

Western Rock Ramblings

By Thomas Farley

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thomasfarley@fastmail.com

All illustrations were derived from photographs taken by the author or from those in the public domain.

Introduction

This is the first chapter of what was to be a hardcopy publication, however, formatting the text and illustrations proved too difficult and time consuming. I wanted the book to be spiral bound to lay flat but costs proved prohibitive. I apologize for the poor formatting in advance, my inability to produce something attractive is of constant agony to me.

The sites listed were either visited by me or recommended to me by trusted sources. I know I have missed many points of interests as well as rock shops and clubs. E-mail me if you would like to be included in the next revision of this text. Several other state chapters are at or near completion and will be released soon.

Feel free to distribute this file anywhere you wish. I wish you good health.

Best,

Thomas Farley

Las Vegas, Nevada

Arizona

Anyone traveling extensively off-pavement in Arizona should get an Arizona State Trust Land Permit. \$15.00 for individuals. Rockhounding on Arizona State Trust Land is prohibited so it might seem that no permit is needed. Stopping at any point on these lands, however, constitutes a “use” and that use demands a permit. Determining where these lands exist while driving is next to impossible, most are managed grazing land outside of small towns or settlements. Rather than guess, get a permit if you regularly go off pavement.

<https://land.az.gov>

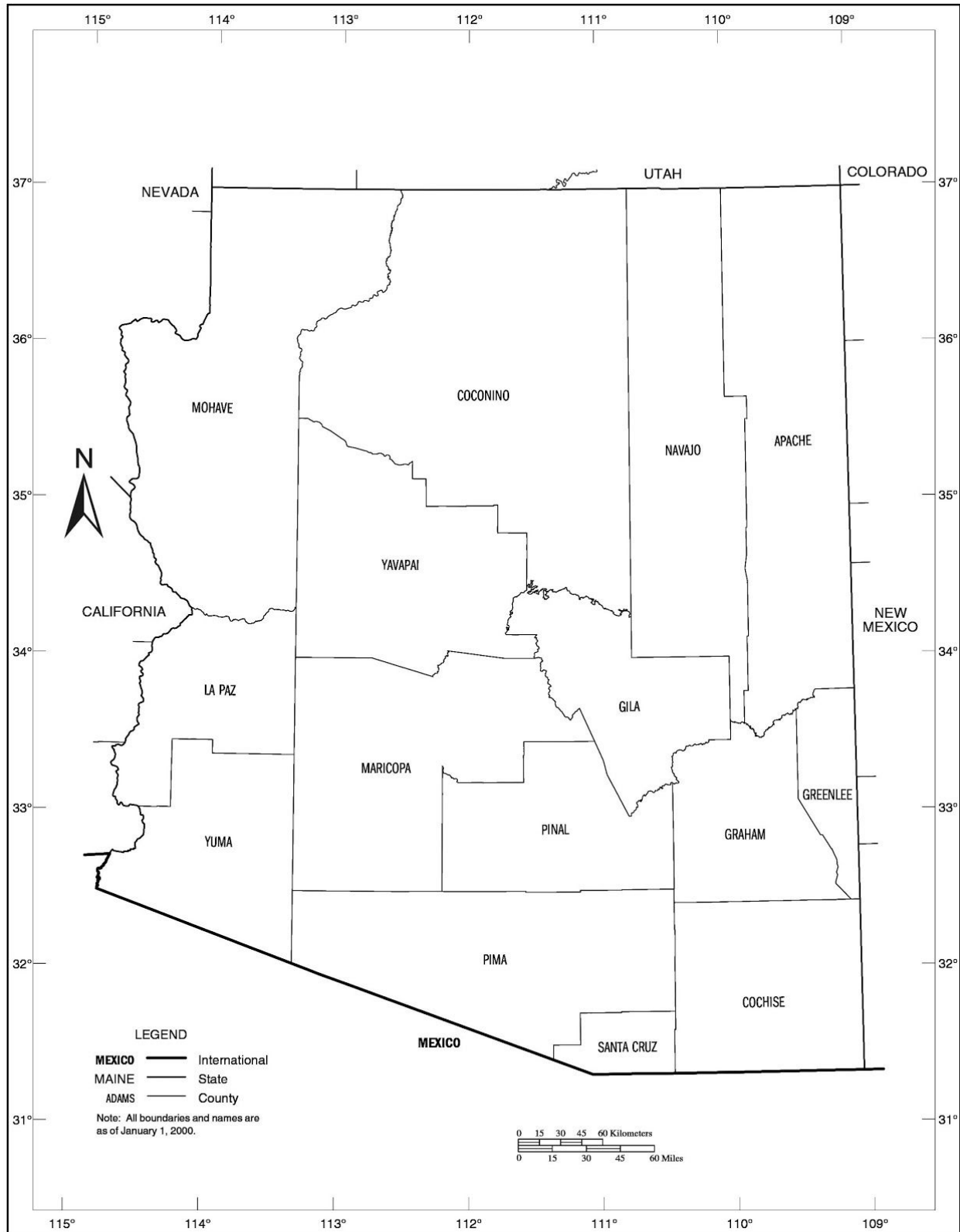
Resources

Ransom, Jay. *Arizona Gem Trails and the Colorado Desert of California* (Portland: Mineralogist Publishing Company, 1955) “A Field Guide for The Gem Hunter – The Mineral Collector – The Uranium Hunter.” Indeed. All sorts of insights by a veteran rockhound and writer. Naturally, much of the area Ransom explored is closed. And much is still open. And, if you can’t access a site for, say, agates, you can learn about agates from Ransom. Don’t pay too much.

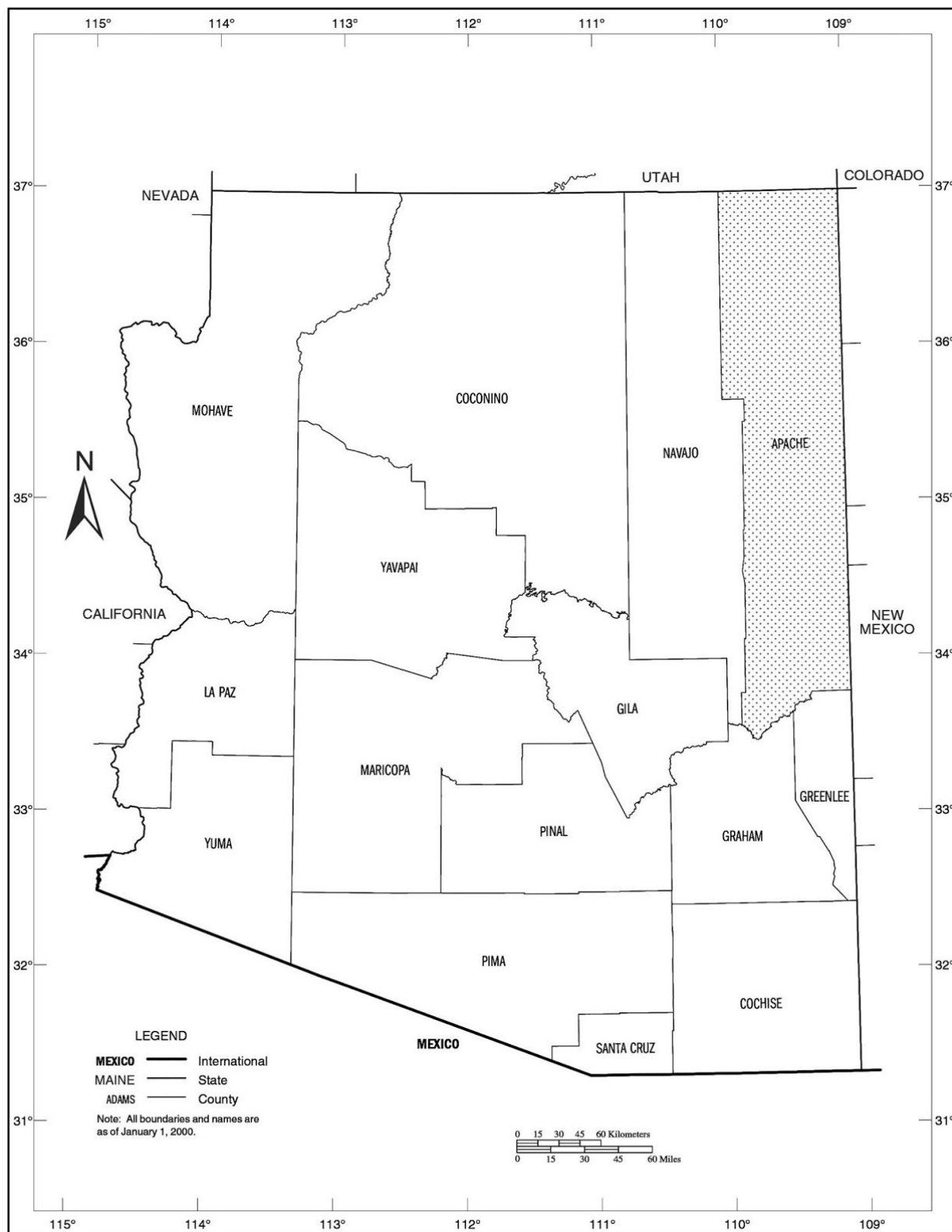
Lynch, Bob and Dan Lynch. *Arizona Rocks and Minerals* (Cambridge, Minnesota: Adventure Publications, 2010) Excellent book with real-life photographs and generalized locality maps. Despite the disreputable publisher, the book itself is a great guide to Arizona.

Johnson, Maureen. *Placer Gold Deposits of Arizona* (Washington, D.C.: Geological Survey Bulletin 1355) Available free online. The copy I have is a used reprint of the original USGS Bulletin. Del Oeste Press in Tarzana, California published it. Their repro includes a fold-out map, much superior to the tiny and unreadable online map. Del Oeste reprinted many, many guides to placer deposits in the Western United States. Avoid any copy of Bulletin 1355 printed on-demand as these may not contain the fold-out map.

Chronic, Halka. *Roadside Geology of Arizona* (Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press, 1983) Classic description of Arizona’s geology. Don’t be bothered by the date, the landscape hasn’t changed much in thirty years, except to development. As with all roadside geology books, these titles are only truly useful when read by a navigator or companion as a trip goes along. Otherwise, the landscape slips by as one can’t drive, read, and look at the same time.



Apache County, AZ (St. Johns)



Petrified Forest National Park

(Apache and Navajo Counties)

1 Park Road, AZ

928-524-6228

34°48.016' N 109°53.120' W (First Entrance)

34°48.923' N 109°51.941' W (Rainbow Forest Museum)

A must stop with no collecting permitted.

The vast amount of petrified wood here resulted from a logjam of trees which occurred in an ancient river in the Late Triassic Period, some 200 million years ago. Unless it is a rainy day, petrified wood here exhibits brilliant colors of white, red, brown, black, purple, and blue from trace elements.

Esteemed writer Bob Jones with Rock&Gem says these colors could come from vanadium, chromium, manganese, iron, cobalt, and many more. Any of the so-called transition metals. Note that these are elements, not minerals. Petrified wood is generally quartz. As a rule, trace elements in the quartz produce colors, not minerals. Read more in the August, 2018 issue of Rock&Gem.



PETRIFIED WOOD FRAMED DOORWAY

The Painted Desert Inn Visitor Center's lower floor reveals how the building was constructed with petrified tree logs. The Petrified Forest National Park stretches north and south between Interstate 40 and Highway 180, with an entrance at each end. Near the south entrance is a fee-dig site for petrified wood. This is the DoBell Ranch, listed further on under entries for Navajo County.

<https://www.nps.gov/pefo/index.htm>

The Navajo Nation Museum and Library

Highway 264 and Loop Road

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Window Rock, AZ 86515

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 1840

Window Rock, Arizona 86515

928-871-7941

35°39.843' N 109°03.308' W

The Navajo Nation Museum and Library is located in Window Rock, Arizona. Window Rock is the Capitol of the Navajo Nation. This museum has historic jewelry fashioned by tribal people, some sourced from local and Southwest material.

<http://navajopeople.org/nnm/>

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

Supervisor's Office

30 S. Chiricahua Drive

Springerville, AZ 85938

928-333-6280

34°07.912' N 109°16.507' W

Two woodlands managed as a single forest in east-central Arizona. They look like an upside-down "L". This forest covers 2.76 million acres in parts of Coconino, Navajo, Apache, and Greenlee counties. These are two Apache-Sitgreaves Ranger Districts in Apache County:

Springerville Ranger District

165 S. Mountain Ave.

Springerville, AZ 85938

928-333-62

34°07.868' N 109°17.261' W

Alpine Ranger District

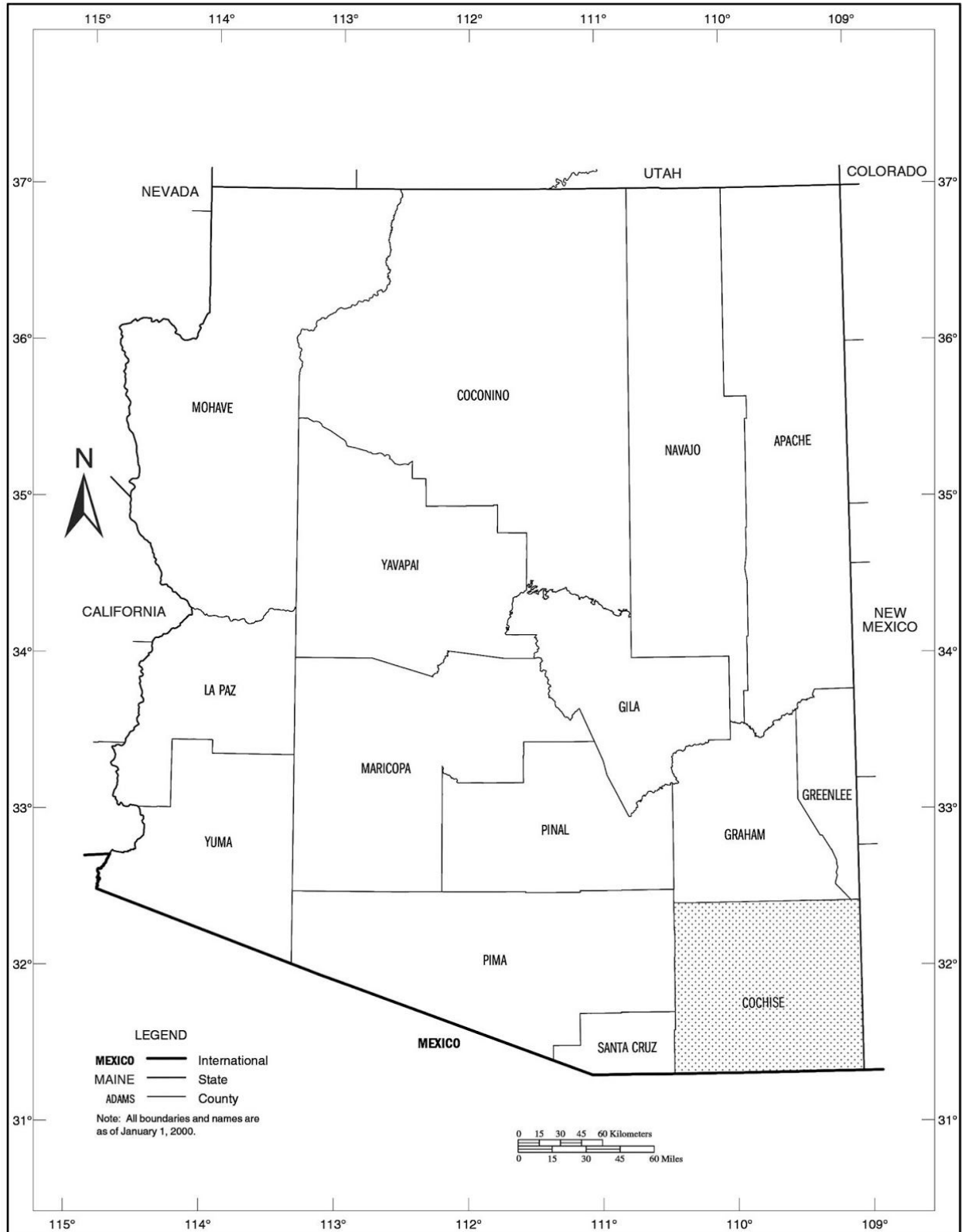
42634 Hwy. 180/191

Alpine, AZ 85920

928-339-5000

33°50.958' N 109°08.823' W

Cochise County, AZ (Bisbee)



BLM Safford Field Office and BLM New Mexico's Las Cruces Field Office

Western Rock Ramblings by Thomas Farley

711 S 14th Ave.
Safford, AZ 85546
928-348-4400

32°49.926' N 109°43.446' W

<https://www.blm.gov/office/safford-field-office>

BLM's Safford Field Office manages areas in Cochise, Graham, Greenlee and Pinal, Counties.

Sunshine Gallery and Gifts

1313 North Highway 80
St. David, Arizona, 85630
520-586-4560

31°55.770' N 110°16.865' W

marieluettcke@hughes.net

Destination rock shop for the rocks and minerals and the owner. Rolf is a mineral authority with vast personal and professional experience. His fascination with everything rock related began in Germany when he was nine. He knows all about the Bisbee area and Tombstone. Plan a trip. Tell him Thomas said "Hi" and that I plan on visiting soon.

Rolf has no official website but I have much, much more on Rolf at <https://southwestrockhounding.com>



SUNSHINE GALLERY AND GIFTS IN ST. DAVID, ARIZONA

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Designs By Owen

Unusual Gemstone Jewelry in Gold and Silver

45 Main Street

Bisbee, AZ 85603

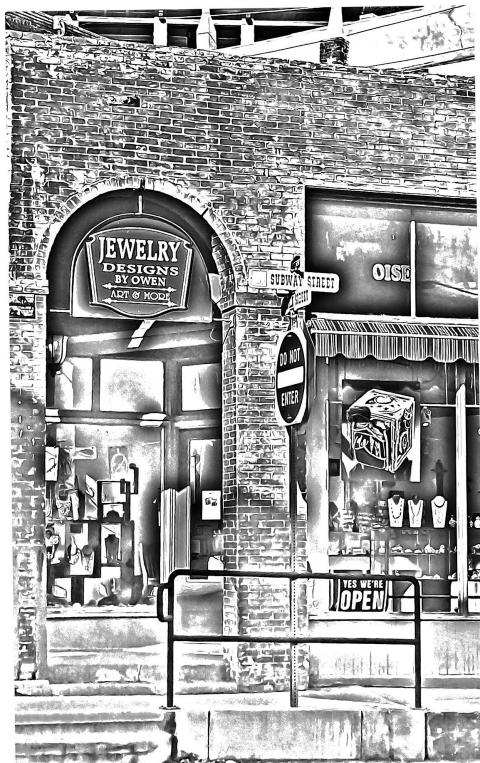
520-432-4400

31°26.520' N 109°55.001' W

Talented jewelry artist Dave Owen is a former geology professional. He's offered to point visiting rockhounds to some nearby collecting spots. Bring a map to help him direct you. Dave specializes in local gemstones, particularly Bisbee cambellite, malachite, and turquoise. His is primarily a jewelry gallery but Dave says he also "sell minerals, mostly from Bisbee and the Southwest, but a bit from everywhere. I also sell rough from different southwest localities and cabachons."

I was recently in contact with Dave. He writes, "Enclosed are a couple gallery shots and a photo of my business card should you need that info. Also, I am including a shot of the flyer for Courtland Ghost town. Michael Oster has started tours, mining, metal detector workshops, limited turquoise digs and other things. He is the only resident of Courtland and also has the main supply of Courtland Turquoise™. A must for your book and I would give him a call. I am the Bisbee rep for his project and doing jewelry work for him."

<http://www.jewelrydesignsbyowen.com/index.html>



DESIGNS BY OWEN, BISBEE, ARIZONA

Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum

No. 5 Copper Queen Plaza
Bisbee, Arizona 85603
520-432-7071

31°26.537' N 109°54.969' W

Bisbee lies in southeast Arizona, a world class location for copper and a variety of other minerals. Wyatt Earp and Apache country, with Tombstone only a half hour's drive away. Bisbee gained fame as the "Queen of the Copper Camps". Occupying a historical mining setting, the Bisbee Mining museum complex features exhibits and an underground mine tour. Read more about Bisbee's copper connection in the August, 2019 edition of Rock&Gem magazine.

<https://bisbeemuseum.org/bm-museum.aspx>

Queen Mine Historic Mining Tours

478 Dart Road
Bisbee, AZ 85603

866-432-2071 (toll-free)
520-432-2071 (local)

31°26.408' N 109°54.743' W

Longstanding underground mine tour operation. Videos at their website.

<http://www.queenminetour.com/>



**BISBEE MINING & HISTORICAL MUSEUM,
BISBEE, ARIZONA**

Courtland Ghost Town, Pearce

N Pearce Rd
Elfrida, AZ 85610
520-585-6555

31°46.116' N 109°48.680' W (Estimated)

Google Map link to Courtland Ghost Town:

<https://goo.gl/maps/fS8Eah19A5EMdL2u8>

Fee tours of area and fee digs. One fee dig is for rocks and minerals and there is a separate one for turquoise which is pricey. The general tour includes some underground. Elfrida is probably the nearest town. I have been in contact with the owners and they seem courteous and inviting.

Double and triple check this location before navigating there. Controversy over what this operation is doing exists; there are questions on claim ownership and the barring of public access to an existing road which leads into the overall area. A non-patented claim owner can gate access to their claim at their border but they cannot bar access to other claims. See the next page for BLM's explanation, it will help you whenever you are out prospecting or exploring new ground.

“Michael Oster has started tours, mining, metal detector workshops, limited turquoise digs and other things. He is the only resident of Courtland and also has the main supply of Courtland turquoise tm. A

must for your book I would give him a call. I am the Bisbee rep for his project and doing jewelry work for him.” David Owens.

<https://www.courtlandghosttown.com/index.html#/>

On The Matter of Access to Claimed Public Land

Bureau of Land Management

Oregon/Washington State Office March 2012

Locating Mining Claims / Notice to Mining Claimant

The mining laws permit the prospector and miner to make reasonable use of a mining claim as long as the use is incident and necessary to prospecting, mining and processing operations. A mining claimant has a right to use his claim for mining purposes only. The purpose of the claim is to protect the miner's discovery. However, an erroneous impression sometimes exists to the effect that the act of staking a mining claim is the shortest route to obtaining public land for a weekend retreat, or other similarly unlawful purpose. A mining claim does not give the claimant exclusive use of the claim. The public may use the surface of a mining claim for any purpose allowed on other public lands other than mining. The public may not interfere with valid mining activities.

Since a mining claimant has merely a possessory interest in the location, the United States has paramount title in the land, which it has a duty and right to protect against waste and unauthorized use. Any use of the surface of an unpatented claim for purposes unrelated to mining is unauthorized and, therefore, considered to be in trespass. Whether the claim is valid or invalid, the Bureau will proceed to terminate the unauthorized use and collect any damages from the beginning of the wrongful occupancy.

The unauthorized use of a mining claim can become a very serious problem for the claimant, particularly when a valuable improvement is constructed or placed on an unpatented claim. Such a person stands to lose all of his/her investment, including the claim itself, due to such trespass action. In many cases, we have found that unauthorized use began because of the claimant's lack of knowledge or understanding of the mining laws.

Therefore, we are providing these cautions to owners of mining locations in an effort to prevent any future difficulties and encourage the proper use and development of public lands. A claimant may limit or restrict public recreational use of/or public access across claims or portions of claims that are actively used for prospecting, mining, or processing operations only in the following situations:

1. The mining claimant or operator has a valid Mining Notice or authorized Mining Plan and has deposited a reclamation bond that has been accepted by the BLM for disturbances related to their mining activity.
2. Where public recreational use of a claim would endanger or materially interfere with legitimate mining pursuits or;
3. In cases where the mining operation is hazardous and could lead to personal injury. The claimant may protect his mining equipment and operations area with appropriate signs or other lawful means if permitted by the local BLM office.

Recreationists may use the surface of most mining claims for any legal recreational pursuit, including hunting, fishing, and camping but must respect the rights of mining claimants. The right to manage the surface of most unpatented mining claims is vested with the federal government.

Recreation is a recognized use of the public lands, specifically on claims located after 1955 and certain other claims located prior to 1955 and is authorized by statute and regulation. A mining claimant may not fence or otherwise discourage free access and use of the land, within the bounds described above. A mining claimant is required under state and federal laws to provide adequate warning devices when using explosives during prospecting or mining operations.

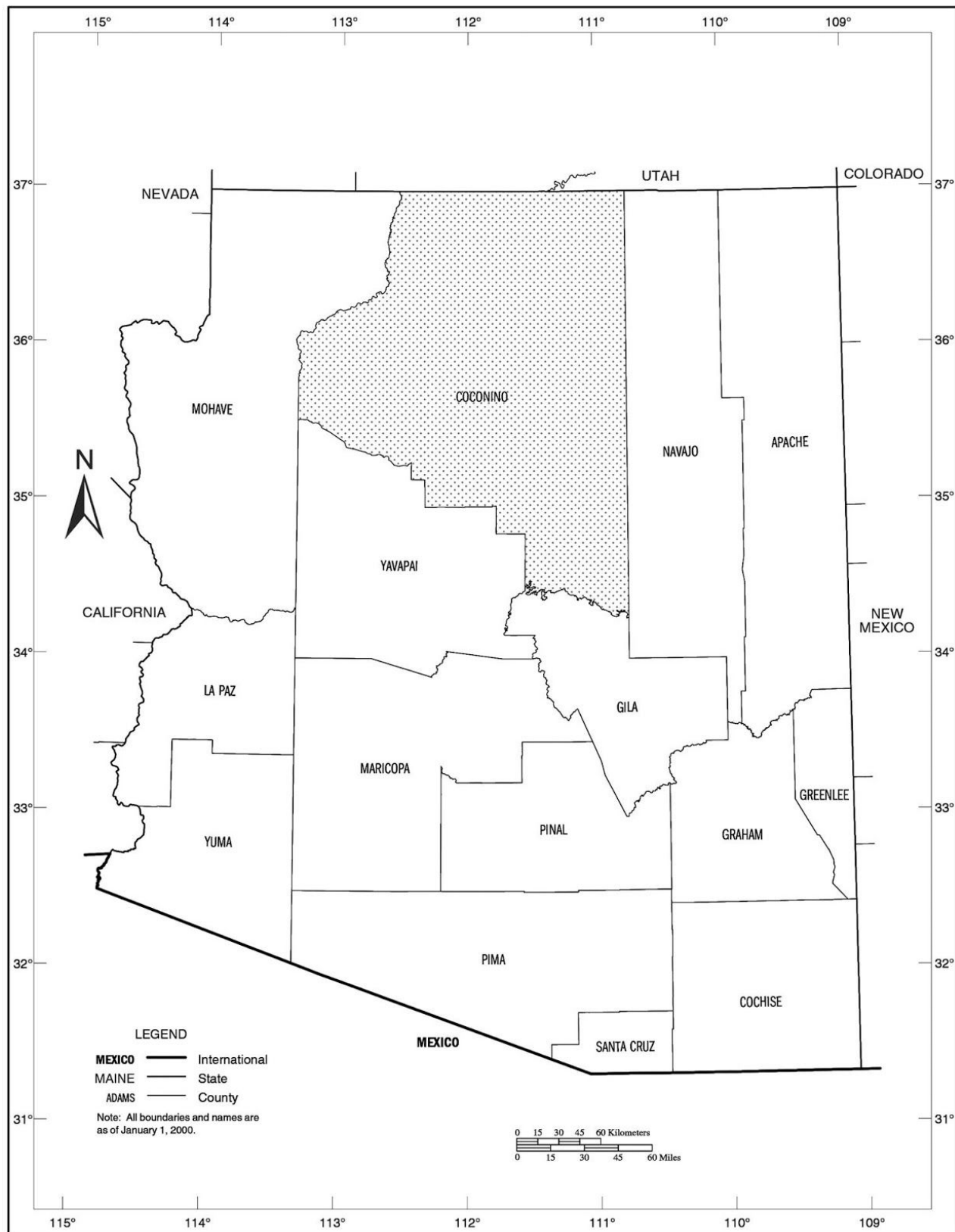
Persons who are denied access to or across unpatented mining claims should immediately leave the area, verify their location and report the situation to the nearest office of the Bureau of Land Management.

The public cannot cross private land to reach public land, where no public thoroughfare exists, unless the landowner's permission has been granted.

Two of the laws referred to in the regulations are the General Mining Law of 1872 (30 U.S.C. 22-54) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq). Laws prior to 1872, such as the 1866 Mining Law, do not apply (Hal Anthony, 178 IBLA 238).

<https://www.blm.gov/or/programs/minerals/files/mining-claim-flyer.pdf>

Coconino County, AZ (Flagstaff)



Grand Canyon National Park

South Rim Visitor Center
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023
928-638-7888 – National Park Service

36°03.558' N 112°06.583' W

The Grand Canyon is one of the great natural wonders of the world. A UNESCO World Heritage site. “Unique combinations of geologic color and erosional forms decorate a canyon that is 277 river miles long, up to 18 miles wide, and a mile deep. Grand Canyon overwhelms our senses through its immense size.” Viewable from sites at both North and South Rims as well as Grand Canyon East and West.

North Rim Visitor Center
36°11.958' N 112°03.153' W
928-638-7888 – National Park Service

The North Rim visitor center is open May 15th through October 15th. Do not use the GPS coordinates provided to dead-reckon to the visitor center. Instead, get good maps and double check them for the best roads. The North Rim itself has many overlooks at the end of challenging, lengthy 4WD roads. Seasonal road closures. No services. Permits required for overnight stays. Inquire at the Public Lands Information Center in St. George, which also doubles as BLM’s Arizona Field Strip District Office. No collecting allowed. Some report that helicopter crews surveil the countryside for unauthorized activities.

<https://www.nps.gov/grca/index.htm>

Grand Canyon / Parashant National Monument
Information only at this address:
345 East Riverside Drive
St. George, UT 84790
435-688-3200 – BLM/Public Lands Information Center



FLAGSTAFF GENERAL STORE AT 9 N. LEROUX ST.

Downtown Flagstaff

Flagstaff Visitor Center

1 East Route 66

Flagstaff, AZ 86001

928-213-2951

35°11.860' N 111°39.098' W

Walking Tour of Flagstaff's Downtown Stone Buildings

Self-guided tour. Recommended book: *Stone Landmarks: Flagstaff's Geology and Historic Building Stones* by Marie D. Jackson. Piedra Azul Press. 1999. Available used through ABE.com and other online used book dealers. Perhaps available in town at Starrlight (sic) Books. Call ahead. 928-774-6813.

Flagstaff's stone buildings are to that city what Victorians are to San Francisco. Here, a rockhound can look and touch a variety of materials while visiting a colorful and historic downtown. Building stones are all local. They include moenkopi sandstone, malpais basalt, kaibab limestone, and olivine laced basaltic lava. The Babbitt building, a highlight of the walking tour, was built of what Jackson calls pumiceous dacite, "a frothy, silica rich volcanic rock" produced by an explosive eruption from nearby Mount Eden a half a million years ago.

This downtown tour enlarges on the experience one will have at the Museum of Northern Arizona and at the Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument. Parking is limited in the downtown district and card-based meters are in effect. The visitor center does provide 30 minutes of free parking, allowing enough time to at least see nearby Leroux Street, which has three buildings featured in the book.

<https://www.flagstaffarizona.org/>

Museum of Northern Arizona

3101 North Fort Valley Road

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Flagstaff, AZ 86001
928-774-5213

35°14.094' N 111°39.934' W

“Celebrating the Colorado Plateau.” A must stop for anyone visiting Flagstaff and beyond. The 1935 building is a beautiful work of art and geology. Its walls are principally malpais basalt fieldstone and its interior courtyard and many paths are lined with native sandstone pavers. A geology collection of note, with many mineral, rock and meteorite samples.

<https://musnaz.org/>

Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument

6082 Sunset Crater Road (Visitor Center)
Flagstaff, AZ 86004

Mailing Address:

Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument
6400 U.S. 89
Flagstaff, AZ 86004
928-526-0502

35°22.149' N 111°32.610' W (Visitor Center)

“Sunset Crater Volcano was born in a series of eruptions sometime between 1040 and 1100. Powerful explosions profoundly affected the lives of local people and forever changed the landscape and ecology of the area. Lava flows and cinders still look as fresh and rugged as the day they formed. But among dramatic geologic features, you'll find trees, wildflowers, and signs of wildlife – life returns.” This from the website below.

<https://www.nps.gov/sucr/index.htm>

Meteor Crater, also known as Barringer Crater

Interstate 40
Winslow, AZ 86047
800-289-5898

35°01.633' N 111°01.350' W (Visitor Center)

Five miles off I-40 on Meteor Crater Road, past the RV Park.

Driving Directions

From Flagstaff, AZ: Head east on I-40 about 35 miles. Take the Meteor Crater Road exit (exit 233) and turn right. Drive about five miles to the Visitor Center parking lot.

From Winslow, AZ: Head west on I-40 about 18 miles. Take the Meteor Crater Road exit (exit 233) and turn left. Again, drive about five miles and you will come to the parking lot.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Admission required. Pay whatever they want.

The Meteor Crater may be America's greatest natural wonder in private hands. Highly recommended. It is awesome to behold such a sight. While inside viewing is provided behind a panoramic sheet of glass, the best experience is outdoors in the sun and wind. Enquire before visiting about walking tours on the crater's rim. Photographers should bring a tripod to take panoramic shots of the crater. Which they will want to do.

The crater's interior is only viewable from platforms accessed by paying an admission fee at the Visitor Center. That fee includes entrance to their well-done museum featuring displays about meteorites and asteroids. There are also exhibits on space, the solar system and comets. A gift shop also exists, however, be careful about buying any rock labeled as a meteorite or meteorite related. Demand authenticating paperwork.

The Meteoritical Society, a group of academics, earth science professionals, and enthusiastic amateurs, prefers to call The Meteor Crater by another name. They use the title Barringer Crater, in honor of Daniel Barringer. He labored for decades to prove that the crater was the result of a meteor and not a volcano. Good job, Daniel. We all thank you for your efforts.

<https://www.meteorcrater.com>

Resources

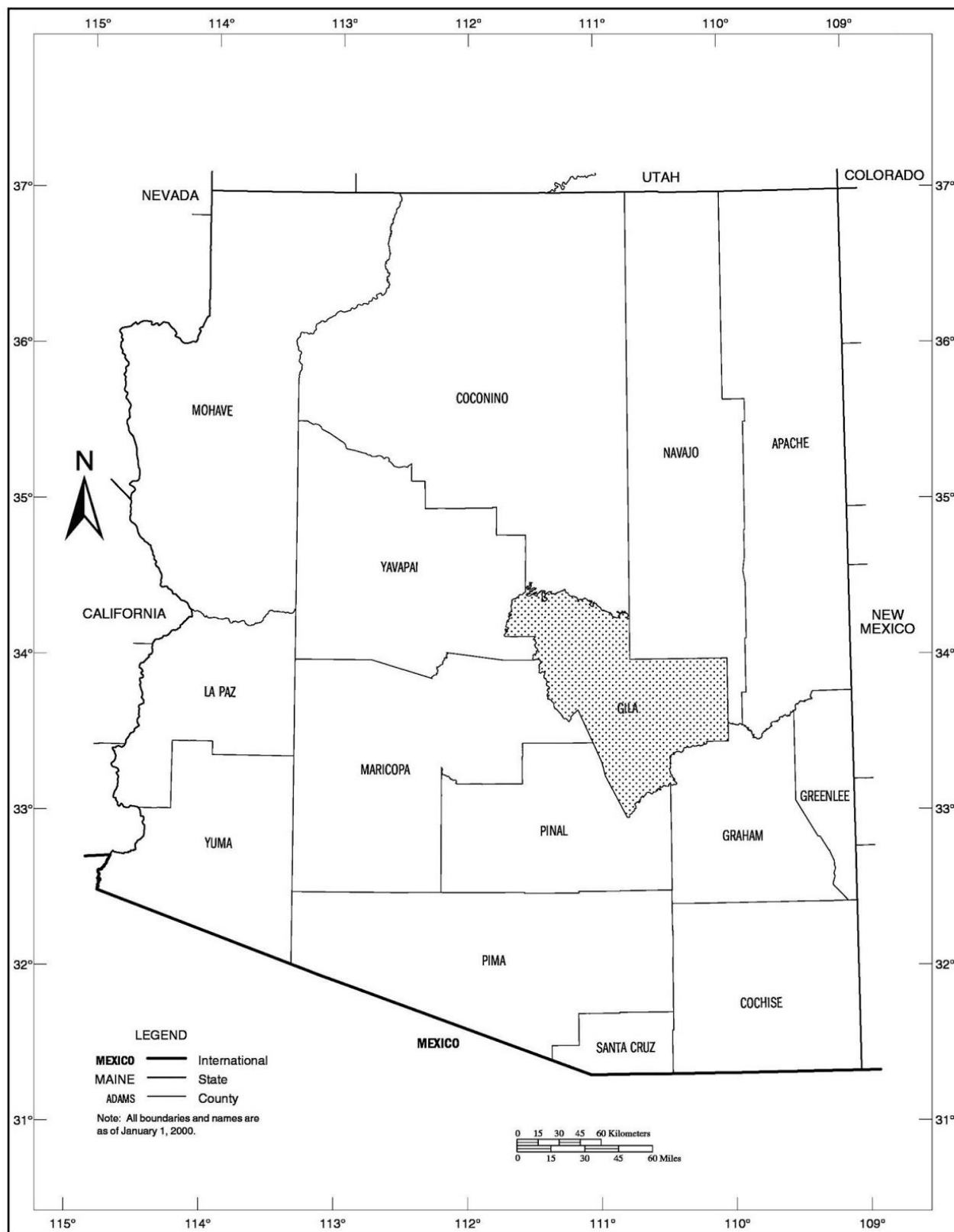
Foster, George. *The Meteor Crater Story*, 13th ed. (Winslow: Meteor Crater Enterprises, 1997) Widely available used. My preferred author for this title.

Smith, Dean. *The Meteor Crater Story* (Winslow: Meteor Crater Enterprises, 1997) A more recent telling.



METEOR CRATER OUTSIDE OF WINSLOW, ARIZONA

Gila County, AZ (Globe)



Diamond Rim Quartz Collecting Site (USFS) Near Payson

Diamond Rim is near Payson in the Tonto National Forest. It is located on the Tonto National Forest Map, but the best way to get there is to collect directions from multiple sources.

Get to Tonto Village before going further. Diamond Rim is on USFS Road 65, but the access road to 65 goes by many names: Forest Road 64, Fire Control Road, Control Road, and Tonto Village Road. When they are open, the Payson USFS Ranger District Office in Payson may help with directions. The Tonto National Forest produced by the USFS is comically big, nearly four feet wide, but invaluable.

Collecting rules are posted at the site. Surface collecting only for most of the year. Digging is allowed from October 1st until February 28th, when the ground is often snow-covered.

Mindat.org supplied coordinate:

34°17.250' N 111°11.533' W

Good discussion here on Mindat:

<https://www.mindat.org/mesg-127593.html>

USFS in Payson

Payson Ranger District
1009 E. Hwy 260
Payson, Arizona 85541
928-474-7900

34°14.538' N 111°18.361' W

May be helpful with locating Diamond Rim which is good for quartz crystal collecting.

Google their website.



**WHISPERING PINES BRIDGE, SPANNING EAST VERDE
RIVER AT FOREST SERVICE CONTROL ROAD,
PAYSON, GILA COUNTY, AZ**

Gila County Historical Museum

1330 North Broad Street
Globe, AZ 85501
928-425-7385

33°24.592' N 110°47.720' W

“The Gila County Museum is in the old Mine Rescue Station, which was opened in 1920. As you walk through the Museum you will experience the workings of the Mine Rescue Station. From photographs to equipment, it is on display.”

<http://gilahistoricalmuseum.org>

Crick's Gems and Minerals

549 W Ash Street
Globe, AZ 85501
928-425-8217

33°23.406' N 110°47.270' W

Closed when I last went by. Broken website.

Peridot Dreams

Stevie Joey
P.O. Box 539
Peridot, AZ 85542

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

33°21.064' N 110°27.591' W (Coordinate for San Carlos)

Authoritative YouTube video on the Mesa's geology:

<https://youtu.be/6Pp2rydb8cI>

Apache tribal member Stevie Joey has peridot claims on the San Carlos Reservation. Peridot is also known as gem grade olivine, a green stone thrown out of the earth by ancient tectonic activity. The coordinates listed mark San Carlos, not the claims themselves.

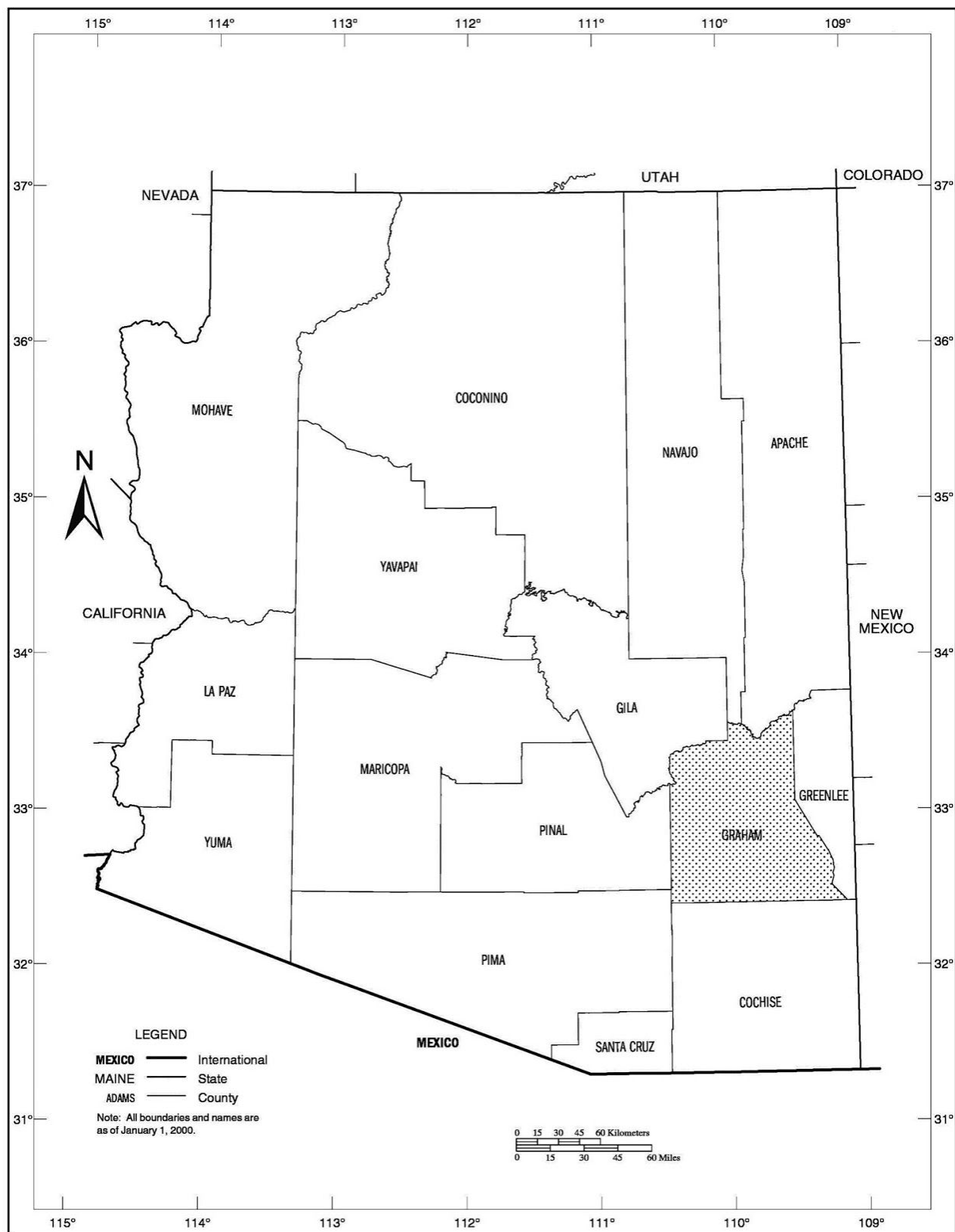
Contact Stevie through his website to arrange a visit. He also sells beautiful jewelry as well as rough stones and cabs. Be patient when corresponding, he may be traveling to shows or working hard on his claim.

The town of Peridot is in southeastern Gila County and northwestern Graham County.

“Take stones and ashes and thorns, with some scorpions and rattlesnakes thrown it, dump the outfit on stones, heat the stones red hot, set the United States Army after the Apache, and you have San Carlos.” Unidentified Apache quoted in *People of the Desert* by Time Life Books.

<http://www.peridotdreams.com>

Graham County, AZ (Safford)



BLM Safford Field Office

BLM's Safford Field Office manages areas in Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, and Pinal Counties. See their contact information under the Cochise County entry.

Peridot Dream Claims

See Gila County.

Black Hills Rockhound Area — BLM managed

Black Hills Rockhound Area lies 17 miles north of Safford in the northern part of the Peloncillo Mountains. These mountains span Cochise, Graham and Greenlee Counties.

32°52.438' N 109°23.697' W

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/search-details/274360/1>

Eastern Arizona Museum & Historical Society of Graham County, Inc.

2 North Main

Pima, AZ 85543

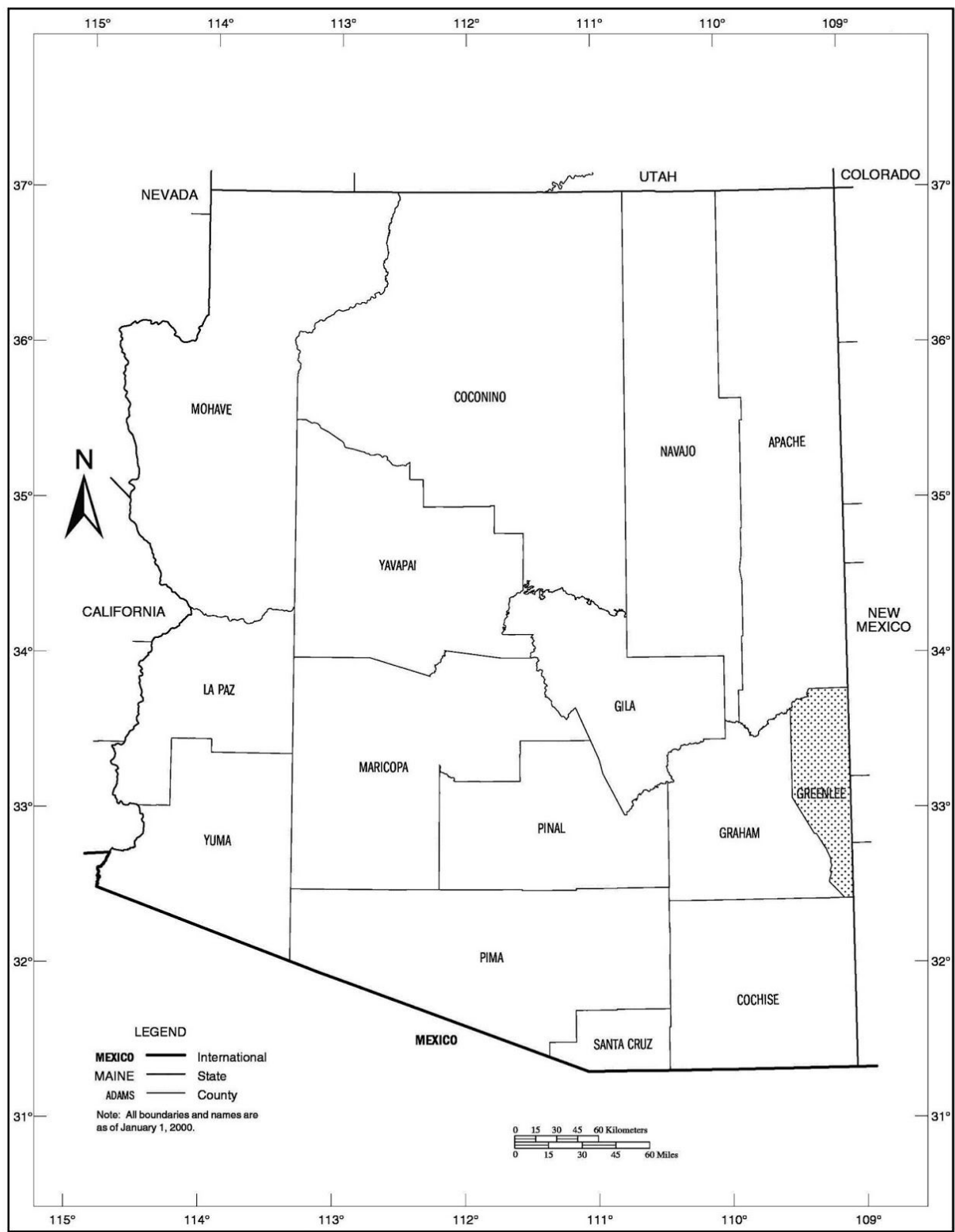
928-485-9400

928-485-3032 (Alternative number)

A small but notable display of rocks, minerals, and ore. Open limited days.

<http://easternarizonamuseum.com>

Greenlee County, AZ (Clifton)



Greenlee Historical Museum

299 Chase Creek
Clifton, AZ 85533
928-865-3115

33°03.368' N 109°18.257' W

Early mining. Museum located in the Chase Creek Historical District.

<http://visitcliftonaz.com/what-to-see/greenlee-historical-museum/#>

Rock-A-Buy: Rocks and Gifts

809 SE Old West Highway
Duncan, AZ 85534
928-215-1641

32°42.791'N 109°05.921' W

<http://www.rockabuyrocksandgifts.com/>

Doug Barlow is the affable owner of this east-central Arizona rock shop. Fire agate is the big draw in this area and Doug will show you samples of what to look for. He will even provide a map of promising locations for anyone who comes into his shop and signs his guest book. The nearby Round Mountain Rockhound Area, listed below, is close and Doug has advice for anyone heading out. Ask, too, about Black Hills, another BLM rockhounding area. Call to make certain Barlow's shop will be open when you visit. He's a great guy. He gave me a piece of calcite he had named the "The Volcano." Gifted it, mind you. It glows beautifully under short wave. I treasure that piece.



ROCK-A-BUY: ROCKS AND GIFTS, DUNCAN, ARIZONA

Simpson Hotel

116 Main Street
Duncan, AZ 85534
928-359-3590

32°43.29667' N 109°06.316' W

Bed & Breakfast (and art gallery!) in Duncan. When you get tired of rockhounding and need to clean up and relax. Deborah Mendelsohn is the owner and manager.

<https://simpsonhotel.com/>

Round Mountain Rockhound Area – BLM managed

BLM: 32°32.632' N 109°05.389' W
Google Maps: 32°28.593' N 109°04.528' W

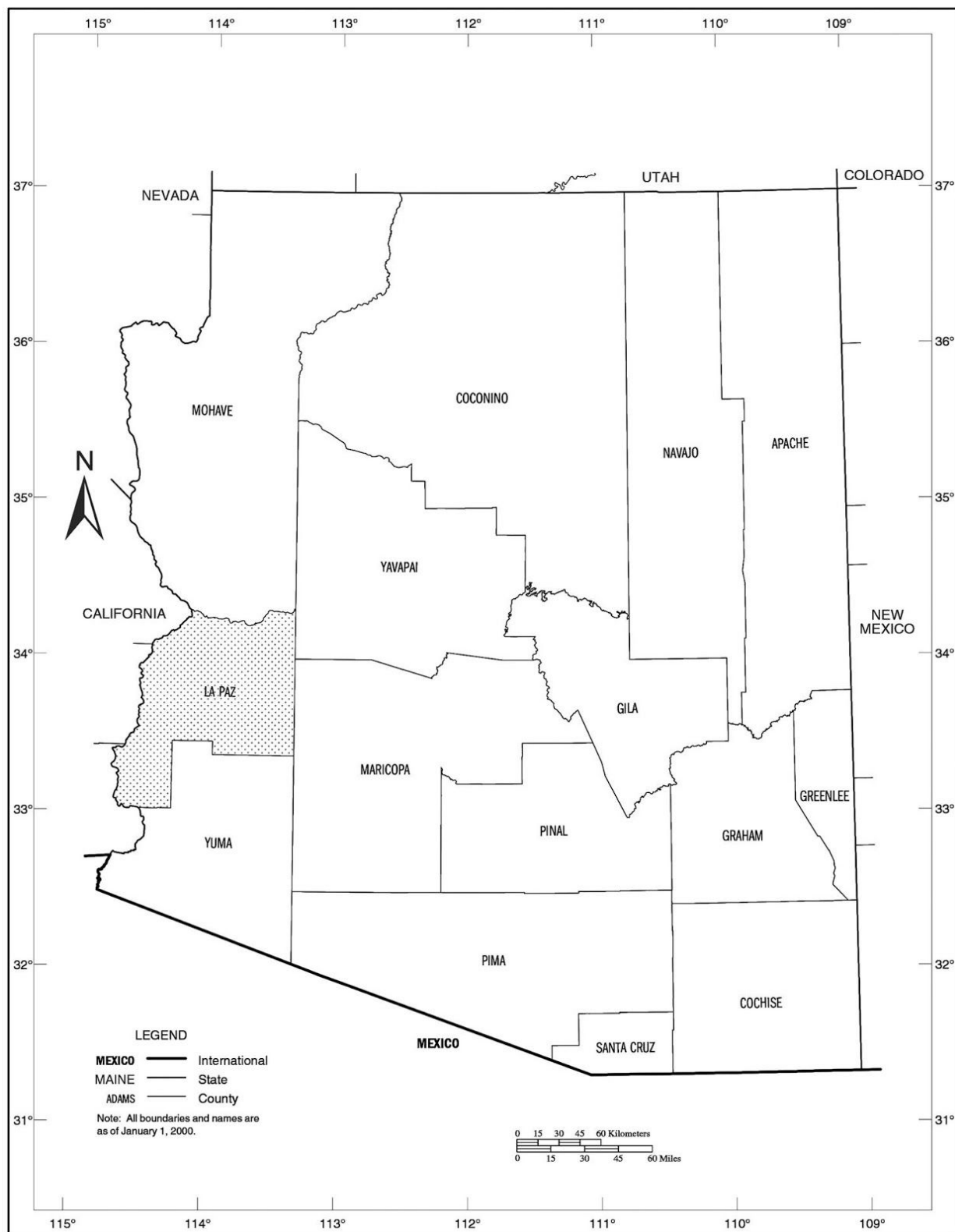
BLM directions: “From Highway 70 east of Safford approximately 50 miles, travel into New Mexico to just beyond milepost 5. Take the dirt access road on your right for 12 miles, following the signs to the Rockhound Area.”

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/round-mountain-rockhound-area>

BLM Safford Field Office

BLM’s Safford Field Office manages areas in Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, and Pinal Counties. See their contact information under the Cochise County entry.

La Paz County, AZ (Parker)



Quartzsite: City and Major Rock Event

Quartzsite PowWow

235 Ironwood (Quartzsite Improvement Association Building)
Quartzsite, AZ 85346

Pow Wow Show Promoters

Mike & Carolyn Zinno

928-927-6325

PowWow@QIArizona.org

33°39.925' N 114°12.843' W

I've written about Quartzsite extensively at my blog, <https://southwestrockhounding.com>. My website has the latest information and links. To give you a flavor of Quartzsite, this is an excerpt from my fifth article for Rock&Gem. To save space I've omitted my writing on other Quartzsite attractions and on Hi Jolly and his camels. You need to know about all of that!

The Quartzsite Show: Rockhounds Gather in The Desert

By Thomas Farley. Rock&Gem, April, 2017

Quartzsite, Arizona is a town and a meeting place. In winter it is a gathering of the clan for recreational vehicle Snowbirds, flea market enthusiasts, ham radio operators, off-road motorists, geo-cachers, and rockhounds. Especially rockhounds. Quartzsite is rock and gem heaven.

While many Quartzsite locations sell rocks in the winter months, the biggest production is January's QIA PowWow Gem and Mineral Show. In 2017 it featured over 550 spaces and 272 vendors. Put on by 300 volunteers, seller's wares had to be 75% gem, rock, mineral, or jewelry related. Running concurrently with the PowWow at another site, the Desert Gardens Gem and Mineral Show concentrates mostly on rocks, with a little less jewelry than the PowWow. Then there's the Tyson Wells Rock and Gem Show. And the Prospectors' Panorama. But I am getting ahead of myself.

Quartzsite is in southwest Arizona, 244 miles east of Los Angeles and 127 miles west of Phoenix. Las Vegas is 213 miles to the north. Located in the La Posita Plain, La Paz County, Quartzsite is bordered in its southerly directions by the Dome Rock, Castle Dome, and Kofa Mountains. Population 3,354. In its heyday, 39 mines operated around Quartzsite. Mostly gold mines, with one or two cinnabar and lead. A profusion of old mines and collecting sites gave rise to Quartzsite in the mid 1960s as a rockhounding paradise.

In 1856 Charles "Charly" Tyson dug a well that would provide water to cross country travelers, nearby ranchers, and to mine workers in the surrounding mountains. He built a small adobe structure and called it Fort Tyson. It eventually became a stagecoach stop on the route from Ehrenburg, Arizona to Prescott. By that time one building had become several, the compound taking on the fuller name of Tyson's Well Stage Station.

Quartzsite owes its present appellation to postal naming conventions. The postmark "Tyson's" served the town until 1895 when mail service ended due to the local postmaster falling ill. A new post office opened in 1896 at another location. The Postmaster General decreed that discontinued place names couldn't be

used and, further, only one-word names were acceptable. Quartz Site is what the townsfolk wanted, from all the quartz at a nearby stamp mill. The postal service shortened it to Quartzsite.



THE QUARTZSITE QIA POWWOW, QUARTZSITE, ARIZONA

The PowWow Gem and Mineral Show first started in 1967 with 18 locals selling items at a small school to about a thousand people. The event progressed into what may now be the largest public rock and gem show in the country. Over these fifty years the entire town has become dotted with rock shops, auction houses, and trading posts of all kinds. While I was there a venue announced the sale of a pallet of American flag products, 4,000 helium balloons, and over 10,000 old Playboy magazines. Essentially, if something has been made, it's probably been sold in Quartzsite.

Quartzsite's popularity as America's largest yard sale and winter retreat probably peaked in the year 2000. In January of 1999, Huell Howser, California travelogue producer par excellence, took his film crew outside the state for the first time to cover Quartzsite. In a warm and engaging hour, which is free to view online, Howser interviewed many townsfolk, mostly about the history of the community. Then, in 2000, National Geographic came to visit. They called Quartzsite Nowhere, Arizona. Until November:

"Then, like a mob of chattering starlings settling into a too-small tree, the snowbirds start landing in November. By mid-January, the mechanical car counter at the Interstate 10 exit is ticking off 26,000 vehicles a day. Within weeks 175,000 RVs cram inches apart into 79 trailer parks, onto front yards, and spill out seven miles on either side of town. Every year more than a million people reset their internal navigation and drive from Everywhere, North America, to this western Arizona dot on the map. Luxury motor homes, fifth wheels, cab-over campers, trailers, and converted school buses plunk down on the same patch of land." National Geographic, January, 2001.

Things have settled down since then. My first visit started on Wednesday, January, 18, 2017. Empty RV parking spaces in town seemed numerous. Space looked plentiful at BLM land outside of town. But since few venues charge for admission or parking, there's no real way to keep count. The BLM did tell me approximately 28,401 people stayed at their free and pay areas in fiscal year 2016. And the Arizona D.O.T. says Main Street now averages 12,400 vehicles in each direction over the course of a year. The city website says 2,000,000 annual visitors. Whatever the numbers, the rock shows continue to draw vendors in record amounts, with waiting lists common for spaces.

As to the PowWow itself, Wednesday was ideal. Bright sunshine and short sleeve weather. I regretted not bringing sunscreen and I later bought a hat from the Quartzsite Gem and Mineral Club. More on them in a bit. To begin with, the PowWow is located just off Main Street at 235 East Ironwood Drive. Follow the cars. A parking lot doesn't seem obvious at first but keep moving along and you'll find it; everything funnels to the main lot. Two tractor pulled shuttles take visitors to any entrance they like. Drivers give everybody time to get on, including those with walkers. Shuttle, parking, and admission are all free.

Resources

Sanholdt, Pauline. *Quartzsite Pioneer Bill Keiser's Lost Mines and Prospectors' Lore*. (Yuma County Historical Society: Yuma, AZ, 1978) Adopted by Sandholdt for the Yuma County Historical Society and the Quartzsite Historical Society.

Quartzsite Museum aka the Tyson's Well Stage Station

161 West Main St
Quartzsite, AZ 85346
928-927-5229

33°39.971' N 114°13.182' W

Don't miss the Tyson's Well Museum. Mining artifacts and an assay office. Free admission enthusiastic volunteers will tell you the history of Quartzsite as a stage station and a supply depot for nearby mines. Speaking of which, outside in back, is the original assay office of the Mariquita mine. The many items speak to the everyday life of miners. The volunteer I talked to was also a member of the metal detecting club. He discussed at length the many mines surrounding Quartzsite. Be sure to notice the museum ceiling made of saguaro ribs.

<https://www.visitarizona.com/business/quartzsite-museum>

Hardies Beads & Jewelry

1250 W. Main St
Quartzsite, AZ 85346
928-927-6381

33°39.754' N 114°14.256' W

A Quartzsite institution. While mainly selling collecting supplies and beads, they have an outstanding rock collection installed on their interior east wall. Much local material including gold in quartz. Not many rocks for sale, mostly things bead related. Seasonal hours.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

<http://hardiesonline.com>

Quartzsite Roadrunner Gem and Mineral Club

Headquarter Address:

235 E. Ironwood Avenue (Quartzsite Improvement Association building)
Quartzsite, AZ 85346

33°39.925' N 114°12.843' W

Mailing Address:

PO Box 338
Quartzsite, AZ 85346
928-927-5531

The Quartzsite Roadrunner Gem and Mineral Club is one of the largest and most organized rock clubs in the country. Extremely active, especially October through March. Field trips go every Tuesday through that time and twice a day during the QIA's PowWow. Non-members pay \$2 a trip. Roadrunners might find bacon rock, desert roses, geodes, apache tears, or green banded rhyolite. Among other things. Major shop facilities and classes. They sell good looking clothing like Polo shirts and caps. All with their Roadrunner logo. As everyone knows, all Roadrunner based apparel enhances life.

<http://qrgmc.org>

Miners Depot

566 North Central Blvd
Quartzsite, AZ 85346
Messaging through their website

33°40.538' N 114°13.033' W

Miners Depot is desert prospecting store and a clearing house for gold information in the Quartzsite area. Detectors, tools, lots of classifiers or screens, the place to stop before heading out. Generally open six days a week during the main prospecting season, from about November through mid-March. Sign up here for the Quartzsite Metal Detecting Club. It consists of coin shooters and gold prospectors. At last check, membership was a terrific bargain at \$20 a person. Details follow in the next entry.

<https://minersdepot.com>

Quartzsite Metal Detecting Club

Mailing Address

PO Box 3102
Quartzsite, AZ 85359
928-927-7150

Meeting address (Miners Depot)
566 North Central Blvd

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Quartzsite, AZ 85346

33°40.538' N 114°13.033' W

A club of coin shooters and gold prospectors. Membership is a terrific bargain at \$20 a person. This lets you in on the club's claims encompassing 360 acres. The club is most active November through the middle of March, however, you are free to work in summer if you can stand the 118 degree heat. If you are a coin shooter, you can participate in their many winter season hunts.

They do not mail memberships. Sign up and pay dues at their club meetings, coin hunts, their table at the PowWow in January, and at Miners Depot.

<http://quartzsitemetaldetectingclub.com/>

Bouse Assay Office and Museum

44362 East Main Street

Bouse, AZ 85325

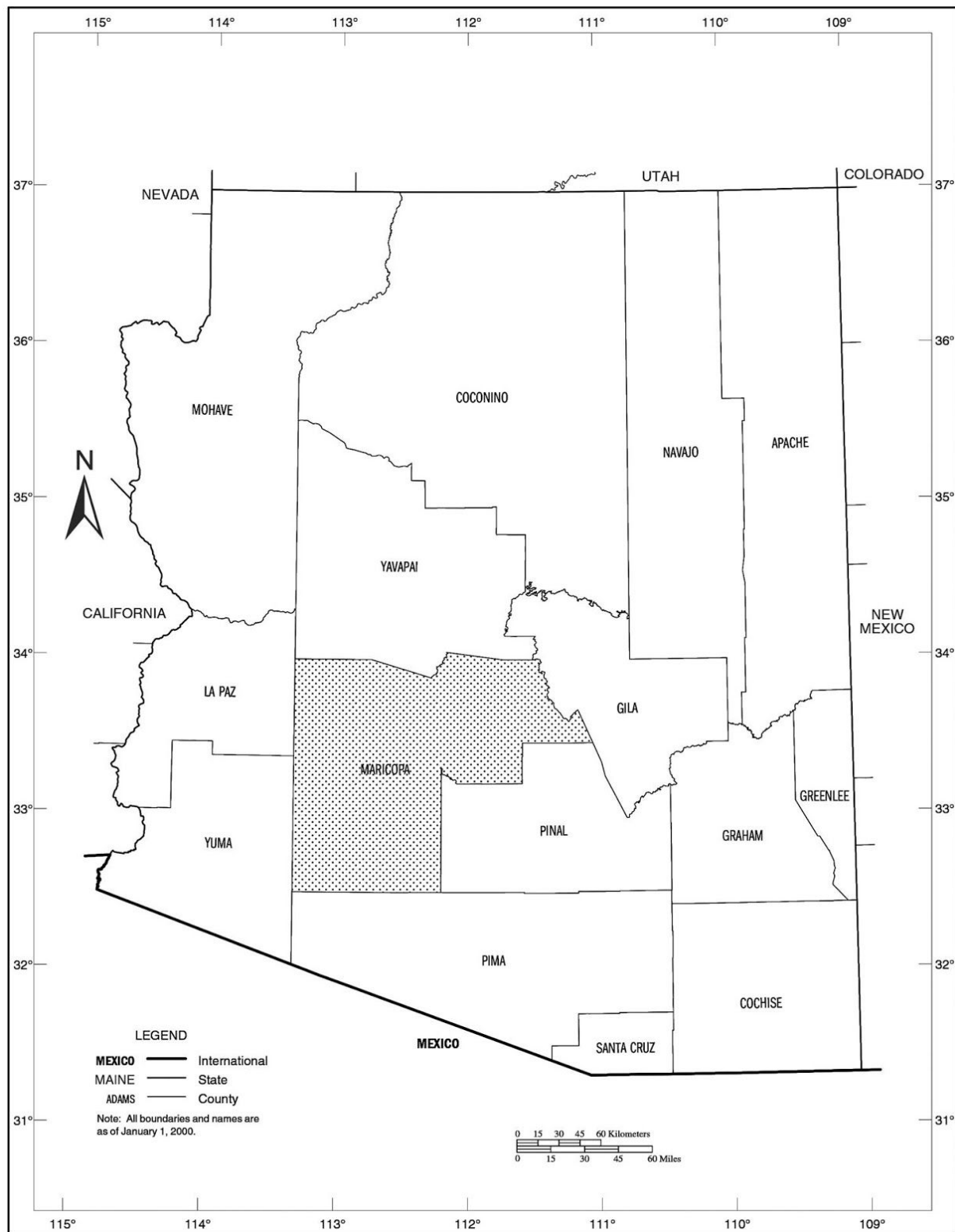
928-851-2509

33°56.001' N 114°00.188' W

“There is a very small historical museum in Bouse that used to be the Assay Office and has rocks as well as mining items.” Diane Hilliard.

<http://www.bouseazchamber.com>

Maricopa County, AZ (Phoenix)



Phoenix

Phoenix metro traffic congestion rivals Atlanta or Los Angeles. Weekend traffic is lightest, although driving between 10 AM and 2 PM on weekdays might be workable. The last time I drove through Phoenix it took me three hours to go from Wickenburg to Gilbert, a distance of only 80 miles.

Deer Valley Petroglyph Preserve Center for Archaeology and Society

3711 W. Deer Valley Road
Phoenix, AZ 85308
623-582-8007

33°40.648 N 112°09.156' W

<https://shesc.asu.edu/dvpp>

Rock art! “The Deer Valley Petroglyph Preserve is an archaeology museum and 47-acre Sonoran Desert preserve, and home to the largest concentration of Native American petroglyphs in the Phoenix area.” Fee charged.

Huhugam Heritage Center

21359 South Maricopa Road
Chandler, AZ 85226
520-796-3500

33°15.250' N 111°58.426' W

Natural history museum with Arizona collections. “In the Ancestral Lands exhibit see the master work of our Huhugam ancestors: pottery, jewelry, carved stone bowls and tools.”

<http://www.grichhc.org/index.php/visit>

Four Peaks Mining Company

9500 E Via De Ventura, Suite D-110
Scottsdale, AZ 85256
480-434-6074

High end retail store. Amethyst mine owners.

33°33.355' N 111°52.621' W

<http://fourpeaksminingco.com/the-mine/>

Flagg Mineral Foundation

P.O. Box 41834
Mesa, AZ 85724

A group of many interests, especially educational. Field trips and much more.

Puts on the Flagg Gem and Mineral Show which is the largest gem and mineral show in the Phoenix area. Free admission.

The show appears here:

Mesa Community College
West Southern Ave & S Dobson Rd, Mesa
AZ 85202

<http://flaggmineralfoundation.org/>

Arizona Museum of Natural History

53 North MacDonald
Mesa, AZ 85201
480-644-2230

33°25.476' N 111°50.034' W

Special geology collections viewable by appointment, among them an Arizona Mine Collection which features locations within a roughly fifty-mile radius of Mesa. Museum as a whole excellent for children. Fee charged.

<http://arizonamuseumofnaturalhistory.org/home>

Arizona State University at Tempe – Various Departments

Interdisciplinary Science & Technology Building IV
781 S Terrace Rd
Tempe, AZ 85287
480-965-5081

33°25.095' N 111°55.703' W

Arizona State University R. S. Dietz Museum of Geology – no longer operating

Searching online for Arizona geology museums returns dozens of references to the R. S. Dietz Museum of Geology at ASU which no longer exists. Its collection is mostly in storage.

Karin Valentine, Media Relations and Marketing Manager for Arizona State University, explains that while they are considering what to do with the collection, “Some pieces are on display in ISTB4 and in some of our other facilities, and we are working on displaying some of the rest in the newly renovated Bateman Physical Science Building F-Wing. We hope to have much of the collection together again on display. We do have geology and planetary science exhibits available in ISTB4.”

Those exhibits belong to the School of Earth and Space Exploration. Not a Geology Department. University administrators think the word geology is out of date. They’d prefer Earth Sciences Department

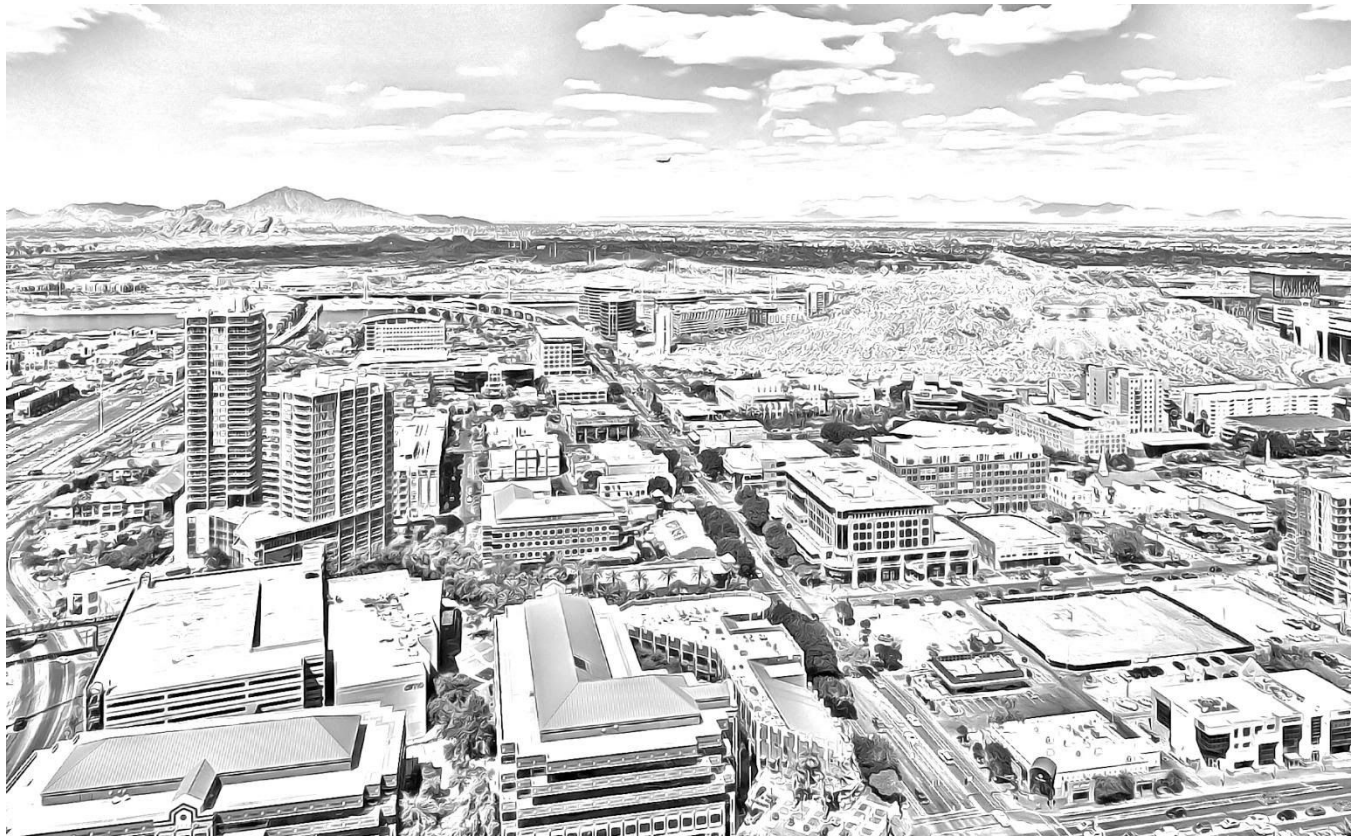
or some such. And that geologists be called earth science professionals. Most practicing geologists, though, still call each other geologists.

School of Earth and Space Exploration at Arizona State University

Public exhibits open on the first two floors of ISTB4.

Center of Meteorite Studies at Arizona State University

May help with meteorite identification or provide some resources. Inquire.



ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY AT TEMPE, TEMPE, ARIZONA

Saddle Mountain — Dispersed BLM camping area and Collecting Site

Unless otherwise prohibited, BLM permits camping on much of their managed land in the Southwest. Saddle Mountain is a dispersed camping area, allowing stays of up to 14 days for no fee. It is popular with Snowbirds who camp their RVs on the flat desert in spring to enjoy the mountain backed setting.

Saddle Mountain's popularity rest with rockhounds who for decades have found fire agate "rough" to a greater or lesser degree. Its accessibility to nearly any kind of vehicle adds to its reputation, as

comfortable camping near any productive ground is rare. An extended stay lets a rockhound put in the hours necessary to find something.

Numerous web pages and YouTube videos exist about Saddle Mountain. This is one:

<http://www.fireagate.us/fire-agate/saddlemountain.shtml>

YouTube has videos from both the RV and rockhound point of view. Look for key words like these on YouTube: Saddle Mountain / BLM Dispersed Camping / Tonopah AZ. /fire agate Saddle Mountain.

Mitchell's *Gem Trails of Arizona* contains specific road directions to Saddle Mountain.

Phoenix Area Map Stores

Wide World Maps & MORE!

Central Phoenix Store:
2133 East Indian School Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-279-2323 x 1
33°29.681' N 112°02.125' W

Google Map link:
<https://goo.gl/maps/h1ofqJJo9vgSkkej8>

North Phoenix Store:
17232 North Cave Creek Road
Phoenix, AZ 85032
602 279-2323 x 3
33°38.613' W 112°01.876' N

Google Map link:
<https://goo.gl/maps/CqbbgmTJqgb4f6jMA>

I have bought many maps from this company online but have not yet visited in person. My life lies uncomplete.

<https://www.maps4u.com>

BLM Phoenix District Office

21605 North 7th Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85027
623-580-5500

33°29.471' N 112°05.002' W

The Phoenix District Office is composed of two Field Offices. One is the Lower Sonoran Field Office, covering a significant part of Maricopa County, including Saddle Mountain. The other is the Hassayampa Field Office, which manages almost one million acres north of Interstate 10.

Tonto National Forest

Supervisor's Office – No public services
2324 E. McDowell Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85006
602-225-5200

Cave Creek Ranger District
40202 N. Cave Creek Rd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85262
480-595-3300

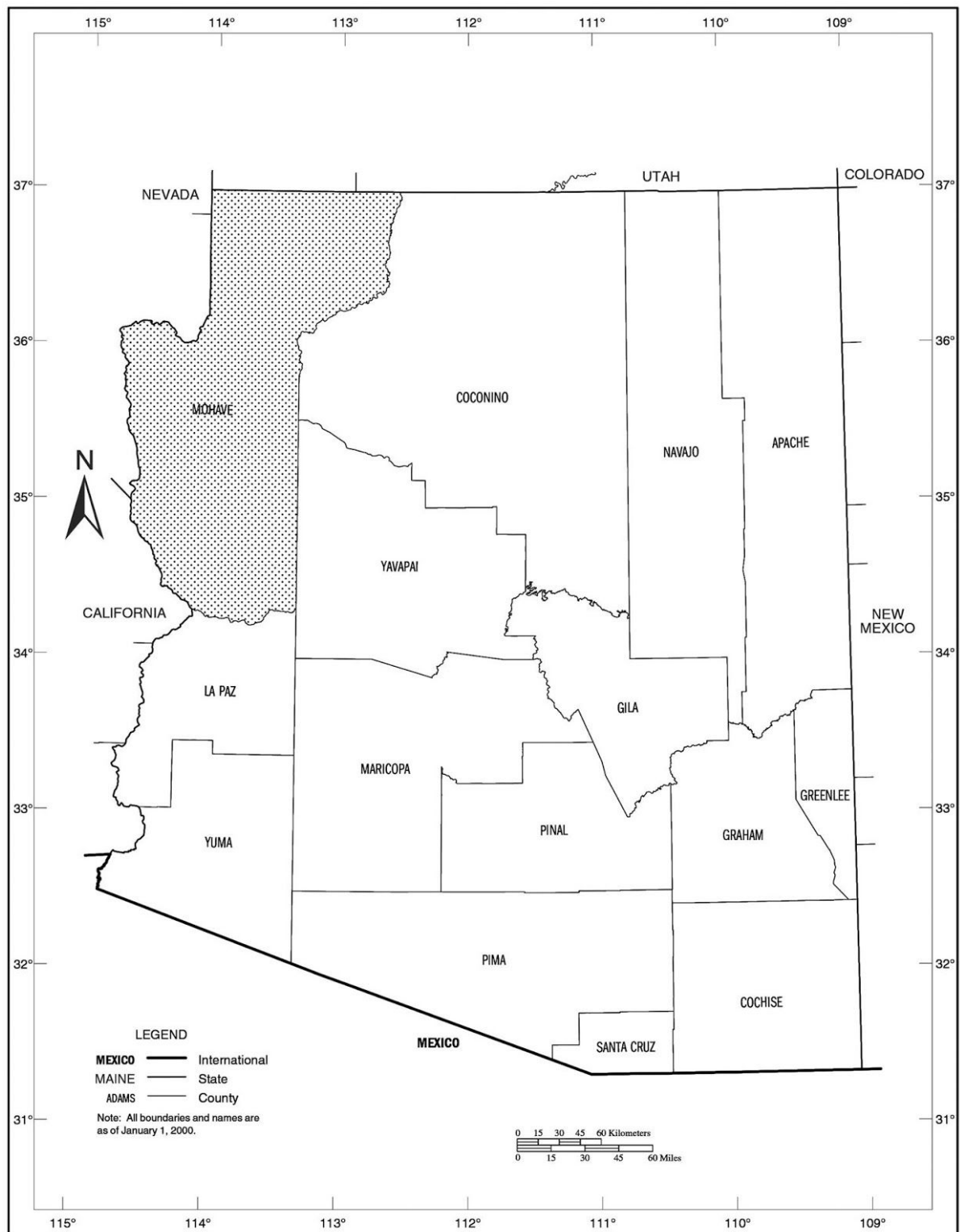
33°50.940' N 111°50.118' W

Mesa Ranger District
5140 E. Ingram St.
Mesa, AZ 85205
480-610-3300

33°26.965' N 111°43.268' W

38 mineral districts were established over the years in the Tonto Basin. Mines recovered everything from lead to gold. Many other commodities were pulled from the Tonto's heavily mineralized ground. The Tonto NF includes the Diamond Rim Quartz Collecting Site near Payson in Globe County.

Mohave County (Kingman)



Jim Fritz Museum

Elkhart Avenue
Chloride, Arizona 86431

Contact the museum through:

Chloride Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 268
Chloride, Arizona 86431
928-565-9777

35°24.835' N 114°11.968' W (Near center of town)

<http://www.chloridechamber.com>

A onetime silver mining camp in Mohave County, Arizona, Chloride is considered the oldest continuously inhabited mining town in the state. It's somewhat confusing to drive the backstreets of the city as land ownership is uncertain to visitors. Nearby ground is well claimed, research before going.

Merle Anderson, Chamber of Commerce Secretary, says that, "We do have some rocks and minerals on display in our museum, but we are a very small museum, so only have a few. Many specimens are available in our area by ATV though, and lots of rock and mineral buffs come here and go exploring in the desert to find them, especially since we are surrounded by BLM land. There are many old mines in the area accessible by ATV, and the Kingman Turquoise Mine (not accessible to the public) is right up the road with a very nice shop where they sell the turquoise. Chloride is a fantastic place to mention for rocks and minerals. Our town is a veritable museum of old mining equipment, and history in itself. Chloride was specifically formed because of the 'rocks' in the immediate area. So, you can see, that one can get much more here in Chloride than just a look at rocks and minerals."

Seasonal hours.

Resource

Paher, Stanley. *Chloride: Mines and Murals* (Nevada Publications: Las Vegas, Nevada, 1978) Good study of the Chloride area including a few nice maps by Southwestern historical cartographer Don Bufkin.

Mohave Museum

400 West Beale Street (Almost on Historic Route 66)
Kingman, AZ 86401
928-753-3195

35°11.423' N 114°03.694' W

<https://www.mohavemuseum.org/mohave-museum.html>

This museum is all about Mohave County. In Arizona, Mohave is spelled here with an "H," whereas in neighboring California, it is most often spelled with a "J." The museum has a number of rock and gem displays featuring local materials. An especially nice case features turquoise carvings commissioned by

S.A. Colbaugh and his wife. Colbaugh founded Colbaugh Processing, still in business, their material Kingman turquoise. The museum has a terrific railroad caboose in back without “Keep Off” signs.

BLM Kingman Field Office

2755 Mission Boulevard
Kingman, AZ 86401
928-718-3700

35°11.394' N 114°00.864' W

<https://www.blm.gov/office/kingman-field-office>

The BLM Kingman Field Office is part of the BLM Colorado River District. it manages the Burro Creek Campground and surrounding BLM land, including the Burro Creek Wilderness Area.

