

ROCKET CITY ROCKS & GEMS



The Monthly News Bulletin of the Huntsville Gem & Mineral Society, Huntsville, Alabama

Volume 57 No. 3

"We'll go to the Moon for a Rock"

March 2025

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No Meeting Mar 25, 2025

Auction



Setup Fri Mar 21 8:00

Doors open Sat Mar 22

9:00 for inspection, bidding 10:00



Web Page - www.huntsvillegms.org/ email - hsvgems@gmail.com



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SPRING ROCK AUCTION.

THE AUCTION IS THIS SATURDAY! MARCH 22nd.

Auction Saturday, Mar 22. Doors open at 9:00, Bidding at 10:00

The auction is an important Club activity as it raises about one third of our yearly operating budget.

If you've never been to the auction, we open the doors at 9:00am for viewing and the auction begins at 10:00am, with a professional auctioneer.

We also have buy it now tables for just shopping. We have a little bit of everything, rough, slabs, carvings and finished stones. There are specimens and crystals and fossils. We have handmade jewelry and jewelry tools, lapidary equipment. To get an idea go to the Club website, huntsvillegms.org and check out the catalog.



It takes a lot of members to pull this off. I want to thank all the volunteers who've given so much in time and materials to make this happen, some of us work on this for months to get ready.

I hope to see everyone there as we have something for everyone. Come find your treasure!

Thanks, Shelley



Huntsville Gem and Mineral Society

Annual Auction & Sale

Saturday, March 22, 2025
Doors Open at 9 am—Bidding Starts 10:00

- Lapidary Equipment
- Lapidary Rough
- Slabs
- Specimens
- Cabochons
- Fossils
- Finished Jewelry
- Jewelry Supplies
- Decorative Objects and much more!

Plus more on the Buy It Now tables!

FREE PARKING—Handicap Accessible
Cash Preferred - Credit Cards Accepted
COME JOIN THE FUN: YOUR TREASURE IS WAITING!

LOCATION → HUNTSVILLE GEM AND MINERAL SOCIETY
EDUCATION CENTER
(located behind the Gym) at the
SANDRA MOON COMMUNITY CENTER
7901 BAILEY COVE ROAD SE
HUNTSVILLE AL 35802



Rocket City Jewelers (RCJ) News March 2025

RCJ is open to all HGMS members 16 and older. All skill levels are welcome! No certification is required, but experience using jewelry tools is a plus. We offer one class a month with 4 opportunities to finish the project.

Note: If you're signed up to take the **Links & Beads Chain Bracelet or Pendant class**, 2 more opportunities are available: **Mar 19th, 6 – 9p**, and **Mar 26th, 2 – 5p**. As always, if you've already completed the current project, you're welcome to work on an unfinished project.

The 2nd quarter 2025 classes are here! Please sign up as soon as possible. To sign up for a class, please email Theresa at rocketcityjewelers@gmail.com at least a *month* before class. Include your name, contact info, the class(es) you want, and *the dates you plan to take them*. You can also sign up at RCJ meetings and monthly HGMS meetings. Judy will provide more details about the bracelet classes.

2025 - RCJ 2nd Quarter Classes

<p>April - LME #6 Metal Buttons and Bead/Jumping Bracelet. All inclusive kit provided (with options).</p>	<p>Kit provides: 16g AA Maui Blue rings 18g EC Silver rings Dangles - like pictured (charms may vary) Clasp</p> <p>May - Beach Theme Vipers Basket Bracelet</p>	<p>June - Bead and Leather Bracelet Kit plus buttons you made in April.</p>

April: LME (Layered Metal Earrings) #6 - Metal Buttons and Bead & Jumping Bracelet

Apr 2 & 16: 6 – 9p, class and make up.
Apr 9, 23, & 30 (5th Wed): 2 – 5p, class and make up.

May: Beach Theme Vipers Basket Chainmaille Bracelet

May 7 & 21: 6 – 9p, class and make up.
May 14 & 28: 2 – 5p, class and make up.

