
What's New in the Mineral World?



Report #37

by **Thomas P. Moore**
The Mineralogical
Record
TPMoore1@cox.net



Yes, it has been an unusually long time since my last online report, in November 2013—but the holiday season and the Tucson Show filled that interval in crazy-busy ways, and in the upcoming May-June 2014 issue you'll see an article which I could also turn into a most excellent excuse for my online silence. But here we are *now*, anyway, with an early-spring roster of what's new on the web, including some resonances from the Tucson Show, some interesting new visitations of older material, and, yes, a couple of *new* discoveries too.

On The Web

Rob Lavinsky's *The Arkenstone* site (irocks.com) has undergone a complete redesign, and its new incarnation, like the old one, has very "deep" galleries loaded with fine specimens, fine Joe Budd photos of same, and much documentary information. Among Rob's post-Tucson updates on the new site is a section which offers specimens from the Herb Obodda collection—heavy on old European classics and on more recent things from Herb's former stomping grounds in Pakistan and Afghanistan. One of the most impressive of the European classics is the 11-cm spray of **aragonite** (shown on the following page) from the open-pit magnesite mine at Podrečany, Czechoslovakia (now just Slovakia) which gave up many such pieces in the mid to late 1980s; and one of the best of the Asian specimens is the sharp dodecahedral crystal of **sodalite** in white marble matrix (also on the following page) from the ancient lapis lazuli mines of Sar-e-Sang, Badakhshan, Afghanistan.



**Aragonite, 11 cm, from Podrečany, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia.
Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.**



**Sodalite, 5 cm, from Sar-e-Sang, Badakhshan Province, Afghanistan.
Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.**

The new *Arkenstone* site also features a big update of Tsumeb specimens out of various older collections. It is especially rich in smithsonite of several blushing hues and sharp rhombohedral to scalenohedral crystal forms, and **the specimens of azurite, cerussite, tennantite**, etc. are very far from negligible, but here I'll settle for showing you my favorite thumbnail among the group, a **diopase** crystal cluster enhanced with a belt of apple-green microcrystals of bayldonite.



Diopase with bayldonite, 2.5 cm, from Tsumeb, Namibia. Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.

More to the “what’s new” point, Rob offers 11 miniature to cabinet-size specimens from an August 2013 find of **siderite** in the Milpillas mine, Sonora, Mexico. If siderite specimens from Milpillas were present at all at the 2014 Tucson Show, I missed them...perhaps they got lost in the glare and glory of all those thousands of electric-blue azurite specimens taken last autumn from a huge pocket in the Milpillas mine (see the print report coming up in May-June). Rob says that his siderite specimens come from a single pocket found in a contact zone between oxidized ore and unaltered chalcocite below; all of the specimens are matrix plates on which gemmy brown, scalenohedral siderite crystals, with a few individuals reaching 1 cm, are densely scattered. His largest such specimen is 18 cm across.



Siderite, 5 cm, from the Milpillas mine, Cuitaca, Sonora, Mexico. Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.

Ibrahim Jameel of *Khyber Minerals* (khyberminerals.com) has come up with three specimens—two miniatures and a thumbnail—from a “small recent find” of **native copper** in the Casapalca mine, Huarochiri Province, Lima Department, Peru. Unlike most other Peruvian metal deposits, those of the Casapalca district have a significant zone of oxidation, with secondary mineral species including copper. In Ibrahim’s new examples, sharp, equant to slightly elongated copper crystals form jumbled groups which look over-cleaned, but nevertheless are excellent specimens; the thumbnail and one of the miniatures had already been marked “sold” by March 28.



Copper, 5.4 cm, from the Casapalca mine, Huarochiri Province, Lima Department, Peru. Khyber Minerals specimen and photo.

