



A monthly publication of the Clear Lake Gem & Mineral Society

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NEXT MEETING: November 18, 2019
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Clear Lake Park Building
 5001 Nasa Parkway
 Seabrook, Texas

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MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 21, 2019 CLGMS MEETING

A thank you to Andrew Shaner, (Lunar and Planetary Institute, Universities Space Research Association) for last month's excellent presentation on The MAVEN Mission to Mars. Thank you for your wonderful presentation at the Clear Lake Gem and Mineral Society last evening. We appreciate the awesome Maven exploration and had about 17 in attendance. We would be happy to extend an invite for future presentation topics.

MINUTES OF THE Board of Directors (BOD)

Here is the CLGMS November 2019 BOD minutes to be published on the November SS:

- The current officers will stay until April 30th (will be in line with our new fiscal year that will start May 1st). The election will be held in March and April.
- John Caldyne did and will do a few more presentations at local libraries hoping to increase the awareness of the existence of the club and hoping can increase the memberships.
- There will be no guest speakers for the next 4 months (Nov-Feb) as we there will be holidays and preparation for the show.
- Christmas dinner: the club will provide the main course (Rudy's BBQ and sides) - members to bring their favorite side dishes to share (salad, dessert etc) - or just come and celebrate with us.
- We will order more of the promotional bags (might be smaller size) and foam rocks - swag bag prizes (?).
- We also will do a Vendors Bingo (Sandy).
- Several volunteers will be at the HGMS show to tend the club's table.
- Sunday - Nov 10th, 2019 - we will do some clean up at our storage facility (4806 Marie Lane, Deer Park, TX 77536) at 9 am.

The November birthstones include Topaz and Citrine. Through much of history, all yellow gemstones were considered topaz and all topaz was thought to be yellow. Topaz is available in many colors, and it's likely not even related to the stones that first donned its name.

Topaz



Citrine



November's second birthstone, citrine, is a variety of quartz that ranges from pale yellow to brownish orange in color. It takes its name from the citron fruit because of these lemon-inspired shades.

A History of the Cowrie Shell Currency

From the Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum, Sanibel Island, Florida:



Excavations of burial sites of prehistoric man indicate that the first good luck charms and the earliest forms of currency were Cowrie shells. Evidence from graves found in Egypt, dating from long before the pyramids (2700-2300 BC), supports this. It is now believed that in much of Asia and Africa cowries were an established medium of exchange by 2000 BC. Money Cowries were the most widely circulated currency in the history of mankind. In their zone of circulation, a single Cowrie could travel over 9000 miles by way of caravan or boat from its original source. Commonly used to buy food, clothing and items of domestic

need, the Money Cowrie was strong enough to finance the world-wide business of trading ivory, rice, rugs, and slaves. As late as 1700's a pocketful of cowries could have been spent in the marketplaces of Burma, India, China and Africa.

- A Chinese emperor in 10AD decreed a return to the ancient shell Cowrie standard of money because the metal coins were being widely counterfeited. Earliest references to people employing shells as currency are ancient and come from China.
- By the 7th century, edicts against hoarding them had been issued. Money cowries were in greatest demand in India. Prior to the time of Alexander the Great, India had learned of Money Cowries and began trading rice for them. Here cowries were carried loose, like coins, and exchanged for food and small services. In the 1800s, cowries were still a common means of payment for taxes.
- Records dating back to 1067 AD show large quantities of cowries traveling across the Sahara to Western Africa.
- By the 1300's, we find written accounts that all internal business transactions in Western Africa were in Cowries. These cowries were strung like beads. Inflation eventually occurred when the Europeans joined the shell money trade and imported huge numbers of cowries to trade for slaves. (In the 1400's, one ounce of gold equals 8000 cowries; by 1780, one ounce of gold= 20,000 cowries.)
- In 1274, records tell of an old caravan route across the desert from Morocco to the Ghana Empire carrying cargoes of salt, figs, and cowries. Marco Polo brought back tales of cowries used as money in China as late as 1291. Polo called them "porcclani" because they resembled the shape of little pigs.
- By the Middle Ages, a major market of cowries is said to have existed in Cairo promoted by Arab trades sailing the Red Sea.
- In 1346, Muslim trader Ibn Battuta recorded how the cowries were collected in the Maldives by the tens of million and shipped off to Yemen.
- In 1433, Ma Huan, a Chinese military seaman, wrote how he witnessed the arrival in Thailand of mountainous heaps of cowries as trade for rice.
- In 1525, Muhammad Ali, a merchant from Canatore who had acquired a monopoly on the export of cowries from a Maldivian sultan, was executed by the Portuguese to take over his trading rights.

