

95 Years of  
Gems and Minerals  
at the  
Natural History Museum  
of Los Angeles County

Special thanks to Museum archivist Cathy McNassor  
for assistance with information and images.



Agricultural Park, opened in 1870's outside the city limits, became a lawless area with horse racing, gambling and prostitution.

The Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art opened on November 5, 1913



The area was renamed Exposition Park in 1910 with the laying of the cornerstone of the Museum.



General Charles Forman, pioneer, Indian fighter, capitalist and a prominent figure in the early financial life of Los Angeles, made one of the first mineral donations to the Museum on November 9, 1913, just 3 days after the Museum officially opened its doors to the public.



The donation consisted of 5 boxes of specimens, including this piece of gold ore from the Manet-Cosy mine in Nevada.



When the Museum opened in 1913, Dr. Howard Hill, a zoologist, curated minerals, shells, fish, amphibians, and reptiles. Notice that Dr. Hill is resting his foot on a vesicular basalt. (1922 photo)

Hill remained with the Museum for more than 40 years. (1953 photo)



In 1921 the Los Angeles Chamber of Mines and Oil gave its mineral collection to the Museum. This collection was particularly rich in fine specimens of copper minerals from Bisbee. This was the first major collection acquired by the Museum and specimens from the collection can be seen on display in the Hall of Gems and Minerals.

**1907**  
Los Angeles  
Chamber of  
Mines

**1910**  
Los Angeles  
Chamber of  
Mines & Oil

**1929**  
California Oil  
and Gas  
Association

**1945**  
Western Oil  
and Gas  
Association

**1988**  
Western  
States  
Petroleum  
Association

For brief periods  
in the 1920's,  
Arthur Tiejé and  
Robert T. Hill  
served stints as  
part-time curators.

Several mineral collections were donated to the Museum between 1925 and 1932:

Crofts Collection (1925)

Johnson (1928)

Lukens (1928)

Last (1932)

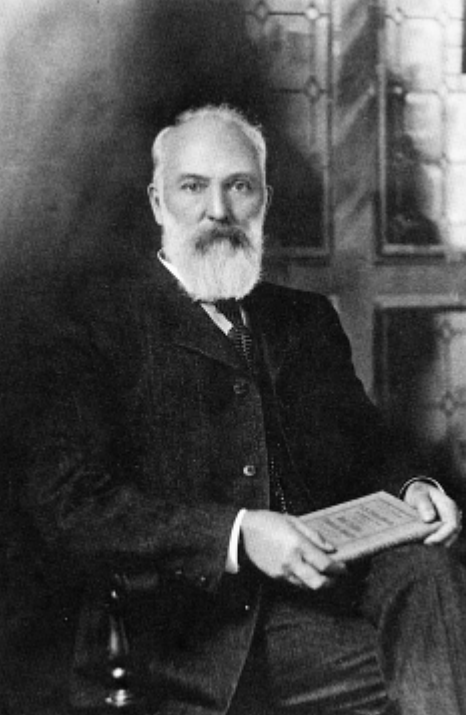
Berray (1932)



Tiejé was a professor of geology at USC.



Hill (1858-1941) was a colorful character who has been called the “Father of Texas Geology” for his early contributions to the geology of Texas. He studied other areas of the Southwest, as well, and his professional career spanned 60 years.



Theodore Parker Lukens, an early Pasadena businessman and civic leader, has been called “The Father of Forestry” for his pioneering efforts in promoting reforestation. He was also an avid collector. In 1928, ten years after his death, his collection of minerals and other geological specimens was donated to the Museum by his sister-in-law.