June: Bead, Chain, and Leather Bracelet

Jun 4 & 18: 6 – 9p, class and make up.
Jun 11 & 25: 2 – 5p, class and make up.

STUDIO 60 Huntsville Senior Center **The Magic Show**
 March 22 with two shows – 2 pm & 6pm. Presented by Ring 194, Huntsville Magic Club. Get your tickets at <https://STUDIO60MagicShow.eventbrite.com> or in person at STUDIO 60, 2200 Drake Ave, Huntsville





Metal Smithing/Silver Group by Kathy Bowman & Shelley Curran

April Class: Bezel Setting a Cabochon

Session 1: Thursday, April 3, 2025

Session 2: Monday, April 7, 2025



We have had several certification classes since our last *Beginning Cabochon Setting* Class and have lots of new people taking classes. If you are just starting metalsmithing this is a basic skill you need to learn. Many of our project classes include setting cabochons and we have noticed that even students who have been with us a while might need a refresher. If you are new to metalsmithing you should start with an oval cabochon (no corners or points). The cab should have slightly angled sides and nice even "girdle". Cabs with very high domes that have a knife edge, and no girdle are harder to set for a beginner. You should bring the several stones you want to set to the class so we can pick easiest one to set. We will provide all other supplies and tools. I will have stones to sell if you don't have a suitable stone.

Even though this class is geared toward those who are beginners and were just Certified, our more experienced students may want to challenge themselves by setting a stone with corners, two small (10x8 or 12x10) cabs for earrings or add a decorative wire border. The class also has a good supply of small oval cabs for earrings (\$3 each), and we will have some larger cabs available for sale if you do not have one.

The signup sheet will be available on Monday and Thursday night classes and at the monthly HGMS meeting. You can also sign up for this class by sending email to HGMS@wildivystudio.com. There are 9 places in each session for a total of 18 places.

Certification/Safety Classes: The date for the next Certification/Safety Class will probably be in April – the date is TBD. We are making some changes. Bob Goble will be handing the Safety/Certification classes starting in April. Those on the Request List will be contacted when a date is set. He is planning on having the class more frequently than every other month so there will not be such a long wait to be certified. Please send your name and contact information (name, email address, and cell phone number (for text messages) to Certifications@wildivystudio.com to get on the list for the class. Seats will be filled in the order we receive them. If you end up on the wait list, you will be added to the next scheduled class. We only have space for 9 students per class. Currently there is a still wait list for the class but hopefully the wait will be shorter.

CERTIFICATION CLASS INFORMATION – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY:

After Certification Class dates are set, email notices with information about the class(es) will be sent to the first 9 people on the request list about a week before the scheduled date. You must reply to that email to be scheduled for the class or to request a future class. One reminder email will be sent to those who do not respond to the first email. If there is no reply after the 2nd email, **your name will be removed from the Certification Requests list.** If you are still interested in Certification, you will have to send in your information again to get on the current list.

Facebook Users: The Metalsmithing class has our own page in Facebook groups. You can see info on classes, examples of project classes and other general information. Members of the group can post their finished class projects. Our class page is HGMS Metalsmithing Group. The link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/438777169648170>

Volunteer Positions *

Class Instructors:	Kathy Bowman Shelley Curran Jan Edmunds (Monday AM)
Tools/Equipment Inventory/ Store Manager	Bob Goble
Safety	Bob Goble
Kit Manager	Shelley Curran
Webpage & Social Media Management	Kathy Bowman

***Note: We are all volunteers, so the schedule is subject to change.**



Pebble Pups - Thursday March 27, 6:30 at the Education Center

The Match Jewelry activity will be a metal project designed by each pup. The options include a key fob, a pendant or a pair of earrings. We will cut shapes using dye cutters and if the pups would like to add a cabochon they can rivet a copper bezel cup to the metal and set a stone.