But, as I see it, the biggest news on the—always quite newsy—*Khyber Minerals* site is found in a “First Tucson 2014 update”: a page of spectacular **autunite** specimens, some with showings of the related but rarer uranium phosphate **sabugalite**, from the Margnac mine, Compreignac, Haute-Vienne, France. In my print report on the 2013 Ste.-Marie-aux-Mines Show (in September-October 2013) I devoted a seriously hot paragraph to a hoard of about 200 thumbnails of Margnac mine autunite, collected 35 years ago, which William Peraud offered at that show. Well, Ibrahim’s specimens also are old, having come from the former collection of French mineralogist Jean Chervet (chervetite: $Pb_2V_2O_7$), who died in 1962—but they run to larger sizes than last summer’s Ste.-Marie thumbnails. On the *Khyber* specimens, thick, lush coverages of sharp, vividly yellow to yellow-green autunite crystals rest on matrix; sabugalite, when present, contributes a yellow-orange tone to the total effect. Ibrahim remarks that “Some of these [specimens] have been stabilized, [as is] necessary for most autunite specimens,” adding that “I would greatly prefer to ship these within the USA.” For my part, I’d advise would-be purchasers to verify that their target specimens have indeed been stabilized: the thumbnail pictured with the Ste.-Marie report, I grieve to say, crumbled suddenly to little yellow shards while I was attempting to mount it in a Perky box. Still it must be said that Ibrahim’s autunites are superlative representatives of their species, and from an extinct locality too: the little Margnac mine closed in 1995. Some of the specimens hail from other abandoned uranium diggings in the Razès region of Haute-Vienne, central France: these are marked “Vénachat,” “Augenes,” the “Peny quarry,” the “Fanay-Augeres mine,” and the “Marnac II mine,” some of which sites are mentioned on Mindat, and some not.



Autunite, 7 cm, from the Margnac mine, Compreignac, Haute-Vienne, France. Khyber Minerals specimen and photo.



Autunite, 3.8 cm, from Vénachat, Compreignac, Haute-Vienne, France. Khyber Minerals specimen and photo.

Another site which has often been mentioned in these online reports is *David K. Joyce Minerals* (davidkjoyceminerals.com), where David is apt to show us out-of-the-way finds, especially those from his home country of Canada. This time, though, the stars of the show (in my opinion) are 11 sharp little thumbnails from the new finds of the manganese sulfide **alabandite** at the Merelani mines (the tanzanite mines) in Tanzania. Loose, dull black, cuboctahedral alabandite crystals from Merelani have gotten a fair amount of publicity lately—and you’ll read about them again in my print report on the 2014 Tucson Show—but David’s crystals command attention for being as sharp and spiffy as most but radically lower-priced, going for \$40 to \$135 (the one in the picture here goes for \$75), but still being world-class examples of the rare species.



Alabandite, 2 cm, from the Merelani mines, Manyara Region, Tanzania. David K. Joyce Minerals specimen and photo.

Mike Keim of *Marin Mineral Company* (marinmineral.com) also has excellent alabandite specimens from Merelani, ranging from single-crystal thumbnails to small-cabinet-size compound crystals, and furthermore he has fine thumbnails of **wurtzite** from the same locality. Lately we have been seeing scattered examples of these sharp, loose, red-brown, sometimes partially gemmy wurtzites: on the positive side, they are probably the world's best examples of the hexagonal zinc sulfide (vastly rarer than sphalerite, its dimorph), but, on the negative side, nearly all specimens so far recovered suffer from careless scuffing, dings and wilbers. Mike's wurtzite crystals are not entirely free of such problems but they are freer of them than most seen so far, and some have a lovely translucency such that they glow orange-red-brown when backlit. Prices range from \$90 to \$750, and one 4-cm crystal with associated diopside is priced at \$1650.



Wurtzite, 2 cm, from the Merelani mines, Manyara Region, Tanzania. Marin Mineral Company specimen and photo.

Now to welcome a newcomer to the web. A Spanish dealership called *MCh Minerals* (mchminerals.com) offers good specimens from worldwide localities but specializes, not too surprisingly, in minerals from Panasqueira, Portugal (see the big article by Carles Curto Milà and Jordi Fabre in January-February 2014). A March update to the *MCh Minerals* site shows many beautiful, newly dug Panasqueira specimens, both of the single-species and “combination” styles, in miniature to cabinet sizes. Also, a February update offers many aesthetic specimens from gem-bearing pegmatites, plus a few unexpected things; to represent the latter I show here one of the site's three beautiful groups of parallel crystals of lustrous, dark green **epidote** from the Cornillon Mountains near Oisans, Isère, France:



Cassiterite with siderite and fluorapatite, 5.5 cm, from Panasqueira, Portugal. MCh Minerals specimen and photo.