The Gold Lady

52 Hope Road, Suite 2
Golden Valley, AZ 86413 (Northwest of Kingman)
928-692-5035

35°13.168' N 114°10.443' W

Located now in Golden Valley, The Gold Lady is a great prospecting and metal detecting store. The Gold Lady knows her stuff and she is an unstoppable when it comes to her own detecting; she is constantly in the field and mightily protests when health prevents her from going out.

She has a new store in Golden Valley which I haven't yet visited. The old store was fine but this new location promises good things. The Gold Lady has been advocating the Minelab Gold Monster 1000 for some time. Although I only saw it work at her old shop, its operation looks simple with a fairly flat learning curve. It looks like a great choice for the beginning prospector. Prospecting supplies and perhaps local maps.

Google Map link:

<https://goo.gl/maps/zEhWvpgeJ9Bhq68NA>

<http://thegoldladystore.com>

Arizona Rock Shops

4107 AZ-68, Golden Valley, AZ 86413
928-565-2882

<http://www.arizonarockshops.com>

Colbaugh Processing

3471 W Chea Dr.
Golden Valley, Arizona 86413

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

928-565-4650

Retail store for Kingman turquoise.

<http://www.colbaugh.net>



**DON NELSON OF THE QUESTA FIRE AGATE
MINE NEAR OATMAN, ARIZONA**

Questa Fire Agate Mine

Don Nelson

9049 (Old Route 66) West Oatman Highway
Golden Valley, AZ 86413

565-928-4145 - Don Nelson, Mine Owner
250-715-7559 –Allan Pryor, for those in Canada

35°02.241' N 114°20.539' W – Driveway location

Google Map link to Nelson's driveway:

<https://goo.gl/maps/N53KR6BrmQoEGniDA>

The GPS coordinates above locate the rugged dirt driveway to Don Nelson's private property. I personally took those and they are good. I can't guarantee the Google Map link but it seems solid.

Nelson directs rockhounds and sometimes escorts them to his nearby claims from his property. You need to go there first to register. Take the driveway for a few hundred yards until it forks. Bear right. No trailers or RVs should go down that road. Little turn around room exists at his house where people receive an orientation and pay their fee. Open year round but it is vital to call first to make arrangements. Nelson's driveway is easy to find if coming from Kingman. It's just a few miles from the store at Cool Springs, a Route 66 landmark.

If coming from Laughlin, on the other side of the hill, head south to Boundary Cone Road. Take that road which eventually hooks up with the Oatman Highway. Using only the physical street address for Nelson's driveway may lead to complete confusion for any navigation device when coming from the west. The area approaching Oatman lacks cell coverage and most smartphone navigating apps will stop working. Use GPS coordinates instead with a dedicated nav unit. A hardcopy atlas or road map is also helpful, unfortunately, most are too big in scale to show smaller roads like Boundary Cone. Do *not* take any off-pavement roads to Nelson's driveway, no matter what your nav unit says.

Back to the fire agates. They are a type of chalcedony, broadly speaking, quartz. At this location they are found within rhyolite, the matrix or host rock. And there is hard clay all around. A rockhound generally searches for large pieces of rock which might contain a fire agate. At the bench, a collector must cut away the matrix toward a promising bit of chalcedony. The hope is that their stone will eventually reveal a display of colors or fire. This gemstone, therefore, does not come out of the ground fully presented. Instead, it takes a talented lapidarist to bring out the stone's beauty. Rough pieces, however, have a charm and beauty by themselves and many are left uncarved because of that. Their bubbly shape or texture is called botryoidal.

Don Nelson is an engaging personality, delighted to explain all about fire agates and the long history of his claims. He and a miner named Al usually work side by side with rockhounds to coach them on recovering the agates. On my visit, work centered on a specific pit dug by hand over the last two years. There was no need to wander the claims, looking for a promising spot. Nelson also sells rough and finished material. Bring cash in small bills for any purchase or the dig fee.

<http://cuestafireagatemine.ilandwyte.com>

Burro Creek Recreation Site (BLM managed)

Burro Creek Campground
Burro Creek Campground Road

34°32.163' N 113°27.112' W Coordinates for BLM campground

My current writing is here:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/05/11/burro-creek-campground-near-wikieup-arizona>

These are the coordinates for the preferred intersection of Burro Creek Campground Road and Highway 93:

34°32.02667' N 113°25.935 W

This should pull up a Google Map for that intersection:

<https://goo.gl/maps/ncHdyc6bUh1rfKDM6>

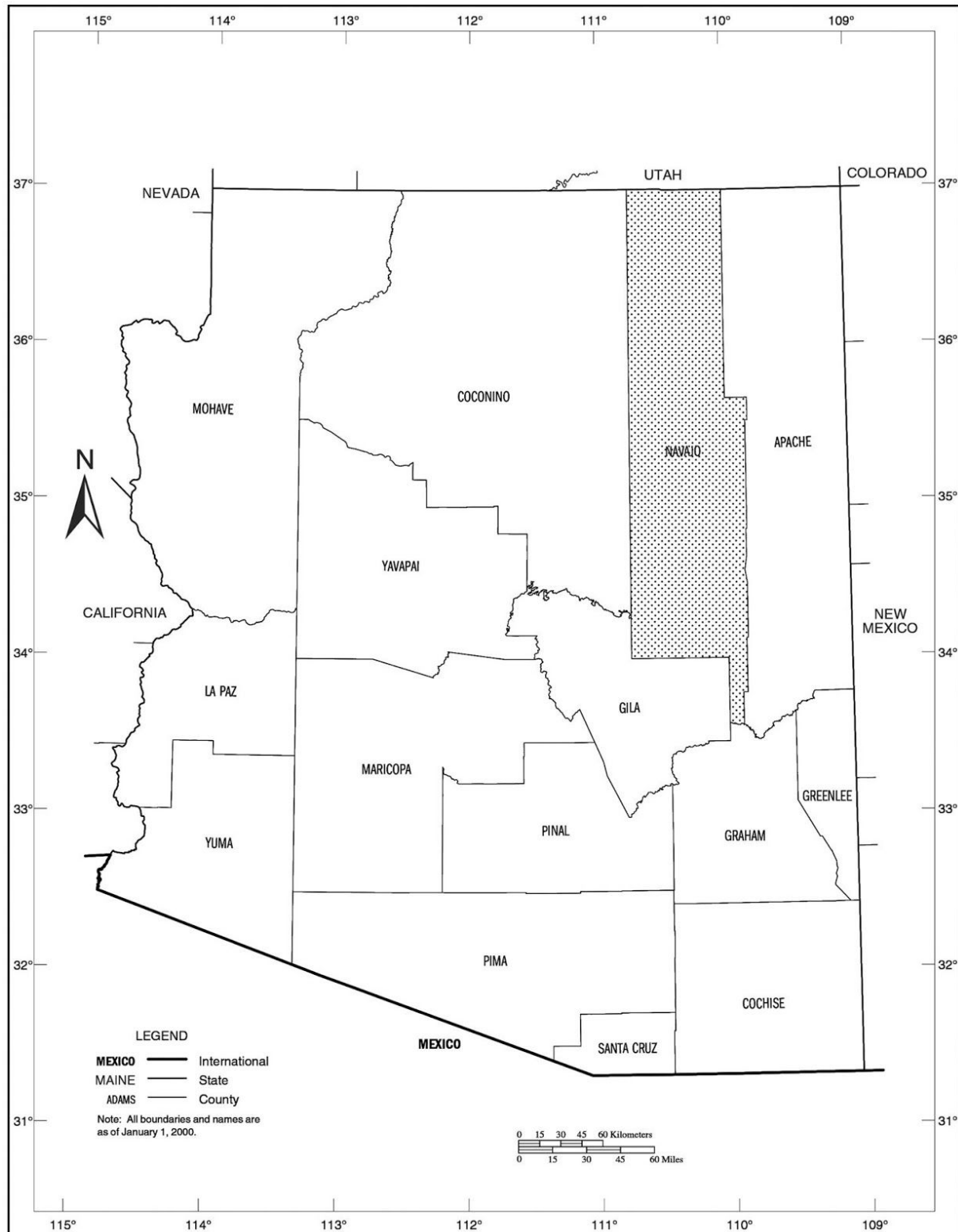
BLM's Burro Creek Recreation Site, known to rockhounds as Burro Creek, is frequented mostly for agates. It is approximately 60 miles northwest of Wickenburg. Wikeiup is Burro Creek's nearest town, with gasoline and limited supplies available. Rock and Gem Clubs from as far as Utah make field trips to Burro Creek, sometimes each year. It is a beautiful area.

For your first visit, go with a group to find the best spots. People camp at BLM's Burro Creek Campground since there are no local hotels. Fee charged. Most collecting is done on the other side of Highway 93. Consult Gem Trails of Arizona if nothing else.

The Kingman Field Office manages the area as well as the nearby Upper Burro Creek Wilderness Area. Inquire about the group campground of somewhat small size. A nasty barbed wire fence encloses the campground, a few fence breaks allow creek access.

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/search-details/591/2>

Navajo County, AZ (Holbrook)



Rainbow Rock Shop

101 Navajo Blvd.
Holbrook, Arizona 86025
928-524-2384

34°54.080' N 110°09.528'

Multiple dinosaur statues out front. Do you need any more encouragement? If so, the gas station I used in Holbrook wasn't prepay. No credit card reader at the pump, just a lever. I went inside to ask the cashier who was also the mechanic. "Just fill up your tank and come back in."

Look for the Rainbow Rock Shop on Facebook.

Jim Gray's Petrified Wood Company

147 Highway 180
Holbrook, AZ 86025
928-524-1842

34°53.433' N 110°09.581' W

Self-billed as the largest rock shop in the world, this store may qualify as such. Located on the way to the Petrified Forest National Park, the outside rock yard contains tons of petrified wood, a veritable forest of its own. Inside, polished pieces present themselves in all forms, from tabletops to book ends.

<https://shop.jimgrayspetrifiedwoodco.com>

DoBell's Curios/Rhonda's Petrified Wood Dig at Dobell Ranch

P.O. Box 691
9274 Highway 180
Holbrook, AZ 86025

34°47.521' N 109°53.611' W

Search for "Rhonda's Petrified Wood Dig at Dobell-Ranch" on Facebook.

Rhonda DoBell operates this fee-dig. The driveway is right before the road to the south entrance of the Petrified Forest National Park, 19 miles from Holbrook. Your close if the Petrified Forest Gift Shop is in view.

The dig site is three miles from the house with the highway signboard. Call Rhonda when you get to the signboard or before. The operators may be at the dig.

928-245-9010 / 928-524-2628 / 928-241-0260

Crystal Forest Museum and Gifts

Highway 180
Holbrook, AZ 86025
928-524-3500

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

34°47.530' N 109°53.476' W

You can't miss this shop. Its sign must be a hundred feet across. It's at the corner of Highway 180 and Petrified Forest Road.

Petrified Forest Gift Shop

6492 Petrified Forest Road
Holbrook, AZ 86025
928-524-3470

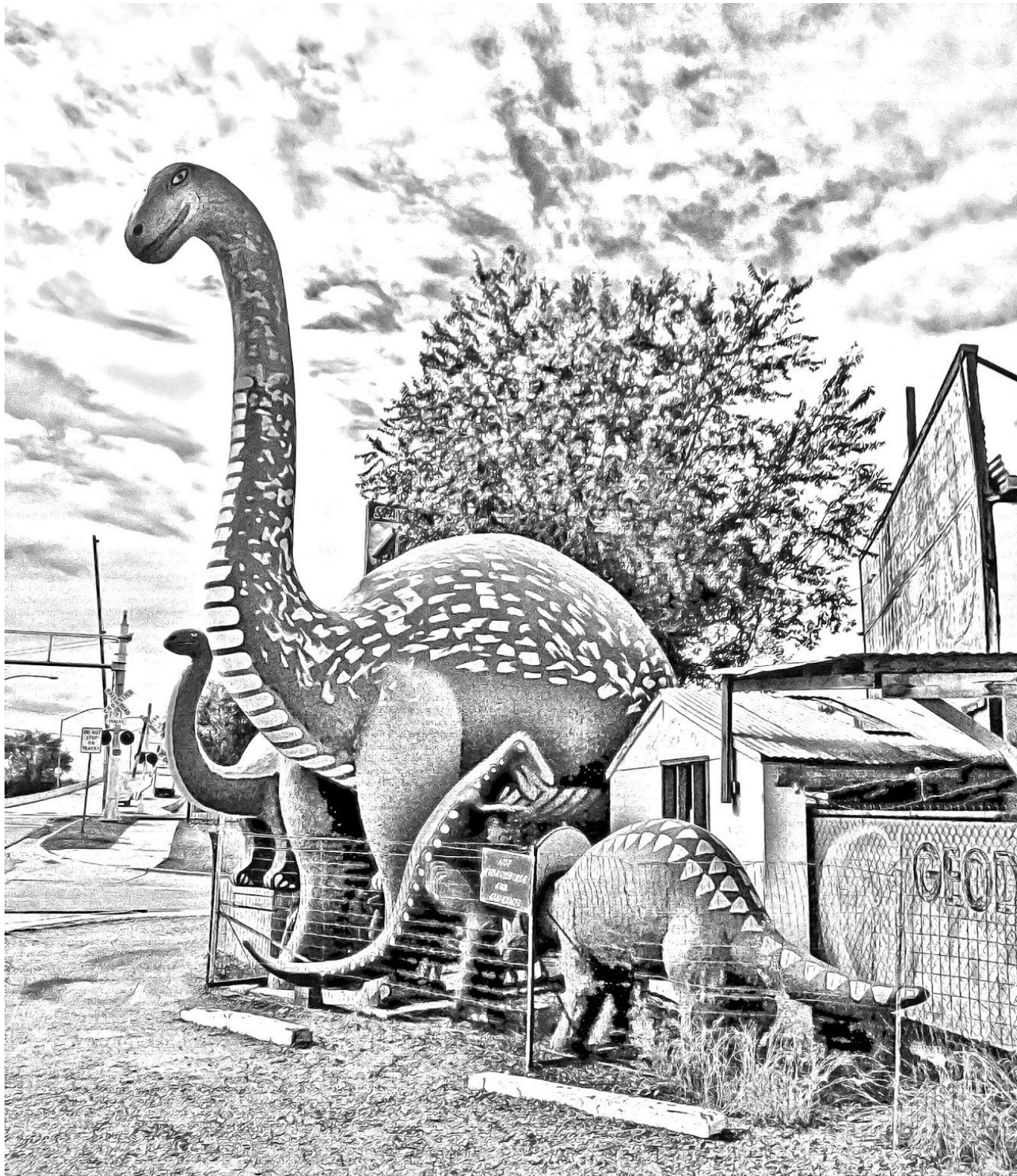
34°47.586' N 109°53.545' W

Another gift shop on the way to the National Park.

Stewart's Petrified Wood Shop

9406 Washboard Road
Holbrook, AZ 86025----on Highway I-40 East of Holbrook
800-414-8533

<http://www.petrifiedwood.com>



RAINBOW ROCK SHOP IN HOLBROOK, ARIZONA



" NAVAJO WOMAN AND INFANT, CANYON DE CHELLE, ARIZONA."
ANSEL ADAMS FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, 1941

Kaytena

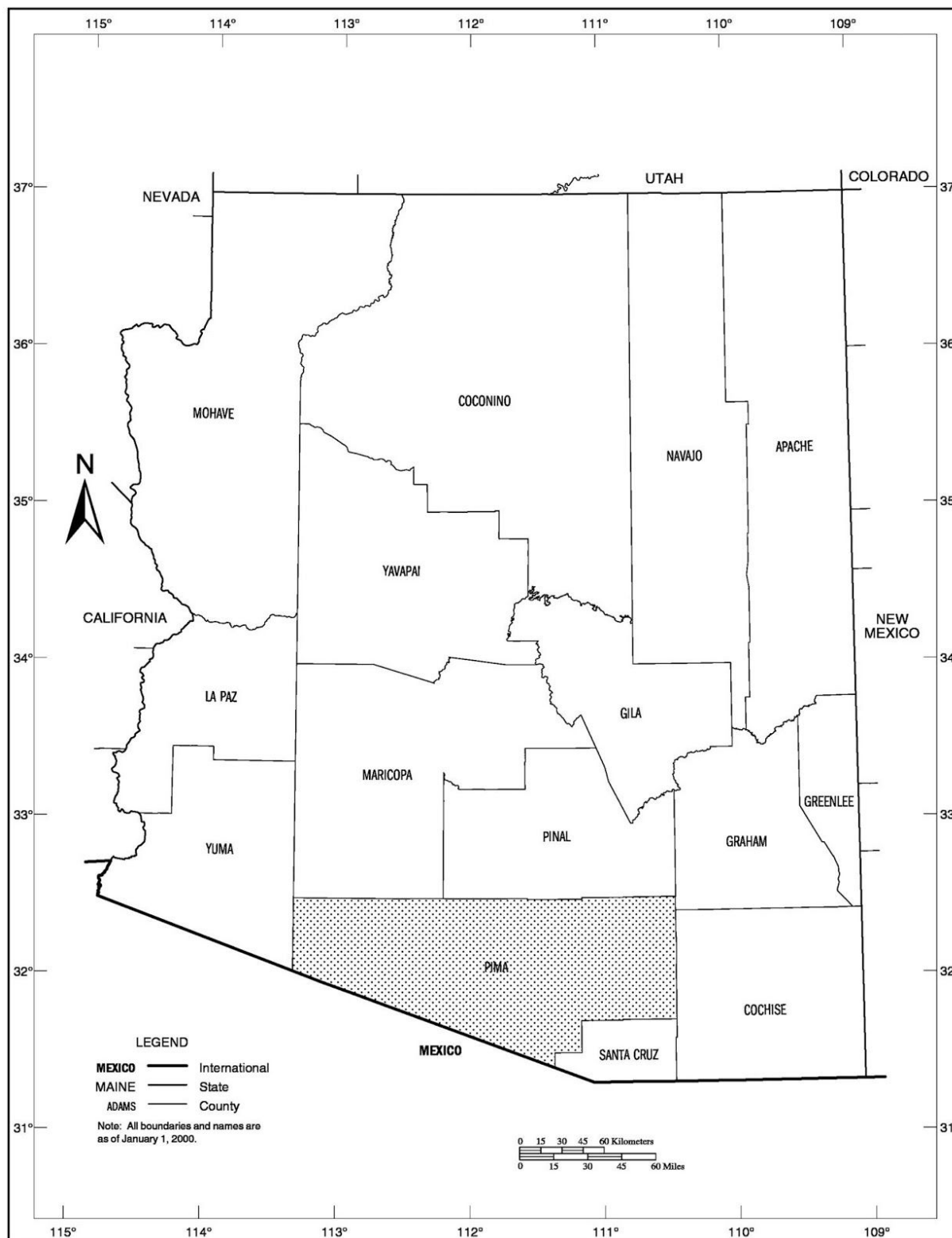
Hampton Inn & Suites

Highly recommended. Details soon.

Four Corners Monument

Information on the Four Corners Monument and the route to same forthcoming. I have visited and have many photos and information but need to write it all up.

Pima County, AZ (Tucson)



Tucson

Tucson is a single word that means many things. Tucson sits in southern Arizona in Saguaro Country, a background to Wild West history which included stagecoach robbers and the Earp brothers. But to anyone interested in the treasures of the earth, Tucson means one thing: Mecca.

Tucson festivities happen in late January and early February, culminating in the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show®. This is a four-day extravaganza held at the Tucson Convention Center. The Big Show, distinct among world class events in its educational emphasis, closes out a three-week, city-wide experience in memorable fashion.

Tucson is a gem, mineral, fossil, and jewelry festival for a solid three weeks. Fossils, crystals, beads, lapidary supplies, books, and more, are sold out of many dedicated venues, hotel rooms and lobbies. The Big Show may be the signature event at the Convention Center for a long weekend, but nearly 4,000 exhibitors spread out across Tucson in all directions. For three weeks, Tucson becomes a wonderland for wheeling and dealing, exploring and learning new things, meeting people, and indulging in visual treats at every turn.

Tucson's overwhelming scale and popularity results in widespread traffic problems. Big Show days jam the convention center parking lot. Traffic control roams every street. A Tucson visitor's best communication, information and navigation tool is a smart phone. Install an Uber or Lyft app in case parking proves impossible. Also, a hardcopy map of Tucson is invaluable to show more detail than a three-inch screen.

Confirm vendor locations and the status of the shuttle bus service prior to the Big Show. If operating, the shuttle service is a convenient way to get around. If not, you are in trouble. There's also a city bus. For drivers, search online prior to your arrival for the most convenient parking lots.

South Freeway fronts I-10 on both sides. I-10 is the north-south corridor through Tucson's center. At the northern end is Congress and South Freeway. From there, venues appear for several blocks as one travels south, ending with the Tucson Showplace at 1530 South Freeway.

Many more vendors can be found south of town at the Kino Gem and Mineral Show at the Kino Sports Complex at 2500 East Ajo Way. The online Tucson E-Z Guide is helpful for planning a trip, with a list of vendors, venues and schedules; a paid subscription gets you a hard copy of the Guide but mailed only a couple of weeks before the show.

The TGMS or Big Show is the heartbeat of the entire Tucson experience. The finest mineral specimens in the world are routinely displayed at the show, many from private collections. John Betts once said that these specimens are often better than museum pieces because museums can't afford such materials.

The Smithsonian, the American Museum of Natural History, the Sorbonne, and more than 25 academic institutions and museums regularly represent at the Big Show. Competitive displays from expert and beginning collectors are featured, with a Tucson award considered the highlight of many a collector's career.

Each year has a theme or focus. 2018's theme was especially memorable: Crystals and Crystal Forms. Dozens of displays illustrated different aspects of this difficult subject, the basic architecture of minerals. 2021 will feature fluorescent minerals, with possibly the largest gathering of UV specimens in history.

Book hotel rooms months in advance. Lodging exists throughout Tucson, with better availability at the edges of the city. Catalina and Picacho Peak state parks north of Tucson offer camping and RV hookups. Advise credit card companies of an upcoming visit. With Tucson's international character, statement charges might originate from Nairobi, Morocco or Germany. If flying to Tucson, mailing purchases home can be more economical than packing for an airline. USPS flat rate boxes are extremely popular for this. Tucson is an event best planned as an expedition. One is traveling to a different world, where everything rock-related awaits. Mecca.

Resources

Rambo, Katherine. The World Came to Tucson (Stanegate Press, Tucson 2014) Rambo details Tucson's origin and continuation. Good background for anyone contemplating going.

Hardcopy show guide of venues and vendors:

<https://xpopress.com>

Online alternative guide to venues and vendors:

<http://www.tucsongemshows.net/coming.html>

Gem show parking and GemRide Shuttle information:

<https://www.tucsonaz.gov/park-tucson/gem-show-parking>

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

2021 North Kinney Road
Tucson AZ 85743
520-883-2702

32°14.692' N 111°09.986' W

<https://www.desertmuseum.org/>

Major natural history museum and accompanying grounds. Holds kid's programs. "We have an extensive Sonoran Desert region gem, mineral, and fossil collection totaling 14,095 catalogued specimens, some of which are on display at the Earth Sciences Center. Our relatively new vertebrate paleontology collection contains the first and only significant dinosaur skeleton from Southern Arizona."

The University of Arizona Gem and Mineral Museum

1601 East University Blvd.
Tucson, AZ 85719
520-621-4427

32°13.923' N 110°57.000' W

Google their website – the URL is too long to fit here

World-wide collection but emphasizes Arizona and Mexico minerals. Meteorites.

“The University of Arizona Gem & Mineral Museum is dedicated to providing public education and the preservation of minerals and meteorites while also serving the research needs of professionals, students and collectors. The collection is world-wide in scope, but with specific emphasis on minerals from Arizona and Mexico.”

University of Arizona Mineral Museum

(New location coming soon)

Old Pima County Courthouse
115 North Church Ave
Tucson, AZ 85701

32°13.407' N 110°58.522' W

Acme Sand and Gravel

7777 E 22nd Street
Building 3
Tucson, AZ 85710
520-296-6231

32°12.42500' N 110°49.63000' W

A wonderful rock yard. Local stone displayed well. Good place to walk around. You could tote home a fifty-pound sack of northern Arizona black lava sand for your nefarious horticultural activities. Or order that from their Amazon store if it is available.

<https://www.acmesand.com>

Dah Rock Shop

3401 N Dodge Blvd.

Tucson, AZ 85716

520-323-0781 ##

The Coronado National Forest

Supervisor's Office
300 W. Congress St.
Tucson, AZ 85701
520-388-8300

32°13.333' N 110°58.546' W

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Google their website.

Vast national forest in many parts. 1.78 million acres across the mountains of southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico.

ASARCO Mineral Discovery Center and Tour

1421 West Pima Mine Road
Sahuarita, AZ 85629
520-625-8233

31°59.883' N 110°59.737 W

<http://www.asarco.com/about-us/our-locations/asarco-mineral-discovery-center/mine-tours/>

Large open-pit copper mine tour. Small fee charged. Visitor center is free, includes excellent exhibits on copper recovery and copper mineral examples. Great place to visit in February if in Tucson for the shows. Call ahead for reservations. 15 miles south of Tucson. The nearby Desert Diamond Casino has bathrooms and food.

Arrive an hour before a tour begins to allow time to visit the gift shop, exhibits, and outdoor garden which is arrayed with mining equipment. The Visitor Center has impressive copper mineral displays and short movies explaining the mining and milling process. The gift shop may have copper ore rough from the mine for sale.

Take a telephoto lens for shooting the maneuverings of distant haul trucks. Overlook positions have fence openings that allow photography. With the quick pace of the tour, a monopod is the fastest way to set up.

Arizona's official motto is "The Copper State" and mines like this power that statement. The mine processes tons of so-called overburden to recover minute amounts of copper and other minerals. But that amount adds up quickly with fleets of haul trucks carrying 240 tons or 340 tons of material at a time. One ton of ore eventually produces 13 pounds of copper. 189 tons of ore concentrate leaves the Mission Mine every day for ASARCO's smelter in Hayden, Arizona. It then goes to their Amarillo, Texas refinery. The pit area from which all of this comes represents what's known as the Mission ore body.

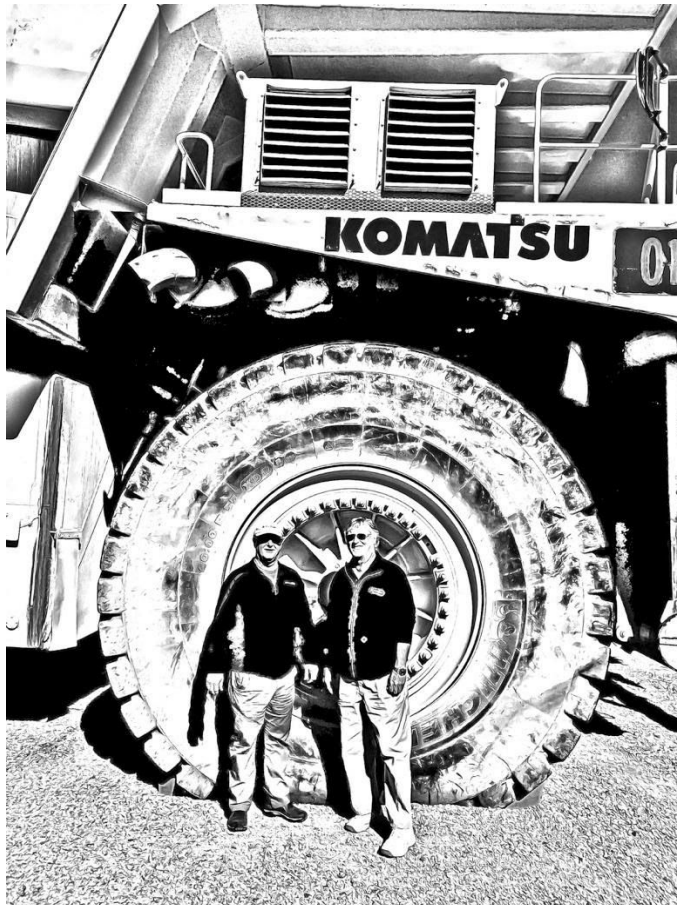
The Mission ore body originated from volcanic and tectonic activity 60 to 100 million years ago. Metal-bearing fluid expelled from cooling magma pushed up from the earth's interior, leaving the present ground rich in sulfide minerals. Sometimes called a skarn deposit, the dominant mineral is chalcopyrite, the chief ore of copper. It is finely disseminated through the rocks of the complex, which include argillite, arkosite, quartzite, and limestone. To the author's eye, it looked like a bottomless pit of caliche and alluvium. Other minerals found here include galena, pyrite, silver, molybdenite, and sphalerite. Precious metals tend to follow copper through flotation recovery and eventual smelting. This can contribute significantly to a mine's revenue. Indeed, in 2016, the Mission Mine produced 1.3 million ounces of silver.

Resources

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

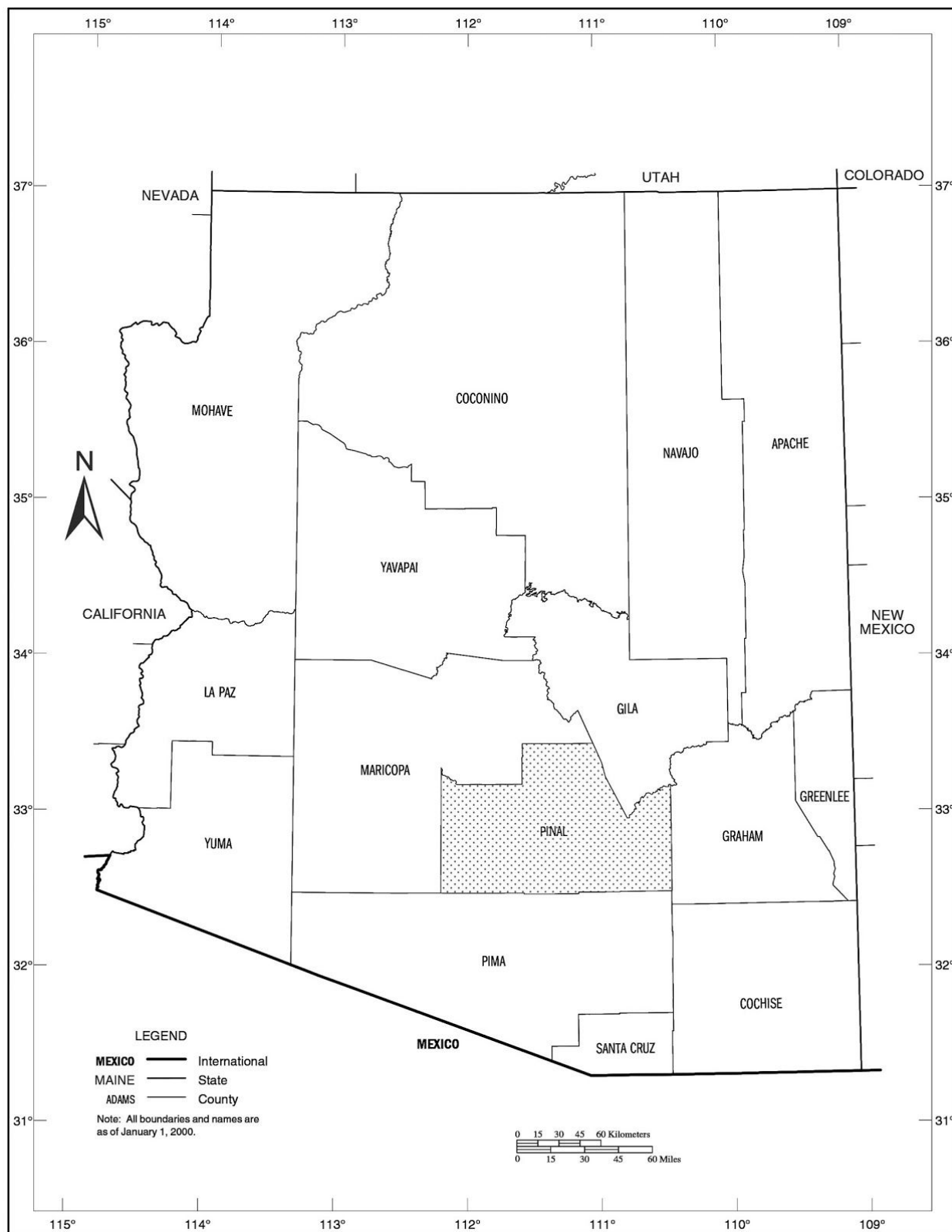
ASARCO Mineral Discovery Staff. *Your Visit to ASARCO GRUPO MEXICO Mineral Discovery Center*. (Sahuarita, Arizona: ASARCO Mineral Discovery Staff, undated) \$4.00 at the gift shop. Make sure to get one.

Weiss, Norman. *Memoirs of a Millman: Volume II* (Tucson, WEICO Publishing, 1993) Discusses setting up operations at the Mission Mine as well as many other open pit mines. This book gets really technical on things like flotation and grinders and how a processing circuit for ore is determined.



ASARCO VISITOR CENTER IN SAHUARITA, ARIZONA

Pinal County, AZ (Florence)



BLM Safford Field Office

BLM's Safford Field Office manages areas in Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, and Pinal Counties. See their contact information under the Cochise County entry.

The Pinal Gem and Mineral Society

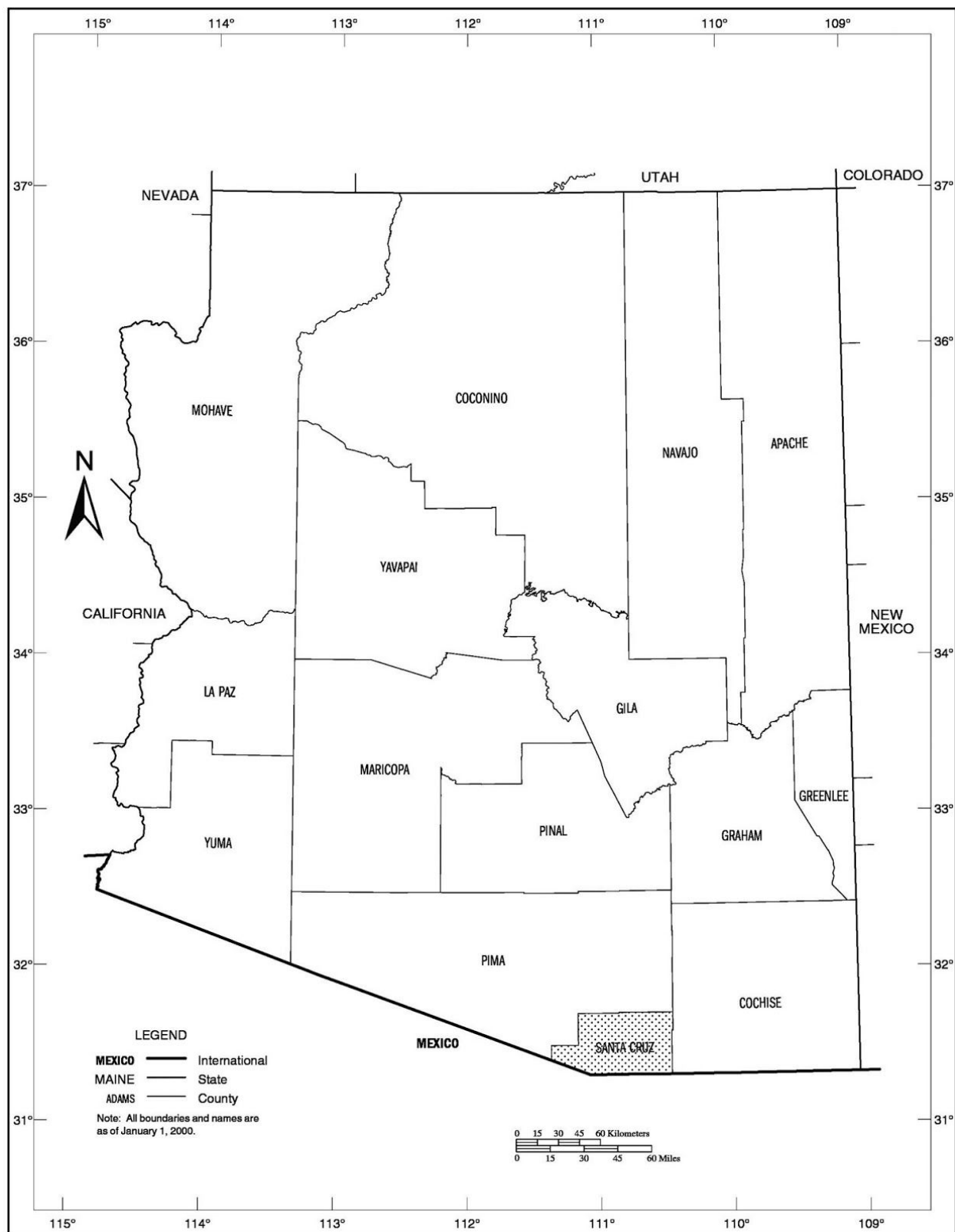
Artisan Village of Coolidge
351 N Arizona Blvd.
Coolidge, AZ 85128

32°58.848' N 111°31.421' W (Points to the Chamber of Commerce)

“[T]he newest addition to the Pinal Geology and Mineral Museum in Coolidge, Arizona is a 72-drawer custom mineral cabinet made at the woodworking shop in the state prison in Florence. They did a wonderful job on the cabinet and a selection of the PGMS mineral collection has moved in! The museum is located in the Artisan Village at 351 N. Arizona Blvd in Coolidge, AZ.” Flagg Mineral Foundation.

<http://www.pinalgeologymuseum.org/>

Santa Cruz County, AZ (Nogales)



Pimeria Alta Historical Society and Museum

136 North Grand Avenue
Nogales, Arizona 85621
520-287-4621

Duquesne Ghost Town Area

Duquesne, Arizona serves as the central point for any fee/dig activities that might occur in this long-closed area. Green garnets, milky quartz crystals, secondary copper minerals and outcroppings of Japan Law twins are noted here.

Schwartz Fine Minerals has been trying to arrange fee digs in Duquesne. Contact them through their website or through their Facebook page. They respond by FB Messenger. Or call Rick and Jill Pitrone at 520-860-0219. Even if digs have been cancelled, we should thank these people for trying to arrange them.

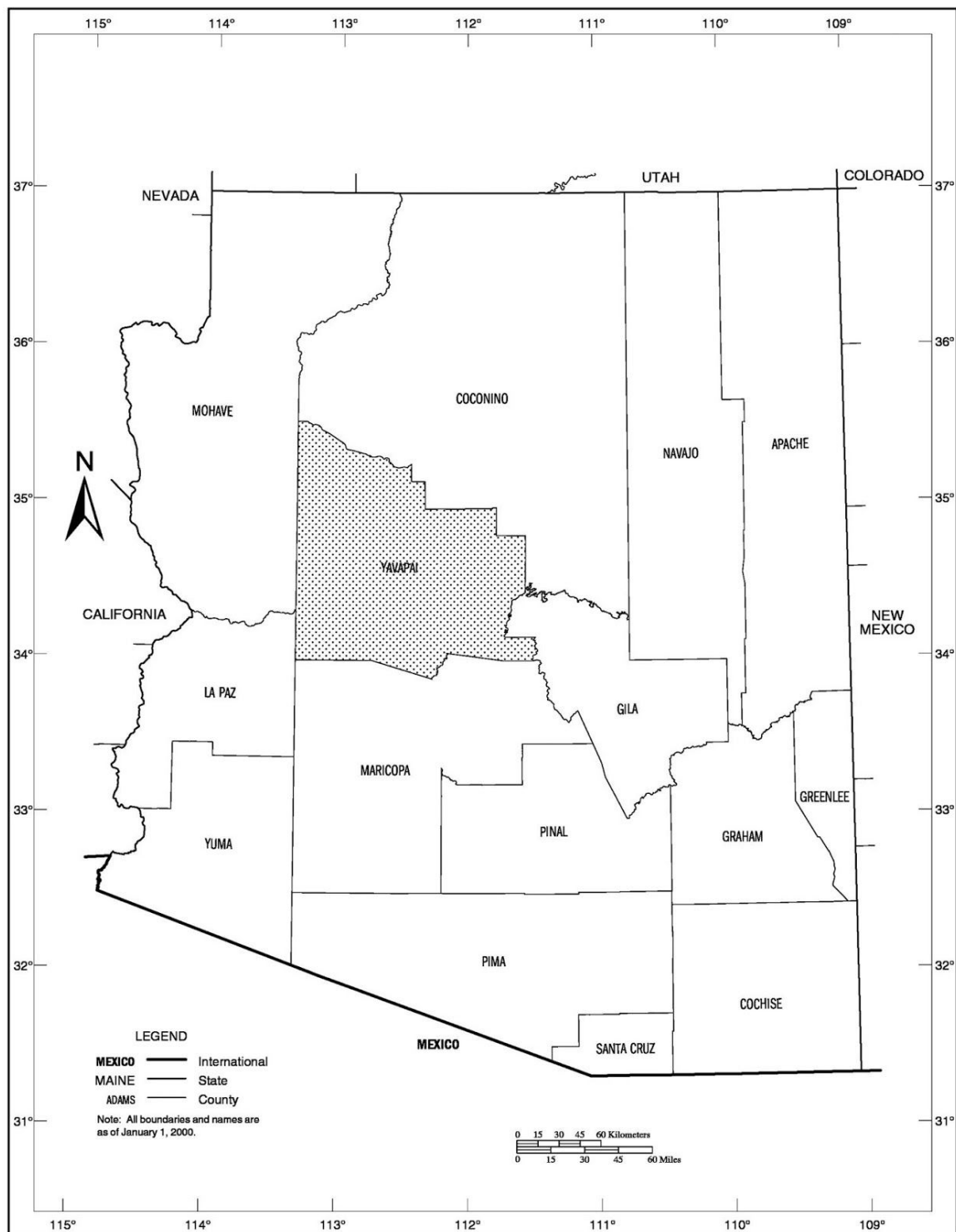
<https://www.facebook.com/schwartzfineminerals/>

<https://schwartzfineminerals.com/about/>



**ORE CHUTE OF THE BONANZA MINE,
DUQUESNE ARIZONA**

Yavapai County, AZ (Prescott)



Jim and Ellen's Rock Shop

1019 N Main St
Cottonwood, AZ 86326
928-583-4412

34°44.910' N 112°01.620' W

I haven't visited in person but their website shows some nice things. When are we going?

<https://www.jerockshop.com/>

Jerome Historical Society Mine Museum

200 Main Street
Jerome, AZ 86331
928-634-5477

34°45.057' N 112°07.093' W

Info on the society needed

Jerome State Historic Park

100 Douglas Road
Jerome, AZ 86331
928-634-5381

Decimal Degrees (WGS84)
Latitude: 34.753972
Longitude: -112.111176

State Historic Park is a state park of Arizona, US, featuring the Douglas Mansion, built in 1916 by a family of influential mining entrepreneurs in Jerome, Arizona, a mining region in the northeast of the Black Hills, east Yavapai County. A museum is located in the old Douglas Mansion.

<https://azstateparks.com/jerome/>

The Douglas Mansion has been a landmark in Jerome since 1916 when James S. Douglas built it on the hill above the Little Daisy Mine. This converted home presents Jerome area history along with photographs, artifacts, and minerals.



**THE DOUGLAS MANSION, JEROME STATE HISTORIC PARK,
JEROME, ARIZONA**

The Copper Art Museum

849 Main Street
P.O. Box 474

Clarkdale, AZ 86324
928-649-1858

34°46.265' N 112°03.406' W

Showcasing all things copper with an emphasis on its use in art and its role in Arizona. Mineral cabinet with copper specimens. Museum quality displays and exhibits. Fee charged. Well reviewed at Rock&Gem:

<https://www.rockngem.com/taking-a-closer-look-at-copper/>

<https://www.copperartmuseum.com>

Verde Canyon Railroad

300 North Broadway
Clarkdale, AZ 86324
800-582-7245

34°46.575' N 112°03.378' W

The Rock&Gem article above discusses the importance this railroad was to the mining town of Clarkdale. As writer Helen Serras-Herman notes, “The Verde Canyon Railroad is also a popular attraction in this area. It runs on the same tracks ordered to be built by William Clark for his mining operations, connecting the copper smelter in Clarkdale and the copper mines in Jerome.” The author mentions the train passing

40 acres of slag, a byproduct of copper production. Slag was often used as railroad ballast, but I don't know what ballast was used for the tracks here.

<https://verdecanyonrr.com>

More on slag, railroad ballast, and their meteorite connection here:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/10/18/beginning-at-the-ending-railroad-ballast-and-slag/>

Copper Mountain Antiques (The shop for the Copper Art Museum)

880 D Hampshire Avenue

Jerome, AZ 86331

928-634-3273

34°45.085' N 112°06.375' W

Call to see if they sell any rocks.

<https://www.copperartmuseum.com/gallery-and-shop>

The Miner's Pick Rock Shop

317 Main St.

Jerome, AZ 86331

928-274-4499

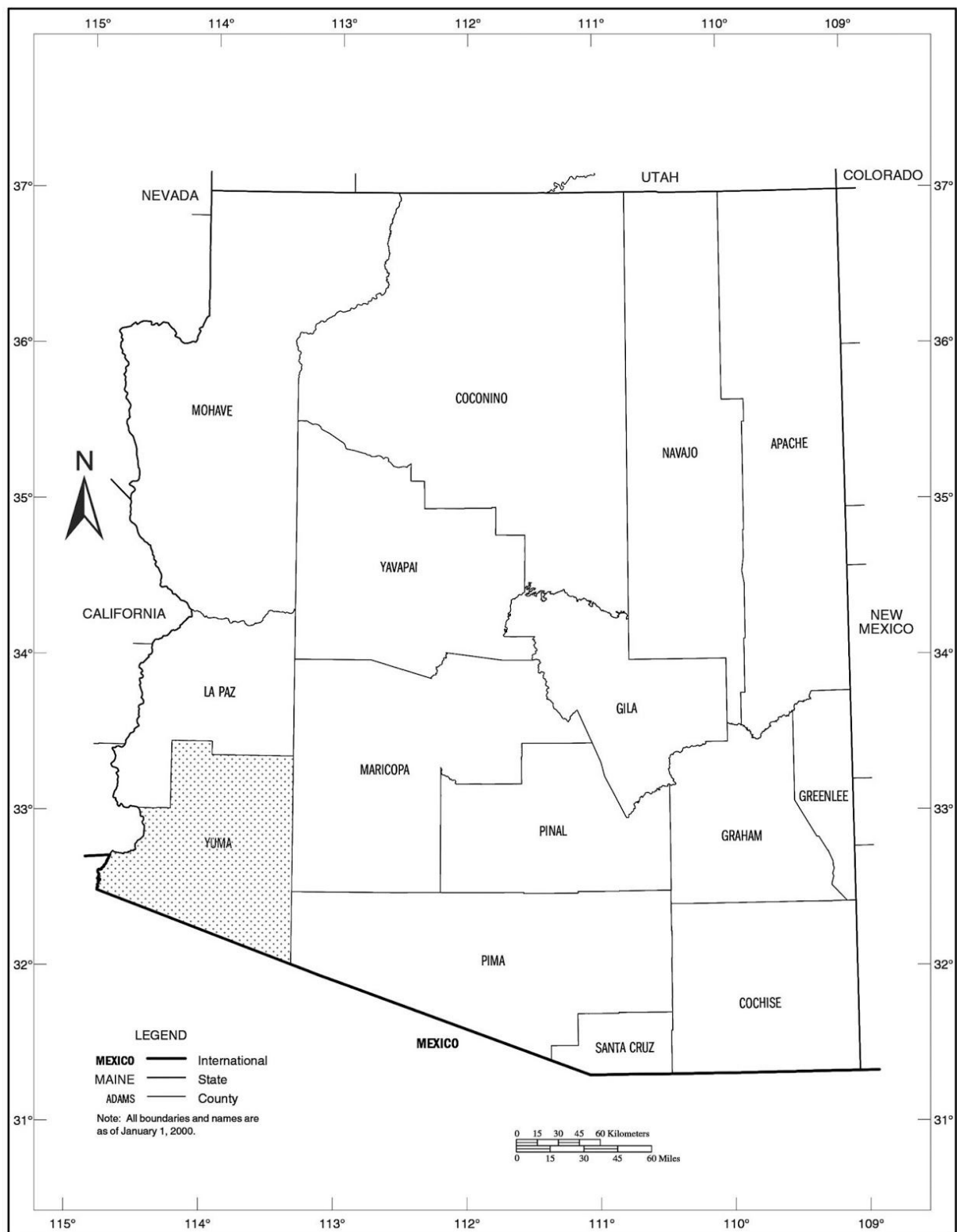
“Featuring hand-picked gemstones, minerals, fossils & crystals from our mine and around the world.

In addition to featuring hand-picked gemstones, minerals, fossils & crystals, we also use local woods and minerals to craft unique handmade products, all right here in Jerome! Our goal is to provide high quality products at great prices and to educate the public about geology.”

Their website redirects to a browser extension so I am not listing it. Google the store's URL.

34°45.031' N 112°06.941' W

Yuma County, AZ (Yuma)



Castle Dome Museum / Mine Tours
Castle Dome Road

Western Rock Ramblings by Thomas Farley

Yuma, AZ
928-920-3062

33°02.807' N 114°10.679' W

<http://castledomemuseum.org/index.html>

Museum with a ghost town setting that preserves Castle Dome City's history. Associated with the Hull Mine. The Hull Mine has an outstanding fluorescent wall, a natural occurrence of fluorescent minerals. Book ahead for mine tours.

<http://castledomemuseum.org/hull-mine.html>

Fee charged. Seasonal hours. Call first.

BLM Yuma Field Office

7341 E 30th St.
Yuma, AZ 85365
928-317-3200

32°40.408' N 114°30.426' W

Manages campsites near Quartzsite, variously called Dome Rock Road and Dome Rock Mountain. The Dome Rock Mountain Camping Area allows 14-day stay.

Western Rock Ramblings

By Thomas Farley

© 2020

thomasfarley@fastmail.com

All illustrations were derived from photographs taken by the author or from those in the public domain.

Introduction

This is another chapter of what was to be a hardcopy publication, however, formatting the text and illustrations proved too difficult and time consuming. I wanted the book to be spiral bound to lay flat but costs proved prohibitive. I apologize for the poor formatting in advance, my inability to produce something attractive is of constant agony to me.

Photos are in black and white to minimize the size of these chapter files. Since black and white photographs present terribly on ordinary printer paper, I stylized the photos. I hope they give the feel of this dry desert country if not technical accuracy.

The sites listed were either visited by me or recommended to me by trusted sources. I know I have missed many points of interests as well as rock shops and clubs. E-mail me if you would like to be included in the next revision of this text. Several other state chapters are at or near completion and will be released soon.

Most sites are probably closed as of press time because of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

Feel free to distribute this file anywhere you wish. I wish you good health.

Best,

Thomas Farley

Las Vegas, Nevada

New Mexico

Notable

Rockhounding New Mexico by Ruta Vaskys and Martin Freed is an essential title. Watch for tribal land when traveling in any state in the Four Corners Area. These sovereign nations must be respected: no rockhounding, no traveling off main roads, no hiking or exploring without express permission. North Star Mapping of Scottsdale, Arizona produces an excellent road map of the Navajo and Hopi Nations. Some nav devices like my Garmin Montana 650 tell me when I am on tribal land, but only the bigger reservations and pueblos.

Resources

Freed and Ruta. *Rockhounding New Mexico* (Falcon Guides: Guilford, Connecticut, 2008)

Christiansen, Page. *The Story of Mining in New Mexico* (Socorro, New Mexico: New Mexico Bureau of Mines & Mineral Resources, 1974) The definitive historical work on mining in New Mexico. Written for the layperson. Available as a free download. Google the current URL.

Chronic, Halka. *Roadside Geology of New Mexico* (Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press, 1987) Another good one from Halka who divides New Mexico into three geologic provinces. The New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources, on the other hand, splits the state into five parts. I prefer the latter course.

Ungnade, Herbert. *Guide to the New Mexico Mountains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1965) Seventy-five mountain ranges in New Mexico! Nice descriptions by a Los Alamos Laboratory chemist killed on a climb in 1965. Ungnade's talented writing lives on.

Simpson, Bessie. *New Mexico Gem Trails Revised ed.* (Granbury, Texas: Gem Trails Publishing Company, 1965) The Old Days, when you could collect Indian artifacts. Can you imagine? Worth a buy at the right price.

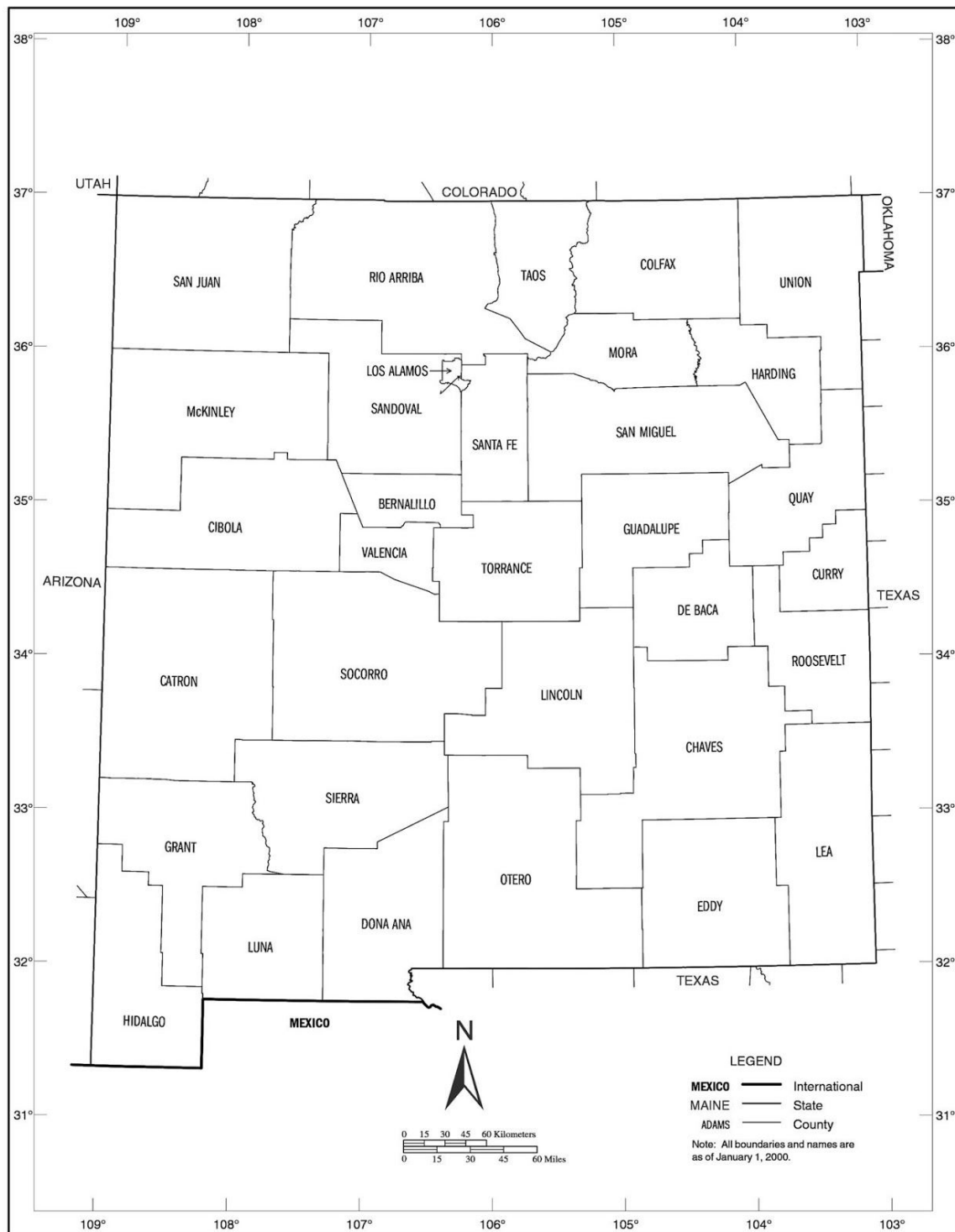
Road Map of Navajo & Hopi Nations (North Star Mapping; Scottsdale, 2017) Excellent map. Really necessary when traveling through tribal land.

<https://mapscompany.com/>

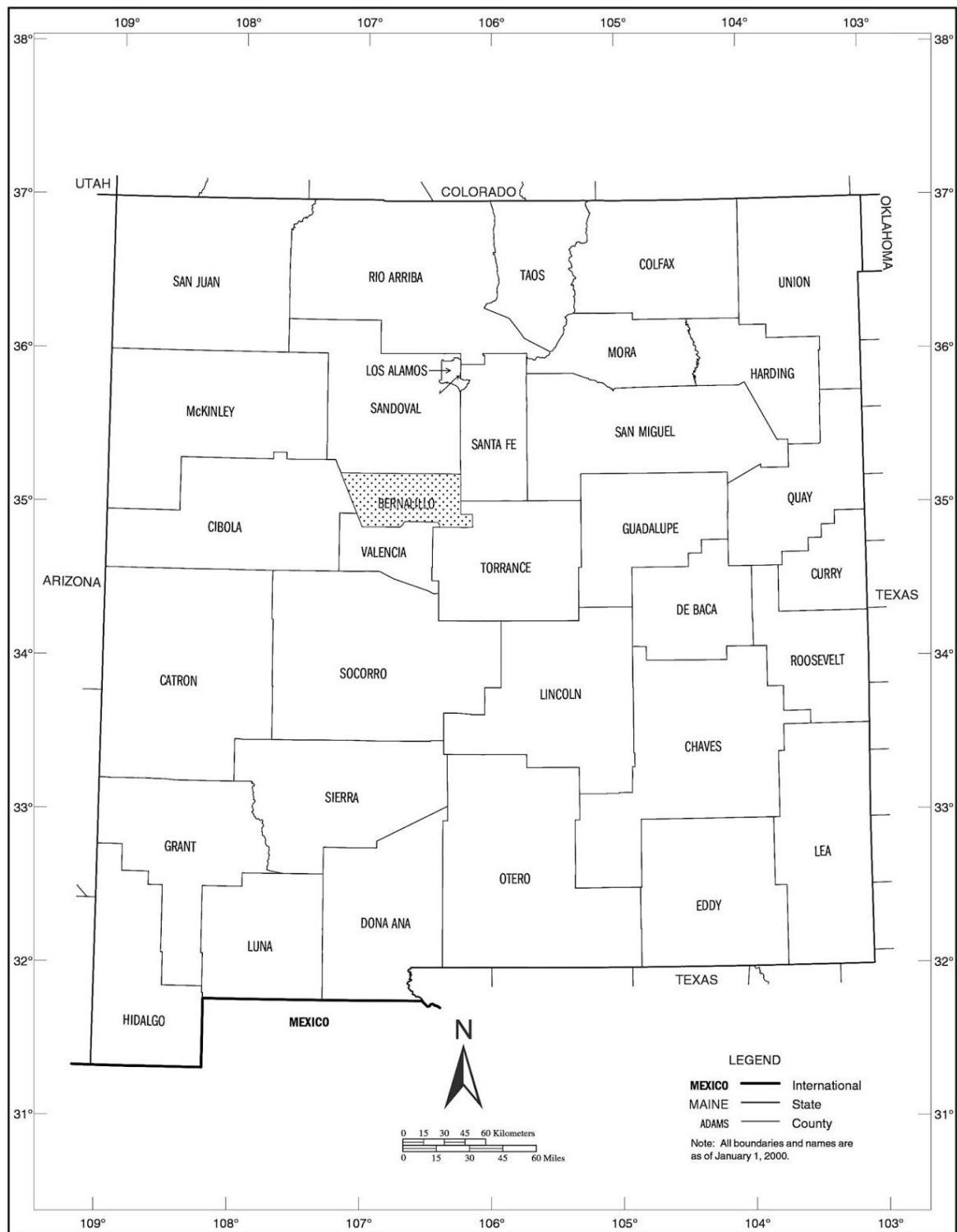
If you're favorite local used bookseller is closed or does not exist, try Advanced Book Exchange. I've used them since 1996. Look for an original used book and not a reprint from India. Those reprints rarely include a map if the original had one.

<https://www.abebooks.com>

New Mexico



Bernalillo County, NM (Albuquerque)



Mama's Minerals

800 20th St NW
Albuquerque, NM 87104
505-266-8443

35°06.011' N 106°40.028' W

Mama's is a leading New Mexico rock shop, two stores, actually, the other in Santa Fe.

<https://www.mamasminerals.com/>

University of New Mexico, Main Campus

1700 Lomas Blvd NE – general address
Earth & Planetary Sciences
The Silver Family Geology Museum (Northrop Hall, Room #24)
Albuquerque, NM 87106
505-277-4204

35°04.996' N 106°37.370' W

Geology and meteorite museum. One exhibit features rocks and minerals from the Harding Pegmatite Mine, worth seeing before visiting that site. Wide range of materials displayed including a fluorescent room. A hallway on the first floor also has some nice displays but at last visit were poorly lit. Bring a flashlight.

<https://artsci.unm.edu/college/museums/museum/geology-museum.html>



**METEORITE MUSEUM,
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO**

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

“Located on the ground floor of Northrop Hall at the University of New Mexico (originally designed by John Gaw Meem), the Meteorite Museum is home to one of the most nationally significant collections of meteorites.” Credit: Patrick Coulle, dnca architects:

<https://dncarchitect.com/projects/unm-meteorite-museum/>

New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science

1801 Mountain Road NW
Albuquerque, NM 87104
505-841-2800

35°05.901' N 106°39.953' W

Natural history museum. Life on earth and possibly beyond. Exhibits on dinosaurs, fossils, space sciences and more. Perfect for kids.

<http://www.nmnaturalhistory.org>

Albuquerque Gem & Mineral Club

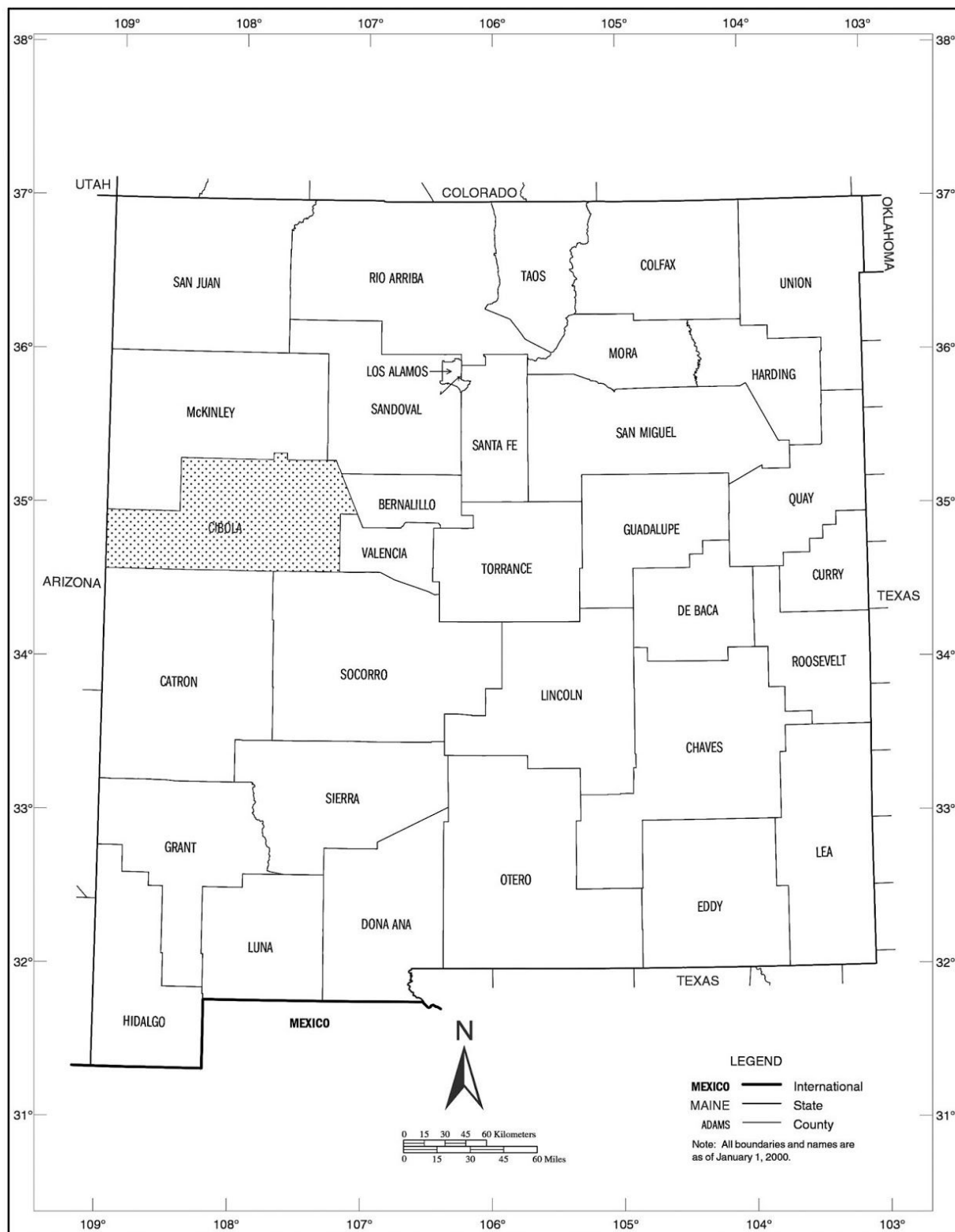
Meetings address:
Museum of Natural History and Science
1801 Mountain Road NW
Albuquerque, NM 87104

35°05.898' N 106°39.951' W

<http://www.agmc.info>

Mailing Address:
Albuquerque Gem and Mineral Club
P.O. Box 13718
Albuquerque, NM 87192

Cibola County, NM (Grants)



New Mexico Mining Museum

100 Iron Avenue
Grants, NM 87020
505-287-4802

35°09.223' N 107°51.278' W

This is New Mexico's official mining museum, the counterpart to the state's Mineral Museum two hours south in Socorro. The focus here is on the working end of mining. Emphasizes life in Grants and Cibola Counties when the uranium boom hit in the 1950s.

<https://www.facebook.com/newmexicominingmuseum/>

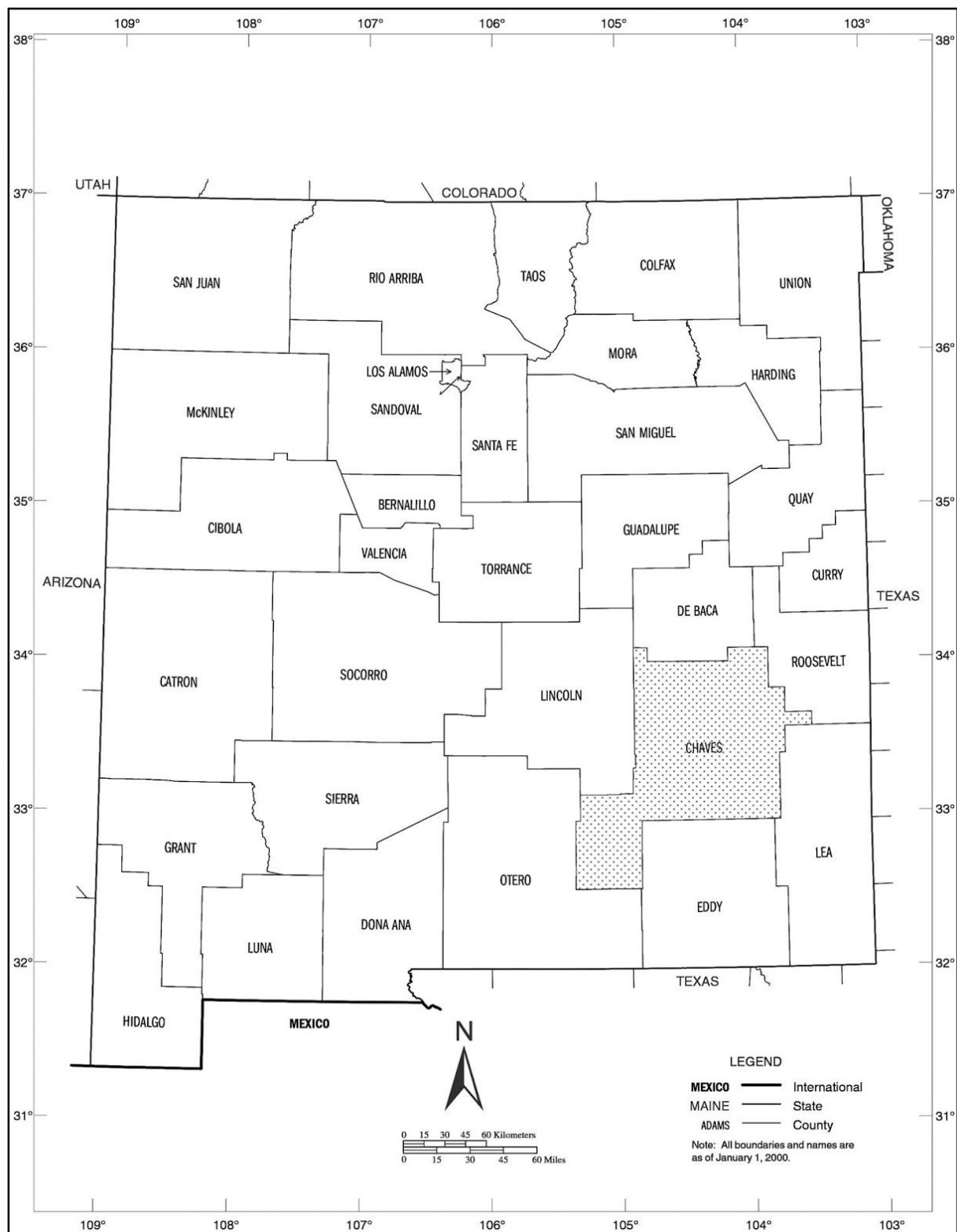
Route 66 runs through Grants. This bit of kitsch from 1979 reflects the uranium history of the area, as well as the constant need for good Chinese food.



The Uranium Cafe in 1979 along Route 66, Grants, New Mexico

Credit: Original photo by John Margolies, from his public domain collection at the Library of Congress. 1979.

Chaves County, NM (Roswell)



Ancient of Days

127 N Main Street

Roswell, New Mexico 88203

575-623-2222

33°23.656' N 104°31.341' W

Eclectic rock shop and source for information on finding “Pecos Diamonds” on nearby BLM land. Close to the International UFO Museum and Research Center.

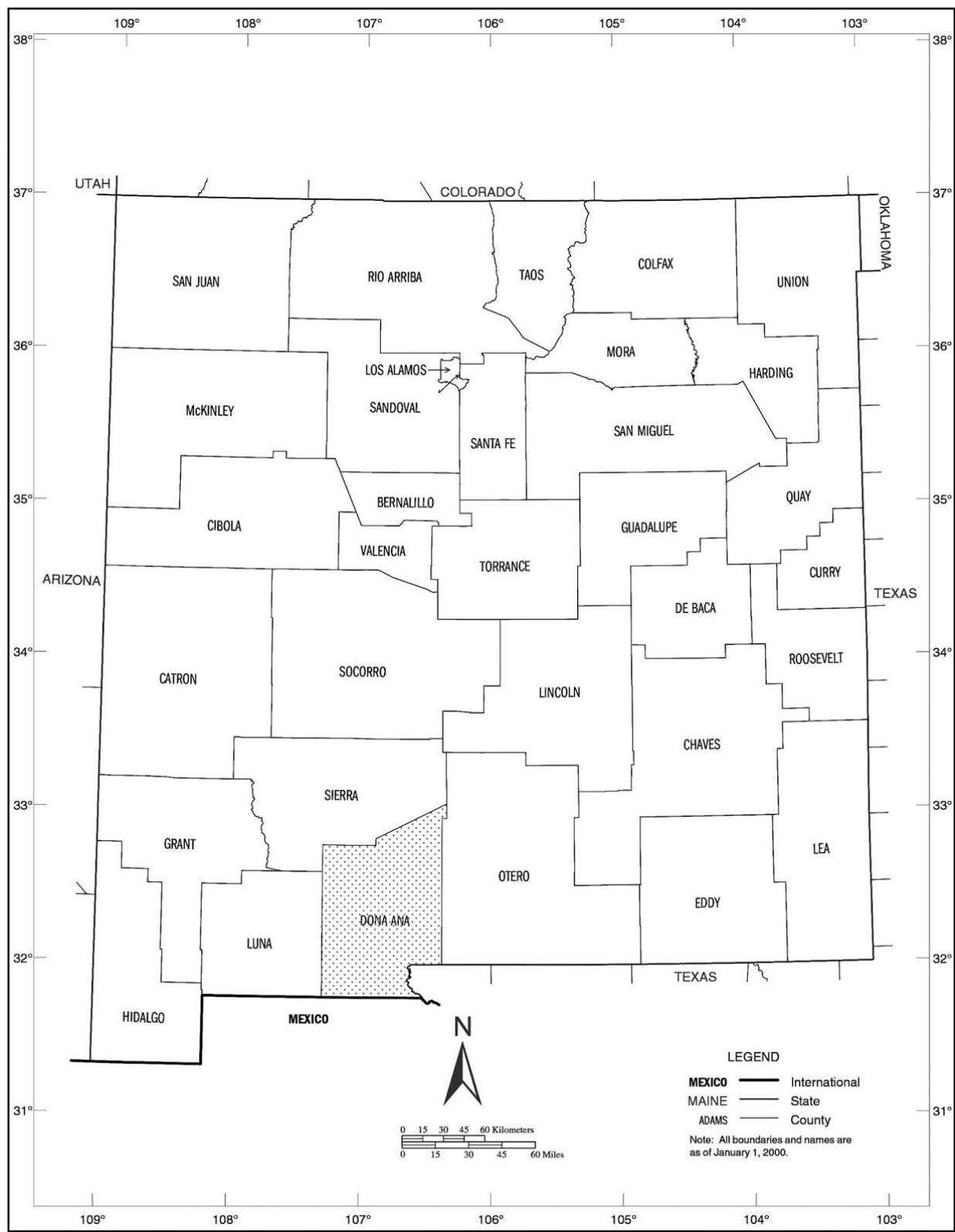
<https://ancientsofdays.net/>



Vending Machine, Roswell, New Mexico

The heritage of the “alien incident” in 1947 continues to echo throughout Roswell. Original photo credit: mr_t_77 at <https://flickr.com/>

Doña Ana County, NM (Las Cruces)



Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument

Non-commercial collecting allowed as of this writing. This according to Colin R. Dunn, Paleontologist/Geologist for Prehistoric Pathways and Organ MT-Desert Peaks National Monuments in personal correspondence with me on September 17, 2018.

32°19.555' N 106°33.390' W – Center of Monument area

Rockhounding in the northern Organ Mountains was featured in the August, 2019 issue of Rock&Gem. Robert Beard wrote “Northern Organ Mountains.” He describes looking for garnets, calcite, and malachite.

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/new-mexico/organ-mountains-desert-peaks-national-monument>



Original Photo Credit, Patrick Alexander, Las Cruces District Botanist, BLM. Modified by the author.

BLM in Las Cruces

Las Cruces District Office
1800 Marquess Street
Las Cruces, NM 88005
575-525-4454

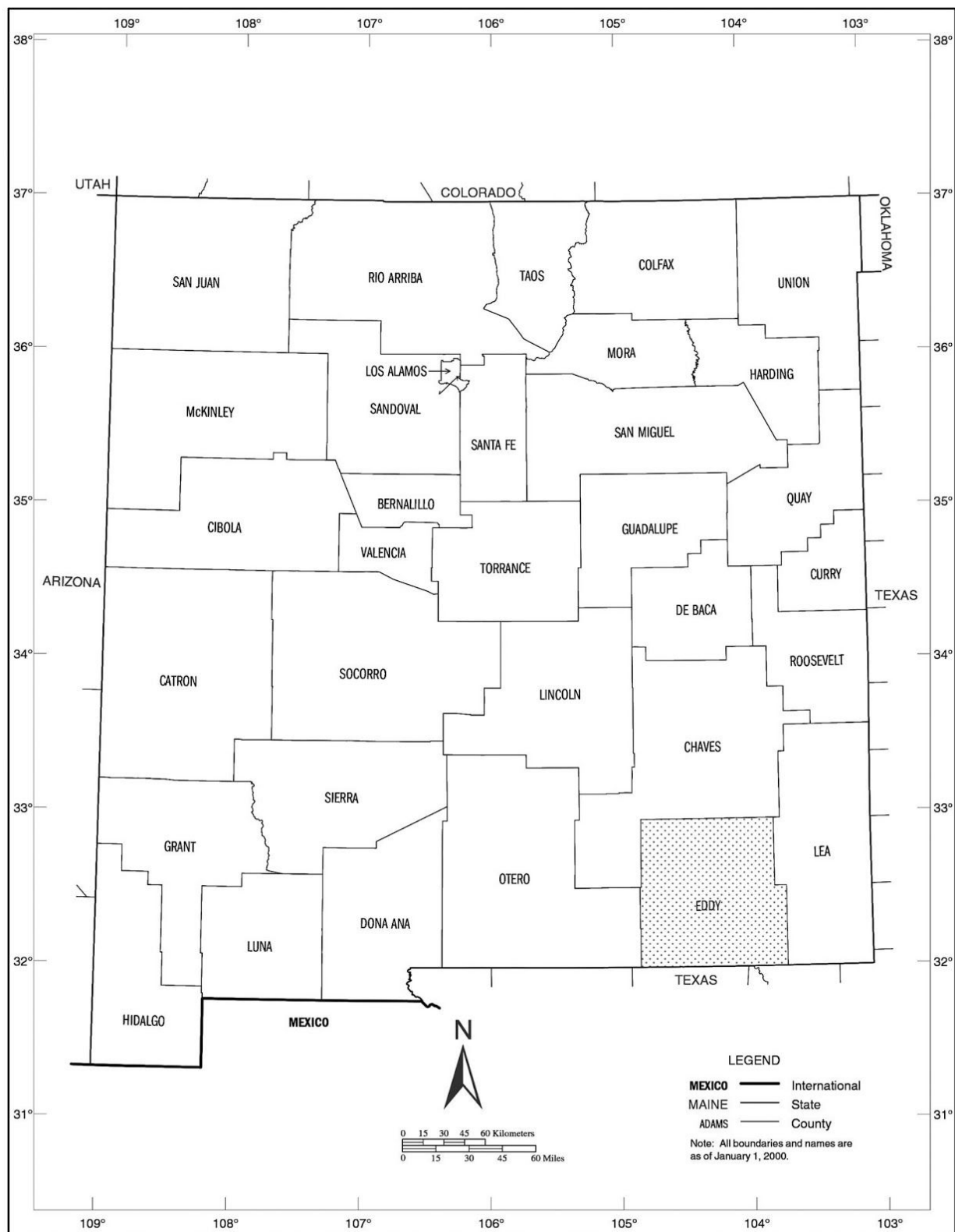
32°17.265' N 106°46.621' W

Manages the above listed National Monuments.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

<https://www.blm.gov/office/las-cruces-district-office>

Eddy County, NM (Carlsbad)



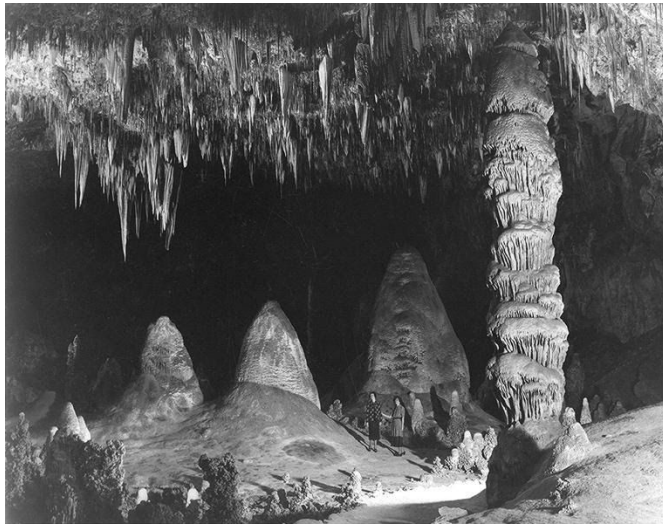
Carlsbad Caverns National Park

Visitor Center
727 Carlsbad Caverns Highway
Carlsbad, NM 88220
575-785-2332

32°10.540' N 104°26.655' W

Internationally known cave complex.

<https://www.nps.gov/cave/index.htm>



**"ROCK OF AGES IN THE BIG ROOM,"
ANSEL ADAMS FOR
THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, 1941**

Cerrillos Turquoise Mining Museum

17 Waldo Street
Cerrillos, NM 87010
505-438-3008

35°26.230' N 106°07.656' W

Part of the greater complex which includes the Casa Grande Trading Post, Petting Zoo and the Cerrillos Turquoise Mining Museum.

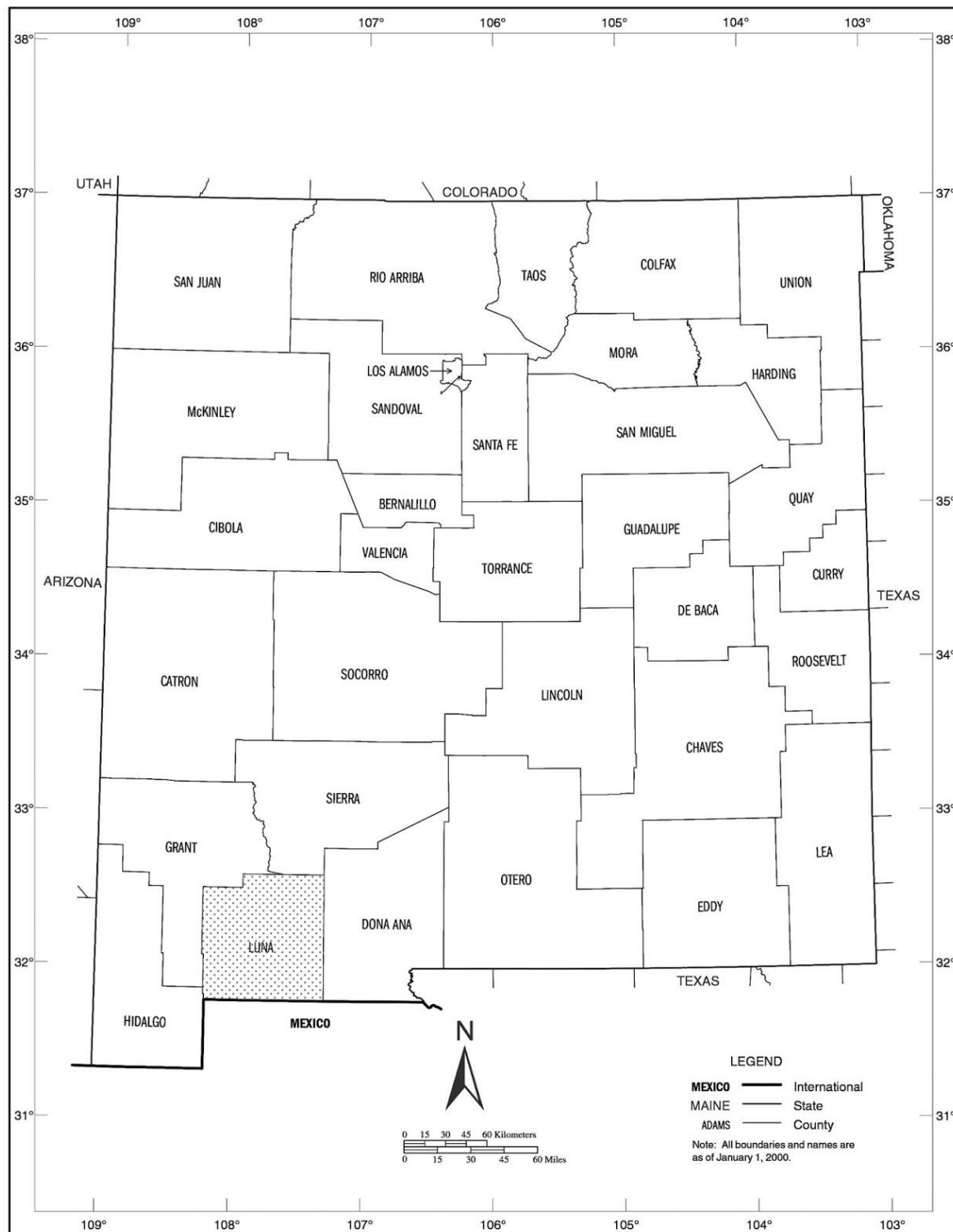
www.casagrandetradingpost.com

Mine tour is \$60.00. No collecting.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

<http://www.cerrillosturquoise.com/cerrillos-turquoise-mine-tour>

Luna County, NM (Deming)



<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Deming Luna Mimbres Museum / Deming Museum
301 S Silver Ave.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Deming, NM 88030
575-546-2382

32°16.003' N 107°45.396' W

History museum with large sections devoted to local geology. Recommended to me by an avid geode fan. An archived article from their website certainly confirms this. The text follows.