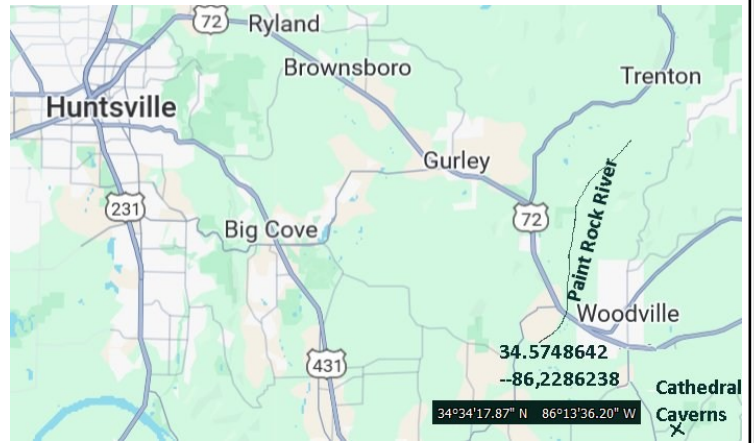


Lapidary Arts

We are still planning our field trip to Cathedral Caverns on Saturday, March 29th. If you are interested in joining us, please reach out to Suzanne Miller at HGMSpebblePups@gmail.com. We will also have information printed out at the meeting. This field trip will add to our topic for next month and give the group a chance to look at a cave in action. We will gather at the Caverns parking lot, and if we have enough participants we will get a group rate. Each family will pay separately. See the map below. GPS 34.5748642, -86,2286238 or 34° 34' 17.87", 86° 13' 36.30" depending on your device.

Please join us for our meeting on **Thursday, March 27th at 6:30pm** at the HGMS Education Center at the Sandra Moon Community Center, located at 7901 Bailey Cove Road SE, Huntsville, AL. We can't wait to see you there!

Suzanne Miller and crew Angela, Kendall, Theresa, Matthew, Dee Dee, Bill, Jeff, and Mike



Movie Night

Coming Soon to the Education Center



At the January Meeting, there was an enthusiastic response to the offer to start hosting Movie nights once a month in the Big Room of the Education Center. **We will be serving popcorn and soft drinks.** The Southeast Federation has over 300 titles available for loan (we only pay return postage). Most are on DVD's but a few are VHS, for both of which we have access to players. They run from half hour up to a full hour.

The first selections are:
 March **OPAL CUTTING MADE EASY** - VHS - 34 Min Instruction and process an opal from the rough state to the finished stone. How to choose the proper stone material, step-by-step cutting, and advanced techniques are covered. By Paul Downing.

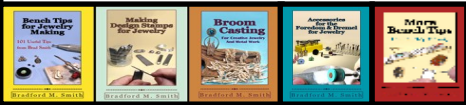
April (maybe two nights) **BASIC WIRE WRAP**- DVD-1985-110min These tapes cover three standard rings for beginners.

Please let us know the three of most interest to you and we will order the three top titles.

RSVP to hsvgems@gmail.com is requested but not required.

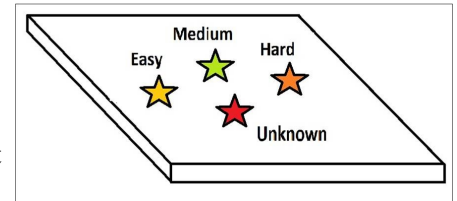
Brad's Bench Tips

"Bench Tips for Jewelry Making" and "Broom Casting for Creative Jewelry" are available on Amazon www.BradSmithJewelry.com For those who enjoy these bench tips, I'm happy to announce a second volume is now available on Amazon. "More Bench Tips" includes 86 additional ways to save time, avoid frustration or improve quality at the bench. These new tips cover problems in fabrication, stone setting, casting, soldering and polishing.



IDENTIFYING UNMARKED SOLDERS

There are plenty of ways to mark your sheet or wire solders, but suppose you forgot to mark them and have a couple that you can't identify. The answer is to compare the melting temperature of the unknowns with that of a known solder.



