

Rock Hounds Learn to Cut, Polish Pebble Collections

(Special to The Birmingham-Sentinel)

Are you a pebble collector? Do you pick up pretty stones on the beach as you walk along some distant shore in summer? Have you wondered how you can preserve the color and glow these stones have when wet?

Many of the people who attend the lapidary classes at Cranbrook institute of science enroll in the first place because they want to "do something" about a bag full of pebbles they have collected. They wonder what beauty may show up in the cutting and polishing process.

Luella Schroeder, assistant preparator at the Institute, had only a few elementary courses to start her on her way as a lapidary, plus experience in silver-smithing and jewelry making. But the equipment purchased last year by William E. Beresford, an Institute trustee, tempted her.

Many started by digging things out for herself, working at night on the stones, reading, looking and researching into minerals and rocks until now her knowledge and enthusiasm on the subject of stone cutting and polishing generates the same flame in those who come to work with her.

Many, including Jasper, agate, jade, lapis, malachite, peridot, turquoise and obsidian, are purchased in the rough by the institute to polish for its own collection, as well as for resale to mineral collectors or to those attending the lapidary classes.

"The cutting of gems by amateurs," says John Sinkankas in his book, "Gem Cutting," is nothing new. Before 1800 rather complete instructions, and sometimes equipment, were obtainable by anyone who cared to get them.

"In this respect, amateur gem cutting is blessed with many more years of tradition than most of our more recent hobbies, such as photography. In spite of its earlier beginning, only during the last two decades have serious attempts been made to give gem cutting popularity and place its methods, raw materials and equipment within reach of all."

"Roughly speaking, there are two types of people who attend the 'lap' classes," according to Miss Schroeder, "those who come in with specimens to polish for cabinet display, and those who have some knowledge of silver smithing and want to use their stones in jewelry."

"We look for the best 'pattern side,' the side of the stone that looks interesting enough to warrant. Then we grind the bottom flat and mount the stone on a dot stick, a little wooden handle to which we fasten it with sealing wax. Then we decide the shape we want, and we, the artist, begin to work on the top," Miss Schroeder said, explaining the process.

The various types of grinders in the lap room might be described as "coarse," "not-so-coarse" and "on down to the fine grit wheel which is wet with a liquid containing a very fine polishing powder. "For stones like quartz or topaz, in fact for any stone hard enough to be faceted," Miss Schroeder explained, "we use this 'faceting wheel.'" Miss Schroeder explained as she loosened the clamp and tossed off a facet on the stone she held against the polishing surface.

"The standard brilliant cut," she went on, "has 57 facets, 32 on the crown, 24 on the pavilion, plus the table." (The table is the flat top of the stone; the pavilion is the

pointed base, as in a diamond.) Faceting is done on a flat copper disc into which olive oil and diamond sawing fluid, but a hubbed. For the final high polish that brings out the sparkle, a luscious disc is used in the cutting and polishing process.

Another fascinating first step often used for many of the beach pebbles brought in is called stone tumbling. This is done in metal barrels placed on a machine which turns 25 times every minute all day long, day after day. "This is merely speeding up nature," Miss Schroeder explains. "It's what comes naturally on the beaches as the stones tumble with the waves beating on the same."

An interesting variety of people collect and polish stones as a hobby or as a profitable sideline, and their previous experience with stones varies as widely as their vocations.

In the lapidary classes this year are physicians, bankers, teachers, nurses, secretaries, high school students and factory workers — often the latter have the greater manual dexterity.

For instance, a draughtsman formerly employed by the mill straightening needles set 60 to the inch, had to be very good with his hands, and took immediately to the exacting work of faceting semi-precious stones.

Only 14 people are accepted in each of the annual four classes: spring, summer, autumn and winter. They meet for two to three sessions on eight successive Wednesday evenings and two Saturday mornings.

Usually, some time is spent studying the mineral collections on display at the Institute, one of the best "show" collections in the country.

Among the simple texts from which you can learn much about rocks and minerals also in the Institute library are available to members. Low-priced memberships are open to all.

The books are "Rocks and Minerals of Michigan," a small paperback volume, and "Gem Cutting," a lapidary's manual.

If you are vacationing in Michigan, the former book, gotten out by the geological survey division, Michigan department of conservation, tells you where to find and how to identify many different kinds of stones and minerals. The

larger volume, a "how-to" book, gives details on gem cutting, the names of stones and the equipment needed.

Thomas H. Miller, director, federal bureau of mines, estimates that last year some 60,000 children and adults were members of a "fast-growing new group of hobbyists called 'rock hounds,'" and that they picked up stones and pebbles from the beaches, woods and fields of America that had an estimated value of \$700,000.

—M.H.B.

Zoning Policy To Be Drawn Up By Planners

In an attempt to establish a policy regarding the zoning of property to business C, the Birmingham planning board Tuesday night reviewed the restrictive requirements of business C, the city would benefit in a number of ways from such zoning.

Main advantage proposed by the board for the protection of residential areas was that professional type buildings were more in keeping with the character of residential architecture.

THE PARKING problem for such businesses is met by requiring the off street type in screened landscape plots.

The statement of policy and other recommendations will be submitted to the city commission at a joint meeting to be held July 17. The board also favored the change of any zoned business A or B to Business C, when these sections meet the requirements of such upgrading.