T. P. Lukens' curio room in 1890

# ROCKS

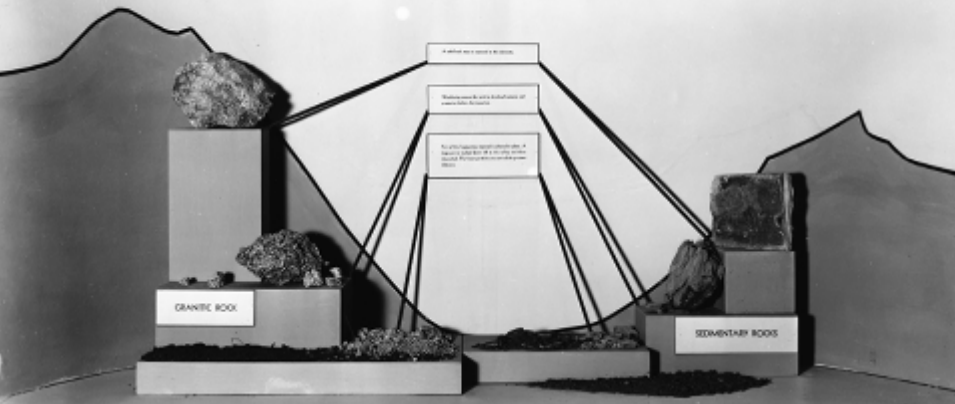


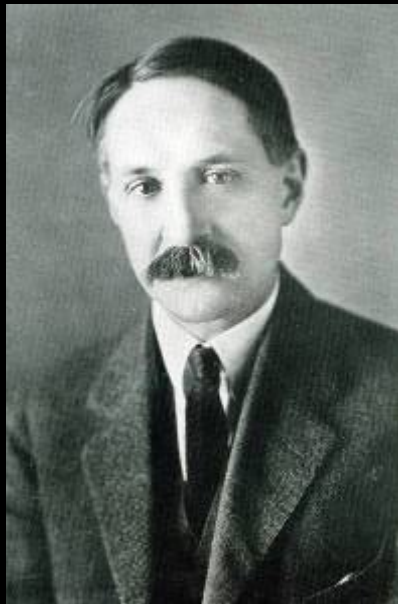
Exhibit of rocks in the 1930's



From 1933 through 1950 the Museum's mineral collection remained almost static. During this period acquisitions averaged only 20 specimens per year.

Nevertheless, Mineralogy and Geology was first established as a separate department in 1946. From 1946 to 1950, Rene L. H. Engle was part-time curator.

Engle was a Frenchman schooled at the University of Paris. He joined the Museum after a career as a mining geologist and professor of mineralogy and geology. He was also an accomplished pianist, having studied at the Paris Conservatory of Music.



Rene Engle in 1925 while a professor at the New Mexico School of Mines and Technology



Dr. Raymond J. Barber became Curator in 1950 after his retirement from USC, where he was head of the Engineering Dept. When Herbert Hoover left the White House in 1933, he hired Barber, then teaching mining engineering at Stanford, as a mining consultant.



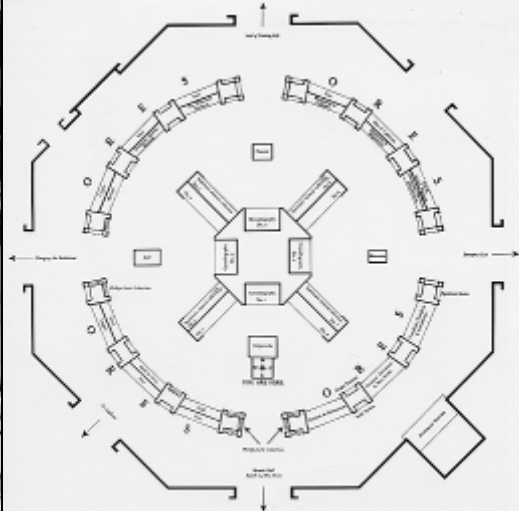
Barber had a special interest in jade and made several field trips into Mexico in search of jade artifacts.

Barber "retired" from the Museum in 1955 at the age of 70.

In 1951, Michael and Stanley Kazanjian, sons of well-known jeweler James Kazanjian and now owners of Kazanjian Brothers in Beverly Hills, donated a mineral collection that had been purchased for them by their father.



The collection was generally unremarkable, but included a specimen of natrolite that showed a few small tips of benitoite crystals. 30 years later the natrolite was removed using acid to reveal this unique specimen.



GUIDE TO THE MINERAL HALL

The first Mineral Hall installed in the original Rotunda of the Museum in 1952 remained in place for 25 years.



The original Mineral Hall is pictured here during the opening of a special exhibit in 1967.

