

SKAGIT GEMS

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Serving Skagit County WA Since 1961

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Mineral Council Field Trips

10/24	MSVL	Money Creek Sky-komish	Money Ck Campground 9am	Picture Jasper	Dig & R. Bar pick
11/21	DARR	Blanchard Hill	I-5 Exit 240 Gas Mart 9am	WA Dalmation stone & Chert	Hard rock tools

Many trips need Discover Pass, Trailhead Pass & Forest Pass. Ask when you inquire about trip

ALWAYS contact host for updated info a week before trip !!!

HOST CLUB

CONTACT INFO

MSVL = Marysville Rock Club Ed Lehman wsmced@hotmail.com h# (425) 334-6282 c# (425) 760-2786

DARR = Darrington Rock Club " " " " " "

SPOK = Spokane Rock Rollers Mike Shaw mikeshawmoose@yahoo.com (509) 251-1574 or (509) 244-8542

N O A = Tony Johnson (253) 863-9238

PVGM = Dennis Bachchelor (360) 870-8741

POW = All Rockhounds Pow Wow Larry Vess vessel3755@gmail.com or (253)473-3908

Keep updated on <http://www.mineralcouncil.zoho.com> Land management changes, and roads close regularly.

There is a area on web page with tool category in pictures and names of tools.

Always have proper cloths and gear for conditions. Be prepared with safety, first aid, food and drink.

A week before trips I (Ed Lehman) will have a pdf file with map and info for that trip I can send you on request. I will do the same for trip host.

Try to be at the meeting site 30 minutes before trip time for details and instructions with a full tank of gas.

Use code of ethics, keep our lands open to rockhounding.

Rockhounds unearth a righteous gemstone near Darrington

It's the discovery of a lifetime — an 8-ton nephrite jade boulder.

BY Evan Thompson EVERETT HERALD
Monday, January 20, 2020

Jason Henry was on the verge of giving up when he made the greatest geological discovery of his life.

Henry, 38, a Darrington native who lives in Marblemount, spent the summer prospecting for the valuable gemstone nephrite jade near Helena Ridge, about 10 miles south of his hometown. After seeing jade from the area displayed in Darrington businesses, he was inspired to go looking for it. But coming home empty-handed was wearing him thin.

"I was getting worn out," Henry said. "It got to a point where I was thinking, 'I need to find something or switch gears and put time in elsewhere.'"

Nephrite, known for its green varieties, is a form of jade created from colliding tectonic plates. It's one of the most valuable gemstones in the world, along with its counterpart, jadeite, which is most commonly found in Burma and Guatemala.

British Columbia is the largest producer and exporter of nephrite in the world — a \$10-million-a-year business for jewelry and ornamental carvings — but it's far less common in Washington. There was, however, a glimmer of hope for Henry; jade had been mined in the foothills surrounding Darrington for years.

On June 18, Henry followed the advice of his mentor, longtime rockhound Ed Molsee, 72, of Arlington, and tracked a vein of serpentine (a metamorphic mineral typically found near nephrite) up the ridge.

"I went up to this rock outcropping and prayed about it," Henry said. "About 200 feet past the outcropping, I looked down and there was a moss-covered area that looked like a rock, about 18 inches long by 12 inches wide."

He didn't know it yet, but he was looking at the top of an 8-ton boulder. He hoped it was nephrite, but he couldn't be sure until he tested it.

"I had to hit this rock about 100 times before I broke a chip off," he said. "I knew during the process of breaking it that it was likely jade. I've had to break pieces of jade, and it's not like any other stone out there, unless you find metals like copper or ore."

Molsee, who has prospected everything from crystals to gold since the mid-1960's, helped Henry cut slabs the following morning. The pieces revealed shades of dark and light green, which boded well for its value.

He was most impressed by its size — it took three weeks to excavate.

"I don't know of anybody who's ever pulled out a boulder of this size in the state," Molsee said. "It's pretty rare."

Just how rare?

"One in a million," he said.