Epidote, 6.5 cm, from the Cornillon Mountains, Oisans, Isère, France. MCh Minerals specimen and photo.

In one of his post-Tucson updates, John Veevaert of *Trinity Minerals* (trinityminerals.com) has a few quite dramatic miniatures of botryoidal orange **mimetite** from the “Anarak district” (probably, I’m willing to say, from the Tchah Mileh mine), Esfahan Province, Iran. Specimens like these were scattered about the Tucson Show, and in fact have been known in the West for a couple of years now, but John’s are the best I’ve yet seen. Except that they are more orange than yellow, they closely resemble the famous mimetite specimens which Benny Fenn took in 1968 from San Pedro Corralitos, Chihuahua, Mexico.



Mimetite, 4.6 cm, from the Anarak district, Esfahan Province, Iran. Trinity Minerals specimen; John Veevaert photo.

Dan Weinrich of *Weinrich Minerals* regularly sends out “on sale” updates where bargains are to be had on unsold specimens that had been offered at higher prices in earlier postings. One such update on March 25 has several pages of very nice **calcite** specimens from all over; some are one-of-a-kind and from odd occurrences, but there are many from Missouri’s Viburnum Trend mines (e.g. the famous Sweetwater mine), and many from Mexican places, e.g. 11 cabinet and large-cabinet pieces from the Santo Domingo mine, Francisco Portillo, West Camp, Santa Eulalia, Chihuahua—up to a 30-cm branching group for only \$225. The specimen shown here (next page) is just as beautiful as that one but smaller—only 13.5 cm—and even less expensive—\$80. It’s easy to overlook Mexican calcites, but these of Dan’s demand to be taken seriously, which is to say they’d look good in anyone’s cabinet.



Calcite, 13.5 cm, from the Santo Domingo mine, Francisco Portillo, Santa Eulalia, Chihuahua, Mexico. Weinrich Minerals specimen and photo.

Rick Kennedy of *Earth's Treasures* (earthstreas.com) is one of those California guys for whom the Benitoite Gem mine in San Benito County is the just about the most exciting locality in the world, and a post-Tucson update of his has some stunning new specimens, freshly prepared, from thumbnails to huge cabinet-size plates, showing excellent crystals both of **benitoite** and **neptunite**. Among the thumbnails there is one with a “triple terminated” benitoite crystal measuring 8 mm resting on a loose neptunite crystal (\$500), and on the other end of the scale there’s a 17.3-cm plate, prepared by Collector’s Edge, fairly loaded with benitoite crystals to 1.7 cm individually. Remembering that this locality is now extinct, any collector who has yet to secure a good specimen from it should bestir him- or herself, and might visit the Earth’s Treasures site.



Benitoite, 17.3 cm, from the Benitoite Gem mine, San Benito County, California. Earth’s Treasures specimen and photo.



Triply terminated (or is that quadruply terminated?) benitoite on neptunite, 2.6 cm, from the Benitoite Gem mine, San Benito County, California. Earth's Treasures specimen and photo.

These online reports haven't previously mentioned Marcus Origlieri's *Mineral Species* (mineralspecies.com) dealership—but let's get to it now. Marcus, a University of Arizona PhD in mineralogy, has periodic "theme" postings which seek to educate collectors even while making sales to them. Around themes which lately have included Type Localities, Uranium Minerals, Långban [Sweden] Minerals, and, most recently, the Kalahari Manganese Field, South Africa, Marcus provides information on the composition, crystallography, history etc. of rare and unusual species and/or exotic localities, as well as talking up the virtues of particular specimens. Many of his pieces come from old collections, and some are strictly for "Dana" collectors, but many are also significant display pieces. Among the site's recent highlights are a specimen of extremely well crystallized (for the species) **braunite** from the fabulously species-rich, now extinct Fe-Mn mine at Långban, and two beauties from the Kalahari, an **inesite** from a great 1992 find in the Wessels mine, and an **ephesite** from the Gloucester Farm, Postmasburg. All three of these pieces are near the top of the respective scales for their species.