EXPLORATORY plans were presented to the board by Herbert Herzberg, city planner, detailing the proposed development of the sewage disposal site. This 60-acre property will be utilized by recreation and public school activities.

It was the board's feeling that that of the driver training and parking lot section be carried by the board of education.

Goes to Sleep, Damages Bridge

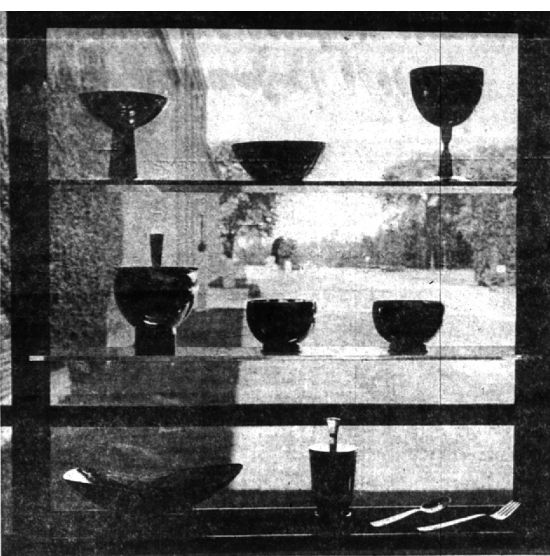
An out-of-control car crashed into the W. Maple bridge Monday, jarring an abutment loose and cracking it.

Police said the motorist Harold W. Blake, 21, of Centerline, had apparently fallen asleep at the wheel. Blake, a member of the U. S. Marine corps, was given emergency treatment for fractured ribs and lacerations at William Beaumont hospital. He was later transferred to Veterans' hospital in Dearborn.

Serving in Far East

Bruce W. Gross, aviation storekeeper third class, USN, son of Mr. and Mrs. James E. Gross, of 383 Henrietta, Birmingham, is serving aboard the Pacific Fleet and fields of America that had an estimated value of \$700,000.

—M.H.B.



A STRIKING VIEW of a portion of the student work now on exhibit at the Cranbrook academy of art galleries is seen through the galleries' west wing window. The 1956 annual exhibit, one of the most ambitious student shows in the country, is open to the public every day except Monday and major holidays from 2 to 5 p.m. through Sept. 23. Work is included from the academy's seven departments: painting, sculpture, design, metalsmithing, weaving, ceramics and architecture.

Local Women Home Appoint Supervisor After Convention Of Pi Beta Phi

THOY — Roy L. Duncan, 1061 Wheaton, a city commissioner, was named to represent the city on the Oakland County board of supervisors. He was appointed by city commission Monday night.

News copy submitted early is necessarily given preference. The "early bird" usually gets the space.

G. T. Christensen of Birmingham bid, province president of the sorority in Michigan and Ontario. Active members Sally Wilkinson of Birmingham and Patricia Aldrich of Bloomfield township also attended the convention. Sally is a member of the U of M chapter and Pat the Hillside college chapter.

Mrs. Merker will give a convention report to her club in the fall.

Construction Filling Up Birmingham

Birmingham is approaching its saturation point for new building construction which partially explains the decline in total building valuation for the month of June, declared Andrew F. Butt, building inspection officer.

The June figures show 52 permits issued with a total valuation of \$278,910. This is a drop from May, which showed an amount of \$327,183.

Butt also pointed out that the weather, steel shortage and the present steel strike will do much to limit building in the near future.

"WE WILL continue to see many more old private dwellings torn down to make space available for new construction," added Butt. The building department listed two new commercial buildings for a combined sum of \$116,000. Two Birmingham residents also were granted permits for private swimming pools.

The main new commercial structure is the 2-story Leon building which will contain office space and beauty salon at 292 Brown.

Drain Tax Again On Winter Bills

Birmingham residents again this winter will pay toward the city's share of county drains—but the exact amount will be determined in September.

City commissioners this week decided to wait a few weeks longer when more information may be available regarding city's costs in the proposed 12 towns relief drain running into the Red Run river.

Last year it was 1/2 mill. More may be required this year, commissioners feel. They also called for a report on advisability of issuing general obligation bonds at lower interest rates than would prevail if the city chose to meet its drain assessments on an annual basis, with nearly a five per cent penalty on the unpaid balance.

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5 Polio Cases Not Vaccinated, Department Says

None of the five children aged one to 14 years, who contracted polio this year, had received the Salk vaccine, according to an announcement from the Oakland county health department.

The department said eight cases of polio had been reported in the county since January 1, but that only five of these were in the one to fourteen year age group which is eligible to receive the shots.

"We want to strongly emphasize the fact that none of these five children who contracted poliomyelitis had received any of the Salk vaccine, and we again urge all parents to see that children who are eligible begin immunization promptly before the onset of the 1956 polio season," the department said.

Since the inception of the Salk immunizations in 1954, 5,321 Oakland county children and pregnant women have received three injections of the vaccine. Two injections have been received by another 75,629, and 15,000 of these are expected to receive their third injection before the onset of the 1956 poliomyelitis season.

Boom Broomfield

Close to 400 supporters and friends of State Senator William S. Broomfield, including many from the Birmingham area held a subscription dinner for him Tuesday night at Devon Lakes, Broomfield is one of three candidates for 18th congressional district representative.

There were 450 persons per square mile in Oakland County in 1950, and estimates indicate that this density increased to 580 in 1954, according to the Oakland County Planning Commission.

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