The Washington Department of Natural Resources does not have records to compare its size with previous discoveries, but spokesman Joe Smillie said it may be the largest ever found in the state.

The boulder was found on public land in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Henry and Molsee filed a mining claim with Snohomish County, which gives prospectors the right to extract minerals, and registered the find with the Bureau of Land Management,

The size and quality of the boulder — which was later transported by forklift



The 8-ton jade boulder took about three weeks to excavate. It was later transported by forklift and truck to a jade cutter in Everson. (Jason Henry)

and truck to a jade cutter in Everson — piqued the interest of Kirk Makepeace, one of the world's leading experts in jade. He's the founder of British Columbia's Jade West Group, a company that mines the region with the richest known concentration of nephrite in the world.

Makepeace, who was once featured on the cover of National Geographic, said it was the largest nephrite boulder he'd ever seen from Washington after 44 years in the industry.

"That was a needle-in-the-haystack type of discovery," he said. "I went up to the site where they found it. It was very challenging, and obviously a determined effort, where other people would have long given up."

So, have they hit the jackpot? Well, not exactly. Makepeace determined it wasn't jewelry-grade jade like the kind he mines in British Columbia. It probably won't sell for a fortune, he said, but it could be useful for carvings and furniture such as coffee tables.

"If that's what they decide to do, they'd find a ready market for that product," he said.

But the discovery is still a very big deal.

"It's a unique part of Washington state's jade history," Makepeace said. "It's certainly very notable and should possibly be preserved in that vein."

He also believes more commercial-grade jade is waiting to be found in the area. Molsee and Henry said it may be a boost to the burgeoning jade industry in Washington.

For Molsee, it's a lifetime achievement. He started out crystal mining as a boy more than 50 years ago with his father.

In that time, he's made claims on gemstones such as quartz and pyrites throughout the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie River. Molsee, who read every book about mining and prospecting that he could get his hands on, has made up to \$26,000 a year.

"I had one quarter of geology in college, but that was it," he said. "I was self-taught."

He also gold mined with a Bellingham company for about 15 years until turning his sights on jade. His prospecting destinations include places near Mountain Loop Highway, Mount Baker and the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie River.

Henry, who as a boy enjoyed picking up shiny rocks, was drawn to prospecting two years ago. He had just sold his Darrington-based business, CNC Artwork, and could afford to go out scouring the hills for signs of lucrative minerals.

Much like the prospectors of old, he armed himself with a pistol to defend himself from bears. Compared to the mines in British Columbia, which rely solely on machinery, Makepeace called Henry's approach "very old school."

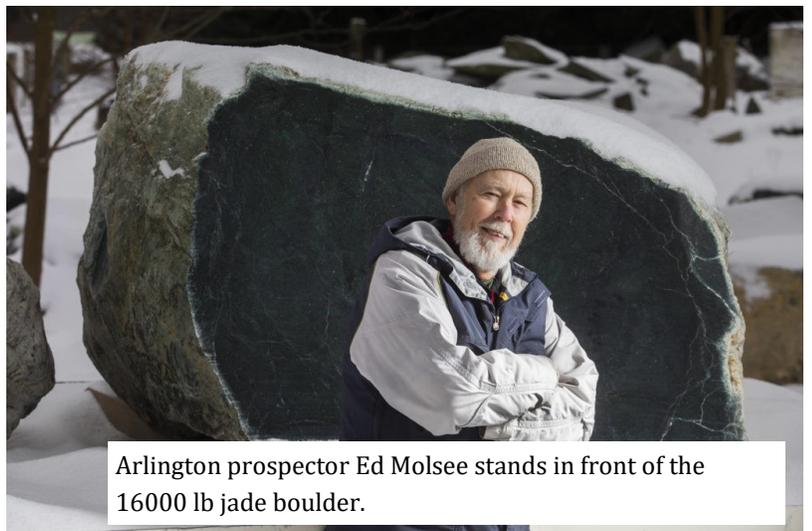
In addition to that pistol, Henry brings prospecting tools and the Ten Essentials on his excursions. Henry learned everything he knows from prospectors like Molsee — but over the years, he's developed his own rockhounding intuition.

