ROCK SOLID

OLATHE GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY

NOVEMBER 2026 · MONTHLY BULLETIN

A non-profit 501(c)3 group founded in March 1956, organized to educate the general public and members' knowledge of Mineralogy, Gems, Jewelry Making, Fossils and related earth sciences.

WHEN
First Thursday monthly
(except Jun, Jul, Aug, Dec)
6:00 – 8:45 PM

WHERE
Merriam Community Center,
6040 Slater St.
Merriam, Kansas 66202

DUES
$15 / year (adults)
$5 / year (minors)
Free under age 12

ONLINE
olathegemclub.org

MEETINGS

The meetings are the first Thursday of each month except June, July, August and December. The Club's annual holiday party is in mid-November and the annual picnic is in June, which includes a silent auction. Visitors are always welcome.

The meetings are at the Merriam Community Center,6040 Slater St., Merriam, Kansas 66202.

6:00 to 7:00 is not structured, as members fellowship and have a raffle. The meeting starts at 7 PM with announcements, introductions of new members, followed by the guest speaker.

Information is available at our website: olathegemclub.org

OFFICERS & CHAIRPERSONS · 2026 – 2027

President	Norman Onnen	(816) 645-1333
Vice President	Vacant	
Secretary	Alison Betts	(913) 962-9584
Treasurer	Barbara Crompton	(913) 492-6783
Website & Editor	Jeff Hatfield	(816) 263-7680
Membership Chair	Lesliee Hartman	(785) 380-6016
Field Trip Coordinator	Lesliee Hartman	(785) 380-6016
Field Trip Assistant	Larry Wells	(913) 787-5138
Programs	Norman Onnen	
Librarian & Historian	Norman Onnen	(816) 645-1333
Gem Show Chairman	Norman Onnen	
Raffle	Lesliee Hartman	
Association Delegates	Chet McLaughlin & Mandy Lorenz	
Alternate Assoc. Delegate	Larry Wells	

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We're on the move.....

As of Nov. we are moving to the Merriam (KS) Community Center for our OGMS club meetings. This rather new facility, built in 2020, is located at 6040 Slater St., Merriam, KS 66202 (and for those who are familiar with the IKEA store on highway I-35, the Center is just one block East of IKEA). Note that this Center shares the site with a Johnson County Library branch, but in two separate buildings. They share the parking in an adjacent garage (a two-story structure with the upper level open and having an elevator and enclosed stair tower). This garage opens to a courtyard from which the Center and library are easily recognized and accessible. The entire site and facilities are very user friendly, convenient and ADA compliant.

As we do not hold a Nov. club meeting (since we are involved with the Nov. 6-8, 2026 Gem and Mineral Show), our first event at the Merriam Center will be our Nov. 19 holiday party. And then we are on the calendar to meet at the Center Jan. 7, Feb. 4, April 1, and May 6, 2027 for our regular club meetings. The Center has three dedicated meeting spaces/rooms which are adjacent to each other, so please watch the Bulletin for our room location on any particular evening. Meeting times will remain 6pm to 9pm (as before) and we will be required to exit the facility NLT the 9pm time as the entire facility closes at that time. We look

forward to our new home-away-from-home and will be interested in your comments on our new digs (to keep it related to rockhounding!).

For our Nov. 19 holiday party, a participation list was begun at our Oct. club meeting. Within the next week OGMS members will receive a registration form, via email, for those who have yet to register. So that we may be close to accurate on our food order, we ask for the form to be completed and returned no later than Sunday, Nov. 15. (See the item below concerning the menu, gift exchange, shared cost, etc.)

