

TAR HEEL



ROCKHOUND

MARCH 2026

Catawba Valley Gem & Mineral Club, Inc.

2026 Officers and Committees

President:	Ben Houston 704-284-2565	Education:	George Max 828-328-9107
Vice President:	Joan Glover 828-446-7633	Show Chairman:	Dean Russell 828-303-1448
Treasurer:	Terry Russell 828-303-1563	Scholarship:	George Max 828-328-9107
Secretary:	Dean Russell 828-303-1448	Field Trip:	
Editor:	Tracie Jeffries 828-430-1341		

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.

**CATAWBA VALLEY GEM AND MINERAL CLUB,
INC.**

Web Master: Mike Streeter

<http://www.cvgmc.com>

Editor: Tracie Jeffries,
3118 Barus Street, Valdese, NC
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CVGMC MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 10, 2026

The February 10, 2026 meeting of the CVGMC was called to order by President Ben H. at 7:00 PM.

Visitors: Jim G.

Program: Members sharing how they got interested in rockhound and/or lapidary arts.

Minutes: A motion was made by Harry P. and seconded by Jimmy S. to accept the January 13, 2026 minutes. Motion was passed by the Club membership.

Treasurer Report: Bank balance was reported.

Education Committee: None

Show Committee:

1. The CVGMC Annual Show is March 6-8, 2025. We will be using the Hickory Room
2. The Exhibit area will be in the main hallway, where everyone will have to pass by the exhibits to get into the show.
3. Set up for the Show will be Wednesday, March 4 th at 3:00 PM
4. Please consider where you can volunteer to help with the show.
5. Theme of the Show is "Home Grown"
6. Contact Tracie J. about having a display case.
7. We will have free admission coupons available at cvgmc.com/shows.
8. All adult patrons will receive wrist band to wear for the show.
9. Please take a sign(s) to put out the Sunday before the show. Pick back up by the Tuesday after the show. Please sign your name and number of signs taken.
10. I am picking up the rest of the show cases and related materials February 21 st in Rochester, NY. We will need help unloading everything into the storage unit on the 24 th . Time to be determined. Hopefully midafternoon.
11. Thank you to our Facebook/Marketing team for the fantastic job they have been doing.

Field Trip Report: None

Old Business:

1. CVGMC T-Shirts –T-shirts can be purchased for \$15.00 each. The Show order has been sent in.
2. Bragging Rights awards were handed out.

New Business:

1. I am ordering name tags tomorrow, anyone who would like one, at \$10.00 each, see Terry R.

Announcements:

1. Make sure you send in your membership forms and dues.
2. The Club still needs a Field Trip organizer.
3. Because of scheduling conflicts, we need someone to take minutes for June, July and August.
4. CVGMC made a donation to St Al's.
5. Wild Acres needs a field trip leader.

Closing of Business: The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Russell, Secretary

MARCH PROGRAM

The March program will be about Gypsum and its many forms.

GEM AND MINERAL SHOW

Show Yard Signs: Please put your yard signs, advertising the show, out by Monday, March the 2nd and take them down by Sunday afternoon, March the 8th.

Show hours are:

Friday, March 6 and Saturday, March 7

10:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Sunday, March 8

10:00AM to 5:00 PM

Ticket and Grab Bag Sales: Terry has already sent out emails with the schedule for ticket and grab bags sales. Make sure you are on time for your time spot. If you have any questions please contact Terry.

Exhibit/Show Cases: If you plan on doing a show case, and reserved a case, you will be able to come in Thursday afternoon, March the 5th to set your case up. You will need to have your case empty by 5:00 PM Sunday, March the 8th.

Set Up: If you volunteered, or want to help set up please meet at the Hickory Convention Center, Wednesday, March the 4th around 3:00 PM.

Take Down: What goes up must come down! We need volunteers to help take down tables, exhibit cases, and pack materials for storage. Please meet Sunday, March the 8th at 4:00 -4:30 PM.

