

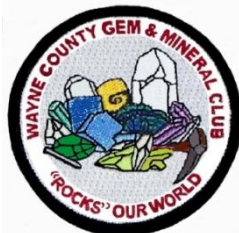
# Wayne County Gem and Mineral Club News

September, 2020

Always Looking for Places to Dig!



*Kathleen makes music with her new saw (see page 4)*



<http://www.wcgmc.org>  
**FACEBOOK link**



*A lecture Review (?) (see pg. 5)*

## Marion Wheaton

October 26, 1930 –  
August 13, 2020



Marion Wheaton, WCGMC co-founder along with her late husband Jim, passed away last month at the age of 89. She is survived by her daughters Nancy and Diane, her sister Barbara, her brother Paul, many nieces and nephews, and by a host of WCGMC rockhound friends.

In addition to being a co-founder of our club, Marion served as Editor of this newsletter for many years. Marion and Jim volunteered many hours displaying and educating young and old all around Wayne County and beyond with their mineral collection and Mastodon bones. Her daughter Diane tells us that Marion was buried with a Herkimer diamond, her Wayne County Gem & Mineral Club pin, and a beautiful pink rhodochrosite brooch necklace she always wore.

Her full obituary can be read [here](#).

As a tribute to Marion, we are re-publishing an article she helped write for the July, 2008 WCGMC newsletter (see page 3).

## WCGMC News

We have decided to cancel at least one more month's activities with the club. There will be no meeting in September and we will wait until October to re-consider when to re-open the workshop. Be patient, stay safe, and hold onto your rocks!

**YOUR DUES ARE PAID:** The WCGMC board "met" via e-mail and decided **not** to collect dues for the upcoming Oct., 2020 to Sept., 2021 membership year from existing members. If you are a member in good standing for 2019-2020 then your membership has been automatically renewed for another year. The club remains financially strong and we felt that we had not had enough activities to support collection of dues this fall. This means you can save your nickels and quarters and bring them to rock sales and auctions once we are able to hold them.

### The club needs one of these (or maybe 2)



## President's Message

Linda Schmidtgaill



How long can this go on? The answer of course is no one knows. But we have decided to cancel at least one more month of club activity. We had little option with our meeting. As of late August, the church had not re-opened its doors to outside groups and we would likely have needed to find an alternative venue. With that realization, we elected not to schedule a September workshop date either.

We'll all watch how the return of children to school and the re-opening of colleges affect the virus transmission rate. If western New York, and specifically Wayne County, report continued improvement during September and the church is available we will reconvene in October.

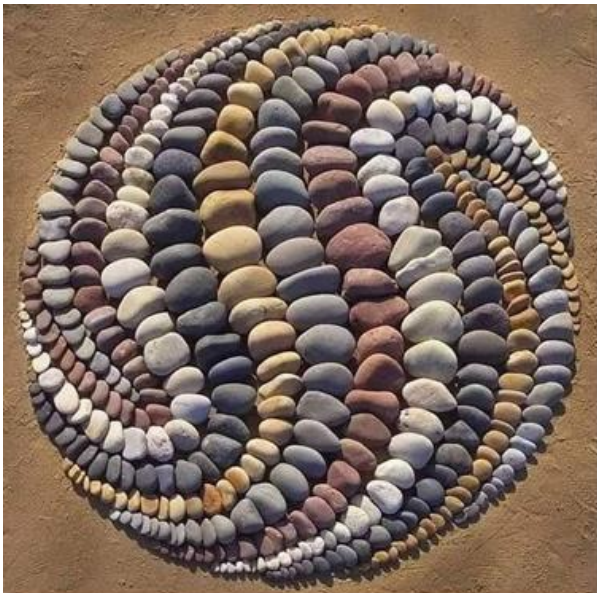
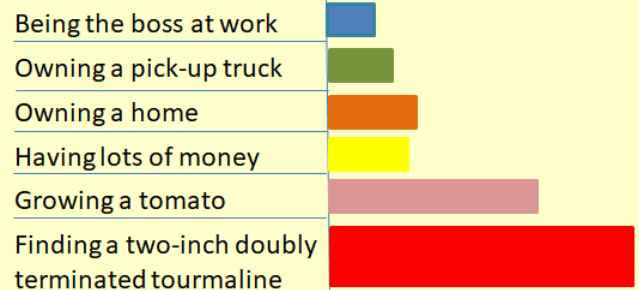
I sure hope we can feel comfortable holding our annual fall club rock sale some time before the end of 2020. There are still hundreds of pounds of rocks and a lot of nice minerals that need better homes than I can provide in the club storage shelves. But fortunately, they are not spoiling while they wait.

