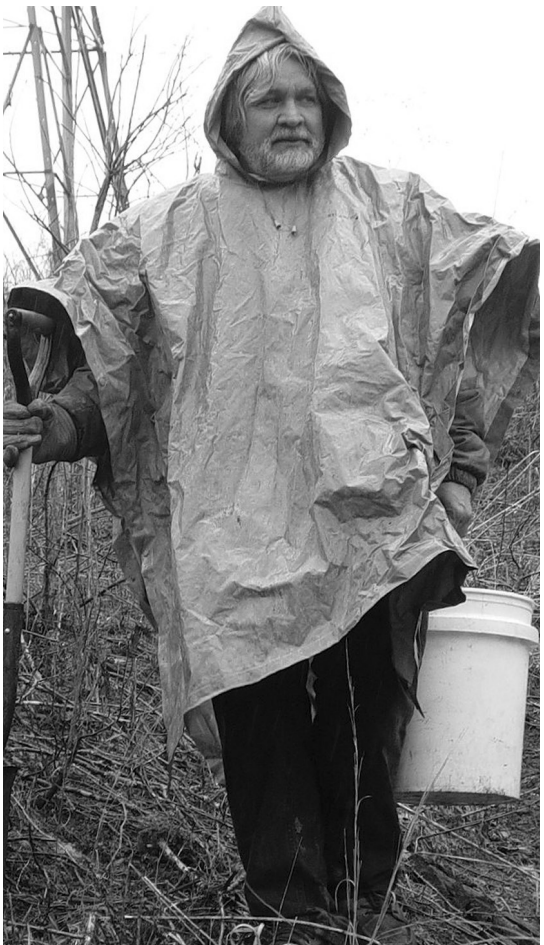
# American Rockhounds



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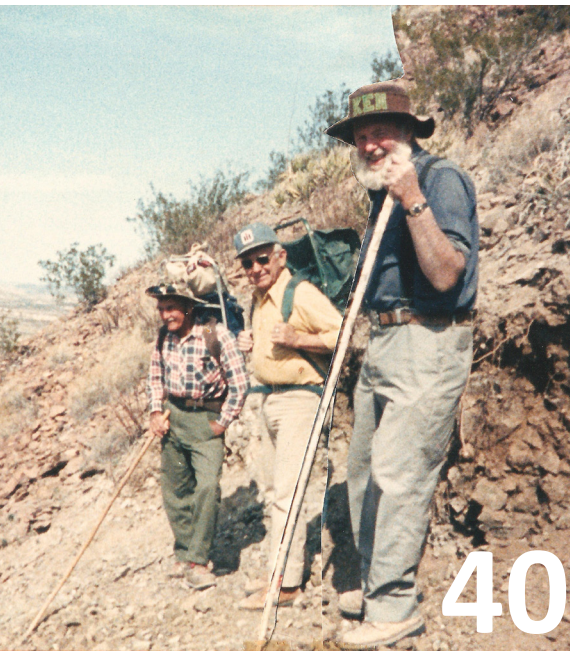




## REGULAR COLUMNS



## FEATURES

*On the front cover: Close-up of a double terminated, multi tipped crystal on matrix from the Reel Amethyst Mine, Lincoln County, North Carolina. 1½" x 1¼" (3.81 cm x 3.2 cm).*

*On the back cover: Layla the rockhound looks on as we remove numerous museum quality amethyst specimens from a pocket at the Reel Amethyst Mine, November, 2012.*



# North Carolina Amethyst

Rob Whaley
Richard Jacquot

Given the well-known occurrences of amethyst in Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia, it seems apparent there is an amethyst belt about 100 miles wide running NE to SW on a line from central Virginia (Amherst, Scufflin Acres) through the Carolinas to Jackson's Crossroads in Georgia. The trend conforms to the piedmont regions of each state, with amethyst occurrences nonexistent in the coastal plain and quite scarce in the mountains. The locations in Virginia, Georgia and South Carolina will be discussed in future articles. Here we will look at North Carolina with an emphasis on several locations familiar to many collectors of southeastern minerals: Reel Mine, Lincoln County; the Hiddenite area mines, Alexander County; and the mines and prospects in the Blue Valley area, Macon County.

In North Carolina, I have seen good specimens from Warren County, Davie County, Gaston County, Guilford County (Oak Ridge Military Academy), Montgomery County (undisclosed location dug by Archie Craven of Troy, NC), Iredell County (A.E. Brown Farm in Amity Hill, Minor Lentz Farm near Statesville and a prospect near Troutman), Alexander County (the mines at Hiddenite), Lincoln County (Reel Mine, Friday's property at Alexis), Catawba County (Tate Blvd. in Hickory, Crabtree Subdivision off Hwy. 10 West in Conover), Macon County, Blue Valley (Gnat Ridge area and Wagner Mine).

