



Rocky Trails



December 2025

Volume 19 Issue 12

The Newsletter of the Columbia Gem and Mineral Society

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to all members. 2025 has been quite a year but it isn't over yet! We are having a Christmas Party on Monday, December 15th as detailed on page 2. This year we are going to have a white Elephant gift exchange. Should be great fun. The party will happen on the bottom floor of the Cayce History Museum (same place as last year). Hope to see you there.

Wait, there's more. We have a fieldtrip to Little Pine Garnet Mine in North Carolina planned for January 24, 2026 (*see announcement on page 9*). This is one of those fieldtrips were everybody finds garnets. The mine is known for having large almandine garnets in schist and has been pleasing rockhounds for many years. The club has had many successful fieldtrips to this location over the years but has had difficulty getting into the mine in recent years.

The show was a success! Attendance was good and sales of raffle tickets, mystery bags and geodes contributed greatly to total proceeds. On behalf of the club **thanks** to all who volunteered time to make the show a success. A special thanks to Angela, Patricia and all of the show committee members for all of their planning and preparation leading up to the show. A drawing will be conducted at the January meeting for two lapidary arts scholarships with one scholarship for those who worked at the show and one for those involved with planning and preparation

We have a number of new board members for 2026 including Jim Carter (Vice President), Liz Gregory (Membership), Terry Gregory (Web Master), and Catherine Sawyer (Programs).

These positions are very important to our club, and we greatly appreciate these folks for agreeing to fill these positions. We are well positioned to have a great 2026.

Stay in touch,
Ron Ahle

NEXT MEETING

January 19, 2026

Socializing and refreshments at 7:00 pm.
Meeting at 7:30 pm.

The January 2026 CGMS meeting will be held at **Hope Church** located at 2609 Seminole Road. It is off Broad River Rd. Use the side door, and we will meet in the Fellowship Hall. **Please** do not come into Hope Church before 6:30 pm.

PROGRAM:

The program for January will be club member Tim Anderson. Tim is an instructor at SFMS lapidary schools and will be demonstrating how to inlay synthetic and real opal chips into a stainless-steel ring blank. A full list of all items needed will be provided for anyone interested in making one on their own.

Ron Ahle will provide door prizes.

Executive Meeting

January 26, 2026

Dinner: 6 pm, Meeting: 7 pm
Grecian Gardens, 2312 Sunset Blvd.,
West Columbia. Members are welcome to attend. Only executive members can vote.

Columbia Gem & Mineral Society Christmas Party

Monday, Dec. 15, 2025 ; 6pm
Cayce Historical Museum in the downstairs meeting room
1800 12th street Cayce, SC

Bring: Appetizer/Finger Food/Hors d'oeuvers

A gift for the White Elephant Gift Exchange - Price range \$10-\$20

RSVP by Friday, Dec. 12th to Terri Tokaz with
no. attending & what you are bringing to eat.

Email - ttokaz@sc.rr.com or Home- 803-783-6365 Cell- 803-767-9170

Club will provide paper products, drinks and ice.

For anyone not familiar with a White Elephant Gift Exchange -
you wrap the gift but don't put a name on it.

We will draw numbers and starting with whoever has 1, you will pick
a gift from the selection. The next person will pick a gift or steal
it from someone who has already picked a gift until everybody has
had a chance to pick or steal a gift.

Gifts can be gem/mineral related, something silly, something to eat.



CGMS GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

November 2025, Monthly Meeting of Columbia Gem and Mineral Society

The Columbia Gem and Mineral Society, Inc. held its monthly meeting on November 20th, 2025, at Hope Church. President Patricia Stidom called the meeting to order at 7:32 PM.

During the November meeting, members voted to confirm the slate of officers proposed for the next year. Patricia Stidom stated that she will be running for president for one more year and her priority will still be finding a location for the workshop and meeting location. Let us know if you know of any property! She also stated that she would like someone to take her place as the dealer chairperson for the show committee next year. Additionally, Patricia asked Pat Carter if she would remain the Show Dinner chairperson, and Pat said yes.

Jim Cobb and Pam Etheridge, the nominating committee, announced the slate of officers for 2026:

President: Patricia Stidom
Vice President: Jim Carter
Secretary: Sophie Grimsley
Treasurer: Angela Valvasori

They also announced their nominations for some other executive board positions:

Club Liaison: Jim Cobb
Membership: Liz Gregory
Webmaster: Terry Gregory
Field Trip Coordinator: Casey Tyler

Ron stated that we need a program coordinator (*Catherine Sawyer has agreed to take over the position*). Sue has done a fantastic job over the years and can still help but someone needs to take over the position. This person coordinates programs, introduces speakers, and writes blurbs for the Rocky Trails. Casey Tyler asked if we have a list of past programs or program speaker contacts. Ron stated that all past programs are in the Rocky Trails. Steve Coker stated that he can put a list together based on the Rocky Trails. Angela said that she has spoken to the State Geologist and the State Geologist will be giving a program next year at their office. Ron volunteered to give another program next year as well.