In 1953 well-known Los Angeles Jeweler William E. Phillips made the first in a series of gem donations: the world's largest sinhalite (159 carats), a gem species from Sri Lanka first recognized in 1952.



His last donation, made in 1961 shortly before his death, was a suite of colored diamonds.





Clements holding fulgerite



122 carat Peridot  
from St. John's Island

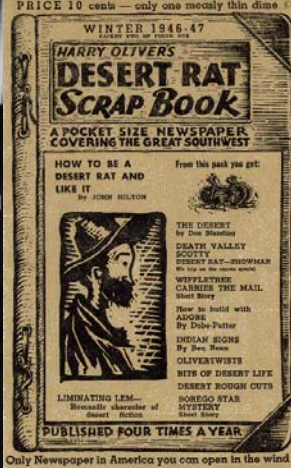
Dr. Thomas  
Clements, head  
of the Geology  
Department at  
USC, served as  
part-time curator  
from 1955 to  
1961.



Jade boulder from Jade Cove on  
loan from Al Tillman since 1958.



In 1955-56 the first significant mineral collection received since 1932 was given by Col. Fain White King and Blanche Busey King.



### Buried Indian Treasures

See the city of a forgotten people, their burial tombs, dwellings, implements, treasures, jewels, ornaments.

Ancient Buried City  
Wickliffe, Kentucky

Prehistoric Fluorite Jewels and other collectors items

Write  
COL. FAIN WHITE KING



Toward the end of 1959, the Museum began a campaign to build its mineral and gem collections through major purchases. Many of the most important purchases were from Martin Ehrmann (1904-1972), a long time resident of Los Angeles and America's premiere dealer in museum-quality mineral specimens. Ehrmann also sold world-class specimens to Museum supporters such as Marion Stuart and Ed Harrison, who later donated these specimens to the Museum.



Mineral photos by Harold and Erica Van Pelt

Randall Chew III served as part time curator from 1961 to 1964 with a year off as a Fulbright lecturer in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Before coming to the Museum he had been an economic geologist for the U. S. Geological Survey and the Northern Pacific Railroad.



The last of William E. Phillips' gem donations was received by Chew, but more importantly Chew was very active in purchasing significant specimens for the collection.



Lasting Beauty  
of Gems  
(1964)



World of Jade (1965)

Robert Gaal was part time curator from 1963 to 1966, joining the staff while finishing his Ph.D. in marine geology at USC. Gaal was involved in staging at least two significant temporary gem exhibits and arranged the purchase of a portion of the Stan Alexander mineral collection. After leaving the Museum he served as librarian for the GIA.





Dr. Richard Merriam, Head of the USC Geology Department served as curator in 1965-66.



Also in 1965 Barbara Lowe joined the Museum as preparator in Geology-Mineralogy. She was later promoted to curatorial assistant and remained with the Museum for about 10 years, having a significant impact.



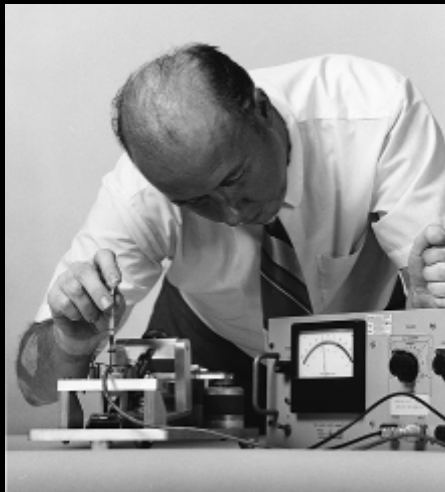
Dr. Jerry L. Matthews, a sedimentologist, was curator from 1967 to 1969. During his tenure the Sol Shalevitz tourmaline collection was acquired. He oversaw the installation of "Prize Collections", a major temporary exhibit highlighting collections of members of the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies.

Scenes from the opening of "Prize Collections" in 1967





Bernard Fuller served as curator from 1969 to 1976 and then as curatorial assistant from 1976 to 1985.