As in the past we will not have a Dec. 2026 club meeting since these last months of the year are very busy times for our members. So looking forward, on Jan. 7, 2027, in our new meeting space, our program will consist of Bill Shefchik, a retired geologist, discussing "Tectonic Plate Collisions: Geological Train Wrecks". Thank you to OGMS member Jeannie Feimster, who with her husband Jim, attended this lecture in Aug. at the Linda Hall Library, and suggested we ask Bill to present to our club. Perhaps we can get Bill to explain why the mid-continent ridge under Kansas failed to complete the split of the North American continent only a few million years ago. (BTW, Bill is retired from Burns and Mac, and kindly has positive things to say about Black and Veatch, from which some of us retired, while some others worked at both places over time).

Our Nov. 19, 2026 Holiday Party

On Thursday, Nov. 19 we will once more consume good food, enjoy our club friends, and share/trade gifts in a somewhat unusual way. So that we may have a reasonable idea for the amount of food needed, reservations are needed by Nov. 15. (Questions to Norm Onnen; 816 645 1333 (cell), onnenne@kc.rr.com).

The club will stand a portion of the expense and the shared cost is $10 per adult, $5 for children (ages 13-17) and free for under 13 years of age. (Cash or check payable to OGMS). The catered food (from Hayward's BBQ) will include pulled pork, burnt ends, brisket, smoked pit beans, cheesy corn, potato salad, bread/buns, sauce, pickles, etc. Utensils, pop and water, etc. will be provided. Participants are asked to bring a dessert to share.

Those participating in the gift exchange are asked to bring a wrapped rockhound, fossil or jewelry type item (somewhere in the $10-$15 range). For those who have yet to be exposed to the exchange, a quick explanation. Each person will have a number (the number from the attendance sheet you sign when you arrive). As the first number is called the individual will select and open a gift. Subsequent numbers will be called, and that new person will either choose to capture a previously opened gift, or select and open a yet to be opened gift. (Captured gifts may only be traded three times). At the end of the session, the first three who have opened gifts may trade one time (to make up for not having previously opened gifts available when their number was called). Sound complicated? Once under way it goes well and everyone apparently enjoys the session with most returning year-after-year. Rock on!

For our new space, we are not allowed to decorate the walls, ceiling or light fixtures, and we must leave the space in the condition it was when we arrive. The Center adheres to no lighted or heated smoking material, tobacco products or illegal substances. Also, no alcohol will be allowed or consumed (without a permit, which we, OGMS, have chosen to not obtain).

OGMS Sale & Lab/Shop Status



On Oct. 23rd and 24th OGMS members Robin and Duane Hicks hosted a large highly organized rock sale at their home in Bonner Springs, KS. Offered were crates of obsidian, geodes, thundereggs, dendritic opal, petrified woods and much more. The club itself was involved in the organization of a raffle and sale of mystery bags, the proceeds of which are being applied to the start up of a lab/workshop for the club. Thanks to Barbara Crompton, Alison Betts, Michelle Hicks, Angel & Derrin Skorupan, and Trevor Huston (and probably others) for their help in this successful sales and lab prep event. Watch for more information concerning the lab once check out and maintenance of the equipment is completed and is in place. This should occur in the next few weeks.

Gem and Mineral Shows

The Nov. 6-8, 2026 G&M Show is just around the calendar corner. For new OGMS members, this Nov. show is a product of the Shows of Integrity, however our clubs are active participants. To that end our members have free access to this show via their membership cards. Additionally some club members will have individual sales tables, and per agreement with the Shows of Integrity and our Association, each sales table will submit 10% of their sales to their individual clubs. Also for this show we are seeking donations of items to be sold at the Association booth (which benefits the Education/Scholarship fund), as well as OGMS members to man the Association booth during the show.

The Mar. 12-14, 2027 G&M Show is our (the KC Association of which OGMS is a member) show and the Shows of Integrity is the active participant. For this March Show we organize and produce the show with the other seven Association clubs. We seek the same assistance with the Association booth and donations, as well as other positions necessary to put on and run the event. More information on this will be provided as the date gets closer, however for this particular show we, the members, place display cases (to which each club benefits financially for each case placed). It is not too early to be thinking about organizing and placing a display case showing individuals' and clubs' rocks, fossils, jewelry, etc. interests. To that end, many members have their own display cases, however the club has some cases that are available to borrow for those interested. (Contact me, Norm Onnen; 816 645 1333, onnenne@kc.rr.com to reserve a case and/or to let me know if you intend to place a display).

