

TAR HEEL



ROCKHOUND

October, 2023

Catawba Valley Gem & Mineral Club, Inc.

2023 Officers and Committees

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Secretary:	Dean Russell 828- 303-1448			Southeast Federation Liaison:	Larry Huffman 828-612-4469

Club Address: PO Box 2521, Hickory, NC 28603-2521  
 Regular Meetings: Second Tuesday, 7:00 PM  
 St. Aloysius Catholic Church  
 921 2nd St. NE Hickory, NC  
 Annual Dues: Family, \$25; Individual, \$18;

The purpose of the Club is to increase the individual’s knowledge of the earth sciences and to aid in the development of lapidary and related arts and skills; to promote fellowship and exchange of ideas; to hold exhibitions, contests, lectures and demonstrations for educational purposes; to help interest more people in the gem and mineral hobby; and to capture and preserve the beauty of nature, the arts, and the works of man.

**Picnic time**  
**Harry and Janice Polly’s**  
**2821 Blowing Rock Blvd, Lenoir**  
**10/10/23 6:30pm**  
**Signup WWW:perfectpotluck.com**

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**CATAWBA VALLEY GEM & MINERAL CLUB, INC.**  
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## October President's Report



I hope everyone is enjoying the cooler weather.

The Labor Day Trip was another good trip. It was fun to see everyone that came and for a chance to do some collecting.

There were 11 members from our club that attended this year. I encourage you to consider coming next year.

Thank you to Andy for providing the presentation at the club's last meeting. Congratulations also for your upcoming graduation.

Thank you also to Tina for being willing to accept the role as Field Trip Coordinator. She has taken this role and started out running.

We had a great field trip to collect quartz and green mica.

Remember that this upcoming meeting will be the club's annual picnic. Harry and Janice have graciously volunteered to host the picnic at their house.

I hope to see everyone there.

Thank you,

Slade

### **Picnic Meeting 10/10/23 6:30 pm**

**Please! If you have not signed up at [Perfectpotluck.com](https://www.perfectpotluck.com), call Larry at 828-612-4469 and leave a message that you are coming and how many. This will help the club have proper food with no waste. Thank You!!!**

**Janice and Harry's House: 2821 Blowing Rock Blvd, Lenoir 28645**

## September Minutes

CVGMC minutes for September 12, 2023

The September 12, 2023 meeting of the CVGMC was called to order by President Slade H. at 7:05 PM.

Visitors – Amy, Eric, Benijamin

Minutes: A motion was made by Rick G. and seconded by Becky S. to accept the August 8, 2023 minutes. Motion was passed by the Club.

Treasurer Report: Bank balance was reported.

Education Committee: None

Show Committee: Next CVGMC Show is scheduled for March 22-24, 2024

Field Trip Report: September 16, 2023 at the Walter T. property in Shelby, NC to collect quartz and mica.

Old Business: None

New Business.

- 1) A motion was made by Larry H. and seconded by Harry P., to appoint Tina L. Field Trip Chairperson. Motion was passed by the Club.
- 2) Jeff S. discussed the North Carolina Museum Geology area need for upgraded mineral storage in the basement of the building. He is asking North Carolina Mineral Clubs to possibly donate money to the museum to help with the upgrades. He will present more information in the future to the CVGMC Board of Directors for recommendations to the Club on this matter.

Announcements:

- 1) EFMLS and AFMS 2025 Conventions will be hosted by CVGMC at the March 2025 Show.
- 2) CVGMC Annual Picnic will be Tuesday, October 10, 2023 at 6:30 PM. Check the October Tar Heel Rockhound for details.
- 3) Tracie J. won a beautiful agate from the EFMLS Raffle. Note: this is the third year in a row that someone from CVGMC has won a prize in the raffle.
- 4) Closing of Business: The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM

Program: "Yes, Memories of Montana: A report on the 2023 ASU Field Camp." by CVGMC member Andy K.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dean Russell, Secretary

