

**THE 788<sup>th</sup> MEETING  
OF  
THE MINERALOGICAL SOCIETY  
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

**7:30 p.m., Friday October 10, 2003**

**Building E, Room 220  
Pasadena City College  
Pasadena, California**

**Featuring a Talk by**

**Bob Reynolds**

**on**

**Turquoise from the Mojave Desert:  
a gemstone mined for the past 1,000 years.**

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**October Program**

Our October Speaker will be Bob Reynolds, and his subject will be Turquoise from the Mojave Desert: a gemstone mined for the past 1,000 years.

Bob Reynolds is a graduate of Pasadena High School and Pasadena Community College which greatly influenced his career in mineralogy and paleontology. Following graduation from the University of California, Riverside, he spent more than 30 years as Curator of Earth Sciences at the San Bernardino County Museum in Redlands, California. During that time he developed volunteer programs in mineralogy, resulting in the informal but very active "Museum Mineral Group" who assisted with a wide variety of curatorial and educational activities, including creating displays for the MSSC show and the Tucson Gem and Mineral show. Mr. Reynolds is presently the Project Manager, Paleontology, with LSA Associates in Riverside. He continues to work with members of the MSSC and the Southern California Chapter of Friends of Mineralogy in mineralogy education and outreach.

**The Blind Springs Silver District**

## by Walt Margerum

Most of us have heard of Calico, Cerro Gordo, and Darwin, but may not be aware of the Blind Springs Hill district near Benton Hot Springs in Mono County. This is one of the earliest silver mining districts in California, and one of the few to be mined primarily for antimonial silver sulfides.

H. A. Whiting gives the following description of the district. *Blind Spring Hill, in which the Comanche, Wai Wera, Cornucopia, Borasca, and other mines occur, is about six miles from north to south by about three miles from east to west. Its eastern flank is so abrupt as to be precipitous in many places, particularly on its northern end, and down to its very foot sweeps a broad talus from the western flank of the White Mountains, across the floor of the narrow Blind Springs Valley, through which the Carson and Colorado Railroad now runs. The western slope of Blind Spring Hill has a much less abrupt descent, and the approach to its mines is from this side. Viewed from the west the crest of this mountain falls by the gentlest slope to the north until its contour there merges grace-fully into the plain at the northwest base of the White Mountains. At its southern end this hill falls very much more rapidly down to Yellow Jacket Creek.*

*This mining district was organized early in 1864; following the discovery of the Cornucopia, Diana (now Wai Wera), and Comanche veins, within a few days of one another, and in the order named; and soon, as usual, the entire mountain was speedily covered by locations.*

Whiting describes the mineralogy as follows: *An examination at Benton of two collections of ores from all of its out-lying districts showed a marked uniformity in the prevailing character of their mineral constituents. They were all essentially more or less complex associations of antimonial ores of copper, lead, and silver, with, usually, scarcely more than traces of gold.*

*The minerals observed in the ores of these two collections were pyrite, chalcopyrite, bornite, gray copper ore (tetrahedrite), sphalerite, galenite, argentite, pyrargyrite, stephanite, kerargyrite, native silver, magnetite, partzite, hematite, anglesite, and cerussite. Only a small number of these, of course, were observed in any one association, the prevailing minerals being, generally, the sulphurets of iron, lead, and zinc, with antimonial silver minerals. Native copper was an occasional occurrence. In the deeper mines of Blind Spring Hill, antimonial gray copper ore is reported to have replaced the partzite below the so called water level.*

The Blind Springs district is the type locality for partzite named for August F. W. Partz an expert assayer and mineralogist. He also founded the town of Partzwick which does not appear on any current maps. Remi Nadeau indicates that all the buildings in Partzwick were dismantled and moved to Benton Hot Springs by 1866.

Partzite is a secondary mineral of the stibiconite group with the formula  $\text{Cu}_2\text{Sb}_2(\text{O},\text{OH})_7$ . It ranges in color from olive-green to blackish-green, and tarnishes black. It is the main reason I went to the area.



Upper Blind Springs Hill road and mines

There are two roads, and I use that term loosely, into the area. The northern one is washed out and is impassable. Even a trail bike would have to be carried over several stretches. The southern route is passable by high clearance 4WD vehicle if you do not mind possible damage to your vehicle. Roger Mitchell gives parts of the southern route a Class IV rating. For this rating he states "If you are not a skillful and experienced off-road driver the body of your vehicle may suffer a little." I have hiked this route and agree with his assessment.

If you want to hike into the area the northern route is best. The distance is about 2.5 Km (8000 ft.) with an altitude gain of 280 meters (920 ft.). The final elevation is about 2000 meters (6000 ft.).

My search for partzite had uncertain Success. I found a small amount of a yellowish mineral that meets the description, but not enough to confirm its identity. I did find galena, cerussite, tetrahedrite, pyrite, siderite, and chrysocolla. None of them spectacular. It is not surprising that I did not find any silver minerals since the dumps have been reworked several times by what were called chloriders. Tucker and Sampson report that a 4320 ft tunnel, the Ross, was driven west from Last Chance Canyon, and intersected the Kerrick vein at 4116 feet. As far as I can tell the last mining was done in the 1950's.

