What’s New in the Mineral World?

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It’s early April, and the orange tree in my front yard is a fragrant white pandemonium of blossoms—Springtime in Arizona is great time to be here, considering the weather in other parts of the country. And the online mineral dealers are showing plenty of things they acquired at the Tucson Show. Field collecting is active as well; for example there is new work afoot at the famous Red Cloud mine in the Trigo Mountains, in the southwestern part of the state. So before coming to the online news let me tell you a little about—

New digging for wulfenite at the Red Cloud

Terry Szenics wrote in 1975 that “…in perfection of form, color, and pure aesthetic appeal, most collectors agree that Red Cloud wulfenite has no equal”—and this judgment prevails still today among “most collectors.” For general backgrounds on the history of wulfenite from the Red Cloud mine, see the essay by Szenics just quoted (“Ed Over at the Red Cloud,” in the July-August 1975 issue of the Mineralogical Record), and see Gary Edson’s general account of the locality in the May-June 1980 issue, and see also Wendell Wilson’s description of the big wulfenite strike of 1996 there by an Arizona group headed by Wayne Thompson (“Bonanza at the Red Cloud mine,” in the September-October 1996 issue).

The Thompson group’s strategy was to excavate the whole of the pocket-bearing vein in an open cut reaching angularly a major distance down from the surface, and since that work ceased it has been generally thought that no more notable wulfenite would be found at the Red Cloud mine. But 14 years ago Robert Bell, a mineral collector who lives in Kansas, purchased the mine anyway, and now he has contracted for experienced field man Roger Sarber to start a search for new wulfenite pockets. Although so far the
operations of Sarber and his small crew have been modest in scale, four small wulfenite-bearing pockets have been collected, the biggest one the size of a grapefruit, during the autumn of 2018. The best wulfenite crystals recovered are sharp, lustrous, of a typical “Red Cloud” red-orange, and 3 cm across; they emerged from pockets wherein they kept company with altered galena, cerussite, brecciated fluorite, and (in just one of the pockets) bladed gray-white barite crystals. Two or three specimens feature nearly or fully transparent wulfenite “windows”—Sarber nicknamed the best of these specimens as the “Tequila Sunrise.” About 15 specimens emerged in all, from small thumbnail size to a 10-cm matrix with a 2.5-cm wulfenite crystal. Because of obstacles created by all the earlier work at the Red Cloud, the chances for further, comparable finds are hard to gauge, depending as they do on the difficult work of “getting the muck out,” as Bell and Sarber put it. Nevertheless it is nice to see a few new specimens of wulfenite come out of the old Red Cloud:

![Wulfenite, 3 cm, from the Red Cloud mine, La Paz County, Arizona. The “Tequila Sunrise,” collected in 2018 by Roger Sarber. Robert Bell and Roger Sarber specimen; Christi Cramer photo.](image-url)
Wulfenite (two views), 3 cm, from the Red Cloud mine, La Paz County, Arizona; collected in 2018 by Roger Sarber. Robert Bell and Roger Sarber specimen; Christi Cramer photo.

Wulfenite, 10 cm matrix (crystal 2.3 cm), from the Red Cloud mine, La Paz County, Arizona; collected in 2018 by Roger Sarber. Robert Bell and Roger Sarber specimen; Christi Cramer photo.
Mr. Bell and Mr. Sarber say that the new specimens are currently for sale, though they haven’t (as of March 2019) come up with hard prices and are willing to bargain. To contact Robert Bell, use drrocklover@yahoo.com, and to contact Roger Sarber, use geoexplorer2003@yahoo.com.

**What’s New on the Web**

In his “Tucson 2019 Update (2),” Jordi Fabre shows some fine specimens from the Milpillas mine, Cuitaca, Sonora, Mexico, including something *new* from that ever more fertile locality for copper minerals. The update (at fabreminerals.com) offers ten beautiful specimens, 2.4 to 10 cm and priced at $102 to $3291, of *shattuckite* with quartz and chrysocolla, found in January 2019 on the 1100 level of the Milpillas mine. A first generation of shattuckite consists of deep blue, felted crystals forming dense inclusions in colorless, transparent quartz crystals, while on the same specimens a second shattuckite generation appears as sky-blue botryoidal coatings on matrix which also is partially coated by pale green chrysocolla.

