What's New in the Mineral World?

Report #67
July 24, 2023

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Yes, you have read and heard all about it: the daily high temperatures in Tucson have hovered between 105° and 112° F (119° in Phoenix!), and nighttime lows have seldom dipped below 85°, for the past several weeks now. These hadean conditions set in, as usual, in early June, and I had hoped to escape a week's worth of them by going to the Ste.-Marie-aux-Mines Show in France in the last week of June. But the outrage is that when I returned, expecting relief in the form of the monsoon season of storms that begins, on average, around the Fourth of July, a new ambush of heat, which has yet to abate even now, had occurred instead. Maybe by the time you read this, the monsoon storms will have started at last—with roiling clouds (white and towering at mid-day, gray-black and streaming by late afternoon); moist winds, and the first fat raindrops that detonate one-by-one on the streets; the bullying thunder and lightning; and in good time the gently astringent smell of wet creosote coming in on the air as the desert around us exhales. Meanwhile, and regardless of latitude, all of us mineral lovers and mineral shoppers can keep up our indoor, cool (as long as the air-conditioning holds out) interconnectedness through our computers, and thus remain open to midsummer news of

What's New On The Web

In these reports I have pointed before to the *Via Mineralia* website (viamineralia.com), which until lately has been run by Austrian dealer/collectors Martin Grüll and Robert Kunze, whose specialties have been Iranian, Alpine and (to a lesser extent) worldwide mineral specimens. Today the website, still well worth a visit, is run by Grüll alone, while Kunze has set up a new dealership called "Mister Mineral," whose website (www.mistermineral.com) has sections for "Latest Updates," "All Minerals," and

"Mineral Articles." The Mineral Article now on the site is a big one—although, Robert assures us, only "part one"—showing old classic specimens from the collection of the Austrian Natural History Museum in Vienna, and in both of the *other* two sections there are more specimens from famous localities in the pre-World War I Austro-Hungarian Empire, these *for sale*, and from other old European localities too. Shown here, for example, is an unusual cabinet-size **hematite** specimen from Framont, Bas-Rhin Department, Grand Est region, France, an ancient iron-mining district only a few kilometers north of Ste.-Marie-aux-Mines. The specimen is priced at 280 Euros (within pennies of $280). Hematites of this style, with rolling matrix coverages of small, brightly metallic black, bladed crystals, are characteristic of mines in this easternmost part of France, including the mines of Ste-Marie, and of course they are very scarce on the market today.

Hematite, 7.5 cm, from Framont, Bas-Rhin Department, Grand Est region, France. Mister Mineral specimen; Robert Kunze photo.

A second old-classic one-of-a-kinder among Kunze's "Latest Updates" is a loose, 6-cm jumble of **wulfenite** crystals from the Stefanie mine, Bad Bleiberg, Kärnten, Austria, priced at 225 Euros. We seldom see good wulfenite from Bleiberg ("lead mountain"), the type locality for the species, where serious ore mining began in the 11th century. But some major collecting of wulfenite specimens happened there during the 1980s, so it's a good bet that Kunze's fine piece dates from that time.

Wulfenite, 6 cm, from the Stefanie mine, Bad Bleiberg, Kärnten (Carinthia), Austria. Mister Mineral specimen; Robert Kunze photo.

By contrast, most of the specimens on the six-page "All Minerals" section of Mister Mineral are of more recent vintage, many of these from occurrences in Iran we have just lately come to know. There are nice cerussite "snowflakes" from the Nakhlak mine; red-brown, razor-sharp zunyite crystals from the salt diapirs of the Persian Gulf; the etched, gemmy crystals of colorless spodumene from "Hamadan" on which I have reported before; celestine and gypsum specimens from obscure Iranian places; and more. And there are miniature to cabinet-size plates of white barite thickly covered by sharp crystals of **analcime** which are colorless and transparent but tinted reddish by fine-grained inclusions of hematite. Such analcime specimens, which come from Mount Kahovan, Semnan Province, northern Iran, have been making it to Western shows for a few years now, but Robert says that those on his site are from a "new find" there; the 9.5-cm example shown here goes for 200 Euros.

Analcime, 9.5 cm, from Mount Kahovan, Semnan Province, Iran. Mister Mineral specimen; Robert Kunze photo.