At the March show some will be interested in the Special Exhibits planned. Included will be Gary Staab (a world-renowned local paleosculptor), Hastings (NE) Museum (showing some of Gary's early works as well as a portion of their extensive meteorite collection), the Johnston Geology Museum (caretaker of the world famous Hamilton Quarry Fossil Assemblage), the always popular Mr. Bone's, flint knapping, the world class fluorescent room display, and others.

From the Past…

Members will recall presentations to our club by Dr. Rolfe Mandel (Oct. 6, 2022. Topic: Searching for Evidence of the First People in the Americas: A Geoarchaeological Perspective) and by Dr. Justin Holcomb (April 3, 2025. Topic: The Western Stemmed Tradition and the Peopling of the Americas: Recent Discoveries in the Far West). These busy people never find time to slow down. Recent publications include "Late Quaternary landscape evolution in river valleys of the Nebraska Sand Hills, USA" by Dr. Mandel, and "Human resilience in cold desert environments: Late Pleistocene archaeology at Connley Cave 4, USA" by Dr. Holcomb. And now, "The geoarchaeology of planetary exploration: new approaches to space heritage" has been co-authored by them. A little light reading once snow falls in our area.

Also, members will recall a presentation to our club by Dr. Jennifer Raff (Jan. 8, 2026 on her highly acclaimed book "Origin: A Genetic History of the Americas"). Dr. Raff, an anthropological geneticist at the University of Kansas, described Denisovans, an extinct cousin of Neanderthals and our own species, Homo sapiens. This species was discovered in a Siberian cave. Some modern populations, it has been determined, carry a small percentage of DNA from Denisovans, indicating interbreeding with Homo sapiens - - thus making us related to Denisovans AND Neanderthals. Now, just published, there has been discovered in the Denisovan cave evidence of an extinct ice age yak (referred to as "Yak X" pending official scientific naming). This bovine species lived alongside the extinct auroch (the ancestor of today's domesticated cattle) and lived from about 250,000 to 27,000 years ago. The Yak X bones, having been found in the cave gives reasonable consideration that it was on the Denisovan menu. (KC Star, 10/26/26).

Timely Beryl Presentation

Our Oct. 3 presentation about beryls by Tom Tivol came at a unique time considering an article in the just received Sept.-Oct., 2026 Mineralogical Record. The article entitled "Minerals of The Utah Durangite Locality, Thomas Range, Juab County, Utah" includes reference to topaz, bixbyite, pseudobrookite, pink beryl, hematite and garnet. Surprisingly, it does not specifically mention red beryl (aka bixbite) which is the "type locality" of this very rare and valuable beryl. Many of our members have collected trilobites and topaz from the Thomas Range and with any luck at all many may have unknowingly collected the elusive red beryl. It would be worth the effort to check long forgotten stashes of minerals brought back from past trips there.

Also, from this article, it is apparent that my previous reference to potential red beryl and bixbyite being found in New Mexico (see the piece in the Oct. Rock Solid Bulletin) is citing the Black Range in the Gila Wilderness area of New Mexico - - although there still has not been credible evidence of this mineral ever being found there.

This week I have discovered a red beryl in a private collection here in Kansas City. It is slightly smaller than a thumbnail. (See photo. The Wah Wah Mountains are near the Thomas Range and the actual gemstone site is entirely private and patrolled).