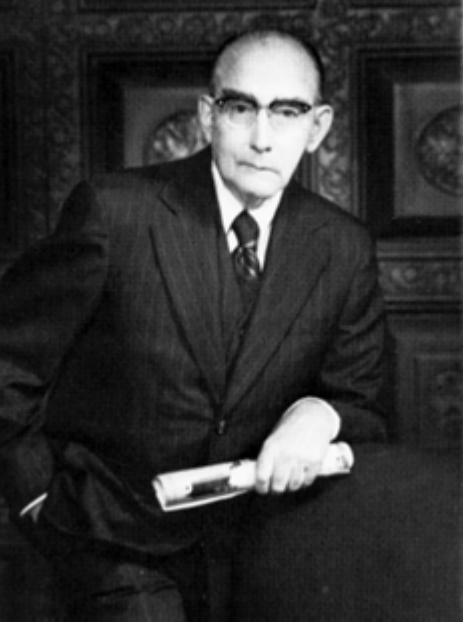
Museum Director Dr. Giles Mead with Museum board members Doug Macdonald, Diane Lilley and Marion Stuart in the early 1970's.



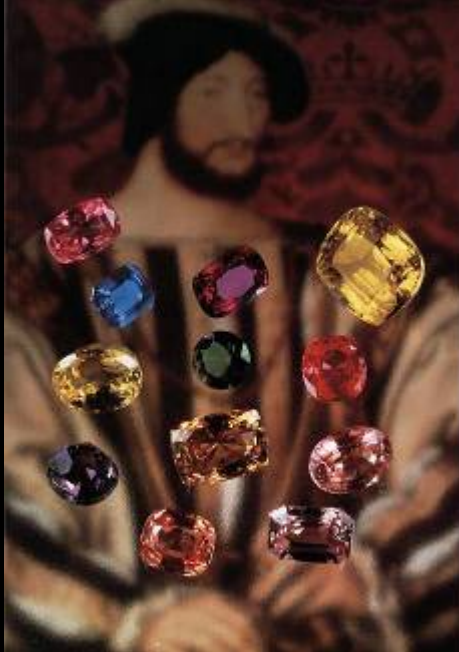
Ed N. Harrison, long-time Chairman of the Museum's Board of Governors

The Museum's mineralogy program owed its vitality in the 1960's and 70's to the strong support of Mead, Macdonald, Stuart and Harrison. Stuart was the prime mover and involved herself in the functionality of the department. Our current Hall of Gems and Minerals owes its existence largely to the efforts of these individuals.





San Antonio capitalist Col. Frederick C. Hixon donated his gem collection between 1971 and 1977.



Suite of sapphires in the Hixon Collection

Photo by Harold and Erica Van Pelt



Building of the North Wing which was to house the Hall of Gems and Minerals - 1971



Hall of Gems and Minerals - 1977



WETZEL



Joseph A. Wetzel & Assoc. – designers of the Hall of Gems and Minerals



Early design concept for the Hall of Gems and Minerals



Final design concept for the Hall of Gems and Minerals



Dr. Peter C. Keller joined the Museum as Associate Curator in late 1976. He left the Museum to become Director of Education at the GIA in late 1980, but returned in 1984 as a consultant and became the Museum's Director of Public Programs in 1985. He left the Museum in the early 1990's to become Executive Director of the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana.



Dr. Anthony R. Kampf joined the Museum as Assistant Curator at the beginning of 1977 and became Curator and head of Mineralogy in 1980.



Exhibits for the Hall of Gems and Minerals were built in Chicago





Construction of exhibits at General Exhibits and Displays



Installation of the Hall of Gems and Minerals - 1978



The Mark and Jean Bandy mineral collection was donated by Jean between 1977 and 1980, with the remainder coming to the Museum after her death in 1992. The collection is particularly rich in specimens from Bolivia where Mark worked as a mining geologist, engineer and superintendent from 1936 to 1947.



# Remembrances from the early days of curator Tony Kampf



Tony's 3<sup>rd</sup>-floor office, which he shared with the mineral collection



Jeanbandyite, a new mineral described by Tony in 1982



Mineralogy Volunteer Constance Pearson hiking up to the Champion mine in the White Mountains with full pack.