Braunitite, 4.5 cm, from Långban, Värmland, Sweden. Mineral Species specimen and photo.



Inesite, 4.8 cm, from the Wessels mine, Kalahari Manganese Field, Northern Cape Province, South Africa. Mineral Species specimen and photo.



Ephesite, 2.7 cm, from the Gloucester Farm, Postmasburg, Northern Cape Province, South Africa. Mineral Species specimen and photo.



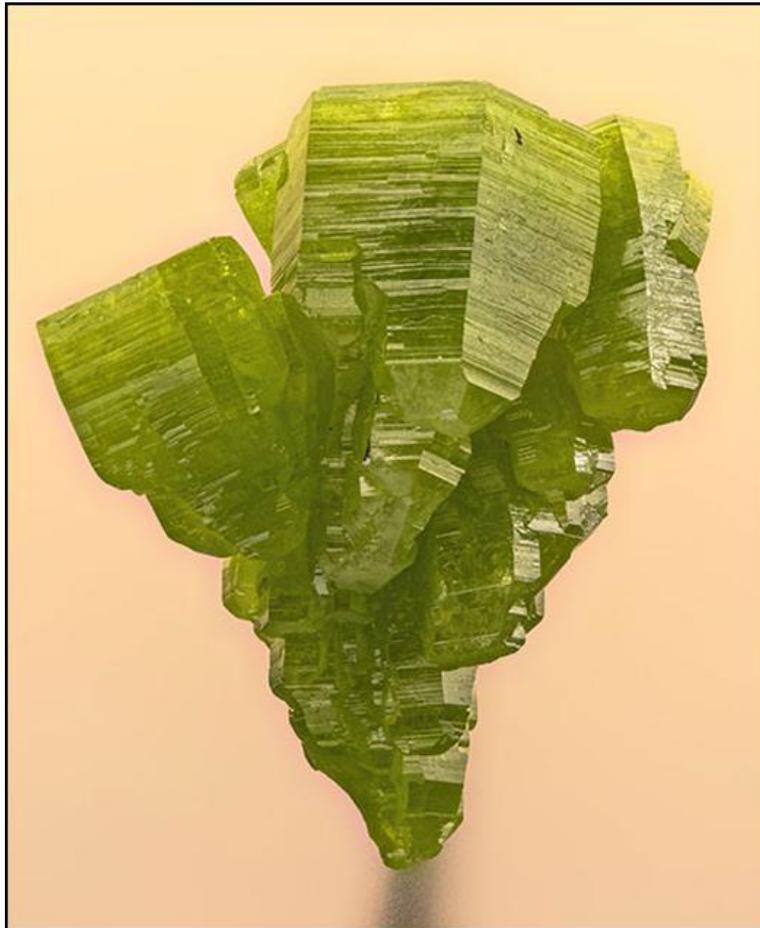
Chalcopyrite/siderite, 7.6 cm, from the Kaiwu mine, Hezhang County, Bijie Prefecture, Guizhou Province, China. Shelter Rock Minerals specimen and photo.

A new dealership, *Shelter Rock Minerals* (shelterrockminerals.com) has not only begun a series of display ads in our print magazine, but also has a new website, a very attractive one selling one-of-a-kind specimens, all “aesthetic,” of contemporary material. I recommend a thorough browse, but I mention the site here chiefly because a recent update shows two beautiful **chalcopyrite/siderite** specimens from a Chinese locality which until recently had eluded specification. In the last, November 14, online report I showed a picture of one of these specimens but was only able to say that it came from somewhere in Hezhang County, Bijie Prefecture, Guizhou Province. Now, pioneering Chinese-minerals expert Berthold Ottens has let it be known that these specimens come from a small open-pit working called the Kaiwu mine, where copper ore, mostly chalcopyrite, is currently being won. And I say again, as I did in November, that the best of the chalcopyrite/siderite specimens are very beautiful, with extremely sharp, lustrous chalcopyrite disphenoids, and translucent, lenticular siderite crystals, also lustrous, ranging from medium-brown to almost olive-green. Chinese dealers commonly have examples at the big shows, though you’ll seldom see one better than the miniature, pictured on the previous page, from the Shelter Rock site.