Walter Toppins Property CVGMC Field Trip  
Shelby, North Carolina  
September, 2023  
Report by Tina Lakhotia  
Photos by Rick and Joan and Tina

Walter Toppins property sits alongside Polkville Road in Shelby, North Carolina. As a generous individual, Walter invited members of the Catawba Valley Gem & Mineral Club (CVGMC) to come out for a day of rockhounding for the smoky quartz and green mica that is found at this location. Members in attendance included Rick and Joan Glover, Richard and Shelda Aultman and their daughter Laura Aultman, Slade Harvin, Tim and Robin Heafner, Shawn O'Gara, Mike Rosso, and Tina Lakhotia. Graham Geiser and Kathryn Lee, who are Walter's personal friends, also attended, but arrived later.

Club members met at 8am and were greeted by Walter and his two red heelers, Jack and Tilly. Other animal entertainment included pigs, chickens, goats, and ducks, which were corralled beside the digging spots. Walter used a backhoe to help members reach the 3-5 foot level in the front of the property that material has been found in the past. Shawn, Slade, Mike, and Richard tugged right into the clay in the holes and after some hard work managed to locate the quartz vein where crystals would be expected to grow. Walter helped them uncover more material in the direction of the quartz vein. Slade and Shawn both found specimens in the clay. In a smaller hole nearby, Tina found some partials.

On the surface, Joan, Shelda, and Laura searched for flat crystal faces glinting in the sun to locate specimens. Everyone found pretty rocks and Laura found the very nice smoky quartz crystal you can see in an image below.

In the back of the property, Robin and Tim Heafner focused on gathering buckets of mica to bring home and clean, hoping to pick up lots of the special green variety. After cleanup, they found that lots of the mica had the beautiful green glow when light is shone through the sides of the crystals.

In all it was a glorious day to be rockhounding and the team had a lot of fun. I can't report that enough material was found that we'd include this location in another formal club outing, but Walter is an open and generous man and members can ask him for future visits if they feel like trying their luck.





## **A Great Mind Needs a Rambling Break!**

**By Cheryl Neary**

I started writing this article for the bulletin on Sunday of Labor Day weekend at the Bright Leaf Motel as I sat poolside, while all other field trippers were on their way to the Litter's quarry. I was waiting for my sister and brother-in-law to visit from Science Hill KY.

Prior to thinking about an article for this bulletin I was researching Thermopolis WY because in 2021 during the AFMS convention in Big Piney, I visited the area and loved the hot springs. While in Billings, MT at the 2023 AFMS convention the Wyoming Dinosaur Center of Thermopolis, WY was represented. They had a very interesting and educational display! I did see their sign while visiting Thermopolis in 2021 but we spent the time at the hot springs which we reluctantly left for the three hour car ride back to Big Piney.

The Wyoming Dinosaur Center has one of the largest fossil collections in the world. The Center also has dig sites in fossil-bearing layers in the western USA.

While reading about the Thermopolis I read about a famous Hole-in-the-Wall Bar made famous by the outlaws of the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang (or the Wild Bunch), with their leader Butch Cassidy. The bar was made from cherry wood cut in New York and sent to Ireland.

Now to sidetrack because I found this fascinating: per information I read from the University of Kentucky: - Black cherry is a deciduous tree that can grow to a height of 134 feet, as found in the Great Smoky Mountains in Tennessee. The tree has a spread of 70 feet. The black cherry is a member of the Rose family (Rosaceae). Black cherry is the only cherry species that furniture can be manufactured with due to its hard, reddish color wood.

The black cherry tree only matures about ten years in age, bearing small round fruit, purplish-red to black in color. It takes about 20 more years for the tree to produce a heavy crop of the bitter to slightly sweet fruit. The twigs and leaves of the Black Cherry can be

toxic, containing high levels of hydrocyanic or prussic acid. The seeds contain high quantities of hydrogen cyanide.