- In the late 1600's the Dutch and English traders began competing with the Portuguese in the Maldivian Cowrie trade market.
- Records from 1602 show as many as 40 Portuguese ships a year leaving the Maldives loaded with cowries, all headed for India to trade for rice. Amsterdam became a major source of supply for other nations wanting cowries for the African market.
- In India, records from 1750 show a pound of rice sold for 15 cowries. In the early 1800's, a gentleman in Cuttack paid several million cowries for the construction of his bungalow.
- In 1849, 300 tons of Money Cowries were brought from India to the port of Liverpool for redistribution to the African Coast. During Stanley and Livingstone's visit to the Congo regions, they noted the extensive use of the Money Cowrie as currency.
- In 1873, a four-masted ship, the "Glendowra" homeward bound with a heavy cargo of hundreds of bags of Money Cowries, foundered in a storm off the coast of England. For many years, these shells could be picked up on English beaches. The sinking of this ship was symbolic: with the slave trade now banned worldwide, the use of the Money Cowrie as an internal form of currency in most parts of the world was soon to end.
- As late as 1949, it took about 700,000 cowries to purchase a bride in Nigeria. In the twentieth century, five specimens of the cowrie shell were found in the Roden mounds of Alabama; and a single one in the Serpent Mound, near Petersborough, Ontario.

The money cowrie is, and has been for centuries, a revered object among the Ojibwa and Menomoni Indians, and is made use of in initiation ceremonies of the Grand Medicine Society (see Hoffman, Bureau of Ethnology, 7th Annual Report, 1885-86

(1891).



Figure 52 The megis, *Cypraea moneta*. $1\frac{5}{16}$ in. = 1 in.

Cowrie Shells, Source: Sacred Scrolls of the Southern Ojibway, Selwyn Dewdney.



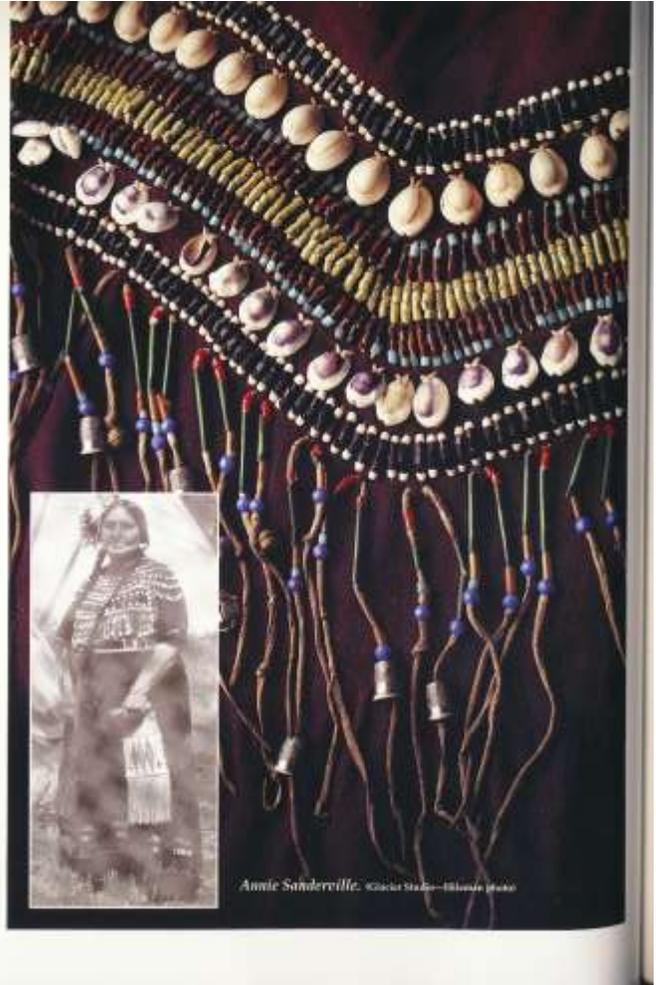
Detail, dress decorated with sinuous rows of cowrie shells and cut-beads.