![Shattuckite in quartz, 4.8 cm, from the Milpillas mine, Cuitaca, Sonora, Mexico. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.](image-url)
Jordi’s other new offerings from Milpillas are no slouches either—even if, for you, azurite and malachite pseudomorphs after azurite from the hot Sonoran locality are verging on the overfamiliar by now. It’s arguable that the Milpillas mine has established itself as the world’s best azurite locality of all time—which is saying a lot when you think of some champion products of Tsumeb, Bisbee, Kerrouchen, Chessy, etc. But just look at this Milpillas azurite miniature on Jordi’s site, with thick yet transparent, super-sharp, wedge-terminated indigo blades sticking out. (Superfine new Milpillas azurite clusters like that were also with Collector’s Edge at the 2019 Tucson Show, as you’ll note in the print report.)

Azurite, 3.3 cm, from the Milpillas mine, Cuitaca, Sonora, Mexico. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

And then, if you like malachite pseudomorphs, Jordi has an unusual one from Milpillas which features a single, sharp, deep green blade nicely set on matrix of pitchy black goethite.
To stick with the pseudomorph theme, I note that Dan Weinrich of Weinrich Minerals (weinrichmineralsinc.com) has recently taken on some unusual pseudomorph specimens from the Dale Armstrong collection, and many of these are distributed over the many pages of Dan’s “Latest Acquisitions.” There is, for example, a 6.5-cm hematite after ilvaite specimen from Dalnegorsk, Primorsky Krai, Russia, which is considerably better-looking than pseudomorph specimens tend to be, as it shows sharp, well terminated, prismatic forms to 5 cm which, okay, are dull black but are decorated with sparkling coatings of “specular” hematite, and have little white calcite crystals hanging onto the sides:
Hematite pseudomorph after Ilvaite, 6.5 cm, from Dalnegorsk, Primorsky Krai, Russia. Weinrich Minerals Inc. specimen and photo.

There is also a pseudomorphous performance such as I’ve never seen or heard of before: bornite after acanthite from Mine #57, Dzhezkazgan, Karagandy Oblast, Kazakhstan. This specimen shows sharp cubic crystals of former acanthite to 8 mm, now wholly replaced by dull black bornite, aligning in semi-parallel fashion to form a stout-looking little group without matrix—$300.

Bornite pseudomorph after Acanthite, 3.5 cm, from Mine #57, Dzhezkazgan, Karagandy Oblast, Kazakhstan. Weinrich Minerals Inc. specimen and photo.
The *Weinrich Minerals* website also has a surprise from the Imiter silver mine near Ouarzazate, Morocco. That mine, which has become well known for its big groups of gray, burr-like, octahedral acanthite crystals, may be on its way to producing at last some truly first-rate proultimate specimens. Typical Imiter proultimates which have emerged up to now are tight masses of tiny crystals—bright red for sure but never very well individualized or aesthetically harmonized. But a little family of thumbnails towards the end of Dan Weinrich’s “Latest Acquisitions” pages show sharp, terminated prismatic proultimate crystals, crimson red and very lustrous, in spiky, flashing groups, and if they were only larger these specimens could rival even the old classic German proultimates. Individual crystals are all around 3 mm, and the groups are nearly all around 1.5 cm. The tinier specimens, e.g. the 1.4-cm one shown here, cost only around $25, and Dan’s only “full” thumbnail, at 2.8 cm, costs just $60. Make these items bigger, Dan…they have everything else that it takes to be top examples of the elite “ruby silver.”