## References

Mitchell, Roger (2003) "Inyo-Mono SUV Trails"; Track and Trail Publications, pp 93-

97

Nadeau, Remi (1999) "The Silver Seekers"; Crest Publishers, pp 65-85

Tucker, W. B. and Sampson R. J. (1940), "Current Mining Activity in Southern California"; California Journal of Mines and Geology, Volume 36 Number 1, pp 45-46

Whiting H. A. (1888) "Mono County, Benton Mining Districts"; California State Mining Bureau Eighth Annual Report of the State Mineralogist, pp 376-382

## **An Invitation to Learn about the Carlin Gold Boom**

The Branner Club, an informal group of southern California geologists, invites MSSC members to attend its next meeting at Caltech on Monday, November 10. The featured speaker will be Dr. Jonathan G. Price, State Geologist and Director, Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology. The title of his talk is "Carlin and the Biggest Gold-Mining Boom in American History." In 2002 the Carlin trend, a narrow belt of gold deposits in northeastern Nevada, reached a landmark in production, 50 million troy ounces of gold. No other mining region in the United States, including the Mother Lode in California, has reached this level of production. The significance of this achievement is being conveyed to the public with the help of the Governor, the Nevada Mining Association and its member companies, the Nevada Division of Minerals, and the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology (NBMG). Perhaps the single most important point to be made is that we are currently in the midst of the biggest gold-mining boom in American history. The actual 50 millionth ounce, made into a commemorative coin, was donated to the W.M. Keck Museum at the Mackay School of Mines by the mine operators on the Carlin trend (Newmont, Barrick, and Glamis Gold). Our message to the public is summarized in a poster (NBMG Special Publication 30) and in series of graphics that are posted in on the NBMG Web site (<http://www.nbmj.unr.edu/slides/slides.php?f=50m>).

The meeting will be at Caltech's Athenaeum at the corner of Hill and California in Pasadena. Social hour begins at 6:00, dinner at 7:00, followed by the talk at 8:15. If you wish to attend the dinner portion of the meeting (cost is \$36 per person), reservations are essential.

Please contact Janet Gordon ([jggordon@pacbell.net](mailto:jggordon@pacbell.net) or 626-441-6715) no later than Nov. 4. Those wishing to attend the talk only may arrive at 8:00 p.m.

Dr. Jonathan G. Price is the State Geologist and Director of the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, a research and public service unit of the University of Nevada. Jon earned a bachelor's degree in geology and German from Lehigh University and master's and Ph.D. degrees in geology from the University of California, Berkeley. His geological career has included experience with industry, teaching, research, and government. He has worked in copper, iron, and uranium exploration and mining (with the Anaconda Company and U.S. Steel Corporation); taught undergraduate and graduate geology courses and supervised graduate theses (at Bucknell University, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of Nevada,

Reno); and conducted and directed research at state geological surveys (in Texas and Nevada). In 1988 he became the Nevada State Geologist.

## Minutes of the September Meeting

The meeting was opened at 7:30 pm and a general discussion began and continued until 9:00 pm. The discussion was generally about "what did we, as MSSC members, want from our club". Jim mentioned a couple of major strengths of the MSSC: one is the quantity of very knowledgeable members and our field trips. Our club has many professional people in the earth sciences that actually attend our meetings. Often gem & mineral clubs have only 1 person that can identify rocks/minerals. We have many people. Thus when looking for new members we should be looking toward professional people: teachers, geologists, etc. Another major strength is our field trips of the variety MSSC earned its reputation. This prompted a lot of discussion with the decision that one major field trip a quarter would be doable. Some of these field trips would probably be fee digs (for example Ocean View Mine in Pala for tourmaline). Walt, Larry and Justin agreed be the field trip chairmen. This will take work as the good mineral locations take scouting to make sure that they have current information. Also another problem is that official field trips need to be only on open areas (no crossing private property without permission, no official collecting on State or National Parkland where it is not permitted, etc.).

We also discussed having more feed back on the status of our Show at the LA County Museum in December. This is not a complaint, just members wanting more information. Members want and need to participate. This includes not only helping with the Kid Rock project but in getting member and guest displays at the Show. Do we need help in getting more display cases? The bulletin editor needs to publish the dimensions of the cases so that members who have not displayed before can make liners. It was also suggested that the time line of events leading up to the show should be available.

Respectfully submitted by JoAnna Richey, for the Secretary

## Calendar of Events

### October

**11-12** Trona, CA, Searles Lake Gem and Mineral Society  
Gem and Mineral Building, 13337 Main Street

Hours: Sat 8-5 Sun 8-4

Bonnie Fairchild (760) 372-5356

web <http://www1.iwvisp.com/tronagemclub/tronagemclub.html>

**18** Canoga Park, CA, Woodland Hills Rock Chippers  
Canoga Park Community Center, 7248 Owensmouth Ave.

Hours: 10 - 5

email: [show@rockchippers.org](mailto:show@rockchippers.org)

**18-19** Whittier, CA, Whittier Gem & Mineral Society  
Whittier Community Center, 7630 Washington Ave.

Hours: 10-5 both days

Jay Valle (626) 934-9764 / [jvalle@aqmd.gov](mailto:jvalle@aqmd.gov)



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