The Old Woman Meteorite visited the museum shortly after its discovery.

# Gold and Emerald Treasures of Colombia (1981)



Inquisition Necklace



Unsuccessful design for the Deutsch Gallery: Gemstones and their Origins



Haus der Natur - Area IV

Winning design for the Deutsch Gallery



Construction of the Deutsch Gallery





The opening festivities for the Deutsch Gallery in 1985 featured a \$75 million exhibition of jewelry from Harry Winston. The gala party brought out stars such as Jimmy Stewart and Zsa Zsa Gabor.



1985 also marked the founding of The Gem & Mineral Council. (1993 photo)

Besides providing essential support for the museum's Mineral Sciences Department, The Gem & Mineral Council provides its members with an unparalleled program of activities including educational lectures, exclusive social events and exciting fieldtrips. The Council's tours to exotic gem and mineral locales around the world have become famous.



In the November 1989 "Best of LA" feature in Los Angeles Magazine, the Museum's Hall of Gems and Minerals was recognized as the best permanent museum exhibition in Los Angeles.



### Wine Shop

**Best:** For wine oddities, the best may be Trader Joe's, for inventing it's Wally's on Westwood Boulevard. But for overall sophistication, the shop of choice is the museum's

**Wine House** (2371 Cotner Ave., West L.A., 213-479-3731), a veritable

### Permanent Museum Exhibition

**Best:** L.A. has more than a few world-class exhibitions—the County Museum of Art's Old Masters gallery, the Getty's priceless collection of Greek and Roman sculptures and statuary, the Page Museum's unique La Brea Tar Pits reconstructions, even such fascinating exhibits as the *Edith Piaf Museum*, *Marcel Duchamp's Museum*, and *Walt Disney's World*.

Merlo Norvali Museum's collection of antique automobiles in Sudard. But the most overlooked museum has to be the **Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County** at Exposition Park and its decade-old Hall of Gems and Minerals, a 7,500-square-foot tropical display of gem-while gemstones and minerals. Curator Anthony Parral says his

hall is one of the largest permanent gem and mineral collections in the world, second only to the *Metropolitan Museum of Natural History* in New York. This museum's collection has two major areas: it has, besides possibly the world's finest display of 5- to 25-carat jewelry-sized stones, the largest display of "active" gold and one of the world's largest crystal balls.



In 1985 the donation of the Ben Chromy mineral collection along with more than \$100,000 came as a complete surprise.





Retired Palo Alto lawyer John Jago Trelawney is pictured here with Museum Director Dr. Craig C. Black at the time of the donation of his gem collection in 1988. Trelawney, who died in 2001, bequeathed an endowment of about \$450,000 to the Mineral Sciences Department.



Photo by Harold and Erica Van Pelt

Micromounts, mineral specimens mounted in small boxes and best appreciated under magnification, represent an important segment of the mineral collecting hobby and they often prove to be excellent candidates for scientific research. Through the donation of large collections, such as the exceptional Weber-Perloff Collection received in 2005, the museum has built a micromount collection numbering more than 100,000 – the largest such collection in the world.