What I do is take a thick scrap of copper or nickel and arrange several solders on it. Ideally, I would have a sample of easy, medium and hard known solders surrounding the unknown piece. Then I heat the plate from the bottom and watch the order in which the solders melt.

EMERY BOARDS

I feel the key to getting a lustrous polish on your jewelry work is having a good selection of sandpaper handy for pre-polishing before going to the buffer. I generally start around 400 grit and then go to 800 and 1200.

While some projects do require sheets of sandpaper, my favorite way of sanding small jewelry items is to use emery boards for doing your nails. I like the ones with a thin foam core. They have enough resistance to sand the high points off a flat surface and yet give a little when you're trying to smooth off a curved surface.

These nail boards are inexpensive and come in a variety of grits. Some grits are so fine they give an almost finished surface. Pick up a few at a beauty supply company, at your local drug store, or from Amazon.





Variscite is a relatively rare hydrous aluminum phosphate mineral with the chemical formula $(\text{AlPO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O})$. It ranges in color from colorless, white, pale green, emerald green, green, blue green, yellow green, pale shades of brown or yellow, to red (rarely). This mineral occurs in fine grained often semi-translucent masses with a waxy luster (the way light interacts with a mineral surface). It can also occur as crusts and crystal clusters with a vitreous (glassy) luster. It has a Mohs hardness of 4.5 (harder than fluorite, but not as hard as apatite) and a white streak. It can also have black spiderwebbing, or whitish veins of crandallite (a calcium aluminum phosphate mineral) running through it.

Variscite is sometimes confused with turquoise, a closely related mineral with similar colors and appearance. So how can you tell them apart? Turquoise is an hydrous phosphate of copper *and* aluminum. Variscite tends to be greener due to the presence of small amounts of chromium. Turquoise can be green, too (due to iron impurities) but it tends to be bluer due to the copper. Also, turquoise is opaque, never translucent, and it doesn't have whitish veins. (But variscite with black spiderwebs has been confused with green turquoise.) Turquoise is harder than variscite having a Mohs hardness of 5-6 (as hard as fluorite, but not as hard as quartz), and it has a blue-white streak.

Variscite is a *secondary* mineral. A secondary mineral forms from the weathering or alteration of a *primary* mineral (a mineral that was present when the original rock formed). Variscite forms when phosphate-bearing precipitation interacts with aluminum-rich rocks in the ground or at the ground surface. This mineral was first discovered in Germany at the Meßbach Quarry in the Vogtland district, and it was named after "Variscia," the historical name for Vogtland. Today, variscite is found all over the world including the United States. Specimens with black spiderwebs are characteristic of Lander, Esmerelda, and Mineral Counties in Nevada. Specimens with crandallite veins are characteristic of the Little Green Monster Variscite Mine in Utah.

Variscite has been used for ornamentation since Neolithic times and continues today. Its color range



makes it a popular shelf specimen and gemstone for making jewelry and ornamental objects. Because of its intense green color, it's a common substitute for turquoise. Even though it's more rare than turquoise, variscite tends to be less expensive because it's not as commonly available or as well known. Be aware that material that may be either variscite *or* turquoise is often marketed as "variquoise". Always purchase from a trusted seller to know what you're buying. Thanks to Les Bartel for suggesting this mineral.



Fine grained, semi-translucent variscite



Variscite crystals



Variscite with black spiderwebs, Nevada

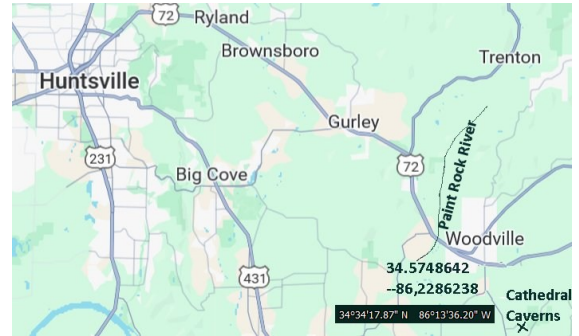


Variscite with crandallite veins, Utah

FIELD TRIPS UPCOMING

There are several field trips coming up. The first is to Cathedral Caverns on March 29th. We will meet at the cave parking lot (see map below). We will gather at the office building, and depending on whether or not we have a minimum for the reduced fee, we will pay individually.