An old standby in these reports is Mike Keim's *Marin Minerals* website (marinmineral.com), which, with its frequent updates, eclectic selections, and gorgeous photos, encourages regular check-ins. A July 9 update on the site offers excellent specimens in varied sizes from the famous gem-bearing pegmatites of San Diego County, California, many of these from the Al Ordway, Cal Graeber and other notable southern-California collections. I hadn't known that **elbaite** from the great Himalaya mine in the Mesa Grande District of San Diego County comes in so many colors; but Mike offers Himalaya mine elbaite crystals, some loose, some attached to or penetrating quartz crystals, in shades not only of pink and green (and "watermelon"-zoned) but also in yellow-green and pale blue. And just look at this screaming red 3.6-cm crystal with little lepidolite blooms attached, which is also a Himalaya mine (not a Brazilian!) piece, and for which Mike asks $1800.

Elbaite with lepidolite, 3.6 cm, from the Himalaya mine, Mesa Grande District, San Diego County, California. Marin Minerals specimen and photo.

The July 9 *Marin Minerals* update also has excellent things from the Stewart, Little Three, Maple Lode and Pack Rat mines in San Diego County, but most remarkable in the array, I think, is a thumbnail-size, loose, only slightly rough, pale green crystal of **hydroxylherderite** (Mike calls it just "herderite," but we now know that almost all "herderite" is hydroxylherderite) from the Green Cloud mine, Chihuahua Valley, San Diego County. This extreme rarity, probably found around the year 2000 and lately in the Al Ordway collection, is priced at $1500.

Hydroxylherderite, 2.5 cm, from the Green Cloud mine, Chihuahua Valley, San Diego County, California. Marin Minerals specimen and photo.

Well, no sooner had I written the *Marin Minerals* paragraphs, just above, on Thursday July 20, than there appeared in my e-mail in-box the regular weekly (Thursday) update of the *Dave Bunk Minerals* website (davebunkminerals.com), with *more* goodies from San Diego County, as well as a few from Butte, Montana. These specimens from days long past at both classic localities once belonged to the late Bryant Harris (1927-2016), whose collection Dave Bunk acquired a few years ago. Among the superstars here are a Stewart mine specimen with a regal 8-cm **elbaite** ("rubellite") crystal rising from cleavelandite albite and lilac lepidolite, this one priced at $25,000.

Elbaite, 8 cm, from the Stewart mine, Pala District, San Diego County, California. Dave Bunk Minerals specimen and photo.

A second Bryant/Bunk superstar is this gleaming metallic black 5-cm compound crystal of **djurleite** from the Leonard mine, Butte, priced likewise at $25,000:

Djurleite, 5 cm, from the Leonard mine, Butte, Silver Bow County, Montana. Dave Bunk Minerals specimen and photo.

And you would have to do a great deal of shopping around before you would find a Butte **rhodochrosite** as brightly pink and fresh-looking as this old Bryant Harris piece from the Emma mine:

Rhodochrosite, 5.5 cm, from the Emma mine, Butte, Silver Bow County, Montana. Dave Bunk Minerals specimen and photo.

Time was, there were several interesting China-based mineral websites available readily to the browser, offering interesting (if rarely exceptional) Chinese mineral specimens at modest prices. But in recent years, as more and more minerals from China have been brought "live" to shows in the West, many of these early websites have faded somewhat in importance as their wares have grown to seem less exotic. However, the very extensive website of *Jinan Chinese Mineral Trading Co., Ltd.* (chinesemineral.cn) is easily worth a visit, as it is rich in relatively inexpensive (and dollar-priced) Chinese "standards." The website offers regular updates, and it has even branched out a bit—for example, updates in April through June advertise very good specimens of vivianite and ludlamite from the new-ish locality at Cabezo do Chochorro, Amazonas State, Brazil. Moreover, if you favor beautiful, jumbo-size specimens of distinctive kinds of **barite** you would do well to look at Jinan's boulder-size clusters of thick, bright orange barite crystals from Xiefang, Jiangxi Province: the 29.5-cm example shown here (almost a foot across!) costs $2600.

Barite, 29.5 cm, from Xiefang, Jiangxi, China. Jinan Chinese Mineral Trading Co., Ltd. specimen and photo.