![Proustite, 1.4 cm, from the Imiter mine, Ouarzazate, Morocco. Weinrich Minerals Inc. specimen and photo.](image)

Speaking of thumbnails (as, yes, I frequently do), the Spanish dealership *MCh Minerals* (mchminerals.com) has a mid-March update with three small but excellent topaz specimens from “San Luis de la Paz, Guanajuato,” Mexico—denoted on the *MCh* website as “a less known Mexican locality.” Indeed, Mindat gives no hint of topaz specimens from the *Municipio* of San Luis de la Paz in the state of Guanajuato, and what’s more these specimens bear some resemblance to the familiar ones showing orange topaz crystals in rhyolite from near the town of Tepetate in the state of San Luis Potosí—so whether the specimens are misattributed as to locality (common in Mexico) or whether in fact they represent a “less known,” perhaps new, occurrence will have to be a small mystery for now (can anyone help to resolve it?). Anyway, the specimens, measuring
2.5, 3.0 and 3.5 cm, are sprays of gemmy pale orange, prismatic crystals of topaz with wide pyramid faces and clean basal pinacoid terminations, rising from brownish gray rhyolite, and they are very pretty, and they only cost 55 Euros (about $60) each.

Topaz, 2.5 cm, from San Luis de la Paz, Guanajuato, Mexico. MCh Minerals specimen and photo.

Continuing to speak all at once of thumbnails, of pseudomorphs and of topaz, I note that Mike Keim’s Marin Mineral Company (marinmineral.com) has four new pages awash in goodies, beginning with one dated February 27 and marked “Tucson 2019—Pseudomorphs.” The page leads off with four sharp specimens of topaz and quartz after orthoclase from the classic locality of Schneckenstein, Sachsen, Germany, from 2.5 to 3.5 cm and costing $200 apiece. These were found, Mike says, in the 1920s and have recently been traded out of the Freiberg Mining Academy collection. Typically for the occurrence, the pseudocrystals are sandy gray, complete, and fairly sharp-edged, and they show clearly the twinning styles of the original orthoclase.
Topaz and quartz pseudomorph after orthoclase, 3.3 cm, from Schneckenstein, Saxony, Germany. Marin Mineral Company specimen and photo.

Another page on the Marin website, called “Tucson 2019” and dated March 7, has “tsavorite” garnet from the Merelani tanzanite mines in the Manyara Region, Tanzania; brilliant red spinel octahedrons from Mahenge, Morogoro Region, Tanzania; and, less familiarly, a few examples of bluish purple spinel in loose groups of slightly rounded octahedral crystals, from a “new find” at Ruaha, near Mahenge. These newer spinels look very fine and are unusual for their color; the specimen shown below is priced at $750.

Spinel, 4.8 cm, from Ruaha, Manyara Region, Tanzania. Marin Mineral Company specimen and photo.
Then there is the Marin Minerals page dated March 23, with four superb miniatures of **prehnite** from Merelani. We have known for a while of the glassy, rounded, pale yellow-green prehnite aggregates from this locality, but these new, vaguely rosette-shaped clusters of highly lustrous, translucent yellow crystals justify Mike’s remark that while “Merelani prehnite is considered by many, including me, to be the best in the world...what has been produced during the last year or two, is the best,” i.e. the best of the best. The example shown here—already marked “sold” by April 3—is priced at $600.

![Prehnite, 3.2 cm, from the Merelani mines, Manyara Region, Tanzania. Marin Mineral Company specimen and photo.](image)