We have had a great response this year for volunteers. Thank you for all you do!

CLUB PICNIC

I need help planning the club picnic in May. The picnic will be May 12th at 6 PM. The location will most likely be Glen Hilton Memorial Park in Hickory. I will need some people to arrive early and help set up the tables. I also need someone to cook the hamburgers and hotdogs. If you can help, please contact Tracie.

GEOLOGY MADE EASY: WHEN IS A DIAMOND NOT A DIAMOND?

Almost all rockhounds are familiar with Herkimer Diamonds, double-terminated quartz crystals so clear they sparkle like diamonds (See Image). But did you know that there other quartz crystals, found around the world, also referred to as 'Diamonds'? Some examples include:

- Bohemian Diamonds, Austria
- Carrara Diamonds, Tuscany, Italy
- Maramureş Diamonds, Ukraine
- Mirabeau Diamonds, Rémuzat, France
- Pakimers, Pakistan
- Stolberg Diamonds, Harz Mountains, Germany

There are also many examples found within the United States.

Herkimer Diamonds

Herkimer Diamonds are perfectly shaped, clear, double-terminated quartz crystals (See Images 1 - 3). Herkimer's are the quintessence of quartz crystals referred to as 'Diamonds'.

Native Americans, such as the Mohawk, were aware of Herkimer Diamonds long before European settlers appeared in America. They held the quartz crystals in reverence and would wear them as amulets. The Mohawk also made tools from the crystals and used them for trade with other tribes. When colonizers started trading with glass beads, the crystals fell out of favor.

The crystals were “rediscovered” in the late 18th century around the towns of Middleville and Little Falls, New York. These crystals were called Middleville or Little Falls Diamonds. Later, the term “Herkimer Diamonds” was coined to include all quartz crystals in Herkimer County and nearby areas.

Herkimer Diamonds are found in Cambrian-aged outcrops of Little Falls Dolomite. The crystals form in hollow cavities called ‘vugs’. At some point, the vugs became filled with silica-rich fluids that slowly evaporated. This allowed for the growth of clear, perfectly shaped, double-terminated crystals. Dolomite is a very hard rock, and it takes great effort to expose crystals. A vug may be empty, contain one crystal, or hundreds of crystals (See Image 3). Vugs may also contain druzy Quartz. Herkimer’s grow in many crystal forms, with the most perfect being double-terminated, hexagonally shaped crystals with 18 naturally faceted sides (See Images 1 – 3). Of course, not all the crystals are perfect; many grow as skeletal or hopper crystals.

Crystals are typically about 2.5 cm (1 inch) in length. Larger crystals are usually poorly formed and/or fractured. It is rare to find flawless, perfectly shaped crystals larger than 7.6 cm (3 inches) in length. Herkimer Diamonds are usually clear and colorless, but may also be reddish, yellowish, or smoky in color and have inclusions. Common inclusions may be:

- Solids - minerals such as calcite, pyrite, sphalerite, or hydrocarbon
- Liquids – bubbles of salt water or petroleum
- Gases – the most common gas trapped in bubbles is carbon dioxide (CO₂)

There are several well-established sites where you can pay to dig for Herkimer Diamonds.

- Age of Diamond Mine
- Herkimer Diamond Mine
- Crystal Grove Diamond Mine and Campground

Herkimer Diamonds are the official mineral of New York. Herkimer Diamonds are the official mineral of New York.



IMAGE 1: A nicely formed Herkimer Diamond from the Ace of Diamonds Mine, Middleville, Herkimer County, New York. Note the clarity, sharp features, double-termination, and hexagonal shape with 18 faceted sides. The crystal is 4.3 x 3.6 x 3.0 cm. Photo by Robert M. Lavinsky



IMAGE 2: A nice set of Herkimer Diamonds showing variations in crystal shapes.



IMAGE 3: A well-formed Herkimer still in its vug. The matrix rock is Dolomite.