Then there are Jinan's only slightly smaller groups of colorless quartz crystals hosting—and sometimes hoisting up in the air—sharp, colorless and transparent, tabular barite crystals, from Jinkouhe, Sichuan Province. The 18-cm piece shown here goes for $395:

Barite on quartz, 18 cm, from Jinkouhe, Sichuan, China. Jinan Chinese Mineral Trading Co., Ltd. specimen and photo.

Once again the Poland-based *Spirifer Minerals* dealership has latched on to a brand-new mineral occurrence, this time of sharp, cubic, somewhat rough-surfaced crystals of **pyrite** to several centimeters embedded in hard, dark matrix of what Spirifer calls a "mafic talc-carbonate rock." These are from the Kemi chromite mine at the head of the Gulf of Bothnia, Lapland Province, Finland—and once again Tomek Praszier has posted a well-illustrated article about the find on the Spirifer website (spiriferminerals.com). The pyrite specimens, Tomek tells us, were sold to Spirifer by a Polish woman, a mineral collector, who, with the help of her geologist boyfriend, collected them on the dumps of the mine (which currently operates underground). So far there are only a few of the new pyrite specimens offered for sale on the website's "Store" page; the piece shown here, better than most of these, is pictured in the article. More and better may well reach the market, especially if that Polish lady, or maybe a Spirifer collecting team, returns to enjoy good luck on the dumps.

Pyrite, 15 cm, from the Kemi mine, Lapland Province, Finland.
Spirifer Minerals specimen and photo.

While taking you to *Spirifer Minerals* I can't resist showing you also one of the website's five excellent thumbnail and small miniature-size crystal clusters of **epidote** from Kimmeria, Thraki, Greece. This locality is a skarn outcrop near the village of Kimmeria, just east of the larger village of Xanthi, Thrace, in northeastern Greece. The site has yielded good epidote specimens since at least the 1970s, but few can have been as pretty as these jackstraw groups of lustrous, pistachio-green, well terminated crystals, which Spirifer offers at prices all around $50.

Epidote, 2.9 cm, from Kimmeria, Thraki (Thrace), Greece.
Spirifer Minerals specimen and photo.

The website of Gerd Wiedenbeck's *Alpine Minerals* (alpine-mineralien-de) is currently offering about a dozen beautiful **brucite** specimens from Killa Safillah, Balochistan, Pakistan, in diverse sizes all the way up to the 19.5-cm giant shown here—already marked "sold," but the smaller cabinet-size pieces are just as impressive, as are the miniatures. Many dealers have carried these lemon-yellow examples of what is by common consent the best brucite ever found anywhere (sorry, Wood's mine, Pennsylvania), but Gerd's selection stands out, as in almost all of his larger pieces the thick mammillary crusts of brucite share space with chunks of gray shale, creating nice color contrasts.

Brucite, 19.5 cm, from Killa Safillah, Balochistan, Pakistan. Alpine Minerals specimen and photo.

The *Alpine Minerals* website features as well an alluring handful of miniature to small cabinet-size specimens of satiny, silver-gray **smithsonite** from a 2022 find in the Hilarion mine, Laurium, Attika, Greece. Shining spherules and botryoidal vug linings of this unusually colored smithsonite occupy deep cavities in rusty brown hematite, with admixtures of other species including, Gerd Wiedenbeck writes, traces of native iron. A goodly number of adits in the kilometers-long labyrinth of mine workings at this ancient locality are still accessible, and Greek collectors are still finding mineralogically complex things in mishmash gossany matrixes there. (For a description of near-contemporary Laurium, see the account of my visit there in the March-April 1995 *Mineralogical Record*.)

Smithsonite, 6.5 cm, from the Hilarion mine, Laurium, Attika, Greece. Alpine Minerals specimen and photo.