## REEL MINE
## IRON STATION, NORTH CAROLINA

Some collectors may insist that Jackson Crossroads, Georgia amethyst is superior to that from the Reel Mine; truly, there are some amazing crystals from the Georgia location. However, in terms of sheer productivity, historic interest, size of crystals and clusters, and ultimately, value of specimens, the Reel Mine is unsurpassed. I would challenge anyone who thinks there is a better location than Reel in North America or South America (unless you think huge amethyst lined geodes are the greatest). The gem grade 165 lb cluster of amethyst at the museum on Grandfather Mountain, found at the Reel by Lewis Sigmon in 1972, was called the finest amethyst cluster ever found in North America by John White, former curator of minerals for the Smithsonian Institution. There are specimens from the Reel on display at all the important natural history museums in the U.S.

Historically, George Kunz in *History of the Gems Found in North Carolina* (1907) and June Culp Zeitner in *Appalachian Gem Trails* (1965) described high-quality amethyst discoveries in the area of the Reel under various names (Goodsen Place, Randleman Farm, etc.) all of which were located south of Hwy 73 and west of Leeper's Creek. A site on Leeper's Creek and one on the Lynch Property are in the vicinity. If numerous old-timers are to be believed, Tiffany & Co. mined the property currently known as the Reel for gemstones way back when. I have not been able to verify this in the literature.

I arrived to collect at the Reel in 1974, just in time to miss out on the discovery of the 165 lb cluster. I wouldn't have found it anyway, since, as a newbie rockhound, I couldn't tell the difference between mine dumps and untouched ground. In 74, Bud Sigmon, of High Shoals, told me he had found the cluster right at the creek. Later I heard it was his cousin, Lewis, who made the discovery and sold it to Bud for $1,000. Somehow the

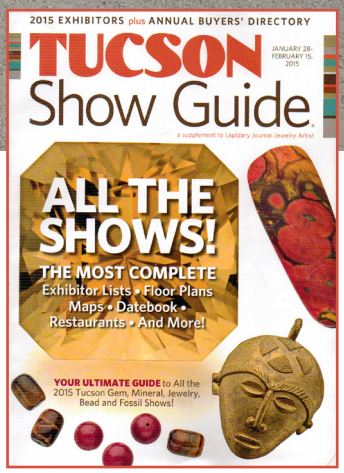
***Opposite page: Close-up of a double terminated, multi-tipped crystal on matrix from the April, 2013 dig at the Reel Amethyst Mine, Lincoln County, North Carolina. 1½" x 1¼" (3.81 cm x 3.2 cm). Richard Jacquot collection.***

# A Rockhound's Guide to Tucson 2015

Jim Landon
Photos by Jim Landon

For anyone with an interest collecting, buying, selling, or just looking at rocks, gems, minerals, or fossils, Tucson is a must see destination in February. The city hosts the largest gathering of dealers in the world and is international in scope. At the many different shows that are held concurrently, you can find examples of almost any kind of material the earth has to offer. For first timers, the experience is truly mind boggling and one can quickly reach sensory overload with all of the specimens that are being offered for sale. This year, most of the festivities started January 31st and ended on February 15th with the four day Tucson Gem and Mineral show that is organized by the Tucson Gem and Mineral Society. Nearly every hotel along Interstate 10 on the west side of Tucson is transformed into a rock mecca along with several other locations scattered around the city and outlying suburbs. Dealers at many of the locations offer similar materials, but there are differences in both the quantity and quality of items being offered.

This year was the third consecutive year I have been able to attend the Tucson show and this time around, I gave myself a week, so I would have more of a chance of getting around to as many of the venues as possible. Even at that, I was only able to attend 9 of the 41 shows that were being held. I have found that there is no way that one can get to them all, even if you had a full two weeks to do so. The Tucson events are held on the heels of the Quartzite gathering and some dealers participate in both events. Anyone visiting Tucson during the shows can fine tune their experience by seeking out shows that specialize in their interests, or are not open to the general public. Events like the Gem and Jewelry Exchange (GJX) and the American Gem Trade




***Every year this publication is put out prior to the shows. It has listings for all of the events taking place along with detailed maps that show locations, lists of dealers at each show, and layouts of each location that show where dealers can be found. I believe these can be purchased before the shows start, but I always pick one up when I get down there. There are stacks of these at each venue and they are free.***

# Famous American Meteorites
# Weston Meteorite

Fairfield County, Connecticut
Fell December 14, 1807, 6:30 AM EST
Stone Chondrite H4

John Sinclair

In the early hours on a cold December morning in 1807, the residents of Weston, Connecticut were awakened by three loud explosions. Some were up and working in their fields and witnessed the unfolding event. A large bright fireball was seen traveling southward through the sky. It exploded over Weston and stones were seen to fall in at least six locations. The rumbling from the sky was described as sounding like "a cannonball being rolled along a wooden floor." The explosions were described as being like large artillery fire. The event startled both man and animal alike.