Patricia made a motion to confirm the officer slate as presented, and the motion was seconded. There was a vote, and all were in favor of confirming the proposed slate of officers for 2026.

Historian: Patricia then brought up the historian position. Angela stated that she is currently the historian unless anyone would like to take over and would be happy to let it go. The minimum requirements for the position are to prepare an annual report using the Rocky Trails photos and information, and to document the club's activities for the year.

GENERAL MEETING MINUTES (continued)

Show Planning: Angela gave a report on the show's planning process. She said that there was bad news and good news. The bad news is that unfortunately we are not going to have gold panning at the show this year. The vendor let us down and we cannot get enough gold dirt in time for the show. The good news is that everything else is good to go. The weather during the show should be nice. Bri sent out the volunteer sign up list and instructions. Angela will hold a Zoom training for how to use the Square system tomorrow at 7:00 PM, look out for that e-mail. On Thursday, the setup for the show will start at 9:30 AM. The show trailer will be unloaded, and booths will be set up. The dealer dinner will start at 4:30 PM. Pat Carter thanked those for their contributions to the dealer dinner. She said they are planning for 120 people but usually get around 60 to 65% actually being there. Angela stated that members are welcome to attend the dinner and asked for members to please contribute food as a donation. For the show volunteers there will be a sign-up sheet to sign in and out of the show. For every 4 hours you work your name is added to a raffle for a William Holland scholarship. There's also a drawing for those who helped plan the show. There will be dealer and volunteer name tags available. Ron stated that he needs to get out to the workshop to load mystery bags into a car and take them to the show. He needs help on the Wednesday before the show; meet at 10 AM at the storage unit/workshop.

Old Business: Ron stated that he and a committee are currently reviewing the CGMS bylaws. Ron has proposed moving some of the board and committee positions around and creating a new position of IT lead. Angela then explained that there is a committee that reviews the bylaws every 5 years. The committee then brings the proposed changes to the executive board, who then bring the changes to the general club for a vote.

New Business: Patricia then brought up the CGMS Christmas Party. She stated that she will not be available in December to help plan the party, and neither will Angela. If anyone would like to take charge of organizing the party, please reach out.

Program: Before Ron lead the show and tell program, Terri Tokaz suggested that everyone watch the Ken Burns documentary on the American Revolution on ETV. Thank you to everyone who brought in items to share!

Patricia Stidom ended the meeting at 8:48 PM

Social Media Helps our Club Stay Social!

CGMS website: www.cgms.rocks

Facebook, Columbia Gem and Mineral Society, Inc:
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100066320452494>

Facebook, Columbia Gem and Mineral Society, Group:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/322192978738281/>

Instagram: Columbia Gem and Mineral Society, Inc. ([@cgms_rocks](https://www.instagram.com/@cgms_rocks))

Please like/follow our Facebook and Instagram pages and share posts

CGMS BOARD MEETING MINUTES

November 2025, Monthly Board Meeting of Columbia Gem and Mineral Society

The Columbia Gem and Mineral Society, Inc. held its monthly board meeting on November 24, 2025, at Grecian Gardens at 2312 Sunset Blvd. Members in attendance were Patricia Stidom, Tom Stidom, Terry Gregory, Liz Gregory, Terri Tokaz, Jim Cobb, Angela Valvasori, Ron Ahle, Steve Coker, Cheryl Coker, Carol Elliott, Dee Iurcovich, and Cat Sawyer. President Patricia Stidom called the meeting to order at 7:28 PM.

President: Patricia said she will look into new venues for our show. She asked about our thoughts on continuing to have the club meetings at Hope Church. There was no objection. She will also check with McKissick Museum to see if there is an option to return there (*Probably not since they are closing the museum*). Patricia thanked Jim Cobb for his hard work as President and more recently as Vice President.

Vice President: Jim gave his appreciation for the hard work at the show.

Show: Angela gave an overview of the show. Lots of volunteers came out and were very helpful. We had an improved mystery bag display and a new family helping at the salted mine. The raffle was a new activity and on Sunday Carol helped to actively sell raffle tickets. Attendance was 1222, which is about the same as last year. On the downside, Jamil charged attendees for parking without asking or even informing CGMS prior to the show. When the show chairs discussed CGMS displeasure with Jamil and requested that parking fees be removed, Jamil was unyielding until Sunday. Another negative occurrence was that the gold panning vendor never delivered the material despite cashing a deposit check. A formal email and certified letter were sent to request the money be returned.