I am pleased to fully support the initiative of the club to waive dues payment for the coming year. We have not met for 6 months now and have had no club field trips this year so such a decision does seem warranted.

I sure hope all of you are sticking with the hobby and perhaps finding a place or two to collect. Do share any stories with the rest of us, either forwarding input to Fred or me for the newsletter, or if you are on Facebook, placing a note there.

*Linda*

### What gives people a true feeling of POWER?



There is no doubt about it. We all need more rocks. We all need a few of these. Let's see if anyone can create one as nice as this one posted to Facebook.



*Eldredgeops rana* from the Deep Run Shale Member in western New York: collected, prepped, and photographed by Stephen Mayer (prep time ~ 4 hours)



## **The Pirrello Mastodon Bones** ***A Tribute to Marion Wheaton***

*In 2008, Pat Chapman (editor of the WCGMC News at the time) helped Marion Wheaton write a chronicle of the events of 1973 that directly led to the creation of our club a year later. This article was published in the July, 2008 WCGMC Newsletter.*

In the spring of 1973, George Fisk of Marion, NY was cleaning a drainage ditch on the celery farm of John Pirrello in the Town of Arcadia, Wayne County, just a few miles north of Newark, NY. He noted the large bones as he dug, but thought them possibly to be from a very large horse. He did not reveal his find to anyone until the last week of August 1973 when he was refueling. My husband Jim was also refueling his tanks. They both worked for Claude J. Nevlezer, Inc., and George agreed to show Jim the bones.

Jim told George that the bones must be from a huge animal many years ago and that he could take them to the Lakeshore Gem Club meeting as John Lenhard of Hannibal, NY could identify them for George. George took Jim to the spot where he had seen the bones in April 1973. They found many bones on the ground and picked them up. Jim took the bones to the Gem Club meeting and John Lenhard identified them as from a MASTODON.

George was NOT interested in the bone find, so the following evening, Sept. 10th, Jim and I went to see John Pirrello, the land owner, to tell him what the bones were. Jim asked permission to dig for more bones. Mr. Pirrello told him to go ahead and he could have whatever bones he found. Jim and I and our daughter Diane went to the site on Sept. 11th taking a photographer, Les Buell, of East Williamson, NY with them. Les is a member of the Wayne County Historical Society. He had previously viewed the bones at the Wheaton home. He phoned Marjory Allen, county historian at the Wayne County Museum in Lyons, NY to tell her about the find. She asked if he would take photos of "an actual Mastodon dig in Wayne County" as it would be a first ever done. He took many photos.

Jim Wheaton found 12 rib bones, [one being the largest rib found at that time of a Mastodon]. He also found a huge rear ankle bone and toe bones that State Scientists [who were brought to the site to do excavating] first thought were from a Mammoth. When Mr. Pirrello phoned the NY State Museum

about the bones Jim was asked to stop digging, as the state has their own way to dig bones. When Dr. Edgar Reilly, Zoologist from the State Museum came to view the bones found by the Wheatons, he noted how large they were and so well preserved. Immediately a major dig for more bones and soil testing was planned. A zoologist, biologist, archaeologist, paleontologist, and workers came from the State Museum. October 2nd to 4th soil samples were taken. Carbon-14 tests were done afterwards on the bones and soil. A coring preparer was brought in for soil samples.

A bulldozer from NYS DOT was brought in to take off the upper layer of muck. It became mired in the marl [limy clay] layer. On Oct. 23rd, 1973 with the bones exposed, scientists came to work for two weeks on a major dig. Four cervical neck bones were found nested together, 4 ribs & fragments of others, a thoracic spine vertebrae and fragments of others. I went to the site every day to watch. On Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>, several days of rain commenced and the dig ended.