Pyromorphite, 4 cm, from the Daoping mine, Guilin Prefecture, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China. Andy Seibel Minerals specimen and photo.

Likewise on the topic of Chinese minerals, Andy Seibel (andyseibel.com) has recently posted two pages of gorgeous thumbnail and miniature-size **pyromorphite** specimens from the Daoping mine, Guilin Prefecture, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Of course, pyromorphite from this locality is far from new, having debuted around 2000 and having almost flooded the market at intervals since then—Chinese dealers may still be counted on to bring plenty of low and mid-quality specimens to every major show, and once in a while a surprise occurs (such as the specimens showing nearly *transparent* lime-green, hopped crystals, first seen at the 2013 Denver Show—and see the November online report). Andy’s specimens are of exceptional beauty and of elegant form: loose groups of lustrous, lime-green crystals, hopped to different degrees, in parallel and subparallel growth, many crystals flaring dramatically at their ends. Their prices vary widely, for reasons not always apparent (at least to me) from the photographs; but if you like the looks of the two pictured here you should check out the rest of the 40 similar pieces on Andy’s site. The 4-cm specimen shown above (previous page) had a price tag of \$1200 and is already sold, while the 2.8-cm specimen shown below is priced at \$375.



**Pyromorphite, 2.8 cm, from the Daoping mine, Guilin Prefecture, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China.
Andy Seibel Minerals specimen and photo.**

The print report on the 2014 Tucson Show will tell you that a brand-new occurrence of fluorescent **hyalite opal** from somewhere undisclosed in “central Mexico” made the scene in Tucson about midway through the hotel-show period; prominent among the people who had the earliest specimens were Peter Megaw, Luis Burillo and Jordi Fabre. Now Jordi (fabreminerals.com) offers a few specimens on his site, thumbnail to 8.8 cm in size, all showing transparent, thick, mammillary coatings and little bubbles of hyalite over a fine-grained gray-brown volcanic rock. Presumably it is trace amounts of uranium in the rock, or in the silica gel from which the hyalite precipitated, which cause the intense fluorescence which is these specimens’ strongest feature: the hyalite, colorless in incandescent light, glows bright yellow-green in sunlight or sky light and even more brightly so in longwave and shortwave ultraviolet light.



Hyalite opal, 2.2 cm, from central Mexico. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo (taken in daylight).

Jordi also has a few miniatures of the very odd-looking, iridescent **chalcocite/djurleite/chalcopyrite** from the Tongshan mine, Daye, Hubei, China. See the short report on this find by Rob Lavinsky *et al.* in the January-February 2014 issue, which explains that the beautiful iridescent patina on these specimens is chalcopyrite, and that there are, as well, narrow, straw-like crystals of chalcopyrite; the underlying djurleite forms “masses of a bubbly habit” and the underlying chalcocite makes crystals of both blocky and platy habits. There are not a lot of these spiky, eccentric, stick-figure items around the market, and Rob’s report tells you why: just one pocket lined with the crystals has so far been found, and Rob obtained most of its contents, although at Munich and Tucson a few strays appeared with a Chinese dealer, and a few more with Jordi. It will be interesting to see whether more pockets, similar or identical to this one, will be encountered in the Tongshan copper mine (rendered by some as the Tonglushan mine, and by Jordi as the Tongshankou mine).



Chalcopyrite-coated chalcocite and djurleite, 4.3 cm, from the Tongshan (Tonglushan, Tongshankou) mine, Daye district, Huangshi County, Hubei Province, China. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