“The Deming Luna Mimbres Museum proudly displays a world-class exhibit of Thunderegg, Geodes, and Nodules donated by Robert (Paul) Colburn of the Basin Range Volcanics Geolapidary Museum. Rockhounds from all over enjoy this collection. Mr. Colburn has dedicated his life to the study of these geologic formations and is responsible for scientific redefinition of previously held ‘truths’.

Thunderegg is a Native American name for what Geologists call lithophysae or spherulites. Geode simply means an earth shaped hollow rock, or more specifically, a hollow Nodule with a crystal lined cavity.

Nodules when opened may be simple or complex. While there is usually a “family resemblance” in Nodules and Geodes from a specific area, the best way to reveal the inner mystery is by opening the rock. You may become a Rockhound “wannabe” after seeing this incredible collection. You may have the sudden urge to become a detective unearthing (pun intended) the secrets of rock formation over centuries.

The specimens on display are the best from over 100 locations and were selected from tens of thousands of cuts made over 46 years of collecting. Each flawless specimen was chosen to typify the area where it was mined.

This collection provides a rare opportunity to view one-of-a-kind gifts of nature created over thousands of years. If your family or group includes a rock collector (rockhound), a future geology professor, or anyone who is marvels at the wonders that have been created in the millions of years of earth’s formation, this is a sure hit for your visit.

Source of Information and photography: The Formation of Thunder Eggs (Lithophysae) by Paul Colburn.”

<https://www.lunacountyhistoricalsociety.com/highlights.html>

Deming Gem and Mineral Society
4200 Raymond Reed Blvd.
Deming, NM 88030
575-546-2554

32°15.256' N 107°42.925' W

Well worth joining if visiting this great collecting area.

<http://www.thedgmsclub.com>

Rockhound State Park

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

9880 Stirrup Road SE
Deming, NM 88030
575-546-6182

32°12.458' N 107°37.531' W

“This is the only place in New Mexico and one of only two places in the U.S. where you can take something from a state park,” says Manager Robert Apodaca to the Albuquerque Journal. “The most prevalent thing that’s readily available for surface collecting is jasper.” Visitors to the park also find geodes and thunder eggs, perlite and quartz, Apodaca says.

Ask on arrival whether anything beyond surface collecting is permitted. The park has steep, cactus-studded hills. Watch where kids play. A great place to camp for a few days of hiking and rockhounding. Bring boots and a hemostat or needle nose pliers to pull out thorns. The visitor center has a good rock collection showing what might be found for those putting in the time.

Stop at the rock shop described below for possible park collecting advice. Please buy something from the owner if he helps you with directions.

Here are park maps:

<http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/spd/documents/RHPARKMAPS.pdf>

<http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/spd/rockhoundstatepark.html>

A highly authoritative page on the geology of Rockhound State Park from New Mexico Tech, along with an explanation of all things geodes and thunder eggs:

<https://geoinfo.nmt.edu/tour/state/rockhound/home.html>



**ROCKHOUND STATE PARK,
DEMING, NEW MEXICO**

The Basin Range Volcanics Geolapidary Museum

6235 Stirrup Road SE
Deming, NM 88030
575-546-4021

32°11.678' N 107°38.768' W

Just before the entrance to Rockhound State Park is this gem of a rock shop. Christopher is the proprietor here and an expert all things thundereggs and geodes. Although he doesn't sell geodes from Rockhound State Park, he did contribute samples for the Visitor Center's rock display. And he may have hints as to where to look in the Park. Take in a park map to make any directions easier to follow.

<http://www.zianet.com/geodekid/index.html>



**THE BASIN RANGE VOLCANICS GEOLAPIDARY MUSEUM,
DEMING, NEW MEXICO**

Trina's Rock Shop

1812 Columbus Rd.
Deming, NM 88030
575-546-0348

32°15.048' N 107°45.112' W

Recommended by Christopher of the Basin Range Volcanics Geolapidary Museum.

<https://www.trinasrockshop.com/shop/>

Black Hat Trading

2785 US-180
Deming, NM 88030
575-494-4693

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

32°17.705' N 107°46.008'

Recommended by Christopher of the Basin Range Volcanics Geolapidary Museum.

<https://www.facebook.com/BlackHatTrading/>

Hidden Valley Ranch RV Resort

12100 Hidden Valley Rd NW

Deming, NM 88030

575-546-3071

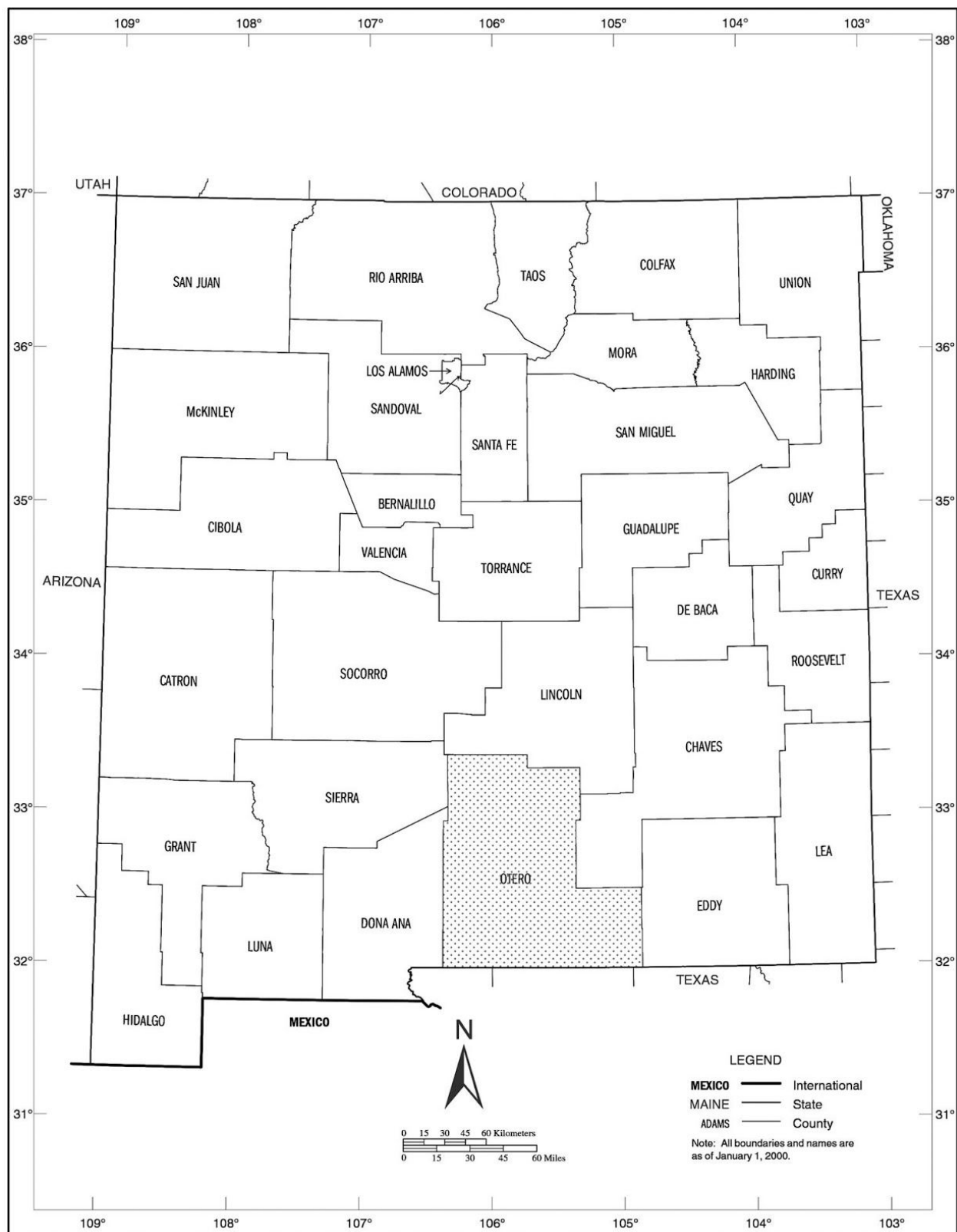
32°25.850' N 107°45.658'W

Seemingly recommended by every rockhound in New Mexico and beyond. Bring your RV, tent, or rent a cabin. 25 miles from Rockhound State Park. Lots of rocks in the area of this working cattle ranch.

Rockhounding a recommended activity by the Ranch, in fact, there is an annual rock show hosted here each March.

<http://www.hiddenvalleyrvranch.com>

Otero County, NM (Alamogordo)



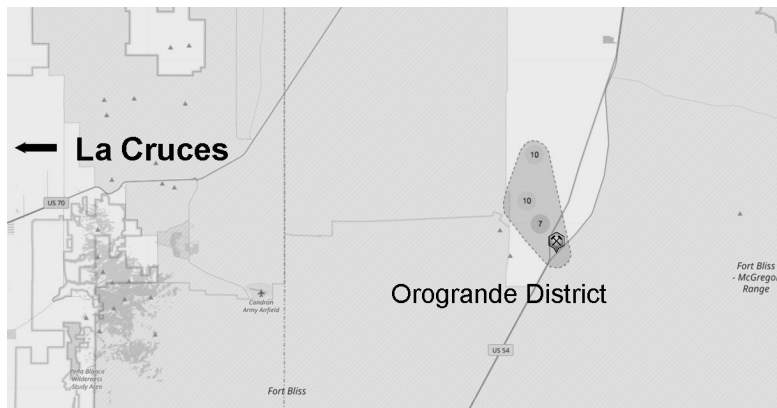
Orogrande District

32°27.616' N 106°06.483' W

Located close to Las Cruces, over 300 mines existed in the District at one time and it is said that gold can still be found. Tiffany & Company owned a turquoise mine in the area which has been completely reclaimed. Commercial operators now pursue copper and garnet. Many mining claims exist but some ground is open.

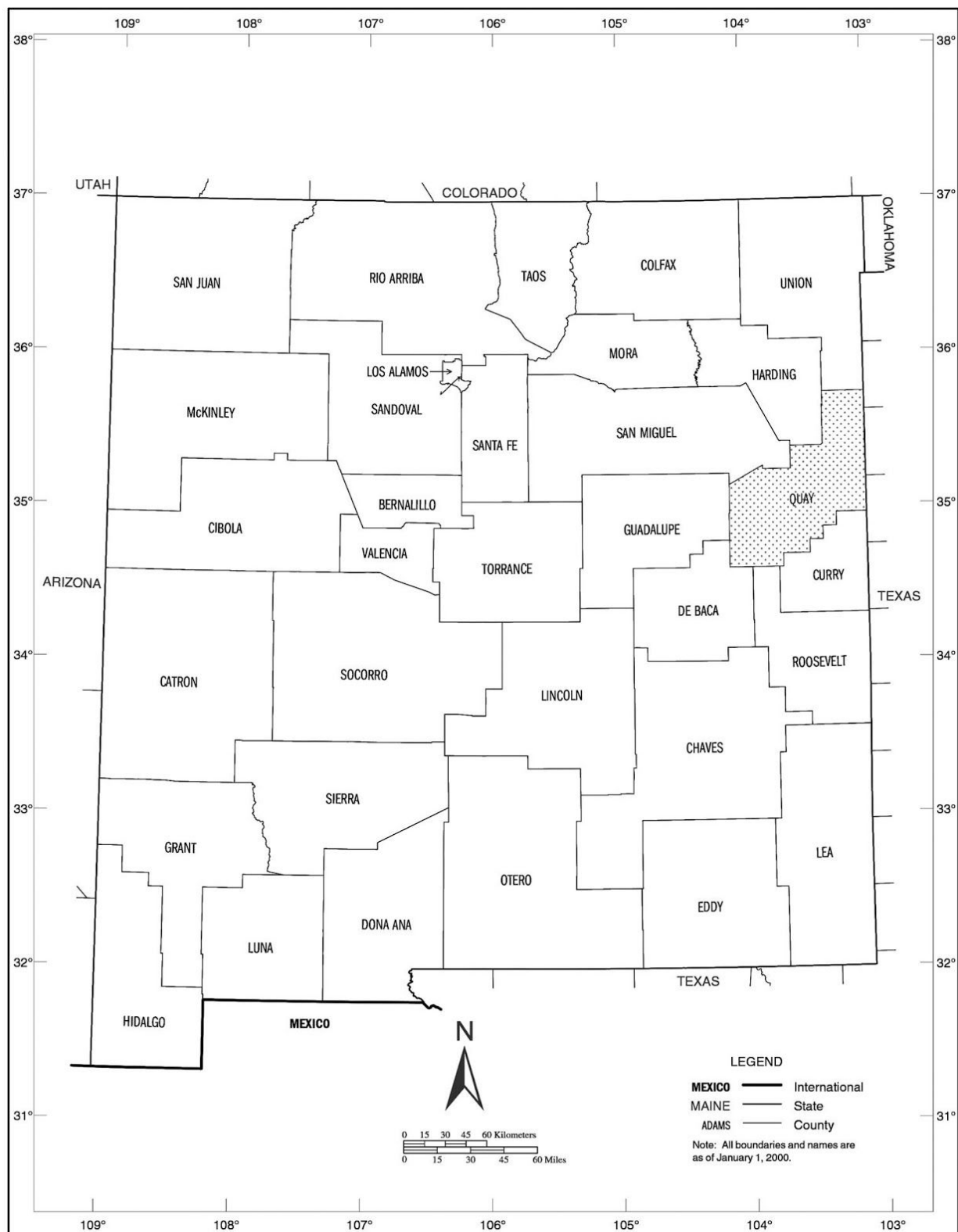


POSTCARD FROM THE OROGRANDE MINING DISTRICT, OTERO COUNTY, NEW MEXICO



Credit: District map from [Mindat.org](https://www.mindat.org). I sponsor three pages at Mindat.

Quay County, NM (Tucumcari)



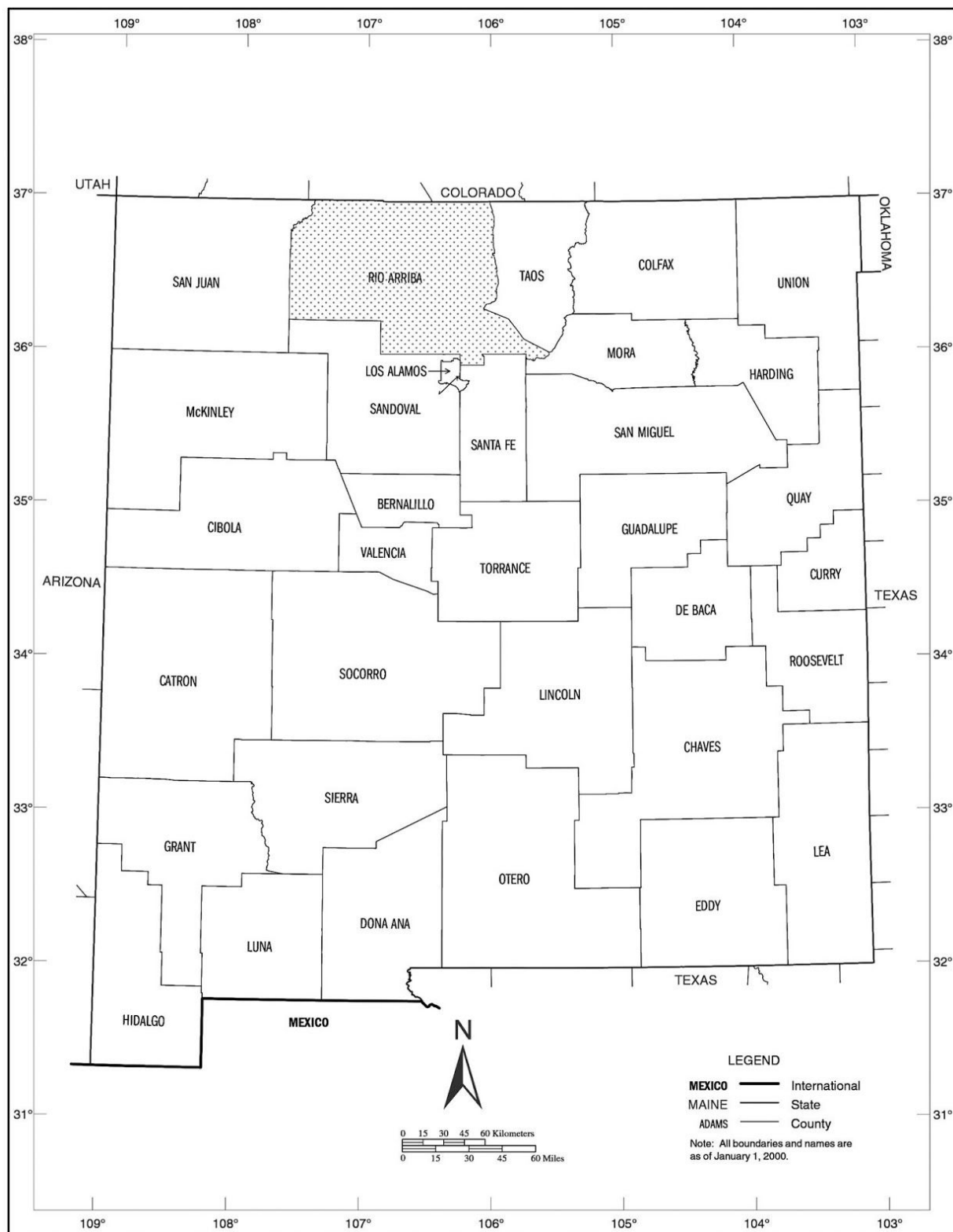
Dinosaur Museum and Natural Science Laboratory

Mesalands Community College
222 East Laughlin Street, Building F
Tucumcari, NM 88401
575-461-3466

35°10.423' N 103°43.431' W

www.mesalands.edu/community/dinosaur-museum/

Rio Arriba, NM (Santa Fe)



Chimayo Rocks

416-A North, Riverview Lane
Española, NM 87532
505-614-4615

35°59.713' N 106°04.088' W

A relatively new shop offering rockhounds guidance to collecting spots. This is a logical stop while traveling north from Santa Fe or Albuquerque to visit the Harding Pegmatite Mine.

<https://www.facebook.com/Chimayo-Rocks-1993258240942785/>

Laura Randolph Gallery / Mama's Minerals Santa Fe

100 E San Francisco St.
La Fonda Hotel on the Plaza
Santa Fe, NM 87501
505-988-1651

35°41.203' N 105°56.268' W

Mineral and fossil gallery. Rocks, beads and more. The sister store to their Albuquerque location. May be changing.

https://www.mamasminerals.com/Mamas-Minerals-Santa-Fe_ep_176.html

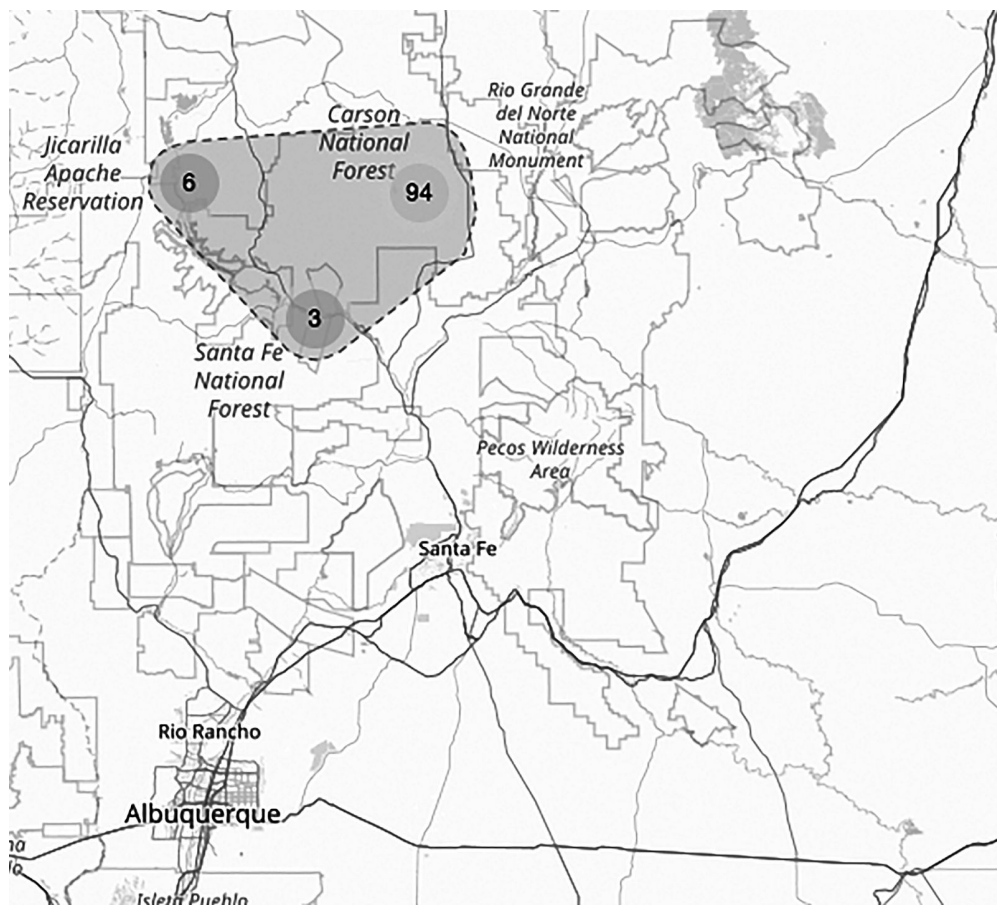
New Mexico's Petaca Mining District

Here's a short history break from the owner of Mineral Exploration Location Services, LLC. He's an authority on the Petaca Mining District in Rio Arriba County, New Mexico.

"Tantalum was as important as uranium during the cold war since tantalum was a critical component used to strengthen the turbine blades of jet engines so they wouldn't fly apart from the extreme stresses caused by centrifugal force.

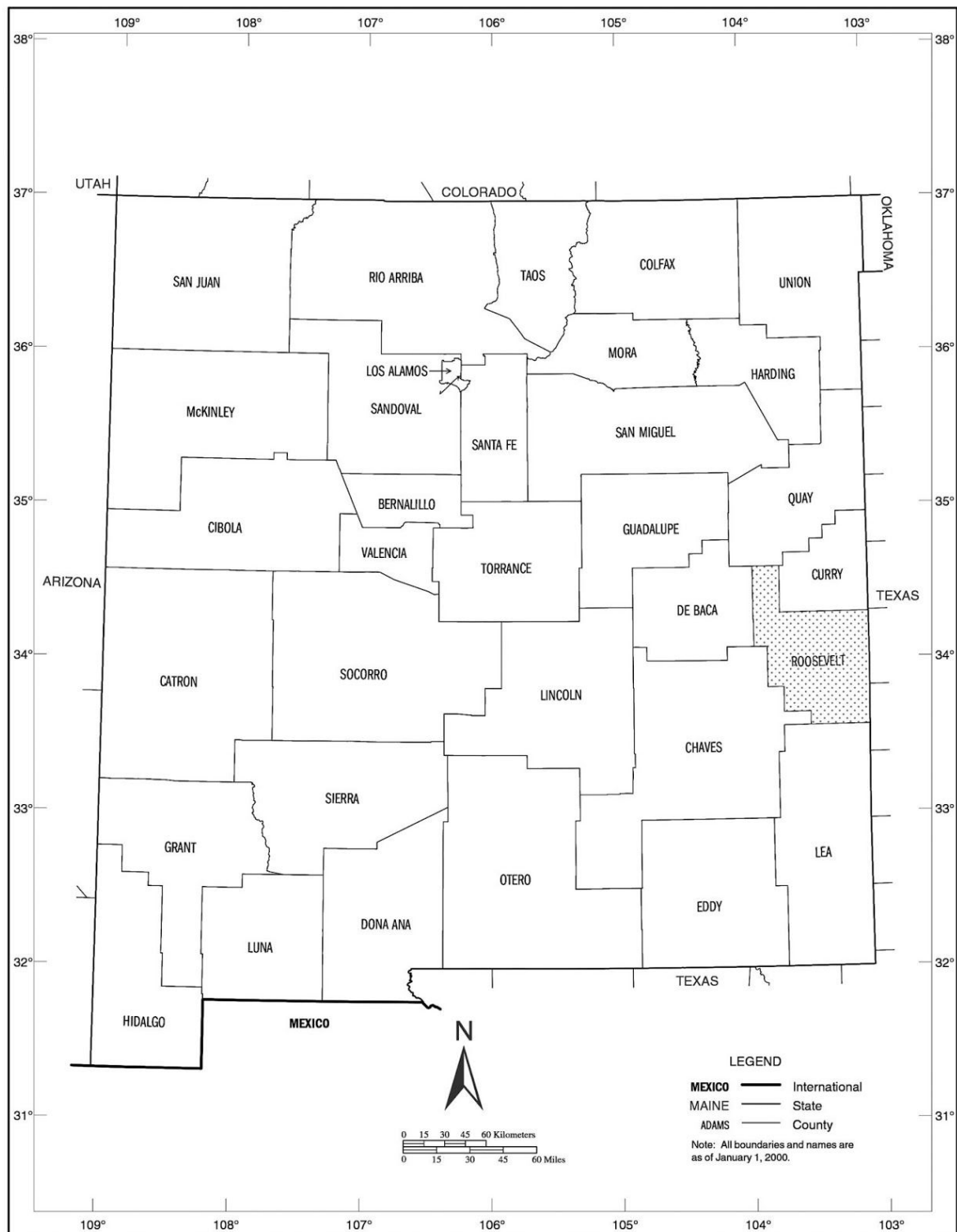
"The search and production of uranium got all the glory, even though uranium is a much more common element in the earth's crust and easier to mine and process, while the search for tantalum was a very secretive and closely guarded in the United States. U.S. spies, in fact, had to steal the commercial refining process for tantalum from the Russians."

New Mexico's Petaca Mining District was slated to become one of the America's largest producers of tantalum ore after exploration by Asarco in the early 1950's. They discovered large economically feasible placer deposits, however the discovery of the tantalum rich pegmatites in the Black Hills of South Dakota eclipsed the Petaca discovery and put an end to mining before it could begin." Personal correspondence with Mels, May 14, 2019.



**PETACA DISTRICT, RIO ARRIBA COUNTY,
NEW MEXICO**

Roosevelt County, NM (Portales)



Miles Mineral Museum

Dr. Jim Constantopoulos, Director and Curator
Director and Curator
Eastern New Mexico University
1500 S Avenue K
Portales, NM 88130
575-562-2651

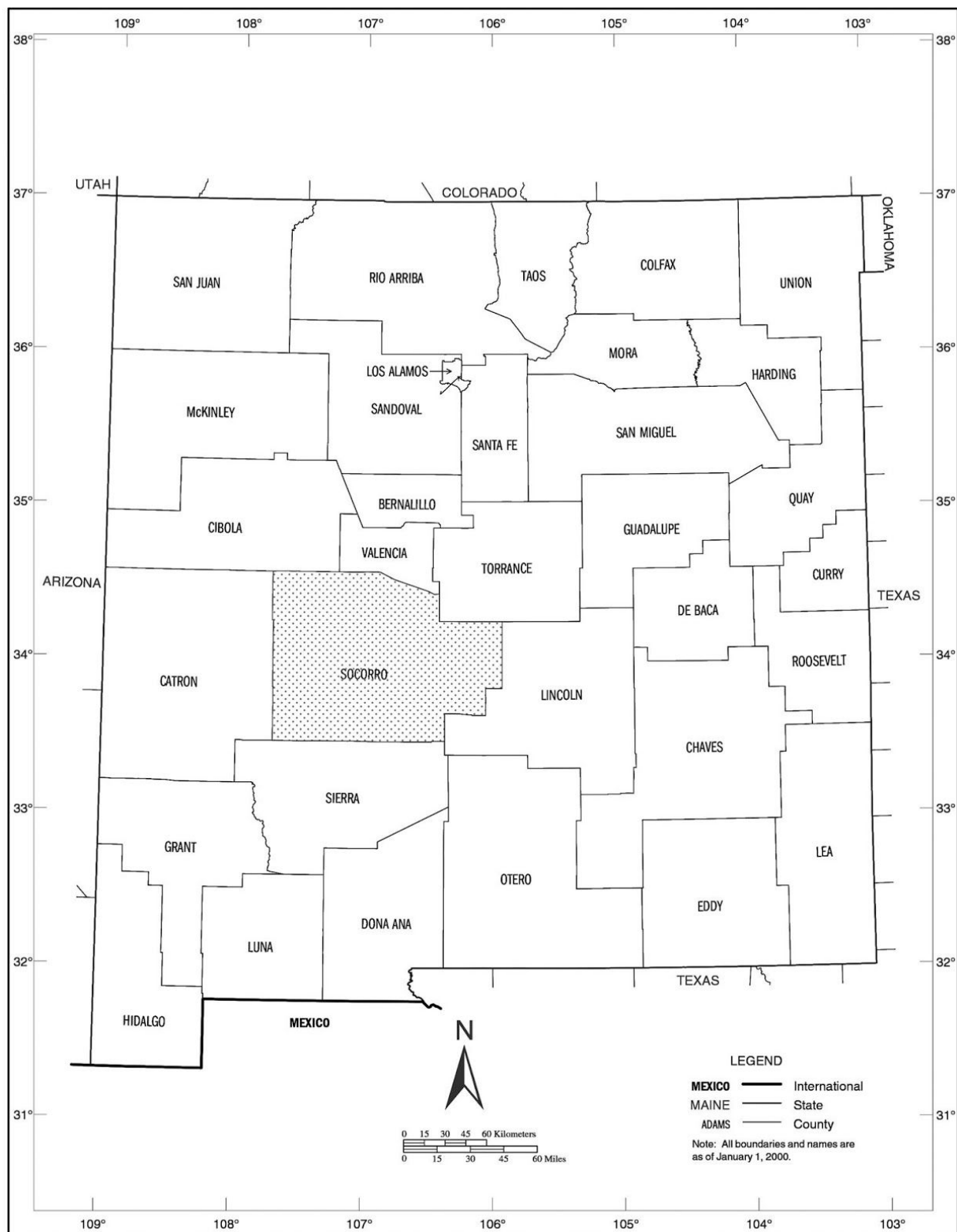
34°10.501' N 103°20.815' W

Museum located in Roosevelt Hall, Room 103. Free admission Fred Miles and his wife publicized and collected local quartz crystals called Pecos Valley Diamonds. The Miles Collection is a product of 40 years of collecting.

Miles Mineral Museum
Eastern New Mexico University
Roosevelt Hall, Room 103
1500 S. Avenue K

<https://www.enmu.edu/about/general-information/local-events-and-info/arts-and-culture/miles-mineral-museum>

Socorro County, NM (Socorro)



Otero's Gem & Mineral Rock Shop

105 1st Street
Magdalena, NM 87825
575-740-4996
575-854-2324

34°07.150' 107°14.163' W

Rough, cabs, jewelry. Many findings made by a native woman silversmith. High quality smithsonite. Bring a lot of money in cash in small bills.

Kelly Mine Fee/Dig, coordinated by:

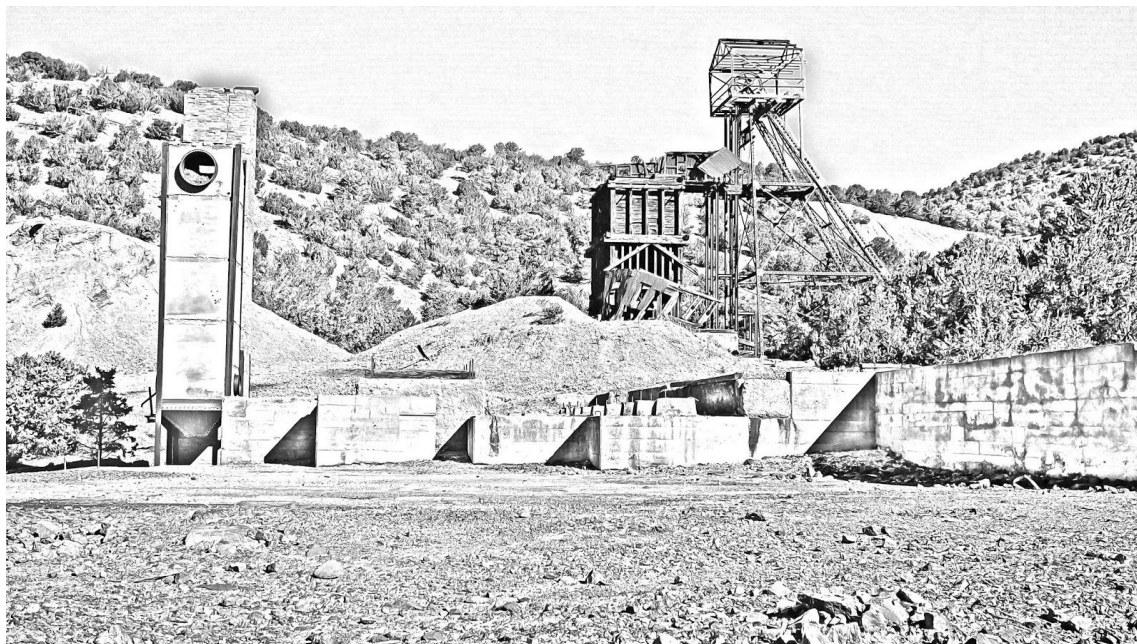
Tony's Rock Shop

911 Kelly Road
Magdalena, NM 87825
575-854-2401

\$10 fee charged when this was written. Once well noted for smithsonite, a zinc mineral. Tailings and property grounds have been heavily scoured over the years. But any ground that you haven't worked hasn't really been scoured, has it? Bring UV lamps as zinc is an activator for fluorescence. Some success reported off the dumps.

Picturesque mine grounds which are well worth a visit. Short drive from Tony's up the hill to the mine. Note the street signs, keep left. The road deteriorates quickly after the Catholic Church, consider parking when available and walking in. Bennie presently owns Tony's as of this writing. Ask other shop owners about his location if he can't be found at his store. Which basically looks like a house.

Mark Leatherman writes about his visit in "Socorro's Mineral Cornucopia" which appeared in the March, 2019 issue of Rock&Gem. Have you subscribed yet?



Mineral Museum

New Mexico Bureau of Geology & Mineral Resources
New Mexico Tech
801 Leroy Place
Socorro, NM 87801
575-835-5140

34°04.106' N 106°54.253' W

My gallery of photos of the Mineral Museum are here at Patreon:

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/30411170>

This is the state mineral museum for New Mexico. It focuses on rocks, gems, and minerals. It is a counterpart to New Mexico's mining museum in Grants. Excellent displays, a small ultraviolet room and a wonderful gift shop focusing on New Mexico gems and minerals. That shop is in the main room. Only a few feet away from the entrance to the museum is another shop that sells books. Make sure to look for it. You will wind up buying many things between these two stores.

“The main exhibit hall, constructed in 2015, highlights top-quality minerals from New Mexico, the United States, and around the world. Over 5,000 mineral specimens are displayed in the main gallery. Spectacular mineral specimens from mining districts like Magdalena, Organ, and Santa Rita (to name a few), are presented in thematic displays illustrating the mineral wealth of each locality. Other thematic displays include Systematic Mineralogy, Uranium Mining of New Mexico, Lapidary, Gold & Silver, Agates & Geodes, Meteorites, and Petrified Wood. The New Acquisitions case highlights recent additions to the collection from generous donors.”

<http://geoinfo.nmt.edu/museum/>

Blanchard Rock Shop/Desert Rose Mine

2972 Hwy 380

Bingham, NM 87832

575-423-3235

33°53.334' N 106°22.452' W

There's a joke that Bingham isn't the end of the world but that it can be seen from there. The Blanchard Rock Shop *is* Bingham; there are no other stores or services. Bingham is an abandoned town site and not a town. Fuel up in Socorro or at tiny San Antonio, New Mexico before visiting Blanchard's. Take a look at the Rio Grande River if you stop at San Antonio.

Blanchard is on Highway 380, seventeen miles east of the turnoff to the White Sands Missile Range. This makes it convenient to visit Blanchard's on the same day the Trinity Site is open, an event that happens only twice a year. Speaking of which, Blanchard's sells authentic trinitite. Genuine trinitite is expensive but don't miss a chance to pick up a piece of history. Bring small bills. Lots of them.

Go anytime to Bingham to enjoy beautiful scenery and to visit the shop. The Desert Rose Mine is nearby. Fluorite is big here, with galena, barite, quartz, and calcite also present. A day-use pass is \$20 a person and directions are given at the store. That \$20 does not include rocks. Allison will look through any findings to determine a price for individual pieces. She also sells rocks from the mine.

Allison is a modern-day, pioneering woman. With her grit, spunk, determination, and personality, she has succeeded in successfully running a business in a remote location where others would surely fail. Call before going. And ask her if she needs anything from town. Seriously, they are that far out.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Website

www.blanchardrockshop.com

Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/theblanchardrockshop/>

Great YouTube video

<https://youtu.be/pfPf-Af7-Jo>

My Blanchard photo gallery at Patreon:

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/30398908>



Blanchard Rock Shop, Bingham, New Mexico

White Sands National Monument, Trinity Site

White Sands Missile Range

South of Socorro on NM 380, New Mexico

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Open twice a year, once in Spring, once in Fall. Next date is April 4, 2020

White Sands was the location of the first atomic bomb explosion and it is only open twice a year to visitors. Next day is in April. Fascinating place, complete details on the web. Have a full tank of gas as you will be idling in a long line of cars. Security will probably ask if you have enough gas to make it to the Trinity Site and return. If possible, top off your tank at the little town of San Antonio, New Mexico on NM-380 before heading the final miles to White Sands. By-the-way, it's a short walk to a bridge over the Rio Grande at San Antonio, fine views of the river.

Take proof of registration, insurance, and don't get going too early. Admittance continues until 2:00 PM and the longest line of cars will be when the gates first open. Wait a few hours, say, 11:00 AM. Do not take pictures while driving the ten or fifteen miles across the missile range to the Site, only photograph at Trinity. The guards will probably remind you.

Upon arrival at the parking area, you can walk about a quarter mile to the obelisk or you can take a shuttle bus that runs to the Schmidt/McDonald Ranch House. "The ranch house is where the scientists assembled the plutonium core of the bomb. Visitors will also be able to experience what life was like for a ranch family in the early 1940s." I did not take that bus last October, the logistics seemed complicated because I was trying to get to Blanchard's after Trinity.

The blast produced trinitite, a green material the result of tremendous heat melting the desert sand. Little pieces get exposed after every rain but you are not allowed to keep it. There are people watching, and if you stop too many times to tie your shoes, you may get a tap on the shoulder. You may, however, hunt for it and then turn it in. Good activity for the kids. There will be a table with many pieces on display and a knowledgeable person who can explain the stuff and its history. Go to Blanchard's down the road after your visit. Allison sells authentic, documented trinitite.

My Trinity photo gallery at Patreon:

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/30392061>

There are many things marked "White Sands" in this part of New Mexico. You are looking for the Stallion Gate entrance road which is off of I-380. From I-380 it is five miles to the Gate.

<https://www.wsmr.army.mil/Trinity/Pages/Home.aspx>

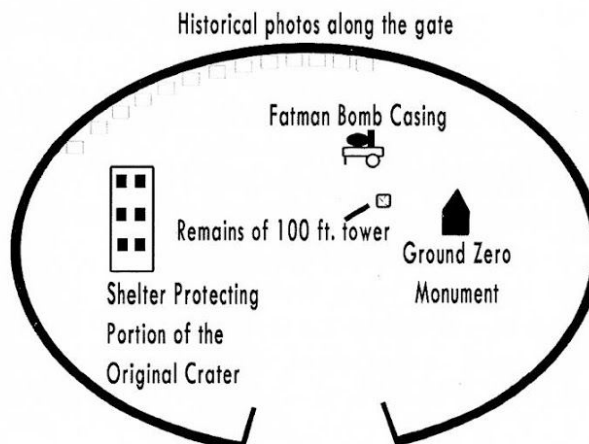
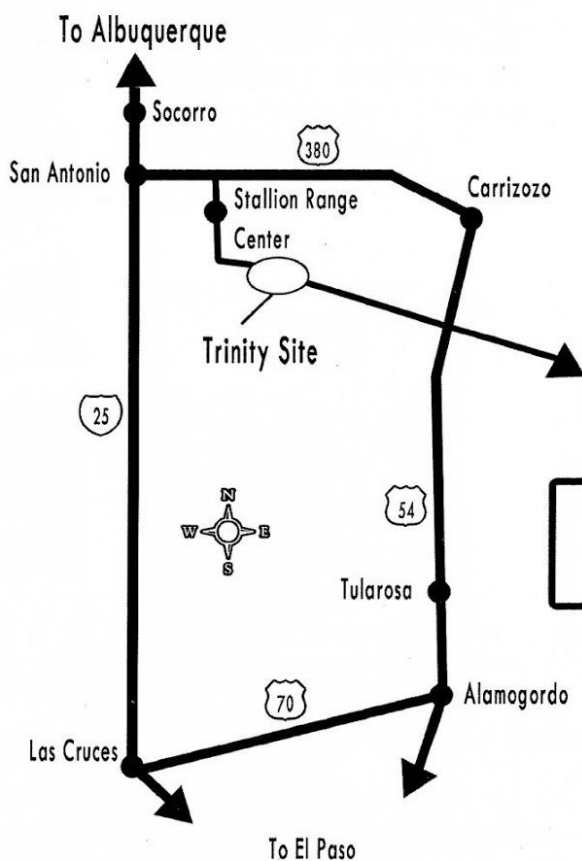
<https://www.nps.gov/whsa/learn/historyculture/trinity-site.htm>



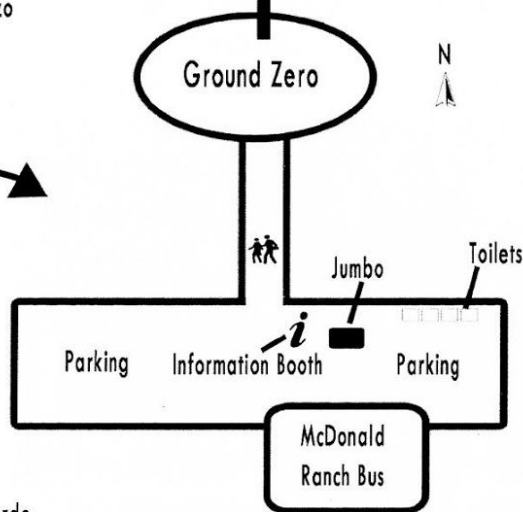
**Trinity Site, White Sands National Monument
White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico**

MILEAGE CHART

San Antonio to Stallion exit	12
Carrizozo to Stallion exit	53
Highway 380 to Stallion	5
Stallion to Trinity Site	17
San Antonio to Socorro	10
San Antonio to Albuquerque	81
San Antonio to Las Cruces	130
San Antonio to El Paso	175
Carrizozo to Tularosa	46
Carrizozo to Alamogordo	56
Carrizozo to El Paso	146
Trinity Site to Alamogordo (via caravan)	85



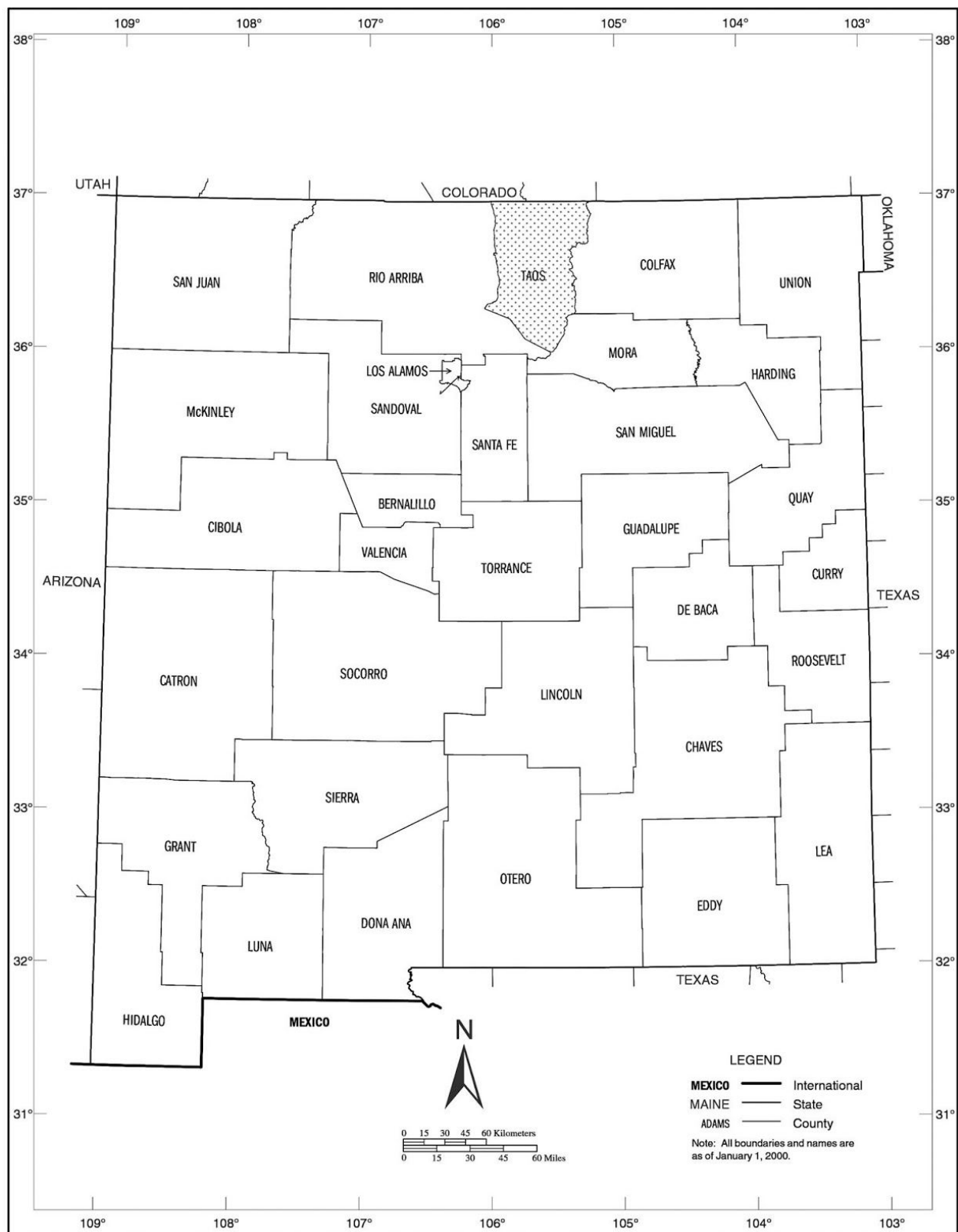
1/4 mile walk
to Ground Zero
from Parking
Lot



Removal of Trinitite is Prohibited

**WHITE SANDS NATIONAL MONUMENT, TRINITY SITE,
WHITE SANDS MISSILE RANGE, NEW MEXICO**

42



Harding Pegmatite Mine

Between Taos and Santa Fe along NM 75. Bring all your maps.

The Harding Pegmatite Mine is a former rare minerals quarry located in Taos County. Now maintained by the University of New Mexico, the Pegmatite Mine is open to rockhounds for no fee. Five pounds of material may be taken provided guidelines are followed. Large groups must pay a fee and they need to call ahead.

Visitors must fill out a release form available at the mine's website. Follow the University's instructions exactly as it will be necessary to fetch the caretaker before entering the mine. The road to the first mine gate is short and passable by passenger vehicles. Parking is extremely limited at this first gate. No trailers or RVs. If the gate is open, a larger parking lot is farther along the road.

Pegmatites are unusual and interesting igneous rocks, originating from volcanic activity. At the Harding Mine, white sparkling rock is all around, some with pink tints, often with gray or darker inclusions. The pegmatite is the white rock, the various colors and inclusions the minerals. These can be quite unusual, needing an expert to identify them. Bityite, eucryptite, and fluorapatite are some. More common is the pink tinged lepidolite.

A lepidolite tinged rock showing nice pink coloring is a challenging but satisfying object to search for on a warm day in the beautiful hill country of Taos. If possible, bring a short wave and longwave lamp, along with a barbecue lid cover. Hunting fluorescent rocks enlarges searching beyond what appears in daylight.

Print the "Walking Tour for the Harding Pegmatite Mine" file before visiting. It references the numbered markers that are spotted about the quarry.

If possible, a tour of the old quarry should start at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque in Northrop Hall, home to UNM's Department of Earth & Planetary Sciences. A museum in Room 124 displays specimens from the mine. A dimly lit case on the first floor also exhibits specimens, including a large chunk of beryl. In that case, notice how one rock seems to intergrade with others. The rose muscovite, the lepidolite, and the spodumene all seem variations on a theme. What's not obvious is the sparkling nature of some of the rocks, which comes into play in bright light.

The mine's entrance off Highway 75 is on a strong uphill grade and is difficult to find. There is no sign indicating the mine road, save for a small wood plaque on a juniper asking people to pack out their trash. On a fair day, you will be caught up in looking at the surrounding countryside. This is the land D.H. Lawrence fell in love with and you will, too.

36°11.890' N 105°47.346' W

This link is for the mine tour.pdf and the release form:

<http://epswww.unm.edu/harding-mine/>

Note: That link is now not directing to the mine. The University is probably shut down as of today, March 28, 2020 for the virus.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

The Taos hill country is populated with artist studios, wineries, and scattered Indian Pueblos. Cottonwoods in the fall blaze yellow along streams and other watercourses. It is a delight in fair weather. Iceland spar may still exist in the area, check Mindat.org for possible locations and MyLandMatters.org for land status.



LaTierra Mineral Gallery
124K Bent Street
Taos, NM 87571
575-758-0101

36°24.530' N 105°34.446' W

<http://latierragallery.com>

Western Rock Ramblings

-- Southern California --

By Thomas Farley

© 2020

thomasfarley@fastmail.com

All illustrations were derived from photographs taken by the author or from those in the public domain.

Introduction

This Southern California chapter is another part of what was to be a hardcopy publication, however, formatting the text and illustrations proved too difficult and time consuming. I wanted the book to be spiral bound to lay flat but costs proved prohibitive. I apologize for the poor formatting in advance, my inability to produce something attractive is of constant agony to me.

Photos are in black and white to minimize the size of these chapter files. Since monochrome photographs present terribly on ordinary printer paper, I stylized the photos. I hope they give the feel of this dry country if not technical accuracy. The resulting sketch type illustrations are at 300 dpi, so they will print well on copy paper.

The sites listed were either visited by me or recommended to me by trusted sources. I know I have missed many points of interests as well as rock shops and clubs. E-mail me if you would like to be included in the next revision of this text. Several other state chapters are at or near completion and will be released soon.

Most sites are probably closed as of press time because of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

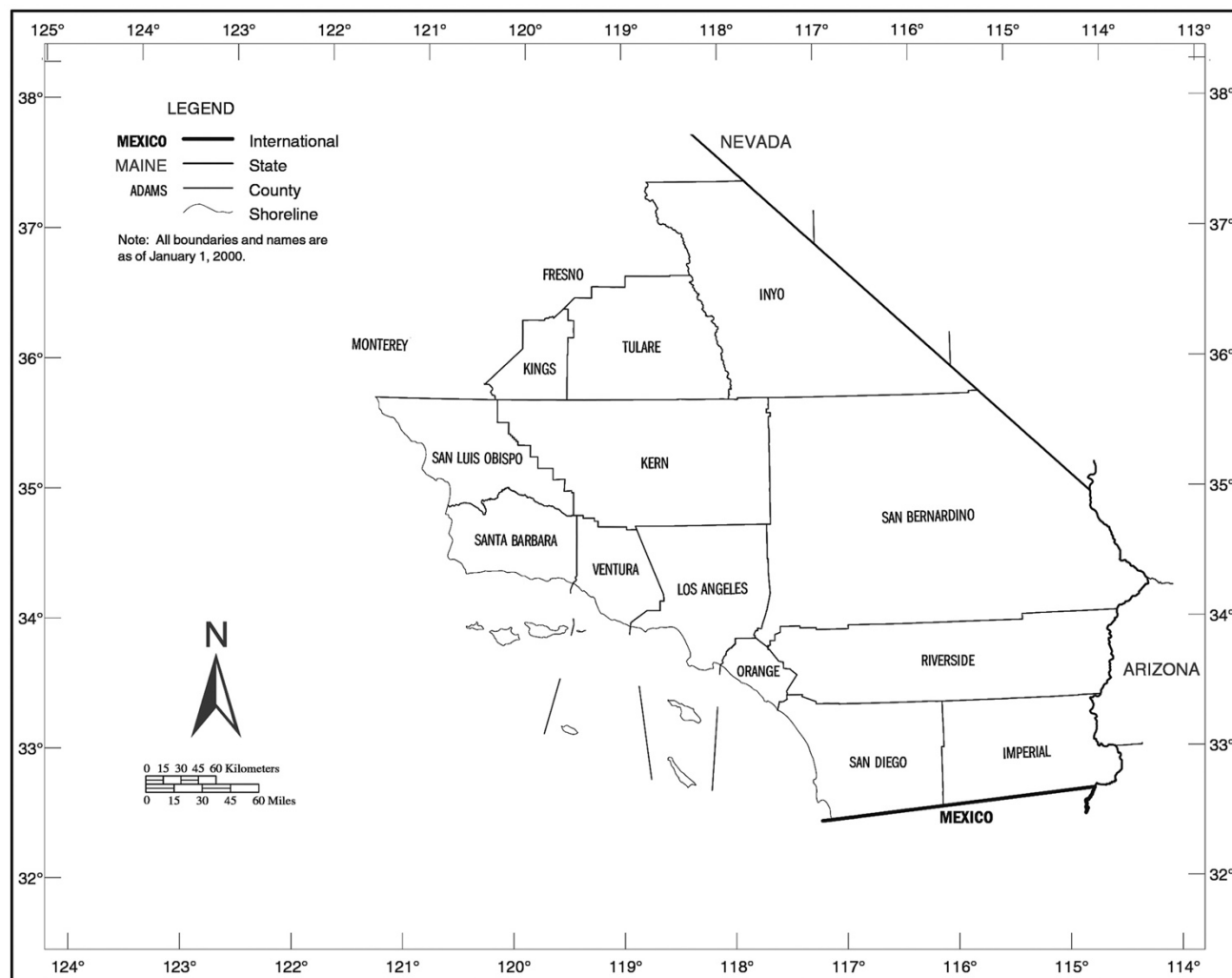
Feel free to distribute this file anywhere you wish. I wish you good health.

Best,

Thomas Farley

Las Vegas, Nevada

Southern California



Notable

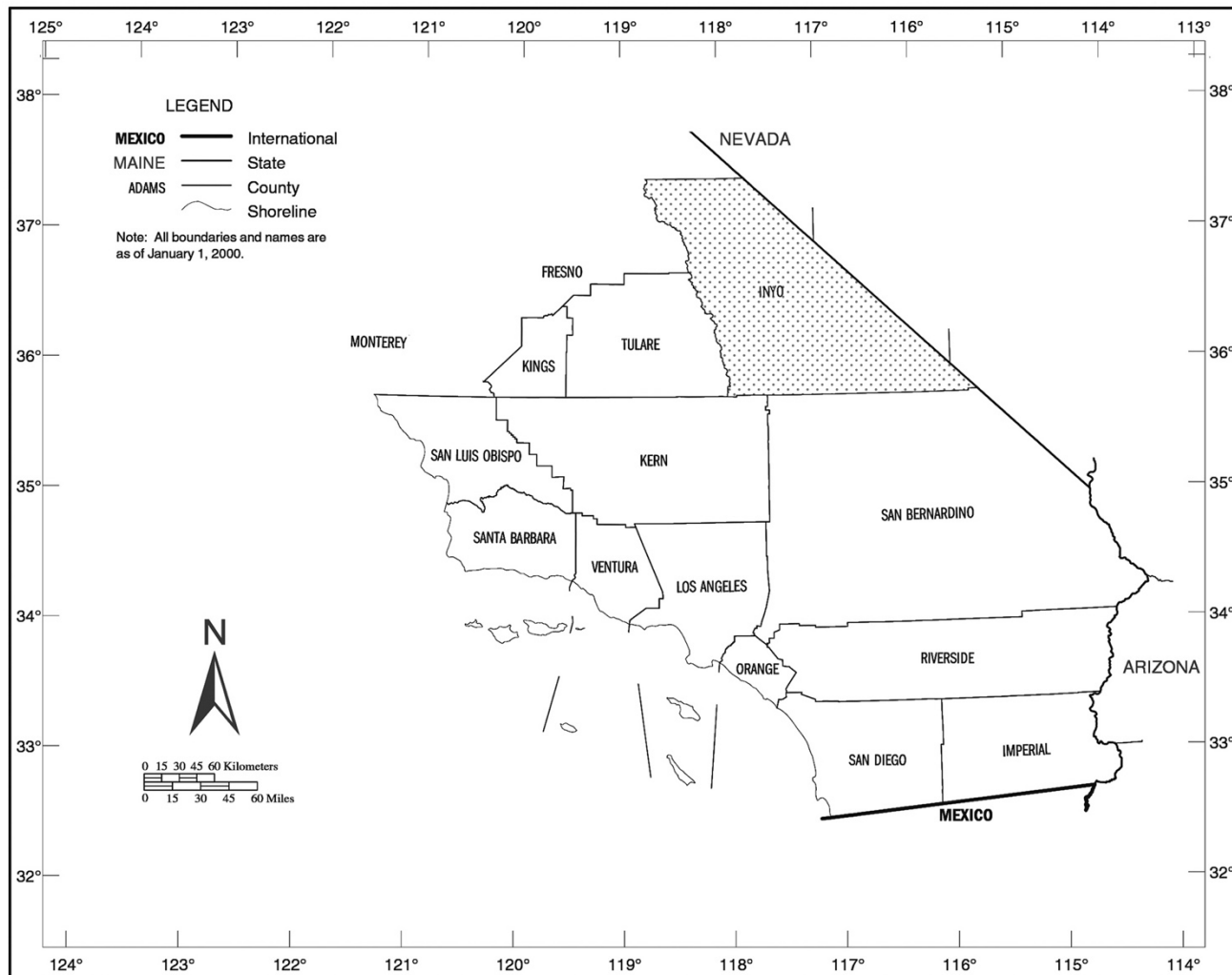
Otie Braden's *Gem Trails of Southern California* is a good gem trail guide, along with *Rockhound Barstow* by Justin Zzyzx. (Both his first and second editions.) As with all collecting spots, even those mentioned below, proceed with care. Leave gates as found, respect claim markers, keep off tribal land, and diligently work to avoid private property.

Resources

Klien, James. *Where to Find Gold in The Desert* (Baldwin Park, California: Gem Guides Book Company, 1994) This happily titled book focuses primarily on California, with a brief look at other Southwestern States. Fairly vague locale descriptions and this is a pre-GPS book. Pointing to general areas is all an

author can do. Exact occurrences are either hidden or claimed, instead, a prospector must range widely, putting time in over a large area. I can point you to an area, but you have to put in the hours.

Inyo County, CA (Independence)



Nopah Range Wilderness Area and South Nopah Range Wilderness Area

Trilobite collecting site and general exploration area

Tecopa Road /Old Spanish Trail

35°53.070' N 116°03.881' W —Roadcuts for trilobite

Roadcuts here on the Old Spanish Trail Highway yield partial trilobite specimens. The coordinates above fix on the parking area for the site, essentially a wide road pullout. The Highway is also known as the Tecopa Road and the area itself is southwest of Pahrump, Nevada.

Digging locations in the shale are obvious as the area has been worked for decades. Brick hammer recommended as always for splitting shale. Handsome country, the area returns beauty and tranquility if not a complete bug. Blue colored lichen on some rocks.

This highway marks the dividing line between these two similarly named Wilderness Areas. As these areas allow casual collecting, day hiking and wandering from the highway may reward rockhounding. The Nopah Range is lifted seabed, mostly limestone, shale, a little slate, much quartzite. These ranges might appear volcanic as their peaks look black and craggy, but they are not. Weathered limestone. A drop or two of acid (HCl) is usually enough to distinguish sedimentary from igneous. I keep a small field bottle of acid in my backpack. BLM's Barstow Field Office manages these WAs.

WAs are well studied before moved to this protected status. As such, a little research will reveal a lot. Here's a geologist's summary of the Nopah Range.

"The Nopah Range, underlain predominantly by carbonate rocks of Cambrian through Pennsylvanian (see geologic time chart in appendix) age, 570 to 290 million years before the present (Ma), is characterized by deep canyons, ridges, and rugged topography; precipices of 1,000 ft or more are common. By contrast, the southern part of the Resting Spring Range, which is underlain predominantly by Late Proterozoic fine-grained terrigenous sedimentary rocks, is more subdued topographically. Minor amounts of volcanic rocks are present in both ranges. The flanks of the ranges are marked by coalescing alluvial fans that merge with lacustrine deposits in the surrounding valleys. Elevations in the area range from 1,800 ft at the south end of Chicago Valley to 6,394 ft on Nopah Peak."

While that may be challenging reading, trying to understand those terms will make you a better rockhound. And a warm friend to children and small animals as well. More importantly, it can lead you to a publication like U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1709-C, available free online. It's entitled "Mineral Resources of the Nopah Range Wilderness Study Area, Inyo County, California." Note the map that file has, with various mineral prospects detailed. I've wandered north on foot from the Old Spanish Trail Highway at Immigrant Pass to find that silver prospect but I still haven't located it yet. This kind of information can be found simply by doing your research.

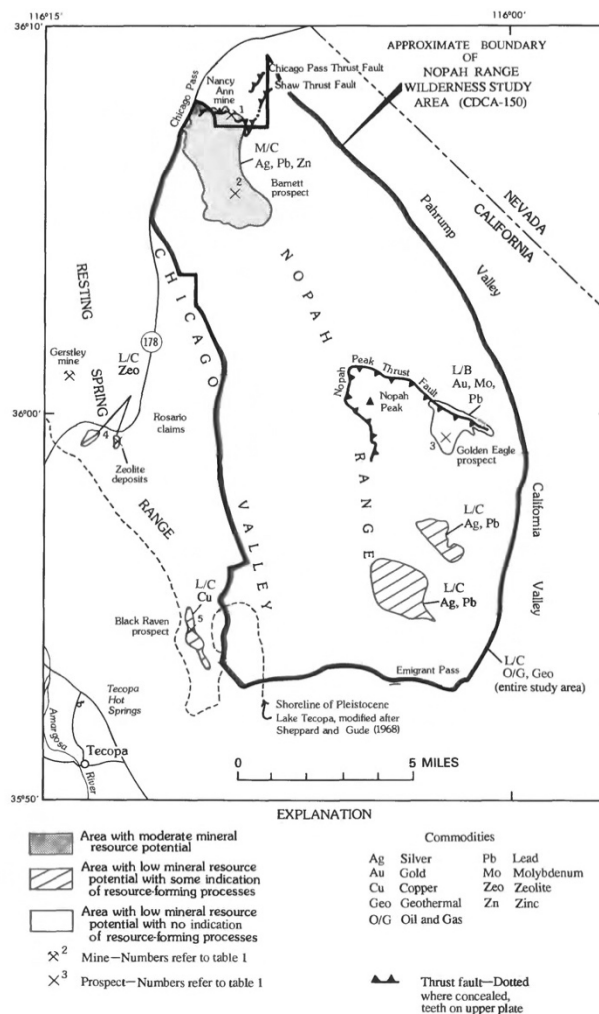


Figure 2. Mineral resource potential of the Nopah Range Wilderness Study Area, Inyo County, California.

**USGS SURVEY BULLETIN INDICATING AREAS TO INVESTIGATE
NORTH NOPAH RANGE WA, INYO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

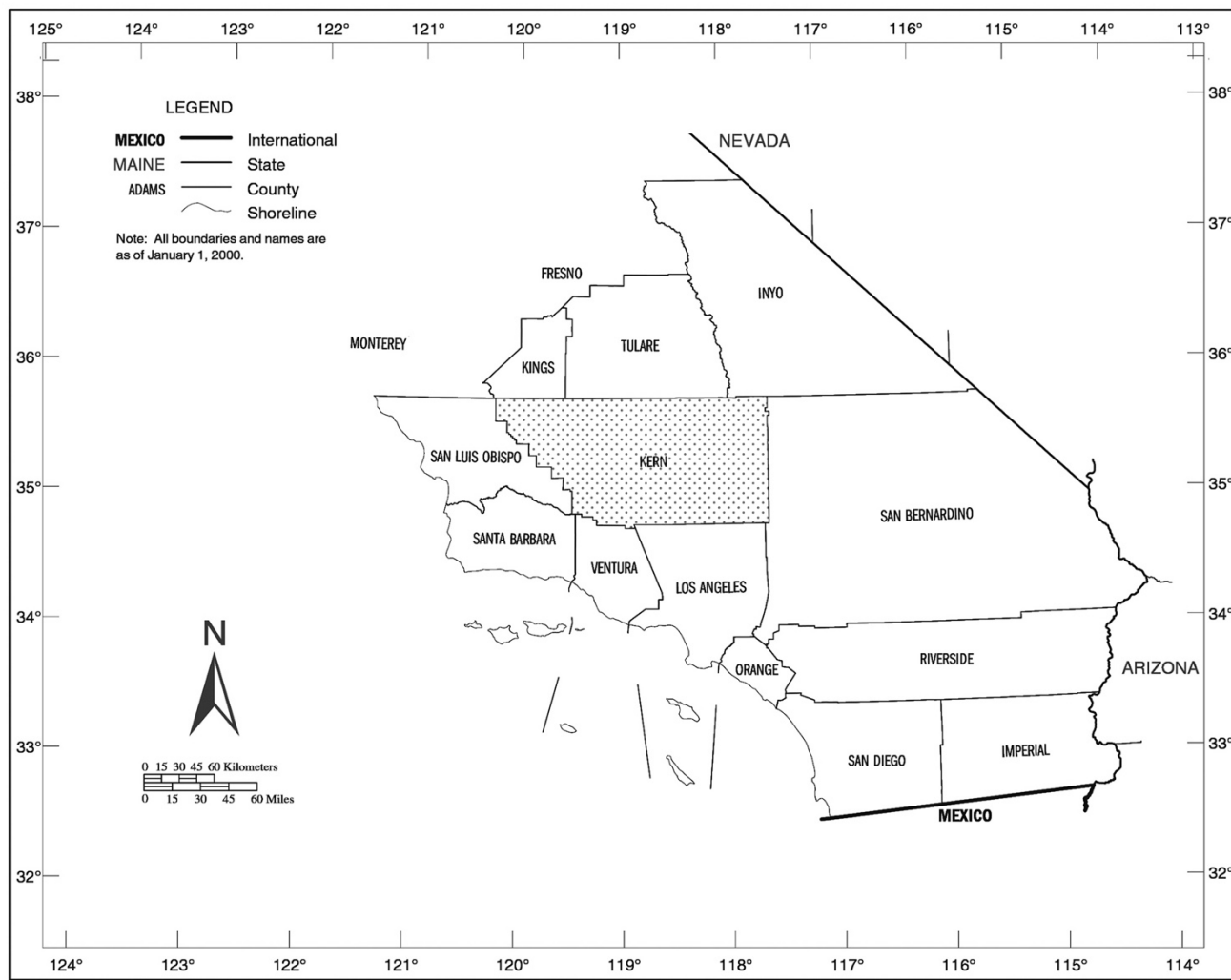
Darwin, California

Noted fluorescent mineral collecting area. I write about it at my website:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2020/03/15/darwin-california-inyo-county/>

All my current trips and new finds are at my website.

Kern County, CA (Bakersfield)



The Ernst Quarries / Shark Tooth Hill – Fee dig

Round Mountain Road
Bakersfield, CA 93308
661-319-7800

Directions at their website, no street address for the gathering point

35°26.779' N 118°53.924' W

The coordinates above are for the staging area but do not rely upon them. They were not provided by the operator of the quarries. I took them at the meeting point. Follow the complete driving directions at their website.

“The Ernst Quarries, located near Sharktooth Hill, California, are home of the largest deposit of Miocene marine fossils in the world. The property sprawls over 260 acres and comprises three distinct quarries. Each quarry yields fossil specimens of various colors and varieties. Together, they offer a unique natural history experience not found anywhere else.” Quote from their website.

This 150-million-year old collecting site is a fascinating visit. Shark teeth are the big draw and in small sizes are plentiful to collect off the ground with patient looking. Larger sizes require digging and screening. The dig site is in isolated hills, so bring everything needed for the day: food, water, sunscreen, gloves, and so on. Not open after big rains or in the summer. Late April or early May might be the driest months but there is no guaranteeing the weather.

Rob Ernst is the gracious guide and thoughtful owner of the quarries. He provides frequent updates on his website about hill conditions and if a dig will proceed on schedule. Visitor signups are through his website. Bring cash or a check to the staging area. Download the information package beforehand and fill out the release form before arrival. This is very important for visitors coming from long distances who may not have a printer at their hotel.

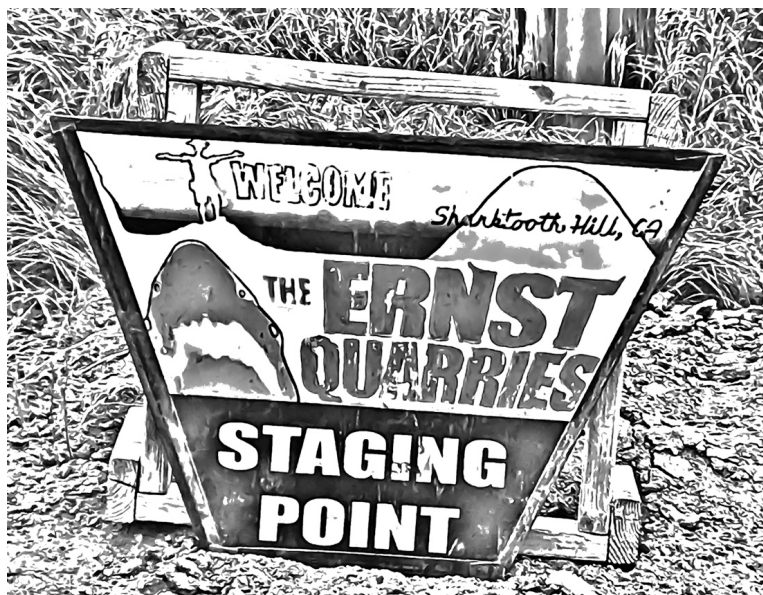
There are alabaster or gypsum rocks on the hill and selenite crystals, also in rock form. Ask Jeff if you can go poking around. Look, too, for marine vertebrae when you dig, not just shark teeth. On my visit I picked two off the ground without digging. Rob said they could belong to anything from a junior whale to a sea lion, the identity now lost to time. Interestingly, he said that close examination of anything like this material eventually reveals tooth marks. It was not an easy life in the ancient seas.

In case of a rainout, a rockhound can see quarry specimens by visiting the Buena Vista Museum of Natural History and Science in Bakersfield. Visiting before a dig is an excellent way to get oriented. The museum is at 2018 Chester Ave. Bakersfield, CA 93301.

<http://sharktoothhillproperty.com/index.htm>



JEFF ERNST OF THE ERNST QUARRIES OUTSIDE OF BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA



ERNST QUARRIES TEMPORARY SIGNAGE ON ROUND
MOUNTAIN ROAD OUTSIDE OF BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA

Desert Discoveries Rock Shop

12131 Boron Ave
Boron, CA 93516
760-762-6861

35°00.076' N 117°39.003' W

A must-stop rock shop, especially before or after visiting the nearby Rio Tinto Borax Mine. Located off State Route 58 between Barstow and Bakersfield, this shop in Boron always has a good selection of desert minerals and local advice. The 20 Mule Museum is nearby in case the rock shop is closed. Call ahead as the proprietor is often off rockhounding. You can't expect small businesses like this to stay open every when only two or three people might stop in.

<http://www.desertdiscoveries.com>

Website may now be dead.

The Twenty Mule Museum

26962 Twenty Mule Team Road
Boron, CA 93516
760-762-5810

Another must stop. Gift shop sells rocks. Animatronic twenty mule team. I am not kidding. Wonderful, friendly people. Mining equipment on display. A small jet on static display next doors. Just go.

<http://20muleteammuseum.com>

The Rio Tinto Borax Mine

14486 Borax Rd (Headquarters' Office, not open to the public)
Boron, CA 93516

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Visitor Center
760-762-7588

35°01.805' N 117°41.245' W

Borax and related mineral mining goes on near Boron at the largest open pit mine in California. Great views from the free Visitor Center. The parking lot has room for RVs, trailers, and buses. No plant or mine tours but good photography possible from the overlooks. Bring a tripod for panorama shots.

The visitor center has wonderful displays of desert minerals commonly extracted from the mine. These include colemanite, ulexite, kernite, and borax. Free postcards with samples of these minerals attached are available. These materials may be available in bigger sizes from piles at the far end of the visitor center parking lot. Selection varies throughout the year. No food available at the center but water and bathrooms are provided.

A Center highlight is a life-size fiberglass twenty-mule team in harness. A perfect background for pictures with mules that will never bite or kick.

Leave State Route 58 at exit 196 west of Boron. From the freeway, head north on Borax Road for three miles. The visitor center is high on a hill. Drive past the unattended guard shack at the facility's main entrance and continue on an unpaved road up the hill.

<https://www.borax.com/borax-operations/borax-visitor-center>

Rand Desert Museum
161 Butte Ave
Randsburg, CA 93554
760-371-0965

35°22.080' N 117°39.323' W

<http://www.randdesertmuseum.com>

Editor, Historian, Lay Curator: J. Bart Parker hafdog@aol.com

Only 22 miles from Ridgecrest, this living ghost town makes an interesting stop when their stores and attractions are open. Do not arrive too early in the morning. The town wakes up late. The Rand Desert Museum is manned by volunteers and only open on weekend unless other arrangements are made. Mining history is a main focus.

“A visit to Randsburg, California is a visit to the past, when the mining camps of the Mojave were boomtowns and gold was being dug out of the hills. The community has survived the many perils the desert mining camps faced, and some of its residents still work the land for its hidden riches. It is a living ghost town, a working mining town that likes having some — but not too much — company. There are no stoplights, gas stations or malls here; just an unpretentious, quiet little town that enjoys its place in desert history.” Len Wilcox, DesertUSA

Open weekends. Call ahead.

<https://www.desertusa.com/desert-california/randsburg-past.html>

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Minerals Unlimited

127 N Downs Street
Ridgecrest, CA 93555
760-375-5279

35°37.425' N 117°41.271' W

Next to a Salvation Army thrift shop sits one of the finest rock and mineral stores in the Southwest. It's operated for seventy years and has a great selection of minerals inside and plenty of rough outside. Most of my rare earth mineral collection comes from this store.

Minerals Unlimited makes a great stop when visiting either the Kern River Canyon Area or when going toward Death Valley. It is a treat meeting Wendi, the woman owner and operator. Call her Ace. But telephone first to confirm hours. Tell her Thomas Farley sent you. With luck, she will not recoil in fear.

This store's website shows only a TINY fraction of its inventory. Photographing the store's entire contents and posting same would be completely impractical. If you need sanidine or thorium or cerussite or whatever, e-mail her your specific requests. Include preferred localities and the size of the specimen you want. You'll probably get a reply around the weekend when the shop is open.

<https://mineralsunlimited.com/>

My Patreon photo gallery page of Minerals Unlimited is here:

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/30494846>

My fuller description with photos and an interactive Google map is here:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/04/07/minerals-unlimited-in-ridgecrest-california/>

Bureau of Land Management

Ridgecrest Field Office
300 S Richmond Road
Ridgecrest, CA 93555
760-384-5400

35°37.103' N 117°38.858' W

<https://www.blm.gov/office/ridgecrest-field-office>

Manages a wide swath of land in Kern and Inyo County, including much in the Highway 178 corridor.

Highway 178 Kern County/Inyo County Kern River Canyon and Corridor



**QUARTZ VEINS IN HILL ALONG HWY 178
IN KERN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**



**CRUDE SCHROL CRYSTAL FOUND ALONG
HWY 178, KERN CANYON,
KERN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

At this location is a marvelous hill of decomposing granitic rock and exposed quartz veins. It is right at the intersection of Borel Road and Hwy178. This gives a great look at what quartz veins look like. Sampling would be easy here, just process a half bucket or so of sand and gravel at the base of the cliff. Any values should reside there, no need to climb a cliff. I recommend the cliff on Borel Road rather than the hill on the north side of HWY 178. Less traffic.

35°35.442' N 118°31.362' W

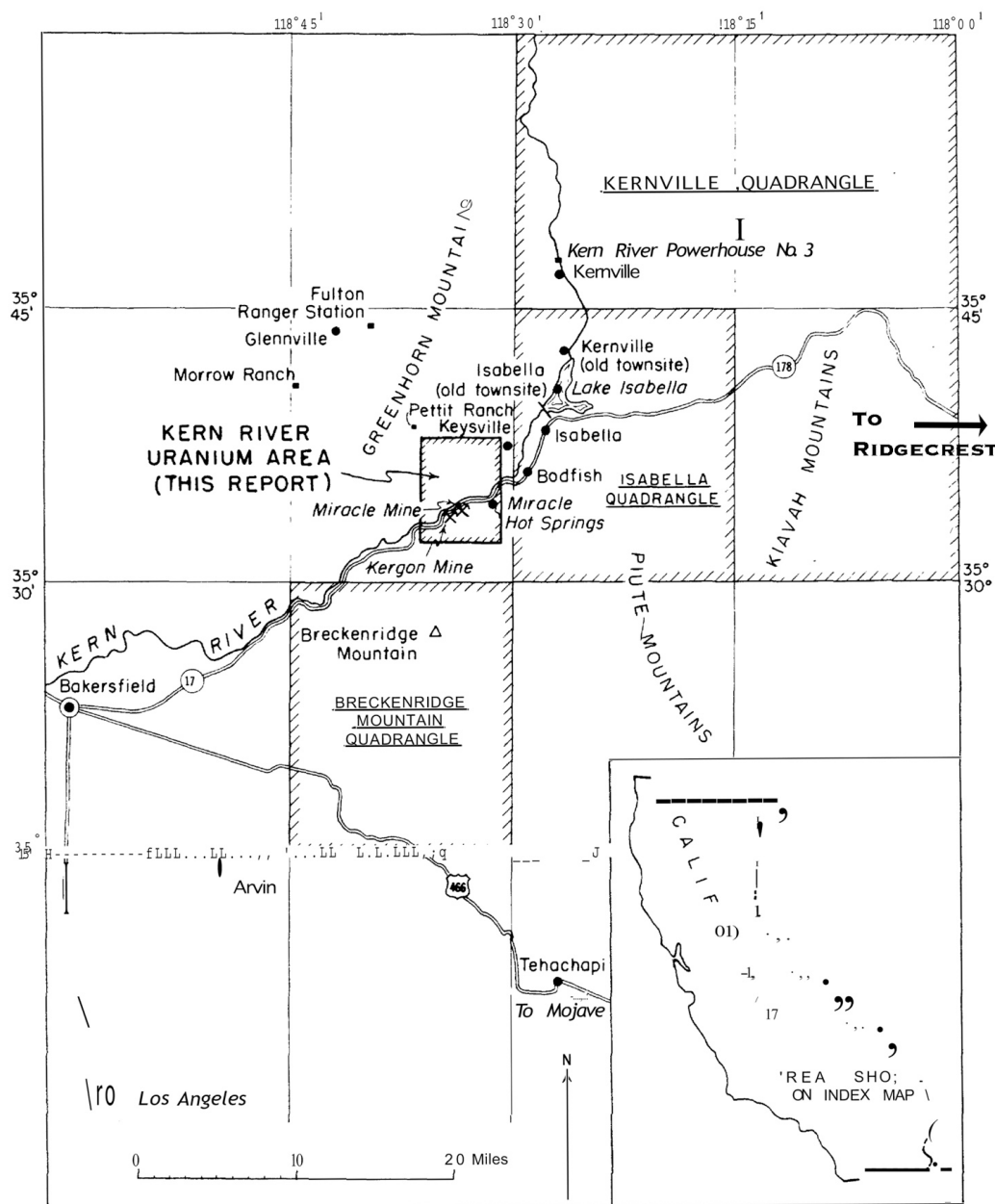
This highway corridor is a treat in spring and fall, although summer weather is good at its higher elevations. The highway runs through a mix of the Sequoia National Forest, BLM managed lands, and private holdings. Quite a bit through the Kern River Canyon. Good rockhounding opportunities on both USFS and BLM lands. Respect claims if noted. Little heavy truck traffic.

Roadcuts are amazing throughout the area and can remain unexplainable without a text. Find Gregg Wilkerson's indispensable 2017 .pdf file entitled *Field Guide: Geology and Mining History of the Kern Canyon, Lake Isabella and Walker Basin, Kern County, California*. Print out its 162 pages in color. I'll e-mail you a copy if you can't find it. Mentions gold occurrences here and there, even when minor. Many granitic rocks throughout the countryside but true granite here is uncommon. More likely you are looking at granodiorite, sometimes with inclusions called xenoliths.

On my last visit I pulled off the road and found a rock with black tourmaline, otherwise known as schrol. Not gem quality but it was tourmaline and it was now mine.

Kern River Uranium Area

“In the Kern River uranium area, an area of approximately 30 square miles in northeastern Kern County, California, small, uranium deposits are erratically distributed along fractures, most of them within the Isabella granodiorite. The deposits probably are too small and of too low grade to be worth mining on a large scale, but they contain local concentrations of ore.” Geology and ore deposits of the Kern River uranium area, Kern County, California, Trace Elements Investigations Report 698 (USGS, 1957 Edward Malcolm MacKevett Jr.