Reilly revealed details on the Pirrello Mastodon. Carbon-14 tests told that the mastodon died 10,340 years ago, plus or minus 170 years, in the year 8,390 B.C. He was equivalent in age to a man in his late 40's. and was probably 10 ½ feet to 11 feet tall. One left rib was broken, possibly fighting with others in the herd. He likely suffered severe pain before his death. Maybe a "loner" who had left the herd? Perhaps in the spring he fell thru the ice of glacial Lake Dawson & drowned. Dr. Reilly said other bones not found may have drifted in the area.



**A few of the Pirrello Mastodon bones on display at the Syracuse Gem Show in July of 1974:** the bones were later on display at the NYSM in Albany, where they reside today.  
(Photo by Marion Wheaton).

## Musical Xylophones from Drill Cores

by Kathleen Cappon

Many of our projects, shows, meetings, and trips have ground to a halt this year, leaving us rock hounds to collect on our own or generate projects with our existing rock hoards. The creation of my rock core xylophones is one such project for me. Although still a "work in progress", I thought I would update all on my progress.

This spring I borrowed a small rock cutting table saw from Linda Schmidtgal and continued to cut and trim all the drill cores I had collected and been gifted from club members as well as some I obtained from generous members of the St. Lawrence Rock and Mineral Club.

I have found that the diabase cores WCGMC members have collected in Cobalt, Canada are denser than others and produce the best tones. The cores from the Gouverneur talc mine and Balmat area are beautiful and had many mineral colorations but are not as good in producing a quality musical sound as the skinny grey Canadians.. As soon as warmer days came in May I began to trim them as I did at the club shop last year.

I developed a process for trimming musical cores by trial and error. If one trims off a quarter to a half inch, the tone of the core will go up one note. Thickness of the cores makes little difference. Many cuttings and practice seemed to increase accuracy.



The cut cores are cut and placed in boxes labeled by key. (C, D, E, F, G, A, and B) Photo by K. Cappon

The greater challenge is to find ways to effectively suspend and support the cores on a cradle to get the best tones. Linda's suspended xylophone, depicted in our extra [April 2020 newsletter \(p.7\)](#) used a clever beaded string support system. I am experimenting with a horizontal system on a cradle that will be placed on an electronic piano stand.



I will be using decorative wood slabs from a local sawmill and corrugated roof supports made out of cedar to support the cores. Photo by K. Cappon

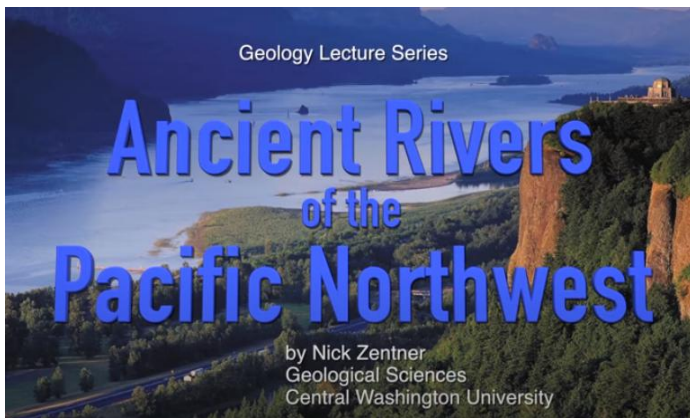
My goal is to make several prototypes and a few kid friendly models. A future trip to Canada will be necessary to obtain more musical drill cores!

After returning Linda's saw, I decided to spring for one of my own. I found a nice little Skill table top tile and rock saw with a diamond blade on E-bay (see picture on page 1). This little gem was only \$86.00 with free shipping. From now on, I can cut and trim drill cores and all my rocks right in my own backyard.