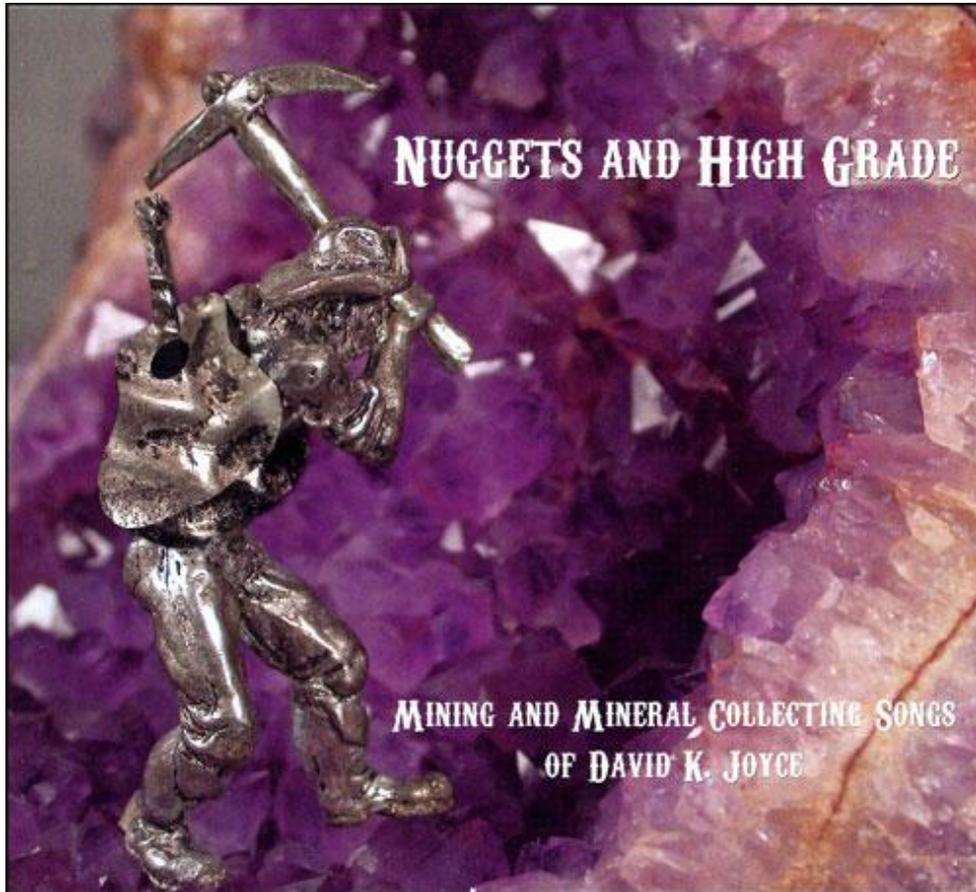
Sad News

Quite often in these reports I have cited interesting lots of specimens offered by *Wright's Rock Shop* (wrightsrockshop.com), whose longtime proprietor, Chris Wright, has been a familiar, knowledgeable, most cordial presence at every Tucson and Denver show I've attended since my earliest days of making the circuit in the early 1990s. Go to the website now and, sadly, you'll find just this bit of text, with a picture of Chris in his younger days: "On January 8, Chris Anthony Wright, owner and operator of Wright's Rock Shop, passed away at his home in Bonnerdale, Arkansas...*Wrightsrockhop.com* will return. Please continue to check back for updates." I will; and meanwhile I extend condolences to Chris's family and his (no doubt) many friends.

Mineral Music For Sale

Canadian dealer David K. Joyce (mentioned earlier here, and in many online reports in the past) has been a musician and songwriter for even longer than he has been a mineral collector and dealer, and off-and-on he has been writing songs about mining and (yes) even mineral collecting. Song titles whose cues to curiosity seem pretty hard to ignore include "Crystal Systems," "The Mineral Dealer," "Diggin' in a Hole," "Crystals

That I've Known" and "Agate Lickers"; "Highway 17," David says, is "a poignant song about life and travails in a mining town where the mine has shut down," and then there's "Miner's Home Tavern," a "ditty that immortalizes the old drinking hole at Cobalt, Ontario." Having performed these songs for years to mineral friends, David decided finally to put them on a CD, and you can buy a copy of that CD from Gloria Staebler at the Lithographie, LLC booth at major shows or purchase it on the Lithographie website (http://www.lithographie.org/bookshop/nuggets_and_high_grade.htm). Or else you can order from David directly by e-mailing dkjoyce@bellnet.ca. The price is \$15.00 plus \$3.00 postage in North America (\$4.00 postage elsewhere).



Have a good summer, all...and don't forget that the Ste.-Marie-aux-Mines Show is happening June 26 to June 29. You've always *meant* to go and check it out; why not this year??