(NEO photo)

And, from the Sept.-Oct. Mineralogical Record - - Another article, entitled “Some Rarities from the Mim Mineral Museum” (in Beirut, Lebanon) cites a specimen of Bikitaite from the Foote Lithium Company Mine, Kings Mountain, Cleveland County, North Carolina. So, bikitaite is described as being a very rare lithium-aluminum tectosilicate zeolite mineral (so rare that 2 small (3-6.5 cm) specimens of the mineral have recently been advertised for sale in the $2,450 - $3,000 range). Found originally in Zimbabwe in 1957, the NC mine is listed as the only other source of significance (now a report of a possible discovery in the Canary Islands). Perhaps our NC OGMS members can discover a specimen of bikitaite and share their experience.

Museums, Sternberg

Budget cuts have resulted in the announcement that the Sternberg Museum in Hays, KS will close to the public effective Dec. 18, 2026. The issue was that the facility required $1.3 million in expenditures and had $20 million in deferred maintenance looming. This museum, a part of Ft. Hays State University, holds more than three million fossils and other specimens from the region including the Great Plains, including several that are “type” specimens. A part of the closure apparently had the behind the scene idea of reducing the holdings through “deaccessioning” or transfers (maybe sale) to others which might include private individuals. This caused immediate alarm in the scientific and interested community as once such items are released they would in all likelihood be inaccessible to science, researchers, etc. and forever lost to the public. A statement was issued that the museum would need a dedicated infusion of over $1 million/year, over several years, if the closure determination were to be somehow reversed.



With that several individuals and groups, alarmed by the prospect of losing such an important icon sprung into action. Most importantly the Bob and Pat Schmidt Foundation pledged a $1 million match to a similar amount being raised. To date gifts just over $800,000 have been pledged and it appears the maximum will soon be reached before Dec.

As recent as last week hearings in Topeka have resulted in the closure date being rescinded and that a long term plan for the museum is being developed. That however appears to be hopeful and much needs to be done to insure continued funding extends keeping the museum open for more than the next 1-2 years. There have even been suggestions of somehow removing the museum from the umbrella of the University. All traveling along I-70 should stop by Hays, KS to see and support this exceptional museum, considered the best between Chicago and Denver. Its holdings, activities and impact certainly support that label.

Museums, Hastings, NE

Another museum of significance is the Hastings Museum in Hastings, Nebraska. Just south of Grand Island, NE (which is on the major E-W I-80 across NE) this museum is a great surprise and is clearly the major museum between Chicago and Denver in terms of regional and natural history holdings - - and of their nature dioramas. If you’ve seen the KU and Denver dioramas, you’ll be very impressed. And surprised with those in Hastings. Visitors off I-80 to the facility will want to arrive early as it is easy to want to spend more time than first anticipated once you enter.

As an unintentional prompt of sorts Hastings Museum will be a Special Exhibit at our March 2027 show, and will be placed adjacent to the working special exhibit of our area's much requested paleosculptor Gary Staab. The connection is that Hastings is more or less the start of Gary's career and there are several of his pieces there, some of which the museum will be bringing to our March show. Gary, this past summer, installed his massive bronze cast bison at each side of the Smithsonian Natural History Museum entry in Washington DC. Of interest also is that the museum in Jan. will be celebrating its 100 year anniversary and will have functions throughout 2027.



Paleosculptor Gary Staab with a mock up of the DC bison (NEO photo)

A New Arizona National Park, Etc.

The 12,000 acre Chiricahua National Park (the nation's 64th) has just been established as an upgrade from national monument status. It joins the ranks of the Grand Canyon, Petrified Forest and Saguaro as the fourth national park in Arizona and is located in the remote SE corner of the state about 35 miles south of the I-10 exit at Willcox in Cochise County Arizona. The change from national monument to national park is likely to have little impact (particularly funding) beyond signage and branding. This site lies about 1/2-way around an 85 mile scenic loop drive (from Willcox to Cochise - both leaving and return to I-10) and consists of only a park headquarters. No other towns or services exist (except for Pearce and adjacent Sunsite - a remote retirement village, population of about 2,000) on this loop which was once a stronghold of Cochise Apache Indians. The Chiricahua National Park's express purpose is to protect what is known as a "wonderland of rocks" (towering hoodoos of rhyolite and wildlife). For rockhounds the entire remote area is a prime area for the collection of various kinds of agate.