Now let us check out—as in several online reports before—the spectacular website appropriately called *Exceptional Minerals* (exceptionalminerals.com), where Kevin Ward likes to show off superb one-of-a-kinders that he has picked up at recent shows. On a June 9 update with a "Half-Price Sale" banner, Kevin has big, beautiful photos of specimens, mostly of familiarly dramatic things (Sweet Home rhodochrosite, Pakistan aquamarine, Michigan copper, English and Chinese calcite), but also of some out-of-the-way display pieces which we can admire and learn from. First, here is an 8.6-cm chunk of pegmatite sporting thick, brilliant black crystals of **schorl** and brown crystals of **spessartine** on pink albite, from what Kevin calls an "obscure Colorado locality," namely the Texas Creek area in Fremont County. Its "regular" price of $2450 has been discounted to $1225, and no, I have never seen anything quite like it.

Schorl and Spessartine, 8.6 cm, from the Texas Creek area, Fremont County, Colorado. Exceptional Minerals specimen and photo.

Also, for $2450, also discounted to $1225, *Exceptiomal Minerals* offers a 7.2-cm specimen of **bismuthinite**, with, well, *exceptionally* large and well developed, striated, bladed crystals of the bismuth sulfide. This specimen, hailing from Datong, Shanxi Province, China, was once in the collection of Mike Groben (1928-2015).

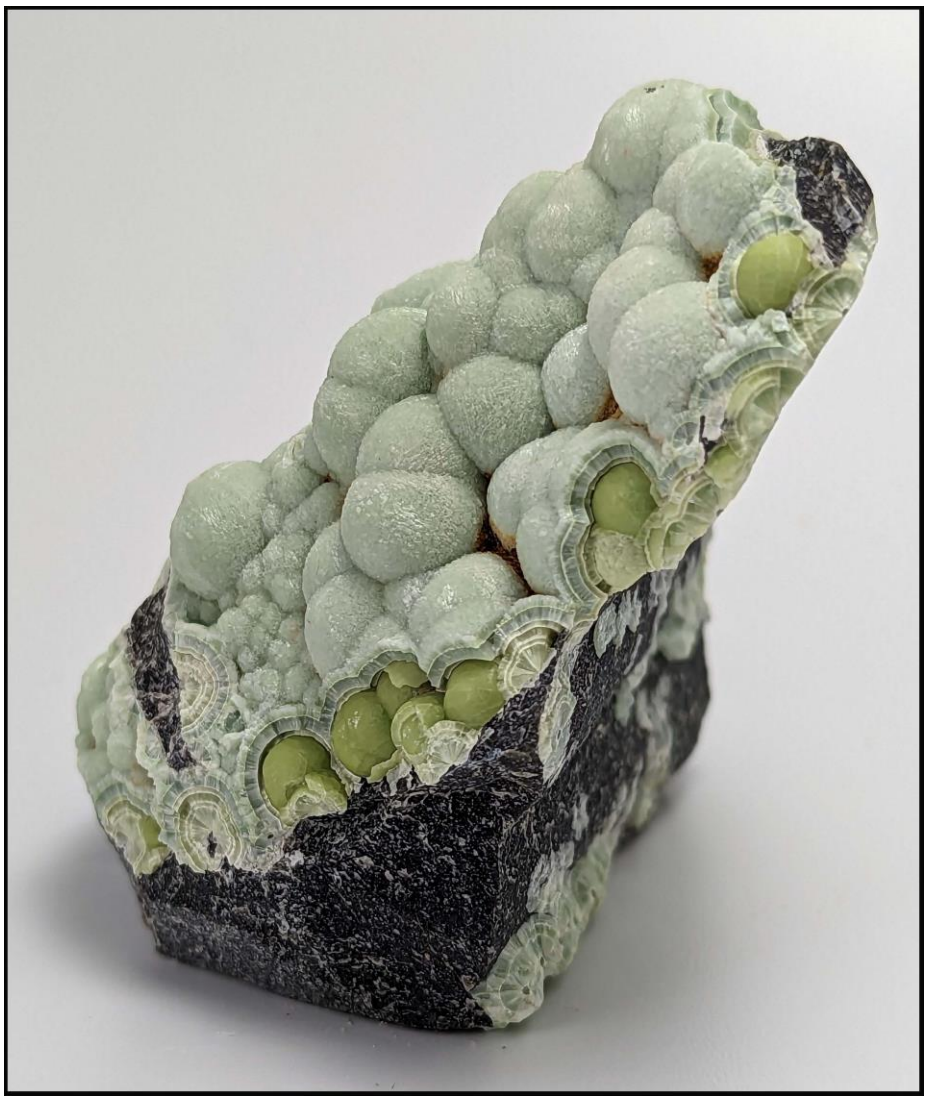
Bismuthinite, 7.2 cm, from Datong, Shanxi, China. Exceptional Minerals specimen and photo.