Pecos Diamonds

Pecos Diamonds (or Pecos Valley Diamonds) are double-terminated quartz crystals found in the New Mexico desert (See Image 4 and 5). They are found in an area approximately 100 miles long and up to 25 miles wide that parallels the Pecos River near Roswell and Artesia, NM. The crystals are authigenic, meaning they are found where they formed, and have not been transported. The crystals weather out of massive gypsum deposits (See Image 4). Pecos Diamonds are unusual in that they:

- vary in size, from as large as 12 centimeters, to crystals so small they are barely visible with the naked eye,
- vary in color, they may be black, brown, clear, green, red, purplish, white, or yellow,
- may be single crystals or clusters,

- vary in crystal habit, they may be prismatic, pseudocubic, pseudotrigonal pyramids and prisms, and quartzoid,
- and they may be transparent, translucent, or opaque.

Though they lack the clarity of Herkimer Diamonds they are a favorite of collectors due to their unique variations! If you want to collect Pecos Diamonds, visit the website below for locations:

<https://pecosdiamonds.com/find-new-mexico-gemstones>



IMAGE 4: A Pecos Diamond still in Gypsum matrix.



IMAGE 5: Pecos Diamonds come in a variety of shapes.

Douglas Lake Diamonds

Douglas Lake is in eastern Tennessee near Pigeon Forge/Gatlinburg. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) created the Lake in the early 1940's by damming the French Broad River. The Douglas Lake Reservoir is about 40 miles long with 555 miles of shoreline. It flows through parts of Cooke, Hamblen, Jefferson, and Sevier counties.

The geology of the area is mainly Early to Middle Ordovician-aged sediments such as Calcareous Shale, Chert, Conglomerates, Dolomite, Limestone, and Sandstone.

Douglas Diamonds/Douglas Lake Diamonds are clear, double-terminated quartz crystals, similar to Herkimer Diamonds (See Image 6). The crystals may be single or clustered, clear, yellowish, milky to smoky in color, and often contain inclusions. Inclusions may be clay, hematite, or water bubbles. Crystals vary in size from less than .5 cm (or smaller) to 7.6 cm (3 inches in.), or rarely larger in length. Douglas Diamonds form in a variety of shapes, but a few will have the nice hexagonal, double-terminated form, with 18 faceted sides similar to Herkimer Diamonds (See Image 6).

The crystals weather out of vugs in local limestone deposits. The sharp points and clean facets indicate the crystals are authigenic, e.g., they have not been transported. The best time to look for Douglas Lake Diamonds is from November through March. During this time, the TVA drops the water levels in the lake about 40 feet, exposing acres of lakebed. Visit the TVA website for current lake levels (See Image 7).

To increase your chances of finding crystals, walk the lakebed/shoreline with your back to the sun and scan the sand/mud for twinkles or glints of light. It also helps to collect after a rain when mud may be washed off exposed crystals. Please follow the rules and regulations posted by the TVA and public access areas. In general, you can only surface collect, do not dig holes, stay off private land, and collecting should be for personal use (non-commercial).



IMAGE 6: A beautiful Douglas Lake Diamond. Note the clarity, sharp points and edges, and classic double-terminated shape with 18 faceted sides.

<https://smokymountainlake.com/douglas-diamonds-douglas-lake-off-season-vacation-rentals/>

