

CONTRA COSTA MINERAL & GEM SOCIETY

The Early Years 1950-1974

by Shirley "Rocky" Schlieff with an update by Ann & Matt Matthews

The Contra Costa Mineral & Gem Society was started in August of 1950 when a small group of people advertised their interest in starting a mineral and lapidary club. Twenty-three people responded and they formed and incorporated the Society. The first membership was by families and at the end of 1950 there were eighteen family memberships. Meeting notices were sent out to members via postcards.

The young Society became affiliated with the California Federation in 1951. The prime mover in getting the Society started was Al Davies, who became its first president. He remained an active member until he moved from the area around 1954. It was noted that in 1966 he is reported as being the president of the then new Nevada County Gem & Mineral Society. It is assumed that he had much to do with the forming of that club also. Once a rockhound always a rockhound.

The club grew and in January 1953 they started issuing a one-page (legal size) bulletin and meeting notice. Mimeographing was done by a commercial firm. By then the membership was 66 families.

Now they seem to make a little progress. In 1958 a Study Group was formed by real "dyed in the wool" rockhounds. This group had good old-fashioned gabfests, studying equipment, crystal growing, lapidary successes and failures, etc., really having a good time exchanging ideas and experiences. They held together about three years but with show activities getting more numerous the group had little time or places to meet and gradually disbanded.

As the membership was frozen at 75 families, the club had an up and down time of it with progress seemingly very slow. The same group that formed the study group was interested in the club's progress and worked for improvement. Finally in 1959 there was an adjustment made, and in 1960 membership was by individual with no limit of the number who could join.

In 1959 the bulletin was changed and enlarged to its present form, about, 6 pages of news and activities plus two cover sheets. A contest was held to name this new publication and the name "Diablo Diggin's" received the most votes and so it is today. A used mimeograph was given to the club and the editors fought a valiant fight with it each month to put out the bulletin. In 1963 the club heeded the editors' wild ravings and bought a new mimeograph.

This same group of members had been talking up a show for two or three years and in 1959 the Society held a one day show. It was a huge success. They have held shows

every year, each one seemingly bigger and better, until this year, 1967, they found themselves unable to obtain a building large enough for their displays.

As with a great many clubs it has had its up and downs, or should I say doers and non-doers, and the tide surges back and forth, depending on who are elected as officers. They seldom have anyone who will stay for a second term of office so maybe the constant change to the inexperienced ones is the "tie that binds". They seem to go ahead two years and slip back one. Things are on the upward swing again. New study groups are forming and there seems to be a revitalized interest in things.

Old members drop out and new members join, but the really interested stay on. In 1967, we still have five of our charter members. Our membership this year is 188 adults and 10 juniors.

From time to time the Society has entered displays in competition in the Federation shows. We received an Honorable Mention in 1959, a 3rd place ribbon in 1963, and a 2nd place ribbon in 1964. At this rate we feel we're bound to win a 1st place ribbon the next time we enter.

Editors note: The above article was written by Shirley for the SOUVENIR publication for the No Calif. Bulletin Editors Seminar in April, 1967. We thought it very interesting and decided to publish it in our bulletin.

We do need to bring the club history up to date. This year we have 140 adult members and 17 junior members. More are applying for membership all the time. We still have our ups and downs or our doers and non-doers. The club still surges back and forth, and we hope now it is again on the upward swing.

He have held our shows at the Concord Elk's Club the last weekend in Jan for several years now and they are better then ever.

We have two study groups in the club. The Micromounter group is a serious study group and currently they are studying and listing the minerals of Calif., county by county.

There is a new Faceting Guild started. They have a closed membership of 12 people so they can learn more. The goal is for each to become a master and enter competitions. As they become proficient, they will no doubt open the membership to more.

We are considering a club workshop and we definitely want to organize the junior members.

We have added an Ecology Chairman to the board and are concentrating on more litter cleanups and bills that affect us as rockhounds. We also added a Publicity Chairman to the Board with good results.

We still have not won that fist place ribbon in competition in Federation Shows, but we have great hope that we will one of these days.