**INDEX MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE KERN RIVER
URANIUM AREA & NEARBY GEOLOGICALLY MAPPED QUADRANGLES**

Maturango Museum

100 East Las Flores Ave
Ridgecrest, CA 93555
760-375-6900

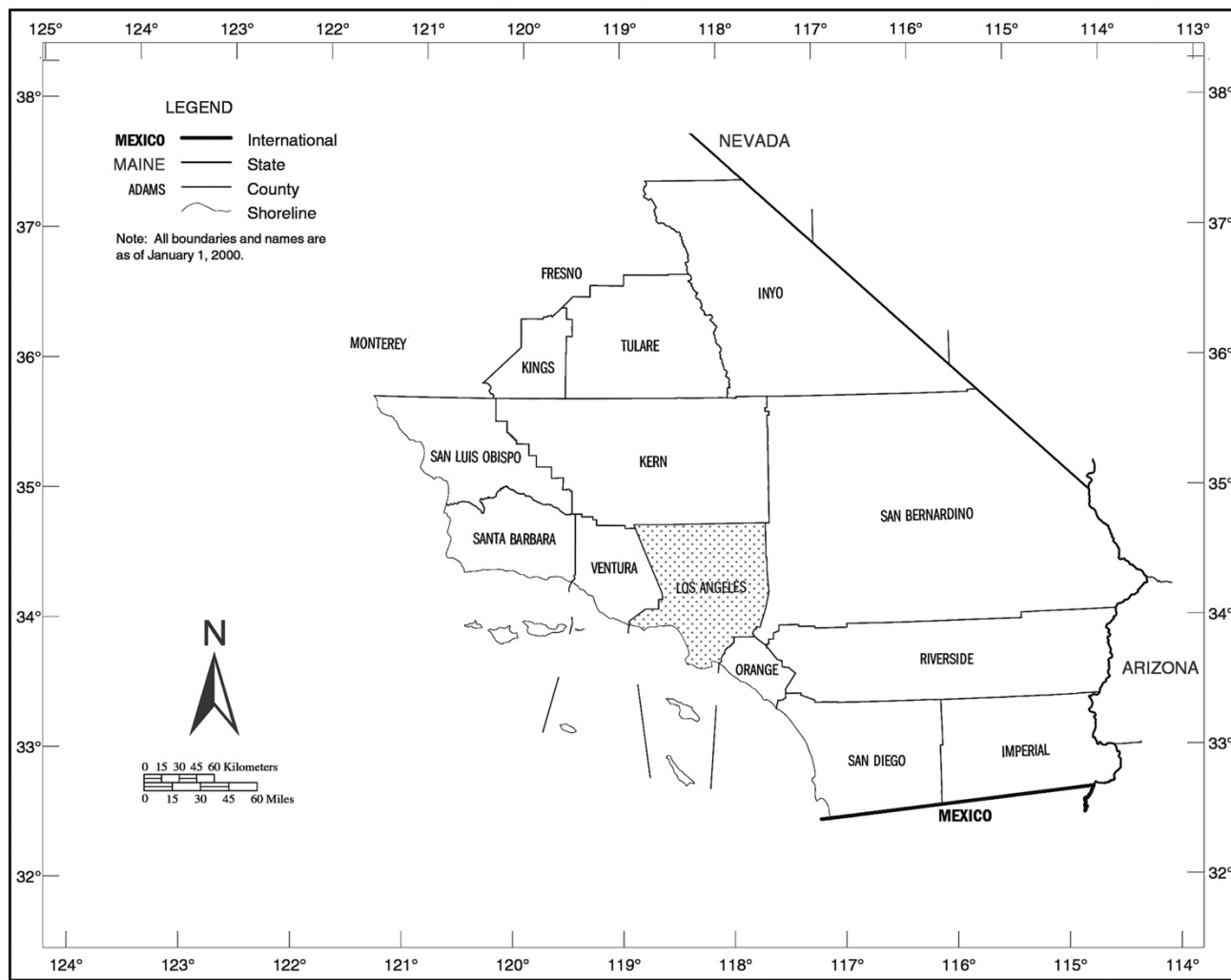
<https://maturango.org/petroglyph-tours/>

35°37.848' N 117°40.158' W

Guided tours go in spring and fall from Ridgecrest to visit Little Petroglyph Canyon. The Museum is the only group that can arrange access. At Little Petroglyph, rock art images by the thousands were etched into canyon walls and boulders by native people long ago. The canyon is on the property of the China Lake Naval Air Station. (NAS). Call or look online at the museum's site for current information on this bucket list tour.

I highly recommend the Hampton Inn in Ridgecrest. Breakfast is included in the room rates. which saves looking for a restaurant. This hotel is close to the NAS greater boundary and at dusk you might hear a lilting bugle tune. That's played by the NAS over loudspeakers as the flag is lowered for the night. Hearing "Retreat" in the gathering darkness is a haunting, stirring experience.

Los Angeles County, CA (Los Angeles)



The Delvers Gem & Mineral Society
14515 Blaine Avenue
Bellflower, CA 9076

33°54.041' N 118°07.601' W

Founded in 1948. Meets at the above address the second Friday of every month except for December. The club participates in field trips, sponsors a geology scholarship, and in general promotes education in the earth science and lapidary arts. Publishes a high-quality newsletter called *Delvings*, which is free for anyone to download. The society is currently working on opposing the Rim of the Valley Legislation which would forbid collecting rocks, minerals, or fossils on most of the hills surrounding the Los Angeles Basin.

<https://delversgemclub.wordpress.com/>

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Los Angeles County Museum – Gem and Mineral Hall

900 Exposition Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90007
213-763-3466

I've always wanted to go. From the museum's website:

“Over 2,000 minerals, rocks, meteorites, and gems from across the globe. Wander among thousands of stunning specimens showcasing the beauty and diversity of Earth's building blocks in one of the world's most valuable collections of gems and minerals. Investigate how geologists find and classify rocks and minerals and marvel at over 300 pounds of gold – including the ‘Mojave Nugget,’ the largest known nugget of California gold.”

Fee charged. Parking charge.

La Brea Tar Pits

5801 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90036
213-763-3499

I visited the Pits when I was a kid and I was fascinated by it. Nothing like a saber tooth cat covered in black goo. I've lately been reading about the condition of the facility and I am glad they are in a years-long effort to renovate the grounds. I wish them well.

This is from their website, “La Brea Tar Pits is the best and most complete record of life during the Ice Age, a living laboratory for scientists and the global community to engage in and learn from groundbreaking research, and discover plants and animals trapped in the tar pits over the last 50,000 years. Outside, you can watch excavators carve fossils out of asphalt. Inside the museum, our staff prepares these discoveries in the see-through Fossil Lab. The Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County oversees 13-acres of Hancock Park, La Brea Tar Pits and the museum (established in 1977 as the George C. Page Museum).”

Admission to the pits includes admission to the Los Angeles County Museum of which the pits are part. Free admission days exist, check the website and reserve in advance. Be aware of your surroundings on this length of Wilshire Boulevard.

<https://tarpits.org/>

The picture on the next page was originally taken by professional photographer Carol Highsmith. She has been generously donating copyright free images to the Library of Congress since the 1990's.



LA BREA TAR PITS, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Resources

Sharp, Edwin. *Minerals of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Self-published, 1959) Geology professor Sharp was most modest. This unassuming book does not reveal that he is an educator nor that he was affiliated with UCLA. Although I assume most collecting sites are now private, this is a worthwhile book to any rockhound living in or near LA. He hounded multiple sites on Santa Catalina Island, amazing access even for that time.

Map: Los Angeles Area Freeway System (Automobile Club of Southern California: Los Angeles, 2012) AAA's excellent overview of the LA Basin. Leaves fine details out, showing one The Big Picture when it comes to negotiating LA's freeways. AAA is out of the hardcopy map business but you can probably find this and the next map on eBay.

Map: Los Angeles Region (Automobile Club of Southern California: Los Angeles, 2012). This maps spans Lancaster to Barstow in the desert all the way to the Mexican border. Only a thin slice of San Diego County but it does include Pala if you are going to hunt tourmaline and other gemmy things at the Oceanview/Pala Chief Mine. You'll need more detailed maps to negotiate at street level.

Orange County, CA (Santa Ana)

Kristalle

875 N. Pacific Coast Highway
Laguna Beach, CA 92651
949-494-7695

33°32.830' N 117°47.791' W

“While in Southern California, stop by our Gallery in Laguna Beach, California and browse fine specimens in person, we have minerals to interest the beginner collector to the advanced as well as shells, fossils and other interesting items. We are often traveling to mineral shows around the world – please call ahead to confirm hours.”

Run by Dona and Wayne Leicht since 1971. I have not visited in person but Kristalle is frequently mentioned as being very well respected by the rock and gem community.

<https://kristalle.com>

Nevada Mineral & Book Company (NMBC)

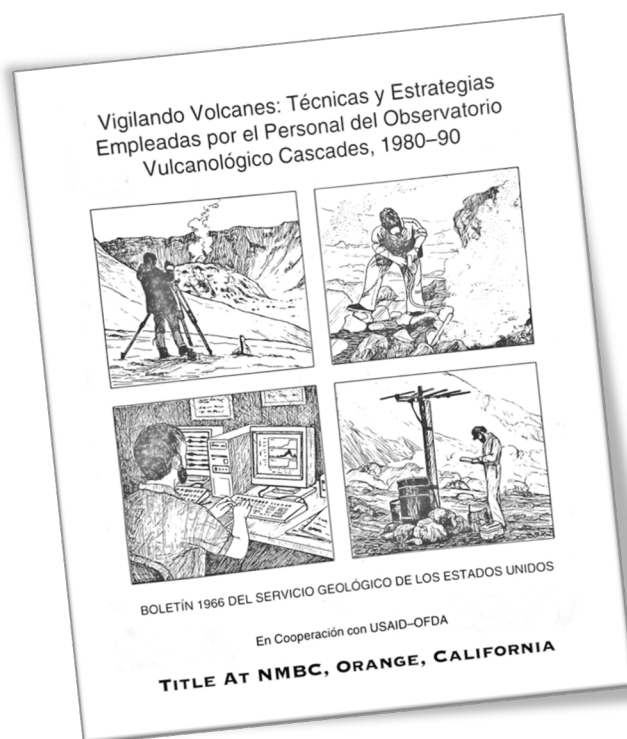
342 S. Tustin Street
Orange, CA 92866
714-633-1549

33°47.025' N 117°50.188' W

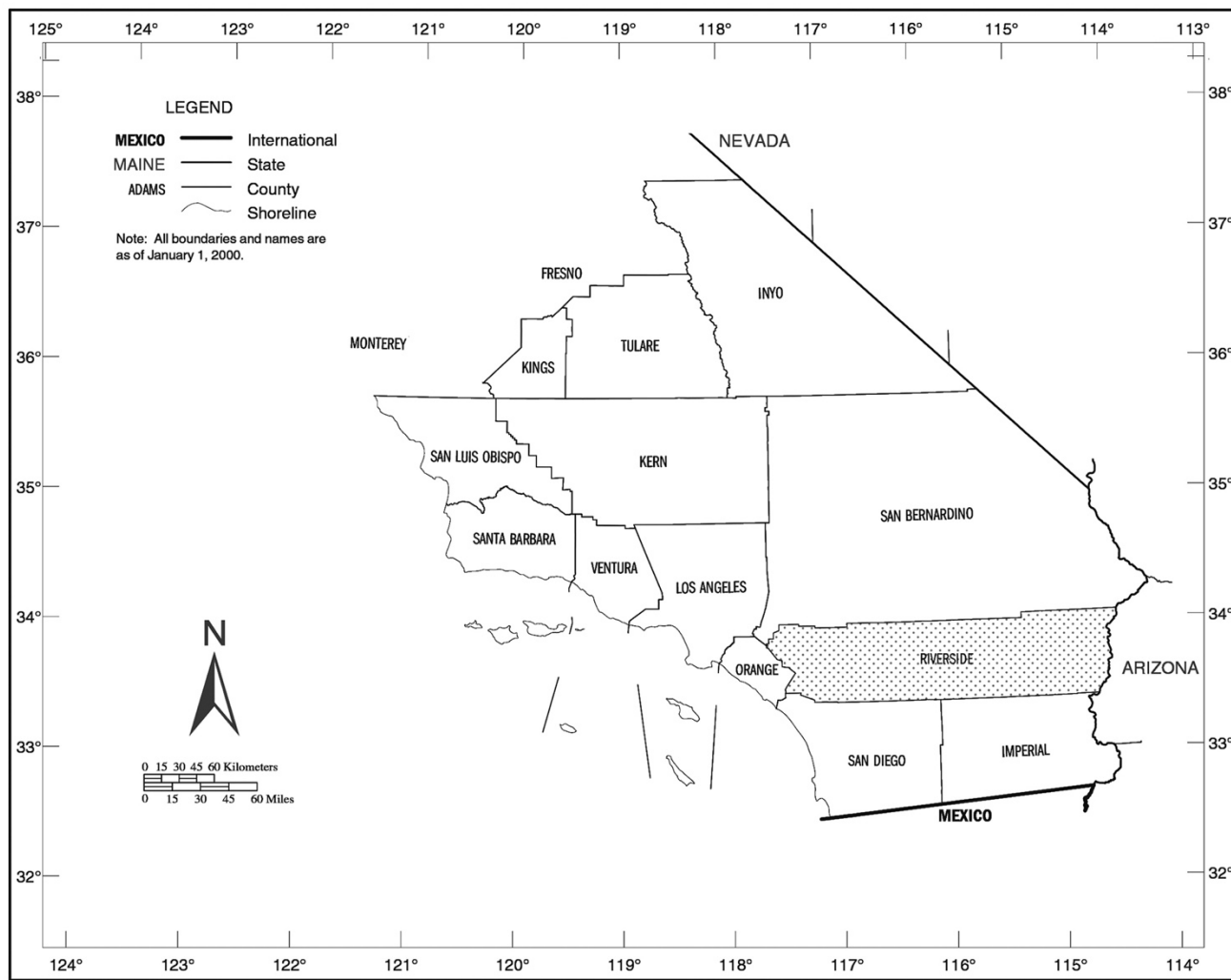
Selling minerals and fossils and much more since 1985. Minutes from Disneyland. Lots of books, maps, and magazines and periodicals. Many rare or specialized, such as the title pictured.

“Nevada Mineral and Book Company is located in the heart of Orange County, in the City of Orange, less than 20 minutes from John Wayne (Orange County) International Airport in nearby Santa Ana. We are two miles from the downtown Orange Circle Antique District and close to Disneyland and Knott’s Berry Farm. “Our store is conveniently located on Tustin Street, close to the 55, 22 and 5 freeways in Eldorado Plaza, just three blocks south of Chapman Avenue in Orange, California.”

<https://www.minbooks.net>



Riverside County, CA (Riverside)



Bureau of Land Management

Palm Springs South Coast Field Office
1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs, CA 92262
760-833-7100

33°50.414' N 116°30.318' W

<https://www.blm.gov/office/palm-springs-south-coast-field-office>

Desert Map and Aerial Photo

Highway 111 73-612
Palm Desert, CA 92260
760-346-1101

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

33°43.301' N 116°22.831' W

<https://desert-map-and-aerial-photo.myshopify.com>

I have ordered many maps from these people and regret I have not visited in person. Check before visiting to make sure their brick and mortar store is open. They also sell a variety of books. Order several maps at a time to save on shipping. Lori Gagnon is the listed contact person.

Their address can be confusing. Here's a Google Map link to their store's location:

<https://goo.gl/maps/74NLokqdNqnjLQ256>

Wiley's Well Campground

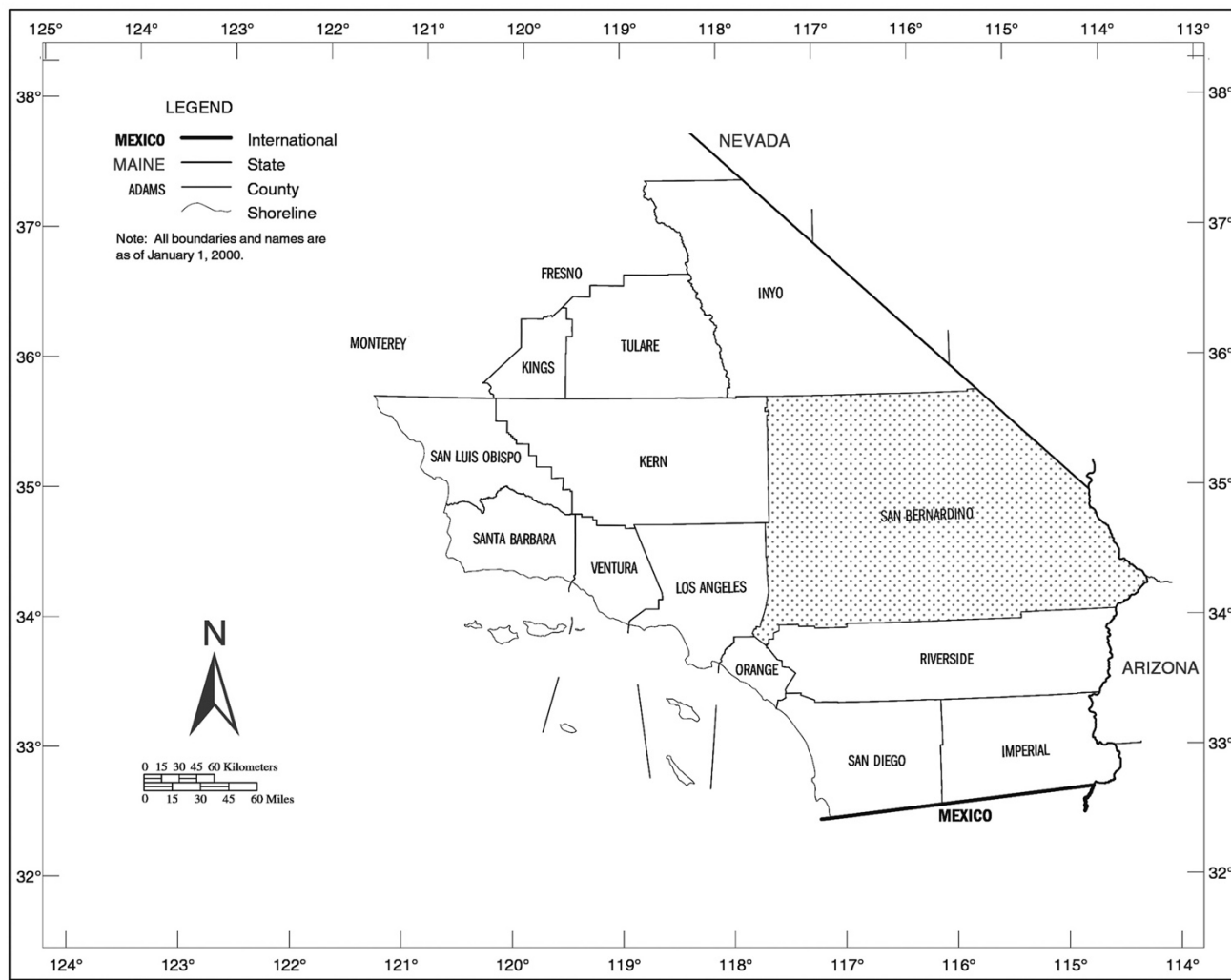
33°29.610' N 114°53.286' W

Newly renovated by BLM, Wiley's Well Campground sits in the lower Colorado Desert in eastern Riverside County. The Hauser Geode Beds and the now closed Opal Hill Fire Agate Mine are in the vicinity by way of 4WD roads. Many trails and areas to collect are here along with the Bradshaw Trail National Scenic Byway. The El Cajon Valley Gem and Mineral Society, by the way, has made several trips to the Hauser Beds in the last few years.

Nearest intersection is Wiley's Well Road and the Bradshaw Trail. Administered by the Palm Springs South Coast Field Office. Proceed with caution using the Owlshead website described below under San Bernardino County.

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/search-details/15181/1>

San Bernardino County, CA (San Bernardino)



Of Note

San Bernardino County is the largest county in the United States. It incorporates the western end of the Mojave Desert whose total area covers 47,000 square miles. Two major highways run east and west across it. Long, dry, open roads. Perhaps a reason the Hells Angels started their MC in San Bernardino County in 1948.

I-15 connects Los Angeles to Las Vegas and beyond to Salt Lake City. I-40 starts in Barstow, then goes 155 miles through California's Mojave Desert to Needles, California. It then crosses into Arizona and eventually winds up in North Carolina. I-40 parallels much of old Route 66. It is from these two highways that most rockhounding trips begin.

Take adequate water. A highway rest stop may have water but it may not be potable.

Resources

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Desert driving in California and elsewhere is always full of surprises, especially in navigating. California's BLM offers assistance by contributing to this website:

<http://www.owlsheadgps.com/owlshead/>

The site above tries showing every California BLM road and trail but their suggested routes are deceptively simple. The many twists, turns, and hazards of desert roads are not well represented. Take multiple copies of maps or electronic navigation aids when going off-pavement. Be ready for washouts, hardpacked dirt roads turning into boggy sand, missing signposts, illegal gates, closed roads without any indication of same, and on and on. This website will surely improve but for right now, check multiple maps.

Robinson, John. *Mines of the San Bernardinos* (Glendale, California: La Siesta Press, 1977) Describes the important or otherwise notable mines of the San Bernardinos. These mountains lie on the west side of San Bernardino County, running into Riverside County.

Justin Zzyzx, *Rockhound Barstow* 2nd Ed. (Forty Seven Press: Newberry Springs, California, 2018) The best collecting guide to California's Mojave Desert. Some rock shops have it as well as Amazon, which offers a Kindle book option. Get it before traveling anywhere in the Mojave: Hesperia to Baker and beyond. Nothing in this book can better describe the Mojave than *Rockhound Barstow*. Look for the first edition as well.

Bureau of Land Management

Barstow Field Office
2601 Barstow Road
Barstow, CA 92311
760-252-6000

34°52.363' N 117°01.240' W

Unresponsive to phone calls or e-mail.

<https://www.blm.gov/office/barstow-field-office>

Bureau of Land Management

Needles Field Office
1303 South U.S. Hwy 95
Needles, CA 92363
760-326-7000

Manages the Marble Mountain Rock Collecting Area and several other recreation areas including the Mojave Trails National Monument. Responds well to information requests.

<https://www.blm.gov/office/needles-field-office>

Searles Lake Gem and Mineral Society

P.O. Box 966
13337 Main St
Trona, CA 93592
760- 372-5356

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Searles Lake is on the way from Ridgecrest to Death Valley. Commercial mining for evaporite minerals continues to this day. This club is host to the famed Gem-O-Rama. You don't know about that? I am sorry for the poor and deprived life you have been living. May I enlighten you with these links?

<http://www1.iwvisp.com/tronagemclub/GEM-O-RAMA.htm>

<http://mojaveproject.org/dispatches-item/gem-o-rama/>

Valley Prospectors of San Bernardino, Inc.

1729 East Base Line Rd.

San Bernardino, CA 92410

34°07.280' N 117°14.978'

Known as Valley Prospectors, this well-respected non-profit has been in operation for decades. They have multiple claims in different areas, including ground in northern California near Downieville in Sierra County. The address above is for club meetings. Join.

<https://www.valleyprospectors.org/>

Afton Canyon – BLM Collecting area 27 miles west of Baker

35°02.346' N 116°22.971' W

The Afton Canyon area is open to rockhounding. Jaspers, agates and such. BLM's campground is a few paced miles off I-15 from the Afton Road exit. The Mojave River here is usually dry enough to walk across. The road descending to the main campground can get badly damaged by rain. A reminder here. Just because you can pick your way slowly down a blown-out road doesn't mean your vehicle can get back up.

The group campground on top of the hill is always accessible but you will have a long walk to the river. Check with BLM's Barstow office for road conditions. *Rockhound Barstow* contains more information on Afton Canyon and surrounding areas.

The Desert Discovery Center

831 Barstow Rd

Barstow, CA 92311

760-252-6060

34°53.468' N 117°01.330' W

Cooperative venture by several agencies to present information about California desert life. Free admission. Hands on viewing of the Old Woman Meteorite, second largest meteorite in the United States. It weighed 6,070 pounds when discovered in 1975 in San Bernardino County. A block away is the Mojave River Valley Museum, featuring mineral and rock displays.

<http://desertdc.com>

Mojave River Valley Museum

270 E. Virginia Way

Barstow, CA 92311

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

760-256-5452

34°53.284' N 117°01.561' W

Free admission to a great museum. Within view of the Desert Discovery Center. San Bernardino County history, including mining and local geology.

<https://mojaverivervalleymuseum.org/>

Diamond Pacific Tool Corporation

2620 W. Main Street
Barstow, CA 92311
1-800-253-2954

34°53.131' N 117°04.761' W

Lapidary equipment manufacturer and rock shop. Anyone who has made a cab knows the name Diamond Pacific. Their machines are now sold in over fifty countries and they still come from this one factory. Their rock shop features a good selection of local rough, slabs, and some finished stones. Topo maps. Source for buying *Rockhound Barstow*, the only book for collecting the Mohave anywhere near Barstow or farther out into the Mojave. That book is described below. But, first, more about Diamond Pacific.

“We welcome you to visit our retail store. Retail shop hours vary, please call for current information. Closed on holidays and Saturday preceding Monday holiday. Please call to verify Saturday hours.” Plant tours may be available. Call first. Go early in the day, they shut down close to three or four unless they know someone is coming.

With luck you may meet Bill Depue, Founder and President of Diamond Pacific. He founded the company in 1973 and they have been in continuous operation ever since. In good times and bad, under Bill's management, they have never missed a payroll.

Bill began rockhounding before he was ten and can talk authoritatively on all aspects of Mojave rocks and stones in general. He works up cabs to this day. But never using a template. When I last visited, I was running late but they held the store open for me. Though I had been in before, I hadn't met Mr. Depue, who was waiting for me behind the counter and gave me a great price on an agate slab. As well as a tour of the facility.

<http://www.diamondpacific.com/index.html>

The Kokoweef Cavern/Mine Complex

Mountain Pass Area
I-15 between Las Vegas and Baker

Private property which *sometimes* permits groups to fee dig on their dumps. I went in August of 2018 with the Southern Nevada Gem and Mineral Society. Calcite cave popcorn from the dumps is an unusual and attractive material to cab. Travertine and onyx also present. This is a limestone cave complex at which the operators are seeking a lost river of gold. Yes, really.

The story of my visit is here with photos and video:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/08/18/the-kokoweef-cavern-mine-complex/>

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>



**STEVEN BISYAK DISPLAYING MATERIAL FROM THE KOKOWEEF
CAVERNS, SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

Gems of the West Rock Shop

40847 Big Bear Boulevard
Big Bear Lake, CA 92315
908-878-0415

34°14.618' N 116°54.640' W

Not visited but intriguing and certainly worth a stop. Just a few miles from San Bernardino itself.

<https://www.gemsofthewest.co/shop/>

Mojave Trails National Monument

Near Amboy, California. Google their website.

Located between Barstow and Needles along Route 66, this 1.6-million-acre National Monument features everything from rough-hewn mountains to sand dunes and even lava flows. Includes a 350,000-acre Wilderness Area within its borders. BLM managed. Rockhounding allowed. No visitor center.

Amboy Crater is the Monument's most prominent feature, with no collecting permitted at the actual site. Parking lot and trailhead are at the end of Crater Road, accessed by Highway 95.

A caution in this area. At least one rest area has water but it is not potable. Make sure to always have enough water whenever going into the desert, even if you are simply touring by day in a car.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Parking lot coordinates are approximate:

34°33.441' N 115°46.866' W

BLM Marble Mountain Fossil Bed Collecting Site

34°31.572' N 115°28.401' W — Center of area

34°31.511' N 115°29.453' W — Marble Mountain campground

The Marble Mountain Fossil Beds lie in a 60-foot thick shale formation which dates back over 550 million years. Trilobites are said to be numerous but whether a full bug can be had is questionable.

Jim Boone's site, BirdandHike.com, has the best map to this area. He calls the site the Cadiz Trilobite Quarry. A link to his map:

https://www.birdandhike.com/Rocks/Fossils/Sites/Cadiz/maps-cdz/Cadiz_Map-o.htm

Chambless Rock Collecting Area

Chambless lies at the southern boundary of the Trilobite Wilderness. Hematite and magnetite may be found there, in the reddish dirt or tailings near abandoned mine entrances. Green epidote might be located in washes. Small garnets and some epidote reported in nearby canyons. Fossils possible in a gray ridge of limestone in the area.

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/chambless-rock-collecting-area>

Once again, BirdandHike.com has the best map to Chambless, with GPS coordinates for every turn in the road. Location photos, too. Ask BLM in Needles for current directions, and Owlsheadgps.com for further information. The Needles' BLM office is very helpful and responds to e-mails.

https://www.birdandhike.com/Rocks/Fossils/Sites/Chambless/maps-ch/Chambless_Map-o.htm

Colton Surveying Instruments

671 E Cooley Dr #101
Colton, CA 92324
909-825-8824

34°03.605' N 117°18.280' W

Surveying equipment and supply store. Safety vests, hand tools, waterproof writing pads, and other cool stuff. Get flags to mark off your grid searching.

Online store:

<http://coltonsurveying.com/aboutus>

Mining Supplies and Rock Shop

16808 F Main St.
Hesperia, CA 92345

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

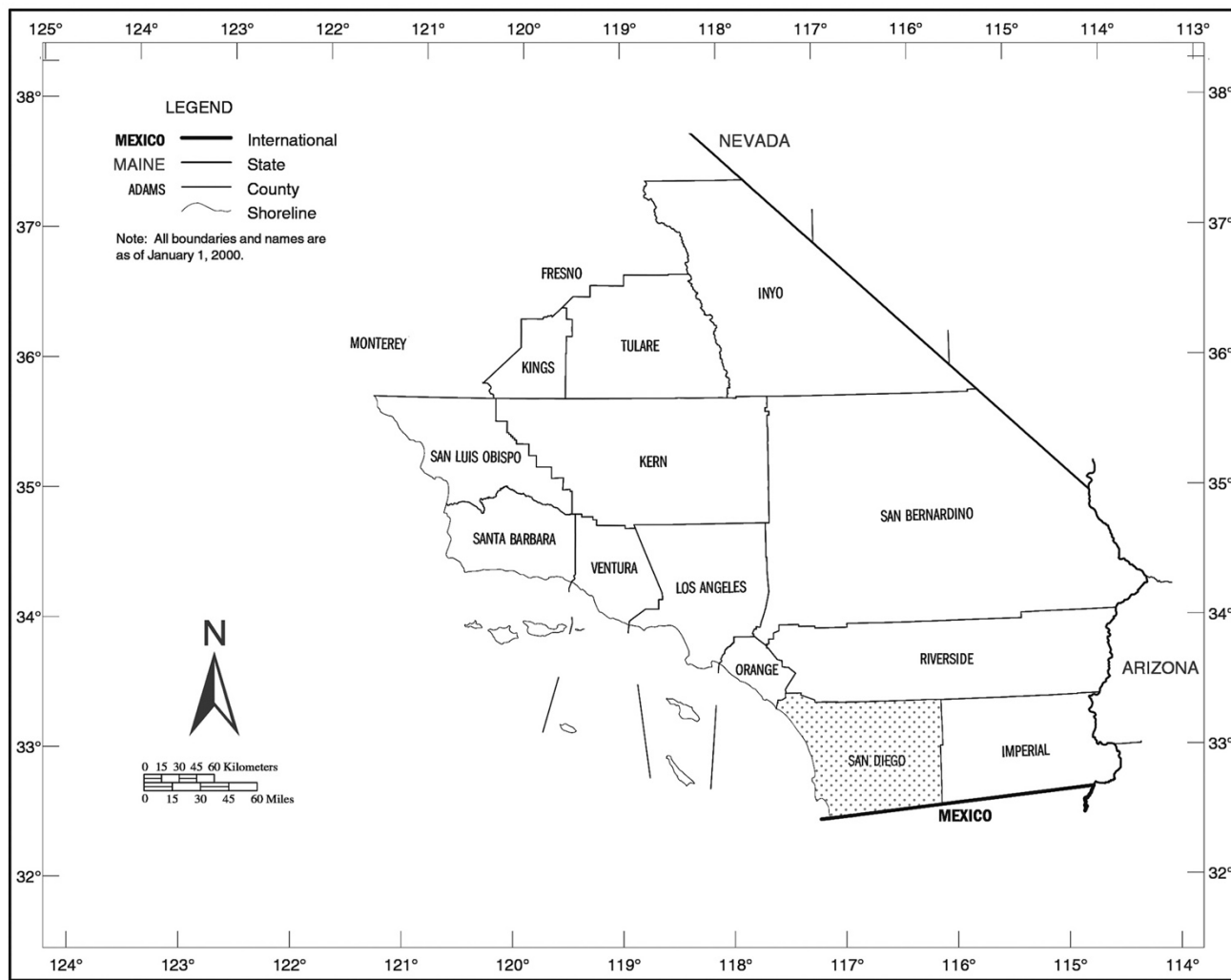
Located in the Stater Brothers Shopping Center
760-244-9642

34°25.301' N 117°17.778' W

A woman-owned rock shop featured in two articles of Rock&Gem, Mining Supplies supports rock and gem and prospecting clubs in Hesperia and Victorville. Field trips have been conducted and they offer lapidary classes for a small fee. I made my first and only rock carving there, a jade key fob. It was a great experience. A nice selection of rocks, minerals and slabs. The shop is not closing but it is for sale. Contact Cyndy or Lois.

<http://www.miningsuppliesandrocks.com/>

San Diego County, CA (San Diego)



The Collector Fine Jewelry/Pala International, Inc.

912 South Live Oak Park Road
Fallbrook, CA 92028
760-728-9121

33°22.471' N 117°12.556' W

A one-of-a-kind jewelry and rare mineral store specializing in tourmaline. The Collector is only a few miles from the Pala Mining District. The owner is Bill Larson, known world-wide as a geologist and authority on gems and rare minerals. He has made more than 150 overseas trips in his pursuit of minerals and colored stones. With any luck, Bill may be around and you will discover how little you know. I don't mean that despairingly, only with humor. Larson is someone you learn from, someone who honors you with his time. The store's central show room emphasizes jewelry, however, there is a marvelous gem pegmatite pocket exhibit off the main floor. It took four months to recover the pocket intact. It's

extremely difficult to photograph through its glass window, so bring your best camera and some ideas on fighting glare. If personnel and time permit, a rockhound may be shown other areas featuring displays of extremely rare minerals and high-end gems. These showcases equal or surpass any museum or Tucson exhibit.

<http://www.palagems.com/meet-our-staff>

Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Museum

123 W Alvarado St B
Fallbrook, CA 92028
760-728-1130

33°22.946' N 117°15.125' W

Few gem and mineral clubs have a museum or gift shop, let alone one of this quality. It's an outstanding effort of the Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Society, containing examples of San Diego County minerals and gems and a fluorescent mineral room. Many local specimens for sale, including three-dollar grab bags of local materials, each small mineral duly described.

http://www.fgms.org/FGMS/Museum_1.html

The Ocean View Mine and the Pala Chief Mine

37304 Magee Rd, Pala, CA 92059
Jeff Swanger, Owner and Chief Operator

760-415-9143

<http://www.oceanviewmine.com>

\$75 a person

Special instructions to reach the mine at their website and also discussed below.

Oceanview Mines, LLC offers two fee/dig experiences in the Pala Mining District. Commonly found are tourmalines, kunzites, and morganites, along with other sparkly things like pink lepidolite. The Pala area, a pegmatite mining district, has been actively worked for gemstones since the turn of the 19th century.

A screen and wash activity is held three times a week in season throughout much of the year. Online videos produced by Jeff Swanger and crew show the entire process. This easy-to-do activity will return attractive stones.

The second experience is held twice a month for part of the year. Bring your own tools. The Pala Chief fee/dig allows rockhounds to search through old tailings and mine dumps, along with hacking at the side of Chief Mountain itself. At some point the mine operator might work an excavator, digging a six-foot deep trench to bring up fresh dirt and rock for searching. Anything found can be kept.

Follow website directions to the mine with care. Their directions start in Pala and go east. First, get to Magee Road using Highway 76; the mine's entrance road is a few miles from there. Only Magee's south entrance from Highway 76 should be attempted. Do not take Magee Road if you are driving south from

Temecula. In Pala there is a Magee Place that is not Magee Road. If Magee Road is not in one's navigation device, try looking for the Pala Raceway. Magee Road is further east on 76.

If you have the time, locate Magee Road the day before your dig so you don't have to worry about where to go in the morning. The countryside is beautiful and the Mission San Antonio de Pala in Pala itself is a Kodak moment. The California Mission chain is well known but their extension churches are not. You should also try to visit The Collector or the Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Museum if time permits.

The mine property road is rough but this author did see a Mini Cooper negotiate its entire length. Staff will happily load people and gear into a buggy if a driver does not wish to drive the road. Bring sunscreen even if it is overcast, snacks, and tools if you are doing the Pala Chief. Full details at their website. Driest weather month may be May if you are planning a trip from across the country.

Resist taking too many photographs, instead, dive into digging or screening as long as you can and as hard as you can. You are going to find something wonderful. Oh, and if you can't go, you can order a bag of pay dirt if they are still offering it. I found enough nice things in what they sent to convince me to go in person.

Magee Road and Highway 76 coordinates:

33°21.830' N 117°03.440' W

Google map link to Magee Road and Highway 76:

<https://goo.gl/maps/hxKNCWGxSzdK1Kxv9>

<http://www.oceanviewmine.com>



SMOKY QUARTZ CRYSTAL RECOVERED AT THE PALA CHIEF FEE DIG, PALA, CALIFORNIA



MISSION SAN ANTONIO DE PALA, PALA, CALIFORNIA

Himalaya Mine

c/o/ Lake Henshaw Resort
26439 Hwy 76
Santa Ysabel, CA 92070
775-225-4245
775-772-7724.

33°14.166' N 116°45.823' W

This is another screen/wash activity located at the Lake Henshaw Resort. It's on the road to Julian, with other rock related attractions along the way. Rockhounds go through tailings from the famous Himalaya Mine. Open year-round, generally Thursday through Sunday from 10 AM to 3 PM. Call ahead to confirm details.

The screen and wash is out of view in back. To get there, go into the market on the property and get a gate pass code. Drive through the gate to the fee/dig. \$75 for an adult. Minerals found may be pink and green tourmaline, black tourmaline, quartz crystals, spessertine garnet, lepidolite, and clevelandite. Keep anything found.

https://highdesertgemsandminerals.com/html/himalaya_mine_dig.html

Crossroads Treasures

30219 CA-78
Santa Ysabel, CA 92070
760-765-2530

33°06.521' N 116°40.501' W

Rock shop and birding. Thursdays through Sundays. Seasonal hours. Near the intersection of Highways 76 and 79, making it a convenient stop on the way to WYNOLA and Julian. Minerals and gems from the Himalaya, Cryogenie, and Pala Chief Mines. The tri-colored blackbird, the western tanager and the black-headed grosbeak frequent the grounds.

<https://crossroadstreasures.biz>

Julian Mining Company

4444 State Hwy 78
Julian/Wynola CA 92036
951-313-0166

So called gold and gem mining. Another road-side attraction. May be fun for kids. "Pan for Real Gold from our Banner Grade 'Paydirt'". Unlimited ore, a lesson, and a vial to collect your finds. \$9 adults \$7 kids under 12 years old. Open during the season on Saturdays and Sundays.

<https://www.julianminingcompany.com>

Julian Mountain Gems & Minerals

2015 Main Street, Suite B

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

33°04.653' N 116°36.068' W

They weren't open when I passed through Julian but it was on a Monday. Their website says that they are generally open Thursday through Sunday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. The last update to the site, however, was in April, 2019. They seem more active on Facebook. "While we do specialize in mostly quartz, fluorite, and tourmaline, we also carry other crystals and minerals." Check their current storefront status while heading to the Eagle and High Peak Mines just a mile or two away.

<https://julian-gems.com/sample-page/>

Eagle and High Peak Mines

2320 C St
Julian, CA 92036
760-765-0036

Slow down! Getting to the mine means driving twisty roads through residential neighborhoods.

33°04.926' N 116°35.710' W

1000' feet of hard rock tunnel on old gold mine property. Guided tour. Low headroom and a steep stairway at the two-thirds mark. Call to see if a mobility-challenged person can be accommodated for the first stretch. There's much to see before that stairway. Great introduction to a hard rock mine. After the tour, visitors can chat with their guide about local rockhounding.

\$10 charge. Gold panning taught before or after a tour. Visitors can't keep the gold but learning to pan is worth more than any colors found. Impressive non-working stamp mill on the property along with other gold mining related equipment. Gift shop with rocks from different countries. Tip your tour guide if you can afford to. These are nice people.

The Julian area has been called California's Southern Mother Lode.

<http://www.theeaglemining.com>

Resource

Ellsberg, Helen. *Mines of Julian* (Glendale, California: Las Siesta Press, 1972) Includes some information on the Eagle – High Peak.

Goffs Schoolhouse

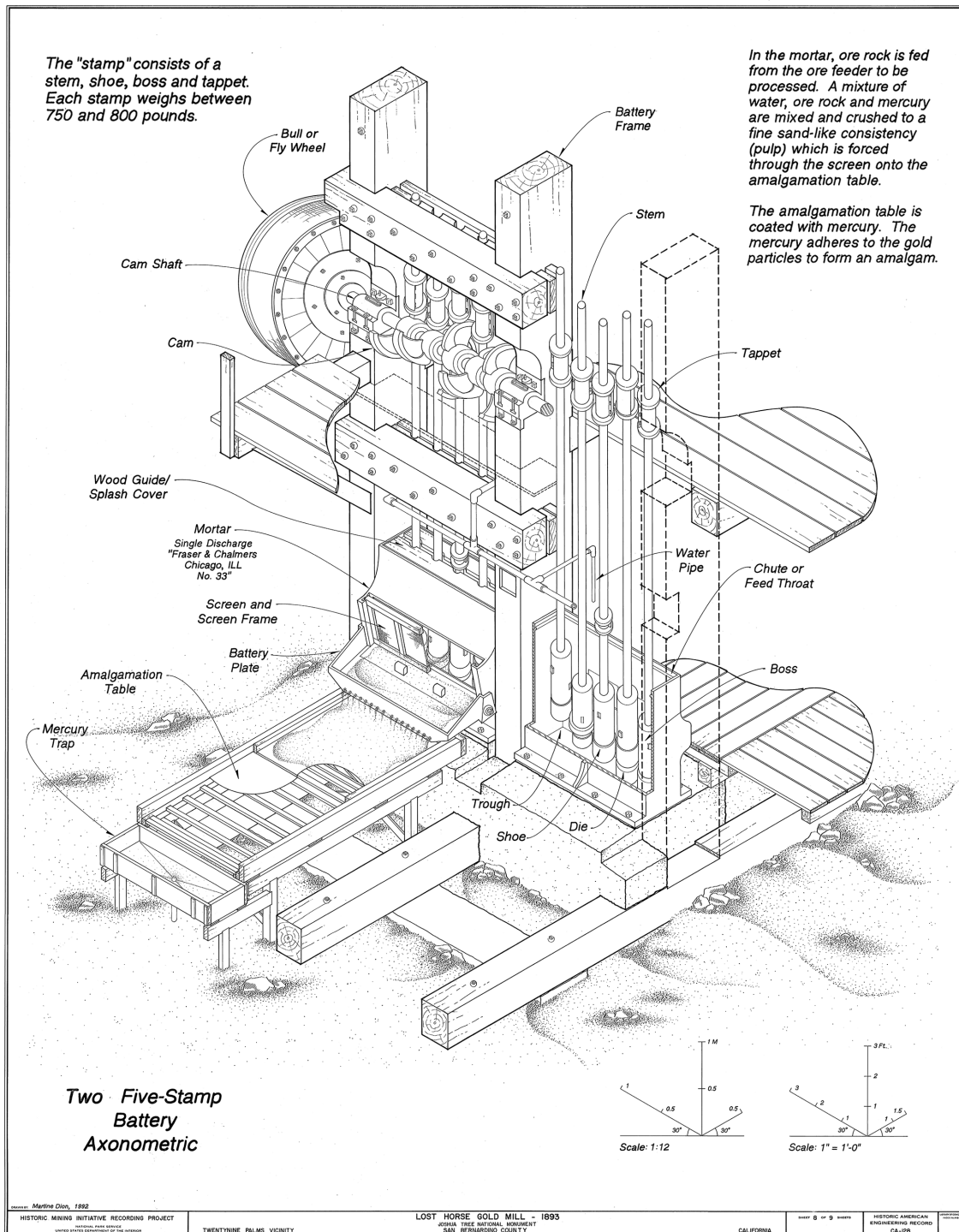
37198 Lanfair Road (Near Goffs Road and Lanfair Road)
Goffs, CA 92332

34°55.281' N 115°04.026' W

Restored ore crushers including a working 10-Stamp Mill. Attend a scheduled operating event if you want to see any in action. It takes many volunteers to get the equipment going. E-mail or check their website to see current and upcoming events.

<https://www.mdhca.org/cultural-center/projects/ten-stamp-mill>

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>



**ILLUSTRATIVE DRAWING OF A STAMP MILL, NPS
DIAGRAM, LOST HORSE MINE, JOSHUA TREE, CALIFORNIA**

Southwestern Prospectors & Miners Association

Mailing address:

SPMA

P.O. Box 904

La Mesa, CA 91944

Meeting address:

Cathy Hopper Clairemont Friendship Center

4425 Bannock Avenue

San Diego, CA 92117

32°49.953' N 117°11.846' W

Active San Diego based club with field trips to their claims. “Welcome. The SPMA is a prospecting association for people of all ages who would like to try their luck at prospecting in the mountains and deserts of San Diego, Riverside and Imperial Counties.” How could you resist an invitation like that? I recommend joining local groups first. National groups are fine but get started with a local.

<http://www.spma-gold.org/index.html>

Their October, 2019 newsletter is here, caution, 10 megs in .pdf:

http://www.spma-gold.org/pdf/assay_Oct2019.pdf

El Cajon Valley Gem and Mineral Society

Meeting location unless otherwise noted:

Heritage of the Americas Museum

Cuyamaca College Campus

12110 Cuyamaca College Dr. West,

El Cajon, CA 92022

Membership mailing address:

ECVGMS

PO Box 451

El Cajon, CA 92022

<https://www.ecvgms.org/home.html>

Long standing club based in El Cajon. Field trips, shop. Annual “Rock and Gem Roundup” with a large number of vendors. Has held several field trips in recent years to the Hauser Geode Beds outside of Blythe, CA. Local rock and gem clubs like these can guide you on trips to areas difficult to find on your own. At times, clubs may have access to ground otherwise closed to the public.

Western Rock Ramblings

-- Northern California --

By Thomas Farley

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thomasfarley@fastmail.com

All illustrations were derived from photographs taken by the author or from those in the public domain.

Introduction

This Northern California chapter is another part of what was to be a hardcopy publication, however, formatting the text and illustrations proved too difficult and time consuming. I wanted the book to be spiral bound to lay flat but costs proved prohibitive. I apologize for the poor formatting in advance, my inability to produce something attractive is of constant agony to me.

Photos are mostly black and white to minimize the size of these chapter files. Since monochrome photographs present terribly on ordinary printer paper, I stylized the photos. The resulting sketch type illustrations, however, are at 300 dpi so they will print well.

The sites listed were either visited by me or recommended to me by trusted sources. I intended to revisit all of my old haunts in Northern California before putting this out but the virus cancelled by trip. Some of the recommendations are therefore speculative but I have been over nearly of all of this ground. Original photos are also mostly lacking.

I know I have missed many points of interests as well as rock shops and clubs. E-mail me if you would like to be included in the next revision of this text.

Most sites are probably closed as of press time because of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

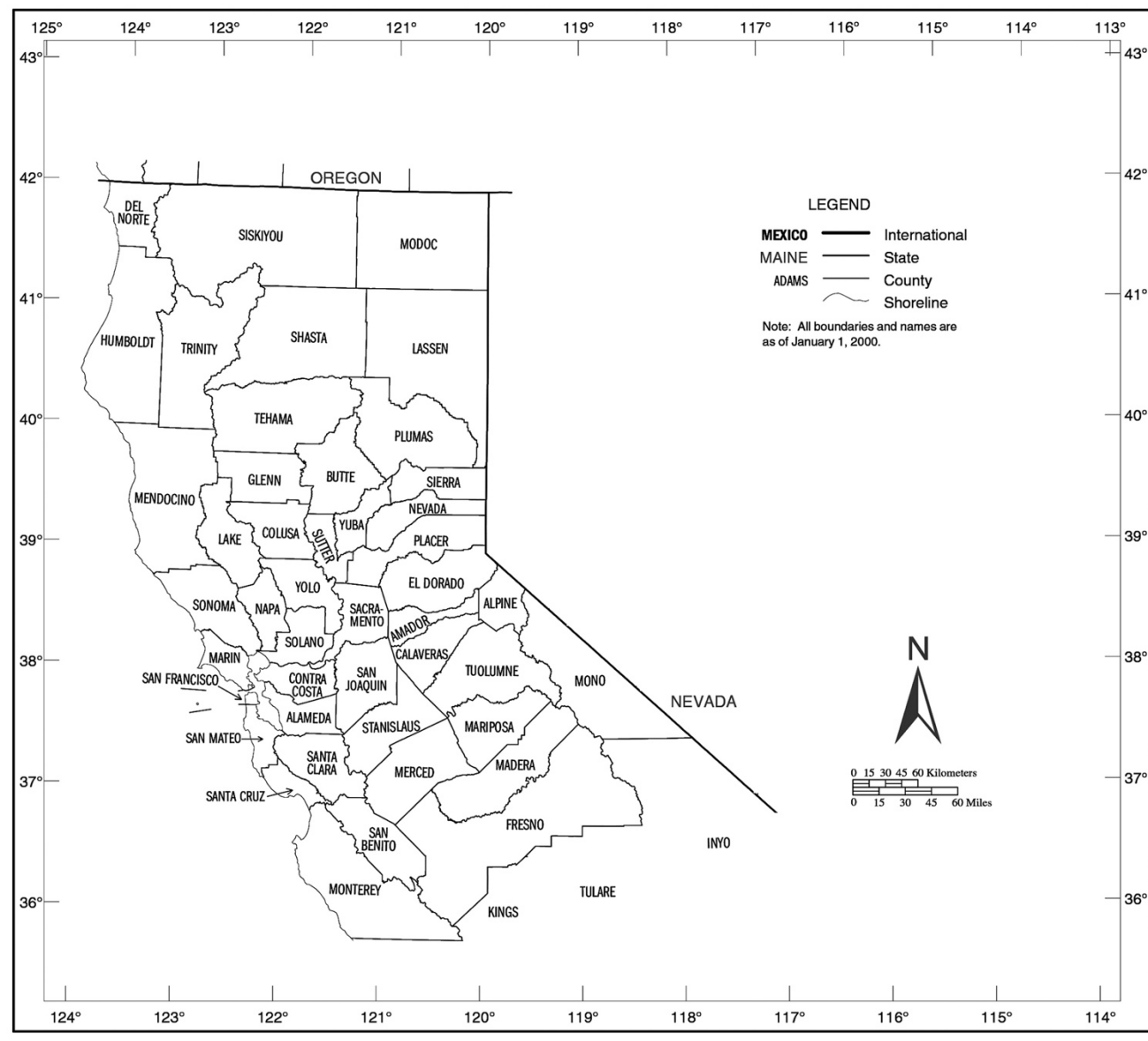
Feel free to distribute this file anywhere you like. I wish you good health.

Best,

Thomas Farley

Las Vegas, Nevada

Northern California



Notable

Donald Henry's fourth edition of *California Gem Trails* is an indispensable trail guide. Written in 1974, it is usually available through online booksellers like Abe.com, or if you are lucky, at a local used bookseller. The majority of his collecting spots are now surrounded by barbed wire or fenced in by regulation but his descriptions will alert you to what is in an area, so that you can investigate road cuts or wander off as appropriate.

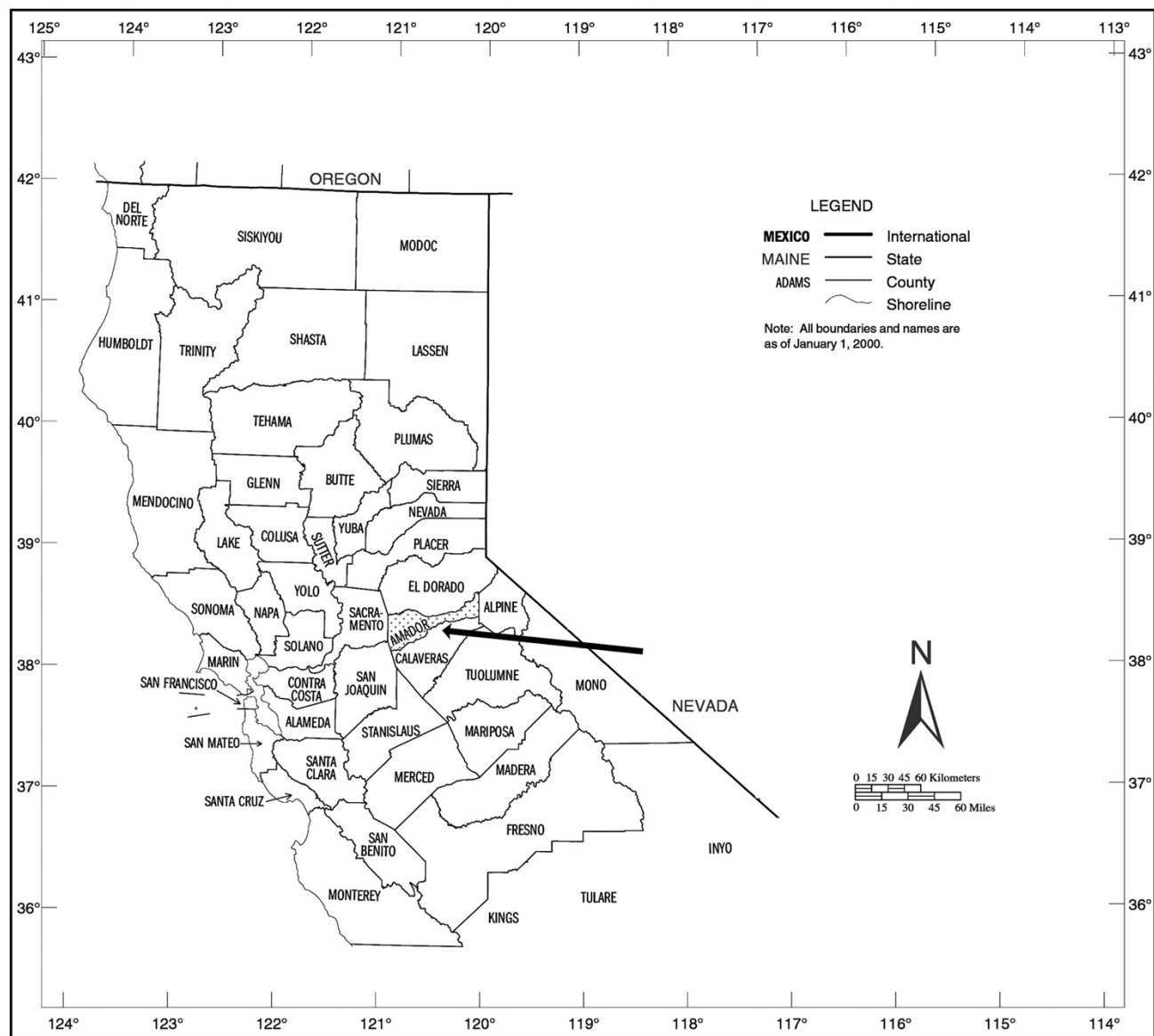
A warning to professional photographers, anyone with a big lens, or a drone. California's restrictions on filming are ever growing at their parks. They want money, lots of it. Even if you are writing on spec for a magazine, not knowing if your article or images will be accepted at all. In this travel list I describe several places this press release mentions:

“Starting January 1, 2019, all commercial photographers, photo/film students, professional photographers offering services or professional development projects, must have an approved film permit for photographic activities at Empire Mine State Historic Park, South Yuba River State Park, or Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park.” Google for this State Parks'.pdf file.

Resources

Northern California rock related literature is overwhelming in its extent, particularly about the Gold Rush of 1849 and the Mother Lode country of the western Sierra Nevada foothills. I'll list just a few titles I've found valuable.

Amador County, CA (Jackson)



Amador County won its fame primarily for its deep, underground mining. But if you look closely, you can see small tailing piles like that at Carbondale Road and Forest Home Road. (private property.) In gold country, every watercourse got looked at and often dredged.

Kennedy Tailing Wheels Park

1200 N Main Street
Jackson, CA 95642

38°21.811' N 120°46.521' W

Contact information:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Kennedy Tailing Wheels Park
c/o City of Jackson
33 Broadway
Jackson, CA 95642
209-223-1646

<https://ci.jackson.ca.us/KennedyTailingWheelsPark/index.html>

Kennedy Gold Mine Surface Tours

12594 Kennedy Mine Road
Jackson, CA 95642
209-223-9542

“The Kennedy Mine, located near Jackson California (printable map), is open every Saturday, Sunday and Holiday from 10 AM to 3:30 PM, March through October. FREE Admission. Guided tours are available at 10:15 AM, 12:15 PM and 2:15 PM. Tour tickets are: \$12.00 for ages 13 to adult, \$6.00 for youngsters 6 through 12, and free to those under 6. Group Guided tours are available, by reservation, all year. Guided Tours are recommended for an interesting, in-depth, and educational tour of the grounds [about 1.5 hours]. You may, if you wish, purchase a self-guided tour book in our gift shop and wander on your own. Some prefer to bring a picnic lunch and just soak in the ambiance of this historic spot. Plan a Kennedy Mine Tour now!”

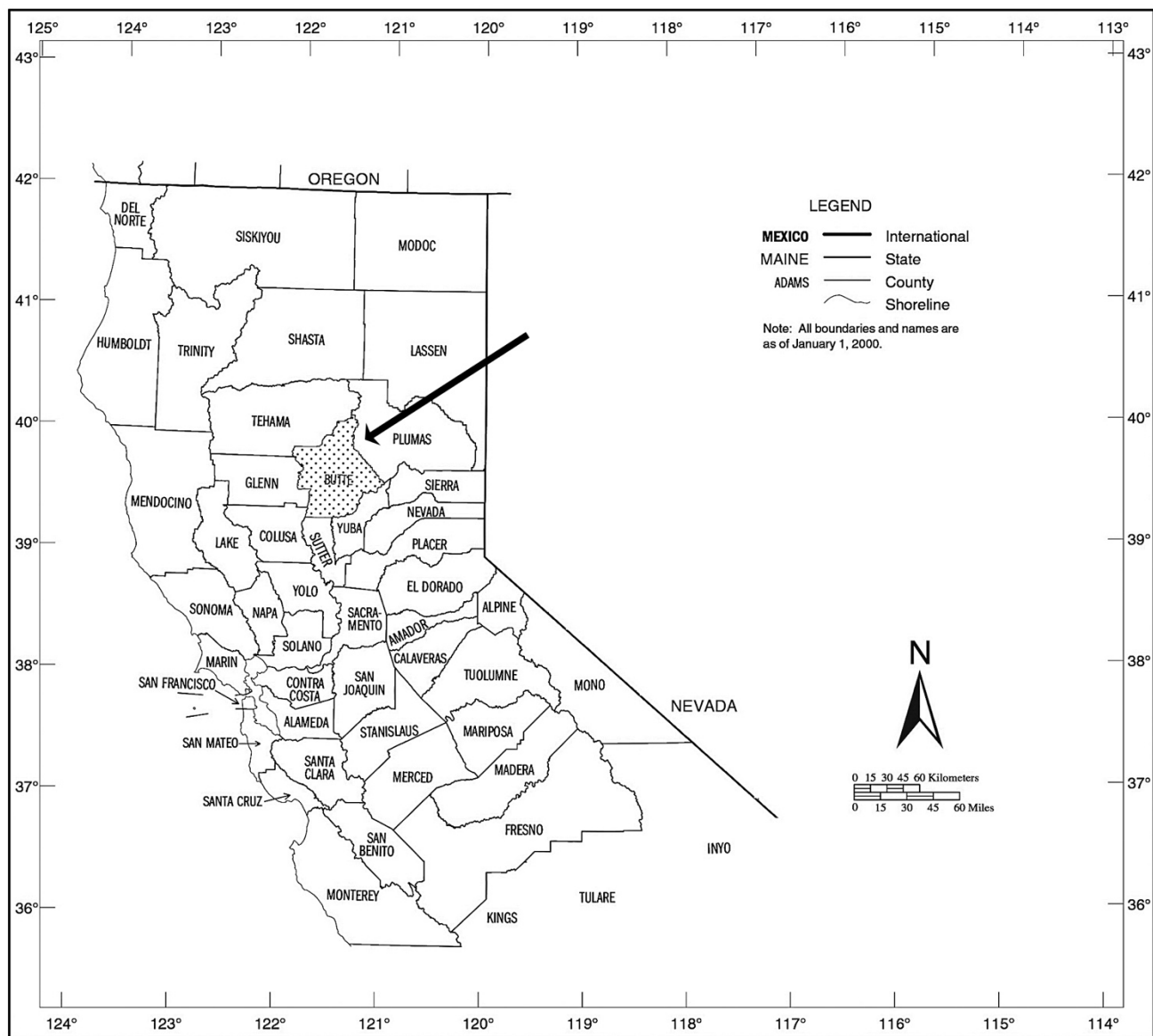
<http://kennedygoldmine.com/>

Amador County Gem & Mineral Society

P. O. Box 794
Sutter Creek, CA 95685-0794 ##

<http://www.amadorgemandmineral.org/index.html>

Butte County, CA (Oroville)



Geology Rocks

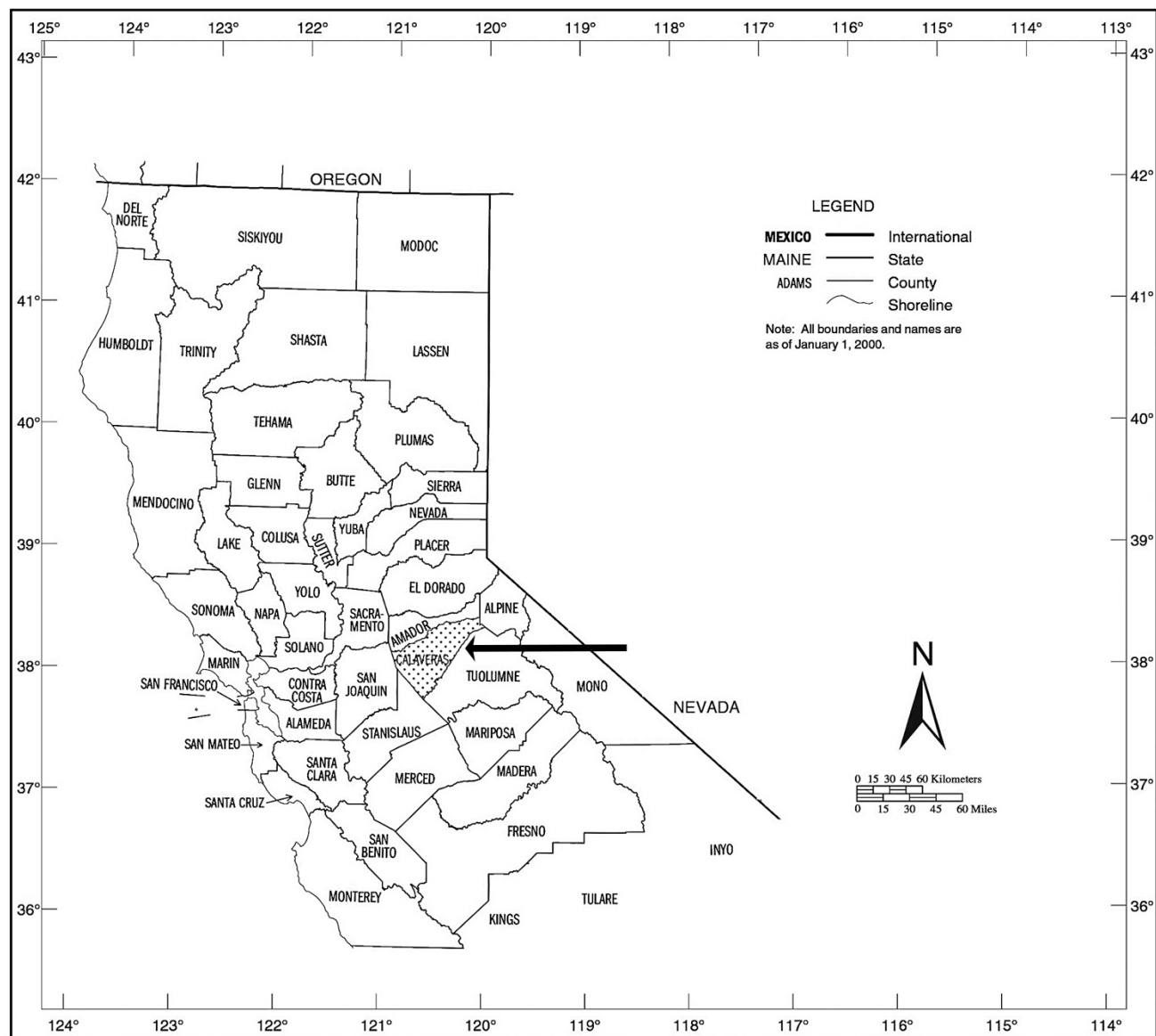
835 Main St
Chico, CA 95928
530-809-0091

The owner here is Casey and we had a fine talk about my upcoming visit that was cancelled due to the virus. He likes included quartz of every description. He says he has a little of everything and the website shows a clean, well-organized shop. If you go, consider lunch and perhaps a tour of the Sierra Nevada Brewery nearby. Bidwell Park is also close, a shooting location for the original Robin Hood movie with Errol Flynn. If you go on campus to Chico State, be prepared for students actually smiling at you and saying "Hello." Chico is a friendly town.

39°43.555' N 121°50.103' W

<https://www.geologyrocksandminerals.org/contact>

Calaveras County, CA (San Andreas)



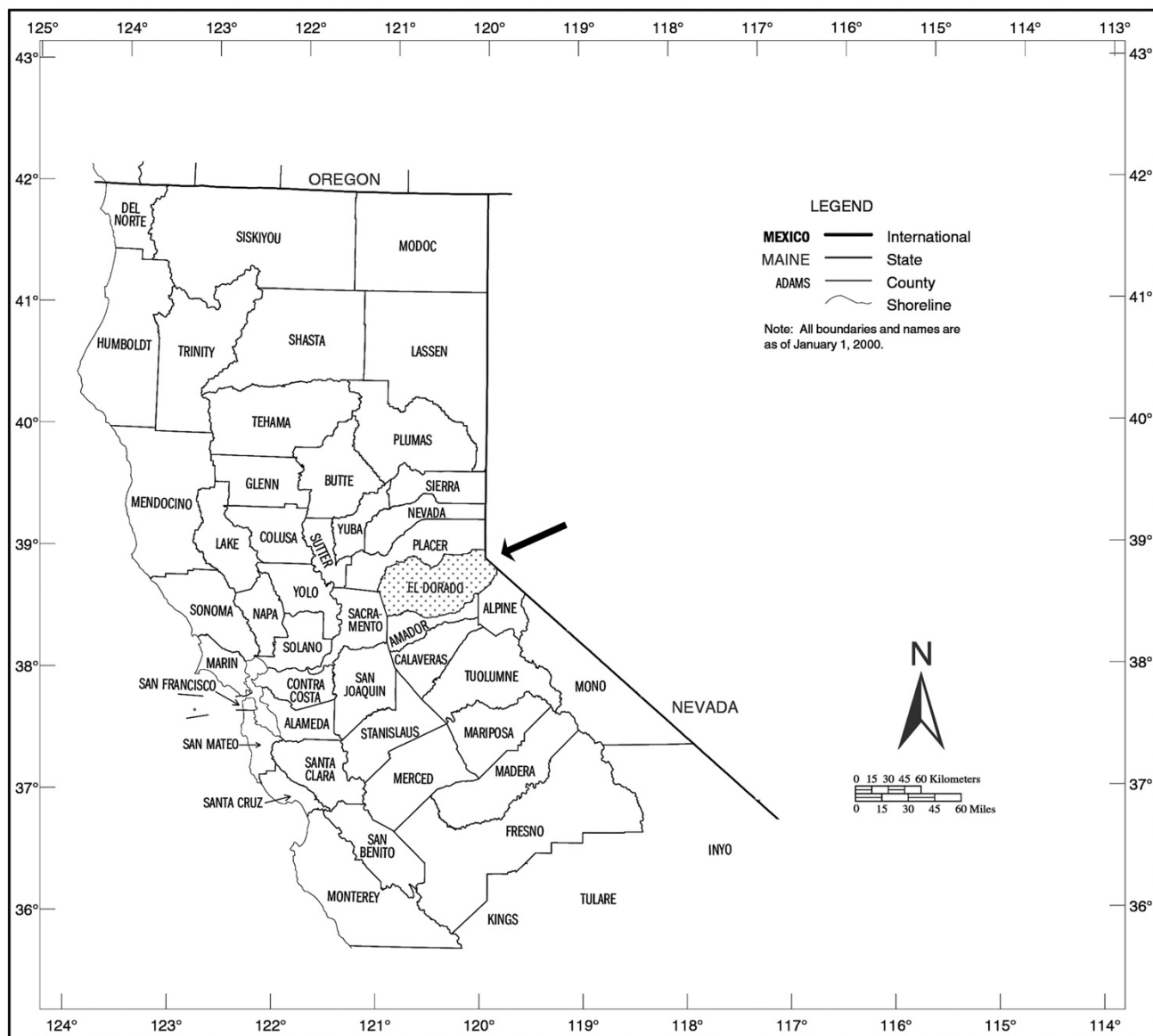
Stories In Stones

1249 South Main Street
Angels Camp, CA 95222
209-736-1300

Another well regarded shop I was unable to visit. Near Mercer Caverns which is another geological feature to visit. Be aware that Highway 49 gets extremely crowded during the summer and your speed will be quite slow. Also, interesting road cuts presents themselves constantly and as a result you will make poor but happy time.

38°04.155' N 120°32.381' W

El Dorado County, CA (Placerville)



Notable

Placerville is in El Dorado County, not Placer County.

Gold Bug Park
2635 Goldbug Lane
Placerville CA 95667
530-642-5207

38°44.595' N 120°47.970' W

This may be the only city owned gold mine in the United States. No fee for the grounds, fee charged for the underground mine tour. That's a pretty straightforward experience but the real treats of the park are the black shop operation, when someone is there, and the Hendy Stamp Mill.

The Hendy is a working scale model of a stamp mill. Really fascinating when they start it going. The clattering and clanking from this small model is incredible. It demonstrates clearly what many people said in the gold rush era, that you could find your way from one town to another by simply listening for the next mill.

I asked if they had any gold in quartz specimens to show. A volunteer or employee picked up a large rock sitting unattended in the middle of the room. It had a broad swash of gold color running through it. The worker said it was gold in quartz. It looked like gold paint to me but I am old and bitter.

I haven't visited the second mine which permit groups to go in. It's called the Priest Mine, call ahead to see if you can go.

<https://www.goldbugpark.org>

Stifle Claim/Traverse Creek Area

El Dorado National Forest

El Dorado County

Meadow Brook Road and Bear Creek Road (approximately)

38°51.916' N 120°48.716' W

Mindat map of area: <https://www.mindat.org/loc-69060.html>

I hesitate to say any ground is played out but I might make an exception with the Stifle Claim. That is if you are looking for vesuvianite, a green, gemmy mineral. The ground is extremely hard and yet when I went it appeared that every boulder and large rock had the ground underneath it had already been dug up. I'm not sure how it has been hunted for "UV", there might be an opportunity there.

Get close to the intersection of Meadow Brook Road and Bear Creek Road and proceed from there. At these coordinates you'll notice a somewhat barren landscape. Should be serpentinite soil present at the collecting site. There is a USFS signboard. Further information below from the local experts.

<http://eldoradomineralandgem.org/edc-field.html>

El Dorado Mineral and Gem Society

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Meetings:

American Legion Hall, El Dorado Post 119
4561 Greenstone Road
Placerville, CA
38°40.685' N 120°53.151' W

Mailing address:
P. O. Box 950
Placerville, CA 95667

530-676-2472

<http://eldoradomineralandgem.org/>

BLM Mother Lode Field Office

5152 Hillsdale Circle
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762
916-941-3101

38°37.263' N 121°03.558' W

The website for this field office is a window into the Sierra Nevada foothills of central California. “The BLM Mother Lode Field Office manages over 230,000 acres of public land in Central California. These lands are scattered within Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Mariposa, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Yuba counties.”

The following are some BLM areas I have hunted. Check field offices for current regulations. Or not. It's sometimes better in California to slip into an area and then slip out. For your information, law enforcement has installed hidden game cameras at certain remote parking spots. They nab people who start forest fires this way along with other crimes like car break ins.

North Fork American River
-North Fork American
-Stevens Trail

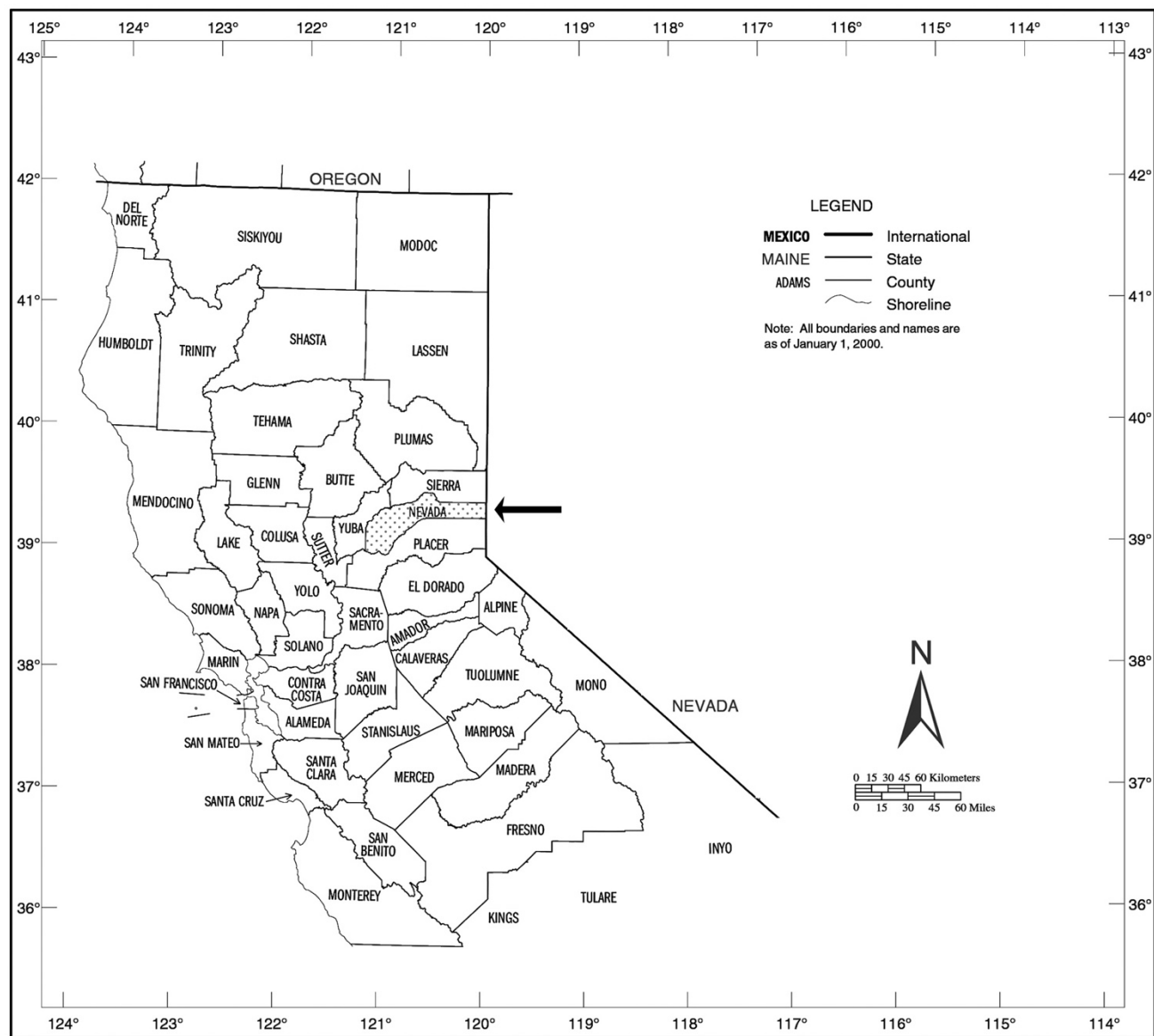
South Yuba River
-South Yuba Recreation Area

South Fork American River
-Cronan Ranch
-Magnolia Ranch
-Greenwood Creek River Access
-Dave Moore Nature Area
-South Fork American

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

<https://www.blm.gov/office/mother-lode-field-office>

Nevada County, CA (Nevada City)



Empire Mine State Historic Park

10791 East Empire Street
Nevada City, CA 95945
530-273-8522

39°12.368' N 121°02.595' W

Grand grounds at a great, historic mine. No underground tours, however, a fascinating place to visit. In particular, there is a scale model of the mine's below ground workings, what kind of looks like a wire frame model. It shows every twist and turn of every tunnel of this incredibly

productive mine. I doubt anything like it exists today in public view. Mines and mining camps in the West were often poorly built as everything had to be torn apart at some point and hauled to the next strike. The Empire Mine, however, was such a long-term producer that fine, permanent buildings were constructed.

“Empire Mine State Historic Park is the site of one of the oldest, deepest, and richest gold mines in California. The park is in Grass Valley at 10791 East Empire Street. In operation for more than 100 years, the mine extracted 5.8 million ounces of gold before it closed in 1956. The park contains many of the mine’s buildings, the owner’s home and restored gardens, as well as the entrance to 367 miles of abandoned and flooded mine shafts.”

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=499

Crystal Rainbow

310 Commercial Street
Nevada City, CA 95959
530-265-3784

Have not gone although I once lived in nearby Grass Valley. Where I had my only placer mining claim. That’s another story.

Malakoff Diggins (sic) State Historical Park

23579 North Bloomfield Road
Nevada City, CA 95959 – (not in Nevada City!)
530-265-2740

A monument to hydraulic mining, where a fire hose size nozzle spit out water with such force that it knocked down hills into giant sluice boxes. This was California’s largest hydraulic mine until silt and sediment from this and other mines choked rivers downstream. A good place to visit while heading north into Yuba County, the Yuba, Downieville, and perhaps onto Alleghany. Camping available. This park is just off Highway 49 near North San Juan.

This area has always been poverty struck but there is something else going on I have never figured out. In the Yuba County section, I describe a bad vibe I get from public access points in the BLM’s South Yuba Recreation Area. I recently picked up an old Saturday Evening Post at my local library from September 23, 1967. Joan Didion wrote about hippies in a preliminary work that developed into *Slouching Toward Bethlehem*. She mentioned Malakoff Diggins even though the piece was centered on San Francisco during the Summer of Love.

“We drink some more green tea and talk about going up to Malakoff Diggins, a park in Nevada County, because some people are starting a commune there and Max thinks it would be a groove to take acid there. He says maybe we could go next week, or the week, after, or anyway sometime before his case comes up. Almost everybody I meet in San Francisco has to go to court at some point in the middle future. I never ask why.”

Tailing piles abound yet no collecting. I sample streams and creeks if I am in country like this. Any leftover values may concentrate where water flows downstream of the piles. As to nugget hunting, good luck. Ever try to keep your balance on the steep sides of a twenty-five-foot-tall loose rock pile while swinging a detector? If you must, I think the best place to hunt is on the top of a pile where weathering may have exposed something. Your detector won't reach more than a foot or so down for something in any case. This is why some operators in Alaska spread out old tailing piles with heavy equipment, then let detectorists hunt the then discoverable ground. Oh, and tailing piles have massive amounts of iron junk left over from mining operations. Still, keep trying.

The best entry road is off of Highway 49. And then closely follow road signs or whatever map you have.

As the State relates, "Do not use your GPS unless you wish to travel on a dirt road for 7 miles. North Bloomfield Road is not recommended. For an all paved route to the park travel from Nevada City, travel 11 miles north on highway 49 toward Downieville. Turn right on Tyler Foote Road from Highway 49 and follow the main paved road to the park. The main road changes names a few times from Tyler Foote Road to Cruzon Grade Road to Back Bone Road. Turn right on Derbec Road then right on North Bloomfield Road. You will stay on paved roads all the way to the park. These are not high-speed roads. The park is 26-miles (50 min drive time) from Nevada City."

Activities and tours of North Bloomfield in season. Parking charged. Campground and a few cabins available in season. Contact the Friends of North Bloomfield & Malakoff Diggins at this website:

<https://malakoffdigginsstatepark.org>

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=494

The Hendy Giant. Hydraulic Mining Water Cannon at Malakoff Diggins State Park in California Ben Franske, Wikimedia Commons.



**THE HENDY GIANT. HYDRAULIC MINING WATER CANNON
AT MALAKOFF DIGGINGS STATE PARK, NEVADA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

Far West Reservoir / Camp Far West
8176 Camp Far West Road
Wheatland, CA 95692
530-633-0803

39°03.546' N 121°18.40333' W

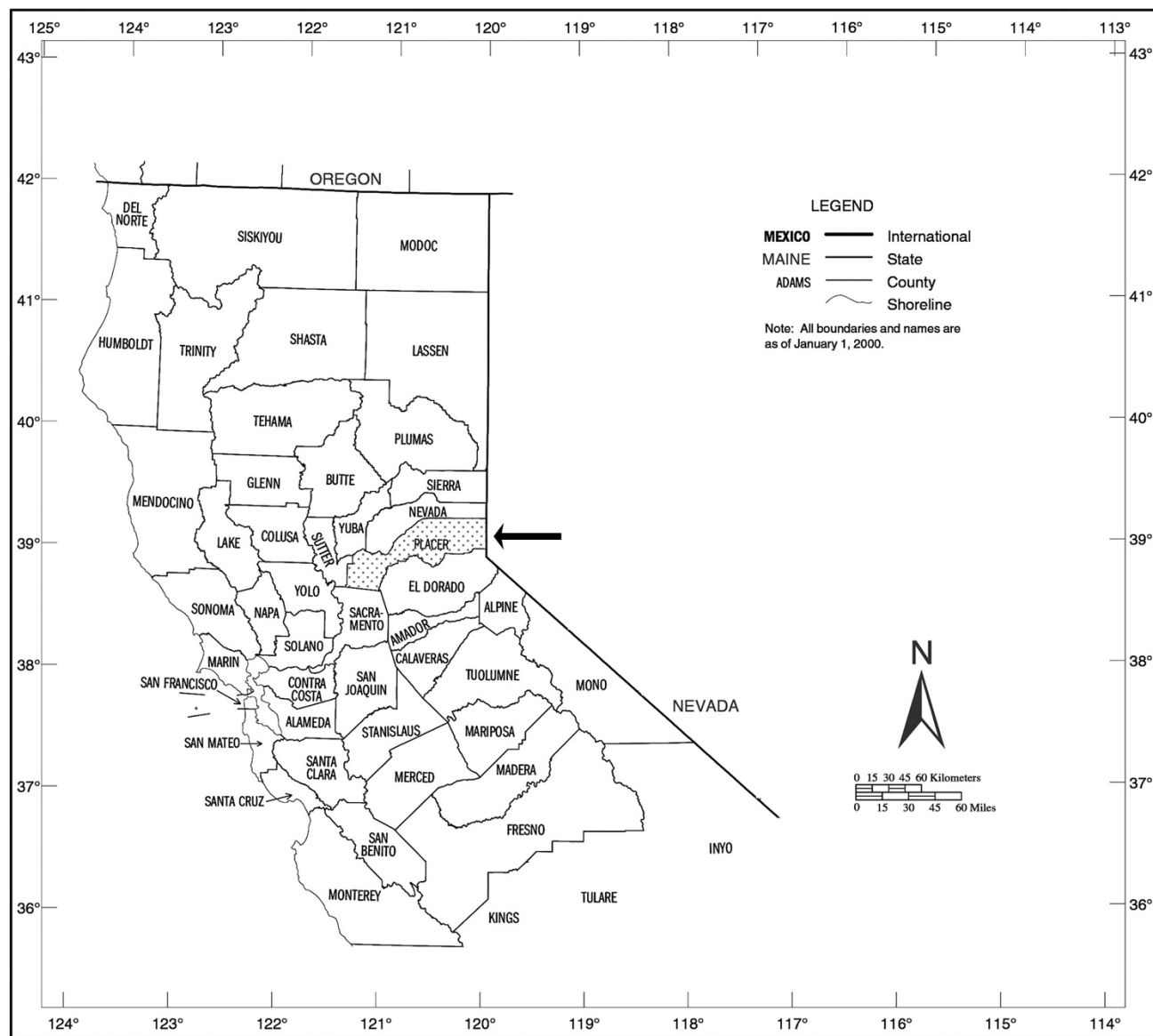
Bring your boat! Boating across this lake allows access to some otherwise inaccessible shoreline of the Bear River. It's a twenty to thirty-minute scoot across the water from the Camp Far West North Shore boating ramp. A typical shallow draft fishing boat will have no problem reaching a fair distance up the Bear. It depends on the water level with the end of summer being best. Rapids will defeat progress at some point but then one can tie up and start hiking. Little chance of being bothered here.