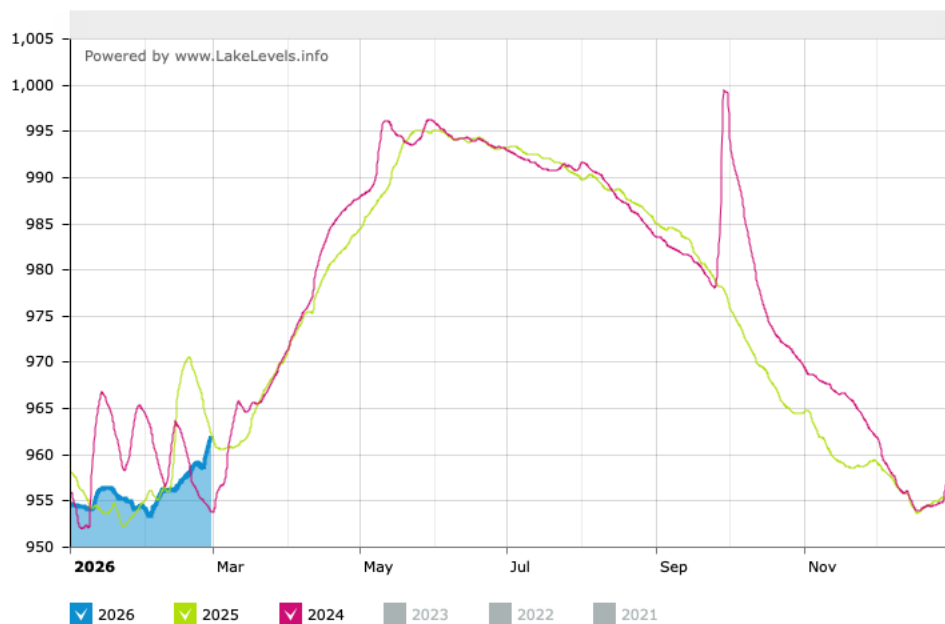


IMAGE 7: TVA graph of water levels for Douglas Lake.

<https://www.douglaslake.info/Level/>

Cape May Diamonds

Cape May Diamonds are quartz pebbles found on beaches (Higbee and Sunset) around Cape May Point, New Jersey (See Image 8). When first encountered, they do not seem very special. The pebbles are small, smooth, translucent, and resemble beach glass. However, when cut and polished, they have exceptional clarity and resemble Diamonds. They are often made into jewelry and sold to tourists (See Image 9).

Perhaps what makes them so interesting is their formation and incredible journey. The pebbles start as clear quartz crystals that weather out of quartz veins in the upper Delaware River region. These crystals and/or chunks of crystal quartz then began a long journey down the Delaware River Basin towards the Delaware Bay and Atlantic Ocean (See Image 10). As the quartz travels down the river, it's worn and tumbled into smooth, rounded pebbles. Once the pebbles reach the ocean, they are tossed and rolled in the waves, giving them a frosted look. Eventually, they wash up on beaches where people collect them. The entire journey, from quartz crystal to beach pebble, covers more than 200 miles and may take several thousand years. This is what makes Cape May Diamonds amazing!



IMAGE 8: Cape May Diamonds are water worn pebbles of transparent quartz.

By Clark Perks at en.wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16360065>



IMAGE 9: Most Cape May Diamonds are made into jewelry for tourists. Above is a beautiful bracelet made with a Cape May Diamond kept in its natural state.

<https://www.janetpaynejewelry.com/sea-glass-jewelry/natural-cape-may-diamond-bracelet>



IMAGE 10: A map of the Delaware River drainage basin, showing tributaries and major cities/towns. Note the incredible journey the Quartz travels, from the upper Delaware River Drainage Basin to Cape May!

By Shannon1 - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=74739440>

Lake County Diamonds

Lake County Diamonds are irregularly shaped shards of crystal quartz; most are colorless, but they may also be yellowish, pink, or lavender (See Images 11 and 12). The quartz formed deep in the earth under tremendous heat and pressure. Due to their unique formation, the shards are slightly harder than typical quartz and are rated 7.5 - 8 on the Mohs scale. This quartz was shattered and propelled out of the ground during a series of volcanic explosions. In essence, the quartz shards are xenoliths found within rhyolitic lava deposits. Xenoliths are fragments of preformed rock that are torn out of surrounding country rock during volcanic explosions and become inclusions in the newly formed igneous rocks. Over time, the resistant quartz shards weather out of the softer rhyolite matrix. These quartz shards, with their unusual geological history, are unique to this area.