Micromount in the  
Weber-Perloff Collection

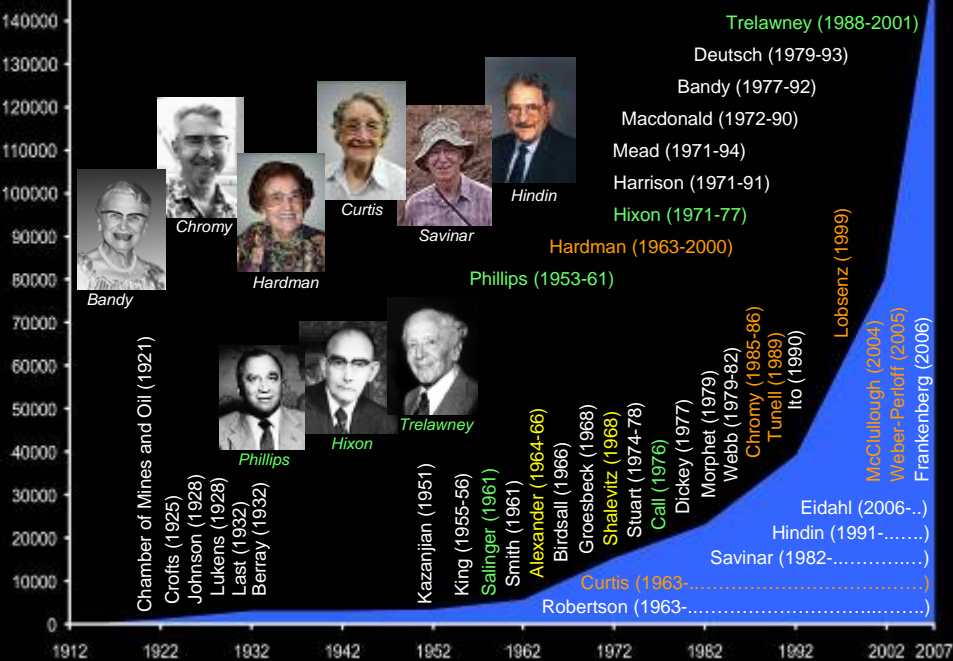


Lou Perloff and Julie Weber at their microscopes



Connellite crystals from Bisbee,  
Arizona on micromount shown  
above. Longest crystal is  
about 1 mm in length.

# Growth of the Museum's Gem and Mineral Collection



Legend: Donated mineral (and gem) collection, **donated gem collection**, **purchased mineral collection**, **donated mineral collection with large micromount component**





Robert G. Middleton  
Collections Manager  
1986-1989



Dorothy L. Etness  
Collections Manager  
1989 to present

## Major improvements to the Hall of Gems and Minerals:

Gems of the Americas video (1980)

Deutsch Gallery: Gemstones and their Origins (1985)

Minerals of California (1986)

Forever Gold video (1988)

Carving Exhibit (1989)

New Gold Exhibit (1990)

GemDisk (1991)

Cyberscope (1993)

Interactive kiosks (1998)

Meteorites (2000)



## Major temporary exhibits and shows:

Gold and Emerald Treasures of Colombia (1981)

Minerals, Metals and Man (1982)

Harry Winston Jewels (1985)

Gold: The Quest for New World Riches (1987)

Gems: Voyage from the Mine (1993)

Buccellati: Artistry in Gemstones and Gold (1994)

Stones from Heaven: Ancient Chinese Jade (1996)

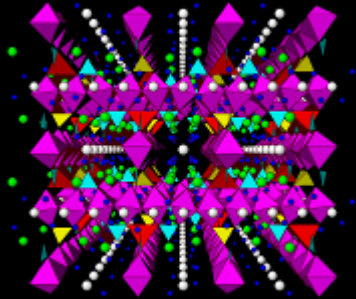
Gem Artists of North America (2000)

SoCal GemFest 2002 & 2003

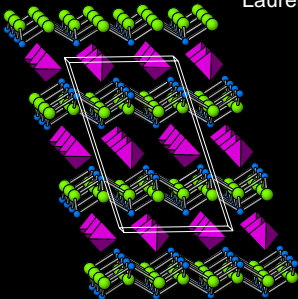
Over the past 30 years scientific research, including The description of new minerals and the determination of their atomic structures, has been an important component of the activities of the Mineral Sciences Department.



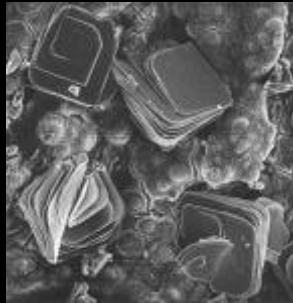
Pseudograndreefite and Laurelite



Philolithite



Grandreefite



Juanitaite

The Photo-Atlas of Minerals CD-ROM, developed by Dr. Anthony Kampf and Dr. George Gerhold and published by the museum's Gem & Mineral Council, was first introduced in 1998. It proved a spectacular success and more than 6,000 copies were sold world-wide in several editions. A greatly expanded and improved DVD version was introduced in November of 2006.

# The Photo-Atlas of Minerals

Version 2.0  
Windows® DVD-ROM



Produced by  
The Gem & Mineral Council  
Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County