Then there is Kevin Ward's 4.2-cm specimen from the renowned, long-defunct feldspar quarries at Hagendorf, Bavaria, Germany, with a vug showing—wait for it—**phosphophyllite** in fairly shapely, translucent to transparent, blue-green crystals reaching 9 mm. During my recent visit to Freiberg (see the "postscript" to the Munich Show report in the January-February 2023 *Mineralogidcal Record*), I saw another specimen of Hagendorf phosphophyllite which is displayed in the wonderful *Krügerhaus* museum of German minerals at Freiberg, and on the spot I became a believer in good macrocrystals of phosphophyllite from this surprising place. Kevin's specimen, although much smaller, must be counted a peer of the *Krügerhaus* one (pictured in the report), and it is a bargain even at $2850—discounted now to $1425.

Phosphophyllite, 4.2 cm, from Hagendorf, Bavaria, Germany. Exceptional Minerals specimen and photo.

A dealership called *Arkansas Minerals* (arkansasminerals.com), never before mentioned in this space, is run by a busy field collector, Josh Varmedore, who offers, yes, Arkansas minerals, most particularly **wavellite** specimens such as have been found for a long time now at Dug Hill and on Mauldin Mountain. Some of Josh's wavellite specimens are, he writes, "from a fantastic 1990s old stock," but he also has new, superb gleanings from the Mauldin Mountain (sometimes called "Mount Ida") locality. The pale green wavellite forms crusts of intergrown spheroids of radiating acicular crystals over black chert: the style is familiar, but in many of Josh's specimens, both old and new, the wavellite crusts are thick, with concentric zoning visible on broken edges, and the aesthetic effect is first-rate. Many miniature to cabinet-size pieces are offered at modest prices: the 7-cm example shown here costs $168. Also available from *Arkansas Minerals* are specimens showing tufts and sprays of acicular crystals of rare phosphates, e.g.

kidwellite, beraunite and rockbridgeite, from the York mine, Shady, Polk County—check this young website out if you fancy colorful secondary phosphates from Arkansas.



Wavellite, 7 cm, from Mauldin Mountain near Mount Ida, Montgomery County, Arkansas. Arkansas Minerals specimen and photo.

Jordi Fabre's "Post-Sainte Marie 2023 Update" on the website of *Fabre Minerals* (fabreminerals.com) has eight thumbnails and miniatures of **arsenopyrite** and three miniatures of **scheelite** from a little-known Spanish tungsten mine: the La Parrilla in Extremadura Province. According to Jordi, the clusters of sharp, lustrous crystals of arsenopyrite with minor muscovite and quartz crystals were collected in July 2022 "in new work faces" at the La Parrilla mine; they are priced at $76 to $119 (Jordi always helpfully shows exact dollar equivalents of his original prices in Euros).

Arsenopyrite, 3.8 cm, from the La Parrilla mine, Santa Amalia, Cáceres, Extremadura, Spain. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

The scheelites, collected in August 2022, show slightly rough, yellow-orange, bipyramidal crystals to 3 cm; one specimen is just a loose scheelite crystal whereas in the other two the crystals rest on matrix of quartz with minor cassiterite, arsenopyrite, pyrite and muscovite. The miniature shown here costs $239.

Scheelite, 3.1 cm, from the La Parrilla mine, Santa Amalia, Cáceres, Extremadura, Spain. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

Although it is already marked "reserved" I *have* to show you one more of Jordi's specimens, dazzling although very small, which surely will be of special interest to adepts of Arizona classics. It is a razor-sharp, complete, very deep blue cubic crystal of **boleite** on a brown scrap of matrix from the Mammoth-St. Anthony mine at Tiger, Pinal County, Arizona. This of course is a much-revered place where the last mining ceased in 1953—see Richard Bideaux's definitive "Tiger" article in the *Mineralogical Record* issue of May-June 1980. Bideaux wrote that boleite was found as "crude crystals" to 7 or 8 mm at Tiger, but this 8-mm crystal of Jordi's is anything but crude, and, oddly, it bears a label "from an important European collection." Jordi's price—presumably to the discerning collector who has "reserved" it—is $609. But at least we have gotten to *see* it…