Lake County Diamonds are also referred to as "Moon Tears". There are several variations of a local legend that explains how they received the name "Moon Tears". According to one version, a Pomo chief and the Moon fell in love. But the Moon's brother, the Sun, would not let her stay with the Chief. The Moon needed to stay in the sky to light the night and mark the seasons. Sadly, she left the chief to return to the sky, crying tears that turned to stone when they landed. These sparkling shards of quartz are now called Lake County Diamonds or "Moon Tears".

Lake County Diamonds are found near Mount Konocti, an active volcano, in the Clear Lake Highlands area, Lake County, California. Within the Clear Lake Highlands area, there are many places to look for Lake County Diamonds. Common places to hunt for Lake County Diamonds include:

- Highland Springs Recreation Area,
- Cache Creek Wilderness,
- Knoxville Creek Recreation Area,
- BLM land off of Seigler Canyon Road,
- and Diamond Mine Vineyard at Six Sigma Ranch.

To find Lake County Diamonds, look in areas of bare ground, in small creeks, washes, and soil around gopher burrows. It also helps to go out after a rain and look for the quartz shards sparkling in the sun. It also helps to go out after a rain and look for the quartz shards sparkling in the sun. Also, be aware of your location and any collecting regulations.



IMAGE 11: A large lavender-colored Lake County diamond found at Clear Lake Campground, California.

<https://www.stresslesscamping.com/blog/konocti>



IMAGE 12: A fine example of a typical colorless Lake County Diamond or 'Moon Tear'.

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/MoonTearDesigns>

Payson Diamonds

Payson Diamonds are clear, double-terminated quartz crystals similar to Herkimer Diamonds (See Image 13). The crystals formed about 370 MYA in the Martin Formation, a complex formation of sedimentary rocks including Sandstone, Limestone, Shale, and Dolomite. The Payson Diamonds weather out of Dolomite vugs. They are usually colorless, but occasionally amethyst specimens are found, and they commonly have inclusions such as hematite and hydrocarbons. Payson Diamonds are found near Payson, Arizona, in the Tonto National Forest. You can look for them over a large area in the forest, but most are found near an area called Diamond Point. The Forest Service has set aside a 35-acre designated collecting site. The collection site has several rules:

- You can only dig from October 1st through February 28th.
- Can only use small hand tools, no shovels.
- Holes can be no bigger than 4 x 4 x 8 inches.
- All holes must be backfilled.
- No commercial collecting.
- Do not dig within 6 feet of trees to protect their roots.
- Collectors are allowed 10 pounds of rock/day.

One article said the collecting site was closed from March 1st through September 30th. However, after reading many articles, it became clear that people collect in the area year-round. I could not find any clarification if the area was closed to all activity or just digging.



IMAGE 13: A large well-formed Payson Diamond.

Of course, Quartz crystals are not true Diamonds. The table below compares the characteristics of quartz with true Diamonds (See Table 1 and Image 14).

MINERAL	QUARTZ	DIAMOND
CHEMICAL COMPOSITION	SiO ₂	C
COLOR	Colorless, white, pink, brownish, grayish to black, purple, orange, green, yellow, and blue	Most are colorless, yellow, brown, or gray Rarer colors are blue, green, black, pink, whitish, violet, orange, purple, and red
TRANSPARENCY	Transparent, translucent, opaque (can vary depending on variety and inclusions)	Transparent to translucent
HARDNESS - MOHS	7	10
LUSTER	Vitreous	Adamantine
FRACTURE	Conchoidal	Irregular/Uneven
CLEAVAGE	None	Perfect in 4 directions
SPECIFIC GRAVITY	2.65 (can vary depending on variety and inclusions)	3.52
STREAK	White	Colorless

TABLE 1: A general comparison of traits between Quartz and Diamonds.