Black cherries were a key ingredient in the Native American dish, pemmican, a high-calorie staple. The tree bark was ground into a powder and boiled. They also brewed tea from the bark. The black cherry was also utilized by Native Americans for a variety of medicinal purposes, including coughs, colds, ulcers, fevers and burns. The inner bark was utilized by the Cherokee (from the southeastern states to treat laryngitis; the Chippewa (from the northern Midwest states) applied a salve from the inner bark to cuts and wounds. The Delaware (from the Hudson & Delaware Valleys) produced cough syrup from the fruit. In the southern Appalachian Mountains, the bark of black cherry has been used in cough medicines and sedatives. Pioneers in the Appalachians used the fruit of black cherry to flavor rum or brandy and to produce jellies.

Mmmm - haven't we all seen black cherry flavor in cough drops!

Okay - back to the Black cherry bar-

There were four bars handcrafted and sent back to the USA. The owner of the Hole-in-the-Wall Bar purchased the bar when seen at the World's Fair in Chicago. It is possible that Tom Skinner, the owner of the bar, may have been an outlaw himself!

Robert Redford who played the part of the Sundance Kid wanted to purchase the bar, but it wasn't for sale and is now part of the historical society.

The bar was named after the outlaw gang's hide-out, Hole-in-the-Wall, located approximately 75 to 80 miles to the east of Thermopolis.

The Hole-in-the-Wall Gang took their name from the Hole-in-the-Wall Pass in Johnson County, Wyoming where they and other outlaws had their hideout in the remote cabins, one now preserved in the Old Town Trail Museum in Cody, WY. We stayed in Cody on our way to the 2021 AFMS convention upon recommendations from Joan and Rick Glover as an excellent place to enter into the eastern part of Yellowstone National Park. While in Cody we decided to see a rodeo - my first - it was great!

Moving on...

The Hole-in-the-Wall Pass is located in the colorful red sandstone escarpment. An escarpment by definition is a long, steep slope usually at the edge of a plateau or separating areas of land at different heights. The "hole" in the wall is a gap in the Red Wall of the Chugwater Group. Boulders were moved by the outlaws to hinder passage. Per the USGS, the Red Wall extends 25 miles along the east flank of the Bighorn Mountains from the Red Fork of the Powder River in the north to Willow Creek at the south end of the range. The red color is from iron oxide in the rocks.

The Hole-in-the-Wall Gang you may remember from the movie Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were a group of outlaws - somewhat compared to Robin Hood because they were outraged by the wealthy cattle barons hurting the smaller ranchers. The outlaws shared their bounty with the local people who often were struggling to survive. Many of the smaller ranchers considered the Wild Bunch to be their friends - their heroes.

After reading about the outlaws in Wyoming- it made me wonder- did North Carolina also have any Robin Hood historic outlaws? I found two that caught my attention, both living during the Civil War period.

Henry Berry Lowry was considered to be a criminal or a local hero depending on who you spoke to. Henry robbed the plantations and redistributed the wealth.

Henry was of Lumbee and Scottish descent, the youngest of the ten sons of a total of fourteen children.

The Swamp gang consisted of members of the Lumbee tribe, African Americans and a Scotsman who fought against the North Carolina Home Guard who were forcing labor to build Fort Fisher near Wilmington during the Civil War. He fought against the Ku Klux Klan during the Reconstruction years.

Henry's family helped Union soldiers escape back to the North. This caused both Henry's father and older brother to be executed. To retaliate, Henry began raiding plantations and killing anyone who threatened his gang. The various man hunts made news in both the North and the South. His disappearance in 1872 is still a mystery- did he die accidentally shooting

himself while cleaning his gun or did he live out the rest of his life peacefully?

Another detour.....

Fort Fisher was built of earth and sand, which was ideal for absorbing the shock of explosives in the Cape Fear headland. A headland by definition is a narrow piece of land that projects from a coastline into the sea. The fort was named in honor of Colonel Charles F. Fisher of the 6th North Carolina Infantry, who was killed at the Battle of Bull Run in Manassas, Virginia.

