

THE MICROMOUNTERS OF NEW ENGLAND

Janet Cares

The Micromounters of New England is an informal group with the common interests of collecting, viewing, mounting, studying, grading, and identifying microminerals. Our relatively unstructured meetings may be held in private homes, public halls, churches, or university facilities. Usually on Saturday, though occasionally on a Sunday, members start arriving at the appointed place as early as 9AM, armed with microscopes, lights, assorted known or unknown micros, and usually a brown bag lunch. There is rarely a formal program, though sometimes one locality such as Mt. St. Hilaire, Fracon, or Palermo may be designated for particular attention. At times members may show slides or give a demonstration of special techniques of specimen mounting, testing, photographing, etc.

Though a relatively small group (less than 40) membership participation is high, with more than half the members showing up at each meeting. Our six or more meetings per year are usually alternated between Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Thus every member, no matter how remote, is sure to find at least one meeting close enough to attend. One of the highlights of the year is our July meeting at the home of John and Martha Reiner on the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee. Weather permitting, we set up tables, chairs, and scopes outdoors for mineral work, stop for a pot luck lunch provided mostly by our host and hostess with the help of members, and in the afternoon may have a cooling swim in the lake. After an evening of conversation or slides, we retire early to prepare for a day of collecting at nearby Palermo to round out the weekend. August finds a number of our members setup at the Sunapee Show by invitation of the Capital Mineral Club of Concord, New Hampshire.

Our newsletter, ably edited by John Anderson since 1976, announces the time and place of the next meeting and miscellaneous news items. Additional information may be added on new minerals, tips on equipment, mounting, identification, book reviews, and other matters of interest.

We are able to boast that three of our members have had minerals named after them. All are phosphate minerals found at the Palermo Mine, North Groton, New Hampshire, and described by Paul Moore and his associates from the University of Chicago. Bjarebyite is named after our first Vice President, Gunnar Bjareby, whom the authors call "among the most outstanding of 20th century amateur mineralogists". He was a keen sight identifier and helpful to others with their unknowns. His passing, soon after formation of the Micromounters of New England, was a great loss.

Foggite is named for Forrest Fogg, former co-owner of the Palermo Mine, and described as a "collector of micromounts who has greatly advanced our knowledge of the practically unique Palermo paragenesis". Last, but not least is Whitmoreite, named for Bob Whitmore, the present owner. Of him,

the authors say "Motivated by a keen interest in secondary phosphates; he quite literally overturned the dumps of the abandoned Fletcher pegmatite, bringing to light many fine specimens representing the complex phosphate paragenesis of a now classic locality."

The first meeting of our group was November 6, 1966, attended by enthusiasts from various New England states and beyond. In January of the following year, a constitution was adopted, the present name approved, and a slate of officers elected. Heading the slate was Gilbert George, who perhaps more than anyone else was responsible for organizing the MMNE, and who remains active today. As Vice President we chose the late Gunnar Bjareby, and as Treasurer the late Walter Chick. Effie Grey was Recording Secretary and Ralph Carr Corresponding Secretary, a position he still retains. Besides Gil and Ralph there are three other charter members who remain active in the club: Fred Colby and Steve and Janet (then Miss Walkley) Cares.

Among our memories are: Gil George's early writeups on Rhode Island roadcuts, St. Hilaire, and Palermo, complete with excellent crystal drawings....Informative talks by Gunnar Bjareby on mineral recognition....Collecting trips to St. Hilaire, Palermo, and other localities....Gil's slides of St. Hilaire micros....Finding a choice specimen in the giveaways supplied by the Cares' and others....Visits by Neal Yedlin, "Mr. Micromounter"....Mineral swaps by mail with other clubs....Pete Dunn's talks and demonstrations during meetings at Boston University before Pete's departure for fame and fortune at the Smithsonian....Collecting at Grant's Mills, Rhode Island for parisite and what we then called danalite, later found to be genthelvite....Visits by Paul Moore to our gathering at the Sunapee Show....The conception and planning for our Northeast Meeting at the Springfield Science Museum, May 1, 1982.

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