Do you think there will be any left if we return to Cobalt next summer? Photo by F. Haynes





### By Fred Haynes

We have featured book reviews multiple times in this newsletter, and we even had [one music review](#). Given the unusual circumstances of a stay at home pandemic, it only seems reasonable to offer a **Lecture Review**. I stumbled on this one circuitously through a Facebook Group of which I am a member,

Nick Zenter is a Professor of Geology at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, WA. He has produced a number of online lectures, both for his students and for the general public and it seems many of them are readily available to all who wish to learn a bit of geology. I've watched a couple so far and will likely watch more.

The lecture I am choosing to feature is one on the river systems of the northwest, notably the Columbia, Snake, Salmon, and Yakima Rivers. The picture at the top is a link to the lecture, or try:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0IjLO9ABKYU>

The story Professor Zenter tells, and then supports with data, describes the forces of tectonics, basalt lava flows and eventually glaciation on the location of these 4 rivers over the past 20 million years. But the real reason I am featuring this lecture and potentially his other presentations, is Nick's unique style.

Nick Zenter clearly enjoys geology and teaching and he is very good at both. His passion is contagious as you watch him mix the technologies of the past (a good old fashioned chalkboard) with the modern technology of today. He combines simplicity in concept with scientific rigor as he enthusiastically engages his audience. The river rocks which help tell his story are called spuds (well, some are sourced in Idaho) and you almost feel that you are in the room with him as he narrates his story. You will learn how water gaps and wind gaps and basalt-filled valleys help unravel the last 20 million years of an active geologic past in the northwest.

Towards the end of the presentation you will see short vignettes of Nick in the field as he further explains the evidence for the significant changes in the paths of rivers. On the right, Nick is literally in



the Yakima River holding up the dark colored rocks that tell us where the river is sourced. On the left, he is standing 1000' above the current Columbia River holding up quartzite "yellow spuds", sourced in extreme northern Idaho. The location high above the current river tells us where the river once flowed before tectonic uplift forced it elsewhere.

Apparently, I am not the only one who enjoyed Nick's lectures. In 2015 Nick received the prestigious James Shea Award, a national award recognizing exceptional delivery of Earth Science to the general public. He claims to be on a crusade to bring the drama of Northwest geology to life for everyone – not just the academics and die-hard rock hounds.

The people of central Washington are fortunate to have him around and the rest of us can watch from afar. If you have an hour and want to learn about the recent geologic history (last 20 million years) of the northwest, I think you will find the experience both entertaining and educational.

You can find all of Nick's online offerings at his webpage: <http://www.nickzentner.com/>. Some are hour long lectures like the one I review here, but others as short as 5 minutes are listed on his site. Both of the lectures I have watched and enjoyed are in the ["Downtown Geology Lecture Series"](#),



## Wayne County Gem & Mineral Contacts

### ELECTED OFFICERS

President - Linda Schmidtgal  
[lees\(at\)tds.net](mailto:lees(at)tds.net) 315-365-2448  
Vice-President - Fred Haynes  
[fredmhaynes55\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:fredmhaynes55(at)gmail.com) 585-203-1733  
Secretary - Debbie Breeze  
Treasurer - Bill Lesniak

### Board of Directors

Gary Thomas  
Bob Linderbery  
Heidi Morgenstern  
James Keeler

Past President - Glenn Weiler

Visit us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1675855046010058/>

### APPOINTED POSITIONS

Bill Chapman – Field Trip Chair

Fred Haynes – Newsletter Editor  
[fredmhaynes55\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:fredmhaynes55(at)gmail.com)

Bill Lesniak – Website Coordinator  
Glenn Weiler – Workshop Coordinator

Linda Schmidtgal – Collection Curator  
Eric Elias: GEMFEST Show Chair

Fred Haynes – Facebook Administrator  
Jim Rienhardt – Sand Chapter

Club meets 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of each month starting in Sept.  
Social meeting at 6:30 PM Regular meeting at 7:00 PM  
Park Presbyterian Church, Maple Court, Newark, NY

**Website –** <http://www.wcgmc.org/>

Dues are only \$15 individual or \$20 family for a full season of fun. Renewal is in October. Send to:

**WCGMC, P.O. Box 4, Newark, NY 14513**