Multiple stones were recovered by terrified residents and many were broken with the thoughts they contained gold or something else of high value. This was a time when beliefs in the supernatural were common and these stones were surely seen by some as a sign from heaven. Out of approximately 350 pounds of stones and fragments recovered, only about 50 pounds were preserved. One account says one large stone was broken into pieces and given away as souvenirs.

As luck would have it, a Yale Professor of Chemistry, Benjamin Silliman, soon heard news that stones had fallen from the sky. Yale was only about 35 miles from the event and Silliman and his colleague, Professor James Kingsley, arrived there a few days later. They recovered fragments from many of the stones that were found.

Without the efforts of Silliman and Kingsley, Weston would not have been distributed to worldwide museums and institutions but would have been lost to history and science. The Weston meteorite was the first recorded meteorite fall in the United States and it led to advancements in the way we studied science in the US. In colleges, Science and Philosophy were grouped together and Silliman led efforts to separate the two.

Silliman's writings and research on the Weston meteorite caught the attention of another man interested in science. Thomas Jefferson. There was friction between President Jefferson and Connecticut at this time. Jefferson had implemented the Embargo of 1807 which stopped all export of American goods and it shut down the port town of New Haven causing dire economic conditions there.

***Wood cut print of a recreation of the Weston Meteorite impact, from the 1800s. Photo courtesy of John Sinclair.***

There are reports that Jefferson made the comment "That it was easier to believe that two Yankee Professors could lie than to admit that stones could fall from heaven." Reports of Jefferson saying this are incomplete.

Jefferson received a letter written on February 8, 1808 from Mr. Daniel Salmon, a resident of

# Rockhound News

Richard Jacquot

## CHEROKEE RUBY AND SAPPHIRE MINE, MACON COUNTY, NC

As reported in the last issue of American Rockhound, the Cherokee Ruby & Sapphire Mine has been sold and is under new management, the site will remain one of the only "all native stones" locations to collect NC rubies and sapphires. Update since last issue: The new owners of the Cherokee Mine, Matthew Michalik, Lisa Michalik and Stanislava Michalik, have joined the Mountain Area Gem and Mineral Association (M.A.G.M.A.) as lifetime members. Welcome to the club! They have also advised me that they will still honor the MAGMA club discount for current paid club members (must show current membership card to get discount). More information can be found at www.facebook.com/pages/Cherokee-Ruby-and-Sapphire-Mine/210128582335872.

## DIAMOND HILL MINE, ABBEVILLE COUNTY, SC

New/old find from the Diamond Hill Mine! About a year ago, Rockhound Jason Brown, brought a specimen into our Asheville, NC gem show that he had collected at Diamond Hill, Antreville, SC about 28 years ago. I obtained it and observed numerous perfect, pale blue colored cubed crystals up to 3/16" (0.48 cm) covering one side of the rock and sitting in various places on the quartz crystals inside the folds of the rock. It is a typical folded vug type formation lined with drusy quartz crystals common from Diamond Hill. The specimen measures 5" x 4" x 3¾" (12.7 cm x 10.16 cm x 9.53 cm). I have collected every type of epimorph/perimorph crystal formation to be found at Diamond Hill, I had never seen any like this. These are not epimorphs, but solid, translucent crystals. My first thought was fluorite. I have numerous epimorph/perimorph specimens of what I have been calling "quartz after limonite". After talking with two geologists familiar with Diamond Hill, I am now thinking they may be "quartz after fluorite". I decided to get the specimen tested for a positive identification. On April 3rd, 2015, it tested positive for fluorite, 100% ID. The test was conducted with a Philips PW 3040 Powder X-Ray Diffractometer. The complete details of this find will be published in a future issue of American Rockhound magazine.

***Close-up of pale blue fluorite cubes sitting on a bed of drusy quartz crystals. The cubes cover a 4" x 3" (10.16 cm) area on one side of the specimen. Photo field of view is approximately ¾" (1.9 cm).***