



Turret Arch through North Window at sunrise at Arches National Park, Moab, Utah.
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Club Corner — Enjoying Colorado’s Geologic Wonders Through the Flatirons Mineral Club

Dennis Gertenbach, FMC Editor

Colorado is blessed with fabulous geology throughout the state, from the Rocky Mountains to the plains in the east to the canyon country in the west. Throughout the state, a wide variety of rocks, minerals, and fossils can be found. And what better way to collect specimens and enjoy the geologic wonders of Colorado than to spend time with others who share your passion?

Since 1957, the Flatirons Mineral Club has offered that opportunity. Our home is Boulder, Colorado, nestled against the Rocky Mountains. Just west of Boulder are the Flatirons, a rock formation that gave the club its name. Our location is a great jumping off place to explore Colorado’s geologic wonders.

As club president, Brian Walko states, the Flatirons Mineral Club “is well established in Boulder County as a club that caters to novice rockhounds all the way to scientific professionals. Our success comes from offering a variety of activities.” The club’s 150 members, ranging from young families, to teenagers, to empty nesters, to seniors would agree. All are welcome to join our programs and activities.

Fun Field Trips for All Members



Agate-collecting trip to Crawford, Nebraska. Credit: Brian Walko

Most of us joined our first rock club to go on field trips. We were excited to collect rocks, minerals, and fossils, and clubs offer expertise on where to collect and what you will find. To meet this desire, Will Rehm, field trip chair, has worked with club leaders to offer field trips that cater to various physical abilities and driving distances. Some of our members have mineral claims, and they allow club members to collect on them.



Digging for blue barite at Hartsel. Credit: Anna Elek

Although many of our trips are in the summer to collect rocks, minerals, and fossils, we also have trips that take advantage of the unique geology and research resources nearby, like the CU Map Library and the Edgar Experimental Mine. Club families are included on our field trips, focusing



Club members touring the University of Colorado Map Library. Credit: Will Rehm

on getting kids outside, which dovetails with our highly successful Jr. Geologists program.

continued on page 14

One exciting new activity for our club is creating geologic guides for local areas that the public can access. Our first one is a geology hike in the foothills outside of Boulder that is nearly complete and will be accessible to the public on the club's website in the near future. In addition to educating the public about the geology around the area, Rehm states that the ultimate goal of these guidebooks is to "get people



Jr. Geologists split shale at the Florissant Fossil Quarry, looking for fossil bugs and leaves. Credit: Rebecca Stetson

outside and help people gain a sense of wonderment about where we live."

Jr. Geologists, Our Program for Club Families

As described by Brian Walko, "The Junior Geologists program is for families - kids and parents - of the Flatirons Mineral Club. It is run by a group of dedicated volunteers. The kids work on the requirements for geology-related badges, part of the Future Rockhounds of America program sponsored by the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies." Club members agree with Jean Orr, long-time club member,

"Our Jr. Geologists program is a big component of the club."



Jr. Geologists learn how to make a cabochon from club member Terry O'Donnell. Credit: Dennis Gertenbach

The success of the Jr. Geologists program is obvious from the number of families participating. We have over 30 kids and teenagers involved in the program. As summed up by Charlotte, age 15, "I love being in the program because everyone there is so easy to talk to, and the adults are so knowledgeable." And her favorite activities? "I really liked the lapidary class, and the time we made a cabochon by rounding and polishing amazonite. I also really enjoyed making a showcase for the club show."

Rocks & Rails, Our Annual Club Show

One of our highlights every December is Rocks & Rails, held at the Boulder County Fairgrounds with the Boulder Model Railroad Club. It may sound strange to have a show featuring both rocks and model railroads, but it works. Last December's show had 3,900 attendees.

Show Committee member Char Bourg, describes why our show is so successful. "There are several facets - no pun intended - that make our annual gem and mineral show the best in the area. The first is our volunteers.

continued on page 15

The club members who volunteer give up precious hours of their free time to help out in various sectors of the show. The second are the people who come to the show. Any profit made from the Kid's Area is donated to a scholarship fund for a deserving Colorado college student studying earth science. Thirdly, when people purchase an item from one of our great vendors, they are providing a living for those vendors.”



Our annual gem and mineral show in 2022. Credit: Brian Walko

personal collecting trips. In the spring we hold a Silent Auction for members to purchase and sell minerals. Attendance is high at the summer picnic and awards ceremony and the winter holiday gift exchange. In September, the Flatirons Mineral Club participates in the Denver Gem & Mineral Show. Another benefit for members is the wide variety of speakers at our monthly club meetings. The University of Colorado and Colorado School of Mines offer talented people to present interesting



Filling grab bags at the annual picnic. Credit: Brian Walko



Sifting for shark teeth at the Kid's Area at the Rocks & Rails Show. Credit: Dennis Gertenbach



Last year's show-and-tell, with members enjoying the many specimens displayed on towels (hence the name – Towel Show). Credit: Brian Walko

Other Activities

We host annual social events such as the Towel Show, our annual show-and-tell, where members display their findings from summer field trips and

geology - related topics. Our membership has also contributed to these presentations. For these in-person meetings, livestream access through Zoom is available for homebound members. Meetings are also live-streamed when in-person meetings are canceled because of inclement weather.

Our main club communication is from our award-winning newsletter, “The Flatiron Facets.” Many club members, including our Jr. Geologists, contribute articles, photographs, and other items to this newsletter.

Club president Brian Walko sums up why members enjoy our club. “The leadership and volunteerism of our members helps the club succeed.”