

Report

Tri-Federation Rockhound Rendezvous and Field Trip

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Texas Springs, Nevada

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Inter – Regional Field Trips

The announcement flier said, “Be prepared for a variety of weather.” And that is what we had! Over the next 6 days we found out that the Texas Springs area is a “Land of the 4 Seasons.” It was a warm summer like Tuesday morning when we turned off the highway headed to the Tri-Fed. Camp by Trout Creek. When we stopped to put up the signs to mark the way to camp we were joined by the Northwest Federation co-lead Dick Parks, and Patti Amos. Six and a half miles from the highway we turned left into “grassy” area amongst the sage brush and shooed away the cattle. This was our camp. Shortly after noon Dean Richardson and his new wife, Bernice, and his son, Rich, arrived. Dean and Rich have been collecting in this area since the 70’s and helped guide our collecting trips. Late in the afternoon the sky darkened, the wind picked up and there was an ominous, dark yellow/gray cloud coming at us from the western horizon. In less than 20 minutes we were hit with a dust storm with wind in excess of 50 mph that lasted close to an hour. By this time we had more than 8 rigs in camp and we closed everything up tight to ride out the storm. This is the last we saw of summer.

Winter revisited us with night time temperatures in the high 20’s and low 30’s. Spring rains returned over the next few days. They were mostly intermittent and spotty. They never effected nor stopped our collecting trips but they caused us to cancel 2 potluck dinners, a couple of happy hour get-togethers and a couple of campfires. On Friday afternoon it was beautiful, the sun was shining and it was pleasantly warm. We set up for our tailgate exchange and map exchange with high expectations for a fun activity. People started to gather and so did the storm clouds. When the rains started we quickly put away our maps and tailgate displays. As the temperature rapidly dropped the rains changed to sleet, then hail and concluded with snow, which covered the ground and our vehicles like a winter wonderland. There were 10 tents as part of our camp and they were weighted down with piles of snow-sleet-hail. Within an hour the sky had cleared, the snow-sleet-hail had melted and the sun was once again shining brightly. Our

afternoon events and potluck dinner were washed away but we were able to have our first campfire.

Our Camp Well that is enough about the weather. It was wet. It was wild. It was windy. And it gives us good stories, but it is not the total defining aspect of our Tri-Federation Rendezvous. And it never stopped us from doing what we set out to do, that is, collect pink agate limb casts and have a great time with other rockhounds. The Tri-Federation Rockhound Rendezvous was held for 6 days over the 2008 Memorial Day Weekend. Over 140 people from the NFMS, CFMS, RMFMS and MFMS came to our Rendezvous. They represented over 45 clubs from 12 states. We had rockhounds of all ages from 4 to 84. Most of our group camped with us amongst the sage brush. We had trailers, motorhomes, tent trailers, tents and pickup campers; a total of 41 camping units. Some chose to take advantage of the motels and full hookup campgrounds that were only 8 miles away in Jackpot. When people arrived at camp I had them sign in on the trip register, sign an Informed Consent Waiver and I gave them a copy of the AFMS Code of Ethics. When camping on BLM land, we practice the Leave No Trace principles. That means we “pack-out-what-we-pack-in”. We leave the area cleaner than we found it. This should be our practice no matter where we camp. I walked around our camp on Monday evening after most of our group had departed and I am proud to say that there was no trash or garbage left anywhere. We did tear up some sagebrush and left some tracks in the dirt, but they will grow back and wash away with the next few rains.

Collecting Trips Texas Springs Canyon is located approximately 25 miles southeast of Jackpot in the northeast corner of Nevada. The Texas Springs area is well known for spectacular pink agate limb casts, as well as, other agate and petrified wood. Although this area has been popular with rockhounds for many years, prized material can still be found for those who are willing to dig for it. And many were successful! On Wednesday morning Dick Parks and I took off for a scouting trip of the five planned collecting sites around Texas Springs. The sites were 15 to 22 miles from camp. We marked the roads, turns and collecting sites with fluorescent orange ribbons for easy identification and travel. The five planned collecting sites were identified as: the “Classic Pink Limb Casts”, “Past the Pink”, “Rich’s Hill”, “Snakeskin”, and “Small Pink Limb Casts and Bog”. The 2 most popular sites were the Classic Pink and Rich’s Hill. Because of limited parking and to minimize the collecting pressure we had sign-ups for these sites, with a limit of 50 people per site. The other 3 areas were self-guided sites. Dean, Rich and I led the trips to Classic Pink and Rich’s Hill.