**Andy Seibel Minerals** (andyseibel.com) has a March 11 update with 20 miniature to small-cabinet-size specimens from a “recent find” of **quartz and hematite** from the Huanggang polymetallic deposit, Hexigten Banner, Ulanhad League, Inner Mongolia, China. The quartz crystals, reaching to over 8 cm long, are a soft pinkish orange from fine-grained inclusions—foggy clouds—of hematite, and resting on them are black hematite “roses,” quite sharp and (unlike some of their Alpine cousins) really looking exactly like fully opened roses. Some of Andy’s specimens are dominated by hematite while others are nearly all quartz, but all are attractive, and they are priced between $150 and $2500.
The January-February 2019 issue of our magazine introduced a new advertiser: Greenstone Fine Mineralia (https://store.finemineralia.com), headed by Brian Greenstone of Austin, Texas. A recent update on this site offers a few first-rate specimens of blue halite with sylvite from the mine near Carlsbad, New Mexico, which was formerly known as the Intrepid Potash East mine but has been renamed the Kerr McGee mine. On the off-chance that you haven’t yet learned of the stunningly deep blue, transparent, cubic crystals of halite from this locality, see the article by Phillip Simmons in January-February 2013, and see (you can’t miss it) that issue’s cover photo of a spectacular 18.2-cm specimen of the deep blue halite (the color comes from stray sodium atoms). Brian Greenstone writes that “Good blue halite specimens from Carlsbad are getting harder and harder to find since there hasn’t been any mining there in years,” and indeed I noted some serious price inflation for the few New Mexico blue halite specimens that I saw at the 2019 Tucson Show. The piece shown here features two perfect blue halite crystals, each about 2 cm, on matrix with big, colorless and transparent cubic crystals of sylvite looming behind them. (Priced at $4,600, this one had vanished from the website by April 4, but three others, smaller and less expensive but with halite cubes just as vividly blue, remained behind.)
Another fairly new dealership based in Texas is The Focal Crystal (focalcrystal.com), run out of Houston by James and Charelle Webb. In this website one finds galleries bearing motleys of one-of-a-kind high-end specimens with impressive aesthetics and (in most cases) impressive ownership histories as well, described in full by the captions. Asking prices for these specimens are not stated, but of course you can always inquire of the Webbs, or at the very least you can stare at your screen and revel in all of the mineralogical beauty. Pictured here, for example, are two Focal Crystal pieces which I, at least, found it very easy to focus on…

The first is a 17-cm Mont Blanc pink fluorite on smoky quartz which (the caption says) went from Rene Jillini, the crystallier who found it, to Eric Asselborn, then via Stuart Wilensky to Ed David, then via Rob Lavinsky to Marc Weill:
Fluorite on Smoky Quartz, 17 cm, from Pointe Kurz, Mont Blanc massif, Chamonix, Haute-Savoie, France. The Focal Crystal specimen; Joe Budd photo.

And the second *Focal Crystal* high-ender is one of the best miniatures of Ojuela mine *adamite* I’ve ever seen, owned at one time by Wayne and Dona Leicht, shown on the cover of the March-April 1979 *Mineralogical Record* and shown again in the big Ojuela mine article in September-October 2003. Some specimens make you wish you could sit down and interview them…
About 15 years ago we suddenly saw large numbers of excellent *brookite* specimens reach the market from the Kharan District, Balochistan, southwestern Pakistan. Some specimens were (and are) tagged with much more specific locality terms, including the Ghad mine, the Thurdok mine, town names including Dalbundi and Taftan, and geographic terms including Zard Mountain, the Rashkoh Mountains, among others. But most of the dealers who have these fine bookites nowadays say simply that they come from Alpine-type clefts in unspecified places in the Kharan District.

A mighty surge in 2004 brought thousands of brookite (and anatase) specimens from Kharan onto the scene, but then a decline set in, and today the brookites, while still not rare, are considerably less common, and pricier too, than they used to be. Well, at the end of the first week of April, Brian Kosnar of *Mineral Classics* (minclassics.com) posted 30 “Kharan District” brookite specimens in a surprising range of sizes—from smallish, elegant thumbnails showing brookite blades set on transparent quartz crystals and crystal groups, to cabinet-size pieces of pale brown matrix rock with dozens of brookites rising from crannies all over. Brian justly says that the individual brookite
crystals are, at their best, superior even to most from scattershot finds old and new in the Swiss and Austrian Alps, as the Pakistani crystals generally are more lustrous than Alpine ones and, when backlit, are fiery-transparent in red-orange, orange-brown or root beer brown; in addition they commonly boast very crisp, starkly black, “hourglass” phantoms. Add a setting of colorless, lustrous, jumbled quartz crystals and you have world-class brookite specimens. In the Mineral Classics lot the thumbnails are priced in the mid to high three figures, the larger specimens in the low four figures. In the case of the 7.7-cm specimen shown below ($1300), the brookite blade measures 3.2 cm—the largest individual brookite crystal in the whole lot.