This national park designation masks the decade-long controversy related to the Bears Ears National Monument in SE Utah. This location was created as a 1.3 million acre monument by President Obama in Dec. 2016, shrunk to 200,000 acres in 2017 by President Trump, re-established to 1.3 million acres by President Biden in 2021, and shrunk to 121,000 acres by President Trump in 2026. Litigation continues.

Call For Submissions

The Rock Solid Bulletin is made from member submissions. Tell us about the geode you cracked open on a creek bank or the week spent hunting topaz in the Thomas Range. Send a joke, a poem, a puzzle, a sketch, or a page of photos with a few lines under each. If you've never written for a newsletter, send it anyway. I'll fix the spelling and send you the edits to approve before anything runs. Email your piece to hatfield.jeff@proton.me.

New Members (Since Sept. 2026)

Jim Beezley	Shawnee, KS. Interested in gem cutting, crystals, minerals, fossils & agates
Benjamin Benson	Overland Park, KS. Interested in minerals & fossils
Nancy Holcroft Benson	Overland Park, KS. Interested in “all”
Diana Benson (Youth)	Overland Park, KS. Interested in “all”
Henry Benson (Youth)	Overland Park, KS. Interested in gem cutting, crystals, minerals & fossils
Howard Callihan	Lawrence, KS. Interested in “all”
Gary Felkner	Leawood, KS. Interested in “all”
Isaac Hartman (Renewal)	Topeka, KS
Michelle Hicks (Renewal)	Bonner Springs, KS. Interested in “all”
Michael Holt	Lee’s Summit, MO. Interested in lapidary and fossils
George Kobzej	St. Joseph, MO. Interested in gold prospecting
Virginia Phillips	Parkville, MO. Interested in crystals, minerals, fossils and “other”

Other new members, joining at the Oct. 23 and 24 sale, will be listed in the next Bulletin.

And now…… OGMS member Lucy Griffin has moved from Portland, Maine to Perth, Australia with her family. We’ve become International!

UPCOMING EVENTS

If you have interest in any of the shows listed here, please check the status of the shows and promoter notices. For a more complete regional and national listing, visit rockngem.com.

Oct. 31 - Nov. 1, 2026	OK Mineral and Gem Society Annual Mineral and Gem Show; 608 Kiamichi Place, OKC, OK
Nov. 5, 2026	KU Event: Staging Nature: Dioramas, Museums, and our Changing Relationships to the Changing World; 1340 Jayhawk Blvd, Lawrence, KS 66045
Nov. 6-8, 2026	Shows of Integrity 47th Annual G&M Show; KCI Expo Center 11730 NW Ambassador Dr, Kansas City, MO 64153
Nov. 15, 2026	An Evening With Tom Tivol; 9101 Nall Avenue Prairie Village, KS 66207
Nov. 19, 2026	OGMS Holiday Party; Registration deadline Nov. 15th. Click here for the sign up form.; 6040 Slater St., Merriam, KS 66202
Jan. 7, 2027	OGMS Club Meeting; Bill Shefchik, Geologist, retired; Topic: "Tectonic Plate Collisions: Geological Train Wrecks"; 6040 Slater St., Merriam, KS 66202
Feb. 4, 2027	OGMS Club Meeting; Merriam, KS Community Center; 6040 Slater St., Merriam, KS 66202
Mar. 12-14, 2027	65th Annual KC Gem & Mineral Show; KCI Expo Center 11730 N Ambassador Dr, KCMO 64153
Apr. 1, 2027	OGMS Club Meeting; Merriam, KS Community Center; 6040 Slater St., Merriam, KS 66202
May 6, 2027	OGMS Club Meeting; Dr. Jay Kalbas; Director KS Geological Survey; Merriam, KS Community Center; 6040 Slater St., Merriam, KS 66202