Boleite, 1.3 cm, from the Mammoth-St. Anthony mine, Tiger, Pinal County, Arizona. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

Rosell Minerals (rosellminerals.com) has a July update offering five miniatures of the pretty, unusual, highly fluorescent **quartz scepters with inclusions of bitumen and petroleum** from Madagascar which debuted "in person" at the 2023 Tucson Show (see that report in May-June 2023). The locality *in* Madagascar as given by Rosell is the usual long Malagasy babel of vowels: the Andranotokana massif, Andilamena, Alaotra-

Mangoro Region (hint: it is in the north-central part of the country). Clearly visible in the transparent quartz crystals are lava lamp-like inclusions of "native" petroleum, and in there too, Rosell writes, are bubbles of methane gas, dark flecks of "asphaltite," and fluid inclusions of other, incompletely known things. The prismatic quartz crystals with scepter heads of varying widths range from 4 to 6.5 cm, and all are priced between 45 and 50 Euros.

Quartz with organic inclusions, 4.5 cm, from the Andranotokana massif, Andilamena, Alaotra-Mangoro, Madagascar. Rosell Minerals specimen and photo.

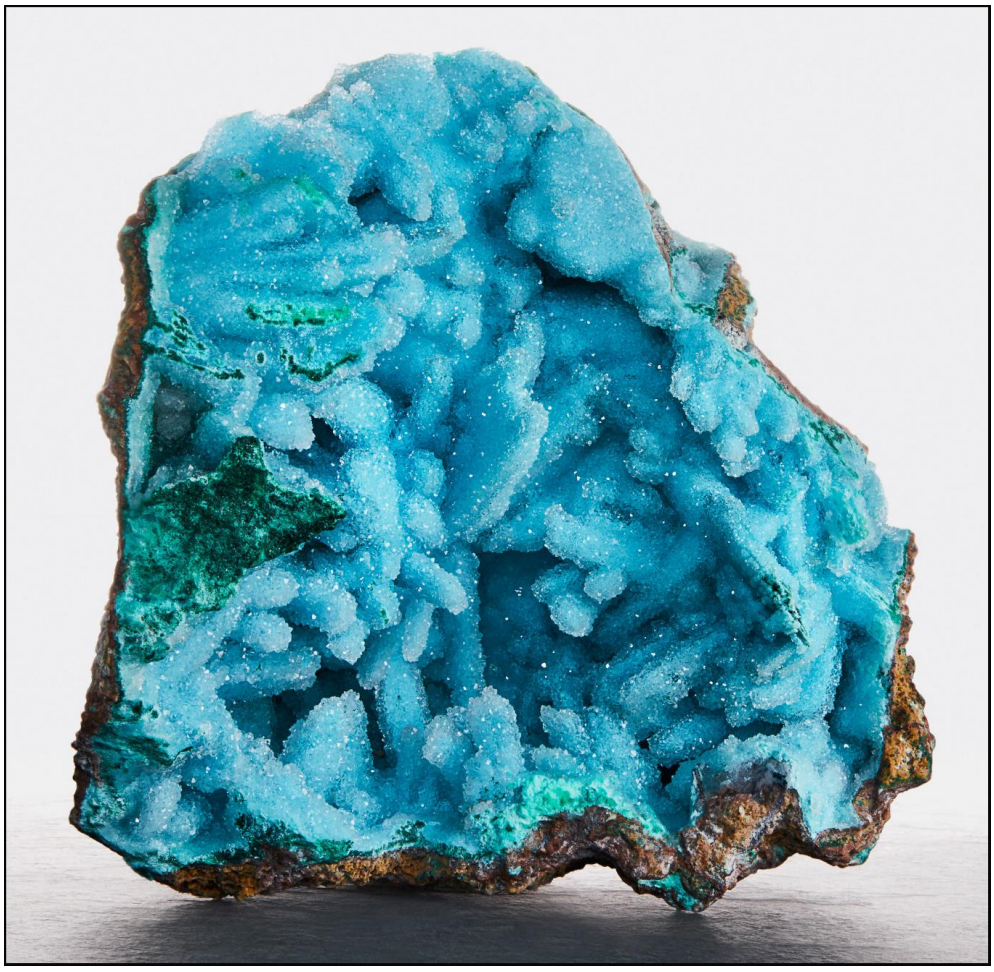
Ray McDougall of *McDougall Minerals* (mcdougallminerals.com) is now selling miscellaneous specimens from the collection of former Smithsonian curator and *Mineralogical Record* founder John S. White, now retired, approaching 90 years old, and living in rural Pennsylvania. Most of these specimens come from places in John's old Pennsylvania-Maryland-Virginia stomping grounds, and all reflect his sophisticated taste, but for me the most appealing of them is the 7.2-cm **datolite** shown below. The specimen, with sharp, transparent, pale green datolite crystals set in a cavity in basaltic