Brookite, 7.7 cm matrix, from the Kharan district, Balochistan, Pakistan. Mineral Classics specimen and photo.

And the brookite thumbnail below, measuring 2.2 cm and priced at $900, is beautifully typical of the smaller pieces.
Brookite, 2.2 cm, from the Kharan district, Balochistan, Pakistan. Mineral Classics specimen and photo.

Ibrahim Jameel’s *Khyber Mineral Company* website (khyberminerals.com) is a juicy one whereon you’ll currently find a February 9 “Tucson” update and a February 22 “Tucson Part 2” update, a “Clearance Minerals” section 20 pages long, five pages for minerals from particular geographic areas, and even a “News from Inner Mongolia” page. On the Tucson 2 update there are 11 miniature-size to large-cabinet-size groups of the new green **fluorite** from what Jameel calls the “Fluorite occurrence, Mandrosonoro, Ambatofinandrahana, Amoron’i Mania, Fianarantsoa Province,” Madagascar. This is the same locality data as given on page 211 of March-April 2019 (in my report on the 2018 Munich Show), except that at Munich the labels provided by *Minerama*, the French dealership who had the fluorites, put a hyphen instead of a comma after “Mandrosonoro.” If the hyphenated “Mandrosonoro-Ambatofinandrahana” indicates that this is a wide area, rather than the site of a single mine or cluster of mines, then that version probably is the better one, since, according to Jack Zektzer’s information in a recent e-mail, the M. place and the A. place lie 100 kilometers apart. In any case, these Madagascar fluorites have been on the market for more than a year now, and although the medium-green cubes are not highly lustrous, and only edge-translucent at best, and only weakly fluorescent (unlike their crazy-fluorescent English cousins), individual crystals are sharp and the groups are remarkable for their size, which can exceed 25 cm.
Fluorite, 12.2 cm, from Mandrosonoro-Ambatofinandrahana, Amoron’i Mania, Fianarantsoa, Madagascar. Khyber Mineral Company specimen and photo.

Forsterite variety peridot, largest crystal 1.5 cm, from Pyaung-gaung, Mogok Stone Tract, Mandalay Division, Myanmar. Crystal Treasure specimens and photo.

The dealership called Crystal Treasure has a website (crystal-treasure.com) which lets us glimpse the diverse mineralogy of Myanmar (Burma), and in particular of the Mogok Stone Tract, Mandalay Division, in the north-central part of the country, from which the world’s finest rubies have come for more than a thousand years. The Mogok Stone Tract has yielded not only choice rubies, sapphires and red spinels for the gem trade, but also a host of common, rare and exceedingly rare species for mineral collectors, many of these also as gem-quality crystals; shown above are three lovely gem crystals of forsterite.
variety peridot from the Pyaung-gaung area in the northern Mogok Stone Tract, where some of the world’s best gem peridots are mined from ultramafic rocks:

In the Tract’s southwestern corner there are, as well, the Sakhan-gyi pegmatite mines, from which some of the world’s finest crystals of topaz and aquamarine have emerged in recent decades. If you are looking, then, for small but fine (klein aber fein, as Siggi, the site’s German owner, might say) gemmy crystals of chondrodite, sinhalite, enstatite, danburite, fluorapatite, johachidolite, painite, zircon—or for faceted gemstones of many of these—Crystal Treasure is a good place to hang out for a while...

And here are two gemmy crystals of the very rare species sinhalite (MgAlBO₄) from Ohn-gaing, just north of the city of Mogok:

![Sinhalite, 1 cm and 4.5 mm, from Ohn-gaing, Mogok Stone Tract, Mandalay Division, Myanmar. Crystal Treasure specimens and photo.](image)

But not all minerals found in the Mogok Stone Tract are potential gems; some are dull and opaque, you might even say ugly, but distinctive and interesting nonetheless. For example, muscovite occurs as nestings of concentric shells in little spheres, familiarly called “ball peen mica,” and such specimens are found all over the Tract. Here is a good example:
There are also ugly/peculiar crystals of monazite, fergusonite, rutile, serendibite, even of highly radioactive **thorite**—\((\text{Th},\text{U})\text{SiO}_4\)—which occurs as surprisingly large, sharp crystals, as in this matrix thumbnail from an alluvial deposit at Ohn-bin-ywe-htwet:

Rudolf Watzl of *Saphira Minerals* (saphiraminerals.com) has a March 6 update showing several miniature to cabinet-size clusters of **amethyst** pocked with blood-red inclusions of hematite, from the Moonlight mine, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. Thunder Bay is, of course, a familiar and very prolific locality for amethyst, but it has been silent (as far as our distant ears can make out) for quite a while now, and anyway it
has seldom been willing to give up examples as beautiful as these of Rudolf’s—and the specimen shown here costs just 55 Euros (about $60).

Amethyst, 3.7 cm, from the Moonlight mine, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. Saphira Minerals specimen and photo.

On the same Saphira update we learn that Rudolf Watzl asks 5500 Euros (about $6000) for one of several specimens he has lately offered of “tourmaline” (almost surely elbaite) from Pyingyi Taung, Male, Pyin-U-Lwin district, Mandalay Division, Myanmar—not in the Mogok Stone Tract but not too far from it either, i.e. about 70 km southwest of the city of Mogok. The short-prismatic elbaite crystals are partially gemmy and lusciously red, with greenish brown centers. In the stunning specimen shown below, the major crystal on top measures $1.6 \times 1.7$ cm.
In these online reports I have never before mentioned websites which emphasize, or exclusively offer, fluorescent minerals, but I decided to break that ice when I happened onto the site of Jim Simpson’s *Tigerowner Minerals* (tigerowner.com). On that site, besides miscellaneous worldwide fluorescent minerals, there are long rows of photos of non-crystallizing but wildly fluorescing Franklin, New Jersey pieces to dazzle the viewer. Such specimens, of course, show the brilliant greens of willemite and brilliant reds of Mn-rich calcite, but these are only the basic background effects; augmenting them are patches and streaks of yellow, orange, blue, white, etc., betraying the presence of such rare Franklin species as clinohedrite, hardystonite, esperite, and more additional ones than I’ve ever internalized the names of. Jim writes on the site that all of these fluorescent items from Franklin and elsewhere come “from the large collection I’ve amassed over the past 65+ years.” To dispose of them he suggests sale prices but negotiates final prices with interested parties (“make an offer!”), and he does trades, stipulating that what he’s most interested in acquiring are cabinet-size “aesthetic” specimens, not necessarily fluorescent.

For the big Franklin specimen shown below Jim suggests a value of $750—by far the highest price assigned to anything on the site, but you’ll have to admit that things get pretty spectacular when *calcite, willemite, clinohedrite and hardystonite* get together, as they did very rarely in the great and unique Franklin orebody, where the last mining ceased in 1954.
A Correction

In my print report on the 2018 Denver Show (January-February 2018 issue), I incorrectly stated that Laura Delano of LLD Production was in charge of the Colorado Mineral and Fossil Show at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Aurora. The show is actually managed by Sandra Gonzales of Rocky Mountain Gems and Minerals Promotions. Sandra has taken charge both of the spring (April) and the fall (September) Colorado Mineral & Fossil shows at the Crowne Plaza.

And by the way, Sandra is also inaugurating a new show, the Texas Mineral and Fossil Show, coming up shortly on April 26-28, 2019, at the Lone Star Convention & Expo Center, 9055 Airport Road, Conroe, Texas 77303. (In future writings we’ll be calling it the “Conroe Show” for short.) See www.coloradomineralandfossilshows.com for details on these events.

Laura Delano’s LLD Productions (also in charge of the spring and fall shows in Costa Mesa, California and the show in Springfield, Massachusetts in August) will be moving her show at the Hotel Tucson City Center (“InnSuites”) in 2021 to the Hilton Tucson El Conquistador resort in Oro Valley (see www.mineralshowslld.com), about 15 miles north of downtown Tucson. Stay tuned for further bulletins about this one, beginning in the print report on the 2019 Tucson Show in the forthcoming issue.

Have a great summer, everyone!

Tom Moore