Treasurer: Angela gave a preliminary financial report for the show. Proceeds exceeded last year due to slightly higher income and lower expenses for geode saw and trailer maintenance.

Sunshine: Sheila was not present. It was reported that Sophie Grimsley's grandfather passed away.

Newsletter: Ron has been writing all the articles for the Rocky Trails and needs new material. The Editor's Message on the first page used to be the President's Message. At some point, Ron began writing it when he did not receive input from the president. Patricia agreed to provide a message. Ron requested a Membership update of about three sentences. Ron has not been receiving speakers' biographies or program descriptions. He would like to begin receiving this again along with a list of future programs. He would like field trip reports on recent as well as upcoming trips. Since Casey was not present, Ron will talk to him about this. Dee mentioned that other clubs send out field trip announcements as soon as trips are scheduled rather than waiting for the newsletter. Field trip notices on the website could be a driver for membership since only members can participate in field trips. Ron would also like other people to contribute articles.

Secretary: Ron commented that Sophie provides excellent meeting minutes which require little to no editing before publishing in the Rocky Trails.

CGMS BOARD MEETING MINUTES (continued)

November 2025, Monthly Board Meeting of Columbia Gem and Mineral Society

Faceting Guild: On hold for now since we do not have a facility.

Website/Social Media: Patricia noted that Steve Coker opened our eyes to new ideas and thanked him for the work he did on the website. Terry Gregory has taken over as webmaster and Steve reported it was a smooth transition. CGMS needs to transfer website registration and domain from Steve's name to club ownership. Patricia reiterated a previous suggestion about having one person coordinate the various electronic platforms such as the website and social media. The person would not have to do all the posting but would coordinate people. It was suggested naming this position "IT Coordinator," and having it be a voting broad member. Liz suggested we link the Facebook and Instagram accounts. There was reluctance in the past, but we should revisit going forward. Regarding CGMS requests that come in via the website, Sue currently picks these up. Terry thinks having these contact requests via our website is a good service that we should continue. It was decided that the president should receive these requests via a club email address set up specifically for this purpose.

Club Liaison: As part of the Bylaw revision, Ron is considering discontinuing this position, as other people are managing the liaison activities with the SFMS.

Rookie Rockhounds: Patricia wants to reinvigorate this position. She commented that it was wonderful to see the excitement of children at the show and wants to encourage this since we have more children in our club. Patricia informed the board that Casey is willing to support this person. Please let Patricia know if anyone has an interest in leading this. Steve Coker suggested consulting with Boy Scouts. Cheryl also suggested schools, however it was clarified that the Rookie Rockhounds would be for club member families, not community outreach. Dee said that the Cobb County Club has junior activities once a month.

New Business:

- Terri Tokaz is organizing a Christmas/Holiday party for the club. Cayce tennis center charges \$450, and Carriage House at the Robert Mills House \$125 per hour. She will call Cayce Museum tomorrow. She suggests having it on our regular meeting night, with a white elephant gift exchange. Terri explained how the white elephant gift exchange works. If that date is not available, she will check other dates.
- Ron is working on the 2025 revision of the CGMS Constitution and Bylaws and has sent his draft to the committee, Jim Cobb and Carol Elliott, for review. The review will extend into 2026. In addition to eliminating the Liaison position, Ron suggested making Librarian a non-executive committee position. Cat suggested cleaning out and organizing the storage unit so the library can be made usable, however Ron does not think there would be room. Steve Coker recommended we keep the library because it is an important point in our favor for grant acquisition.

CGMS BOARD MEETING MINUTES (continued)**November 2025, Monthly Board Meeting of Columbia Gem and Mineral Society**

Programs: We welcome Cat Sawyer as the new Program Chairperson for 2026. She asked about types of programs the group would like. In January, Tim will give a presentation on inlay opal rings. Angela is going to coordinate a visit at State Geological Survey for the February meeting and inform Cat of the details. Cat relayed other ideas for programs. During some meetings, Cat recommends we let the speaker present first before our business meeting, especially when speakers come from out of town.

Old Business:

- Regarding the workshop location search, Cheryl is looking into zoning questions about a property on Bluff Road. Carol is aware of a couple of properties on Leesburg Rd that may become available soon, however CGMS might not be able to afford them.

Patricia adjourned the meeting at 8:57 pm.