My only trip with my mining partner Dan and his borrowed boat produced little gold but I thought we were getting close. We were finding heavies like old D-cell batteries and lead fishing weights in many cracks where we creviced. A few gravel bars presented themselves for panning. Camping for a few days would permit much better exploration.

“Camp Far West Reservoir also called Camp Far West Lake, is located at the junction of Placer, Nevada and Yuba counties. Both Beale Air Force Base and the Spenceville Wildlife Area lay directly to the north of the lake. The lake's location makes it easily accessible by coming from Nevada City, Grass Valley and Western Nevada County along with Sacramento, Roseville or the Yuba City/Marysville area.”

<http://www.nevadacounty.com/camp-far-west-reservoir/>

Placer County, CA (Auburn)



Pioneer Mining Supplies

878 High Street
Auburn, CA 95603
530-823-9000

38°54.085' 121°04.15500' W

The Willis couple now runs the shop, old-timers like me remember Frank and the old stores. Great advice on the local area. I do not know how Pioneer stays in business with dredging

outlawed in California and the nearby Auburn State Recreation Area closed to everything but hands and pans. No metal detecting. It's a testament to their grit and determination that they keep going in this hostile environment. Online, too, so visit if you can through the web. There are scattered parcels of BLM land open along some forks of the American River; inquire.

<https://www.pioneermining.com>

Auburn has nice cafes and at one time a great used bookstore. Make sure to stop by the old Courthouse to see a wonderful gold specimen exhibit, nicely shown in a period era safe. Listed below.

The Placer County Museum

101 Maple Street
Auburn, CA 95603
530-889-6500

38°53.800' N 121°04.615' W

Great little museum in a photogenic old courthouse building. Bring your wide angle or fisheye lens. Great gold display. No fee. The parking lot on weekends is a meetup place for many hiking groups. Call ahead to check on hours. Traffic is often busy and you can easily get mixed up trying to find the right streets in Auburn. Plan extra time for getting confused.

<https://www.placer.ca.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Placer-County-Museum-84>

The Auburn State Recreation Area / The Folsom State Recreation Area

Hands and pans. Lovely country to walk or bike through, now off-limits for collecting. A poison oak fest if you are not careful. High quality slate in much of the area, commercially mined at one time. I did fifteen years of prospecting here when it was allowed and parking free. A day use fee is now charged and expensive, vehicle security terrible at many trailheads, and an anger against mining by every government official connected to the SRA. This is actually Bureau of Reclamation land but the Bureau has turned over management duties to the California State Department of Parks and Limited Recreation. I never saw a ranger in the areas where I collected as they stay close to their vehicles. Citizen patrols are on horses but rarely seen and always on trails.

These were my favorite spots:

38°55.285' N 120°59.698' W– (Nearest trailhead Quarry Trail parking lot) Good crevice spot on the Middle Fork of the American River. Bedrock outcropping on river, rock easily broken apart. Accessible by a one-hour hike in on the Quarry Trail, best method is by mountain bike. That should take only twenty-five minutes if you are in decent shape. Work the river early since the water level will come up in the afternoon from a dam producing power upstream.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Park any vehicle on Highway 49 itself, not in the Quarry Trail Parking lot where it may be hidden from view. Organized thieves are at work near Auburn. They look for people leaving their vehicles and then move in. Look for “glass puddles” wherever you park, these are marks of recent break-ins. People at the State Park Headquarters building nearby will not help with a break-in or investigate, they’ll just give you papers to fill out.

38°52.480' N 121°03.390' W (Nearest trailhead, Maidu Drive) Decent colors and small flakes in river shoulder or bank. Look for my old pick marks in the clay. Extremely difficult walk in along the river. No shade. Gold tied up in rock hard clay. Requires pounding the clay into powder to pan. Do not attempt to take a shortcut by going down the cliff to the collecting area, you will die.

38°52.343' N 121°03.9716' W (General area – nearest trailhead, Maidu Drive) – Gold in quartz possible in drift mine tailings on steep hillsides. The ancient river channel of the American north fork crops out here for a few hundred yards. Numerous drift mines with many tailings on the downhill slope. Look for The Little Banner Mine on Mindat.org to get a sense of the area. Poison oak everywhere. And, again, no collecting allowed, especially metal detectors. But I am not your Mom.

Don Robinson has written many, many detailed articles on prospecting in the Auburn SRA for the International California Mining Journal or ICMJ. Most know it just as The Journal. A subscription to the Journal gets you access to these articles on hunting the Auburn SRA.

<https://www.icmj.com>

Let me know if you have a recent, positive experience in either of these SRAs and I will report it.

Resources

Ferris, Lynch, and Toner. *American River Canyon Hikes* (Auburn, California: Auburn State Recreation Area Canyon Keepers, 2007) Good maps in this title, since revised.

<https://www.canyonkeepers.org/page5.html>

Robinson, Don. *The American River: The North and Middle Forks*. (Foresthill, California: Don’s Mining Office, 1991) An excellent map of the Auburn SRA produced by Don Robinson. It was once available at Pioneer Mining Supplies in Auburn. Inquire.

Bear River Park & Campground

2500 Campground Road
Colfax, CA 95713
530-886-4901 Parks Division

Excellent place to try out a sluice and panning. Not much gold but a learning place with good access and camping. Placer County has raised the rates recently on camping which may be good. Less riff-raff. Day use area free. If you want to experience the Bear in a completely different way, read my entry on the Far West Campground in the Nevada County chapter.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

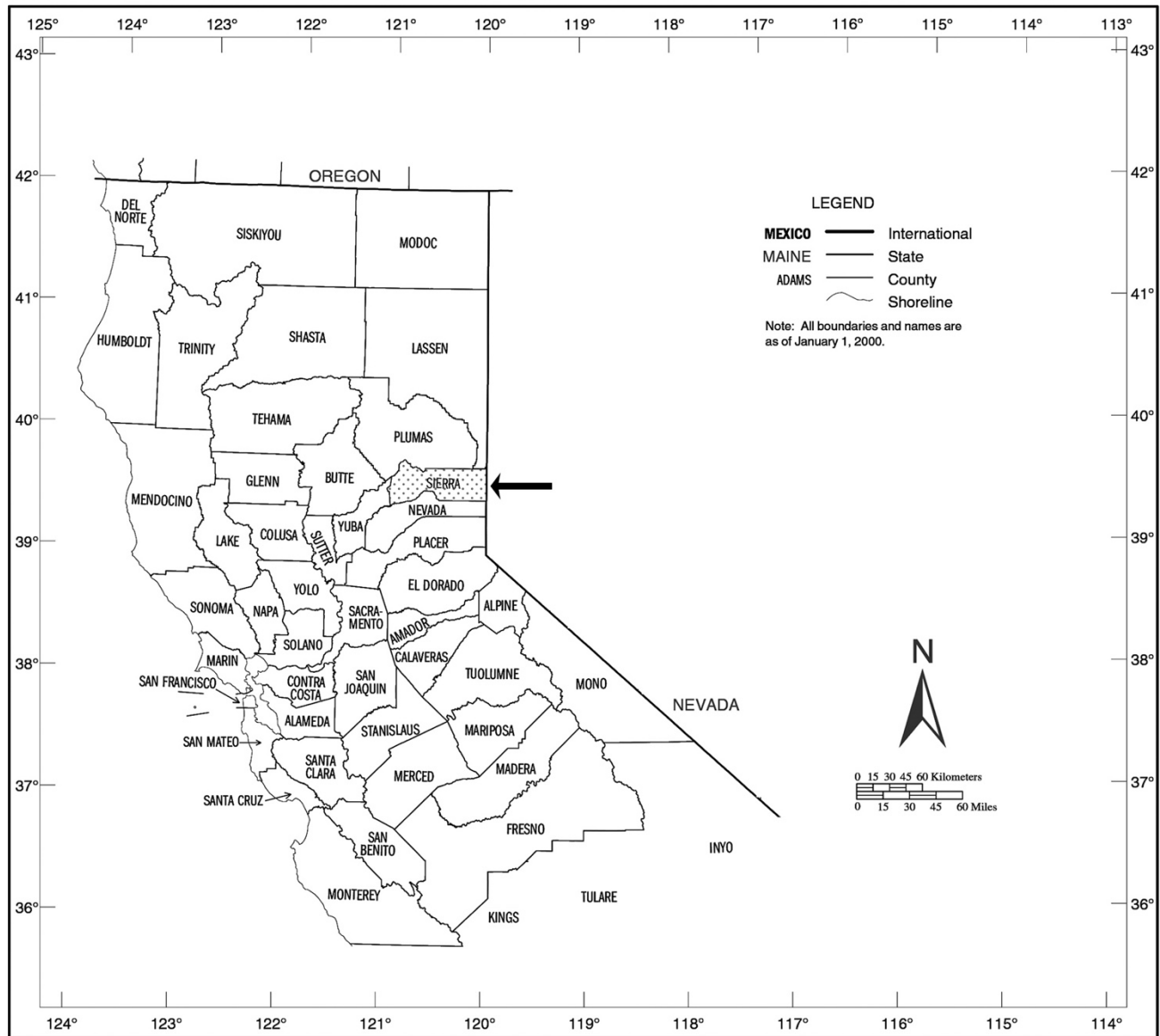
In general:

<https://www.placer.ca.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Bear-River-Park-Campground-8>

Online reservation website:

<https://secure.rec1.com/CA/placer-ca/catalog/index?>

Sierra County, CA (Downieville)



Notable

A few comments on the Nevada/Yuba/Sierra County area. I've helped with dredging on private land on Oregon Creek near Camptonville and on the middle fork of the Yuba near the Our House Dam. It's pretty country and rustic attractions abound. The Oregon Creek Covered Bridge is just off Highway 49 past North San Juan. Yes, a covered wooden bridge. Little museums are here and there, I mention two below.

Downieville is where my mining partner Dan once saw fire under water. During a raging winter storm, Dan witnessed boulders half the size of houses tumble down the Yuba, sparking wildly as they rolled and ground over each other. The water was alive with lightning.

Downieville Museum

330 Main Street
Downieville, CA 95936
530-289-3506
530-289-3423

39°33.636' N 120°49.640' W

May through October. Call ahead. Closed or not, go to Downieville.

<https://www.sierranevadageotourism.org/content/downieville-museum/sie4cdedbd27211e5fc4>

Kentucky Mine Museum

100 Kentucky Mine Rd.
Sierra City, CA 96125
530-862-1310

39°34.353' N 120°37.32500' W

Operating full size stamp mill. Gold mine tour. Fee charged. Memorial Day to Labor Day.

<https://www.sierracountyhistory.org/kentucky-mine-historic-park-and-museum>

The Original Sixteen to One Mine

Mailing address:
PO Box 909
Alleghany, CA 95910

Office address:
527 Miners Street
Alleghany, CA 95910

530-287-3223
530-287-3455

Legendary mine. Bucket list tour. The 16 to One produces extraordinarily beautiful gold specimens. The gold usually resides in an almost perfectly white quartz matrix. I've always wanted to take a tour of the mine and never got a chance. Tours by appointment only, arrangements may need weeks or months to arrange, depending on the mine's schedule. A group might make more sense to the mine when booking than a lone individual. They are attempting their best to accommodate wheelchairs for part of the mine.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Michael Miller is the long-suffering Director, President & CEO of the Sixteen to One. For a small, independent company, abiding the inspections, permits, and regulations for operating a hard rock mine in California are absolutely staggering, pernicious, and financially killing. The compliance side is probably harder to complete than the mining. Whatever money you spend on a tour or at their website for a specimen (when available), know that it is going toward hard-working miners dedicated to keeping heritage gold mining alive.

Follow the directions to Alleghany as described on the map at their website. Bring along hardcopy maps of the area as well. Sierra County is thinly populated, you can drive dozens of miles without seeing anyone to help with directions. Land is a crazy quilt patchwork of private property and USFS managed ground. Do not attempt any prospecting in the area without thorough research. Valley Prospectors of San Bernardino, Inc. has a claim near Downieville. They're listed in my Southern California Chapter.

<http://www.origsix.com/tmarticle.asp?id=330>

Our House Dam / Middle Fork of The Yuba

39°25'02.5"N 121°00'45.3"W – intersection of Ridge Road and Our House Dam Road

Possible collecting site, especially for metal detecting and sluicing in mid to late summer. Yuba County Water District managed, although technically Bureau of Reclamation land. Dam site areas prohibit claims, leaving rockhounding allowed if permitted by the agency managing the ground. BLM Surface Management Maps for this area (listed below) show these so called “power withdrawals.” Check with the Yuba County Water District before going if rockhounding is still permitted, they have had terrible problems with trash being left behind by campers. Unattended vehicle security poor. Our House Dam Road is paved to the parking lot near the river but amazingly steep. It will burn out weak brakes. Locals will know you are down there.

The access road is Our House Dam Road. When I last visited it was unsigned and below the grade of Ridge Road. If proceeding east on Ridge Road, turn back if you have gone more than two miles from the fire station. Turn back, look again. Some online map services don't show the road at all. Websites reporting this location are inaccurate. There may be a locked gate at the start of the road depending on activity at the dam. My mining partner Dan got decent gold while dredging when it was allowed in California. But he had a five-inch dredge and moved a lot of gravel. Ground is immediately claimed downstream from the dam which is odd since no replenishment from the surrounding hills can make it past the dam.

BLM's South Yuba Recreation Area

This area encompasses a number of possible collecting sites:

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/south-yuba-river>

I don't like the element at the Yuba along Highway 49. As the kids say, there is a bad vibe. I haven't prospected the numerous other areas shown at the link above.

Cell phone service is spotty throughout this rugged territory and signs few and far between. I once got so thoroughly lost in this region that I beat a retreat back to my Nevada City motel to regroup. More maps help but be prepared for everything not on a map.

These BLM Surface Management Maps show land status well but not small roads. Each name is the title on an individual map:

Lake Almanor, Susanville, Yuba City, Truckee, Portola, Chico

<https://www.blm.gov/media-center/public-room/california/public-room-maps-sale>

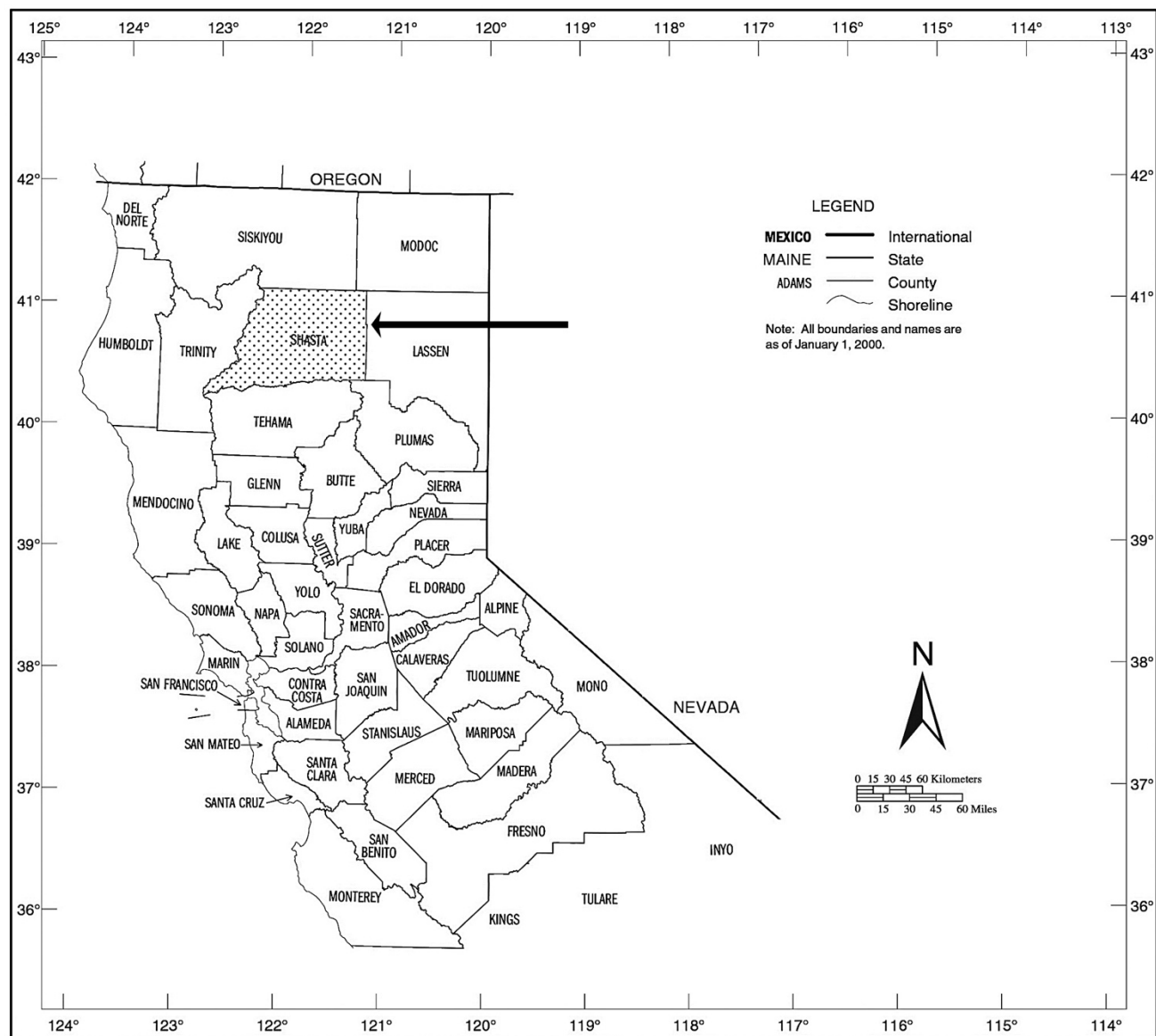
United States Forestry Service Maps display smaller roads better than BLM maps but these USFS maps cover bigger areas, making it difficult to show small details:

Plumas National Forest, Tahoe National Forest

<https://www.nationalforestmapstore.com/>

Unfortunately, I don't know of any good road atlas for the Northern Mother Lode. Preplan with what you have and use Google Earth as well

Shasta County, CA (Redding)



The Miner's Cache

1600 E. Cypress Avenue #8
Redding, CA 96002
530-410-3122

40°34.313' N 122°20.520' W

“We have over 40 years-experience in mining — and even scratched out a living as professional gold dredgers in the early thru mid 1980s. We also have over 40 years-experience in the use of metal detectors and are continually expanding that knowledge.” I visited several years ago and wanted to go this year. Alas, entire trip cancelled due to the virus.

<https://theminerscache.com>

Howell's Dive Shop

1426 Eureka Way

Redding CA 96001

530-241-1571

40°35.268' N 122°23.571' W

“Northern California’s one-stop center for all your diving and mining needs

Open at the original Redding location since 1952, Howell’s is one of the oldest dive shops in the United States. Bud and Ray Howell began diving the Sacramento River for gold in 1959 and became a Scubapro dive equipment dealer in 1965. In the years since, Howell’s has expanded their line to include the latest in diving and mining equipment and is anxious to share this rich history with others seeking to explore the exciting underwater world.”

Another shop not visited. I will when California is no longer locked down.

<https://howellsdiveshop.com/>

Randy's Rock Shop

18293 Clear Creek Road

Redding, CA 96001

By appointment. Looks more like a rock yard.

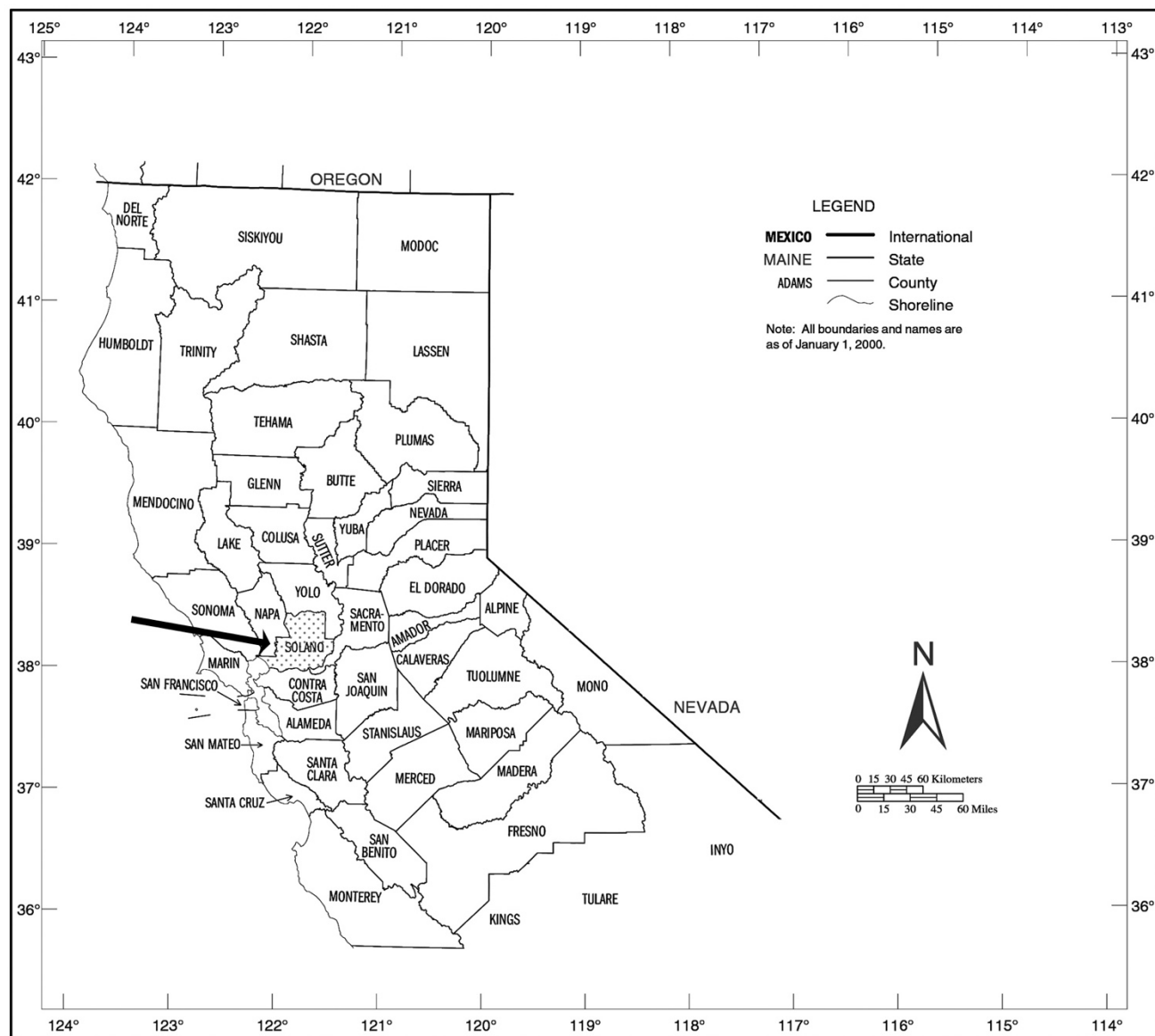
<http://vadertactical.com/rock-shop>

“Tons of agates and obsidian left.”

“Brazilian Agate, Bull Canyon Agate, Idaho Plume Agate, Agatized Coral from Borneo, Turritella Agate, Rose Quartz, Davis Creek Rainbow Obsidian, Gold Sheen Obsidian, Double Flow Obsidian, Mahogany Obsidian, And Much More.”

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Solano County, CA (Fairfield)



Consolidated Rock and Mineral

5115 Quinn Rd
Vacaville, California 95688
707-448-5525

38°23.675' N 121°55.615' W

I've been going here since the late 1960s when I was a kid. I'm not a kid any longer and I am still going. Ask if you don't find what you are looking for. Or if they have a less expensive specimen if you can't afford an item. They have many things underneath the counter or in back.

They keep their radioactive minerals off the main floor, for example, so be sure to ask to see them.

A little difficult to find because it is on a frontage road. A metal sided building tucked into oleanders. The parking lot won't be possible for RVs or trailers so you may have to walk in a ways. No public bathrooms. Use the facilities at the nearby fast food places before visiting. They're near I-80.

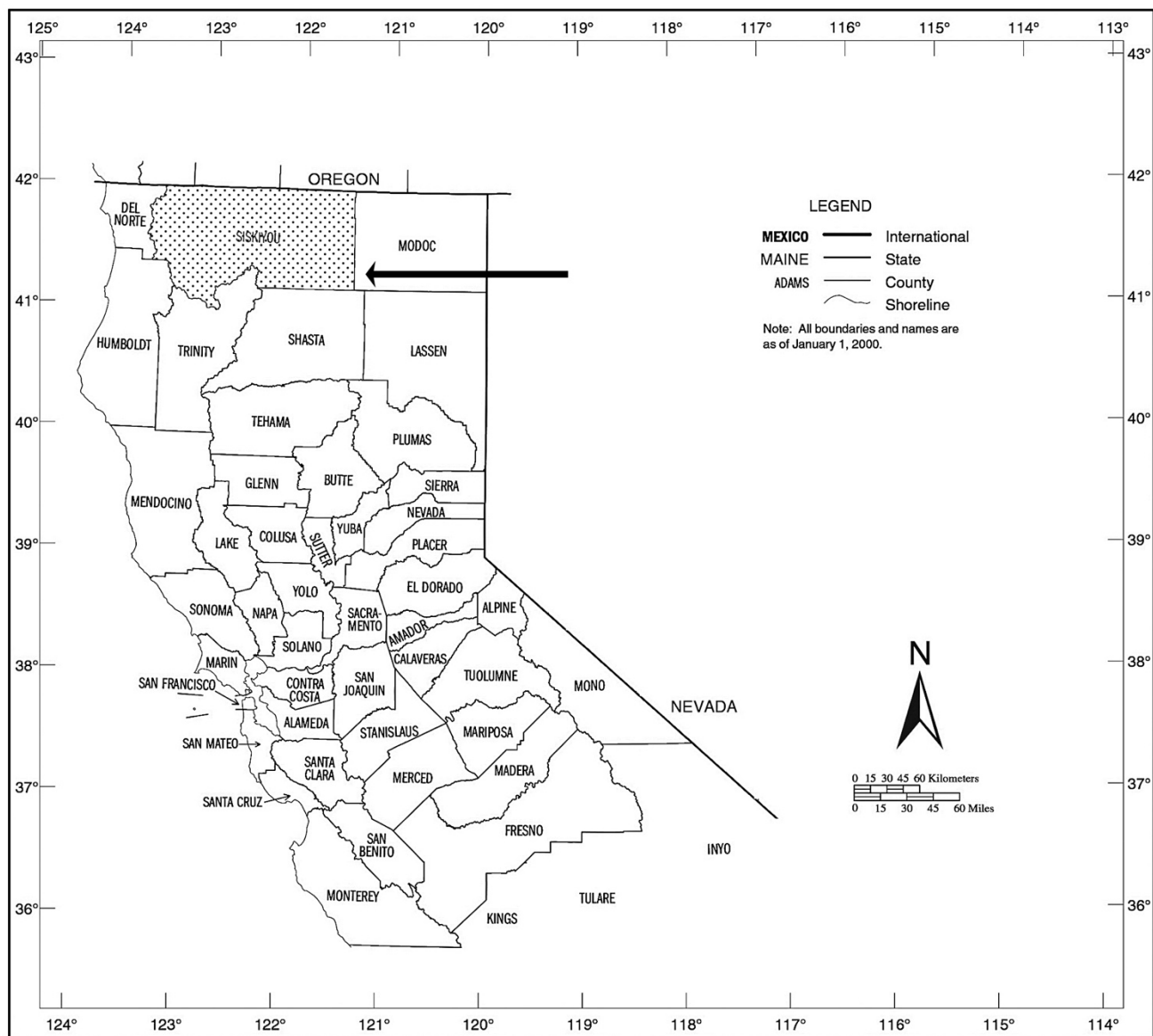
This URL might work, otherwise, Google:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Consolidated-Rock-Mineral-Shop-LI-C/136668809715266>

Google map link:

<https://goo.gl/maps/a5XdX6PM5KC5KRrQ6>

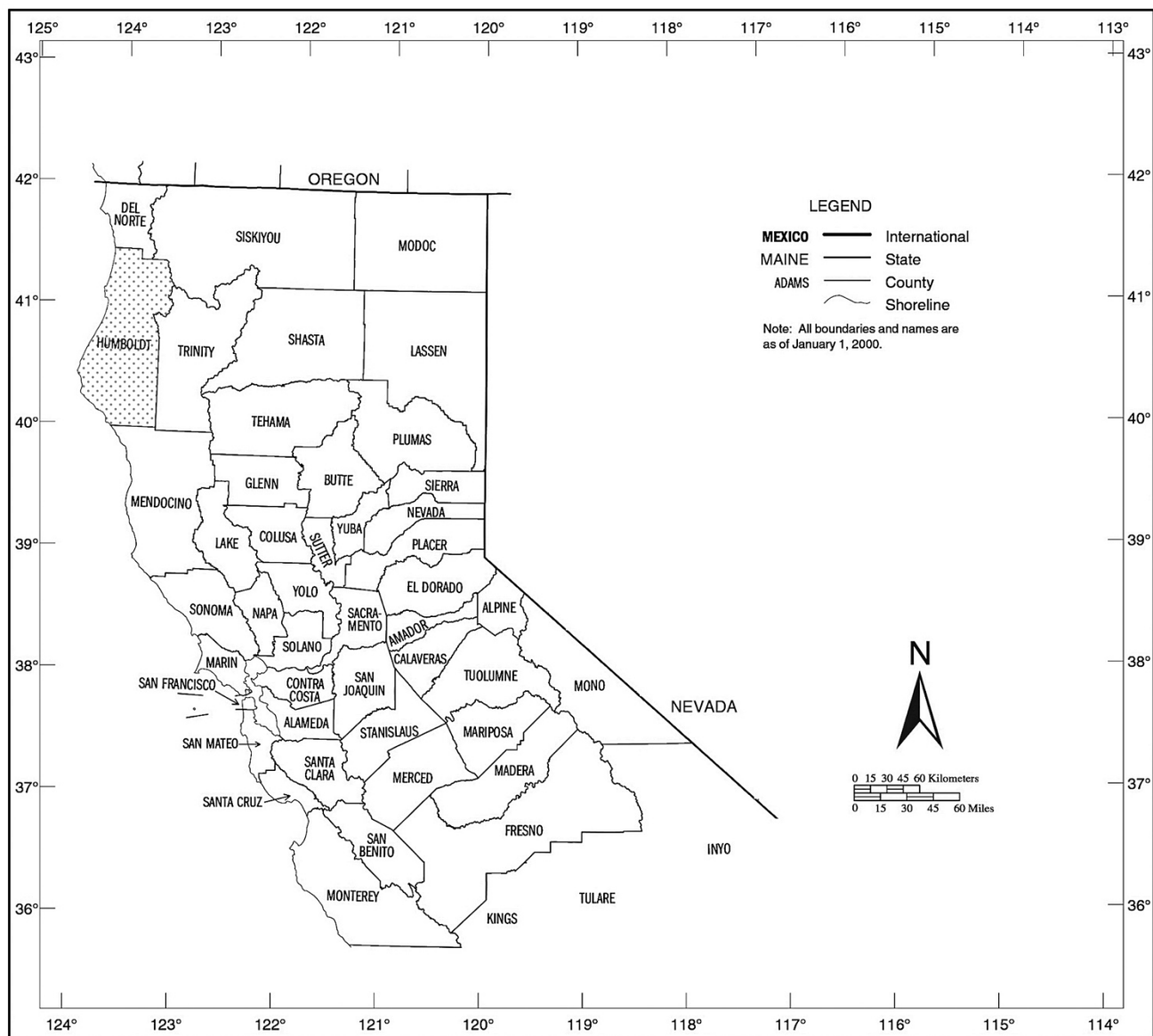
Siskiyou County (Yreka)



Beaver Creek Campground recommended for gold. Happy Camp was Dave McCracken's settlement or camp or whatever you called it in the 1980s and 1990s. He taught many people dredging and wrote great books on the same

.
<https://siskiyoucountycamping.blogspot.com/2008/05/beaver-creek-campground-nfs.html>

Humboldt County, CA (Eureka)



Chapman's Gem & Mineral Shop

66 Metropolitan Road
Fortuna, CA 95540
707-725-2714

40°31.475' N 124°09.041' W

Great rock shop. Local knowledge. They offered to let my brother Tim scan their material with a Geiger counter. Tim lived in Eureka and got a counter with the mad idea of scanning Eureka

beaches for radioactivity from Fukushima. Outside of Fortuna proper, this shop is best accessed by Highway 101. Here's a Google Maps link:

<https://goo.gl/maps/R1g8fLhxcBm5ieuf7>

Seascope Restaurant

1 Bay Street (at the pier, drive downhill as far as you can and then park in the gravel parking lot)
Trinidad, CA 95570
707-677-3762

41°03.373' N 124°08.861' W

The only place to have breakfast before going to the Redwoods. Some views of the working pier and the postcard perfect Trinidad Harbor. This area is mostly in the Trinidad Rancheria, so be respectful of tribal rights.

<http://www.seascope-trinidad.com/>



THE SEASCOPE RESTAURANT, TRINIDAD, CALIFORNIA

Patrick's Point State Park

4150 Patrick's Point Dr. (GPS coordinates easier to follow)
Trinidad, CA 95570 (The park is not in 95046 Trinidad!)
707-677-3570

41°08.005' N 124°09.176' W

“The park is 25 miles north of Eureka and 56 miles south of Crescent City.”

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

The most beautiful campground I have ever stayed in. High rainfall and a temperate climate keep vegetation lush or at least existing between campsites. You won't have complete privacy but you will have enough. Dense foliage and heavy air subdue sound throughout the park, save for the bark of sea lions and waves crashing on the shore. Which includes Agate beach.

Beach agates here are called resistant pebbles by some geologists. Their origin is lost in Deep Time. This quotation is from the State of California's .pdf file called Geological Gems of California State Parks.:

"The popular and prized agates of Agate Beach are resistant pebbles, washed and rounded by stream transport, deposited in sediments along the ancient coastline of North America, and exposed locally by modern wave action. The source of the pebbles is unknown, but they probably came from volcanic rocks in the ancestral Klamath Mountains to the north and east. Once transported to the ocean via the ancient stream and river system along this part of the California coast, the pebbles were further rounded and polished by constant washing and grinding against sand and each other in the modern surf zone."

Ah, but how does one find them after getting down to the beach on that rather sketchy and very steep trail? I've been totally frustrated in years past, sitting on the cold, wet gravel, pawing through hundreds after hundreds of little black and white stones. Nothing matched up to what I saw in the park's visitor center. The beach is magnificent and it is a fantastic place to find nothing but finding something is better. But I have been working on a plan for my next visit.

I'm taking two five-gallon buckets and a one-quarter inch screen or classifier. I have no interest in any agate that is smaller than a quarter inch. Using the second bucket as a scoop, I will pour beach gravel onto the classifier and then look over that material, much reduced in amount. I will then use a battery powered light box to test for translucency, the defining characteristic of thin agates. It will take patience, no matter the method, to find agates that hint of other colors. I have a premade light box that I got from Amazon for only \$25 dollars. Runs off a USB connection so I can power it with one of my small battery packs. I intend to find Agates when I get back.

Patrick's Point Drive is a frontage road for Highway 101. Get breakfast at the Seascap restaurant on the pier in Trinidad. Stock up on supplies at the town grocery store. Top off the tank at the gas station if it is operating. Find the frontage road and strike north with caution. Clear views ahead disappear behind blind turns. Very few places to pull out. Locals drive really fast. Area trailer parks have some camping, the few motels are serviceable. A-Listers can afford The Lost Whale. If you're staying there, listen for me at 6:00 AM. I'll be honking my horn as I drive back to Trinidad for breakfast at the Seascap, doing my best to disturb your luxe slumber.

Appropriate map link for Patrick's Point State Park:

<https://goo.gl/maps/7768YB5Rqh4NQkrB8>

The park's official website, noting that it is now closed to vehicular traffic. It is a *long* way from the Park Gate to Agate Beach. Best wait for the park to reopen.



**MATTOLE ROAD,
HUMBOLDT COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

to turn around for miles and miles. Countryside is gorgeous but it will take you hours to get to Highway 101. Go slow, it is a trip of a lifetime.

Unnamed Black Sands Beach

(At the north boundary of The Lost Coast)

Over the hill from Ferndale. Nearest town Petrolia. I have visited this beautiful and remote beach. Make sure your brakes are in excellent condition when you head down the hill to the beach. It is a killer.

40°24.968' N 124°23.853' W

Taking Mattole Road further into the interior will show you the tiny town of Petrolia and eventually Honeydew. That little hamlet usually has the most rain in California each year.

The roads in the interior to Highway 101 are extremely twisty and often one lane. Do not trailer something of any length or take a big RV. There won't be anywhere



**BLACK SAND BEACH, MATTOLE ROAD,
HUMBOLDT COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

Black Sands Beach in Shelter Cove

(At the south boundary of The Lost Coast)

865 Beach Road (nearest street address)

Whitethorn, CA 95589

40°02.716' N 124°04.630' W – trailhead

Bring close toed shoes as the sand is very coarse. Check your dog's feet after the beach as the sand may irritate them.

There are two vehicle areas to the trailhead. The lower area is for loading/unloading the vehicle and actual parking is not allowed. This is akin to an airport. The actual parking area is up the hill from the loading/unloading spot where you'll have a great view. Restrooms are located at the vehicle parking lot. A short but rather steep walk will be required between the two areas.

Ocean Safety Guidelines from Pointcabrillo.org

Introduction

Keep yourself, your family, friends, and pets safe by following these guidelines. Prevention, not rescue, is the best solution to accidents that may occur abruptly and with surprise.

Avoid standing on or near the edge of any cliff or bluff. Sudden erosion can dump you into the sea.

Never go near or into the ocean alone. An adult should accompany a child even on rocks and beaches.

Watch for oversized waves fifteen to thirty minutes before approaching water or rocks. Use a designated spotter to monitor waves and strong currents.

Proper clothing is essential: life jackets are recommended for children when on rocks, tide pooling or the beach.

Beware the sleeper, sneaker, or rogue wave. These can appear without warning, often surging upon the beach or rocks with deadly force. They are unpredictable; occur often and may come in series.

Assume that strong waves, especially during high tides, can reach you across jetties and headlands.

Avoid exposed rocks, jetties, and headlands during and after storms.

People who fall from the bluffs or are swept out to sea seldom survive. Water temperature is in the low to mid 50-degree range. Hypothermia will happen in 10 to 20 minutes.

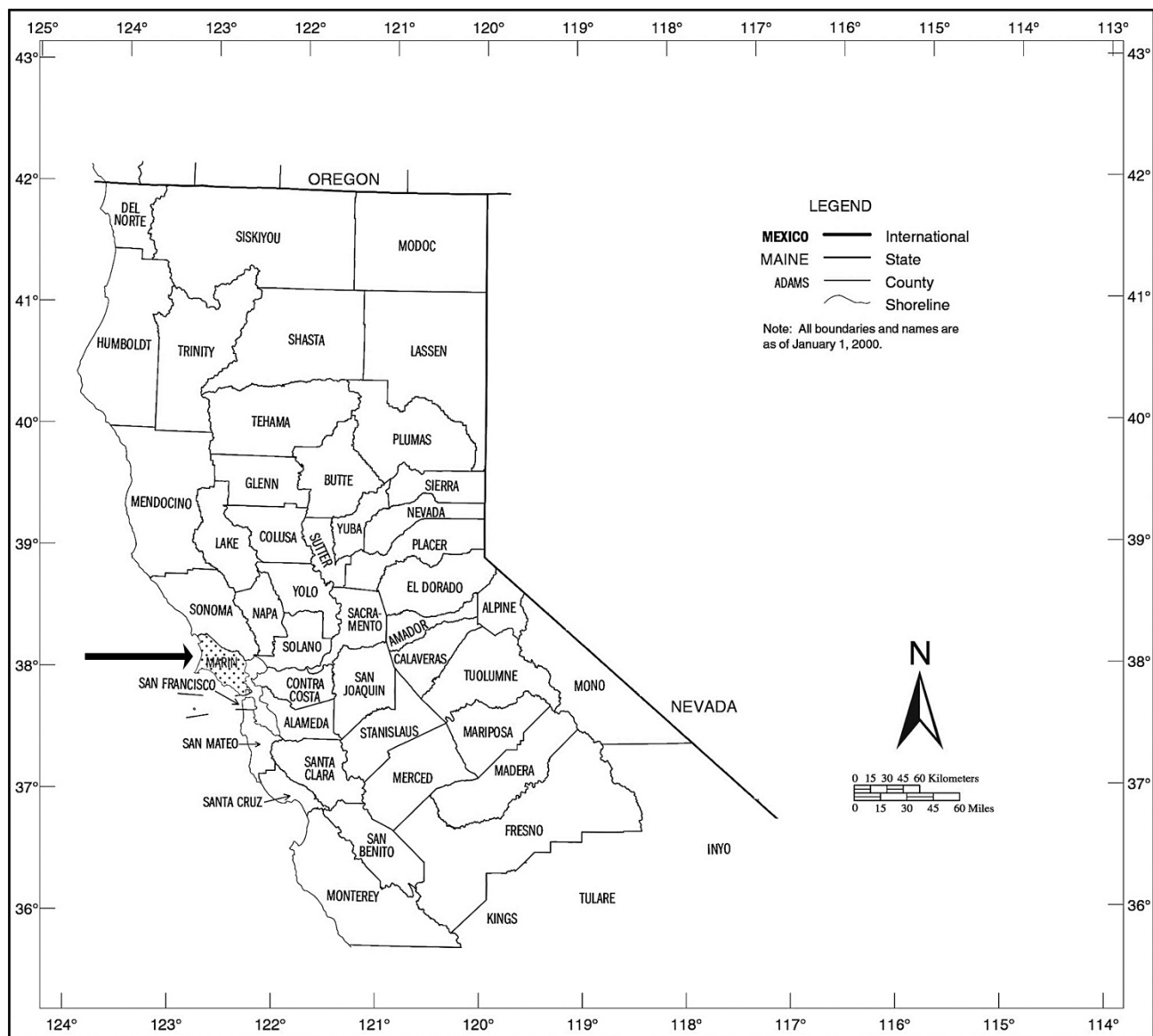
Safety Rules To Remember

Never turn your back on the ocean.
Keep children close to you.
Know when tides change.
Expect rapidly changing conditions.
Avoid slippery rocks.
Never beachcomb, fish, kayak, or dive alone.
Learn to swim.

A Personal Note

Do not attempt to rescue a dog lost in bad surf. They often paddle back. Don't lose your dog *and* a loved one.

Marin County, CA (San Rafael)



Angel Island

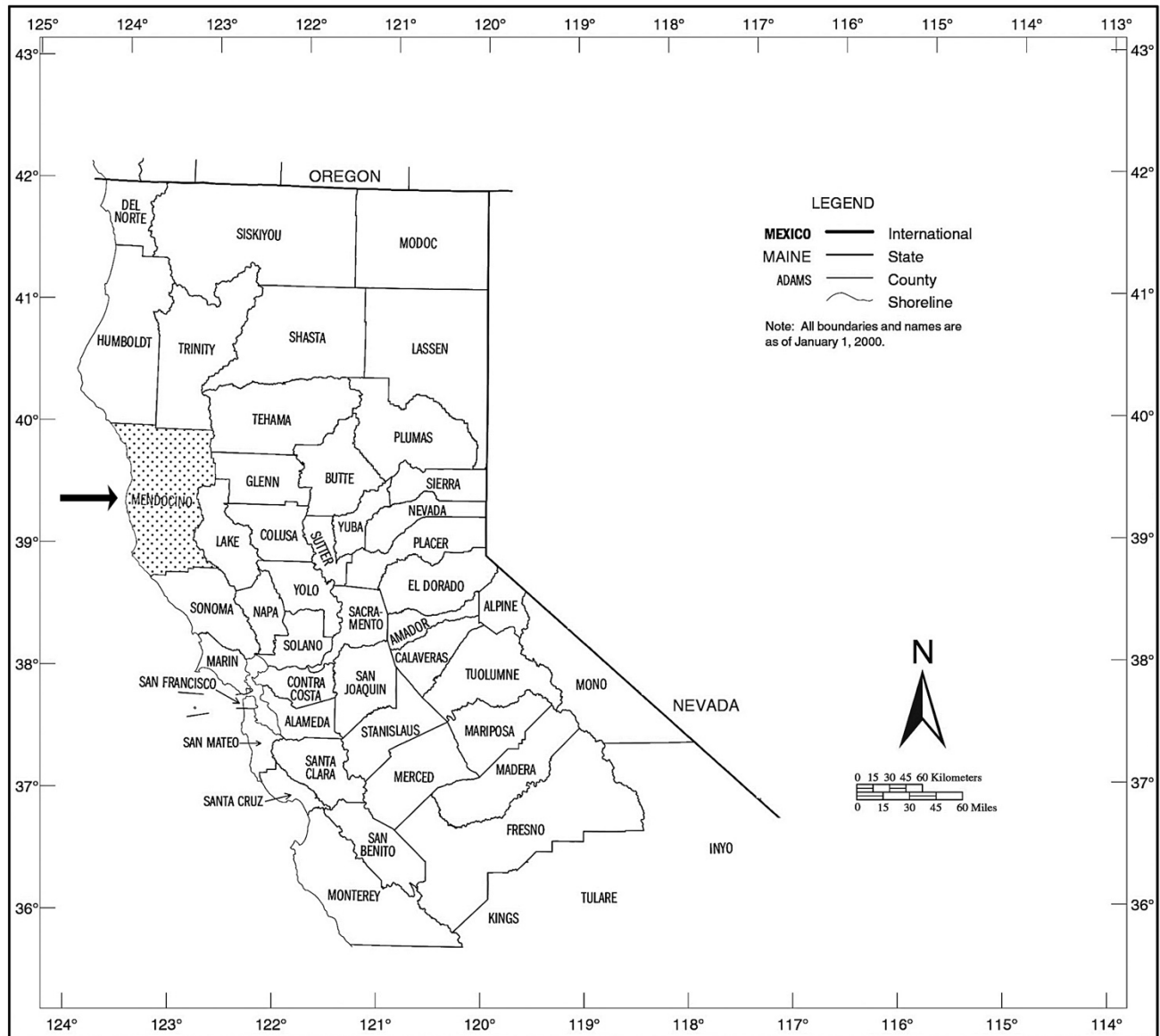
There is a beach for sea glass that I like on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay. Great place when fog prevents good views from the top of the island. I am told one can easily fake sea glass with a rock tumbler and that red is the rarest color. But you would know the difference if you did it yourself. Not a quality experience like searching the beach.

Angel Island Quarry Beach

37°51.609' N 122°25.236' W

Getting to Angel Island means taking a ferry and paying for it and your car parking. Both expensive. Most people want to charge up the highest hill on the island for the best view. You will not be able to see anything, though, with fog all around. Summer is the worst time for fog, October perhaps the clearest. Not bathrooms or cover if you hike all the way to top. Bathrooms nearby at Quarry Beach.

Mendocino County, CA



Mendo County is remote, pastoral, and wild along the coast. It is surprisingly agricultural with cattle out in the fields, usually kept in by fencing. Usually. Constantly curving and bending roads. Expect slow driving through the county.

Georges Geodes And Gems
600 S Main St, Willits, CA 95490
707-472-7412

39°24.376' 123°21.165'

<https://georges-geodes-and-gems.business.site>

Glass Beach

West Elm Street and Glass Beach Drive
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

Come for the lighthouse, stay for the beach glass.

Now part of California's MacKerricher State Park, this particular beach does not allow collecting. Happily, though, there are two other nearby beaches that do. This website gives complete details:

<https://inspiredimperfection.com/adventures/glass-beach/>

Some of the text:

“When the 1906 earthquake struck San Francisco, it shook the ground all the way north to Fort Bragg, causing brick buildings to collapse, wood-framed home to fall from their piers, and fire to break out. There was so much debris covering the city after the quake that the decision was made to just push the garbage over the edges of the cliffs into the ocean.”

“From 1906-1943, bulldozers simply pushed trash and everything else — cars, batteries, furniture, appliances, bottles, and cans — off the cliffs into the ocean at the foot of Pine Street. The dumping was moved to a new site from 1943-1949 and then moved once more to a site that was used from 1949-1967 when the town finally stopped dumping garbage into the ocean.”

“While the town assumed the ocean would sweep away their discarded trash, that wasn't the case. Unfortunately, the rock formations along the coast caused everything dumped into the ocean to stay on the beach and not get washed away. As the trash piles grew, they were burned, which has created a very rare and unique type of sea glass called fire glass.”

“Many years of crashing waves and rolling tidal action have repeatedly tumbled and pounded the glass pieces in the sand until they became the smooth, rounded, colorful, polished pieces of glass you see today sparkling in the sunlight on Fort Bragg's glass beaches.”

I have visited Fort Bragg many times and never inquired about sea glass. I am ashamed.

Rock Stop

1804 CA-128
Philo, CA 95466
707-895-2388

39°07.928' N 123°31.958' W

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Big on jade. “Northern California Mendocino Wine Country.”

<http://www.rockstop.com>

Rock Shop

17951 US-101

Hopland, CA 95449 (closest to Pieta)

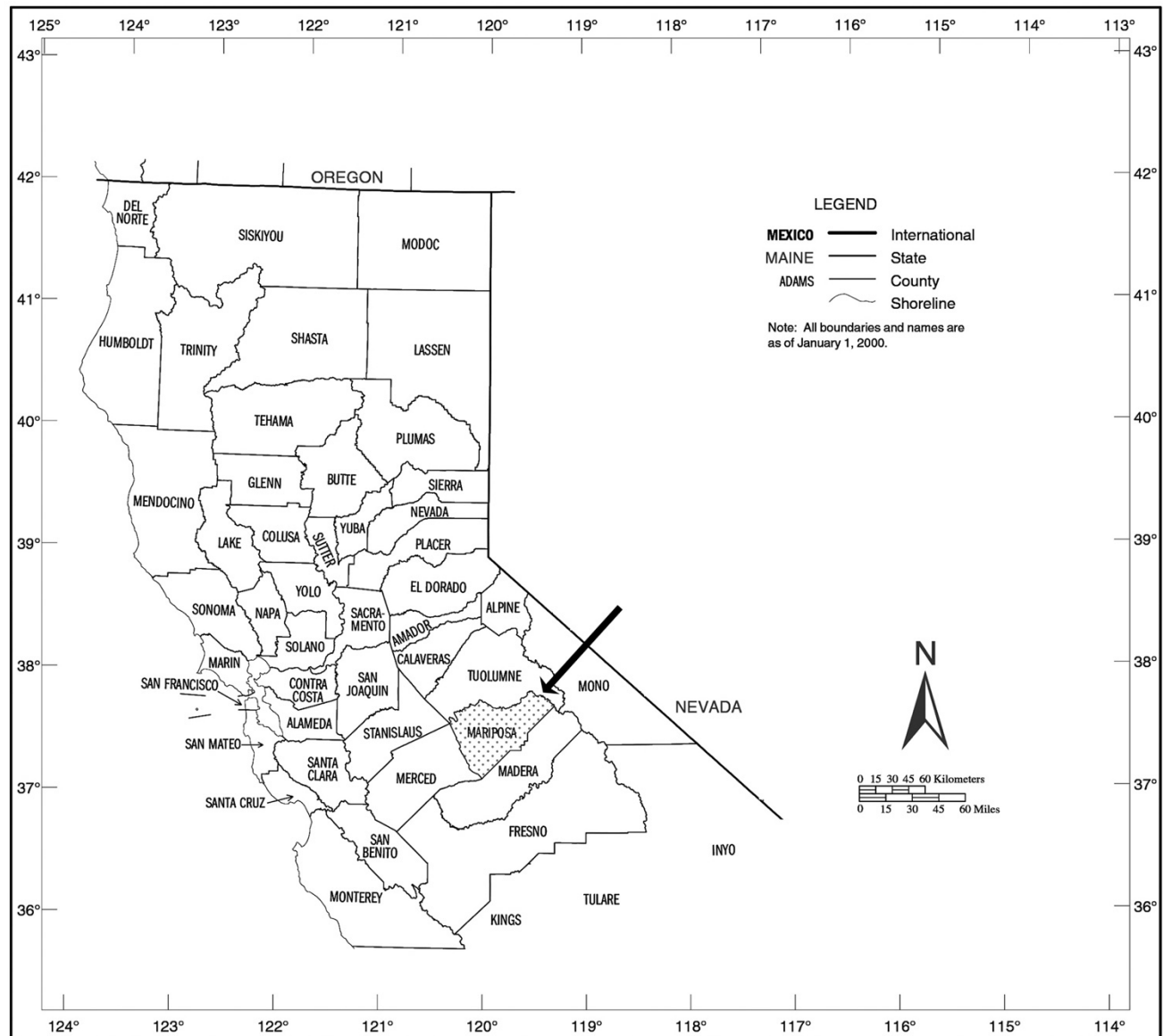
707-744-1897

38°55.653' N 123°03.330' W

No website and said to be hard to find open. Unofficial page below:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Rock-Shop/124243397657662>

Mariposa County, CA (Mariposa)



Stone Monument with Mariposite Rock

This is located at Cathey's Valley Park at the intersection of Highway 145 and Schoolhouse Road. About 11 miles west of Mariposa. One of the most elegant stone monuments you'll ever see.

Monument is here: N 37° 26.292 W 120°05.177

Dials Rock Shop

Michael Falloure
4008 Highway-140
Catheys Valley, CA 95306
209-966-2127

37°28.801' N 120°01.571' W

On Highway 140 going to Mariposa. This shop is below the grade of the highway, consequently, don't miss it if you are driving quickly. Mike is good peoples. And a miner. Good place for mariposite. Internet directions are confusing. This shop is not in the city of Mariposa.

<https://www.facebook.com/Dials-Rock-Fossil-Shop-1455179088037125/>

Not sure if the Facebook page reflects current activities.



DIALS ROCK SHOP, CATHEYS VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Mariposa Gem and Mineral Club

4994 7th Street
Mariposa, CA 95338
209-966-4367

The local rock and gem club and a good one. Has a small, smart, well done retail store in downtown Mariposa. Operates their shop in a motel. Meets at the California State Mining and Mineral Museum described below. Helped me with my Rock&Gem article on mariposite.

<http://mariposagemclub.org/contact/>

Mariposa Gem and Mineral Club – Retail Store

4994 7th Street
Mariposa, CA 95338.
209-966-4367

37°29.17167' N 119°57.941' W (Approximate)

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Nice store with many member's lapidary work and finds available. Best yet, local area guidance from anyone working the floor. Provided that you are, of course, not an idiot and only ask, "Where's the gold?" The store may take several trips around the block to find. Parking tough for anything big. Walking several blocks is definitely worth the time.

All Mother Lode communities are tight on parking and traffic is heavy on Highway 49, especially in the summer. Call to confirm days and hours.

<http://mariposagemclub.org/home/the-store/>



**MARIPOSA GEM AND MINERAL CLUB STORE,
MARIPOSA, CALIFORNIA**



Roughly polished slab of mariposite rock from the shop of the Mariposa Gem and Mineral Club in Mariposa.

California State Mining and Mineral Museum

Street address:

5007 Fairgrounds Road

Mariposa, CA 95338

Located inside the Mariposa County Fairgrounds

Mailing address:

P.O. Box 1192

Mariposa, CA 95338

209-742-7625

37°27.893' N 119°56.891' W

Good museum with a major caveat – no photography of any permanent display. Develop a good memory before this visit. A serious break-in and robbery a few years ago forced them to look hard at their security and the wisdom of publicizing their inventory. The staff, though, is

extremely helpful. Knowing I needed some pictures for my mariposite article, they took a big rock out of storage and rolled it into their office for me to photograph there. Limited days and hours. Call ahead.

Located inside the Mariposa County Fairgrounds which has plenty of parking for anything big.

https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=588

Merced River Recreation Management Area (BLM)

Briceberg Visitor Center

209-379-9414

The visitor center is located at the intersection of Highway 140 and the Merced River. Highway 140 leads to Yosemite from Mariposa. “Twelve (12) miles east on Highway 140 from the Mariposa Visitor Bureau stop sign.”

37°36.273' N 119°57.976' W

“The Merced River is a very popular swimming destination during the hot California foothill summers with some of the clearest swimming hole around. Gold panning and prospecting have never fallen out of favor since the 1850’s when this canyon had a large mining population.”

This management area includes chain of BLM managed campgrounds along the Merced offering opportunities for panning and sluicing and perhaps metal detecting. There is open ground here along with claims. Do your research and inquire at the visitor center. The map linked below contains section numbers and with any good GPS handheld you will be able to orient yourself. As river ground is always valuable, claim markers may be well built and prominent.

The Wild and Scenic River designation would limit mining activities to non-mechanized ones. Again, check with the Visitor Center or BLM to see how much of this Management Area comes under this designation. New claims can’t be filed in a Wild and Scenic Area, the current ones may have been grandfathered in since they existed before the 1987 establishment date.

Commercial rafting companies do not play nice with gold miners. Expect your sniping or sluicing to be reported to BLM, no matter how well you are in compliance. Commercial operators pay large license fees which make them think they own a river. Rafters and kayakers were always bothered by tie ropes to dredges. Although dredging in California hasn’t been legal for over a decade, bad blood remains.

Map of area with campgrounds and unimproved road leading to them:

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/merced-river>

Visitor Center open according to season:

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/briceburg-visitor-center>

Lake McClure / Bagby Recreation Area

37°36.585' N 120°08.068' W

Operated by the Merced Irrigation District. Their official website does not mention Bagby. Their FB page seems equally silent save for two pictures of the area:

<https://www.facebook.com/MercedIrrigationDistrict>

Online camping websites enable reserving a spot at Bagby but there is nothing official I can point to. I assume it is open to day use. Bagby is near the Highway 49 bridge over the Merced River. Doesn't seem to have any claims over its area at the time of this writing. This ground may be closed to mineral entry, that is, you can't claim here. This may be due to what is called a FERQ withdrawal which is common on lakes and rivers that have or may have a connection to power generation. Long subject. A few area rockhounds say there is an area known as Jade Cove. I'd look into that.

Mariposite Outcropping

Outstanding road cut near Highway 49 and Coulterville showing mariposite rock, one of the best road cuts in California.

The mariposite outcrop is here on road 132:

37°42.470' N 120°11.874' W

Traffic is heavy in this area so be careful. The Northern Mariposa County History Center is only a quarter of a mile away. Interesting stop. Across the street from the History center is a year-round creek that might be worth checking for mariposite if it is not in private hands.

The Meaning of Mariposite

Background to the article

In late November of 2016, I went back to California to help with horse sitting duties at an Amador County ranch. I traveled through the southern and central Mother Lode to get there. Along the way I investigated outcroppings and stories of mariposite, a rock said to sometimes contain gold.

As a longtime prospector I was eager to learn more about it, a potential ore I had no experience with. My prospecting has been confined to the northern Mother Lode and mariposite does not figure greatly there.

I found that mariposite could be ore, but it was most often lacking in gold. Instead, the green laced rock is principally used for lapidary work and as an ornamental stone in building projects.

I took several photographs and I also collected the story of a geologist who argues the California gold rush started with mariposite. Take a look at these photos and then read the article that follows.



THE
Meaning
of MARIPOSITE

Get to Know This Green Muscovite Mineral

"The historically famous Mother Lode of California consists of a mass of less continuous veins of gold deposits lying in a narrow belt that extends for 100 miles along the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Much of the production in this belt has been from gold-bearing quartz veins. However, one feature of mineralized country rock—immense persistent barren quartz veins, and extensive bodies of carbonated rock containing muscovite (a clayey mineral)—occurs in the southern part of the belt." (J.W. Kiser and F.C.W. Dodge, "Notes: Studies of Mariposite Bearing Rocks from the South Central Mother Lode, California," California Geology, September 1985)

Story and Photos by Thomas Farley

Mariposite? I was not familiar with it until last November when I got a call for help with ranch sitting at a horse farm in Plymouth, California. That's in Amador County, the middle of California's Mother Lode. My drive there would take me through the state's south and central gold country. As a prospector, I was eager to learn about any new "ore bodies". But mariposite turned out to be more than just another rock to run my gold detector over.

I soon learned that mariposite means different things to different people. To a builder, mariposite is an attractive, marbledlike ornamental stone. To a lapidary, mariposite is quartz that is flecked or streaked with dark-green mica. To the rockhound, high-quality mariposite is beautiful and collectible. And of interest to everyone, mariposite may be the rock that started the California gold rush.

Rock & Gem Magazine

The rock at the Coulamville road stop is actual Wilburton and Lander, several gold-quartz, antimony-mariposite rock.

TOP LEFT: This road trail in Nevada and the Wilburton River is composed entirely of mariposite.

16 www.rockngem.com

17



Pig fashioned from mariposite. (My collection) And an ebay picture of gold in mariposite.

The Meaning of Mariposite by Thomas Farley

March, 2017, Rock&Gem magazine

Also available at this link:

<https://www.rockngem.com/the-meaning-of-mariposite/>

The historically famous Mother Lode of California consists of a more or less continuous series of gold deposits lying in a narrow belt that extends for 120 miles along the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Much of the production in this belt has been from gold-bearing quartz veins. However, ore bodies of mineralized country rock — immense persistent barren quartz veins, and enormous bodies of carbonated rock containing mariposite (a chromium high-silica mica) — prevail in the southern part of the belt.” R.W. Kistler and F.C.W. Dodge (1983)

Mariposite? I was not familiar with it until last November when I got a call for help with ranch-sitting at a horse farm in Plymouth, California. That’s in Amador County, the middle of California’s Mother Lode. My drive there would take me through California’s south and central gold country. As a prospector I was eager to learn about any new “ore bodies.” But mariposite turned out to be more than just another rock to run my gold detector over.

I soon learned mariposite means different things to different people. To a builder, mariposite is an attractive, marble-like ornamental stone. To a lapidarist, mariposite is quartz flecked or streaked with dark green mica. To the rockhound, high quality mariposite is beautiful and collectable. And of interest to everyone, mariposite may be the rock that started the California gold rush.

A Monday morning found me driving from my home town of Las Vegas to Fresno, some four hundred miles. The next day I traveled north on Highway 99 to Merced. At that point I headed east to Mariposa, which marks the southern end of the Mother Lode. As I drove through the oak woodland I thought about what I had read on mariposite. I started at the beginning. What did Mariposa mean?

Mariposa is Spanish for butterfly. The name of the town and county go back to the naming of Mariposa Creek. There, in 1806, Padre Muñoz, traveling with the Gabriel Moraga expedition, recorded at the creek butterflies in “great multitude, especially at night and morning.” He remarked that “One of the corporals of the expedition got one in his ear, causing him considerable annoyance and no little discomfort in its extraction.” Later, John C. Frémont’s land grant was named Las Mariposas and both city and county took the English spelling appellation in 1850. A geology relation soon followed.

In 1868, Benjamin Silliman Jr., a Yale chemistry professor, collected a green micaceous material from the Josephine gold mine in Mariposa county and named it mariposite. That word represents a common name, an unofficial working title. The International Mineral Association or IMA does not recognize mariposite as a distinct mineral by itself. Instead, experts classify it as a variety of Muscovite, which has long enjoyed mineral status. Muscovite is the most common form of mica.

(Please note. For a comprehensive look at the Mica group, read Bob Jones' excellent article in the August, 2014 issue of Rock&Gem.)

Simon and Schuster's Guide to Rocks and Minerals does not mention mariposite. Instead, its existence is only hinted at under the Muscovite variety of fuchsite. Geology of the Sierra Nevada also carries no index entry for mariposite. Instead, its Muscovite page discusses mariposite only in passing. Minerals.net, however, lists mariposite as a distinct variety of Muscovite, along with five other individual varieties. This confusion started early on.

According to Harry Rieman, writing in the November, 1972 Lapidary Journal, it was determined after Silliman's findings were published that his material was the same as fuchsite. Something already named. Since a first name takes precedence, most authorities were reluctant to use Silliman's. But the mariposite appellation has stuck hard and is now in common use.

To complete this discussion, many people refer to mariposite as the rock in which it is found. This is usually quartz. But the rock can appear as marble if it has a large amount of dolomite. In that form, mariposite rock makes for a distinctive ornamental stone. A higher percentage of quartz, on the other hand, gives mariposite rock a translucent character which is quite attractive. To sum up, you can have your mariposite in two ways. As green flecks of mica shot through a rock or as the rock itself. Yes, but what about gold?

Mariposite is often associated with gold. Indeed, mariposite rock may sometimes have tiny inclusions of gold within it. As Peabody tantalizingly put it in his 1991 California Geology article, "Occasionally mariposite rock contains networks of gold-and iron sulfide-bearing quartz veinlets and stringers." Sierra foothill geologist, George A. Wheeldon, brought even more attention to mariposite in that 1991 article. He asserted mariposite rock was the source of gold that James Marshall found in 1848 in Coloma on the south fork of the American River. Wheeldon identified a 100 foot mariposite outcropping four miles upstream from the old location of Marshall's sawmill.

It is conceivable, Wheeldon concluded, that Marshall's nugget weathered out of the mariposite ore he located. The outcropping sits atop the Big Canyon drainage just north of Placerville. Having extensively prospected the three forks of the American River, as well as their canyons, I was concerned. Had I overlooked detecting on mariposite? Did I miss it because I didn't recognize it? I would certainly have to learn to identify it on my trip.

At about 11 miles from Mariposa I came to the county run Cathey's Valley Park at the intersection of Highway 145 and Schoolhouse Road. It showcases one of the most elegant stone monuments you'll ever see. Even knowing what little I did, it was apparent this monument used the best sourced Mariposite.

Monument is here: 37°26.292' N 120°05.177' W

Continuing east I passed Dials Rock and Fossil Shop, closed at the moment but open when I returned Friday. A Mariposa Gem and Mineral Club sign also went by. I connected to Highway 49 at Mariposa, the beginning of the Mother Lode. Mariposa bills itself as the gateway to

Yosemite. But the California Mining and Mineral Museum in Mariposa is the biggest draw to rockhounds. It boasts a 13.8 pound crystalline gold specimen discovered in 1864 called the Fricot “Nugget.” Closed on Tuesday, I would visit when I returned Friday.

Many excellent geology guides exist for California’s Highway 49. Particularly good is Roadside Geology and Mining History of the Mother Lode by Gregg Wilkerson and David Lawler. It covers the southern Mother Lode: Mariposa, Toulumne, and Calaveras Counties. It’s a free download. Just Google it. A tip. I strongly recommend a navigation system for your vehicle. Especially in the middle Mother Lode, Highway 49 is not a continuous north/south route. There are detours, abandoned sections, jogs, and bypasses. A current, conventional road atlas is also a good idea. It allows you to navigate better and to let others show you where points of interest are. No one has GPS coordinates in their head; having something in hardcopy lets people share landmarks and locations. But now, back to the road.

While driving through town I saw large green boulders occasionally lining roadways and parking lots. I wasn’t sure if they were mariposite, having not seen it in the wild. The community of Bear Valley came and went and I soon found myself in mariposite country. Local rockhounds say all side roads should be investigated for mariposite, not just road cuts along Highway 49. That includes Bear Valley Road, Drunken Gulch Road, Schilling Road, Buckhorn Fire Road, French Road and the Mary Harrison Mine Road. Before Highway 49 drops into the Merced River Canyon, there is a terrific overlook with which to get the lay of the land.

The overlook is at: 37°35.293' N 120°07.467' W

After a steep decline and innumerable hairpin curves, I approached the Highway 49 bridge over the Merced River. Just before it is the Lake McClure Bagby Recreation Area. Known to locals simply as Bagby. You can rockhound and pan there for just a day use fee. Ask directions to Jade Cove.

Bagby is at: 37°36.585' N 120°08.068' W

On the north side of the river was an impressive road cut, an entire hillside composed of crumbly, quarter sized pieces of serpentinite. My old gold detecting nemesis. Glinting in the sun, showing a light green cast, I pulled over to take pictures of it. There’s so much serpentinite in the Sierra foothills that highways have used it as road base for decades. To differ it from mariposite, I’d find later that mariposite doesn’t glisten in full sunlight, rather, it looks a faded pale green. If you do want some serpentinite at this location, look for larger pieces on the river side of the road, just down the bank from where you’ll park your car. This is also a place to get to the river to investigate panning.

The road cut is here: 37°36.811' N 120°08.390' W

Serpentinite is a possible host rock for gold and it, too, can be collected for lapidary work. Bad serpentinite is everywhere in any outcropping; it flakes and is crumbly. The best serpentinite is

dense, solid, and lustrous. At the least, serpentinite rock indicates highly mineralized soil which every gold prospector is looking for. Even if serpentine soils themselves represent the most miserable ground to detect on. And there's an important relation to mariposite which we can discuss here.

“Mariposite has resulted from the hydrothermal alteration of serpentine.” So wrote Adolph Knopf in 1929 in The Mother Lode System of California, a U.S. Geological Professional Paper. 108 to 127 million years ago, hot water, some 650°, upwelled from deep beneath the earth, mineralized with elements like carbon, silica, quartz, potassium and carbon dioxide. This enriched fluid broke through fissures, cracks and faults in the crustal rocks above it, whose base was frequently serpentine. A chemical reaction occurred when these hydrothermal fluids encountered the serpentine bedrock. Mariposite was formed, containing deposits of quartz, chrome-mica and metallic sulphides, including, sometimes, gold.

My drive to Coulterville continued, about ten miles further on. Traffic kept me out of some road cuts. It was difficult finding a parking spot when I thought I saw something. James Mitchell's Gem Trails of Northern California stated there are things to see along this stretch. But I did not find anything promising. To be fair, I did not have time to pursue any side roads. I did know, however, where one outcropping was definitely located and I hurried to get there. I read about this site in many Highway 49 geology road trip accounts.

At Highway 49 and Highway 132 in Coulterville is the Northern Mariposa County History Center. An E Clampus Vitus monument out front is built entirely from mariposite stacked stone. Not the quality of the Cathey's Valley monument but mariposite never-the-less. One or two obvious mariposite boulders sat on the road shoulder. Visiting Maxwell creek across the road did not reveal any small, collectable pieces.

The History Center and monument is here: 37°42.615' N 20°11.830' W

I then drove west on Highway 132 about two tenths of a mile to find the outcropping I had researched. I saw nothing matching my notes. After a few more miles I backtracked and parked across the road where I thought the outcropping should be. Nothing but country rock, possibly schist, looking washed out in the bright sunshine. Discouraged, I left the area and drove north on 49, looking for the next spot. After five or six miles my inner rockhound told me to go back. I realized I had a photo of the location from the internet. Geology teacher Garry Hayes considers the Coulterville outcropping a candidate for the most important geologic road cut in California. I had to find it.

Returning to where I parked before, I matched the photo to the outcropping. A cloud moved overhead and the formerly bleached looking rocks revealed a bluish green. I put on my bright yellow safety vest and crossed the road. This site is at the intersection of Highway 132 and 164, which is Old Highway 49. Looking much more carefully at the outcropping, I could see veins of quartz coursing through the rock. Wonderful swirls laced the stone. I think the term is foliated. This was mariposite at its finest. Or more precisely, what Wilkerson and Lawler would say is quartz-ankerite-mariposite rock. I wondered if I had passed mariposite in earlier prospecting days, not noticing the rock when it was in full sun.

I thought I might easily knock out a bookend sized piece. Not so. The rock proved completely impossible, even with deep joints all around the stone. I had nothing in my truck heavy enough to get it out. But as I continued to marvel at the mariposite, I felt good about not disturbing the rocks. As I was leaving I spotted a few tiny flecks of brassy looking material. My hand held Falcon detector did not sound off on these spots so I presume they were pyrite. Also, fortunately, the mariposite presented itself as quiet ground, not fighting my detector. It would be wise, therefore, for me to look for and then carefully detect on any mariposite outcropping while in the Mother Lode.

The mariposite outcrop is here: 37°42.470' N 120°11.874' W



Driving north from Coulterville for about eight miles I was unable to find the collecting spot described in Darold Henry's California Gem Trails. He said pieces could be collected out of a streambed on the west side of 49. That stream may be Blacks Creek. It should appear before Penon Blanco Road. Check my GPS coordinates below in your web browser if you want to try to find it. You can even view the area in Google Street View. Remember, too, what Henry ruefully said so many years ago about the foothills: "In general where the minerals lie is completely enclosed in barbed wire."

Possible collecting site is here: N 37°44.1072 W 120°13.629'

Running out of daylight, I sped up to get to the horse ranch in Plymouth I promised to help. I passed Jamestown, where I had wanted to visit Gold Prospecting Adventures. No time either to visit Columbia State Historic Park or Ironstone Vineyards in Murphy, home to a 44 pound crystalline gold specimen. Perhaps I could visit these places on the way back. But the California Mining and Mineral Museum would be top priority.

After a few days of feeding horses I left on Friday morning and headed south on 49. A worthwhile stop is a BLM site called Big Bar Launch. It's just below the Highway 49 bridge over the Mokelumne River. On the border of Amador and Calaveras counties. Although meant for launching rafts and kayaks, it looked like a good place to pan or sluice during lower waters in summer. A descriptive signboard there lists other BLM land upstream.

Panning site is here: 38°18.701' N 120°43.241' W

I then proceeded to Columbia, which I last visited as a child. It looked the same as I remember, indeed, it has to remain the same. It's owned by the State which has control over all buildings. Store keepers lease their space in vintage Gold Rush buildings. A blacksmith still hammers out a tune on a forge. It was a little slow when I visited at ten in the morning, but everyone I talked to seemed in good spirits and relished working in so unique a surrounding. On to Mariposa.

The California Mining and Mineral Museum in Mariposa houses a spectacular collection of California oriented material. Unfortunately, they no longer allow any photography of any displays inside. Security reasons. I could only stare through the glass at a nice sized piece of gold speckled mariposite ore. The staff did graciously roll out a small foliated mariposite boulder from a back room for me to photograph. This giant doorstep would be an amazing find for any rockhound. The museum is in the Mariposa Fairgrounds. 5005 Fairgrounds Road, Mariposa. (209) 742-7625

I next stopped at the Mariposa Gem and Mineral Club Store in downtown Mariposa. It's usually open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 to 4:00 but call or e-mail first. It's an all-volunteer organization run by enthusiastic members. I bought a nice mariposite mounted slab. Besides rocks and minerals and jewelry, you can get local rockhounding advice. It's at 4994 A 7th St. (209) 966-4367. Cash only!

Making my way back to Merced on Highway 140, I saw that Dials Rock and Fossil Shop was open. Mike is the owner and he is also a miner. We discussed gold and prospecting and it was very clear he is a local geology expert. Using my last dollars, cash only, I purchased a hunk of mariposite. It looked like rock normally found in the field. Mike's shop is at 4006 State Highway 140, Cathey's Valley. (209) 966-2127.

Dials Rock shop is here: 37°28.823' N 120°01.611' W

My discussion with Mike on the mysteries and bafflements of gold prospecting got me thinking about that mariposite outcropping high above the south fork of the American River, the possible source of James Marshall's gold.

In 1987 a 10,500 pound boulder from that outcropping was donated for use in the Fountain of Freedom Monument to be built in Philadelphia. The monument would mark the 200th anniversary of the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Amid much fanfare and expense, large rocks from all over the country made their way to Pennsylvania, including picture sandstone from Utah, travertine from Montana, and granite from North Dakota. So, can you go visit that mixed green and white mariposite boulder, possibly bearing gold? Alas, no. The epitaph to the article describing the project reads simply, "The monument was never constructed and the location of the stones is unknown."

References Used or Consulted: Ed. Note. One-third of all links on the web die each year. The ones I list may all be dead. Use the [Internet Archive](#) to retrieve them if they cataloged those files.

Kistler and Dodge. *Isotopic Studies of Mariposite-Bearing Rocks from The South Central Mother Lode California* R.W. Kistler and F.C.W. Dodge U.S. Geological Survey California Geology September, 1983

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Mariposite outcropping reference to geology teacher Garry Hayes:
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Minerals.net. <http://www.minerals.net/mineral/muscovite.aspx>

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Peabody, George. Mariposite: *The Rock That Made California Famous*. Unabridged work containing the article on the Fountain of Freedom Monument. Published in the anthology *How About That!* produced by the El Dorado County Historical Society and written by 1991.

Roadside Geology and Mining History of the Mother Lode

https://www.blm.gov/ca/pdfs/bakersfield_pdfs/field_trips/mother_lode_south/pdfs/2006_part_1_maricopa-jackson.pdf

Rocks and Minerals of California, Vinson Brown, David Allan, James Stark. Naturegraph Publishers. Third revised edition. 1987.

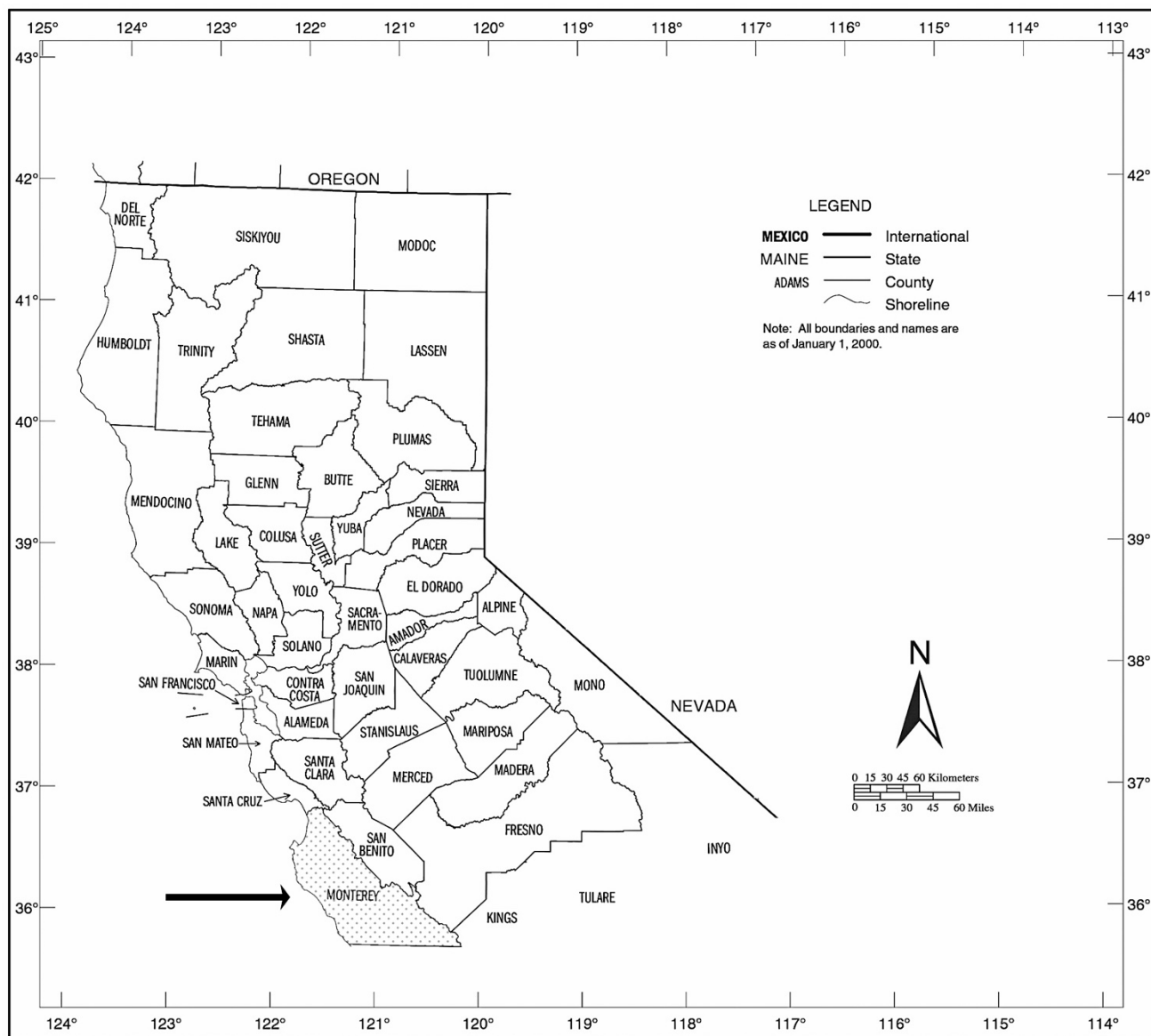
Review of the nature, resources and plan of development (now in progress) of the northern division of the Mariposa estate by Silliman, Benhamin, 1816-1855

<https://archive.org/search.php?query=creator%3A%22Silliman%2C+Benhamin%2C+1816-1855%22>

United States Department of the Interior Geological Survey. Gold Deposits of the Western Sierra Nevada. Field Trip Guide by Franklin C. W. Dodge and Ralph C. Loyd

<http://www.geologictrips.com/sn/snttml.pdf>

Monterey County, CA (Salinas)



Jade Cove State Beach and Environs

Los Padres National Forest

Highway 1, 3.3 miles N of Gorda, 9.7 mi S of Lucia (Yelp directions)

Big Sur, CA 93920

35°54.983' N 121°28.161' W – General area coordinate

Historically productive area for jade although serpentine far, far more common. The above coordinate fixes on a parking area for the official Jade Cove beach but other coves exist. Rules at this state beach allow limited loose jade collecting above mean-high tide line. Normally, California prohibits gathering anything from the coastline. That includes shells, sand, or even a rock. Removing a rock constitutes

“tampering with geological features.” Look up the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Jade Collection Zone map for boundaries.

<https://montereybay.noaa.gov/materials/mappages/jadecollectionmap.html>

Better ground may be the south fork of Willow Creek near the Willow Creek Day use area. Mindat.org says this part of Big Sur is a mining district, the “Los Burros District, Santa Lucia Mts (Santa Lucia Range), Monterey Co., California, USA.” Extensive land status research needed before prospecting off the beach. Crowds year long.

Nearby Monterey will soon host the third annual Monterey Bay Jade Festival from June 7th to June 9, 2020. “The largest gathering of international nephrite and jadeite carvers, jewelry artists and specimen/rough dealers to take place in the USA.”