Originally, there were a few mounds of earth. It was Colonel Lamb who arrived at the Fort in the summer of 1862, who knew the importance of the Fort in protecting Wilmington, the South and the Confederacy. With forced labor, mainly African-Americans- both freed and slaves, the Fort was built. The mounds were approximately 32 feet high. There were interior rooms used as bombproofs or powder magazines and were connected by underground passageways. A nine-foot palisade fence was located in front of the entire land face.

Fort Fisher kept North Carolina's port of Wilmington open to blockade-runners supplying necessary goods to Confederate armies inland. After a massive Union amphibious assault on January 1865 on Fort Fisher, its defeat helped seal the fate of the Confederacy; the supply line of the Confederacy was severed, and the Civil War was soon over.

Today, approximately ten percent of Fort Fisher still stands along with a restored palisade fence. The visitor center offers the history of the fort. The North Carolina Underwater Archaeology headquarters is also located on the property.

Yet another detour!

Cape Fear River is formed by the convergence of the Deep and Haw Rivers, flowing southeast 202 miles to the mouth of the river emptying into the Atlantic Ocean at Cape Fear. The river is a blackwater river meaning it has a slow-moving channel flow through wetlands and forested swamps. The Cape Fear River was named "Rio Jordan" by Spanish explorers in 1526. Later the river's name was changed with each



different ruler, for instance it was called the Charles River after King Charles II and later changed to the Clarendon River, when the city of Charleston was expanding. By 1733 it was commonly referred to as the Cape Fear River. This river was utilized as a key transportation route for European settlers traveling into North Carolina. During the Civil War control of the Cape Fear River was important to both the Confederate and Union forces.

The Haw River was originally named the Hau River, Haw was derived from the Native American's name for the river, Saxapahaw. Haw is also the name of a town on the riverbanks.

The Haw River flows 110 miles from its headwaters in the north-central Piedmont region of North Carolina to the Cape Fear River just below Jordan Lake Reservoir. The Haw River is the most popular whitewater paddling river in the North Carolina Piedmont Region.

In 2014, American Rivers listed the Haw River as a Most Endangered River to highlight the problems that the river faced. By 2015, American Rivers used a new approach to remediate the river, investing in projects that build resilience in the watershed to climate change and the removal of antiquated dams.

Located in the middle region of North Carolina between the Coastal Plain and the Mountain regions is the piedmont which name is from the Italian word 'ped' for foot and "monte" for hill.

The Piedmont area has elevations that range from 300 feet in the western Coastal Plain to nearly five times higher at 1,500 feet near the mountains.

Talking about mountains, Grandfather Mountain is one of the highest peaks on the eastern escarpment of the Blue Ridge Mountains at 5,946 feet. The Blue Ridge Mountains are one of the major chains of the Appalachian Mountains. The Appalachian Mountains span almost 2000 miles from central Alabama to the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Appalachian Mountains are in twelve states. Mount Mitchell, at an elevation of 6,684 feet, known in Cherokee as Attaullah, is the highest peak of the Appalachian Mountains and the highest peak in mainland North America east of the Mississippi River.

The Appalachian Mountains form a natural barrier between the eastern Coastal Plain and the vast Interior Lowlands of North America. The Appalachian

Mountains were formed by plate tectonics when two continental plates collided approximately 300 millions of years ago. During this collision of plates, huge sheets of rocks were pushed over each other. A rock layer called the Blue Ridge Thrust sheet covered the 60 miles of Grandfather Mountain.. Some rock formations date back 1.2 billion years. The mountains once were approximately ten times higher than today, however erosion, especially from water, over the years has created the present landscape.

Generally, the rocks on Grandfather Mountain are metamorphic, formed by pressure, heat, and the introduction of new substances. At the Nature Museum and at Split Rock the rocks are a metamorphosed conglomerate. Near the upper parking lot the rocks are phyllite or meta-siltstone. The Swinging Bridge is built on granular pebble conglomerate.,

The Cherokee name for the area of Grandfather Mountain was "Tanawha," meaning "a fabulous hawk or eagle."

Pioneers saw the face of an old man in the cliffs- hence the name Grandfather.