The only other instance Abbott knew of was “a handsome dress possibly of Cree Origin” acquired by the Lewis and Clark expedition no later than 1806, which was decorated with four dozen money cowries. Source: **The Blackfeet: Artists of the Northern Plains. By Bob Scriver.**



Gabardine dress (shown above), circa 1900, is a classic example of Blackfeet imagination, artistry, and craftsmanship. It is decorated with purple and pink ribbons on the arms and bottom of the dress. Cut-beads and rows of cowrie shells are on the upper part of the garment. Long rawhide fringes are strung with beads, bells, and metal thimbles. Thimbles and cowrie shells caught the fancy of Blackfeet women and were eagerly sought after at the mercantile stores in Browning. This beautiful garment is similarly trimmed on the back of the dress. It is in excellent condition.

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Annie Sanderville. ©Gladys Staebler-Milwaukee Public

Figure 49 Six versions of the megis as represented in the Origin scrolls

VARIATIONS on the MEGIS THEME



Cowrie Shells (Megis) were made into Stone Carvings and Cowries were depicted by Natives on Sacred Birchbark Scrolls of the Southern Ojibway, as shown by Selwyn Dewdney in the book (pp 51, 71,72,99, 100).

Upcoming Program Listing - We are looking forward to programs.

2019 Program drafted listing is updated below with additional topics to make this an exciting year.

Date of Program	Topic	Presented by
November 18, 2019	Show and tell and show report from Sandy	Open
December 16, 2019	Christmas dinner	Open
January 20, 2020	Annual Show	Open
February 22-23, 2020	Annual Show	Open

UPCOMING SHOWS AND PROGRAMS

SCFMS and MEMBER CLUB GEM SHOWS			
Nov 8-10, Humble, TX, Houston G&MS, Humble Civic Center, https://hgms.org	Nov 23-24, Mesquite, TX, Dallas G&MS, Mesquite Rodeo Center Exhibition Hall, www.dallasgemandmineral.org		
STONEY STATEMENTS Clear Lake Gem and Mineral Society, Inc PO BOX 891533 Houston, Texas 77289			

Meeting 3rd Monday of the Month
 7:00 P.M.
 Clear Lake Park Building
 5001 NASA Parkway, Seabrook, Texas

Member of



Next Annual Show
February 20-21, 2020
Pasadena Convention Center

American
Federation of
Mineral Societies

South Central
Federation of Mineral
Societies

CLGMS is on the Web:
<http://www.clgms.org>
2/20-21/2020

Clear Lake Gem and Mineral Society, Inc

MEMBER: American Federation of Mineralogical Societies and South Central Federation of Mineral Societies

PURPOSE: To promote education and popular interest in the various earth sciences; in particular in those hobbies dealing with the art of lapidaries and the earth sciences of minerals, fossils and their associated fields.

2019 OFFICERS:	President	David Tjiok	
	Vice President	John Caldyne	
	Secretary	Trina Willoughby	
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		John Caldyne	Donna Nelson
Jim Edwards		Jim Hawkins	
	2020 Annual Show	Sandra Christiansen	
	Newsletter Editor	Vince Barrows	

Show Chairman	John Caldyne	Membership.....	Mike Flannigan
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Historian.....	David Tjiok	Education/Field Trips.....	Annabel Brownfield
Publicity.....	Cyndi McGowen	Hands On.....	Theresa Lowdermilk
Facebook.....	Trina Willoughby		

Membership Dues Jan. to Dec. 2019: Adult \$15:00, \$5.00 per additional adult at same address, Junior \$5.00, \$5.00 per member with adult at same address, Family Dues \$20.00 (4+) at same address. Send Dues to CLGMS, PO BOX 891533, Houston, TX, 77289