GPS 34.5748642 -86,2286238, or 34° 34' 17.87", 86° 13' 36.30" depending on your device.



The next trip will be to Brilliant AL on April 12th to collect brilliant wood, a beautiful, druzy-quartz-covered, petrified wood found in Alabama and Mississippi. The trip is April 12th, and the cost is \$100 per 5-gallon bucket. There is a limit of ~25 people for this trip. All participants must sign a liability waiver. The site is approximately 2 hours from Huntsville. The cost will be approximately \$100 per 5-gallon bucket collected, depending on the quality of the finds. If you find a piece that won't fit in a 5-gallon bucket, he will negotiate a fair price for you. We will meet in Brilliant at 8:15 to go to the site at 8:30. Details will follow on where to meet.

The collection area is in a wooded area, so it will be slightly cooler than being in direct sunlight. There are no restrooms at the site, but the Dollar General is very close. Participants should bring water and bring lunch.

Bring your own buckets and a tool for shallow digging (rock hammer, pry bar, shovel).

Reply to me if you would like to go, with the names of attendees and include your cell phone number. If, after responding, you decide you cannot go, please let me know so that I can reassign the spot to someone else.

On Sunday, May 18th, the club will be travelling to the Hogg Mine in Georgia for a machine dig. This may be your last chance to visit the Hogg Mine, as the owner plans on closing later this year. The cost will be \$45 to \$90 depending on the number of participants. There is a limit of 30 HGMS members for this event (and 30 from the Alabama Mineral & Lapidary Society in Birmingham). The Hogg Mine has beryl, tourmaline, rose quartz, and aquamarine. Watch your email for details on signing up for this trip.

We are also looking into a field trip to **Wichahpi Commemorative Stone Wall (Tom's Wall)** near Florence. Tom Hendrix spent over 30 years constructing the largest unmortared rock wall in the United States. The wall was dedicated to his great, great, great grandmother's journey back from Oklahoma to the Tennessee River (the Singing River). Te-lah-nay, of the Yuchi tribe, had been taken from Alabama to Oklahoma with other Native Americans along the Trail of Tears. The site is popular spiritual destination. More to follow.

Get in on a Machine Dig at the Hogg Mine

Chris Painter offers opportunities for groups to schedule a deep dig at the Hogg Mine, uncovering much richer access to the many minerals to be found in the mine site. The Alabama Mineral & Lapidary Society in Birmingham has offered to join with the HGMS in sponsoring one of these opportunities. The cost is \$2500 total, to be divided by the number of participants of both Clubs - i.e \$45 with 30 spaces allotted to each Club for members who sign up and pay in advance. That fee might go up or down according to the actual final count. This event will expose deep material from the original operation as a commercial Beryl Mine, but will also uncover the other minerals - tourmaline, amethyst, aquamarine, and many other very desirable specimens. If you are interested, contact Bill Friday at hsvgems@gmail.com to reserve a spot, no money due till dates are set - looking at May 2025. First come, first served - maximum 30 diggers from HGMS and 30 from AMLS.

The plan is for a machine dig on Friday, open to the public on Saturday for a regular \$35 fee, and a second dig on Sunday with our two crews on hand for the day (don't get in the way of the machine).



The Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education, 7901 Bailey Cove Rd. SE, Huntsville AL 35802
Metal Smithing/Silver Instructors: Shelley Curran, Kathy Bowman, Jan Edmunds
Lapidary: Bill Friday, James Yack, Anthony Zwilling, Les Bartel, Theresa Chivers, Deb Epperson
Rocket City Jewelers: Judy Osmundson, Theresa Chivers, Leslie Malakowsky
Pebble Pups: Suzanne Miller, Angela Mendoza, Theresa Chivers, Dee Dee Morton, Bill Friday

Monday	Metal Smithing/Silver	5:00pm - 9:00pm
	Lapidary	1st Monday each month 9:45am-2:00pm (Except Aug and Sep)
	Lapidary	6:00pm - 9:00pm
Tuesday	Lapidary	9:00am - 2:00pm
	HGMS Meetings	6:00pm - 8:30pm 4th Tuesdays
Wednesday	Lapidary	6:00pm - 9:00pm
	Rocket City Jewelers 1st & 3rd Weeks	- 6:00pm - 9:00pm
	Rocket City Jewelers 2nd, 4th, 5th Weeks	- 2:00pm - 5:00pm
Thursday	Metal Smithing/Silver	5:00pm - 9:00pm
	Pebble Pups	6:30pm 4th Thursdays
Friday	Lapidary	6:00pm - 9:00pm
Saturday	Metal Smithing	9:00am - 3:00pm irregular 1st Saturday of the Month
	Lapidary	9:00 - Noon - First Saturday of the month



PURPOSE OF THE SOCIETY: The Huntsville Gem & Mineral Society is a non-profit educational organization for people interested in mineralogy, geology, paleontology, and related lapidary arts. Its primary purpose is the education and enjoyment of the members and the general public in these areas. This purpose is accomplished through programs and activities, shows, lectures to school children and organizations, and exchange of rocks, minerals, artifacts, and newsletters.

DUES: Annual dues are \$20.00 per person, \$25.00 per family, and are due on October 1st of each year

Membership Applications may be found at our webpage www.Huntsvillegms.org or at the HGMS Education Center during a meeting or at one of our activity periods: 7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 35802

Meetings: 4th Tuesday of the month except for March Auction, June picnic, Christmas Dinner and major holidays.

The Society is affiliated with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies , the Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies, and the Dixie Mineral Council

Federation Newsletters: DMC: http://www.amfed.org/sfms/_dmc/dmc.htm

SFMS: <https://www.southeastfed.org/newsletter> - new, under construction

AFMS: www.amfed.org/news/default.htm

2025 HUNTSVILLE GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY EXECUTIVE BOARD

President - Shelley Curran -
Vice President - Anthony Zwilling -
Secretary: Debbie Epperson -
Treasurer: Theresa Chivers -
Membership - Theresa Chivers -
Editor: Bill Friday - 256-527-8227
Past President: Mike Harrison -
Directors:
 James Yack -
 Ashlee Pool -
 James Mallonee -
 Doug Blakeslee - [bla](#)

2025 COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Property: Bill Friday
Program Chair—Bill Friday
Webpage: Leslie Malakowsky,
Auction Chair: Shelley Curran
Membership: Theresa Chivers
Field Trips: Bill Friday
Hospitality: open
Pebble Pups: Suzanne Miller



March
Aquamarine

Birthstones



April
Diamond

2025 CALENDAR

- 22 Mar '25 Sat - Annual Rock Sale / Auction - details above. No regular March Membership Meeting.
- 22 Apr '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 27 May '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 14 Jun '25 [**Saturday**] - Annual HGMS Picnic, Monte Sano State Park
- 22 Jul '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 26 Aug '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 23 Sep '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 10-12 Oct '25 - Fall Gem, Jewelry, and Mineral Sale - Jaycees Building, Airport Rd
- 28 Oct '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 25 Nov '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 9Dec '25 - Christmas Dinner - details as it gets closer
- possibly a great potluck dinner again at the Ed Ctr.
- 27 Jan '26 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm

<p>Deadline for Next Newsletter Apr 13, 2025</p>
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Dated material
Do not delay

March 2025

Rocket City Rocks & Gems
Bill Friday, Editor
2508 Excalibur Dr.
Huntsville, AL 35803