"When something like this happens, you can look at it as pure luck," said Henry, who now works at Hampton Lumber Mills in Darrington. "But I really feel like it was a sign that I was supposed to find this thing."

"The area I found it had already been searched over 20 times. You literally have to leave no stone unturned."



Ed Molsee of Arlington and Jason Henry of Marblemount used a forklift to transport the 8-ton jade boulder from where it was found near Helena Ridge. (Courtesy of Jason Henry)



Arlington prospector Ed Molsee stands in front of the 16000 lb jade boulder.

“The Great Republic Fossil Hunt”

By Geoff Case

I know you're all excited to hear what we uncovered, so here's the Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF): we actually found..... a seed.

OK, so that wasn't the only fossil we found, but the seed was probably the most unusual thing we found during our trip to the Stonerose fossil site in Republic in early September. For those of you who aren't that familiar with Stonerose, the site is an ancient lake bottom, exposed on a hill side right in the city limits of the city of Republic. The hillside site has layers of shale and sandstone, and it's possible to dig in several different levels on any given day. After checking in at the Stonerose office/store/museum (and paying for your dig for the day; the site is private property), it's a matter of walking a couple of blocks up the hill and around the corner to the dig. At the actual dig site, one of the Stonerose employees is available to assist in identifying finds, and giving pointers on techniques for uncovering fossils.

The site has invertebrates, but we uncovered mostly plant remains, including some dwarf redwood and some kind of aspen/birch leaves. Our other finds include what was scientifically described by our site docent (actually the Stonerose director, a recent transplant from the Burke Museum) as 'pond scum'. A couple of our finds have a layer of what is basically coal outlines of water plants on one side, and more traditional fossilized leaves on the other (older) side of the slab. Once we're done with the actual dig for the day, we took our samples back to the office for identification. One of the Stonerose staff helped us by gently removing some of the sandstone around an unidentified "spec" and was able to uncover the rest of the outline of our aspen/birch/whatever seed.

***For more info visit: <https://stonerosefossil.org/>





VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!

Meetings are on the FIRST Saturday of the month (except for Jan, July and Dec) at 10:00 am at the Mount Vernon Community (Senior) Center
1401 Cleveland St. Mount Vernon WA 98273

- The purpose of this non-profit earth society shall be to stimulate interest in the study of geology, lapidary, and the collection of geological specimens
- We are a member of the Northwest Federation of Mineralogical Societies and the Washington State Mineral Council. We are affiliated with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies.
- Dues are \$15.00 per year for adults and \$7.50 for those under age 16
- Visit our website: skagitrockandgem.com
- Email: skagitrockandgem@gmail.com
- Mailing address: PO BOX 244 Mt. Vernon 98273

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Swap-Vandenburgs

Membership Dues

We realize that we are not holding meetings right now so please pay dues as you are able. Everyone will still receive the newsletter as usual.

The club's year runs from September to August. Payment can be sent Dave Britten or the PO Box, info on pg 5.

Dues are: \$15.00/ yr for adults \$7.50/ yr age 16 and younger





Skagit Rock and Gem Club
Debbie Frank, Editor
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Burlington WA 98233

October Gem of the month: Padparadscha

Padparadscha is the name given to the orange-yellow sapphire, a gem variety of Corundum. Padparadscha is a mineral with a hardness of 9 out of 10 on the Mohs scale of mineral hardness. These Trigonal structured gems are made of aluminum oxide, their full chemical compound being Al_2O_3 .

The main sapphire-bearing rocks are marble, basalt, or pegmatite. It is mined mainly from alluvial deposits or deposits formed by weathering, rarely from the primary rock. It usually occurs in placer deposits, in

Australia, Burma, Sri Lanka,
Thailand

Padparadscha derives its name from the Sri Lankan language Sinhalese word

"padmaragaya," used to describe the beautiful color of the lotus flower. Gem5.com