The group assembled each morning at 8:00 for information about the sites,

instructions, safety information, and announcements of the other activities for the day. We lined up our vehicles and headed down the road at 8:30. The Classic Pink site is a sparsely foliated hill of ash and dirt. There are many holes and old digs from previous rockhounds. While a rare piece can be found as float, collecting at this site is accomplished by digging and many of the holes are deep. As the name denotes, the sought after material here is pink agate limb casts that range in size from twigs to large masses over 100 pounds. Some of each was found, but most were in the ounces to a couple of pounds range. Rich's Hill is named for Dean's son who discovered the area where he found a number of fair sized logs and casts last year. Rich's Hill is about one half mile due east of the Classic Pink area. The material here ranges from twigs and small limbs as float to small logs and limbs 10 to 12 inches below the surface. The digging was easy in this loose topsoil. The material is mostly a brown jasp-agate. The most productive digging was at the bottom of the hill. On Saturday Dick Parks led a group to an agate area near Opal Springs a couple of miles north of Texas Springs. Dick also led people to some travertine/onyx sites that were only 8 miles from camp. Of the three self-guided sites the Small Pink was the most productive, the Snakeskin had the most unusual material and the Past the Pink was more of the same and harder to dig. The Small Pink is a low-lying hill about one half mile long. There are small, finger sized pink agate limb casts all over the east side of the hill. Although this was not planned to be a dig site someone tried digging and found small logs like those on Rich's Hill. Soon everyone was digging. There was gray/brown bog agate at this site also.

There are two geode sites nearby. One at Contact about 18 miles south of Jackpot and one 5 miles north, just off of the highway, at Rabbit Springs. On Sunday I led a group of over 40 to collect some geodes. The Contact geodes were found in trenches and in shallow digs on the hillside. They are hollow geodes that are filled with calcite. The Rabbit Springs geodes are hollow and chalcedony lined. They are just off the old highway, about .3 miles in from the turnoff. Broken geodes litter the surface and whole ones can be found with easy digging in loose/ashy soil. The Rabbit Springs geodes were abundant and are fluorescent. This was the best day of geode collecting that I have ever experienced. The geodes were in the top 12 to 24 inches loose ashy soil. Everyone who dug filled their bag and buckets with baseball to softball size geodes.

Our Other Activities Our afternoon activities were the most affected by the rain, snow and wind. We had a speaker from the BLM scheduled for Thursday's happy hour, but his talk and our potluck dinner were canceled because of rain. On Friday afternoon we were all set up for our Tailgate and Map Exchange when they were washed away by rain, hail, sleet and snow. But on Saturday the

weather cooperated and we finally held our Tailgate and Map Exchange. We had 12 people participate in our Tailgate. They pulled their trucks up or set up a table to display what they brought. Several people brought rocks and specimens from their home areas to share. There were minerals and specimens from several locales including Wyoming, New Mexico, Oregon, Nevada, California, and Arizona. Several people brought buckets of specimens to give away to the group. We had good participation in the Map Exchange with 15 to 20 maps from California, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, New Mexico, Nevada and Montana collecting areas. Some really good, detailed maps to some excellent collecting sites. Enough to fill our field trip schedule for a long time.

One of my favorite activities when camping is the campfire. There was a lot of wood brought for our nightly campfires but we didn't get to use it until Friday evening. We had so much wood that we had a hard time burning it all and sent a lot home for the next outing. Let's Eat – a Favorite Rockhound Activity Our Welcome Potluck Dinner was postponed on Thursday because of the rain. When the rain returned on Friday we had to call it off again at the last minute. But the food was all ready, so we broke up into “mini-potlucks” in our trailers and motorhomes. The selection may have been smaller, but the food was still good. On Saturday the sun was shining, there was a breeze but no wind, and we were able to have our All Rendezvous potluck. It is amazing that in the midst of the desert and sagebrush, when the dinner bell rings the serving table is filled with freshly prepared food and delicious desserts. After dinner we had self-introductions to find out a little about one another and where they were from. To celebrate our age diversity, Betty gave a stained glass clown to our youngest, a 4 year old, and a stained glass angel the oldest an 84 year old “youngster”.

As the weekend drew to a close the big question from all was “Where will the Rendezvous be next year?” My answer to them was “Anywhere you want to lead it?” This Tri-Federation Rockhound Rendezvous was a great, fun, rewarding event. It was more than a fieldtrip, it was a rendezvous, a coming together of rockhounds to do and share all the things we like to do. We had a great time together. We met and got to know a lot of wonderful rockhound friends. We collected some interesting rocks. We enjoyed the beauty and majesty of this great land of ours. I hope that someone out there will pick up the ball and arrange for our next Rendezvous. Our Inter-Regional Field Trip Committee is ready to help. Call or email me with your ideas and suggestions.

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