The Club is selling T-shirts at meetings this year!

We still have two colors available, purple tie-dyed (seen below) and black. We have sizes ranging from medium to large currently available. If you can't make it to the meetings and would like to get a T-shirt, contact one of the officers in the club. We have limited supplies so don't wait!



About the Program

The program for January will be club member Tim Anderson. Tim is an instructor at SFMS lapidary schools and will be demonstrating how to inlay synthetic and real opal chips into a stainless-steel ring blank. A full list of all items needed will be provided for anyone interested in making one on their own. Many of you may have met Tim at the show (see picture below) where he was demonstrating polishing some pretty amazing opals. Having seen some of his work, he is definitely a skilled artisan. If you like opals, this presentation is for you!



January 2026 Fieldtrip

An official field trip of the Columbia gem and mineral society Little Pine Garnet Mine January 24, 2026

Join us for a guided half-day field trip to the Little Pine Garnet Mine near Marshall, NC, to collect gorgeous, large garnets! Geologically, the site is located within the mineral-rich Blue Ridge Province, where amphibolite and other metamorphic rocks host these beautiful almandine garnet crystals. There is also the chance to find staurolite in a mica schist similar to the material I found recently.

We will meet at 10AM at the Ingles Market parking lot (address below) to arrange carpools. Please note: The final access to the mine requires fording a creek, so high-clearance vehicles are recommended; we will consolidate groups at the meetup. From Ingles, we will drive together to the Sandy Bottom Trail area, where the **\$25 per person fee** will be collected.

What to Bring: Dress for cold, wet conditions. Waterproof boots are highly recommended, especially if you plan to explore or collect in the creek. Remember your collecting tools, gloves, and containers.

Contact Casey 803-319-4492 for more information

Meetup Location: Ingles Market at 5580 Hwy. 25/70 in Marshall, NC 28753



3" garnet in matrix from Little Pine Garnet Mine (*cat added for scale*)

CGMS 57th Annual Show

The 2025 show is finished! Attendance was 1222, which is similar to last year. The show was a success because of the time we spent planning and preparing and the voluntary support of many members. Thank you for all your efforts. We began in April, considered new ideas and improved on existing ones. While there were a couple of disappointments, we continued and had a good show.

A drawing will be conducted at the January meeting for two lapidary arts scholarships at William Holland or Wildacres - one scholarship for those who worked at the show and one for those who did the planning and preparation. Below are photos taken at the show by Ron Ahle.

Sincerely,
Angela Valvasori



Ron's Display Case



Madline's Display Case



Mystery Bags



Amazing Opal (worth a double take!)

South Carolina State Museum

301 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC 29201
803-898-4921

<http://scmuseum.org/events/upcoming-events/>

Hours of Operation: Mon: CLOSED; Tue – Sat: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday: 12 to 5 p.m.

Planetarium and 4D Theater Shows

Advance online ticket purchases are encouraged, especially if you wish to see planetarium and/or 4D shows

Arora

Explore the beauty of the Northern Lights in the digital dome planetarium experience, "Áróra!" This immersive cinematic journey takes guests across remote Icelandic landscapes and into space to find and understand these mystical, eerie lights.

During this award-winning show created by some of Iceland's best-known scientists, writers, photographers and musicians, you will not only witness the beauty of the aurora above Earth but also explore how these stunning displays of colors have also been seen on other planets and moons throughout our galaxy.

If you were lucky enough to see the aurora here in SC recently, the return of this show creates a special chance to revisit that experience and explore the origins of the Northern Lights! "Áróra" also highlights how various communities across the world have tried to make sense of the Northern Lights by incorporating them into their folktales and mythology. This season, guests can join the dance of these mystical lights over the cold winter skies of Iceland from the comfort of the State Museum.

Showtimes are valid through Sunday, November 23rd.

Black Holes

Unimaginably powerful, relentless, and invisible, black holes are some of the most fascinating and extreme objects in the universe. They warp space and time, swallow up stars, and can grow to monstrous sizes. How do they form? Where are they found? What would happen to you if you fell into one? Go on a mind-bending journey that brings you face to face with these strange and enigmatic denizens of the cosmos

Show Run Time: 35 min.

Museum Special Exhibit:***Apollo 16 & Beyond: South Carolina in Space***

Explore the Apollo 16 lunar mission and the historic moonwalk of SC astronaut Charles Duke. In addition to featuring many Apollo 16 objects, the exhibition will also highlight South Carolina scientists and engineers who have contributed to the field of aerospace research and exploration.