<https://montereybay.noaa.gov/materials/maps.html>
<https://www.bigsurjadeco.com/monterey-jade-festival.html>

Pfeifer Beach

Los Padres National Forest
Highway 1
Big Sur

36°14.300' N 121°48.805' W – USFS supplied coordinates

A beach noted for purple sand. The beach lies at the end of a rugged road that is poorly marked from the main highway. I haven't visited Pfeifer but I have driven through Big Sur. It's remote country with few services, little to no cell phone coverage, and a steady stream of traffic on Highway 1. A beautiful landscape prone to sliding downhill across the highway. Frequent road closures. Those prone to car sickness should think twice before driving the length of Big Sur. Twists and turns go for dozens of miles. Children get sick easily.

“Sand is derived from whatever material is available. In this case, probable source of this sand is the Big Sur River. Its watershed contains both garnetiferous schists of the Franciscan Complex and granitic rocks of the Salinian Block, where diorite contains a significant quantity of garnet. Pfeiffer Beach is primarily composed of quartz sand, but in areas the garnet has been concentrated by wave action. This sand is roughly half garnet and half quartz.”

R.C. of Geological Specimen Supply goes on to write that Pfeifer Beach sand is “[S]lightly more dense than the quartz that makes up most of the beach sand in the U.S. The dark grains in this sand are derived from the Franciscan Complex, a chaotic assemblage of rocks that were scraped off the Farallon Plate as it subducted under the North American Plate during the late Mesozoic.”

The facility access is subject to river levels at crossing just prior to the facility. During and after large rain events there is a high chance of the crossing being closed.

Poorly working website. \$12.00 day use fee, bound to go up. <https://campone.com/notices-and-closures/>

The USFS website for the area states, “To better serve campers and their families, additional Los Padres campsites managed under concession by Parks Management Company (PMC) will become available for the public to reserve through the National Recreation Reservation System (NRRS) beginning May 1, 2018.##

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

The Los Padres National Forest offers a total of 869 campsites for our visitors to enjoy and now 548 of those are reservable, allowing campers a better ‘plan ahead’ option. As always, if a campsite is not reserved, it will still be available on a ‘First Come First Served’ basis.”

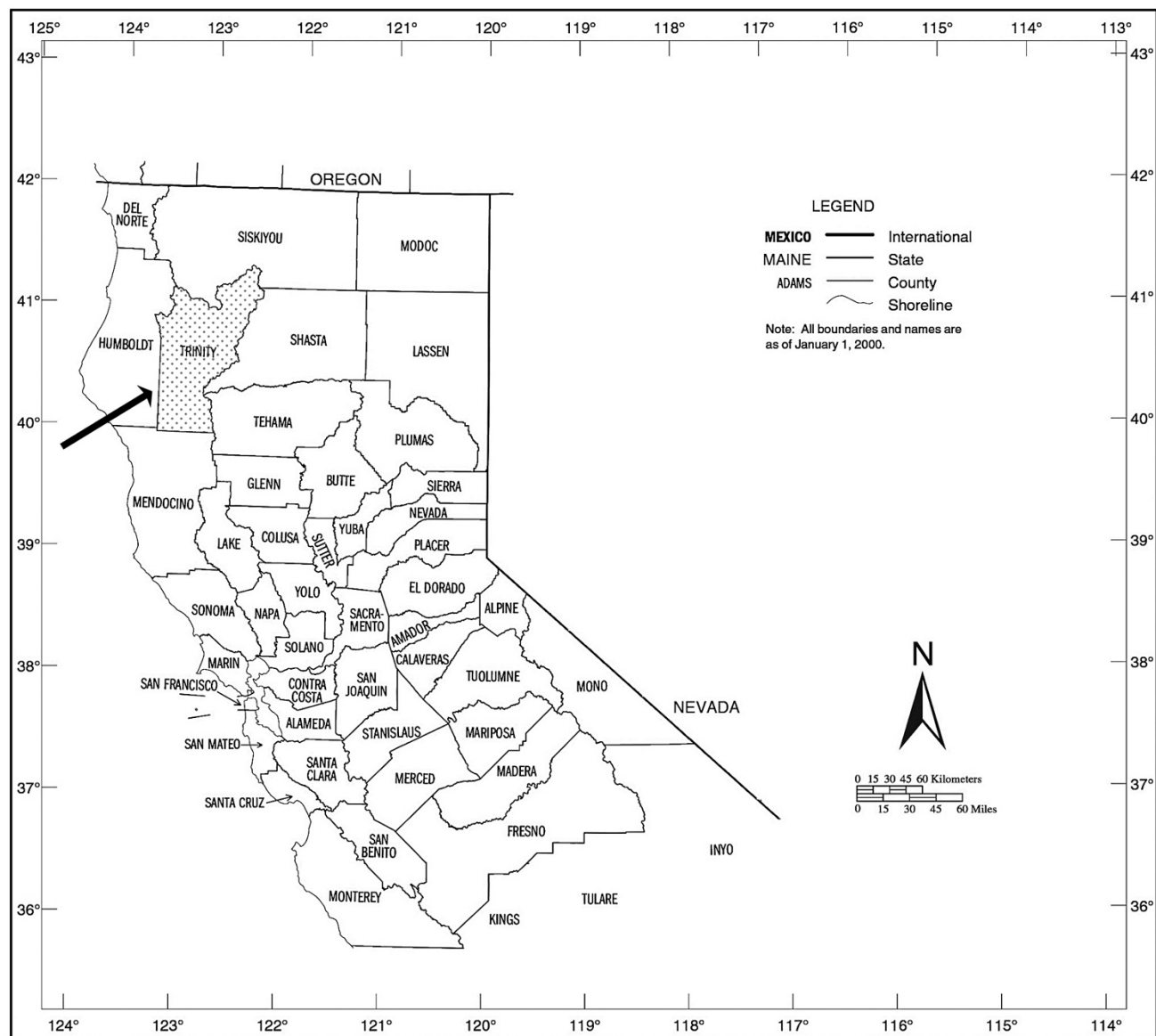
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/lpnf/recarea/?recid=10918>



BIG SUR COASTLINE BELOW MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

Highsmith, Carol M, photographer. Big Sur, California. Big Sur. California United States. [Between 1980 and 2006] Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2011630038/>. Public domain.

Trinity County, CA (Weaverville)



“This county is bounded on the north by Siskiyou and Humboldt, on the east by Shasta and Tehama on the south by Mendocino, and on the west by Humboldt County. Trinity is a mountainous county, its eastern third being covered by the Coast Range, or Trinity Mountains, the summit of which divides this from Tehama and Shasta Counties. Bully Choop, Baldy, and other peaks in this range reach an altitude of over six thousand feet, some of the summits in Trinity County lies midway between Salmon Mountains, in the northern part of the county, being still higher.”

“The latter are also remarkably steep, shooting up in spires so precipitous that the snow is unable to lie upon them, but sliding off into the deep rents remains there all summer. The hydrography of this county is very simple, the Trinity River and its confluent draining all parts of it. Heading in the Scott Mountain division of the Coast Range, this river, after flowing south for sixty miles, makes a detour to the

northwest, which course it holds for another sixty miles, when it passes into Humboldt County, uniting a little further on with the Klamath.”

“Nearly the whole of this county is heavily timbered with pine, spruce, fir, and cedar, oak and madrona forming a part of the forests at lower altitudes; while the wild grasses afford much pasturage. Trinity contains comparatively little good farming land, though for the hardier fruits both the soil and the climate are especially well adapted. As in most mining sections, the auriferous belt varies; some of the veins being in slate, some in granite, while others are on the contact between slate and granite. The deposits of gravel are as vast as any found in the State.”

Eight Annual Report of the California State Mineralogist. 1888

Douglas City Campground (BLM)

40°38.963' N 122°57.023' W

Another place I enjoyed panning and sluicing. Some rustic hotel accommodations nearby.

“Follow State Highway 299 to Douglas City, turn onto Steiner Flat Road and go about one-half mile west of Douglas City to the campground turnoff.”

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/search-details/15075/1>

Junction City Campground (BLM)

40°44.774' N 123°03.833' W

This is west of Weaverville, the main source of supplies along Highway 299 on the way to Eureka and everything else on the Pacific Coast. More specifically, 1.5 miles west of Junction City on 299. I enjoyed this area in years past for panning and sluicing, in fact, BLM still mentions panning. “If you would like to stay at the river's edge, you can always swim, fish or do a little gold panning. The river can be accessed from many locations along this stretch of the Trinity River.”

I see that fly fishermen have discovered this place. I like fly fishermen because they are extremely neat, carrying out all of their trash. That's a big difference with the bait fishing community. But fly fishermen always look annoyed at anything mining related in a river, as if they are the Guardians of The River. Little do they understand that we are often removing algae and scum from gravel in a river or a stream, allowing a clean bed for fish like salmon to spawn.

<https://www.blm.gov/visit/search-details/15074/1>

Denny Campground (USFS)

40°55.983' N 123°23.710' W Denny Campground

40°52.196' N 123°31.338' W Intersection of Denny Road and HWY 299

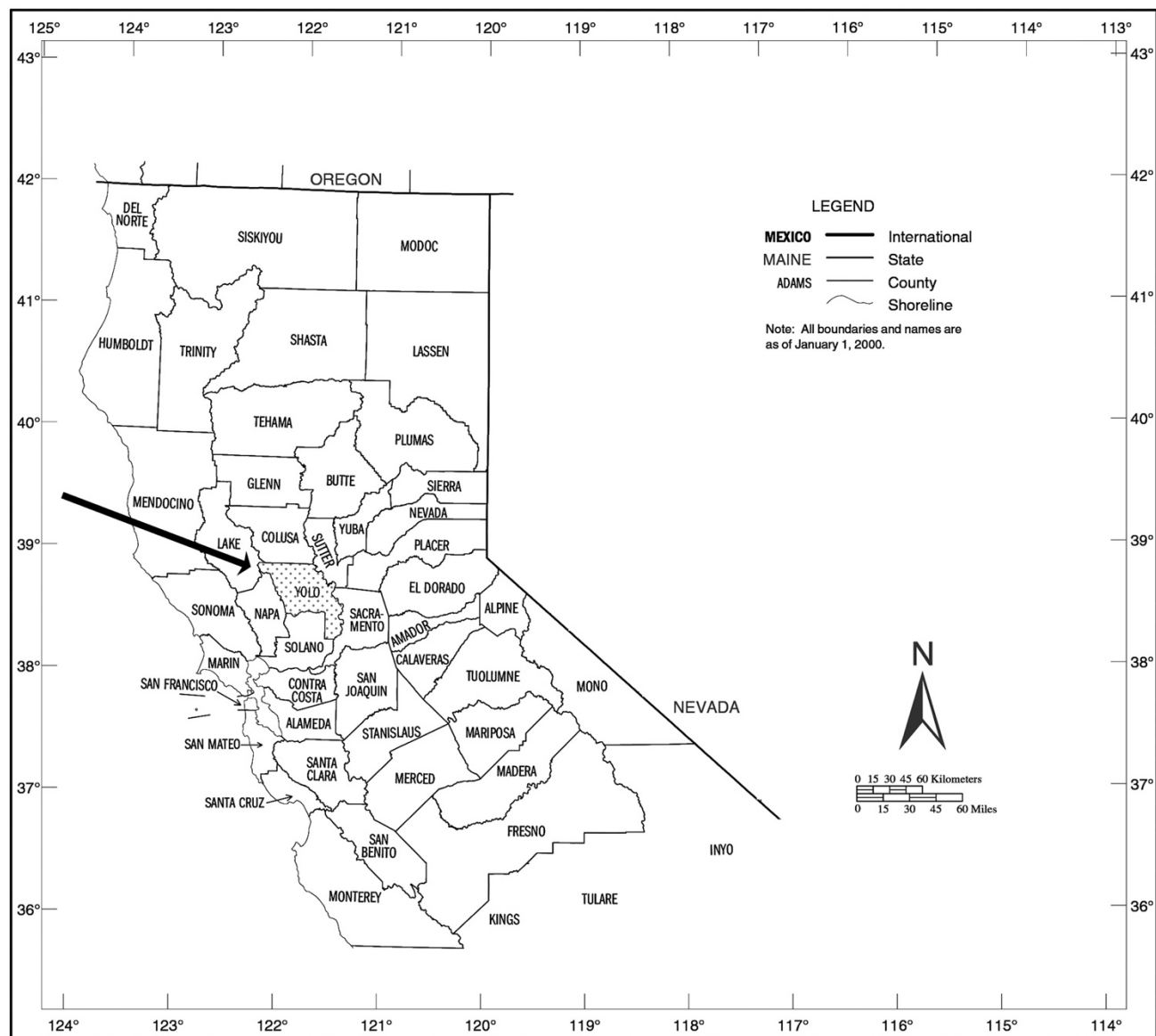
Denny is twenty or so miles north of Highway 299 where Hawkins Bar lies along the Trinity River. That mere twenty miles may easily take you an hour to drive. There are more twists and blind turns on the Denny road than you can count. One way much of the way.

This campground is a good place to put in a sluice on the New River which feeds into the Trinity. There is claimed ground above and below the campground. Dredging parties were working along the river on my last visit many years ago with my brothers. No potable water so be prepared to purify. Old dredge tailings exist in the campground area but covered in poison oak and blackberry vines.

This is the heart of the Emerald Triangle. Vehicle security at the campground is probably still good, especially since there is a USFS post nearby which is manned during the season. Do not leave a vehicle unattended along any stretch of any road in this area. Every miner we met on my last visit wore a sidearm. Including us, the first and last time I ever carried a gun while prospecting.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/stnf/recarea/?recid=6529>

Yolo County, CA (Woodland)



The California Rock Garden

University of California at Davis
Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences
Academic Surge
1124 Crocker Lane
Davis, CA 95616

Corner of La Rue Road (!?) and Crocker Lane.

38°32.151' N 121°45.101' W

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

“The California Rock Garden is open to the public every day. Located primarily along the eastern and southern sides of the Earth and Physical Sciences building, the garden features boulders and core samples representing various geologic features of California.”

Well worth visiting, even during the week when nine dollars is charged for visitor parking. Since you paid that money, spend time visiting the rest of the campus. Your parking fee should get you into any public parking lot on this beautiful campus. The UC Davis Arboretum extends along Putah Creek and is well done.

I've visited the rock garden many times and written about it at my site which is SouthwestRockhounding.com. Search for “rock garden” and “mariposite” when you visit.

Official UC Davis information here but the rock garden map may be well out of date.

<https://geology.ucdavis.edu/about/garden>

My writing here:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2018/11/23/at-the-rock-garden-at-uc-davis-california/>



**SCHIST BOULDER AT THE UC DAVIS ROCK GARDEN,
UC DAVIS CAMPUS, DAVIS, CALIFORNIA**

Consolidated Rock and Mineral Shop is only 20 minutes from Davis and well worth the drive. I describe the shop in the Solano County entry.

Camp Haswell

1999 Hwy 16
Rumsey, CA 95679 (stated address)

38°54.510' N 122°15.926' W

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Yolo County park used by kayakers and rafters as a take-out point when Cache Creek is running well. The two most beautiful stream agates I have ever found were here, lying in and out of the riverbed. Beautifully rolled and rounded. One a mix of green, the other a blend of brown and gold. The latter showed mild UV response. I wish this place were closer to Las Vegas. ☺ Google for the URL, far too long to print here.

Western Rock Ramblings

By Thomas Farley

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thomasfarley@fastmail.com

All illustrations were derived from photographs taken by the author or from those in the public domain.

Introduction

This Nevada chapter is another part of what was to be a hardcopy publication, however, formatting the text and illustrations proved too difficult and time consuming. I wanted the book to be spiral bound to lay flat but costs proved prohibitive. I apologize for the poor formatting in advance, my inability to produce something attractive is of constant agony to me.

Photos are in black and white to minimize the size of these chapter files. Since monochrome photographs present terribly on ordinary printer paper, I stylized the photos. I hope they give the feel of this dry desert country if not technical accuracy. The resulting sketch type illustrations are at 300 dpi, so they will print well on copy paper.

The sites listed were either visited by me or recommended to me by trusted sources. I know I have missed many points of interests as well as rock shops and clubs. E-mail me if you would like to be included in the next revision of this text. Several other state chapters are at or near completion and will be released soon.

Most sites are probably closed as of press time because of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

Feel free to distribute this file anywhere you wish. I wish you good health.

Best,

Thomas Farley

Las Vegas, Nevada

Nevada

Notable

Many Nevada cities have a flashing yellow turn signal at stoplights. Proceed halfway into the intersection and let oncoming traffic have the right of way. Turn left when clear. I distinguish northern Nevada from southern at the 38th parallel. In Nevada that line runs between Goldfield and Tonopah.

Resources

All southern Nevada travelers should consult BirdandHike.com. Although not a rockhounding site, BirdandHike.com provides tremendous coverage of many areas a rockhound may venture to, with GPS coordinates and location photos. Produced by Jim Boone, professional ecologist. Northern Nevada visitors may benefit as well, anyone traveling through the Great Basin. An essential resource and nothing published in hardcopy comes close. A special point here.

Nevada has outlawed uncapped PVC pipes used as claim markers. These trap birds, condemning them to death when they drop into the pipes looking for nesting cavities. Other small animals get trapped, too. It is legal to remove these markers when found and Jim and his people have done a great job of removing most of them from Clark and Lincoln Counties. If you find one and are uncomfortable removing it, notify Jim through his website about its location. He will thank you. I will, too.

https://www.birdandhike.com/Markers/_Markers_Intro.htm

Resources

Kappele, William and Gary Warren. *Rockhounding Nevada* (Falcon Guides: Guilford, Connecticut, 2019) Rockhounding Nevada by William Kappele has been the recommended gem trail guide for years but the title was last revised in 1998. Gary Warren has revised the work for 2019. I have not read this third edition.

Castor, Stephen and Gregory Ferdock. *Minerals of Nevada* (Reno and Las Vegas: Nevada University Press, 2004) The essential tome on Nevada minerals.

Massey, Titus, and Wilson. *Nevada Trails: Southern Region* (Parker, Colorado: APC Publishing, 2015) Good information and excellent maps on driving off-pavement in Southern Nevada. Roads and routes rated as to difficulty. Roads are more difficult than described as the authors are expert at 4WD. Expect, too, to find blocked and washed out roads that will terminate a trip at any point. This is desert driving.

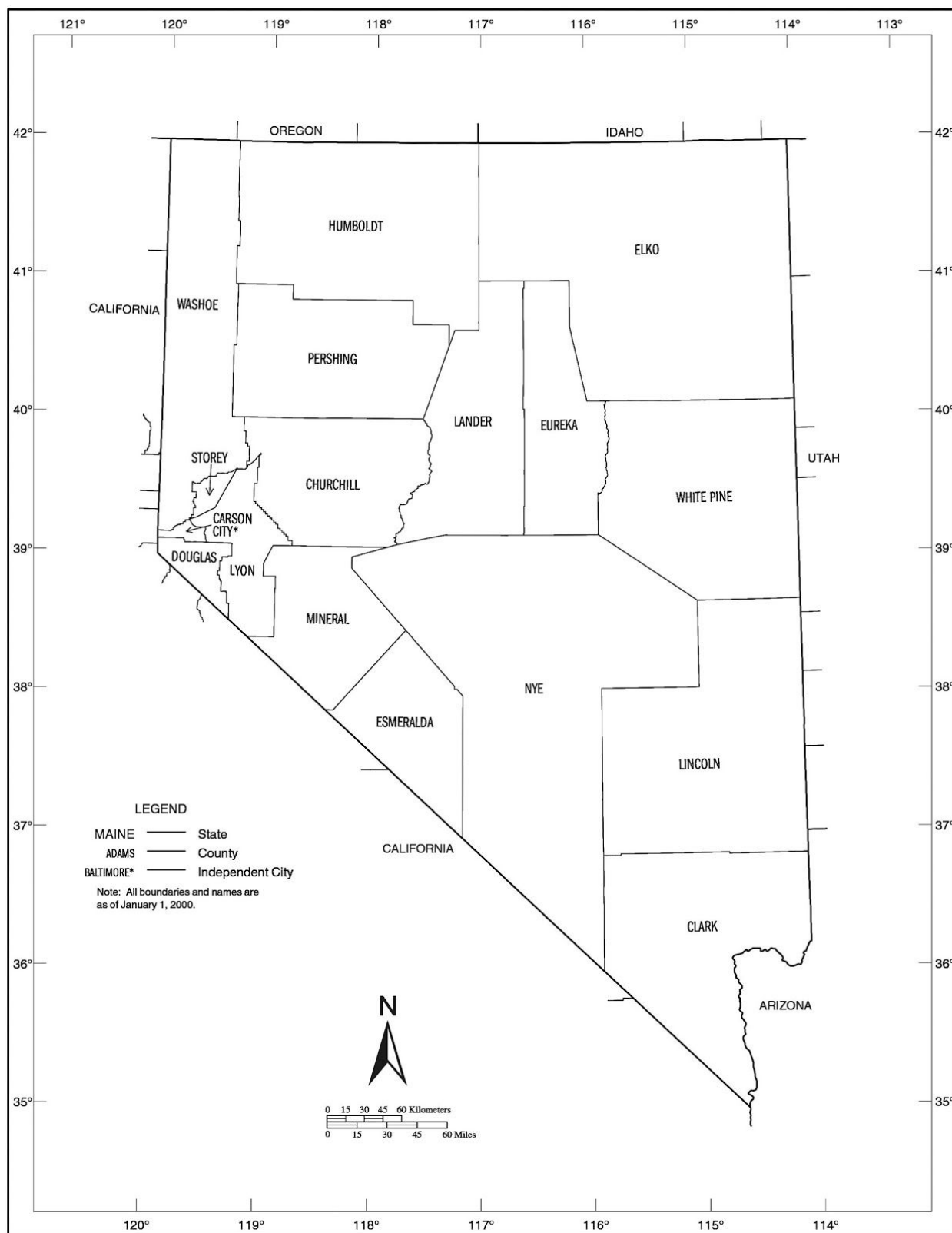
Orndorff, Wieder, and Filkorn. *Geology Underfoot in Central Nevada* (Mountain Press: Missoula, 2001) Excellent in every way. I was hooked at spheroidal and preferential weathering. Not a mile by mile guide but an area guide. Wander the sites discussed with book in hand.

Johnson, Maureen. *Placer Gold Deposits of Nevada* (Washington, D.C.: Geological Survey Bulletin 1356) Available free online in .pdf. Johnson authored a number of placer gold deposit titles for the USGS. She deserves recognition.

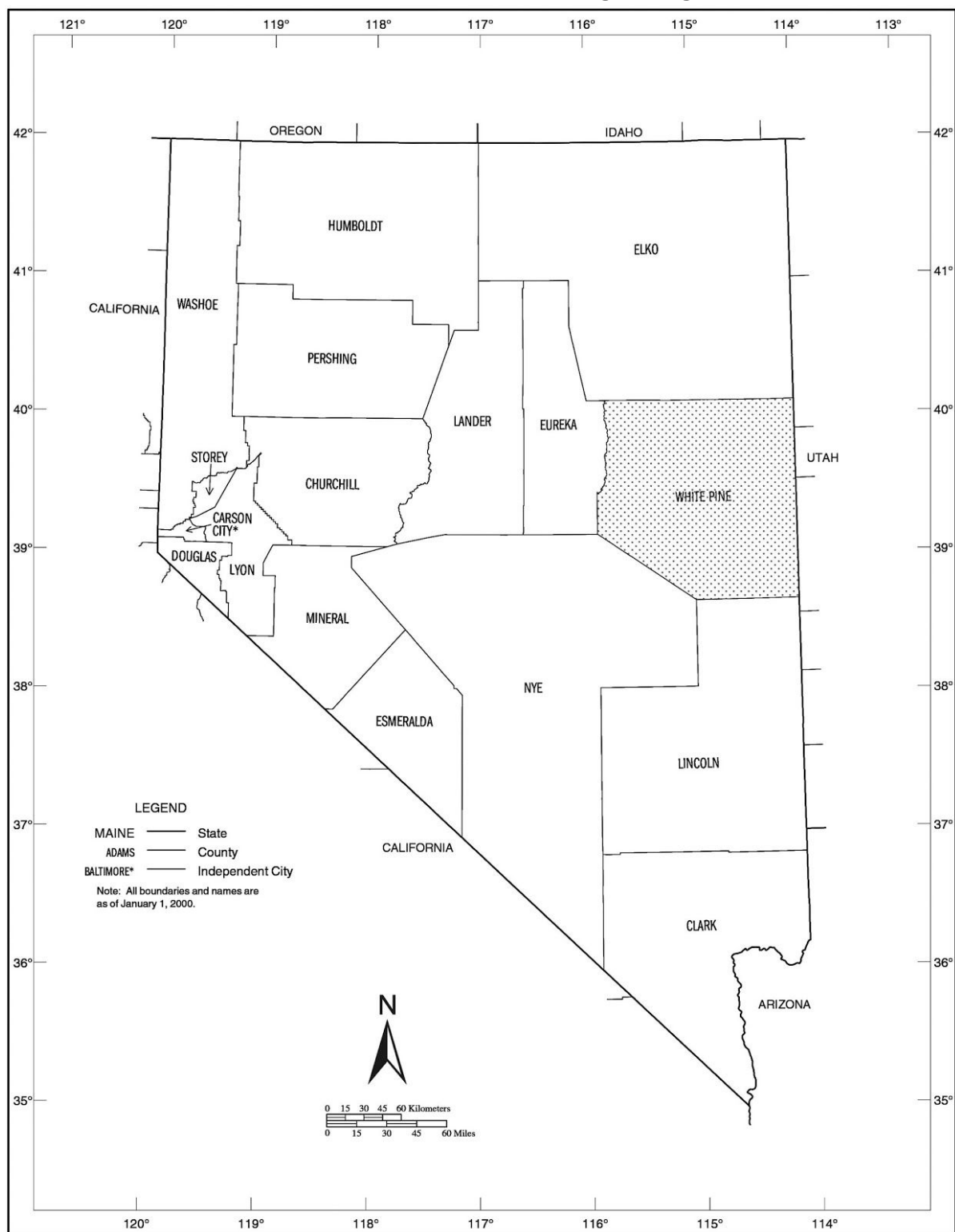
My copy is a used reprint of the original USGS Bulletin. Del Oeste Press in Tarzana, California published it in 1981. It shows mining districts as yellow spots on a map. The Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology and MylandMatters.org present much more detailed district boundaries online.

My repro includes a fold-out map, much superior to the tiny and unreadable online map. Del Oeste reprinted many, many guides to placer deposits in the Western United States. Avoid any copy of Bulletin 1355 printed on-demand as these may not contain the fold-out map.

Nevada



White Pine County (Ely)



Garnet Hill

The following is an updated account of my trip to Garnet Hill in 2016. This article originally appeared in the August, 2016 issue of Rock&Gem.

A Central Nevada Field Trip to Garnet Hill

References to Nevada's Garnet Hill kept popping up whenever I scoured my rock and gem guides. It's just outside Ely, in the central far-east of the state. The site seemed promising by its very name. Gold prospectors have a saying: "Find gold where it has been found before." That should apply, too, to any gem or mineral. A closer look at my books revealed Garnet Hill to be a century old collecting site. The garnets might be dark and small but they were there. I was planning a trip from Las Vegas to Sacramento in late April. Making no sense at all, I decided to take a huge detour to Ely and then on to California. 562 miles' worth of detour.

As a disclaimer, I should say that I found little on Garnet Hill. It is a better side trip and not an end destination if you have only a day to look. But I did gain some important insights that should help you on your visit. This trip reminded me of my gold seeking adventures. I might get skunked but I also might find antlers. No gold but perhaps the sight of a majestic Bald Eagle. On the drive out of Ely I saw my first antelope. To me, that's worth something. Perhaps to you, too.

To the public, garnet is an inexpensive red gemstone. It is put into rings, earrings, and necklaces. An everyday jewel. To an industrialist, garnet is a workhorse mineral. Possessing a hardness of 6 to 7.5 on the Mohs scale, the stone is employed in waterjet cutting and as an abrasive powder. It is also used to filter water. To a rockhound, garnet is a worthwhile and generally available rock to search for. Depending on where it is collected, it varies richly in translucency and color. The USGS says, in fact, that "Garnet displays the greatest variety of color of any mineral, occurring in every color except blue."

Source: <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/commodity/gemstones/sp14-95/garnet.html> Link now dead, try the Internet Archive to find the article or go to the USGS site and search for current information on garnet.

My first interest in garnets began without luck at the bottom of a gold pan. Heavier than ordinary gravel, gold prospecting literature said garnets might be left after panning was finished. Alas, I never found any alluvial garnets while panning out. Perhaps my aggressive style spun them downstream. Or perhaps their dark color kept them hidden. My gold prospecting friends had equally poor results. None of them could ever show me a single garnet from any sluice box or gold pan clean up. Well, then, if I couldn't find garnets in a flowing stream, I would go looking in the hills. Garnet Hill, at 7,280 feet, seemed a likely hill.

My preparations might seem unusual. Certainly tiring. I started exercising. I was out of shape and I knew the high elevation and mountainous terrain would beat on me. With my road trip as motivation, I began running or walking every other day. I also gathered my tools, including the screens I normally used in gold prospecting. Various visitors on the net described how they screened to remove larger rocks from the very small garnets. I also filled up a five-gallon jerry

can with water to use with my five-gallon buckets and screens. I knew dirt and dust could easily hide the gems.

As before any field trip, I began reading. Minerals.net makes a concise assessment. “Garnet is not a single mineral but describes a group of several closely related minerals. Garnets come in a variety of colors and have many different varieties.” That sounded straightforward. And most books referred to only five or six varieties. Pyrope, almandine, and spessartine are three. Again, a somewhat approachable subject.

Source: <https://www.minerals.net> Google “garnet” at their site for their latest information.

The jewelry names applied to these varieties are trickier. Joe Rothstein put it this way. “Whether the phrase ‘whim and whimsy’ was invented to describe garnet nomenclature as used in the gem and jewelry trade I do not know but it certainly applies.”

Source: Joe Rothstein, “The Gem Garnets” Lapidary Journal (July, 1983) p.606

Saving me from getting lost was *Geology Underfoot* in Central Nevada. Its Garnet Hill chapter, Desert Gemstones, describes specifically what I’d find. It gives the stone’s mineralogical description and its origin. There’s no need to read about garnet elsewhere and then apply it to Garnet Hill. The authors have already done it.

“The particular type of garnet at Garnet Hill is a beautiful dark variety called almandine.

Almandine consists primarily of the elements iron, aluminum, silicon, and oxygen bound together into a complex three-dimensional network. The element manganese sometimes takes the place of iron in the crystal structure, shifting the composition toward the manganese-rich variety of garnet called spessartine. Some garnets at Garnet Hill contain both iron and manganese in varying proportions. Mineralogists call them almandine-spessartine garnets.”

Source: *Geology Underfoot in Central Nevada*. Richard L. Orndorff, Robert W. Weider and Harry Filkorn. (2001) p. 195 Mountain Press Publishing Company, Missoula, Montana. Permission to use this extended quote was granted to me by Professor Orndorff on April 8, 2016.

With this tongue twisting orientation, I felt more confident about my upcoming road trip. Garnet Hill had one variety of garnet with one sub-variety. Still, I wondered what color I might find. Red? Reddish black? Almandine-spessartine might be either. And even green, if a story I heard later was true.

I left Las Vegas in a pouring rain. My route on Highway 93 was due north, first through the Mojave and then into the larger Nevada desert. Nellis Air Force Base was to the west. It was still raining when I came into Crystal Spring. The highlight of these 110 miles was the Pahrnatag Valley. It’s a narrow strip of sometimes arable land fed primarily by three large springs. The Paiute Indians called this area the “land of many waters.” The Pahrnatag National Wildlife

Refuge visitor center is a must stop. Also, six other nearby locations in Lincoln County reveal native art and archeological sites.

Source: 30 page .pdf file on Lincoln County rock art and archeological sites archived here:
<http://www.birdandhike.com/Glyphs/LincolnCo/LincolnCoRockArtGuide.pdf>

At Crystal Spring there is a dogleg four-way intersection. The road north becomes State Highway 318. The road west is Rachel–Warm Springs Road or Highway 375. This is Nevada's officially named Extra-Terrestrial Highway. Years ago, friends took 375 to Groom Lake Road and followed it to a locked gate that barred access to the almost mythical Area 51. The road east at Crystal Spring is also interesting. Its US 93. Take that road and you'll come to the BLM maintained Oak Springs Summit Trilobite Area. It's south of the summit at 6,231 feet. Look for the signed dirt road.

The next 133 miles north were uneventful. 90 miles of it are used twice each year to run the Silver State Classic. That's a state approved event in which cars race over the roadway as fast as they can. The record is 24 minutes! As I came into Ely the weather cleared a little. I drove through town and headed west on Highway 50. The road to Garnet Hill is just a few miles outside of Ely. A sign indicates the Garnet Hill Recreation Area and the access road is dirt. Although there were some muddy ruts from the recent rain, I slogged up with little concern. A normal clearance vehicle could make it up if driven slowly. I would not advise trailers or large RVs.

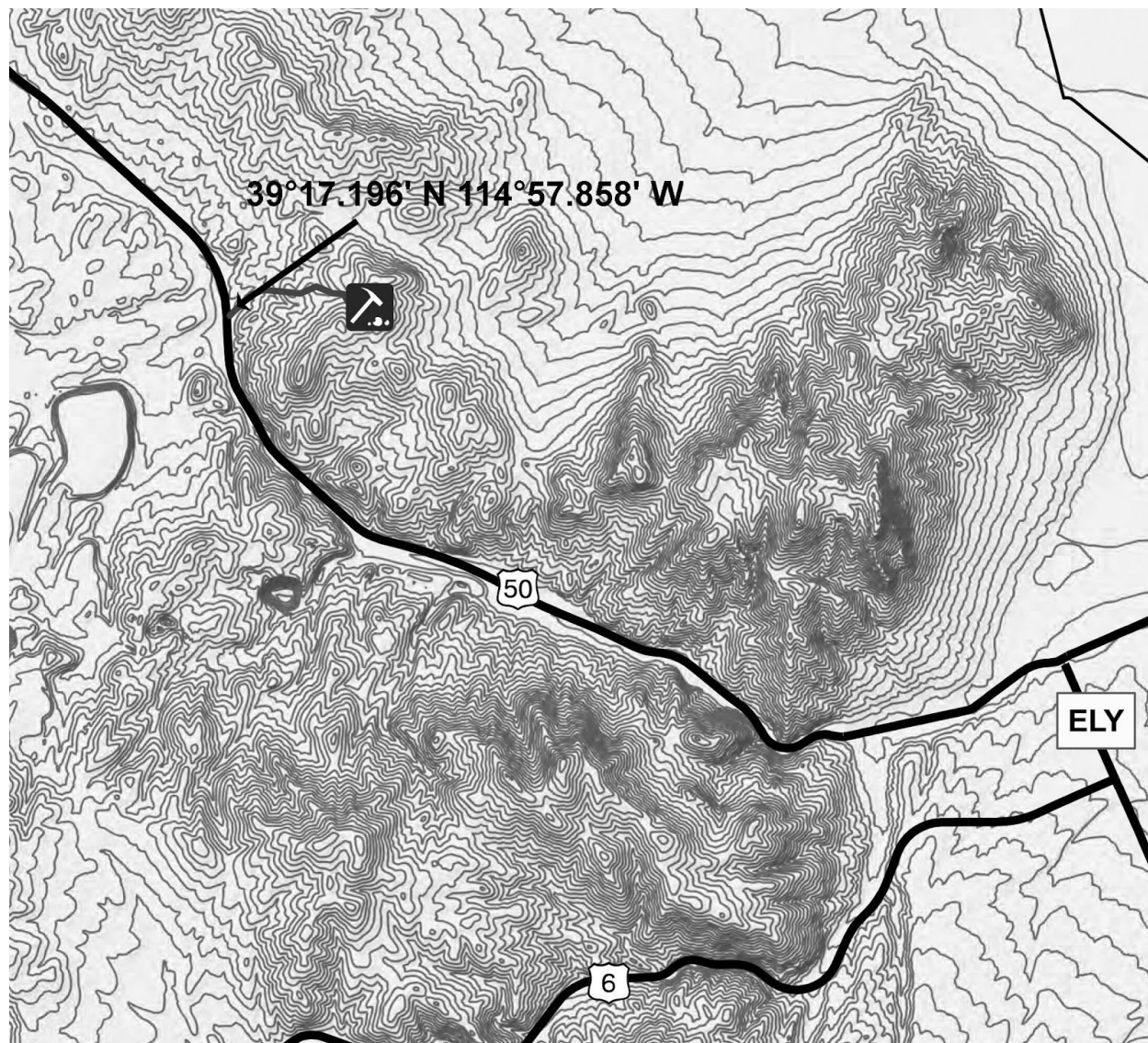
Vital intersection:

<https://goo.gl/maps/9727cs1QGnlySVjk9>

39°17.196' N 114°57.858' W



GARNET HILL INTERSECTION SIGN ALONG US HWY 50,
WHITE PINE COUNTY, NEVADA



The first people I met were a family of three, inspecting a gully alongside the road that was about a third of a mile downhill from the parking lot. They were looking for garnets that had weathered out of the parent rock which is rhyolite. The group said they found some small garnets but did not show them to me. When I got to the parking lot there were two passenger cars and three trucks. A few picnic tables looked in good order, along with a vault toilet. Pinion pines thinly cloaked the hill, growing out of the light pink rhyolite. Down from the top of the hill, a small family came to the parking lot, asking me if I knew where any garnets were. I said the previous group had luck with the drainage ditches, but, I too, was looking. The small children in both groups were crying. They obviously tired of looking long before their parents.

As I organized my tools, scattered snowflakes and light hail began falling. Cloudy skies meant I probably couldn't use reflection to help me. People described walking with their backs to the

sun, hoping to see a garnet reflect. Like what you see with broken glass in a gravel parking lot. Alas, the sun never came out long enough to help. And what I realized later was that many garnets were only partially faceted, if at all. That is, they did not all have faces, but were often irregularly rounded stones that would not easily reflect.

The rain worked against me. It made the soil and every rock darker than usual. Looking for deep red color, I was instead picking up charred wood from campfires and wet bits of pine cone. There was no distinguishing the black looking material on the ground from the dark red of a garnet. Another approach was needed. Perhaps instead of scanning the ground, I could bust open the rhyolite, possibly exposing garnets. That also proved difficult.

Most broken rock I saw was solid, without voids or fractures. Little chance of finding garnets. What I wanted were rocks with cavities. Garnet Hill rhyolite contains small holes Orndorff calls vesicles. These volcanic gas bubble remains were formed as magma cooled. It is in these vesicles or pockets that garnets can be found. Almost unique to this location, garnets were produced by hot vapor as the rhyolite magma cooled.

The rhyolite I found with holes only hinted at garnet. I picked up one rock showing material half the size of a small fingernail, too tiny to easily photograph. The rock exhibited a light colored druze surrounding a protuberance of the gemstone. This spray of tiny crystals reminded me of powdered sugar. The *Geology Underfoot* authors say these are other minerals, formed at the same time the garnet crystals were growing. I put away two rocks that glinted red and continued scanning the ground. Here's what I should have done: I should have taken home a five-gallon bucket or two of promising rock. I could then have carefully hammered the material at my convenience without being rained on.

Broken rhyolite was everywhere. Was this the natural condition of the hill? Or was all that broken rock from garnet hunters? There were some spots of solid rhyolite here and there. They were exposed at the bottom of holes dug through the rubble and into the topsoil. My breaker bar unfortunately wasn't heavy enough to split apart the solid rock. At one point a bright green lizard kept me company, posing long enough for a picture. PhD ecologist Jim Boone later identified it as a Great Basin Fence Lizard, a common resident of central Nevada.

What about my screens? Again, difficult. Where to set up? I had clues when I went gold prospecting but this area was a mystery. When gold prospecting I'd set up a screening station where I wanted to classify material going into a pan or a sluice box. I'd determine that spot by being on the inside bend of a stream or where there was a great deal of black sand. Most of the time I would do a great deal of sampling first, by quickly panning out gravel in different locations. On Garnet Hill I couldn't find any kind of streambed in the main area. And just broken rock. No gravel. Given the difficulty of moving around a large tub of water, I decided not to screen.



**BROKEN RHYOLITE AND PINON PINE AT GARNET HILL,
WHITE PINE COUNTY, NEVADA**

After two hours I collected my tools and prepared to head back to Ely. It was still raining. The second family I met came down the hill, also fleeing the rain. They showed me three rocks they had found, each showing garnet stuck to the rhyolite. These stones had significantly more gemstone than the ones I collected. Perhaps, I thought, it was just a matter of putting in the hours. hours. And maybe a group is best, more sets of eyes, to scan as much rock as possible.

Before I left, I looked off to the distance to see the huge open pit copper mines at Ruth. In unadjusted dollars, more money has been produced at these copper mines than the silver and gold of the Comstock strike.

Source: Schilling, John *Metal Mining Districts of Nevada*, 2d Ed. Nevada Bureau of Mines Map 37. (1969)

Driving back to Ely, I knew I wouldn't be able to come back the next day. Was there a better way to search?

I spent that night at the excellent and historic Hotel Nevada. It has many celebrity themed rooms and a 24-hour restaurant. In the morning I fell into a conversation with the bartender. He said locals frequent Garnet Hill and it is not worked out. The key, he said, was to go when conditions were dry. Locals scan the ground for what looks like dried blood. He said that over the years he's gathered enough garnets to fill a bottle. With two nice stones he had earrings made for his wife. And just recently a friend claimed to have found a green garnet. The bartender said he hasn't seen it yet but was looking forward to it. I asked about hammering the rhyolite apart. He grinned broadly and said that might work but he doesn't do it. He said there were enough garnets on the surface that most people looked for loose stones. I thanked him and told him I would be back when I had more time and when it wasn't raining.

After I got home to Las Vegas I started researching Garnet Hill again. Perhaps I could continue my search from a distance. I reached out to local rockhounds with no luck. No one had recent experience with the site. And a local rock shop had no examples from Ely. I then went on on-line and quickly discovered people were indeed finding garnets on Garnet Hill.

My first stop was at John Betts' site. He's a fine minerals dealer. His photo gallery displayed 16 gem-grade garnet specimens, all of them sold. I then went to eBay. There were nine listings, each showing garnet attached to pinkish colored rhyolite. They weren't spectacular pieces but ones I imagined were more typical of the area. I wound up buying ten rocks from two dealers for \$35. If I could not go back to the mountain, the mountain would come to me. In a few days I had both shipments. Plenty of material to try out an idea I had.

I selected a rock at random to experiment on. Would it be possible to cut out the garnets from the rhyolite? (I was thinking of tumbling loose stones, which I have now reconsidered.) I took my Dremel rotary tool and put on an aluminum oxide grinding stone, specifically, a Dremel 952. At high speed it worked well. Low speeds did not work well, in fact, such grinding produces the same odor you smell when you get your teeth drilled!

After a few minutes I removed a stone from its matrix and then tried removing the excess rhyolite. That's where things broke down – I couldn't get the excess removed. Trying to do so would bring the grinding stone too close to the garnet, possibly breaking it. The stones would have to be tumbled as is. This experiment taught me that searching the ground is probably the best approach if one wants individual garnets. I then looked closer at my remaining lot. Each of the rocks had fracture marks, apparently from being broken open from bigger pieces. So, despite what the bartender told me, people were finding worthwhile garnets by breaking rhyolite. That made good news, as it kept all doors open to discovery. If you do tumble, though, you will lose all the pretty crystal faces that make up a nice looking garnet.

Garnet Hill is best as a side destination if you have only a few hours to spend. Have more time? Make it a group hunt and hold a picnic if you can. Stay overnight in Ely or camp on the hill. BLM permits this. Tents and small RVs are the right choice. Do not take a trailer as you will have trouble turning around. Ely boasts other attractions that are worth a weekend or several days.

Ely has a world class railroad museum, with both steam and diesel locomotives operating on miles of track. Of note is the occasionally scheduled Rockin' & Rollin' Geology Train. The museum touts it as "A lively presentation by a local geologist talking about the railroad, mining history, and a show and tell of ore samples. All of this as the century-old steam engine is pulling your train through the great geological 'museum' right outside the window of your coach."

Great Basin National Park is only seventy miles from Ely. The Lehman Caves are there, with tours given year-round. More than forty years later I still have fond memories of the tour I took with my family. The National Park Service puts it concisely. "Lehman Caves is a beautiful marble cave ornately decorated with stalactites, stalagmites, helictites, flowstone, popcorn, and over 300 rare shield formations."

Seventeen miles from Ely is Nevada's Ward Charcoal Ovens State Historic park. Italian stone masons in the 1870s built these beehive shaped ovens to produce charcoal used in forging and mining operations. Hiking and mountain biking are both possible from the park. Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing can be done in the winter. There is a tiny rivulet of water that flows nearby. I hope it runs year-round.

It would be wonderful to say I made out handsomely on Garnet Hill but I did not. Still, I saw a beautiful country and learned lessons for my next trip. The next time I will spend several days, enough for the garnets and the railroad and the caves. If you are interested, find a used book seller and order Geology Underfoot. Perhaps buy a rock from e-Bay. And get ready for your Garnet Hill adventure.

Resources (Current as of April 7, 2020 but the virus will impact everything mentioned.)

Hotel Nevada

501 E Aultman Street

Ely, NV 89301
775-289-6665

Period restored hotel, Denny's on site, great bar, friendly staff. A little difficult for the mobility challenged.

<https://www.hotelnevada.com>

Nevada Northern Railway Museum

1100 Ave A
Ely, NV 89301
775-289-2085

All manner of things railroad related: train rides, locomotive driving lessons, gift shop, walks around the ground at your own pace. Dirt the Cat. The locomotive barn and the machine shops are a photographer's dream. I found a small, overpriced, handmade kit of copper minerals at the gift shop. Handwritten descriptions by some local citizen. Of, course I bought it.

<https://nnry.com>

Ward Charcoal Ovens State Park

Physical location:
39°02.231' N 114°50.840' W
(South of Ely by way of HWY 50 and Cave Valley Road)

Contact information:
P.O. Box 151761
Ely, NV 89315
775-289-1693

wcosp@parks.nv.gov

<http://parks.nv.gov/parks/ward-charcoal-ovens>

Great Basin National Park

Great Basin Visitor Center
100 Great Basin
Baker, NV 89311
775-234-7331

39°00.903' N 114°07.506' W

Lehman Caves Visitor Center

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

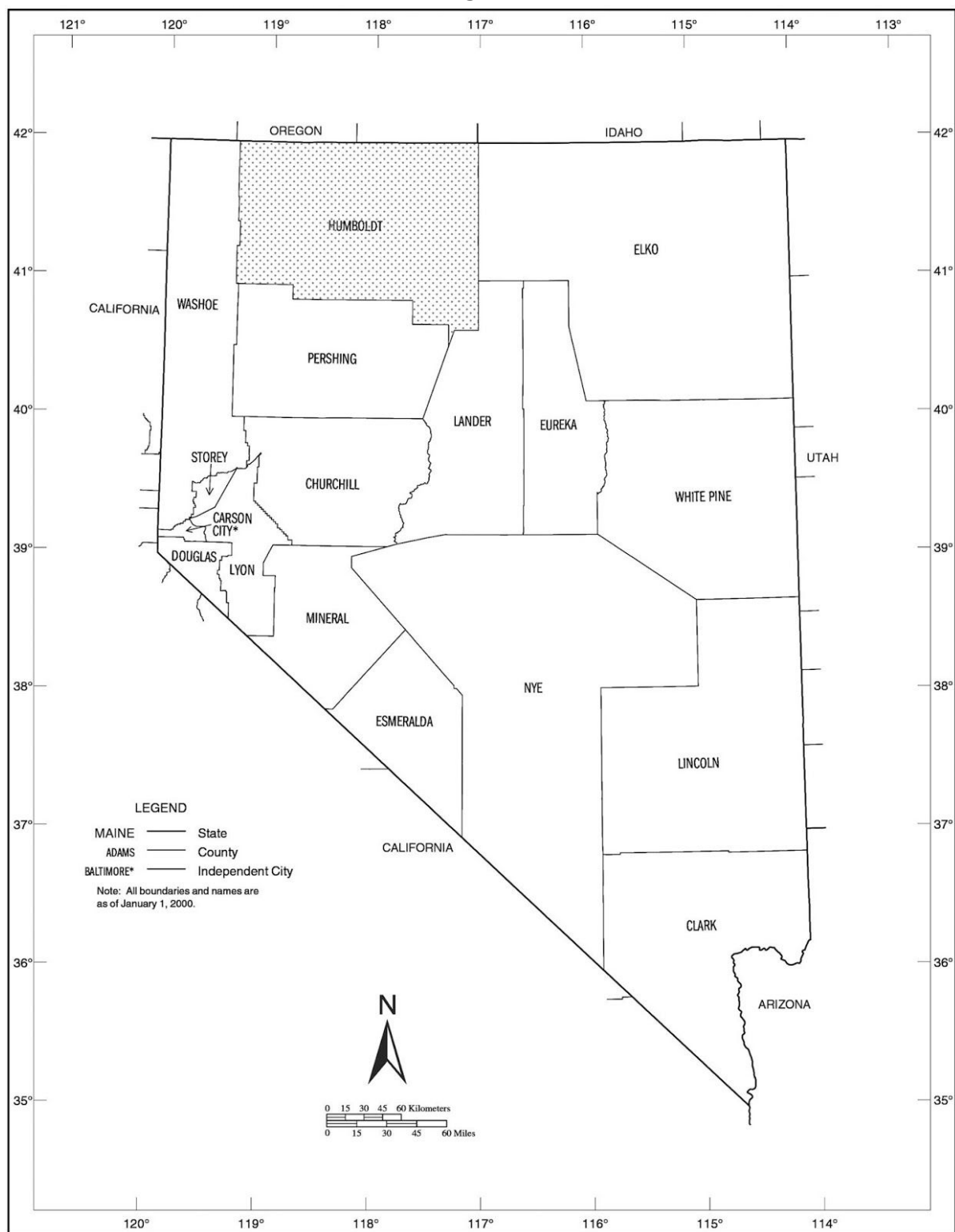
Lehman Caves Road

39°00.490' N 114°13.101' W

No collecting allowed. Campgrounds with water and without. Spotty to non-existent cell phone service. Do not depend on it. Nearest town is Baker on Hwy 487. It is a very small town. The Great Basin Café offers food in season without going back to Baker. Two good visitor centers. The Lehman Caves tour is a treasured memory of my youth. There is quite a process involved in getting a ticket, book beforehand as far as possible. Everything at this writing should be double checked before visiting the park due to the virus. Carry extra fuel and top off your tank at every open gas station.

The park is renowned for its deep, dark sky, however, you must have a plan “B” in case clear conditions do not prevail. I camped in summer once for three days and never saw stars. All clouds. A 13,000-foot mountain like Wheeler Peak can make its own weather. Plan to pack up equipment if need be to drop in elevation or to get to the desert floor. Also, time your stay if you wish to practice night photography. Check how full the moon will be before going.

Humboldt County, NV (Winnemucca)



Notable

A large, rural, and remote county. Some hamlets and ranches are so isolated that the Department of Education pays for a high school student's boarding in Winnemucca if the family desires it. This spares the child hours and hours of bus travel each day to get to the nearest school. Winnemucca is the hub of commerce, everything else in the county spins around it. Gravel sidewalks in some parts of town for better footing on ice in the winter. Brothels allowed but none currently working. So far as I am aware.

One year I was playing Blackjack in downtown Winnemucca when the man next to me said he worked at the local gold mine. I asked where, as I didn't know any around. He said sixty miles north down a dusty dirt road. The mine bussed workers in each day. He said the ride wasn't too bad anymore. Last year, he explained, they began putting oil on the road.

Resources

Olds, Sarah. *Twenty Miles From A Match* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1978) Compelling portrait of a woman raising her family off the land in northwest Nevada in 1910. Backbreaking work, tremendous isolation, simple hopes.

Morgan, Dale. *The Humboldt: Highroad of the West* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1943) The classic description by Morgan of the Humboldt River. Much original source material. Well written. The Humboldt trends east-west over 350 miles although not continuously or always above the surface. Its waters often slip underneath the desert sand to appear miles later, now brackish and too bitter for cattle to drink. The Humboldt led early cross-country travelers along, easily followed west when wagons weren't stuck in the river's endless mud and sand bogs.

Please note! I have not visited these places. I was going before the virus hit. Basic info provided below. I am more interested in the occasional uranium occurrences in the Virgin Valley region than opal, never-the-less, I was going to try the fee digs to find some opal.

Royal Peacock Opal Mine (fee-dig)

Mailing address:
#10 Virgin Valley Rd.
Denio, NV 89404
775-941-0374

41°47.184' N 119°05.986' W: Mine location in the Virgin Valley

Open May 15th to October 15th

This is a well-established fee-dig that for decades has let rockhounds hunt for specimen and sometimes gem grade opals. I have not visited but the Peacock Mine is constantly mentioned by everyone in the rock, gem, and mineral trade. The location is very remote. Really remote.

Perhaps 35 crow fly miles north east of where Burning Man is held in the Black Rock Desert. Get out your maps. Their website has everything you need to plan your overnight trip. I say that because I don't see how it's possible to put in a full day and then find a motel. You should be too tired to drive anyway.

Get street directions at their website and follow. The mine is off of HWY 140 in northwest Nevada. If from Reno, best approached from Winnemucca. It might seem more straightforward to head north to Gerlach and then further to HWY 140 but there are little to no services on this route. (Save for Bruno's in Gerlach, a wonderful bar, restaurant, and small hotel.) Winnemucca offers full services and lots of lodging, making it the best jumping off point.

The mine offers a tailings dig and a bank dig. Federal regulators now require that anyone working the bank must wear steel toed boots, safety glasses, and a hard hat. These are rules imposed on the mine which they must now enforce. The mine says that they have some of this gear for rent but visitors should try to bring their own if they can. Rubber boots with caps are surprisingly affordable at Amazon.

Closest full-service groceries: Lakeview, Oregon – 100 miles; Winnemucca, Nevada – 140 miles
Closest gas and diesel: Denio Junction – 34 miles; Fields, Oregon – 55 miles
Closest propane: Fields, Oregon – 55 miles

<https://www.royalpeacock.com/>

Rainbow Ridge Opal Mine

Mailing address:
Rainbow Ridge Opal Mine
PO Box 97
Denio, NV 89404

41°47.915' N 119°00.940' W Mine location

Stated physical street address: unable to confirm:
40190 Sagebrush Creek Road, Virgin Valley

Operating since 1949. I have not visited this mine, either, so check their website for more information.

<https://www.nevadaopal.com/#welcome-1-section>

Bonanza Opal Mine

Virgin Valley, NV
775-375-5955

41°50.028' N 119°04.650' W

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Same area as the Peacock and Rainbow. Tailings dig. The Bonanza's website and its accompanying brochure have many details. They operate Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend. Good location info at their website, along with a description of the free campground in the area with potable water.

<http://www.bonanzaopals.com/>

More Virgin Valley Information

Webpage:

The bottom of this webpage states, "Only the three MSHA registered and safety-inspected Fee Digs Listed above are legitimate and valid legal pay to dig mines!! Any other fee digs or tours in the valley without Federal Permits and Insurance and MSHA safety registration/compliance are scams to make money off you illegally!"

<https://www.virginvalleyopalmines.com/fee-digs>

Book:

Leechman, Frank. *The Opal Book* (Lansdowne Press: Sydney, Australia. 18th edition, 1984)
Gemological Fellow Frank Leechman takes us on a world-wide opal tour, with good information on Nevada's Virgin Valley. Great stories of opal obsession.

McDermitt

This is background on the area and reporting on the local rock shop. McDermitt is close to the Nevada/Oregon border. The rock shop owner mentions the Jordan Valley. Travelers from Winnemucca to Boise on Hwy 95 cross that area while skirting the very southeastern portion of Oregon and thence into Idaho.

News source:

"McDermitt is unincorporated. Winnemucca is the Humboldt County seat and 80 miles south on US 95. Humboldt County, Nevada is nearly eight times the size of Rhode Island and home to some of Nevada's largest and most productive open pit gold mines. The county is also home to Nevada's largest irrigated farm where primarily potatoes are grown for national distributor US Foods. The median household income in Humboldt County is nearly \$70,000 a year, but that is not statistically uniform across the vast county."

<https://tinyurl.com/McDermitt-background>

The Caldera Rock Shop

650 Lasa Drive

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

McDermitt, NV 89421

503-495-3087

Rock shop owner description:

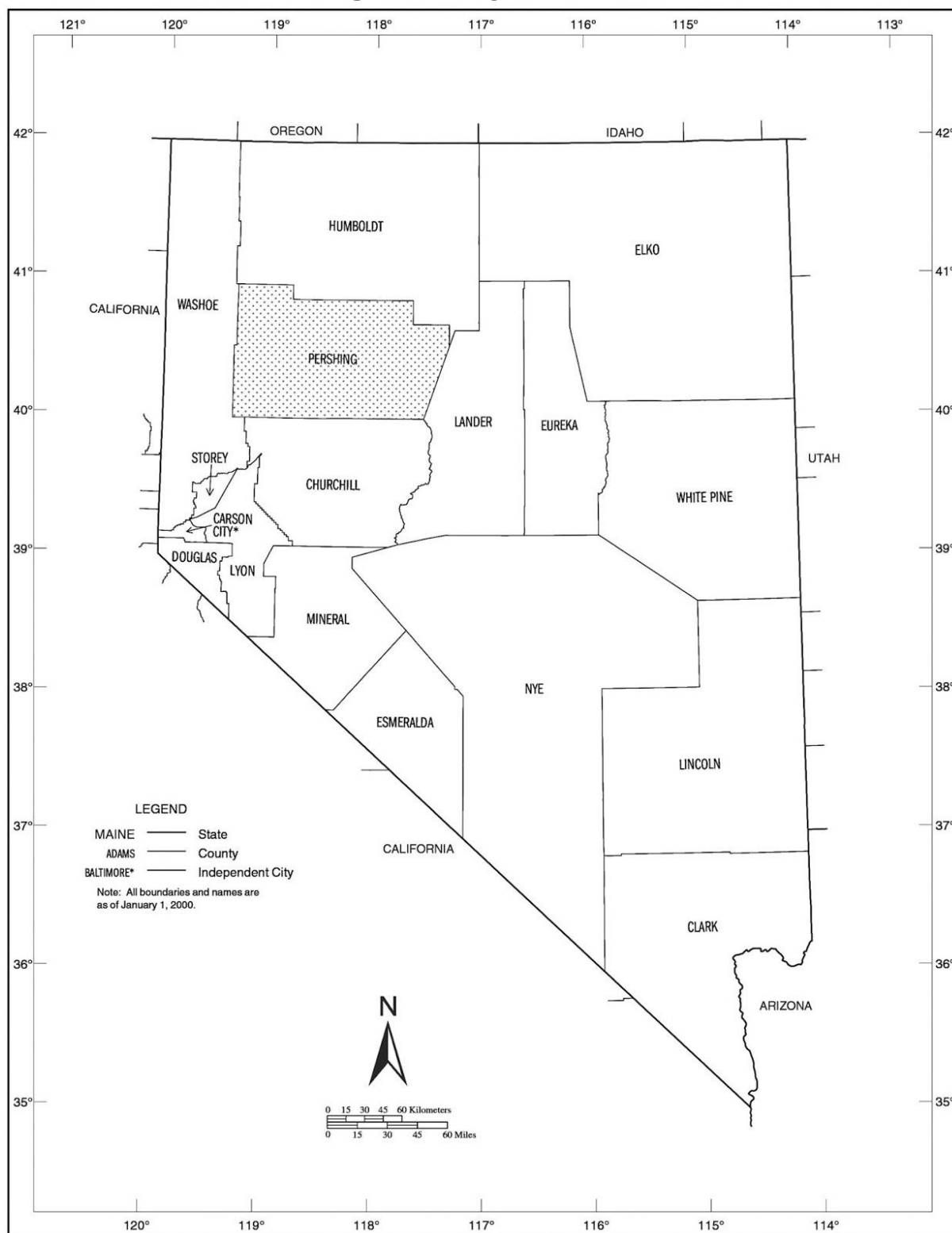
“Welcome to our rock shop in McDermitt, Nevada. The famous caldera in this area is a collapsed volcanic area that erupted over three separate time frames. The Rock hunting area is a giant loop with accessible roads and smaller roads coming from various digging areas. Some are old digs, some new and some are private property on ranch land by permission only. It has long been known for its many varieties of great rock. Also, great mountain views, fresh air, hiking, hunting, prospecting and camping. My family started to collect here in the late 60s. My Dad Reggie Kemp owned claims in this area, the Jordon Valley. We work with miners on our claims and also consign their rock.”

“We have literally tons of rock here at our temporary location at 650 Lasa Dr. in McDermitt. I encourage clubs and visitors to communicate times they want to visit. This will ensure the rock shop will be open. Also, to gain access to certain areas. Our number is 503-495-3087. We will call you back. There will be times we are closed during slower seasons and/or our mining operations. “

“Our plan is to open up more rock that has been exhausted by surface collectors and hand diggers. My family purchased the property at the end of our street, where Lasa Dr. meets Hwy 95. Which we will build on at some point a new rock shop. We're excited about it and hope you drop in the see us.”

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Calderarockshop/about/>

Pershing County, NV (Lovelock)

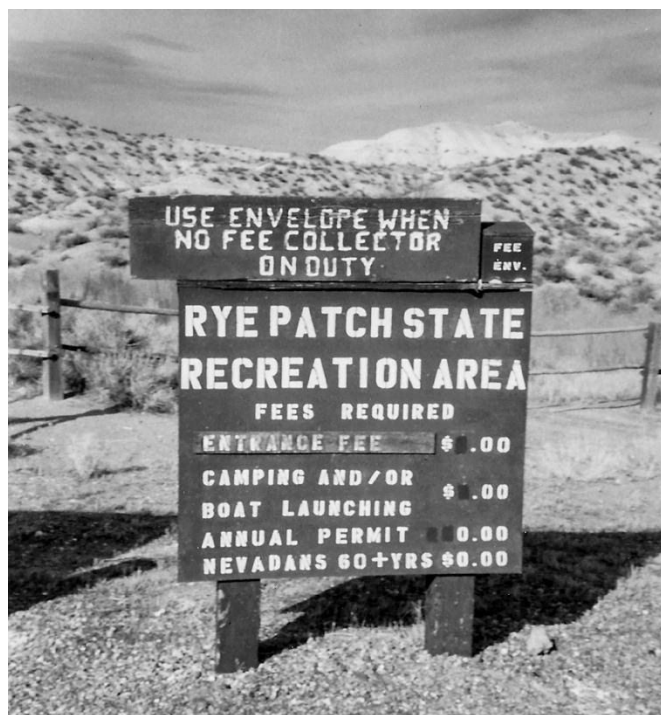


Rye Patch and The Area in General

Noted location for nugget hunting. That wasn't the case when I first saw this ground in the mid-1990s as you can see by the sign below. I'm not going to provide much information here as I haven't visited since 2005. The mostly Mormon town of Lovelock is a good base of operations for rockhounding and prospecting.

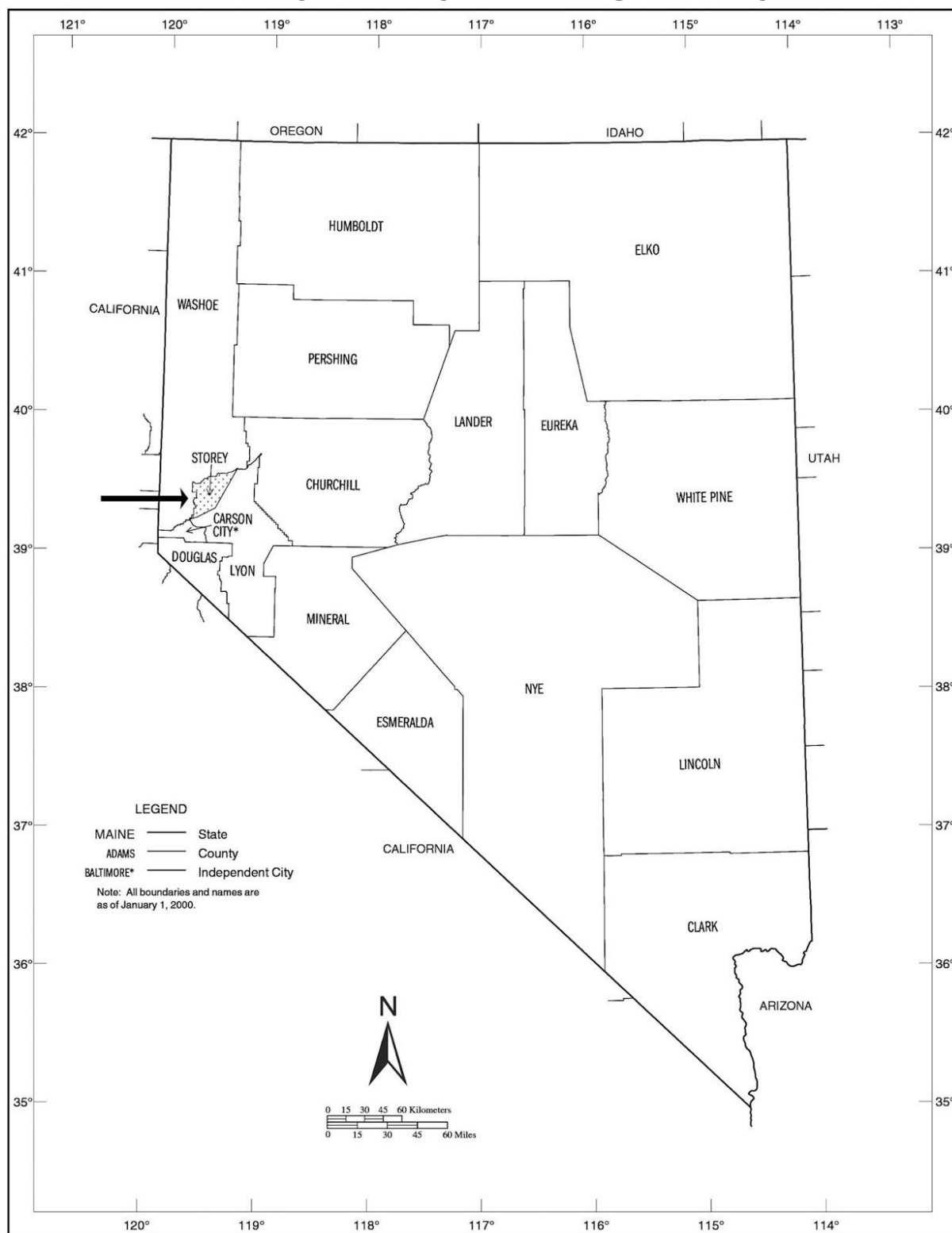
The Seven Troughs area is full of mine dumps and abandoned mining buildings. You will be alone. I will not give any directions to where I visited in 2005 since I don't want you lost. Take waypoints at every opportunity. Go well equipped. This is a good introduction.

<https://westernmininghistory.com/towns/nevada/seven-troughs/>



**RYE PATCH, PERSHING COUNTY,
NEVADA. 1994.**

Storey County, NV (Virginia City)



Virginia City

Home of the Comstock Strike. Saloons, wooden sidewalks, rock shops, a mine tour, a railroad, and Camel Races once a year. Some locals dress in period costume and sit on storefront benches to watch people go by. If you ride, the Virginia City loop is outstanding, plenty of twisties. Virginia City is my happy place.

It is not a town for the physically challenged since steep hills make walking tough, even for those in good shape. If you are in this position, call the Silverland Inn or the Gold Hill Hotel to see if a local will run you around in a buggy. During the Camel Races, locals with UTVs shuttle people from place to place for tip money. Yes, they drive on city streets and are probably totally unregulated. This is small town Nevada where such wonderful things go on.

Chollar Mine Tours

615 F St.
Virginia City 89440
775-847-0155 |

39°18.161' N 119°39.043' W -- Driveway coordinates

“400-foot level walk down an old mine tunnel. Along the way, your guide will point out the methods used to excavate and maintain the mine shafts. Guests will hear stories of the day-to-day conditions that the miners labored under and even the superstitions that they held! For a brief moment, guests will even get a taste of the real-life working conditions so long ago — as the guide lights a candle to show how the miners worked in the darkness!”

I haven't taken this tour but I have walked right by the property. Closed during the winter season. Cash only, but you are used to that now, right?

<https://www.chollarminetours.com/tour>

Four-minute ad free video from The Keck (University of Nevada at Reno) filmed at the Chollar Mine:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/4949353/video/371751618>

Comstock Rock Shop

20 S C St
Virginia City, NV 89440
775-847-0383

39°18.641' N 119°38.990' W

A great rock shop for more finished materials. Eclectic selection, a fun stop in V.C. Check hours before going, this little town is frequently closed when you want it to be open.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

<https://www.yelp.com/biz/comstock-rock-shop-virginia-city>

Stone Age Quarry

81 S C St
Virginia City, NV 89440
775-847-0706

39°18.59500' N 119°38.990' W

Another fun stop in Virginia City. No web presence. Has a shop in Reno as well.

<https://www.yelp.com/biz/stone-age-quarry-virginia-city>

The Silverland Inn & Suites

100 E St
Virginia City NV 89440
775-847-4484 – reserve direct, don't use a third-party booking service

39°18.771' N 119°38.823' W

Wild horses often grazing on the front lawn. Expensive rates for special events like the Camel Races or the Ferrari Hill Climb if that is still going on. But there is an indoor pool, call to make sure it is open, and it just a steep two-block walk to downtown Virginia City. Ask the clerk if they can call a buggy for you.

Limited snacks and coffee for breakfast, better bet is the Canvas Café up Sutton Street from the hotel. Opens at 6:00 AM, the only place serving cooked food at that hour. The outdoor seating is wonderful in good weather. The walk uphill to the Café is challenging for anyone with disability problems. The nearby Virginia City RV Park and Market is still the only place in town to pick up a variety of food and drinks. Get there before 7:00 PM or call for hours before going. They have wine . . .

<https://www.silverlandinnandsuites.com>

<https://canvascafe.wixsite.com/canvascafenv>

<http://www.vcrvparknv.com>

Donovan Mill

900 S Main Street
Silver City, NV 89428

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

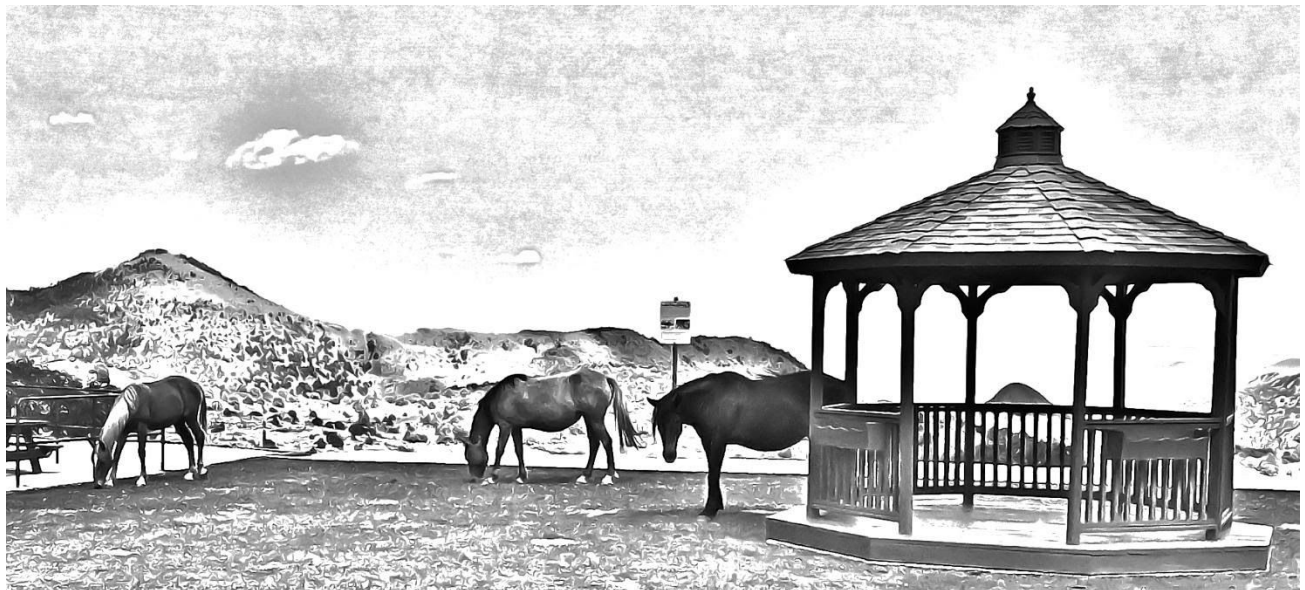
39°15.670' N 119°38.374' W

Outside of Virginia City. Recent UNR video says they are open to giving tours. No tours listed on their website but perhaps a donation would help.

<https://vimeo.com/388749522>

##

<https://comstockfoundation.org/projects/donovan-mill/>



**WILD HORSES GRAZING ON THE LAWN OF THE SILVERLAND HOTEL,
VIRGINIA CITY, NEVADA**

Notes:

A few hotels exist in or near Virginia City, I simply haven't stayed in them: the Virginia City Inn, the Sun Mountain House B&B, Sugarloaf Mountain Hotel, and the Gold Hill Hotel, that one down the road from Virginia City. But the train can take you in if you plan ahead. Some places you want to visit will be closed. Take period mining costumes with you if you want to dress up and join the fun of Virginia City.

Other Virginia City Attractions

International Camel and Ostrich Races

A must see. Pay more to get seats in the shade. Do *not* get seats in full sun.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

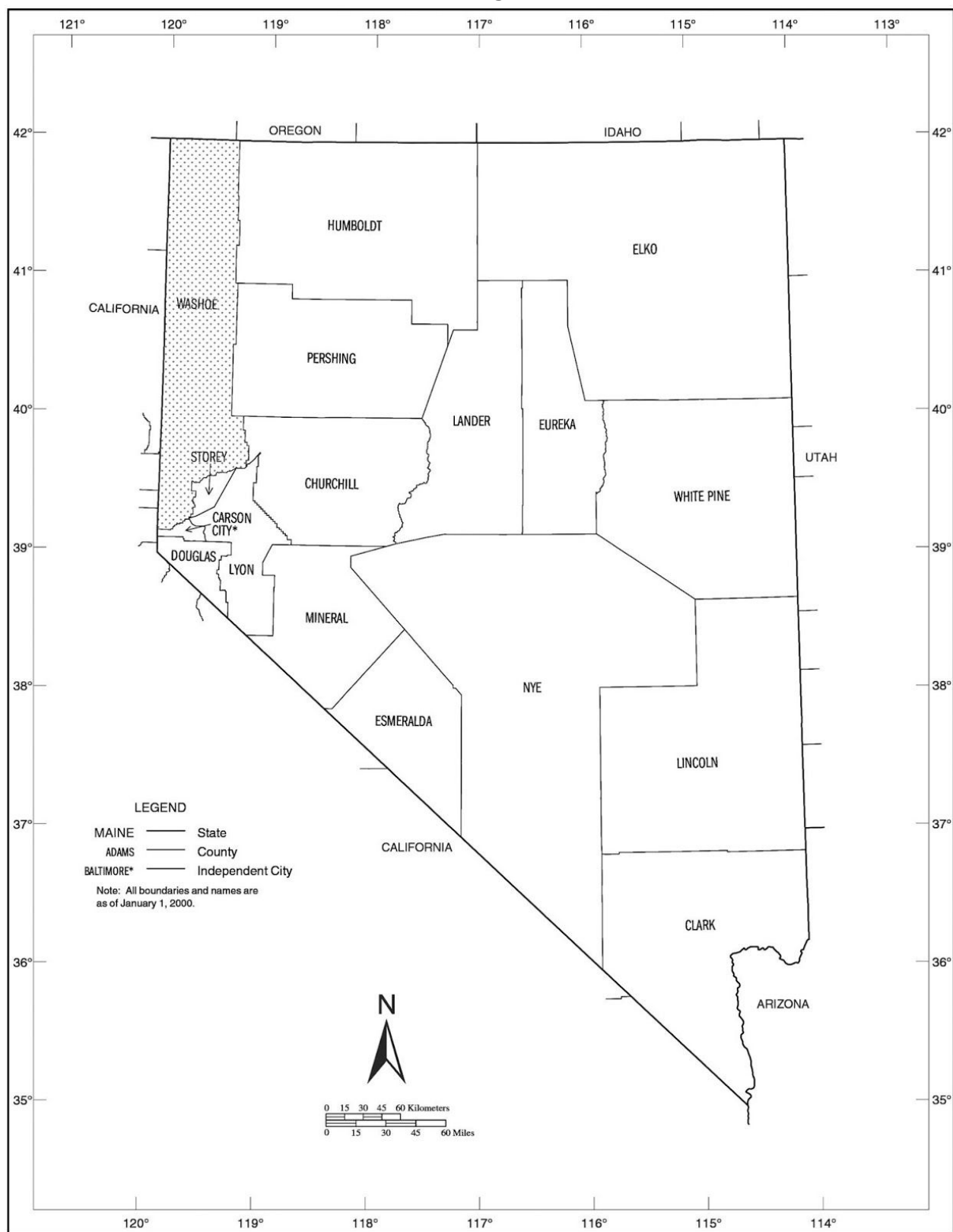
<https://visitvirginiacitynv.com/events/international-camel-ostrich-races-2/>

V&T Railroad Ride and Experiences

Train rides. Need I say more? The half-hour round trip from Virginia City to Gold Hill is great. Open air on top. Lots of Instagram worthy possibilities but keep a good grip on that selfie-stick, lest you drop your phone on the rails.

<https://www.virginiatruckee.com>

Washoe County, NV (Reno)



Notable

Washoe County centers around Reno. Numerous rock related attractions demand staying a while. For a hotel, I like the Eldorado. You can fit a fairly large pick-up truck into their parking garage and they do have outside parking for larger vehicles. They may have the shortest escalator in the world. You'll see. There is always a security guard at the elevators. These people check for your room key before they allow you to go up. This is really valuable as much of downtown Reno is sketchy. Interconnected with Circus Circus which has a massive game area for kids. Great coffee shop with specials after one in the morning. Easy walk to the Truckee River promenade. Bring your kayak.

For the RV folk, many like the Reno KOA at Boomtown which is west of the city near Verdi. Some think it is overpriced but it has a pretty location. Big Chevron station nearby. The Boomtown casino is only a few hundred yards away as well as a Cabela's. Yes, they are overpriced, too. It can get cold in Verdi. Pro tip: tarp your windshield before a frosty night. No scraping in the morning.

Resources

Eldorado Resort Casino (downtown)
345 N Virginia Street
Reno, NV 89501
800-879-8879 (reservations)

<https://www.eldoradoreno.com/>

Reno KOA at Boomtown
2100 Garson Rd
Verdi, NV 89439
888-562-5698 (reservations)
<https://koa.com/campgrounds/reno/>

Classic Nevada (Inside the Antiques & Treasures Downtown Mall)
151 N. Sierra
Reno Nevada 89501
775-762-4905

39°31.585' N 119°48.896' W

Rocks and books and CDs on Nevada history. Antiques as well. I haven't visited but I have talked at length in person with the Woman in Charge. I see their website is promising original door knobs from the Goldfield Hotel so we can only wait with anticipation. Classic Nevada also has a space at Wild Inspirations in Goldfield. I describe that store under the Esmeralda County entry.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

<http://classicnevada.com>

Stone Age Quarry

2002 Harvard Way, Suite B
Reno, NV 89502
775-827-1232

39°30.273' N 119°47.040' W

I haven't visited but the reviews are good. Rock shops are like used bookstores to me. I go into everyone I can find. I don't guess what might be there, I just go. Stone Age Quarry has another store in Virginia City.

No web presence. Try:

<https://www.yelp.com/biz/stone-age-quarry-reno>

William M. Keck Earth Science and Mineral Engineering Museum

The University of Nevada, Reno (UNR)
1664 N Virginia Street
Reno, NV 89557
775-784-4528

39°32.376' N 119°48.870' W – Building only coordinate, parking is far off

Open weekdays only except for the first Saturday of each month. Free admission. Check on summer hours before visiting.

The museum, known as “The Keck” by staff, is in the Mackay School of Mines Building, a classical looking structure in Flemish-bond brick. Gold and silver specimens are first class and the history of the Comstock strike is well presented. Any rockhound should tour the museum's displays of minerals, fossils, mining artifacts, and ores.

In the basement is some of the sterling silver dining set that Mackay commissioned Tiffany and Company to design and produce. The complete set served 24 and reportedly took Tiffany's two years and a million man-hours to complete. Mackay had the dies destroyed later so that no one could reproduce the pieces. As Thor might say, “That's what silver barons do.”

Of note is a large display cabinet which houses the Luella Margraveturquoise collection. It has specimens from around the world, including over 30 examples from different Nevada mines and localities. Mostly rounded and polished stones, the collection includes a Blue Gem mine specimen that weighs 704 carats! The grouping also shows stones often mistaken for turquoise, such as howlite, chrysocolla, wardite, imperialite, and variscite.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Nearby parking is metered and very scarce when students are in session. A long walk is usually required even from metered parking. Take lots of quarters or be prepared for credit card entry if they have stepped up to that. If you have mobility issues, take a Lyft, Uber or taxi from downtown Reno and get dropped off as close as you can to the Museum. The building is handicap accessible with restrooms.

<https://www.unr.edu/keck>

Great Basin Science Sample and Records Library

Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology Publication Sales and Information Office

2175 Raggio Parkway

Reno, NV 89512

775-682-8766

39°34.340' N 119°48.175' W

The Bureau maintains this sales and record keeping outlet at the Great Basin Science Sample and Records Library building on Raggio Parkway in Reno. It's recognizable immediately by its insulating gold clad windows. Maps, books, postcards, and even a small Nevada rock and mineral collection is for sale at this office. Check their website before going to see what is available. An impressive display of rock profiles from around Nevada is exhibited at the office, identifying both rocks and rock formations.

Research is also possible here, although don't expect the helpful staff to be thoroughly knowledgeable on gemstones and collectible minerals. This office supports Nevada's mining industry in the main, the person you are talking with may know more far more about diatomaceous earth than turquoise.