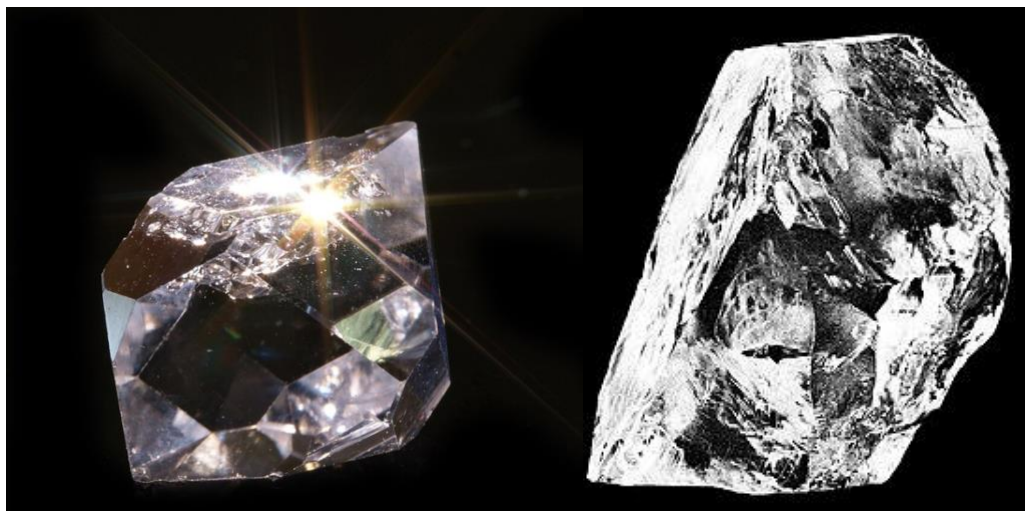


IMAGE 14: The image on the left is a Herkimer Diamond from Herkimer County, New York. It is a double-terminated Quartz crystal. The image on the right is a raw uncut Diamond, the Cullinan Diamond, which was found in 1905 in South Africa. Before it was cut the Cullinan Diamond was 3,106 carats.

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Herkimer.jpg>, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cullinan_Diamond

So why bother looking for Quartz pseudo-diamonds?

- It is fun to travel and explore new areas.
- It is an adventure and treasure hunt. You never know what you will find.
- The thrill of the hunt. Once you find one crystal it becomes addictive!
- Learning about the unique geology of these crystals adds to their value and allure.
- What else are you going to do, sit on the couch and watch reruns? Get out and have fun!

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR AREA

WHAT	WHEN	WHERE
Catawba Valley Gem, Mineral, Fossil and Jewelry Show	March 6 – 8th Fri. and Sat 10:00-6:00 Sun 10:00-4:00	Hickory, NC Hickory Metro Convention Center 1960 13th Ave Drive SE
Annual Gastonia Gem, Mineral, and Jewelry Show	March 14 -15 Sat 10:00-6:00 Sun 10:00-4:00	Gastonia Farmers Market Address: 410 E Long Ave Gastonia Farmers Market
Tar Heel Gem and Mineral Show	March 27 -29 Fri 3:00-7:00 Sat 10:00-6:00 Sun 10:00-5:00	NC State Fairgrounds, Kerr Scott Building Address: 4285 Trinity Rd NC State Fairgrounds Raleigh, NC 27607

FREE CLUB COMPLIMENTARY PASSES

This year we are trying something new and allowing each CVGMC member to give out as many free complimentary passes as they want. There is no limit on how many passes you can give to family, friends, church members, coworkers, etc. for free admission to the Gem Show. The passes no longer need to be signed by a club member. You just need to print and distribute a hard copy of these passes. Please remind everyone that these passes are good for ONE free admission - each person attending the show needs to have their own pass. The complimentary passes are attached below in this newsletter.

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INVITES YOU TO THEIR
56th Annual
GEM, MINERAL, FOSSIL & JEWELRY
SHOW
March 6-8, 2026
HICKORY METRO CONVENTION CENTER
Club Member Complimentary Pass
Good for one FREE ADMISSION**

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Club Meetings

2nd Tuesday of Month, 7:00PM

St Aloysius Catholic Church

921 2nd Street NE Hickory, NC

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Organized 1969

