification

Now that we have become familiar with the physical properties of minerals, we should be able to determine them in the specimens we find. Once we have done this with a certain piece, we can look up various minerals that we think it might be in a mineral book and see what their physical properties are. We usually can eliminate one after another of these by deciding it does not have all of the same properties. It may not be hard enough, have the right luster, or be in the correct form, etc. Hopefully, we will eventually come to the right identification by this process of elimination. This system works pretty well for someone who has become familiar with quite a few minerals, but is not very satisfactory for the real beginner.

In first starting out, perhaps it would be better to use one of the charts that have been worked out to help amateurs. There is at least one system on cards and others in books. The one in the two-dollar paperbound volume, The Complete Guide to Rocks, Gems, and Minerals, called the Five-Digit System is supposed to be easier to use than the others. Dr. Frederick Pough, author of Field Guide to Rocks and Minerals, chose for this chart the list of minerals he thought amateurs would most likely need to identify.

In this system there are only five properties to be determined -- luster, hardness, transparency, form, and color. Each one of these is given a number, making up a five-digit number, which is then located on the chart. This narrows the possibilities down to the few listed under that number. Then, by using a good book and possibly making some more tests, it can be determined which of these indicated minerals is the right identification for the specimen.

Frank and Eleanor Owens



Certificate of Participation



RECOGNITION IS EXTENDED TO



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FOR PARTICIPATION IN

All American Federation Club Award

Honorable Mention — 1971


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PROGRAM FOR DECEMBER

This is the season of the year when we take time to remember others and present our gifts to them. In this respect we are to have our usual gift exchange, which is explained elsewhere in the bulletin. John Passaneau and Mrs. Passaneau are to head up the gift exchange.

The other part of the program will be a color motion picture, "The Fossil Story," produced by the Shell Oil Company. The film is related to oil prospecting, and the subject matter is well presented.

SEASON'S GREETINGS.

Program Committee

STONE FOREST TUCKED AWAY IN MISSISSIPPI In Flora, Mississippi

Tucked away in upland above the Mississippi delta country lies a place of fascination -- the only petrified forest in the eastern United States.

Its existence has been known since the middle of the 19th century, but only within the past few years has it been developed and opened to the public. This past summer, increasing numbers of travelers wended their way here to view the petrified remains of magnificent trees. It is three miles from the hamlet of Flora, in Mississippi's Madison County by the state's major highways. Open daily, the site also contains an outstanding mineral museum.

The 40-acre petrified forest tract is privately owned. A national registered natural landmark since 1966, it is one of few privately owned sites to have this recognition by the National Park Service. The U. S. Department of the Interior's advisory board has stated that the site should be preserved as an outstanding specimen of the nation's natural history.

Some of the petrified wood logs are whole, some have hollows, some are tree chunks, but all of them were once part of a primeval forest transformed into stone. The specimens were dated by the age of the soil layers in which they are found. They have been carefully examined by scientists.

Events leading to the preservation of the petrified logs began over 36 million years ago during the Oligocene period. The logs are not indigenous to their present location, but came as driftwood from the north. This area was lowlands, where shifting rivers spread sand over plains and shores. Stranded here in a gigantic logjam, the logs were preserved from decay by rapid burial in the sands carried by the waters. Petrification took place during the ages by gradual infiltration of dissolved minerals, mainly silica.

Some of the stony logs have a gray lichen growth, some carry the wounds of water-wearing, some have odd shapes. One is calculated to have been more than 1,000 years old as a living tree.

Natural erosion first exposed these prehistoric stone trees. As time goes on, more erosion will uncover additional tree remains.

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Via Rock Trails

A ROCKHOUND

A pick in hand,
A glint in his eye,
An all around regular guy.

He climbs the hills
And wades the streams,
To find a fossil or rock that gleams.

Soaking up sunshine
And digging up clay,
He passes many a pleasant day.

Without a plan
For fortune or glory,
He shares the rocks and tells
their story.

Word of his hobby
Reaches far and wide,
Brings friend and family to his side.

Wherever he goes,
And whatever he's found,
He's a real nice guy --
He's a ROCKHOUND!

--by Jean Kennedy of
Seymour, Indiana, in honor of
her father, Ivan Thompson.

Contributed by Bessie Rogers.