<http://www.nbmng.unr.edu/GBSSRL/index.html>



**GREAT BASIN SCIENCE SAMPLE AND RECORDS LIBRARY,
RENO, NEVADA**

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Bruno's County Club / Hotel

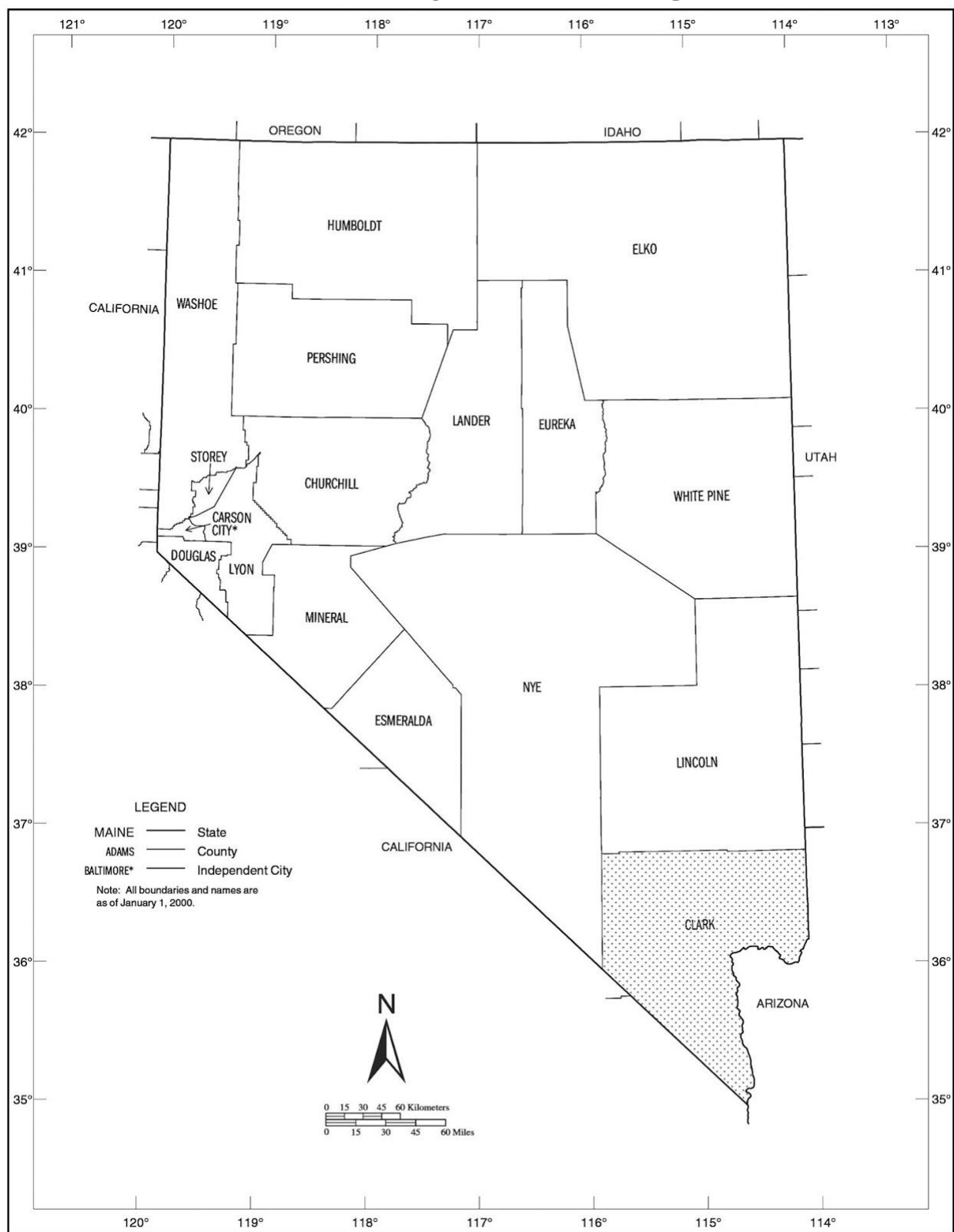
445 Main St.

Gerlach, NV 89412

775-557-2220

Two hours north of Reno sits Gerlach on Highway 447. Wild horse country and a jumping off point for Burning Man people who congregate each year in the nearby Black Rock Desert. The place to stay while prospecting or rockhounding the area. Fuel up in Reno or Fernley or hope the gasoline tanker has delivered to Gerlach. You may be waiting a while. Small but serviceable hotel on the property. The bar and the restaurant have an extremely comfortable atmosphere that is hard to describe. If I ever go missing, you'll find me at Bruno's.

Clark County, NV (Las Vegas)



Notable

The United States government owns nearly 85% of Clark County. Air Force bases, three large National Recreational Areas, a National Wildlife Refuge, and the Nevada National Security Site remove vast land from rockhounding. The huge and remote Gold Butte National Monument offers the greatest rockhounding opportunity for casual, non-commercial collecting.

BLM

Red Rock/Sloan Field Office
1000 Scenic Loop Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89161
702-515-5000

36°08.145' N 115°25.668' W

Located in the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area on the west side of Las Vegas, just a few miles from the Las Vegas suburb of Summerlin.

<https://www.blm.gov/office/southern-nevada-district-office>

Las Vegas Field Office

4701 N. Torrey Pines Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89130
702-515-5350

36°14.743' N 115°14.075' W

BLM's Red Rock/Sloan Field Office at in Las Vegas manages the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. This office is out in the Red Rock Canyon Visitor Center. The entire area prohibits collecting. They sell a few maps. BLM has another office in North Las Vegas which sells surface status management maps. They are conjoined in the same building as the USFS office mentioned next.

<https://www.blm.gov/office/southern-nevada-district-office>

USFS

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest District Office
Spring Mountains National Recreation Area
4701 N. Torrey Pines Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89130
702-872-5486

36°14.743' N 115°14.075' W

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

This office manages the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area which prohibits collecting. They sell maps. Humboldt-Toiyabe is the largest National Forest in the lower 48 states. It occurs as a collection of scattered lands from Reno to Las Vegas. Multiple hardcopy maps needed for travel. Over six million acres. The usual National Forest collecting rules apply except for the National Recreation Areas within the Toiyabe. Those are excluded from collecting. Do you sense a trend here?

The Springs Preserve

333 S. Valley View Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89107
702-822-7700

36°10.346' N 115°11.411' W

–Nevada State Museum

Located on the grounds of The Springs Preserve, this State Museum in Las Vegas has a number of earth science exhibits including displays on geology, fossils, and rocks and minerals. A small but excellent fluorescent room.

<http://nvculture.org/nevadastatemuseumlasvegas/>

-The Nature Exchange

The Nature Exchange is off to the side of the Spring Preserve's gift shop, a trading post for children for rocks, shells, insect parts, plant parts and fossils. The Exchange emphasizes the importance of documenting finds, good advice for anyone going into the field.

<https://www.springspreserve.org/explore/nature-exchange.html>

The Springs Preserve price structure is confusing. Ask first as to what is being paid for, the museum, the grounds, or both. The Preserve is near a freeway complex called the Spaghetti Bowl. If turned around, use surface streets to navigate to the Preserve.

Cactus Joes — (aka Blue Diamond Nursery)

12740 Blue Diamond Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89161
702-875-1968

36°02.370' N 115°22.038' W

Cactus Joes is a wonderful plant nursery. They are Nevada's best and largest authorized dealer of Joshua Trees. They also carry rocks, some rough, some slabs. Much unlabeled, all of it fun. Seek

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

out Cactus Joe himself for a good rock talk. Tell him Tom Farley apologizes for not being around again and that I have some rose quartz for him.

<http://www.cactusjoeslasvegas.com/>



**CACTUS JOE'S NURSERY,
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA**

Jewelry and Mineral of Las Vegas

410 East Sahara Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89104
702-733-7166

36°08.631' N 115°09.130' W

Interesting rock shop located very close to the Vegas Strip.

<https://jewelryandminerals.com>

Southern Nevada Gem and Mineral Society

3111 S. Valley View #E125

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Las Vegas, Nevada 89102

36°09.697' N 115°06.559' W

This is a club well worth joining if living or visiting in Southern Nevada. Has an agate claim near the Lake Mead National Recreation Area. A fine club workshop. Check their website before going to the shop to avoid certain parking spaces.

<http://www.snvgms.org/page2.html>

Visual Rock ID Sessions in Las Vegas

University of Nevada at Las Vegas
4505 S Maryland Pkwy
Las Vegas NV 89154
702-895-3262

36°06.351' N 115°08.503' W

Lily Fong Geosciences Building
36°06.508' N 115°08.458' W

<https://geoscience.unlv.edu/rock-identification-2/>

Held while classes are going on in the fall, winter, and spring, these visual rock identification sessions are very valuable. I have gone to several sessions, particularly to talk with PhD student Drew Barkoff who was a friend of my now unpublished book. I'd stress that you should bring in as much information as you can about your specimen's locality. The geology of an area determines what can be found in that area.

A geologic map or a small printout of same, no matter how simple, will help tremendously. You can find those at either <http://www.MyLandMatters.org> or especially <https://macrostrat.org>. I once brought in a rock from Plymouth, California and did not and could not expect anyone there to know area's geology. Bring a map of the collecting area if possible. Oh, and a small flashlight since the conference room is dim. And a hand lens. They have simple test tools like streak plates. At the above link you will find a link to a .pdf file that explains basic rock ID.

Parking is tough. Many meters accept quarters but in some lots you will get only 10 minutes to a quarter. On many of those meters they have a credit card system in place. You call the number on the meter and voice prompts walk you through a ten-minute process to register your credit card, take down your license plate, and so on. It is frustrating and lengthy to set up the first time, considering you will be in full sun the entire duration. If you return at a later date your account will be established and it will be just a matter of calling the number back. There may be other parking options so, again, check the official UNLV link above.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Bring a cart or hand truck if you have a large or heavy rock. The Geosciences Building is a long walk from wherever you park. Everything is on the first floor and handicap accessible. There is an outstanding display of rocks and minerals on the first floor and I noticed recently that all ceiling bulbs in the hallways have been replaced. Things look great. The Geosciences Building is worth a visit just to check out this collection. All campus staff is friendly and people will happily point you out to the right building.

Gold Searchers of Southern Nevada

Non-profit organization based in Henderson. Monthly outings as weather permits. Has a claim adjacent to the Nye Gold Seekers' claim in the Johnnie Mining District outside of Pahrump in Nye County. Many people have memberships in both clubs.

<http://www.goldsearchersnv.com/home.html>

Rupprecht Estate Rock

Jason Fabbi G.G.
East Las Vegas, NV
702-544-1957

Appointment only.

jhfstones@yahoo.com

Small rock yard representing more than sixty year of collecting in the Southwest by Ed Rupprecht and his wife. Mostly rocks that take a cut and polish, little in collectible minerals. Mostly rough, some slabs. Please bring cash in small bills. Rocks in general are two dollars a pound, slabs more, some things different. Ask Jason for particulars.

Bring your UV lamps, there is a barn like structure on this property with good darkness. I got plenty of pretty lime/green pieces in quartz like rocks, no red or unusual colors. It was not a calcite fest, either, which was good. And I only had a SW lamp, so your luck will be better if your portable lamp has all three wavelengths. Pet wood, opalized wood, a septarian nodule or two, rhyolite, and on and on. Well worth looking at if you are in Las Vegas.

Contact Jason Fabbi to see if the yard is open. Jason is an extremely talented jeweler with a long history of collecting and finishing stones. He is very active in the local club, the SNGMS and does much custom work. He made a handsome bolo tie for me out of gold in quartz that I found.

Here are some pictures, a video, and the eulogy for Ed.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/10/20/the-estate-rock-yard-of-ed-rupprecht-in-east-las-vegas/>

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Clark County Museum

1830 South Boulder Highway

Henderson, NV 89002

702-455-7995

36°01.27266' N 114°57.679' W

This is a large complex rather than a single building housing one museum. Thirty acres in all. The Jilly Bean exhibit showcases Nevada hard rock mining in general and southern Nevada in particular. Invertebrate marine fossils are featured in another display. These can still be collected in parts of southern Nevada. Specimens include trilobites, sponges, crinoids, and brachiopods.

<https://www.clarkcountynv.gov/parks/Pages/clark-county-museum.aspx>

El Dorado Canyon Mine Tours

16880 NV-165

Searchlight, NV 89046

702-291-0026

35°42.611' N 114°48.225' W

“Eldorado Canyon Mine Tours is based in Eldorado Canyon at the historic Techatticup Mine. It's the oldest, richest and most famous gold mine in Southern Nevada. Just 45 minutes from the Strip in Las Vegas. We provide historic mine tours, photo shoots, movie backdrops and canoe/kayak rentals.”

Tours go out from this picturesque road stop of Nelson, Nevada. Despite the address, they are not in Searchlight. Maps are provided at the website. Nelson is a collection of old buildings, rusting cars, ancient mining equipment, old gasoline station signs, and every kind of now collectible discard from generations ago. A great location for trying out one's camera lenses and shooting techniques. They charge a little to photograph, more if you are using a model. Call to make sure mine tours are on.

<https://eldoradocanyonminetours.com/mine-tours.html>

The First Lode Mine in Nevada

Mormon pioneers settled present day Las Vegas in 1855. With the help of a Paiute guide, a small scouting party discovered what was eventually called the Potosi Mine in the nearby Spring Mountains. It produced lead, although it smelted poorly. The ore proved unsatisfactory in the main, never-the-less, on the return to Utah two years later, several tons of it were hauled 450 miles across the Great Basin to Salt Lake. The ore was eventually used to make tools, paint, and bullets. Later miners successfully developed a zinc mine at the Potosi. Fluorescent mineral collectors, therefore, may be interested in the area, check land status first. The entire area

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

eventually become the Potosi Mining District. A Nevada Historical Marker stands along Nevada Route 160 commemorating the efforts of these early miners.

The mine itself is on a rugged off-pavement road in an area with no cell phone coverage.

36°00.062' N 115°29.125' W (Marker location)

Gold Butte National Monument

36°43.906' N 114°13.088' W — Crossroads of Gold Butte Road and HWY 170

This 300,000-acre National Monument allows casual collecting of rocks and minerals. It's said that Gold Butte offers a tremendous variety of minerals but none in paying quantities. Materials previously mined include gold, mica, silver, lead, magnetite, copper and zinc. The Gold Butte area has a mining district although claiming is no longer allowed. Jim Boone's site is the best guide to this remote, service-free area. Past president of The Friends of Gold Butte, Boone describes rock art, wildlife, cultural resources, camping opportunities, and much more.

<https://birdandhike.com>

Do not expect to average more than fifteen miles an hour on Gold Butte's roads. This makes it difficult to experience the area as a day trip, since one has to drive hours to get to the Monument's interior. It is really best for camping, preferably several days. Bring everything needed. Avoid summer. Large RVs are not recommended as the roads are too jarring to handle hour after hour. The Friends of Gold Butte produces the best map.

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/nevada/gold-butte>

Friends of Gold Butte

12 West Mesquite Boulevard, Suite 106

Mesquite, NV 89027

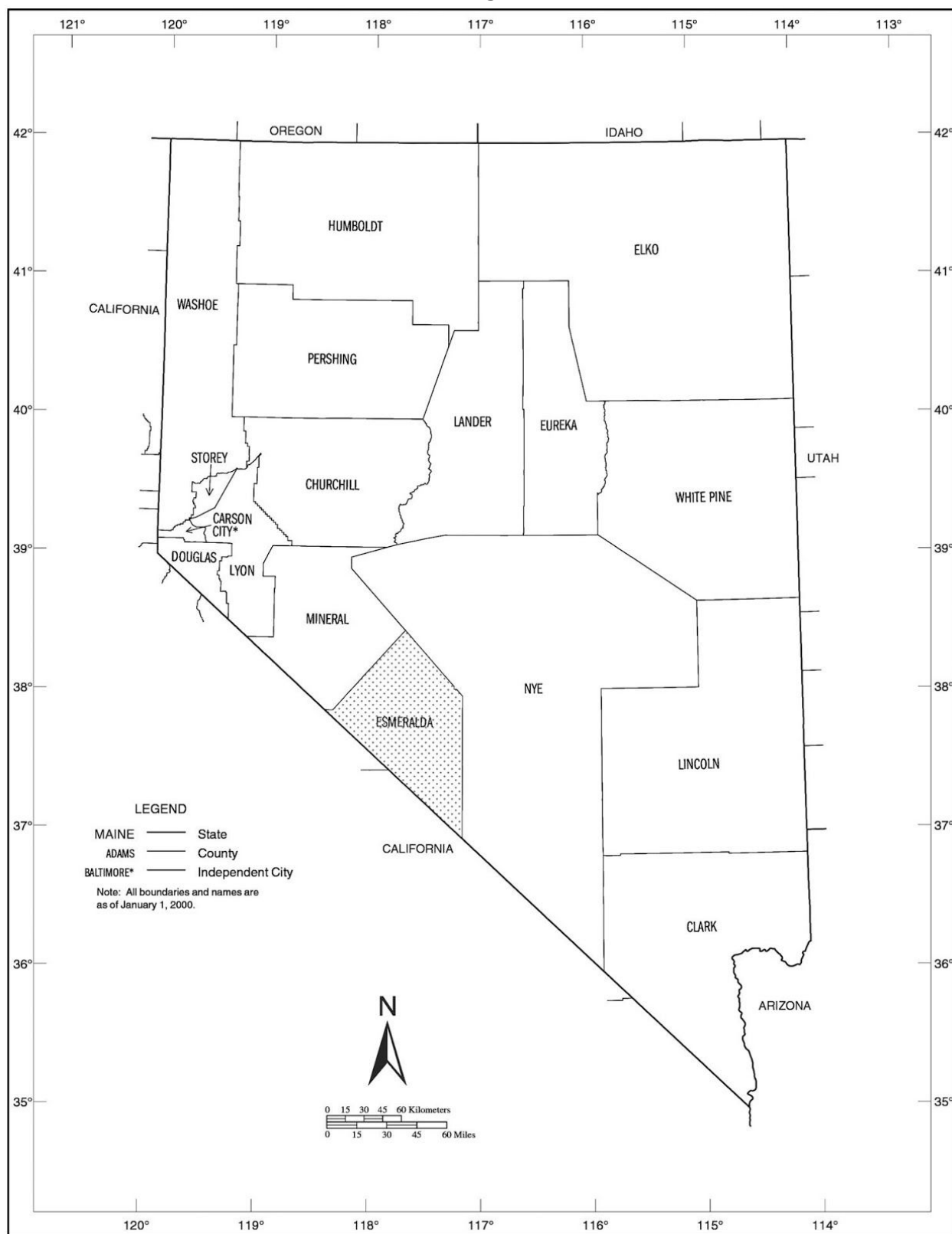
702-613-5875 – telephone number for the Friends, not necessarily the center

36°48.218' N 114°04.110' W

This center relates the “The geology, ecology, and human habitation of Gold Butte.” Sells the latest and most detailed Gold Butte map. Absolutely essential for travel in the Monument. But it may not be available online and the center is closed on weekends. E-mail or call first.

<https://www.friendsofgoldbutte.org/>

Esmeralda County, NV (Goldfield)



Notable

Located at the northern boundary of the Southwest is Goldfield, Nevada. Goldfield is Esmeralda's County seat, the county having no more than 4,000 citizens. Goldfield is wonderfully picturesque and quiet. Wild burros, sometimes antelope in the fields. No gas. Fuel up in Beatty or Tonopah before arriving.

Resources

Artlip, ed. *Goldfield and Esmeralda Nevada Mining Districts 1904-1905* (Reno: Domain Enterprises, 2012) Articles and illustrations from the mining and scientific press as compiled and edited by Sharon Artlip. She and her sister own the chalcedony claims described further on. Possibly available in town at Hidden Treasures or Wild Inspirations. ClassicNevada.com has it and scores more similar publications.

Gemfield Nevada Chalcedony Rock Hounding Site

Near Goldfield, Nevada off of U.S. 95

37°44.370' N 117°17.642' W (Claim information board)

The Gemfield Gem claims are a premier source of chalcedony, quartz of banded, spotted, and swirling colors. Some response under LW UV. Makes for fine cabochons and tumbling material. Well graded road leading to the claim area, entry sign prominently marked along U.S. 95. No large RVs but passenger vehicles will have no problems.

These claims have a long and storied history. I wrote about them in the May, 2016 issue of Rock&Gem. The owners are Sharon Artlip and her sister Nadiah Beekum, with rock shop owner Bryan Smalley assisting.

Sharon has tumbled hundreds of pounds of material from the claim. The Gemfield claims are littered with small pieces that make for fine tumbles. Spend several hours at the claim to make sure you find each of the occurrences of green, red, light blue, and cream-colored stones. Sharon can also do custom tumbling for you. Bring your material along to Goldfield to see if she can work it up.

This is a self-directed fee-dig operating under the honor system. Rocks are \$1.00 a pound. Register before proceeding to the claim at Wild Inspirations or at Hidden Treasures Trading Company at 489 Bellevue Avenue.

If you spend two or three hours at the claims the chances are excellent that you will see wild burros or antelope.

All details and directions are at the claim's website:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

<http://www.gemfieldnv.com>

One of my many illustrated posts on Gemfield:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/04/18/another-update-on-the-gemfield-gem-claims-in-goldfield-nevada/>

Goldfield's Gems: A Center of Chalcedony

(Editor's note: This was my second Rock&Gem article. It was published in their May, 2016 issue.)

By Thomas Farley

A venerable Nevada collecting site has changed ownership and is now open under new management. The current operators wish to say you are welcome to visit. Very welcome, indeed.

Sharon Artlip and Nadiah Beekum now own and run the Goldfield Gemfield Gem claims outside of Goldfield, Nevada. The site is about 25 miles south of Tonopah and 190 miles north of Las Vegas. Only four miles from Highway 95, the site is accessible without four-wheel drive or a high clearance vehicle. Collecting is on the honor system, with rocks going for a dollar a pound.

Five non-patented lode claims make up the site. Chalcedony (Cal-said-a-knee) is the main draw, in many forms. Dendritic agate, bulls eye agate, and rainbow agate, all chalcedony variations, have been collected at Gemfield over the years. In many cases, chalcedony can't be broken out into a category. It appears simply as rocks with tints of red, pink, yellow, and lavender, often with bands and swirls of color.

Gemfield's collecting history began in 1962 when Earl Nesser staked his first claim for gemstones called the New Jerusalem. Goldfield residents thought his pursuit odd, as gold and silver were what local prospectors usually looked for. Although gold may be finely disseminated through the site, there was never enough to make the ground pay. Instead, gems were always the focus, particularly chalcedony. One claim followed after another until he had five.

Nesser opened the entire site to the public in 1966. Rockhounds flocked to collect its variegated stones. While entertaining visitors, Nesser sold samples, sacks, and truckloads of rocks to rock shops and private customers in the United States and abroad. Gemfield's fame grew.

Gem Trails of Nevada and the *Western Gem Hunters Atlas* were just two books to note the Goldfield Gem Claims. James Mitchell in *Gem Trails* *marveled*, "It seems that the entire mountain is made of top quality, immensely colorful cutting material." And, "Some of the most interesting and colorful jasper and jasp-agate to be found anywhere is here, and most is solid and takes an excellent polish." The Bowman family, later owners of the claim, went further. They

wrote in visitor handouts that, “The Gemfield deposit is probably the largest mass of colored gemstone quality chalcedony in the United States.”

The zenith of Gemfield’s fame, though, was probably reached in October, 1984. That’s when Lapidary Journal carried a lengthy article on it written by Robert Ferguson. Entitled “A Visit to The Goldfield Gem Claim,” Ferguson’s article contained 21 photographs, many in color. The “tall, lean and desert tanned” Earl Nesser provided anecdote after anecdote. Notable among them was the account of chalcedony boulders, tons in weight, sold to German clients who shipped them home and turned the material into table -ops. The gaudy but spectacular end product can today only be imagined; after slabbing, cracks and voids in the chalcedony were filled with gold colored epoxy.

In 1987 Nesser sold most of his claims interest to the Camaldolese Hermits of America, a Benedictine family of Monks. He retained ownership of the original New Jerusalem Claim. The monks worked the chalcedony into religious items, such as small rocks inscribed with crosses. The monks never lived in Goldfield, instead relying on Nesser to ship them rocks. After a few short years, the monks sold their claims in 1989 to Arthur and Georgia Burton. The Burtons then acquired the New Jerusalem in 1999 from Nesser who moved to Idaho. All five claims were once again under a single ownership.

The Georgia Burton Bowman family continued operating the Goldfield Gemfield site under the honor system. A payment box on the property took money from rock hounds and local residents forwarded these payments to the Bowmans who did not live in Goldfield. Eventually, the payment box was stolen, claim markers were vandalized, and trash came to be dumped on the claims. In September of 2015, Goldfield locals Sharon Artlip and Nadiah Beekum approached the Bowman family about buying the claims. As nearby residents they felt they could better manage the property.

Artlip was familiar with the collecting site since the early 1980s. Her father, “Slim” Sirnes, would often visit Goldfield and she became familiar with the area, as much for the serenity of rural Nevada, as for the rocks themselves. After working out details and filing the necessary paperwork, claim ownership transferred to Sharon and Nadia at the end of September, 2015. A new life had begun for an old site.

Gemfield is easy to get to. It’s right off Highway 95, the main corridor between Las Vegas and Reno. Two miles north of Goldfield you’ll see a tall green sign pointing to the west. The Gemfield claims are four miles down a fairly well graded road accessible to almost any vehicle with normal clearance. Four-wheel drive not required. I would advise, though, against most RVs, due to a lack of turn around space. But I am getting ahead of myself. Check into the claim by going to Goldfield first.

The claim owners want you to visit but they want you to sign in first. Doing so lets people know you are on the ground and signing in is also a release of liability. Four different places in Goldfield keep visitor logs. (Editor’s note: these stores are listed after this article.)

Material collection is on the honor system. Collect as many specimens as you like and then estimate the weight to the nearest pound at a dollar a pound. Drop off cash to one of the above locations or write a check. Make checks payable to Goldfield Art & BS. You can also PayPal the money to goldfieldart@yahoo.com.

Now back to the rocks. And that dirt road to the claim that starts at Highway 95. Take your time. You might see wild burros or perhaps an antelope. Colorful arrow signs point the way at each fork in the road. After four miles you'll come to a small parking spot with an information board and brochures detailing the area. GPS coordinates are N 37°44.370' W 117°17.642'

The roads beyond the information sign are for high clearance vehicles and perhaps four-wheel drive. But you can park at the sign and hike to anywhere on the claim site. If you have time to explore, there are springs, petroglyphs and old kilns nearby. Check the USGS Montezuma Peak 7.5 quadrangle and Stanley Paher's *Illustrated Nevada Ghost Towns & Desert Atlas*.

I visited the claim site on a mid-week-day in late February. Sharon Artlip was kind enough to shut down her store (Goldfield Art & Business) to guide myself and another party to the area. Following her vehicle wasn't really necessary because the road was so well marked. It was nice of her to do this, however, and I got a better idea of what to look for.

As I got out of my truck, I tried to remember what little I knew about chalcedony. Most often I thought of it as a pale milky or opaque stone used to carve Victorian era cameos. James Mitchell, in *Gem Trails of Northern California*, defined it as a "Clear and colorless agate without patterns or inclusions. A translucent or micro-crystalline form of quartz that is often pale blue or gray with a nearly wax-like luster." That's what I remembered about cameos. Yet all the rocks I had seen at Artlip's store were a riot of color and patterns.

Minerals.net describes the word this way. "Chalcedony is often used specifically to describe the white, gray, or blue translucent type of Chalcedony, but its technical term includes all additional varieties." Those varieties comprise, to name a few, Agate, Bloodstone, Carnelian, Chrysoprase, and Jasper. And, of course, varieties such as Agate can have many forms themselves, such as Fire Agate, Eye Agate, Snakeskin Agate, or Moss Agate, all of them exhibiting banding or different colors.

The Henry Holt Guide to Minerals, Rocks, and Fossils reconciles the colored and colorless face of chalcedony. "Chalcedony (SiO₂) is the name given to compact varieties of silica which compromise minute quartz crystals with sub-microscopic pores. There are two main varieties: chalcedony, which is uniformly coloured, and agate, which is characterized by curved bands or zones of differing colour."

Leaving taxonomy to others, I walked about the low hills of the site. The ground was literally covered in places with broken chalcedony. It was everywhere. Artlip pointed to different areas where different colored stones could be found. The brochure she developed was handy, outlining the many areas of the claim. Wanting only a few hand samples, I left my rock hammer

and digging bar at the truck. It was obvious I could get what I wanted simply by picking it off the ground. Or perhaps not.

A chalcedony boulder presented itself near the top of the claim territory. It was over a yard wide and high, a confusion of swirls and patterns. I thought about how Nesser sold these boulders, most probably bigger, and how much they might weigh. A dollar a pound? I'd need a bigger pickup. And a bigger checkbook. Speaking of which, Sharon and Nadia will negotiate a discount for larger rocks. Also, rock Clubs planning a field trip can contact them and their members will get a discount, along with a portion going back to the sponsoring club.

While hand sized pieces were numerous, it was obvious that garden sized pieces were much fewer. They would require work to extract. At many places you could see where others had labored. One chalcedony pit stood out, it looked like people had a tremendous interest in a light blue outcropping, judging by past efforts. For me, I was simply interested in a piece that wasn't too vuggy, something I could slab at my gem and mineral club. After gathering a few pieces, I contented myself with touring the grounds and taking in the high desert scenery.

Rural Nevada's tranquility is always captivating. As open BLM country, one could camp here amongst the Joshua Trees. Make sure, though, to keep a clean camp and be aware this is desert. Rattlesnakes, tarantulas, lizards, and other creatures call the area home. Remember, too, that no mechanical equipment is allowed – picks, shovels and hand tools only.

I noticed Artlip took the other party aside to show them the basics of gold panning. She previously told me there was black sand on the property and I was now intrigued. I got out my White's GMT and detected on the area she collected ground from. The black sand readings weren't that high but I looked over only a few feet. As she panned the material out I could see there was *some* black sand. Since the Gemfield claims are between two gold districts, perhaps some flour gold could be found on these hills. Artlip pointed out a gully she thought was under laid by hardpan. We ruminated that a false bedrock could result, perhaps worthy of prospecting. People are welcome, she said, to try for gold if they liked.

After an hour or two I decided to go back to Goldfield. I wanted to look up Bryan Smalley at Hidden Treasures, the local rock shop. He has a Facebook page but no website. I was very interested in what his store might contain.

I returned to Sharon Artlip's store for directions to Hidden Treasures. Her place is, again, Goldfield Art & Business Services, sometimes called Goldfield Art & BS. It's one of the four businesses you can check in before visiting the claims. Right on Highway 95 at Fifth Avenue, the actual address is 306 Crook Avenue. You'll see a large wooden sign out front that proclaims "Official Gemfield Headquarters." (Editor's note: Store now called Wild Inspiration and run by different folks. See their information after the end of this article.)

Outside, Artlip has plenty of rock from the claims. Inside, if you ask, she'll pull out a tray of polished stones which have been worked up from Gemfield rocks. Sharon now directed me to Bryan's shop which is several blocks off Highway 95, at 489 Bellvue, near Bellvue and Oasis.

Pick up a map at the City's Chamber of Commerce to guide you. Or just ask someone walking around. Goldfield's 200 souls all know each other.

Goldfield is a sprawling ramshackle of a town, its size befitting a place that once claimed 20,000 citizens. Grand stone buildings remain, along with rough-hewn houses, traditional homes, and single wide trailers. Make sure to slow down as you look around, you'll find something interesting at every corner. Art cars worthy of Burning Man? An aluminum giraffe named Cosmo? It's all in Gemfield.

I arrived at Bryan's corner store. In two buildings he has a little bit of everything: rocks from the area, agates, fossils, collector minerals and more. He told me that he thought it was great that Artlip was resurrecting the claims. "I think it is wonderful. It's good rock, it's good material, it's been used off and on but the claim has never seriously been developed. Now, Artlip has the claims, she's here in Goldfield and there's now a chance to get things going."

Bryan showed me carvings he had made, noting the hardness of the local stone. He said Gemfield's chalcedony, when properly heated, made great strikers for flintlock rifles. All manner of knapping can be done with the rock, from creating arrowheads to producing stone knives. Bryan knew Earl Nesser, the first claim owner, and can tell you stories about him. He can also comment on your finds, advising on what you might make out of them.

Artlip says there are plenty of things to do in Goldfield besides looking for chalcedony. "We have over a thousand miles of roads in Esmeralda County that people can go rockhounding on. There's plenty of off-road activities as well as the tremendous historical sites in town. There are hot springs, antelope, wild horses, wild donkeys and plenty of things to do. Goldfield Days are the first week in August. It's not that hot in the summer so if you are in Vegas, come on up. We're generally 15 to 20 degrees cooler."

Thinking of going? The Gemfield claims are on open ground with little shade. Bring a hat, long sleeves, gloves and plenty of water. You are at 5,000-feet in elevation. Dry. Take extra water and food so you don't have to come back to town before you're ready. Hat and handkerchief. Gloves, goggles and a spray bottle, along with all of your regular rockhounding tools.

As to facilities, there's one small hotel in town, connected with the Santa Fe Saloon. More lodging is in Tonopah, 26 miles away. The Dinky Diner is the one restaurant in town and there is one general store. No gas in town, so fuel up before you hit Goldfield. Expect some places to be closed when they should be open. Keep a list of phone numbers for all the places you wish to visit. Many times, you can call the owner and they will open their shop for you. Don't be afraid, too, to ask the townsfolk for directions and information.

One last note. A new heap leach gold mine may be opening near Goldfield. It's in the planning stage and is called the Gemfield Mine. An open pit operation, it will have nothing to do with the Gemfield Gem claims. Sharon welcomes your e-mails at goldfieldart@yahoo.com. And every business in Goldfield says that you are welcome. Very welcome, indeed.

Resources

Goldfield Chamber of Commerce
307 Crook Avenue
P.O. Box 204
Goldfield, Nevada 89013
(775) 485-3560

<http://goldfieldnevada.org/information.html>

Dining

Dinky Diner
323 Crook Avenue
Goldfield, Nevada 89013
775-485-3231

Lodging

The Santa Fe Motel
925 North 5th Ave
Goldfield, NV 89013
775-485-3431

Works Cited

Mitchell, James R. *Gem Trails of Nevada*. (1991) Gem Guides Book Company

Mitchell, James R. *Gem Trails of Northern California* (2005) Gem Guides Book Company

Paher, Stanley *Illustrated Nevada Ghost Towns & Desert Atlas* (2012) Nevada Publications

Hamilton, Wooley, and Bishop *The Henry Holt Guide to Minerals, Rocks and Fossils* (1974)
The Hamlyn Publishing Company.

Johnson, Cyril R *Western Gem Hunters Atlas* (2001) Cy Johnson & Son

http://www.minerals.net/gemstone/chalcedony_gemstone.aspx

Visitor handout to the Gemfield Gem Claims. Produced by Sharon Artlip. (2015)

Wild Inspirations

306 Crook Avenue
P.O. Box 121

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Goldfield, NV 89013
775-485-3789

37°42.560' N 117°14.284' W

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/goldfieldwildinspirations/about/>

Has some rocks, many of which were collected by the owners. Old maps and documents. You can register at this shop for digging at the Gemfield Claims. This building was formerly Sharon's and still has "Gemfield Headquarters" at the top of the building. As with everything in Goldfield, call to make sure they are still open. Contact Goldfield's Chamber of Commerce if necessary.

Hidden Treasures Trading Company

489 Bellevue Avenue
P.O. Box 512
Goldfield, NV 89013
775-485-3761 – Voice mail box is usually full
775-485-3485

37°42.220' N 117°14.066' W

<https://www.facebook.com/HiddenTreasuresTradingCo/>

bsmalleyhiddentreasure@gmail.com

One of my many posts on Hidden Treasures:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/04/25/bryan-smalley-and-hidden-treasures-trading-company-in-goldfield-nevada/>

Bryan Smalley runs one of the Southwest's most eclectic rock and gift shops. He is expert on local rockhounding and accomplished at cutting and lapidary. He does knapping and can talk authoritatively on making flintlock strikers from locally collected chalcedony. It is sometimes difficult to find him at his shops, three buildings in total.

Ask locals where Bryan is if you can't find him. Try the Dinky Diner. The friendly Goldfield citizens won't mind your asking. Bryan has a minimal web presence since he focuses on finding rocks and cutting same. And making doors and entire buildings. Make sure to stop when investigating the Gemfield Gem claims. Tell him Tom said "Hi" and if you have a rock that needs cutting, ask him if he has the time. Oh, and buy something!



BRYAN SMALLEY, HIDDEN TREASURES TRADING COMPANY
GOLDFIELD, NEVADA

Florence and Rustler #2 Mine Tours

Goldfield, NV

Call or text for information and reservations:

James Aurich: 702-622-0500

Jon Aurich: 702-622-1344

Guided surface and underground tours by appointment. The surface tour views head frames, hoist houses, the black shop and more. Great views of the surrounding country which are pockmarked with the craters of old mines. One mile from Goldfield on an easy dirt road. Private residence on site. Those with mobility issues should bring up their condition with the owners before visiting.

This page linked below contains photos and mine history. Information on the Florence exists in different places on the web, including Mindat.org.

<https://www.yelp.com/biz/florence-mining-company-goldfield-4>

Vanderford's Gold Strike

William D. Vanderford, Consulting Geologist
775-485-3252

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 27
Goldfield, NV

Shop location:
Highway 95 on the west side of town.

Eclectic materials, well worth a stop. Don't pay too much.

billvanderford@yahoo.com

Old YouTube video but a good look at the store:

<https://youtu.be/I0nFH0Lfh8Q>

The Dinky Diner
323 Crook Avenue
Goldfield, NV 89103
775-485-3231

37°42.453' N 117°13.946' W

Menu:

<http://places.singleplatform.com/the-dinky-diner/menu?>

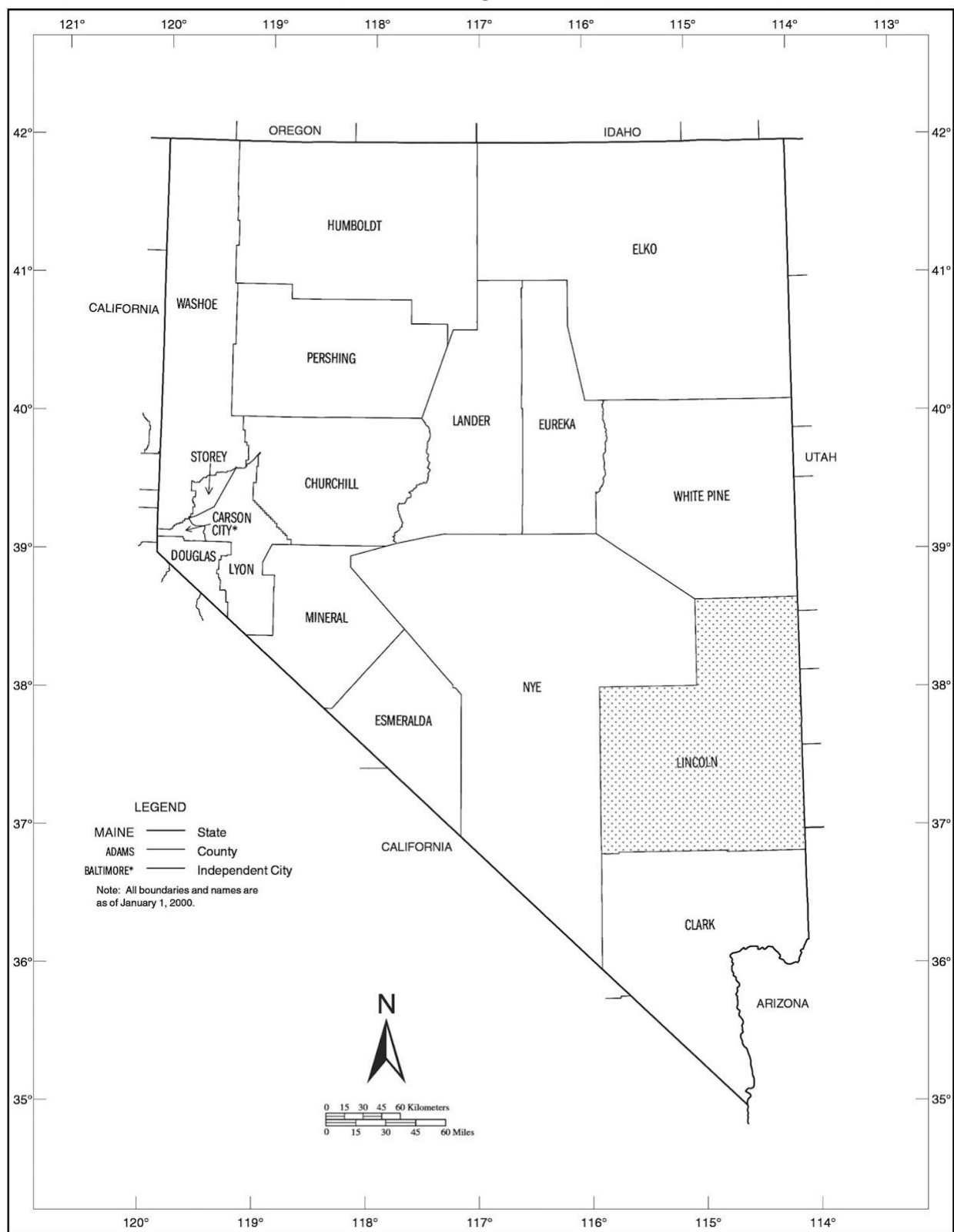
Your place to eat in Goldfield. Skip a meal in Beatty or Tonopah and eat instead in Goldfield. It will be worth it. Only place in town to eat but this business does not take advantage of that, they try very hard. Small-town life; strike up a conversation with the next table. They will fix anything to go if you don't have time to dine.

The Dinky is right on I-95 in Goldfield, essentially Main Street. You may miss it coming in from the south. Turn around where convenient but watch your speed and where you turn as an Esmeralda County Sheriff is often waiting to catch speeders. Slow down!

A few years ago, I stopped into Goldfield to research my second Rock&Gem article. The waitress asked me what I was doing in town. I said I was meeting Sharon Artlip to discuss her chalcedony claims. "Oh, yes," the waitress said, "Sharon said you were coming in."

"My mom and I own this business and we are just trying to serve awesome food. With a good environment and great people. Hours are 7 am to 4 pm, every day except Sundays when we close at 2 pm. Hope to see you soon!" Karie L.

Lincoln County, NV (Pioche)



Clover Mountains Wilderness Area

Twelve miles south of Caliente off of State Route 317 lies the Clover Mountains Wilderness Area. Rhyolite in shades of, pink, yellow, red, orange and brown. Look for petroglyphs and pictographs.

37°24.338' N 114°19.618' W (Center of WA)

Philip Neuhoff to Fluorescent Minerals

January 29 at 9:55 PM ·

Broke up the drive to Tucson today with a stop in Pioche, NV. The county historical museum was open so I stopped in. Was pleasantly surprised to see, along with nice displays of local minerals, a small but effective FM display. Well thought out, combined LW/SW display with an explanation of fluorescence and sufficient UV illumination of the specimens. In context I was impressed.

BLM Oak Springs Trilobite Site

Highway 93 (The Great Basin Highway)

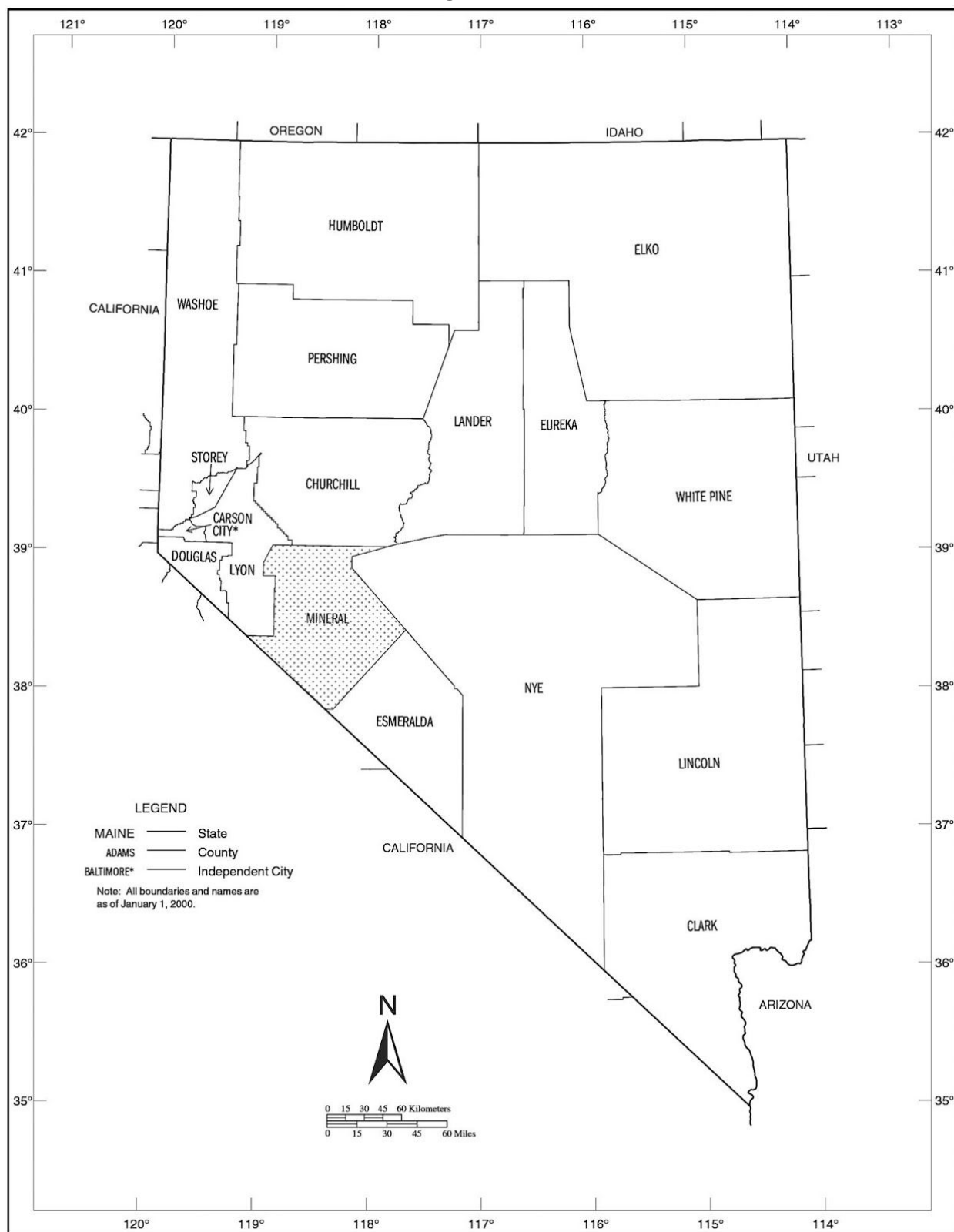
Caliente, NV 89008

775-726-8100

37°36.821' N 114°42.681' W

BLM managed collecting site open to the public free of charge. Mostly partial trilobites here but finding a full bug will take luck, patience, and time. No services but well-marked trail. The site is not in Caliente but 11 miles west near the Oak Springs Summit. A brick hammer works better than a geologist's pick for splitting shale.

Mineral County, NV (Hawthorne)



Rock Chuck Gem and Mineral Gallery

4045 S. Highway 95
Schurz, NV 89427
760-978-4567

38°56.401' N 118°48.638' W

My fuller description with an interactive Google Map:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/04/30/rockchuck-gem-mineral-gallery-in-schurz-nevada/>

This is the store of John and Chelsea Keady. Rock Chuck isn't in the Southwest but it is a mandatory stop leaving or approaching the Southwest. It is outside of Schurz, Nevada, a tiny town 34 miles north of Hawthorne, Nevada, 90 miles south of Reno. Their store is at the intersection of South Highway 95 (Alternative) and US-95 itself.

Chelsea and John are miners, lapidary artists, rockhounds, and all-around good people. Bryan Smalley affectionately refers to them as "The Kids." These young people signal a bright future for the rock and gem trade.

They built their store themselves and everything that goes in it. They sell material they have either personally sourced or dug themselves. That includes Green Mist variscite and Hellfire agate. They carry many local rocks and gem material and fashion much of that into jewelry. John and Kelsea sell ready-made jewelry at the shop and they are always ready to do commission work.

The Keady's are now keeping the store open more often. Call first, though, to make sure they are there, and not off on one of their claims. If you can't visit them at the shop, you might catch them at Quartzsite in January. They try to get there each year.

This store is a memorable stop on any drive from Las Vegas to Reno, or on any travel through central Nevada. Rock Chuck is big on Facebook so check them out there if you want to keep up with their latest happenings. They have a nice dog.

<https://rockchucknevada.com>

Mineral County Museum

400 10th St.
Hawthorne, NV 89415
775-945-5142

Call for hours

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

38°31.933' N 118°37.515' W

Well done museum with mining history and some display of rocks. Free admission. Well worth a stop, especially if staying overnight in Hawthorne. (I recommend the Travelodge). Across the street from a public rest area. Walking distance of the Hawthorne Ordnance Museum.

“The Mineral County Museum is located at the corner of Tenth and D Streets in Hawthorne, Nevada. Directly across the street from the rest area on U.S. Highway 95 at the north end of Hawthorne.”

<http://web0.greatbasin.net/~mcmuseum/index.html>

Hawthorne Ordnance Museum

925 E Street
Hawthorne, NV 89415
775-945-5400

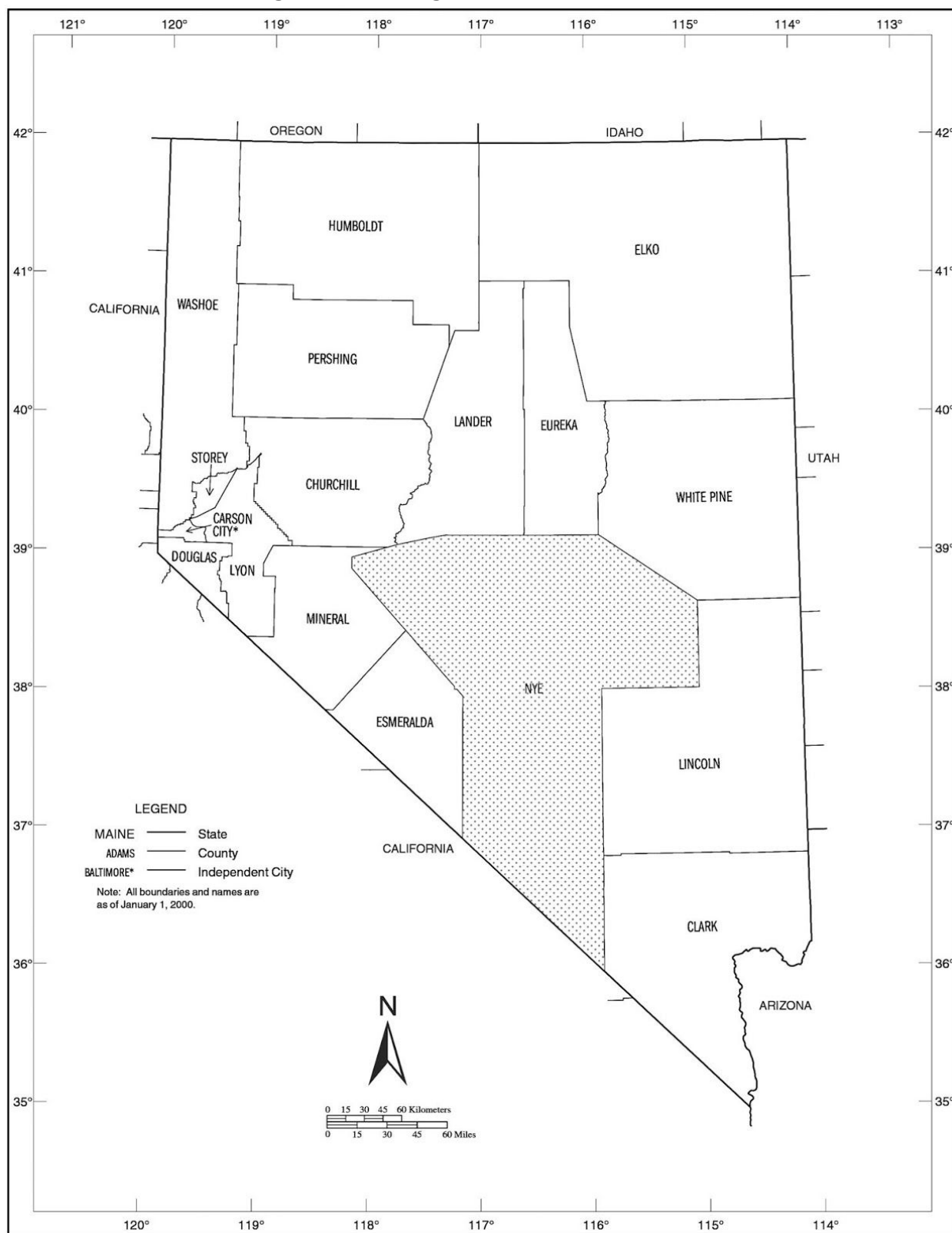
38°31.870' N 118°37.491' W

Hawthorne is home to the largest ammunition depot in the western hemisphere, possibly the world. The base does mostly decommission work now, so they say, and as such they furnish a steady stream of castoff shells and flares and what not to the museum. The museum highlights the contributions that bombs, missiles, and shells played in keeping us free. You will see things here that are nowhere else. Get to know your ASROCs (anti-Submarine ROckets).

The gift shop is amazing and a source of souvenirs your friends will try to steal from you. Strictly cash, bring plenty. I think there is a commercial ATM nearby. They have t-shirts and hard goods that are hard to describe. The trick is to get in there by 4:00 PM when they close. Normally I would recommend a museum, this one I am ordering you to visit. Don't let me hear you passed by without stopping.

<http://hawthorneordnancemuseum.com>

Nye County, NV (Tonopah)



BLM Pahrump Field Office

4701 North Torrey Pines Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89130
702-515-5000

36°14.718' N 115°14.038' W

<https://www.blm.gov/office/pahrump-field-office>

Rock-N-Gold Club

Meeting address:
Pahrump Valley Museum
401 E. Basin Ave.
Pahrump, NV 89060
775 751-8613

36°13.172' N 116°00.335' W

Great gold prospecting club and rockhounding group with a Johnnie Mining District claim. Their general meetings had been held at 2:00 PM on the third Saturday of the month except for June, July and August. This group is a recent merger of the Nye Gold Seekers (NGS) and the Pahrump Valley Rock Hounds (PVRH). The address listed above was for the old meeting place. This is the kind of local club you want to join. See if something similar is in your area. Learn on productive ground from the old-timers. Drywashing, metal detecting, panning, are all things you can learn at a club.

<https://www.rock-n-gold.org/>

The Beatty Museum

417 Main Street
Beatty, NV 89003
775-553-2303

36°54.368' N 116°45.693' W

Unassuming building and grounds overflowing with objects and curiosities. Mining history and artifacts; Nevada's mining past often matches the colorful stories and characters of California's Mother Lode. Let me make that clearer. In the Mother Lode, miners had a temperate climate, water, even if distant, forage for livestock, and timber. In Death Valley and the southern part of Nevada's Great Basin, even shade is hard to find.

Staff let me pull out many maps on my last visit. Although volunteer driven, this museum always has a professional curator.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Beatty is a gateway to Death Valley. Fuel up here, gas is much, much cheaper than in Death Valley. The old mining town of Rhyolite is a few minutes away, famous for its modern, ghostly sculptures, one figure holding a bicycle. The city name, by the way, is pronounced like Warren Beatty. Not Beety. Despite what you've heard.

<https://www.beattymuseum.org>

Otteson Brothers Turquoise Tours / Dig

Tonopah, NV

The Ottesons were scheduled to bring fee digs back in the spring of 2020 for the general public. Who knows what the virus will do to their plans? Fee digs in the last few years have been limited to the membership in certain rock clubs and to others on an individual basis. Don't think they are getting rich on your dig fee, I expect half of that money probably goes to insurance, the reason more fee digs don't exist.

<https://ottesonbrothersturquoise.com/mine-tours>

For a look at the great time I had on the last public fee dig Dean Otteson gave, read my first article for Rock&Gem at this link:

<https://southwestrockhounding.com/2019/10/21/a-nevada-turquoise-adventure-from-2015/>

The Tonopah Historic Mining Park

Tonopah Historic Mining Park
110 Burro Avenue
P.O. Box 965
Tonopah, NV 89049
775- 482-9274

38°04.136' N 117°13.801' W

<http://www.tonopahhistoricminingpark.com/index.html>

Tonopah was America's last great gold and silver strike. You've heard about the Gold Rush of 1849, the Comstock, and the Klondike. But there was also Tonopah in 1900 and for years thereafter. The visitor center and the park grounds highlight this stupendous and spectacular hunt for those precious metals at the turn of the century. Five-dollar admission.

The park is right behind the extremely comfortable and period correct Mizpah Hotel. The entrance road is best approached in larger vehicles by Burro Street. The visitor center parking lot

has room for two or three RVs and the exit road is a pull-through, so there is no worry about having to back up.

The grounds offer a self-guided tour. Pick up a map at the visitor center which also houses a terrific rock, gem, and mineral museum. As for the grounds, hiking the park at 6,000 feet can be tough at times but take it slow and bring some water. Great opportunities for photographs. For those out of shape or mobility challenged, tours on a Polaris with a guide can be arranged. Call for current availability and charges. Jeff Martin is a Park Host and Guide that I have dealt with many times.

Top your tank before leaving Tonopah since the nearest gas stations are 100 miles north and south of town. Also consider visiting the Central Nevada Museum before you leave, the city's best kept secret. They have rocks. Bring a flashlight.

Central Nevada Museum

1900 Logan Field Road
Tonopah, NV 89049
775-482-9676

38°03.610' N 117°13.246' W

Great museum and grounds. Free admission, donations accepted. Some rocks on display. Great place if you are researching anything or anyone in the area. Call ahead or e-mail if you are looking for something particular.

<http://www.tonopahnevada.com/central-nevada-museum/>



DRIVING OUT OF THE ROYSTON HILLS, NYE COUNTY, NEVADA

Western Rock Ramblings

-- A Little Utah --

By Thomas Farley

© 2020

thomasfarley@fastmail.com

All illustrations were derived from photographs taken by the author or from those in the public domain.

Introduction

This chapter is on a few things in Utah. It is another part of what was to be a hardcopy publication, however, formatting the text and illustrations proved too difficult and time consuming.

Photos are mostly black and white to minimize the size of these chapter files. Since monochrome photographs present terribly on ordinary printer paper so I stylized the photos. The resulting sketch type illustrations, however, are at 300 dpi so they will print well.

I know I have missed many points of interests as well as rock shops and clubs. E-mail me if you would like to be included in the next revision of this text. I had intended an extended visit back to Utah but the virus cancelled all my travels.

Most sites are probably closed as of press time because of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

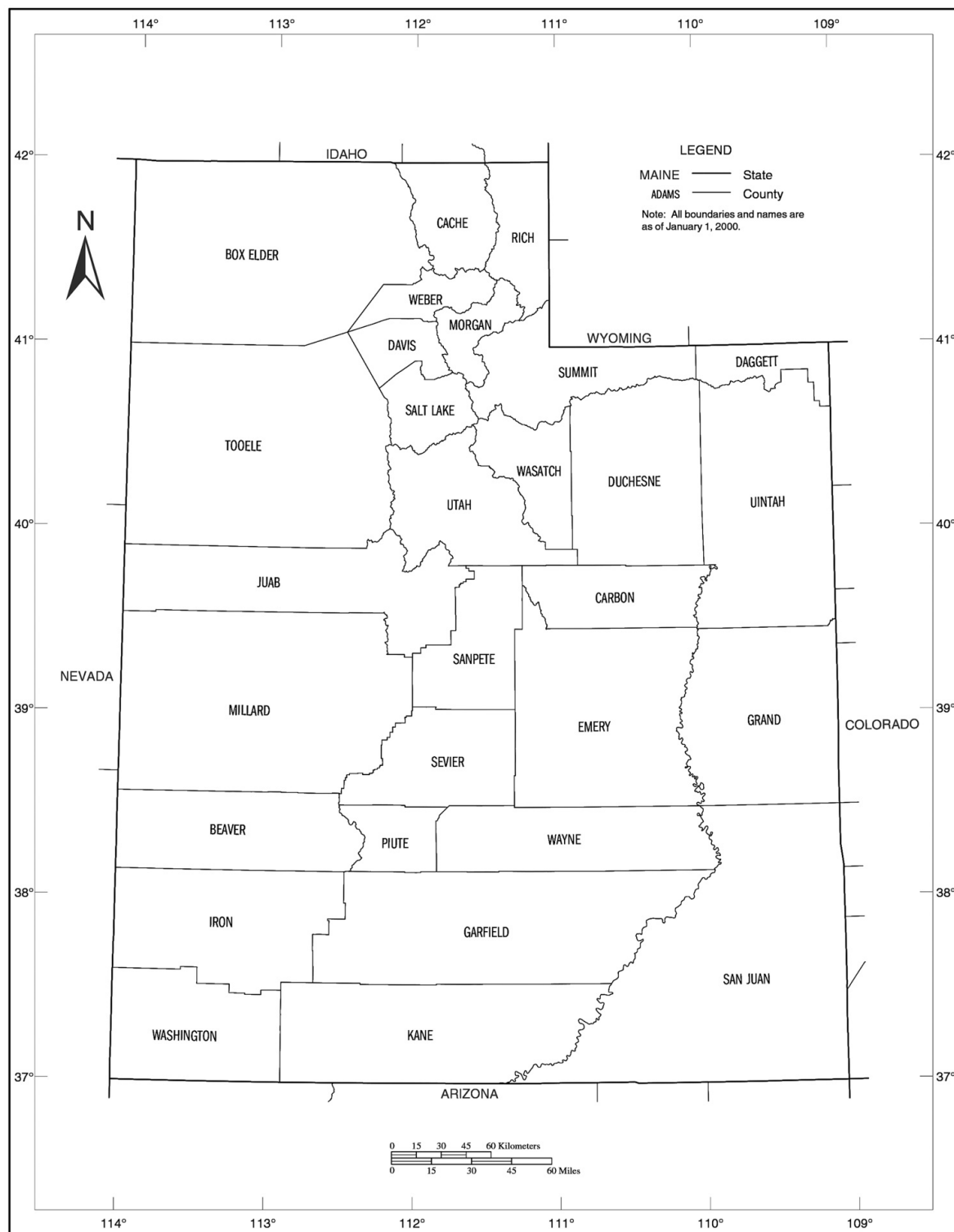
Feel free to distribute this file anywhere you like. I wish you good health.

Best,

Thomas Farley

Las Vegas, Nevada

Some of Utah

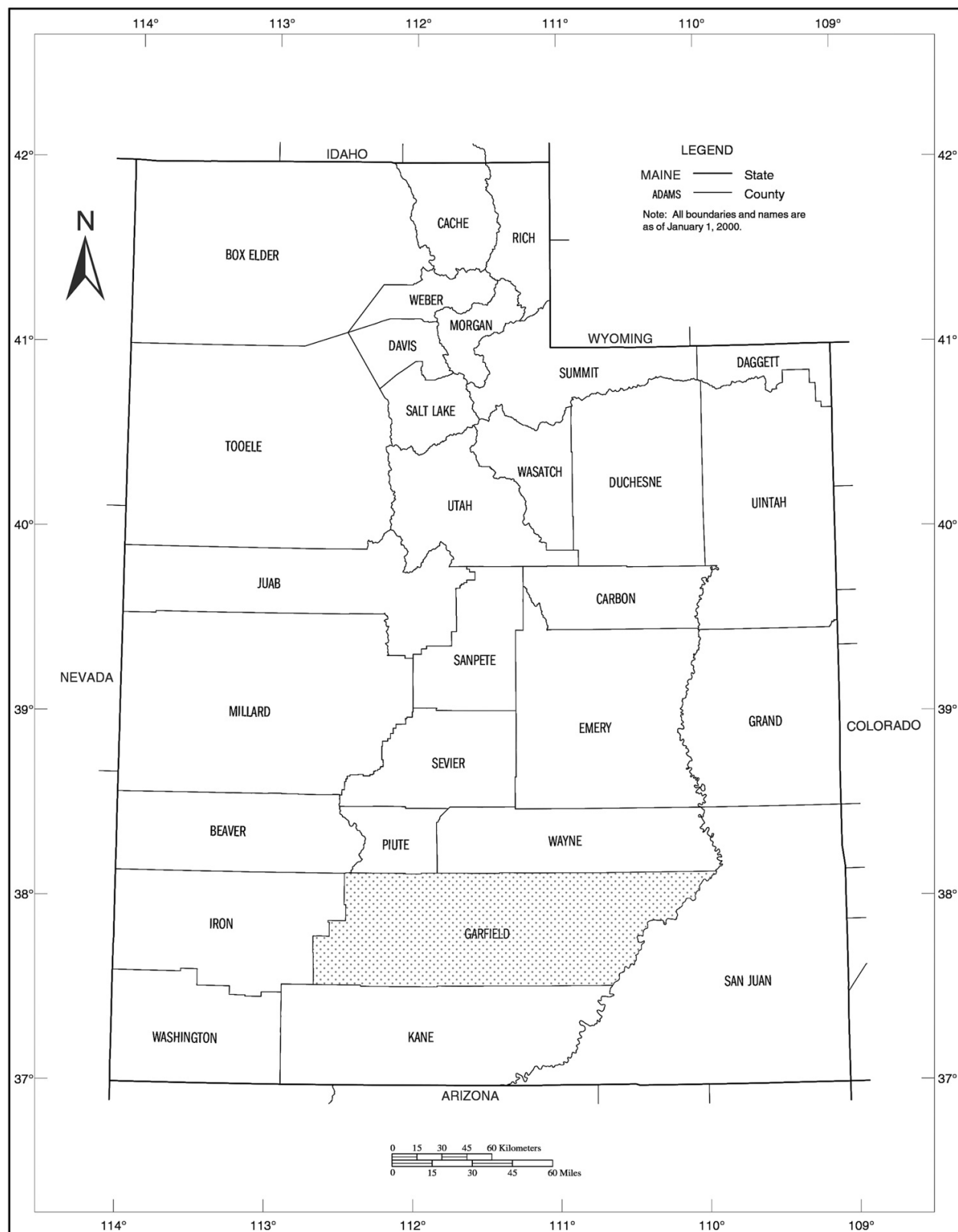


No other state show rock formations better than Utah save Northern Arizona. Southern Utah's National Parks and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument reveal countless bold and colorful sandstone layered cliffs. These are all off limits to collecting but they provide a great geology education when using the ROCKD app of Macrostrat.org.

Utah charges a \$10 fee for rockhounding on Utah's trust lands. These are, to make it simple, state land where collecting is not otherwise prohibited. These lands are scattered throughout Utah in a random checkerboard fashion. Check MyLandMatters.org to view at home. In the field, boundaries are impossible to determine. Send Utah their \$10.00.

<https://trustlands.utah.gov/business-groups/mining/rockhounding-information/>

Garfield County, UT (Panguitch)



Geologist James Wilson says this south-central county hosts volcanic rocks in the Markagunt Plateau, the Sevier Plateau, the Aquarius Plateau, at Boulder Mountain, and in the Henry Mountains. Widespread sedimentary rocks result in agate, gypsum, petrified wood, and fossils. Wilson's book is A Collector's Guide to Rock, Mineral & Fossil Localities of Utah (Salt Lake City: Utah Geological Survey, 1995)

Dixie National Forest

Supervisor's Office and Cedar City Ranger District
1789 N Wedgewood Lane
Cedar City, UT 84721

435-865-3700 (SO)

435-865-3200 (CCRD)

37°42.630' N 113°03.478' W

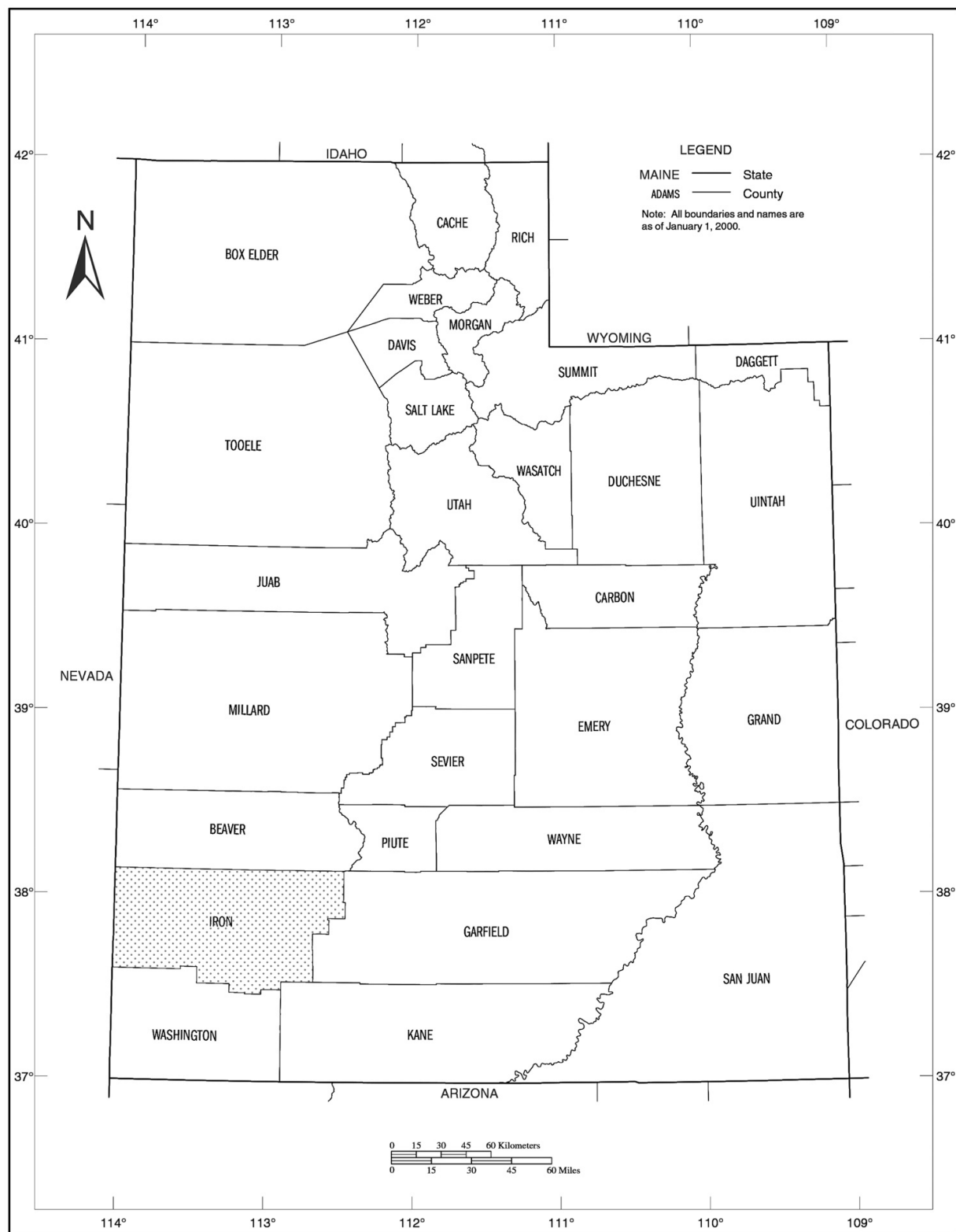
Free Dixie National Forest Maps at the Ranger District Door. The Dixie sits in parts of six counties, including Garfield, Washington, and Iron. Kane, Wayne, and Piute counties have less forested land than the others.

State Hwy 14 runs generally east/west through the Dixie. No guide lists collection sites along that stretch. This author, however, found a nice agate scrap and an unidentified rock with crystals in five minutes by simply stopping at this random pullout:

37°29.496' N 112°36.966' W

The Panguitch Lake area further north is more solidly recommended for agates.

Iron County, UT (Cedar City)



Iron County is named for the magnetite hosted in the rocks of the Iron Springs Mining District west of Cedar City. That area has quite a bit of unclaimed BLM managed land. The Cedar City area, though, is best known for agates including fingerprint agate near Enoch.

The Southern Utah Rock Club

497 N. 100 W
Cedar City, UT 84721

37°41.213' N 113°03.876' W

The gracious and generous Lynn Dalton well represents this club's membership. SURC's lapidary shop is in Cedar City, club meetings alternate between St. George and Cedar City. Join if at all contemplating Utah rockhounding. Fellow club members may welcome a traveling rockhound, possibly showing places to collect.

I can't disclose the agate collecting site Lynn showed me on a recent visit but we had a grand time and I wish I could have stayed longer. Local knowledge is key in Cedar City. Lynn and I got to the site by leaving the main highway, driving to the other side by using a one way tunnel under the roadway, traveling for miles on a frontage street, finding an unmarked road, letting down a barb wire gate, putting the gate back up, and then proceeding up this dirt road that turned into a passenger car killing field of ruts and rocks. Fortunately, both of us had trucks.

<http://www.southernutahrockclub.org/>

Cedar Rock & Bead Shop

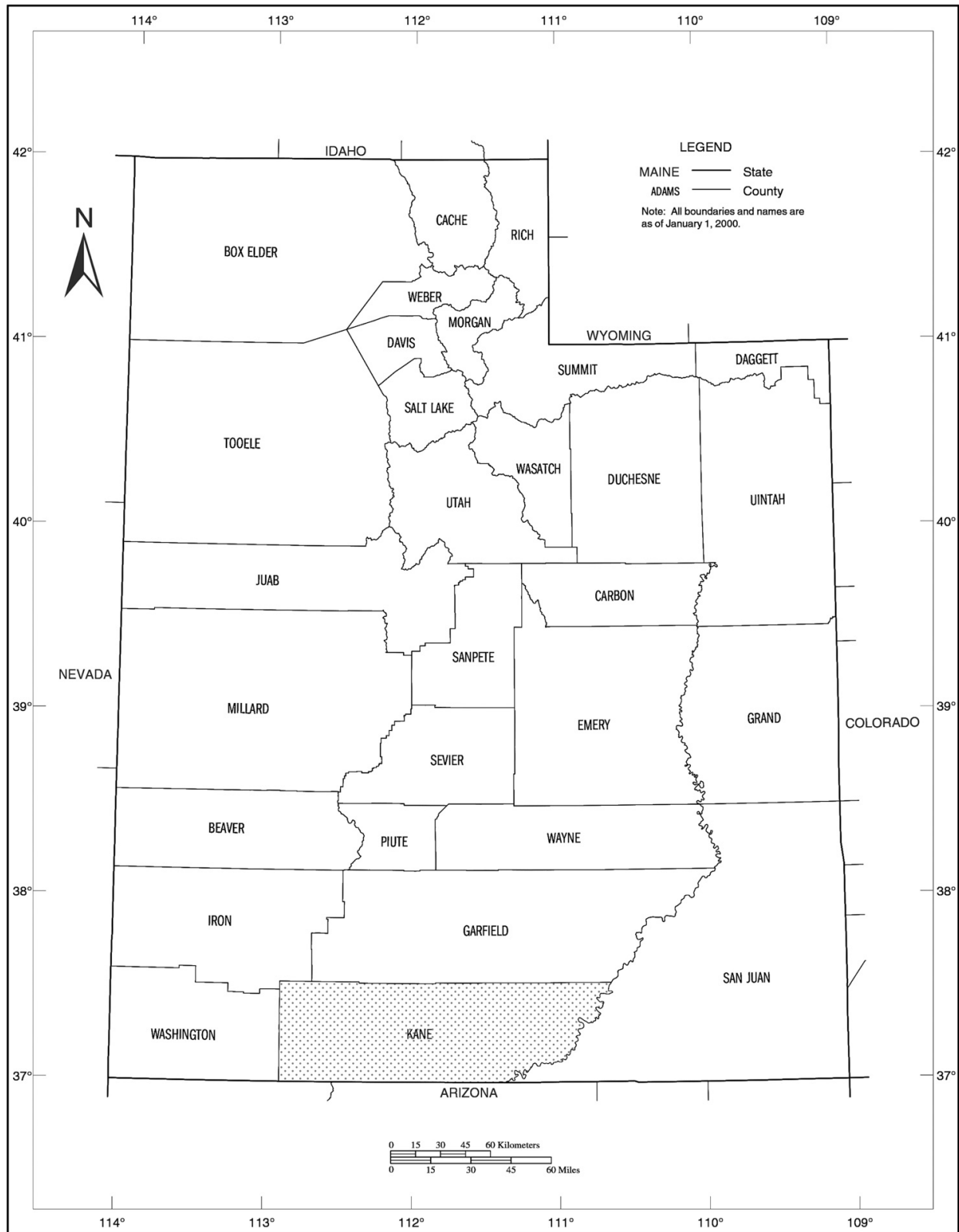
718 W 400 N #4
Cedar City, UT 84721
435-275-4445

37°41.090' N 113°04.381' W

Rocks, minerals, and beads.

<http://cedarrockshop.com>

Kane County, UT (Kanab)



“Kane County lies along the Utah-Arizona border. The rocks that occur here are almost all Mesozoic sedimentary rocks and are likely to yield fossils, agate, and petrified wood. Kane County is best known for the occurrence of septarian nodules which are hollow and lined with calcite crystals.” James Wilson, A Collector’s Guide to Rock, Mineral & Fossil Localities of Utah.

Joe’s Rock Shop

425 E 100th N or HWY 89@100 N
P.O. Box 116
Orderville, UT 84758
435-648-2737

37°16.671' N 112°37.818' W

Family run since at least 1952, specializing in digging, cutting, and polishing septarian nodules, petrified wood and more. Rough and finished stones of all types. Custom rock cutting done. Septarian nodules are limestone rocks filled with calcite and aragonite. Decorative patterns are revealed when cut open. Some show crystals from the outside. Orderville is the most famous locality for these uncommon stones. The owners provide local rockhounding directions when asked. They also ship by mail and are closed in the winter.

<https://www.facebook.com/joesrockshoputah/>

<http://stores.ebay.com/rocksrusUTAH>

The Orderville Mine Rock Shop

US-89
Orderville, UT 84758

37°16.316' N 112°38.970' W

Open when visited but the owner may be contemplating a sale.

<http://ordervillemine.tripod.com>

Fisher’s Rock Shop and Jewelry

400 W State St
Orderville, UT, 84758
435-648-2255

37°16.583' N 112°38.435' W

May be closing.

The Rock Stop

385 West State Street
Orderville, UT 84758
435-0648-2747

37°16.330' N 112°38.883' W

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Rock shop in the form of a rock. Really. It cannot be missed when going through Orderville. This author guarantees that. Wide variety of material. They ship.

<http://therockstoputah.com/index.html>

Orderville, Utah Area Attractions

A “glamping” campground with Yurts was operating across US-89 from Joe’s Rock Shop when I visited. This area is picturesque and somewhat close to Zion National Park and Bryce Canyon National Park. Zion, by the way, is now charging \$30 to drive through the park. No collecting so have fun. Maynard Dixon’s home and a museum to him is further down US-89 in Mt. Carmel. If you don’t know who Maynard Dixon is, I weep for you.

<https://www.thunderbirdfoundation.com/information/visit/tours/>

Western Hills

288 West Center
Kanab, UT 8741
435-644-2390

37°02.916' N 112°32.085' W

Large size picture sandstone is a specialty, these wall art sizes amazing in beauty. I’m not sure they treat their sandstones. They also carry small fossil specimens along with figurines made from septarian nodules. Unusual sandstone coasters that absorb the water of a sweaty glass. And on and on, making up a bright, clean rock shop. The shop is right on 89 as one drives through Kanab.

<http://www.westernhills.com>

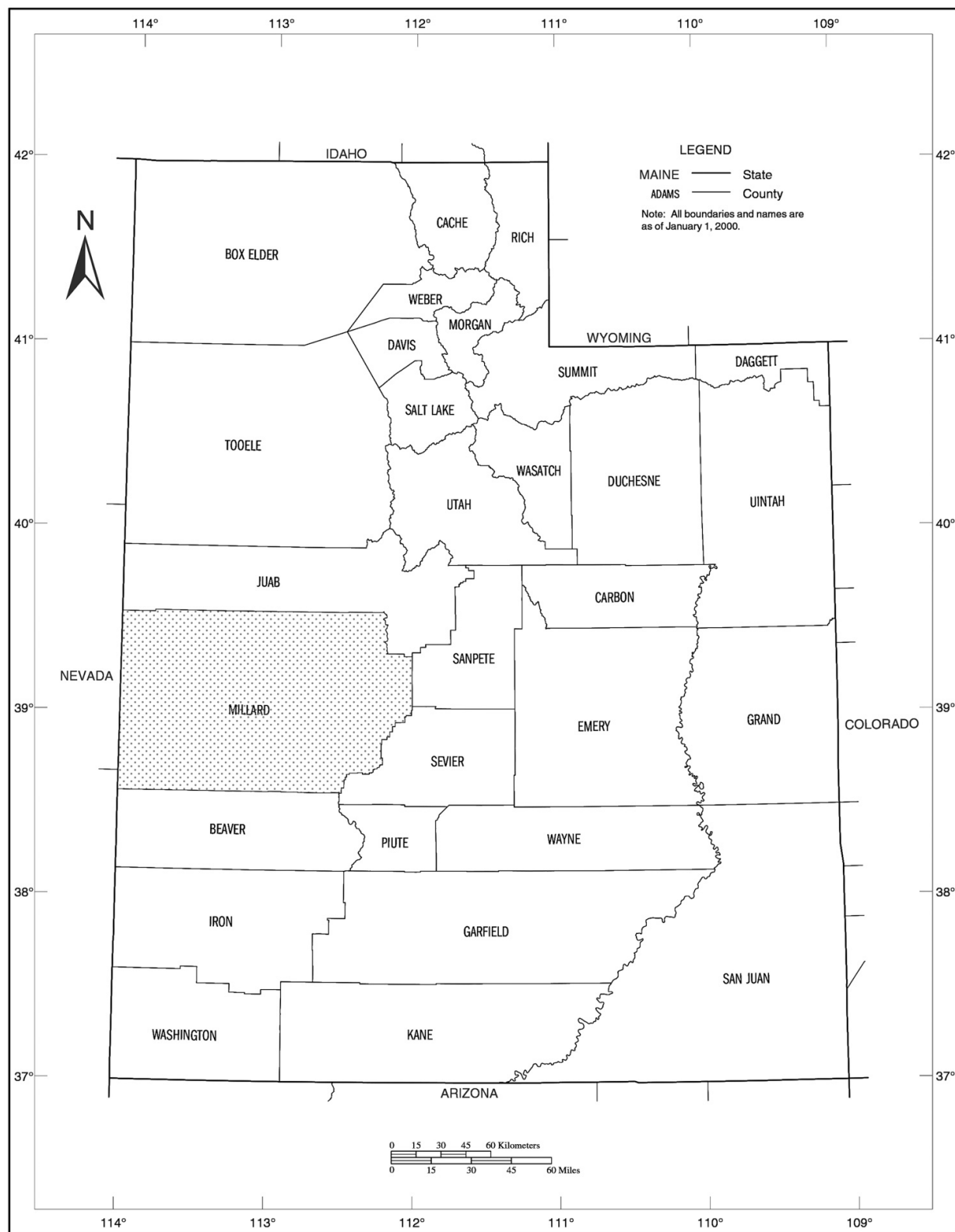
As a note, I bought a picture sandstone specimen online a while back which came with this description.

“This is natural sandstone that formed 180 to 220 million years ago by wind and water as part of the geological formation ‘Shinarump.’ The colors and design were induced by a mineral spring containing iron oxides. If you like the unusual and beautiful works of nature, you will enjoy this picture sandstone product. Truly ‘Nature’s most beautiful painting.’ This piece comes from northern Arizona. The design and patterns are natural, its color is achieved by heat treating the stone. This caused the iron oxides found naturally in the stone to react, the richer the iron the deeper the color.”

The Shinarump is actually a conglomerate of pebbles and sandstone. This occurrence is technically called the Shinarump Member of the Chinle Formation. You can find this type of conglomerate throughout the Colorado Plateau.

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Millard County, UT



High Desert Gems & Minerals – Trilobite Me Quarry

Trilobite Me Quarry! Open April 1st - October 10th

Well noted fee dig I have been unable to visit. Everyone says this is *the* place to find trilobites.