matrix, was dug some decades ago in a quarry near Leesburg in Loudoun County, Virginia, whose name has varied—it has been called the Virginia Trap Rock, Virginia Crushed Stone, or simply VCS quarry, but Ray writes that it is now called the Luck Goose Creek Plant. This is, anyway, good old-time Virginia datolite, and with a fine collection-provenance too. Ray would let you have it for $125.

Datolite, 7.2 cm, from the Luck Goose Creek Plant, Loudoun County, Virginia. McDougall Minerals specimen and photo.

I seem to have adopted the custom of ending each online report by putting on-screen a picture and rave review of some single, very expensive and *extremely special* specimen or specimens—mainly for the sheer eye-candy fun of it but also, sometimes, to show to what heights of specialness a well-known, even mundane, mineral species might rise. This report's concluding image is in line, all right, with both of those purposes, but it is also more than usually congruent with the "what's *new*" mission of these reports. Behold, below, Stuart Wilensky's 12-cm specimen from the "Tenke-Fungurume area" in the Democratic Republic of Congo: the image appears on the website of *Wilensky Exquisite*

Minerals (wilenskyminerals.com), where the specimen is denoted "chrysocolla after azurite (possibly barite) with malachite coated with drusy quartz." Its price is $68,000.



Chrysocolla after azurite (possibly barite) with malachite coated with drusy quartz, 12 cm, from the Tenke-Fungurume area, Kolwezi District, Lualaba, Democratic Republic of Congo. Wilensky Exquisite Minerals specimen and photo.

We have lately been picking up a great number of "what's new" signals from the "Tenke Fungurume area." Labels of most specimens now on the market settle for this rather vague term, but Mindat clarifies that the "area" in question is about 30 km long and lies "between Tenke hill in the northwest and Fungurume hill in the southeast." Wikipedia further informs us that Tenke-Fungurume is within the Kolwezi mining district in Lualaba Province—one of five provinces carved in the 2000s out of the former, much larger Katanga Province—and that within the "area" are many named mines including the Tenke mine proper, Fungurume mine proper, Mambilima, Kansalawile, Big Pimpi, and plenty more.

On a much larger scale, the "Katanga Crescent," on the southern edge of the Democratic Republic of Congo, has been richly productive of copper and cobalt ores

since well before the old Belgian Congo gained independence in 1960, but Mindat notes that, for some reason, none of the Tenke-Fungurume deposits had been tapped before the 1990s. Well, they are certainly being tapped today, if the flow of specimens from them onto the international mineral market is any indication. Besides producing outrageously rare exotica such as gerhardtite, claringbullite and paramelaconite, Tenke-Fungurume produces great showboat-type specimens, such as the one shown here, in which azurite, malachite, kolwezite, quartz, barite, vividly sky-blue chrysocolla, and various pseudomorphic combinations of these, all meet in orgies of celestial color. The flow of such specimens onto the international market now seems to be nearing flood stage—see my print report on the 2023 Ste.-Marie-aux-Mines Show, coming up in the September-October *Mineralogical Record*, or indeed, if you don't want to wait for that one, see the last several big show reports before now. "Tenke-Fungurume" seems a fair bet to become the next truly world-class locality to be opened to the specimen trade, and *we* are positioned to be in on the thrills. Keep shopping…

…and (as many are fond of saying these days) Keep Cool!

Tom Moore