It was this remarkable landscape of caves and ravines that made it easy for the outlaw, William McKesson Blalock to hide during the tumultuous times in the 1860s.

Two families with adjoining properties began a feud in Scotland over 150 years prior and continued in the Blue Ridge over property lines and politics.

William Blalock was an infant when his father went out to hunt to never return. It was believed he was murdered by the Pritchard clan. William grows up with a fighting spirit and is given the name Keith by Alfred Keith, a bare-knuckle boxer.

His mom remarries a wealthy farmer, Austin Coffey, whom he becomes very close to.

Imagine the surprise when Keith at the age of 23 marries Malinda Pritchard, childhood friends in 1861 at Coffey's Gap.

At the wedding the feud is ignited as the Pritchard's were Secessionists, while the majority of the Blalock's were Unionists. The Coffey's were split, however,

Keith and his Stepdad, Austin Coffey, favored the Union. By the end of the wedding celebration the various family members start to feud once again - killing family members. Keith was asked if he would fight for his state in the event of war. He decided to join the Confederacy, with the intent of slipping out in Virginia across the state line. In June he travels from Blowing Rock to Lenoir to enlist in the Company F, 26th North Carolina Infantry. Keith was elected to be the sergeant by the 21 other individuals, one of them a slender, short person that turns out to be his wife disguised as his brother Sam, one of the two known women to have fought from North Carolina in the Civil War. To Keith's dismay, his troop is not deployed to Virginia. Some time later the company is ambushed while on patrol crossing the Neuse River. (The Neuse River is a river with its source in the Piedmont of North Carolina and emptying into Pamlico Sound below New Bern. Its total length is approximately 275 miles, making it the longest river entirely contained in North Carolina.) Malinda is shot in the left shoulder. Keith carries her back to camp, where her secret is revealed. She is to return home. Later Keith slips out to a spot where there is poison ivy or oak and rubs it on his body - soon to be feverish with red welts. He receives a medical discharge and both return to their home. Once home he recuperates and expects with his medical discharge that he will be left alone- but to his dismay, some of his Coffey and Boyd relatives report him to the Home Guard and that begins his career as an outlaw, as he manages to escape the Home Guard.

Prior to hiding from the Home Guard they devise a set of signals - eluding capture. In 1862, under new command, the Home Guard was ordered to round up the deserters - starting with Keith Blalock. Under Major Bingham's command any able-bodied man is ordered to surrender, if they run they are to be shot down. Numerous times Keith is cornered, captured and escapes. There were approximately 1,200 Confederate deserters hiding out in the Blue Ridge Mountains, with many in the Grandfather Mountain vicinity. Keith becomes the leader of the outlaw band of bushwhackers, each taking turns as either a lookout or providing food. At one point, Malinda and Keith escape to Tennessee where Keith joins the Union Army (1864) to help Union deserters and prisoners into Union-held territory. When Keith learns that his stepdad has been murdered - and that John Boyd ( a

relative) had something to do with the murder, Keith vows to kill Boyd which he did in 1866.

Over the years he was shot in the hand and in his eye. He is blind in one eye and living on the run affecting his health. Keith receives yet another medical discharge this time from the Union army. After the war, Keith and Malinda and their family of four sons settle back near Grandfather Mountain. Keith runs for office as a senator, but is not elected. Malinda dies in the early years of the 1900s, and ten years later, at the age of 75, Keith dies in Hickory, North Carolina where he settled after his wife's death. He was pumping a handcar along the tracks when the car jumped the tracks and crushed him to death. He is buried alongside his wife in Montezuma Cemetery in Avery County, with the tombstone reading simply the NC infantry.

Next article will be about Grandfather Mountain- stay tuned!

First Class Mail



# Tar Heel Rockhound

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Gem and Mineral Club, Inc.**

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Club Meeting

Tuesday

October 10, 2023

~~St Aloysius Catholic Church~~

~~921 2nd St NE~~

~~Hickory, NC~~

**Harry and Janice Polly's  
2821 Blowing Rock Blvd, Lenoir 28645**

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