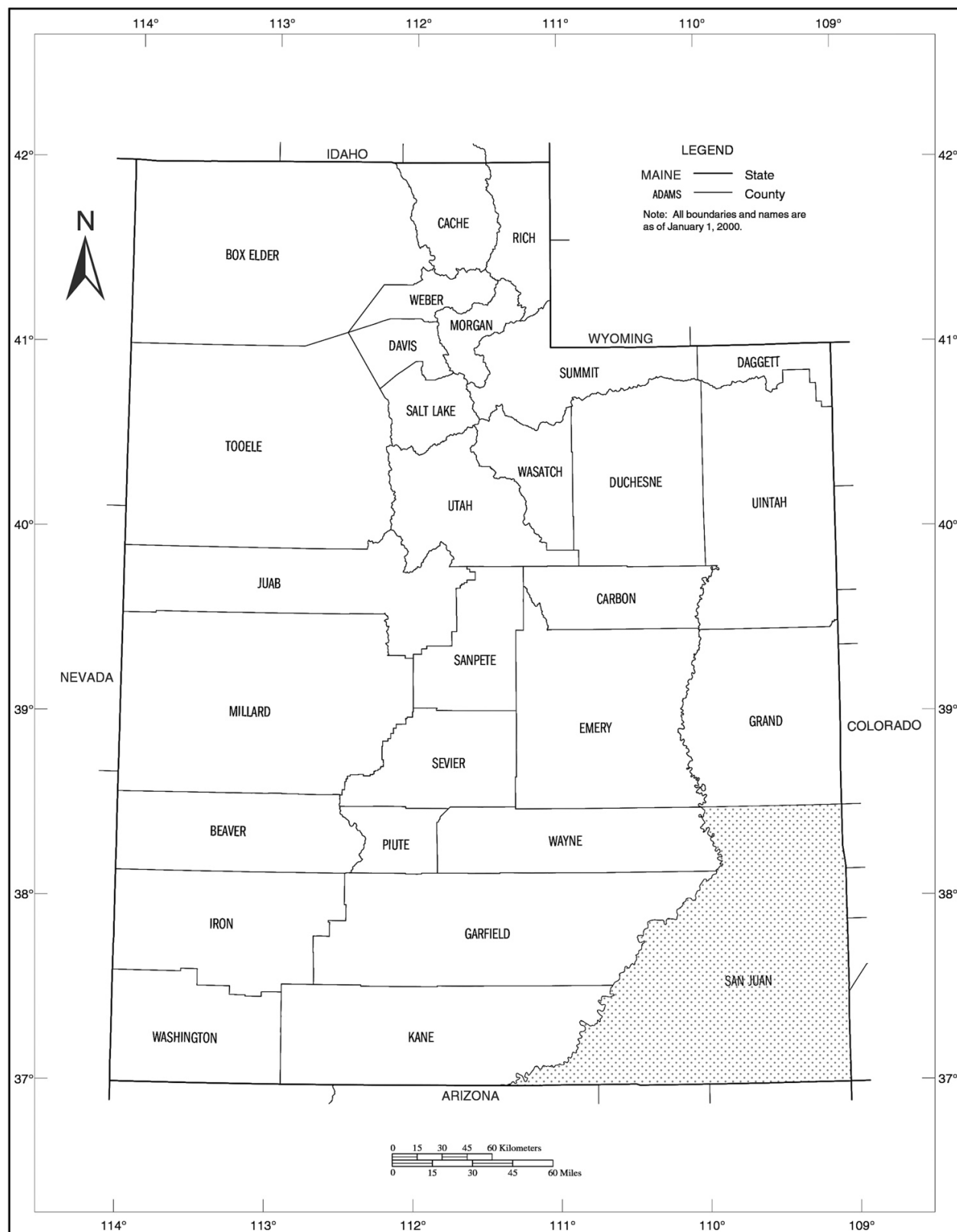
From their website: “Trilobites are an ancient and extinct arthropod that lived in during the Cambrian period (a.k.a. the “Cambrian Explosion”), approximately 505 million years ago, in ancient seas that once covered the western United States of America. These iconic fossils are found in the Wheeler Formation located near the town of Delta, in western Utah. There are nine species of trilobites that are found in the Trilobite Me fossil quarry. There are also many other types of fossils such as bivalves, brachiopods, jellyfish, and sponges. Also, similar to the Burgess Shale Formation in Alberta, Canada, many rare, and even unidentified, soft body fossils have been unearthed at our quarry.

“Historically, this trilobite location has been the most prolific source of trilobite specimens in the world. The original trilobite quarry was opened around 1969 by Robert "Bob" Harris of Delta, Utah. Since then, professionals and amateurs alike have unearthed millions of trilobites at the Trilobite Me! Quarry.”

“Trilobites were first collected by Native Americans who made them into jewelry, and wore them as a talisman, protecting the wearer from sickness and harm. Today, the trilobites from the Trilobite Me! Quarry are used for jewelry and as fossil specimens throughout the world.”

https://www.highdesertgemsandminerals.com/html/trilobite_me_quarry.html

San Juan, UT (Monticello)



San Juan County in Utah's southeastern corner has a variety of materials. Wilson says the Abajo Mountains and part of the La Sal Mountains have igneous rocks but sedimentary rocks predominate in the county. Uranium mineralization occurs as well as copper deposits. Wilson recommended these areas many years ago: Northeast of La Sal Junction (agate), Chicken Corner Trail Area (marine fossils), Red House Cliffs (agate and algal balls), and the Joe Wilson Wash (agate).

USFS Monticello Ranger District – Manti-La Sal National Forest

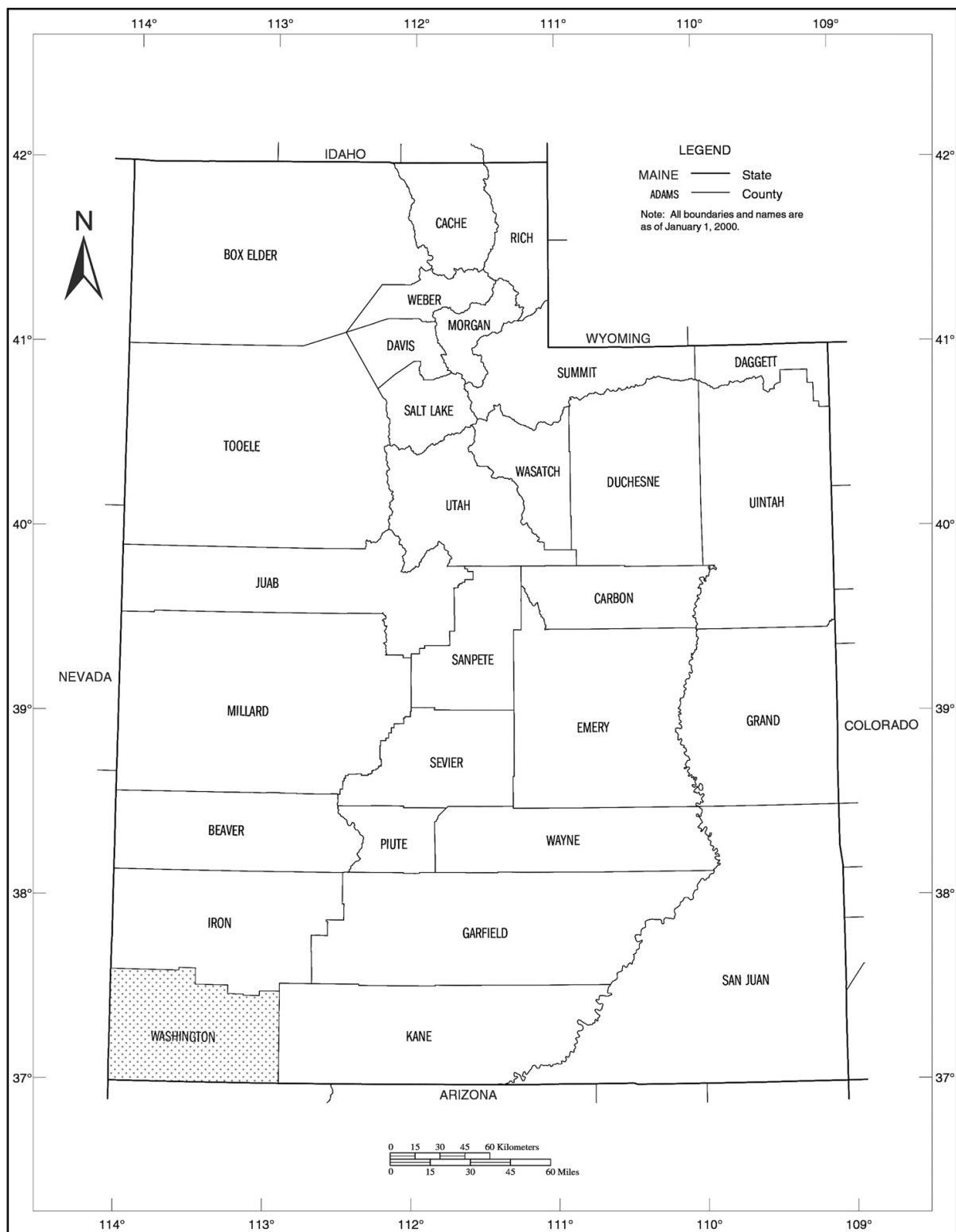
496 East Central
PO Box 820
Monticello, UT 84535
435-587-2041

37°52.353' N 109°21.111' W

National Forest spanning 1.2 million acres. Lightly claimed at last look of MyLandMatters.org. Might be worthwhile exploring.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/mantilasal/home>

Washington County, UT (St. George)



BLM Arizona Strip Office

345 E Riverside Dr.
St. George, UT 84790
435-688-3200

37°04.986' N 113°34.611' W

<https://www.blm.gov/office/arizona-strip-district-office>

Listed under Arizona. They may have Utah maps.

As I discussed in the Arizona entry, this office is physically present in Utah but manages Arizona land. They control the Grand Canyon's North Rim, a no collecting area, and the Virgin River Recreation Management Area in northwest Arizona, a noted rockhound area. Their office has some nice rock and mineral displays.

Personnel asked me to fill out a rockhound permit when I inquired about collecting. This form applied to casual use, not commercial operations which demands a permit. No other office has asked me to fill out a permit and other BLM offices look at the document with curiosity. Most BLM and USFS offices act as their own fiefdom, drawing up practices and procedures to fit their particular area.

Saint George Dinosaur Discovery Site at Johnson Farm

2180 E Riverside Drive
St. George, UT 84790
435-574-3466

37°06.091' N 113°32.090' W

The Saint George Dinosaur Discovery site (SGDS) is must stop for rockhounds, amateur geologists, dinosaur enthusiasts, and kids of all ages. It is a place to look, study, and in some cases touch dinosaur tracks and fossils. At SGDS you can see in an hour what might take a paleontologist a lifetime to discover. Good ripple mark displays, movement of ancient water left in stone. Many desert washes have ripple marks and it's good to recognize them. Excellent geology room with many area rocks.

<https://utahdinosaurs.com>

Perhaps my writing from 2016 will get you interested in the Discovery Site:

Sheldon Johnson wasn't looking for dinosaur tracks, he was just trying to flatten a hill. What the eye doctor found, though, was certainly eye opening. That Utah hill is now the St. George Dinosaur Discovery Site at Johnson Farm. It is a world class locality preserving an entire Jurassic ecosystem. Say hello to the land of dinosaurs.

St. George is located in southwest Utah. It's 119 miles from Las Vegas and 302 miles from Salt Lake City. People flock to St. George to visit nearby Zion National Park and Bryce. At Zion, cliffs of red and white Navajo sandstone dominate. At Bryce Canyon National Park, natural amphitheaters and distinctive geological features called hoodoos populate the area. Southwest Utah is a wonderland for geologists. And paleontologists.

The history of the St. George Discovery site begins in 1992. That's when the city of St. George built a road extension through Dr. Johnson's alfalfa farm. The finished road sat 25 to 30 feet lower than an

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

adjoining hill. Sometime in 1998, Johnson began lowering the hill with heavy equipment. He wanted to eventually meet the grade of the road. Once done, his roadside property could be more easily developed. He was moving forward with this work when he hit layers of sandstone.

The overlapping plates of sandstone couldn't be scooped up and dumped like loose dirt. Instead, he had to split up layers with his track hoe. For many months he sold the blocky pieces for landscaping use. One day a piece flipped upside down, revealing a large natural cast of a dinosaur foot. Dr. Johnson immediately contacted the correct authorities, including his stepson, Kelly Bringham, a geology professor at nearby Dixie State College.

Paleontologists and geologists converged on Dr. Johnson's farm and all agreed he had made a major discovery. Trace fossils abounded on the hill and on land around his property. The site had to be preserved. Three years of private fundraising ensued. State and federal grants were sought. Finally, the Johnsons partnered with the City of St. George to protect the land and build the museum you see today.

In addition to preservation and education, continuing research is a vital part of the museum's mission. Material from all over southern Utah comes in to be examined. Look for the museum's lab at the back of the building. Behind sliding glass windows, volunteers and staff clean and otherwise work on fossils. Ask any guide if you have questions about what they are doing.

NB: My 2016 article continues at my personal writing site. With a map and photos.

<https://thomasfarleyblog.com/sample-article-track-stars/>

Silver Reef Museum

Silver Reef, UT (townsite)
1903 Wells Fargo Road
Leeds, UT 84746

37°15.196' N 113°22.006' W

Open limited hours. Detailed driving directions at their website. 18 miles north of St. George near Leeds, UT.

This somewhat preserved townsite was only one of two locations in the world where silver was found in sandstone. Early miners had trouble getting investors because no one believed the occurrence existed. Steve Voynick described the area and its mining in his June, 2015 Rock&Gem article entitled Silver Reef, Utah. The area is also noted for the radioactive mineral carnotite as well as copper. Private land all around. No collecting but great picture taking possibilities, especially when the townsite buildings are open.

<http://www.silverreefutah.org/>

Virgin River Canyon Recreation Management Area (BLM)

<https://www.blm.gov/virgin-river-canyon-recreation>

435-688-3200

36°57.06702', -113°47.60760'

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Off of Interstate 15 past the Nevada/Utah border. Excellent campground which they were renovating last year on my last visit. Quiet river. Perhaps some petroglyphs. Nest to two different Wilderness Areas which allow casual collecting. Closed as of this writing like everywhere else.

Western Rock Ramblings

-- A Little Colorado --

By Thomas Farley

© 2020

thomasfarley@fastmail.com

All illustrations were derived from photographs taken by the author or from those in the public domain.

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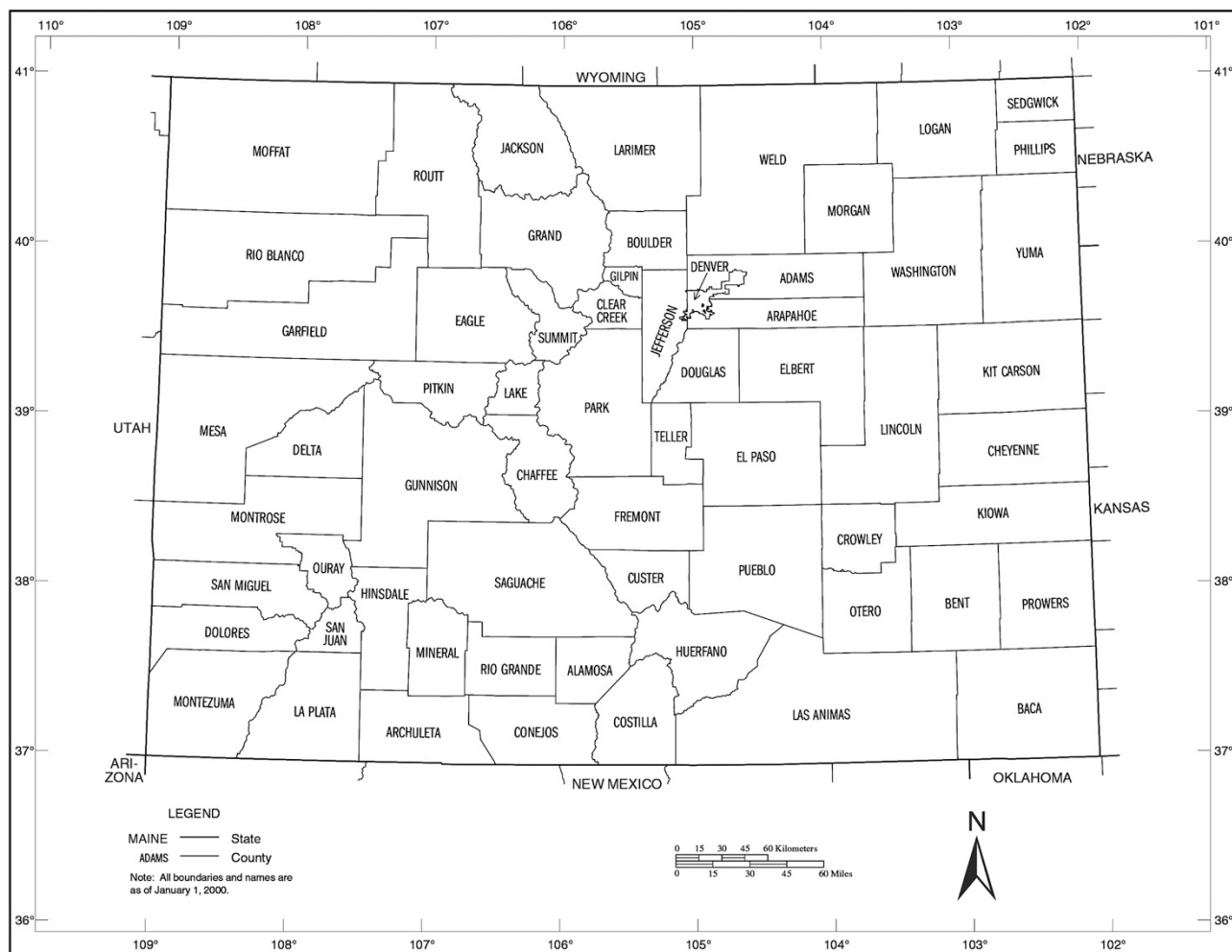
Feel free to distribute this file anywhere you like. I wish you good health.

Best,

Thomas Farley

Las Vegas, Nevada

Some of Colorado



Of Note

Southern Colorado rests at the extreme north-east of the Southwest. This book defines the Southwest proper as below the 38th parallel. That line runs through or near towns like Ouray, Moffat, San Gabriel, and Rocky Ford. Most important collecting localities exist above the 38th. Geology Professor Richard Pearl described Colorado as having more mineralized ground than any other state, save California.

Resources

Kevin Singel's *Finding Gold in Colorado* is the best and most current writing on finding gold in this state. This is a print on demand book through Amazon. As such, Singel can easily make revisions and keep his title up to date, something traditional hardcopy publishers cannot do.

<https://findinggoldincolorado.com>

Pearl, Richard. *Colorado Gem Trails and Mineral Guide* 3rd ed. (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1972) Excellent book with maps detailed enough to follow today, provided listed roads are still open. Detailed references and notes. Heavy emphasis on mineral collecting. Which is nice.

Chronic, Halka and Lucy Chronic. *Pages of Stone: Geology of the Grand Canyon & Plateau Country National Parks & Monuments* 2d. ed. (The Mountaineers Books: Seattle, 2004) Invaluable road trip book for traveling the Southwest. Explains the geology behind 24 National Parks and Monuments. Well-illustrated, much more than their roadside geology books.

Map: The Colorado Plateau. 4th ed. (Time Traveler Maps: Mancos, CO, 2018) Excellent regional map. It's wonderful to have a map stretching across the Plateau's several states. Time Traveler also produces Indian maps and guides.

<https://www.timetravelermaps.com/>

Map: Road Map of Navajo & Hopi Nations (North Star Mapping; Scottsdale, 2017) Also excellent. Very necessary to know when you are on tribal land.

Notable

I don't stop on tribal land unless there are well established turnouts to view something or services like gas stations designated for the public. I don't take a bathroom break next to the road on tribal lands nor do I even think about collecting. North Star Mapping may not be in business any longer but this company should have both. Make sure to get the current editions.

<https://mapscompany.com/>

The Denver Gem & Mineral Show

The Denver Gem & Mineral Show at the Denver Mart is scheduled for September 18th through the 20th. Denver, as it is getting to be called, may now be surpassed only by Tucson as a rock, gem, mineral, and fossil show. I haven't visited but I plan to this year. It is in a single venue which will make it far easier to navigate than the crowded roads and far flung venues of Tucson.

<https://www.denvermineralshow.com/>

What is the Colorado Plateau?

Geologic Provinces and Notable Features

The American Geological Institute defines a geologic province as a large region characterized by similar geologic history and development. These characteristics include landforms, natural features of the earth's surface, rock types, or a shared evolutionary history. Every part of the West belongs to a distinct province with particular landforms and geology. The name physiographic region is the more modern term for geologic provinces.

Geologic provinces show well on maps but not easily on the ground. Plants are sometimes better indicators than rocks. Saguaro cactus herald arrival in the Sonoran Desert. A lessening of creosote bush and an increase in sagebrush marks the beginning of the Great Basin Desert.

Macrostrat.org produces a free smartphone app called "ROCKD." Within cell phone range, it instantly describes the ground a rockhound is standing on. This includes the physiographic province, the region's lithology, the age of the rocks, and the stratigraphic unit. These terms can be learned as one goes.

This app makes geology approachable, understandable, and inviting. Every rockhound should use it. Last year I drove east from Mesquite, Nevada to St. George, Utah. Mesquite is well within the Great Basin. As I drove I-15 into the Virgin River Canyon and gained elevation I wondered where the Colorado Plateau began. I pulled over to check the ROCKD app. Sure enough, I had arrived. Maps and information can be downloaded beforehand when traveling beyond cell phone range.

The Colorado Plateau Province

The Colorado Plateau Province extends into Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico. The Plateau may be pictured as centered over the Four Corners of the United States. Its elevation is between 5,000 and 7,000 feet and it covers some 240,000 square miles.

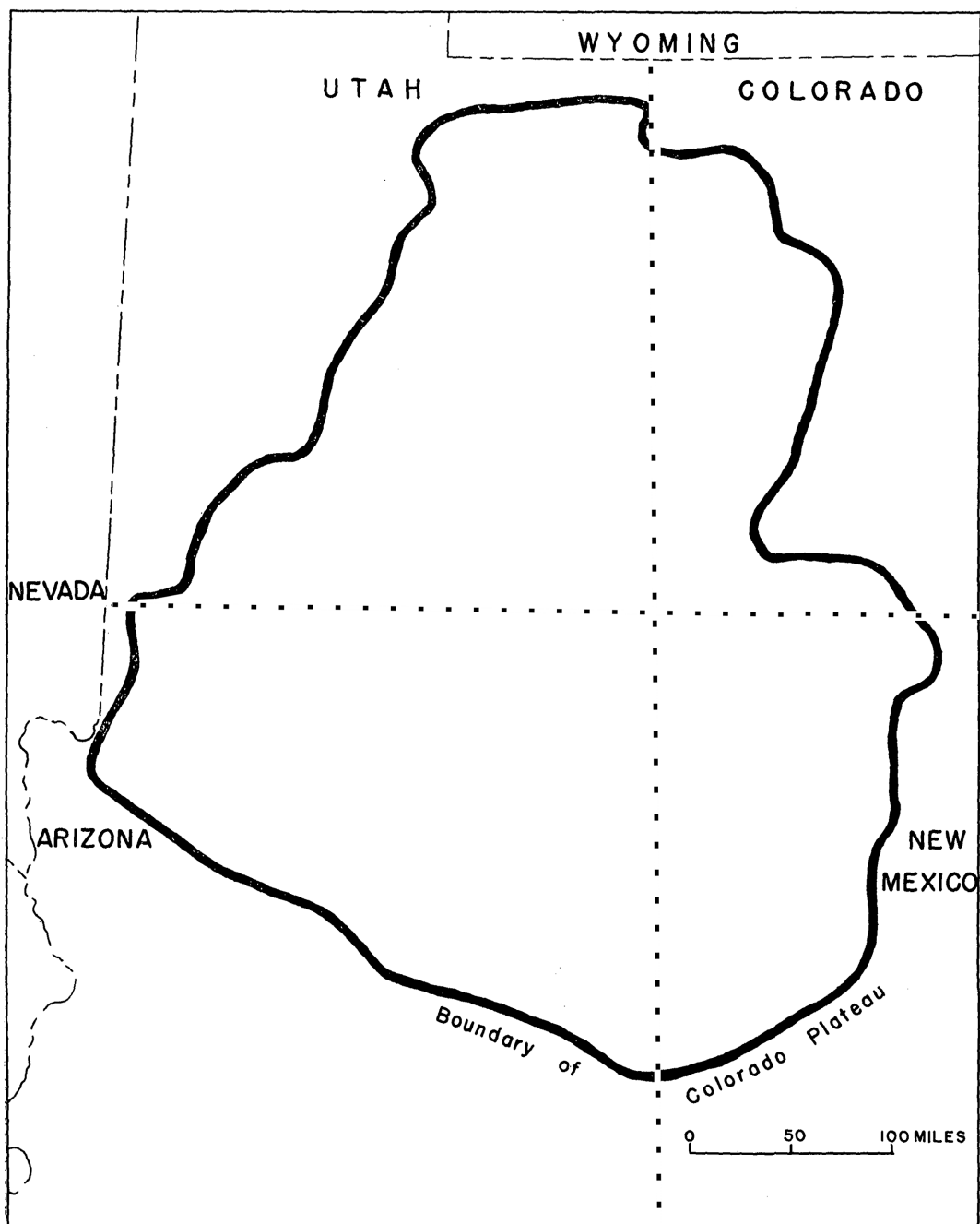
The Plateau lacks gold, silver, and copper deposits. Geologist and prospector Jim Straight once wrote, "Both the Columbia and Colorado Plateau are capped with non-metalliferous basaltic flows." In other words, ancient lava flows not enriched with precious-metal bearing minerals. And some non-metal bearing minerals as well, such as fluorite. This holds true for each portion of the four states in the Colorado Plateau.

Arizona's part of the Colorado Plateau runs diagonally northwest-southeast through the upper half of the state. Arizona's largest city Plateau city is Flagstaff. The Hualapai, Navajo and Hopi are among the Plateaus' many tribes. Much of Monument Valley is here, the background for several John Ford films. The four-thousand-foot wide Meteor Crater lies here and the Grand Canyon wends through the Plateau.

Colorado's western portion of the Plateau includes these National Monuments: Canyons of the Ancients, Yucca House, and Chimney Rock. Western Colorado is uranium country.

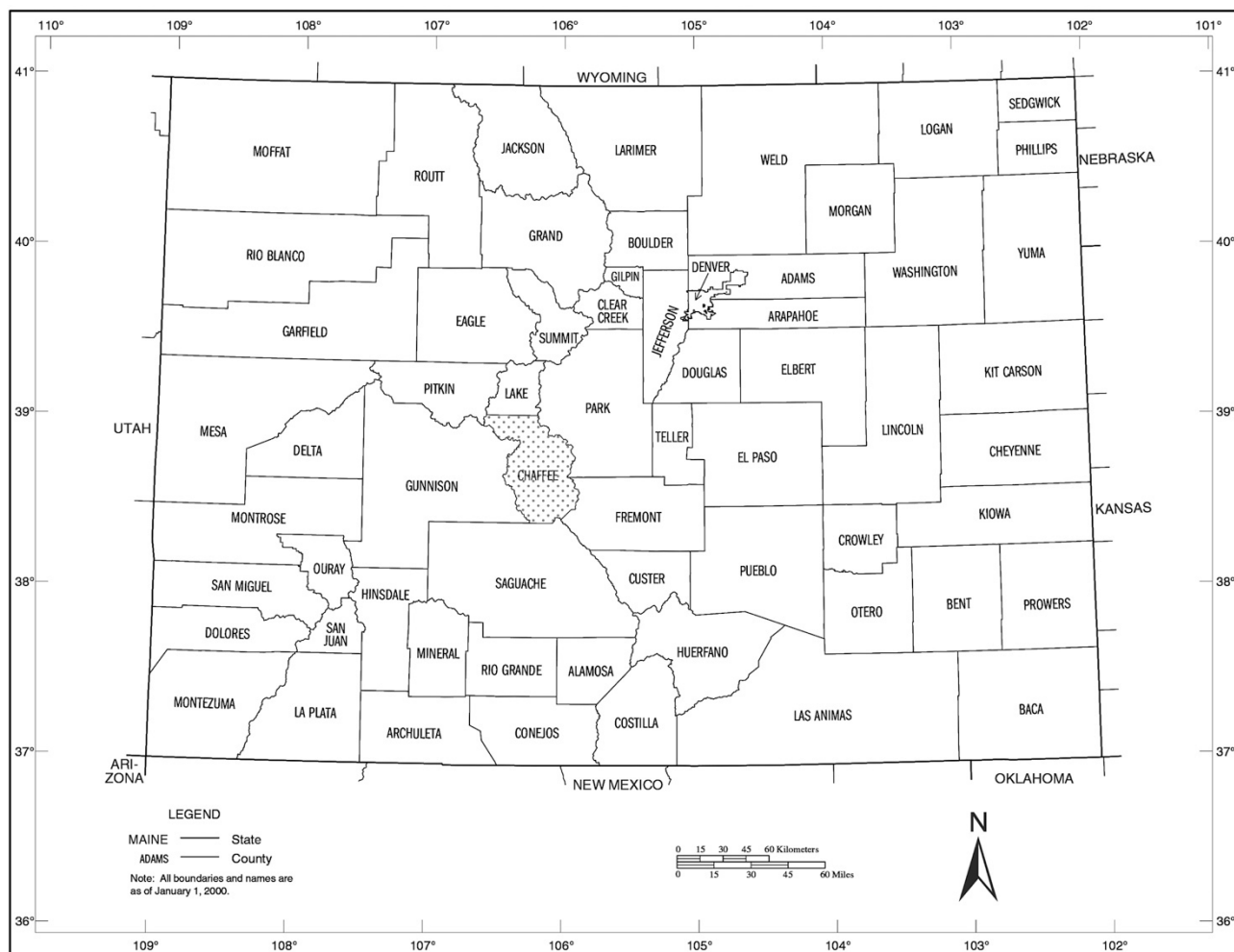
New Mexico's Colorado Plateau portion lies in the upper northwest corner of the state. New Mexico's two major cities, Santa Fe and Albuquerque, lie on the edge of its borders. The Navajo Nation owns 27,000 square miles of New Mexico's Colorado Plateau country. The plateau's rich topography partly explains the nine National Parks and eighteen National Monuments located there.

Utah's southeast corner of the Plateau occupies the Four Corners Area. Monument Valley extends here into Utah from Arizona. Southern Utah's other notable geologic features include plateaus, buttes, mesas, and deeply notched canyons.



MODIFIED USGS MAP SHOWING THE COLORADO PLATEAU

Chaffee County, CO (Salida)



The Rock Doc
17897 US HWY 285
Nathrop, CO 81236
719-539-2019

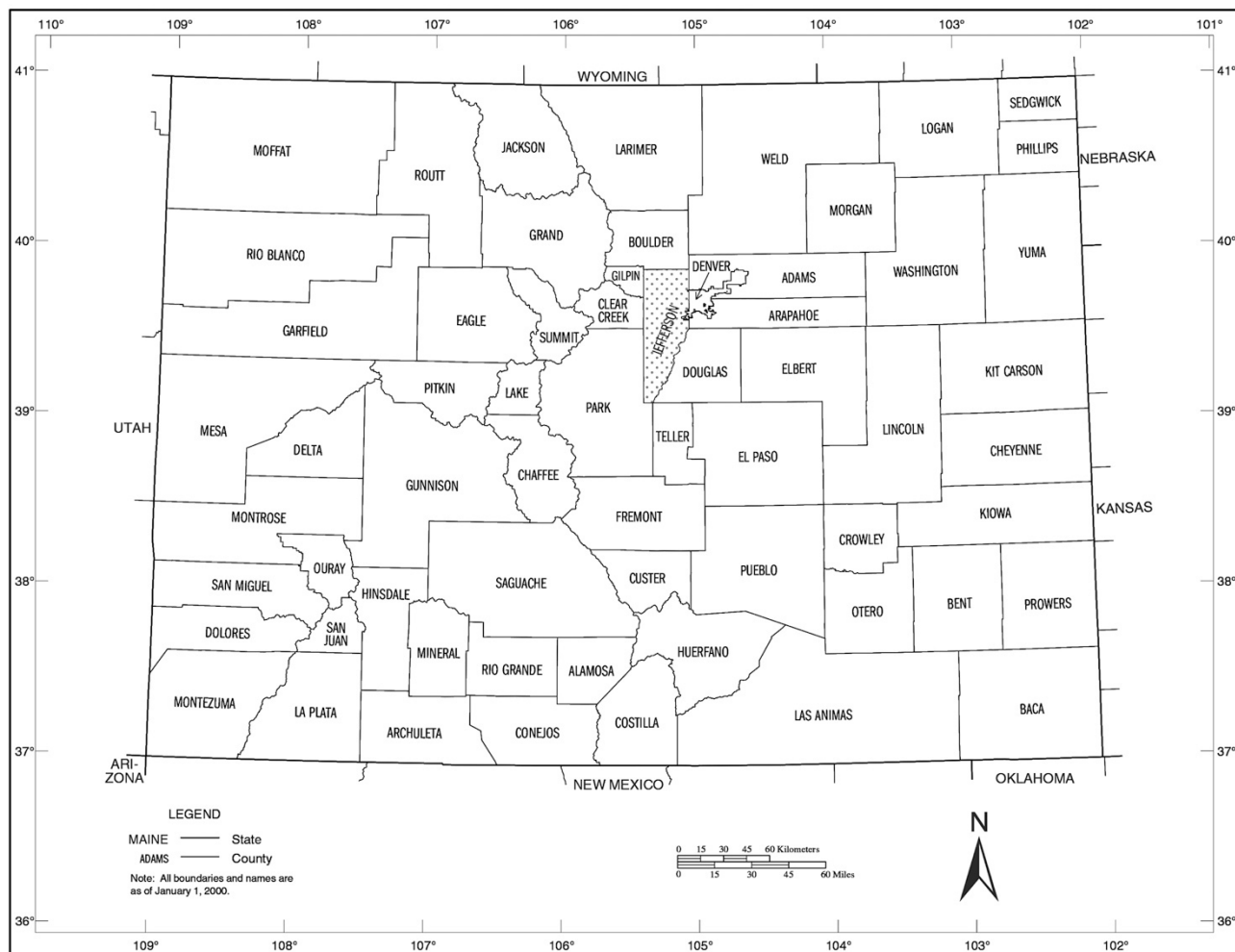
38°40.623' 106°05.593' W

This shop lies between Buena Vista and Salida, five miles south of Nathrop. It is between Mile Marker and 138 on HWY 285 but off the main highway at Prospectors Village. Minerals for sale, their personal collection on display, as well as prospecting supplies. Recommended by Singel.

<http://therockdoc.net/>

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Jefferson County, CO (Golden)



Gold-N-Detectors – Metal Detecting & Prospecting Center

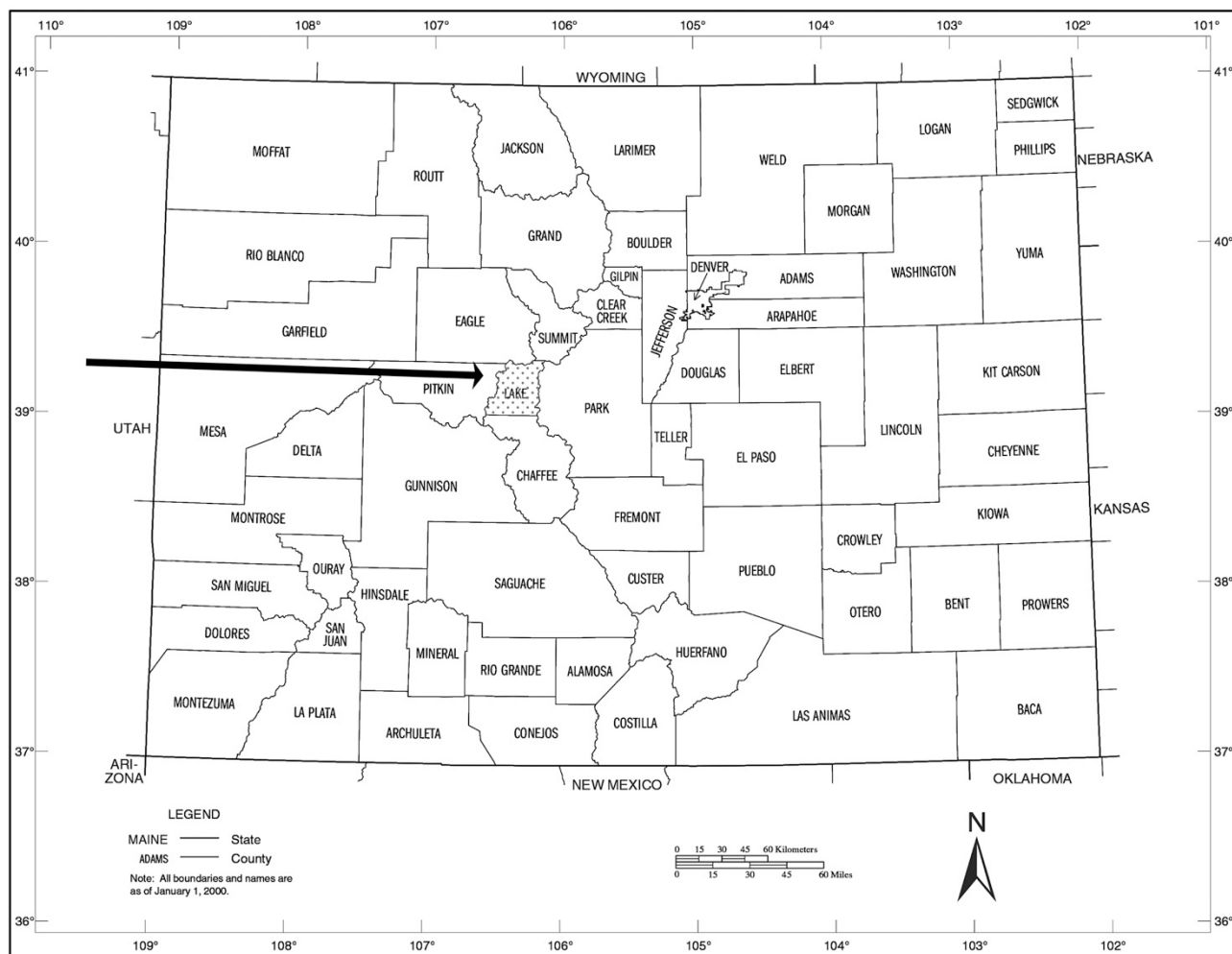
802 Washington Avenue
Golden, CO 80401
303-278-6622

39°45.526'105° N 13.49500' W

Miner and author Kevin Singel says Gold-N-Detectors is the largest prospecting store in Colorado. Full line of prospecting supplies. Singel also says the store will grant access to their claim on Clear Creek Canyon. Simply come in and sign a liability waiver. Buying something at the same time would be nice.

No website as of this writing.

Lake County, CO (Leadville)



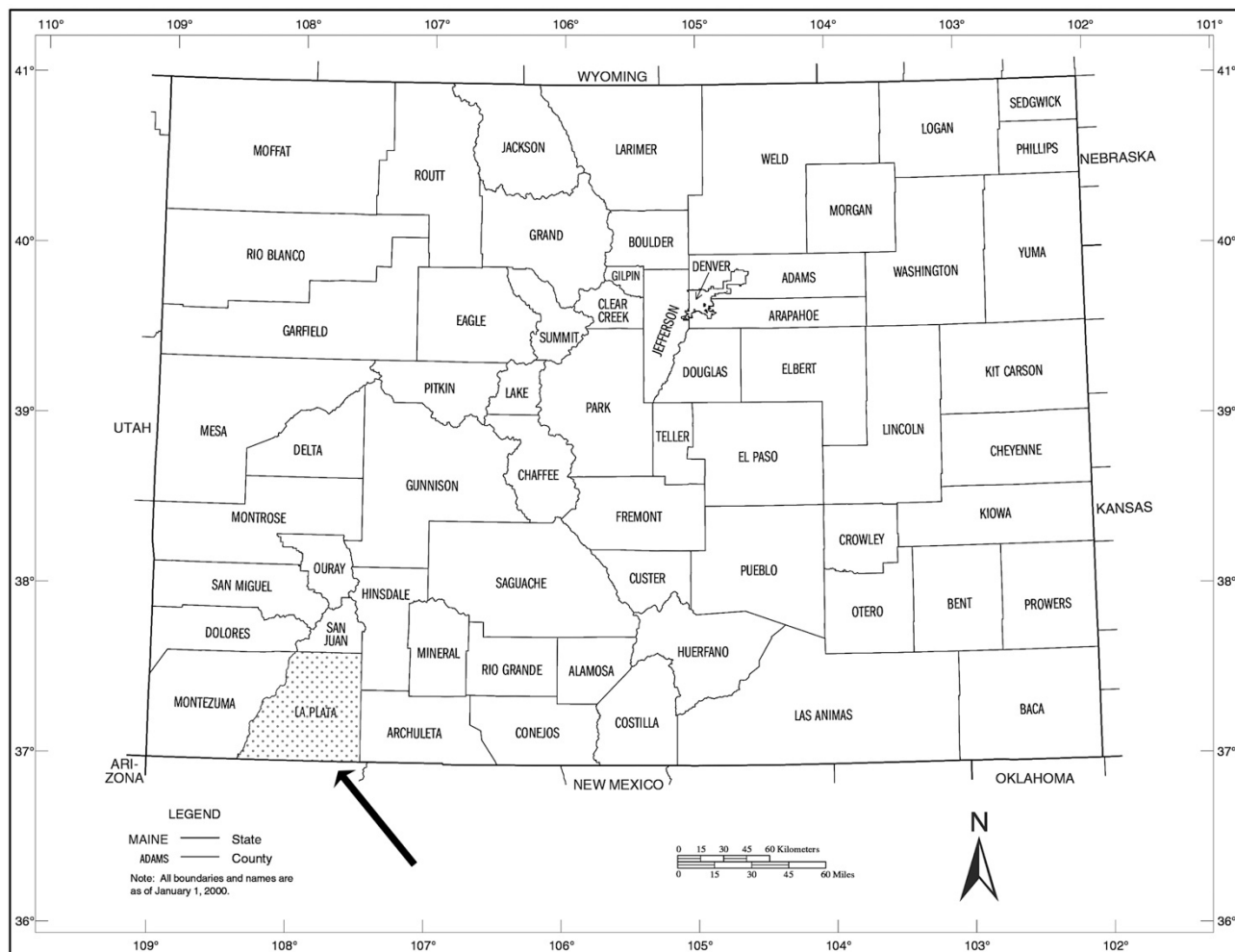
The Rock Hut

706 Harrison Ave.
Leadville, CO 80461
719-486-2313

Highest elevation mineral store in the United States at 10,200 feet. Operating over forty years. Colorado specimens emphasized. Singel says they also sell a selection of prospecting supplies, books, and metal detectors.

<http://www.therockhut.com/>

La Plata County, CO (Durango)



Four Corners Gem & Mineral Club

2351 N Main (In Brookside Park)

P.O. Box 955

Durango, CO 81302

Field trips, classes, lapidary shop. Since 1947. Join if thinking about Colorado rockhounding. Their newsletters keep one informed about collecting localities, local geology, and more. Their simple mission: “Collect and identify rocks, gems and minerals.”

37°17.360' N 107°52.570' W

<http://www.durangorocks.org>

The San Juan Mountains

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Professor Pearl maintained that not a single acre of tillable land existed in all of the San Juan Mountains. Instead, the mines of the mountains and their dumps yield “All of the important ore minerals of gold, silver, lead, copper, zinc, tungsten, manganese, and others.” The San Juan National Forest is all around Silverton, Telluride and Ouray and should be investigated.

San Juan National Forest

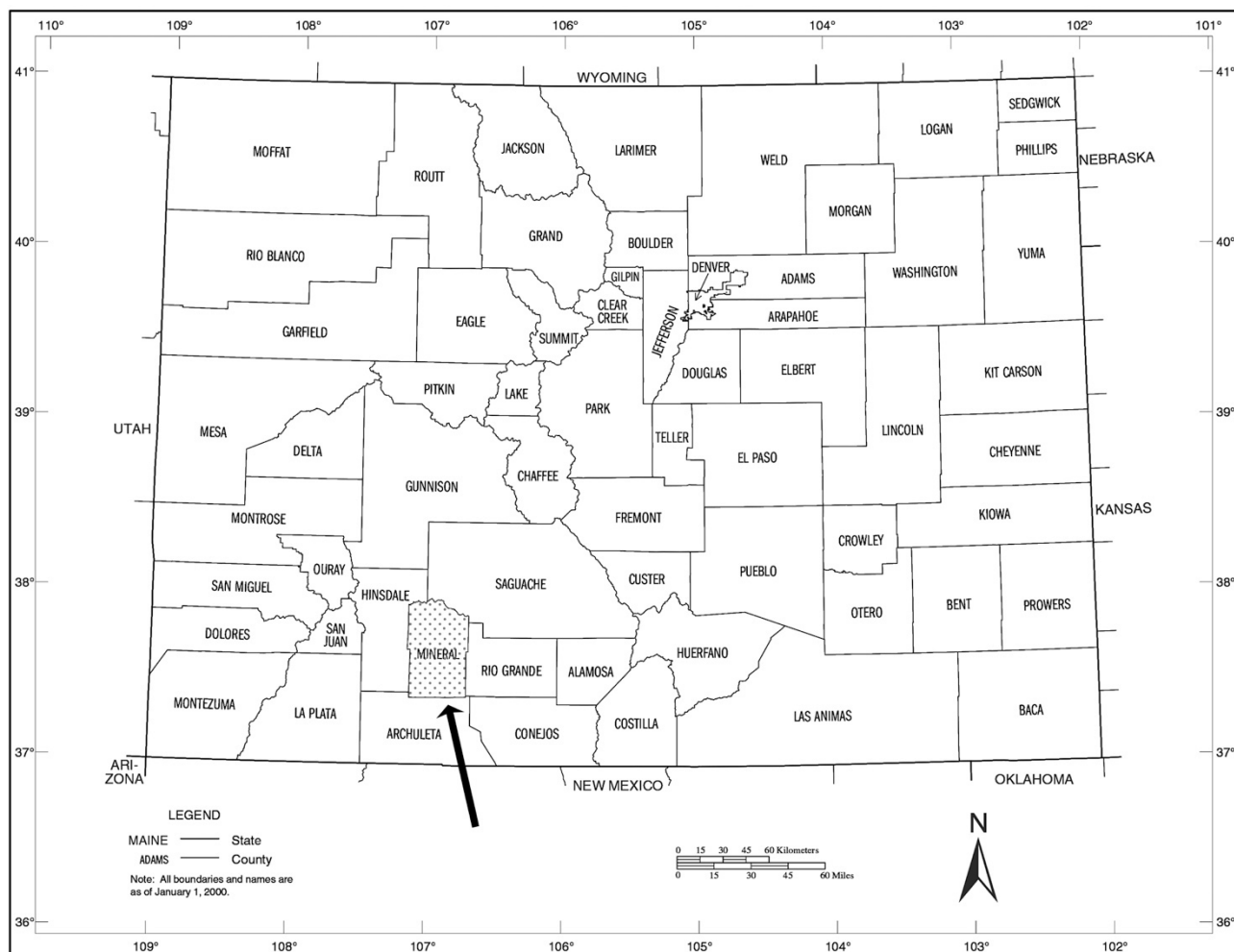
15 Burnett Court
Durango, CO 81301
970-247-4874

37°16.405' N 107°53.591' W

1.8-million-acre forest in Southwest Colorado spread over 10 counties.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/sanjuan/>

Mineral County, CO (Creede)



Last Chance Mine

504 Last Chance Mine Road
Creede, CO 81130

37° 53.035' N 106°56.197' W

The Last Chance Mine is only open in summer when the snow retreats from 10,000 feet and rockhounds can advance. Underground tours conducted and a gift store. Rustic, picturesque property. Surface collecting on dumps allowed in the past but now dependent on the current owner. Sowbelly agate with amethyst the mine's notable material. Look at Mindat.org for the mine's geology. It is several miles north of Creede past the Bachelor Town site. Check road directions at their website.

<http://www.lastchancemine.com/index.php>

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

Wolf Creek Pass, San Juan Mountains

Noted collecting locality of agate nodules and unusual minerals on US 160. This pass is at 10,857 feet, crossing the Continental Divide. Summer travel only.

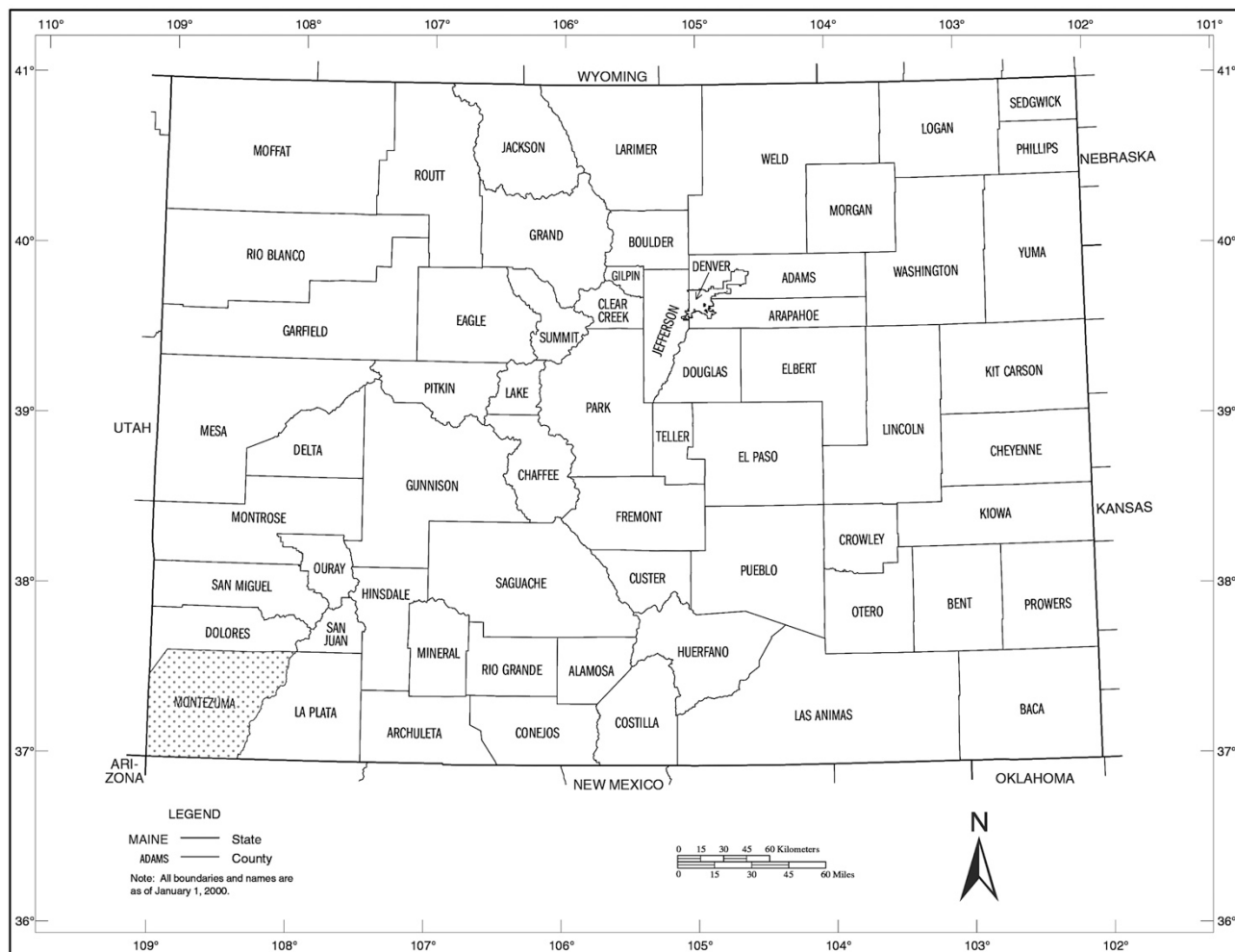
37°26.976' N 106°52.865' W

Treasure Falls Locality of Wolf Creek Pass is nearby.

37°26.933' N 106°52.766' W

Consult [MyLandMatters.org](https://mylandmatters.org) for present land status. [Check Mindat.org](https://mindat.org) for known minerals.

Montezuma County, CO (Cortez)



San Juan Gems (Rock shop and more)

11523 Highway 145

Cortez, CO 81321

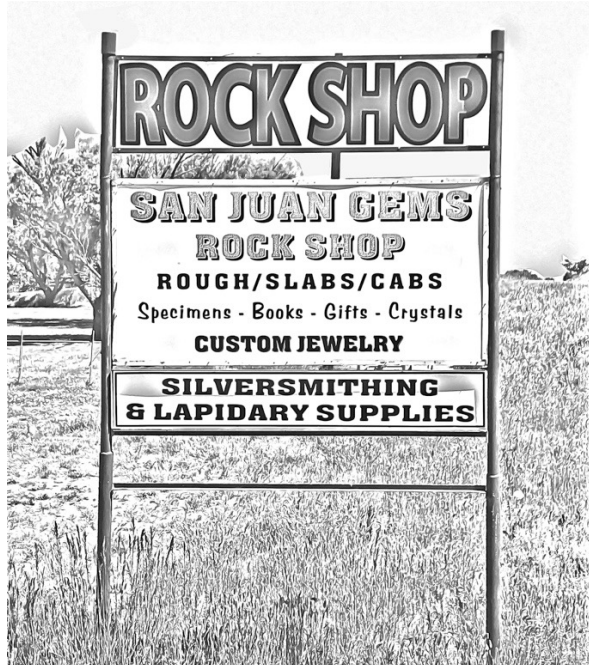
970-565-9854

37°22.771' N 108°33.293' W

Larry Sanchez, G.G., is the principal here, a lifetime with rocks and gems and lapidary. Larry is a master silversmith as well as an accomplished cutter and polisher. Dino bone authority. San Juan Gems is the most important rock shop in the Four Corners area and in Southern Colorado overall. Over 40 years in business.

<https://sanjuangems.com/>

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

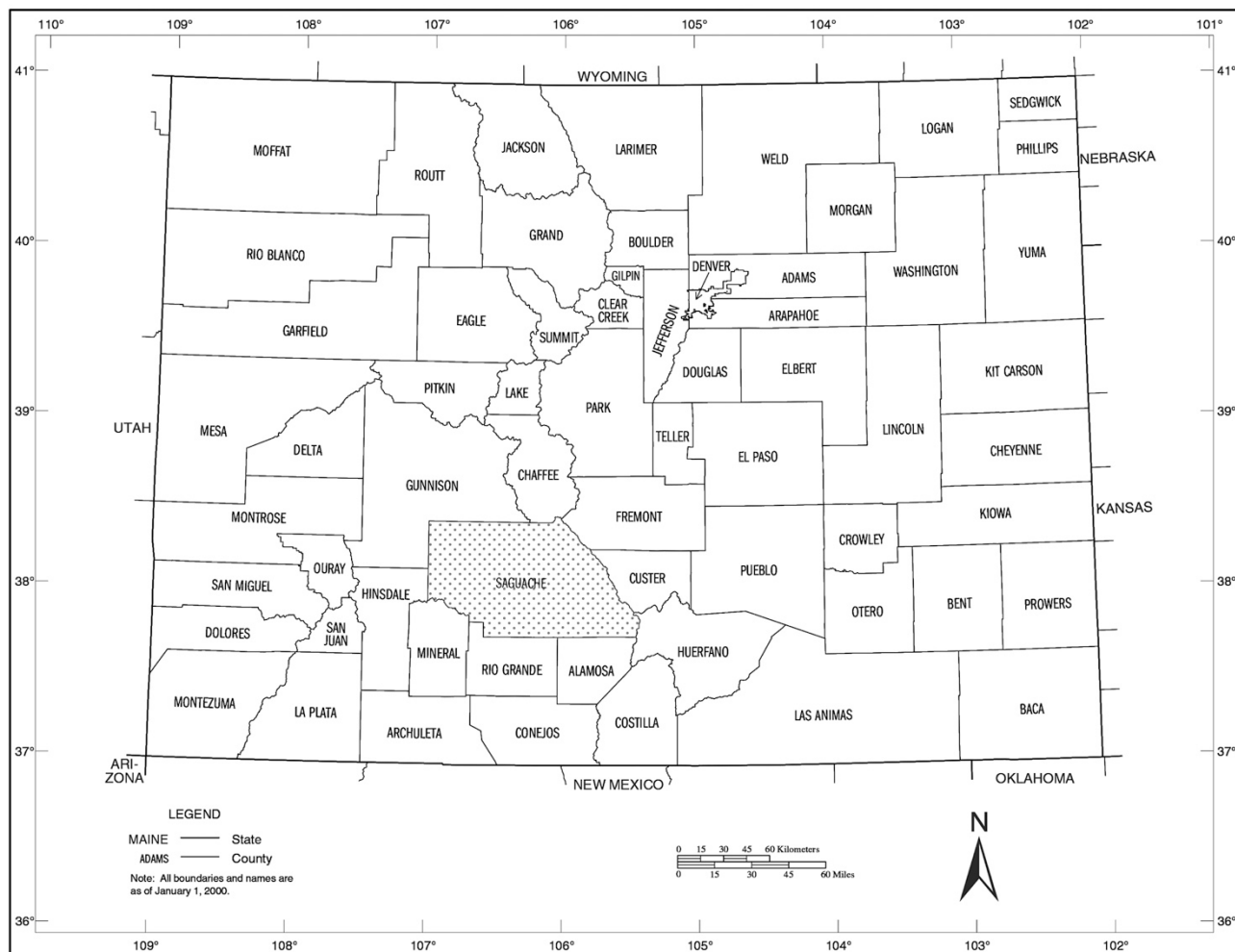


SAN JUAN GEMS, CORTEZ, COLORADO

Gem Village – Only a memory, on the road to Durango

America's first organized rock colony. Today, only Tucson in winter can compare to the spirit and camaraderie that existed at Gem Village sixty years ago. Gem Village sat on US 160, 18 miles east of Durango. Beth Simmons wrote a nostalgic piece on it in "America's Only Rockhound Colony," which appeared in the August, 2016 issue of Rock&Gem. Still listed on many maps.

Saguache County, CO (Saguache)



Beidell

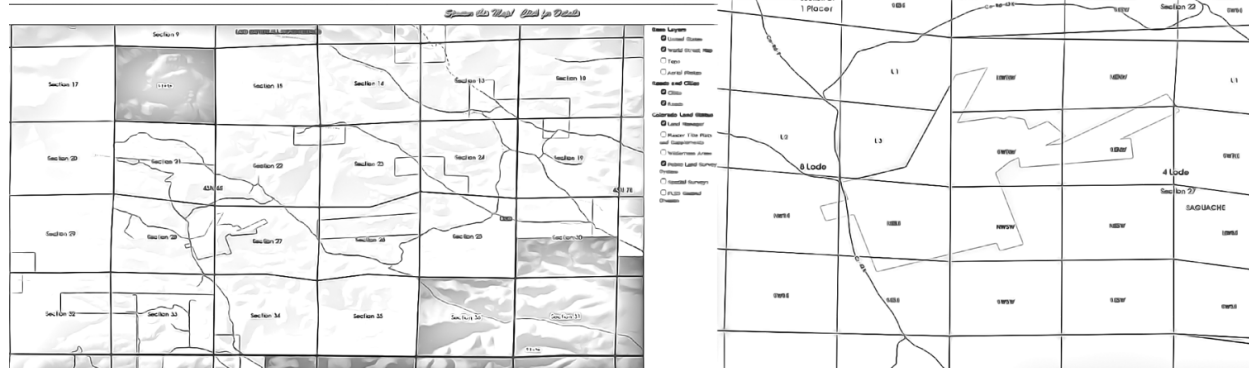
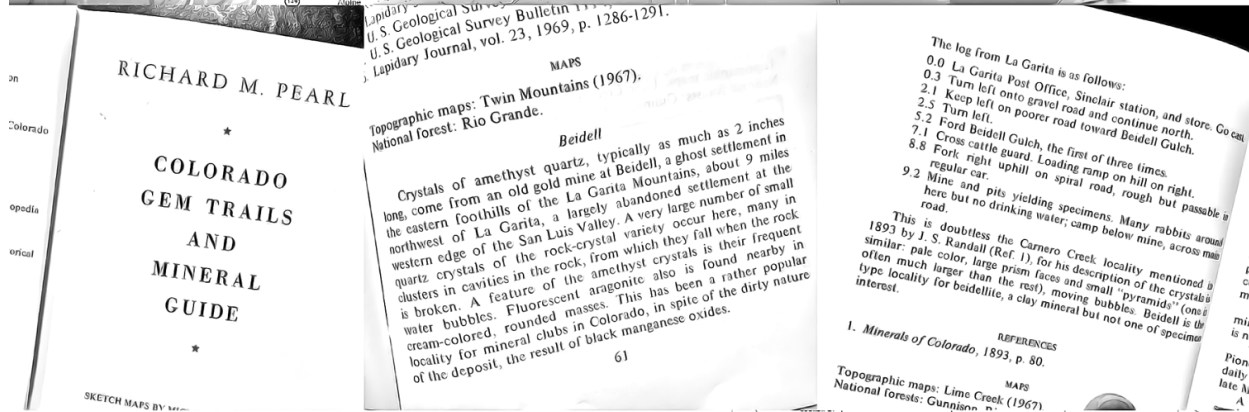
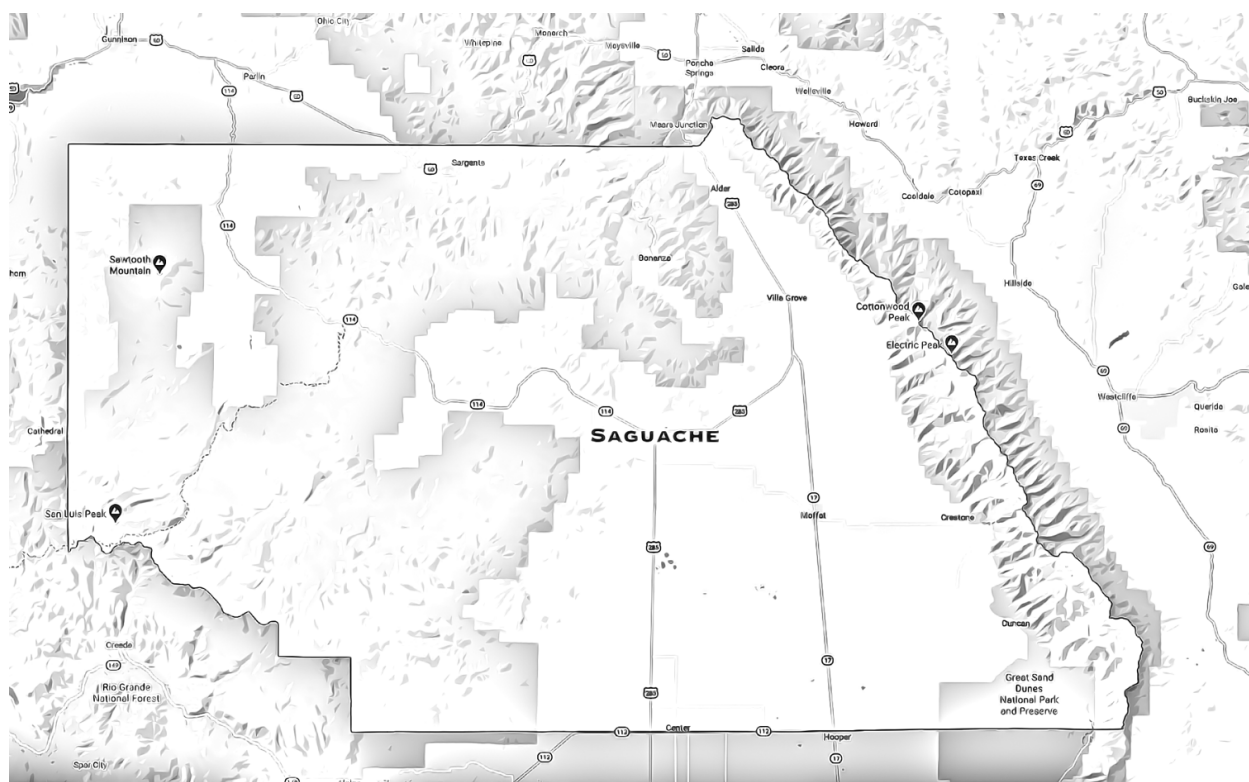
The ghost settlement of Beidell, as Richard Pearl described it, is for the adventuresome only. I have not been there but this is the stuff of research, planning, and exploration. Which is how I like my prospecting. Pearl described its location by starting from La Garita and then proceeding some nine miles from there. He thinks the location is also called the Carnero Locality. It may now be accessible only by trail.

Amethyst was noted in the area as well as fluorescent aragonite and other interesting minerals. Get his *Colorado Gem Trails and Mineral Guide* which was published in 1972 by Sage Books. The 1967 Lime Creek 7.5-minute topo is the appropriate map, available at the USGS store. The locality should be at T.43N, R.6E, Sections 27 and 28 near the head of Beidell Creek. Pearl describes it as a routine stop for rock clubs. Some information at Mindat.org.

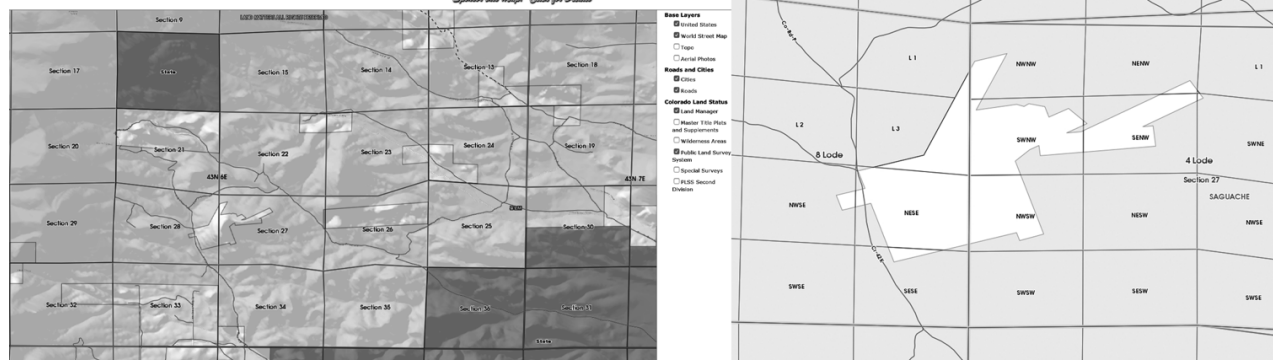
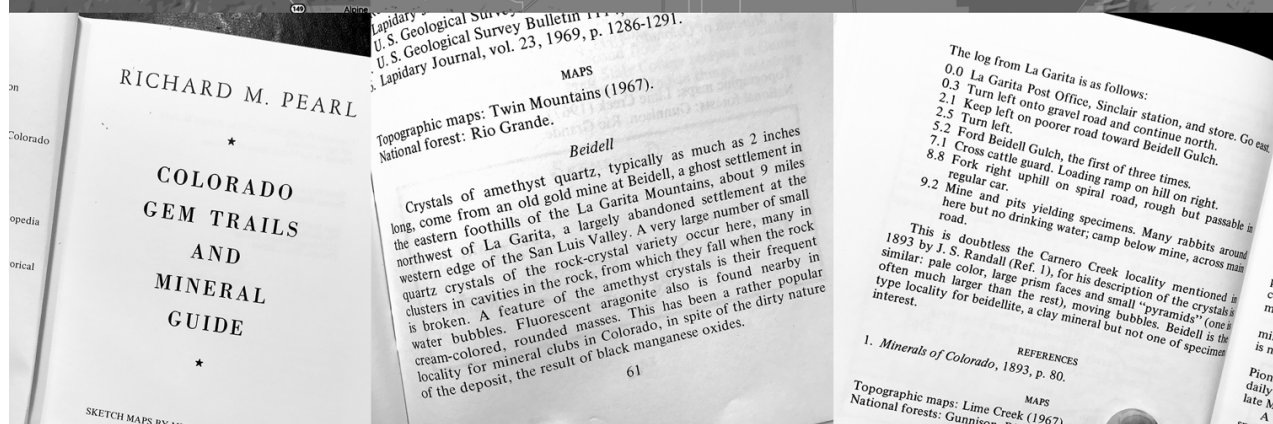
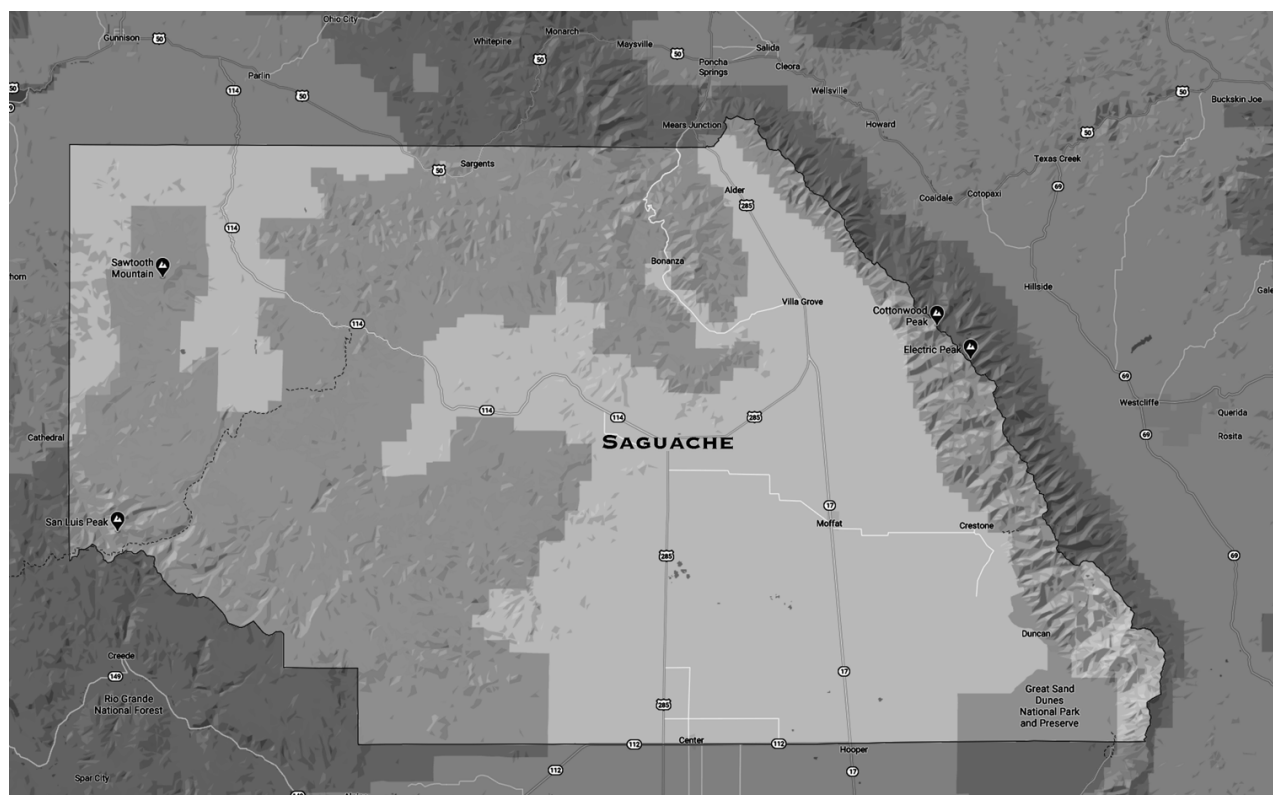
https://www.4x4explore.com/rds/s_rds/sanderson_glch.html

“An easy road to the Crystal Hill Mine interpretive site as well as to what may have been the old town of Biedell.” https://www.4x4explore.com/rds/b_rds/biedell_crk.html

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

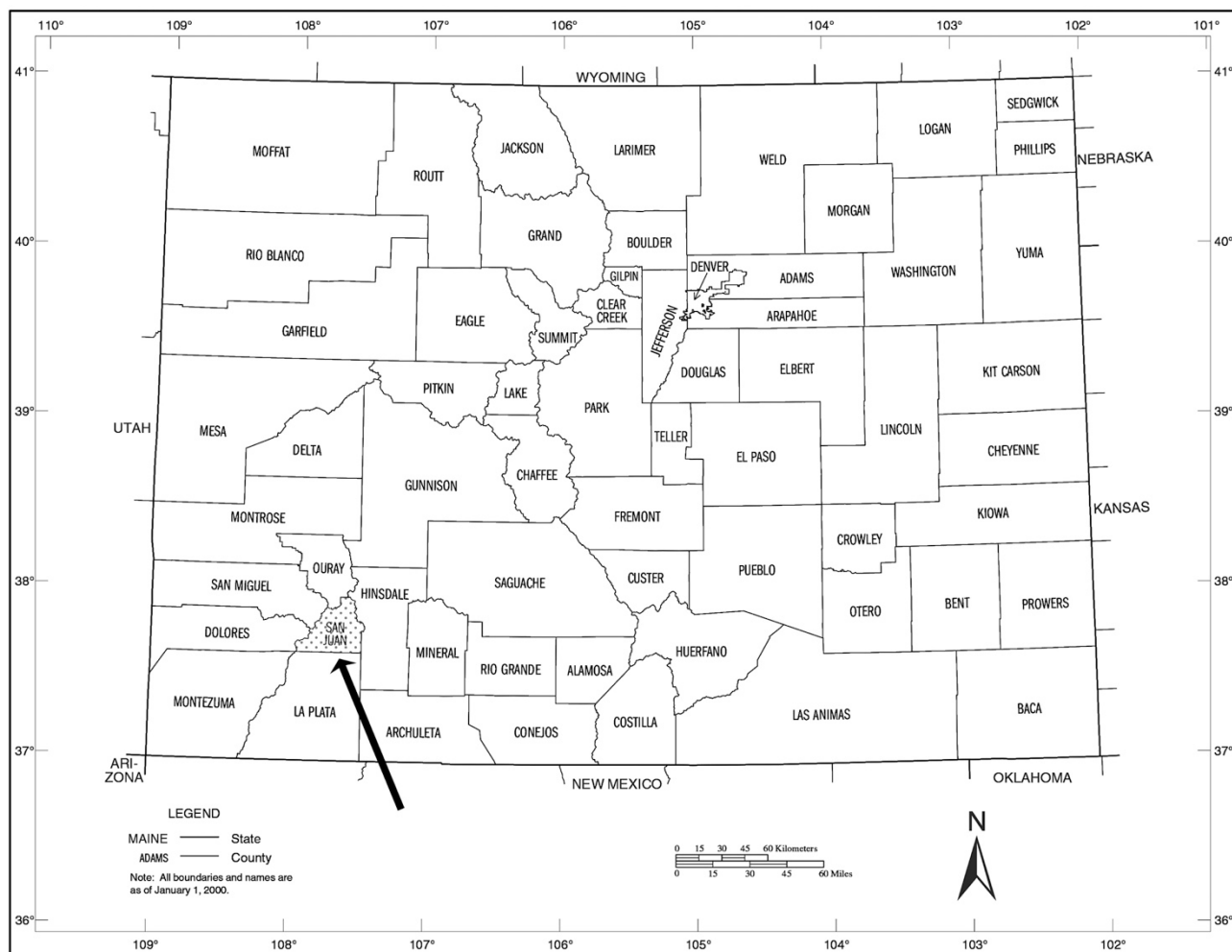


IDENTIFYING AN AREA BY COUNTY, LAND STATUS, TOWNSHIP, RANGE, AND SECTIONS



**IDENTIFYING AN AREA BY COUNTY, TOWNSHIP,
AND FINALLY BY SECTION OR SECTIONS**

San Juan County, CO (Silverton)



My personal reference collection of rare earth and radioactive minerals includes two specimens from San Juan County. The first is torbernite on sandstone from the Happy Jack Mine. The second is Schröckingerite from the old Mi Vida Mine Complex in the Lisbon Valley.

Old Hundred Gold Mine

721 County Road A
Silverton, CO 81433
970-387-5444

37°49.446' N 107°35.106' W

Underground mine tours into Galena Mountain. Operating equipment on view.

<http://minetour.com/index.html>

San Juan County Historical Society Mining Heritage Center

<https://southwestrockhounding.com>

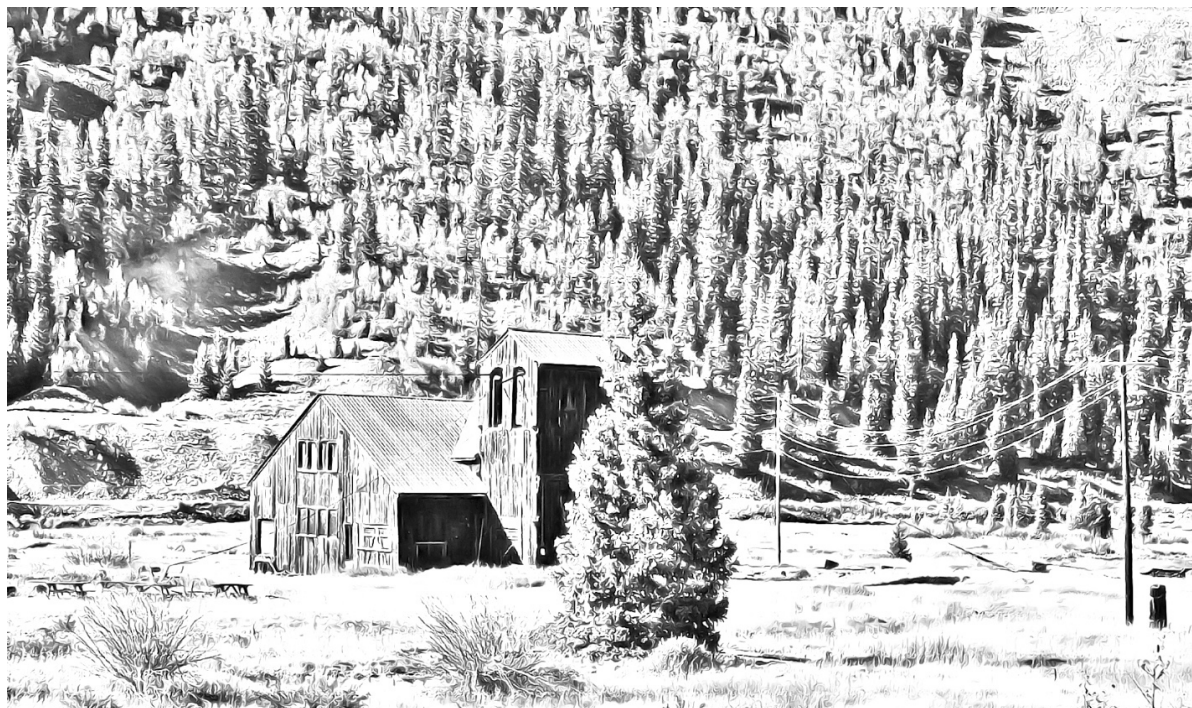
1557 Greene Street, Courthouse Square
Silverton, CO 81433
970-387-5609

37°48.920' N 107°39.713' W

Seasonal hours.

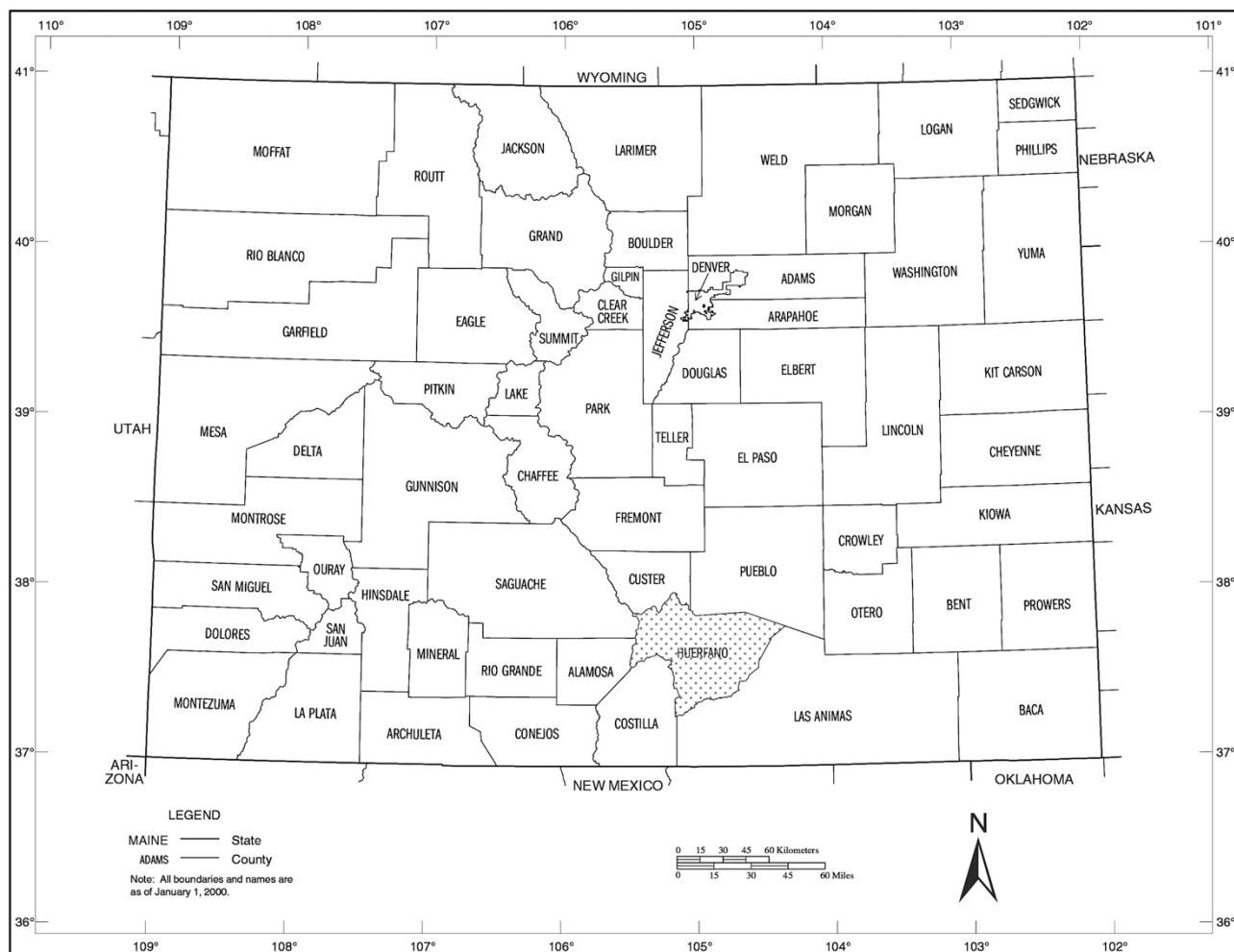
<https://www.sanjuancountyhistoricalsociety.org>

Little Nation Mill, Howardsville, Colorado



LITTLE NATION MILL, HOWARDSVILLE, COLORADO

Huerfano County, CO (Walsenburg)



The Walsenburg Mining Museum

112 West Fifth Street

Walsenburg, CO 81089

719-738-1992 (Seasonal)

37°37.505' N 104°46.923' W

Located in an 1896 jail. Huerfano County's mining camp history and memorabilia.



THE WALSENBURG MINING MUSEUM, WALSENBURG, COLORADO

“The 1896 city jail in Walsenburg, Colorado, which in 1994 became the mining museum for ‘The City Built on Coal.’ Carol M. Highsmith Photography, Inc. Library of Congress Catalog, Public Domain.

<http://huerfanohistory.org/mining-museum.html>