Apollo 16 & Beyond: South Carolina in Space explores the history of the lunar mission and Charles Duke, as well as other South Carolinians who have made contributions to space exploration. In addition to many Apollo 16 objects, the exhibition features items typically kept in museum collections storage. This includes a flight suit Duke wore while training for the mission and memorabilia from Lancaster's "Charlie Duke Day" following the astronaut's return to Earth.

News Worth Digging Up

Hidden for 70 million years, a tiny fossil fish is rewriting freshwater evolution

By: Neil Banerjee

Source: University of Western Ontario

Date: October 5, 2025

“A fossilized skeleton of a small fish discovered in southwestern Alberta is offering scientists new clues about the origins and evolution of otophysans, a supergroup that includes familiar species such as catfish, carp, and tetras. Today, otophysans make up nearly two-thirds of all freshwater fish around the world.”

Researchers from Western University, the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology, and several international institutions analyzed the 4 centimeters long fossil that dates back to the Late Cretaceous. Representing an entirely new genus and species, the fish was named *Acronichthys maccagnoi*. This fish is the oldest North America member of the otophysan group and provides incredible data to help document the origin and early evolution of so many freshwater fish living today,” said Neil Banerjee, Earth sciences professor. The specimen was carefully analyzed by using computed tomography (micro-CT) scans that are non-destructive (critical when studying prehistoric fossils), high-resolution X-ray images that create 3D virtual models of objects. The study estimated a new divergence time for otophysans from marine to freshwater species at around 154 million years ago (the Late Jurassic period) -- after Pangea, the supercontinent, began to break apart about 200 million years ago. The researchers have yet to understand how the tiny *Acronichthys* moved from continent to continent (as its freshwater ancestors now live on every continent except Antarctica) if they couldn't swim across saltwater oceans.

To read the entire article about *Acronichthys maccagnoi*: [Hidden for 70 million years, a tiny fossil fish is rewriting freshwater evolution | ScienceDaily](#)



Photograph of *Acronichthys maccagnoi* fossil (with scale), which was located well inland from the shoreline of the Western Interior Seaway.

Credit: Don Brinkman (Royal Tyrrell Museum)

Credit: Don Brinkman (Royal Tyrrell Museum)

AREA SHOWS

To verify the accuracy of a show date, go to the show's website or contact them directly.

December 14-15, 2025—FRANKLIN, TN: Mid-Tennessee Gem & Mineral Society, Inc: Ag Expo Park, 4215 Long Lane • Franklin, TN 37064 20 Miles South of Nashville; I-65, Exit 61; Sat. 9-6, Sun 10-5, Admission: Adults, \$6.00 (2-Day Pass, \$10.00) • Students 18 & under, \$1.00 Children under 12 with adult, FREE • Scouts in uniform, FREE. Free Parking Website: <http://www.mtgms.org/show.htm>

The Columbia Gem and Mineral Society is an organization of persons associated together to promote popular interest in and to provide means for the exchange of knowledge of the Earth Sciences – Geology, Mineralogy, and Paleontology – and of the related Arts – Lapidary and other. The Society is a member of the Southeast Federation Mineralogical Societies Inc. and an affiliate of the American Federation of Mineralogical Society Inc.

2025 OFFICERS and COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President..... Patricia Stidom.....
Vice President..... Jim Cobb.....
Treasurer..... Angela Valvasori..... treasurer@cgms.rocks
Secretary..... Sophie Grimsley.....

COMMITTEES

Membership Liz Gregory..... membership@cgms.rocks
Auctioneer..... Ron Ahle.....
Club Liaison..... Jim Cobb.....
Faceting Guild..... Tom Daniels.....
Facebook..... Sue Shrader

Field Trip..... Casey Tyler.....
Historian..... Angela Valvasori..... treasurer@cgms.rocks
Librarian..... Sheila Frame.....
Newsletter Editor..... Ron Ahle.....
Program..... Catherine Sawyer.....
Show..... Angela Valvasori/Olga Yukhno..... treasurer@cgms.rocks
Sunshine Sheila Frame.....
Website..... Terry Gregory website@cgms.rocks
Workshop..... Gary Hert.....
Workshop Location Special Committee.... Cheryl Coker..... CGMS.workshoplocation@outlook.com



CGMS Website

Please visit our website:

<http://www.cgms.rocks>

Webmaster: Steve Coker

Monthly Meeting

The meetings are held the third Monday of each month. Socializing and refreshments at 7:00 pm; Meeting at 7:30 pm.

Executive Board Meetings:

Except for January, the meetings are held on the fourth Monday of each month. Meal is at 6:00 pm. Meeting is at 7:00 pm.

Rocky Trails
PO Box 6333
Columbia, SC 29260