
What's New in the Mineral World?



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by **Thomas P. Moore**
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TPMoore1@cox.net



In late June of this year, visiting the Ste.-Marie-aux-Mines show in the beautiful Vosges Hills of Alsace, France, I found that this show is fully living up to its reputation as a major conduit for Moroccan minerals into the Western show scene. You will see my report on the show in the September-October 2015 issue of our magazine, but meanwhile this midsummer online report begins with a few new, very colorful Moroccan goodies that have appeared on the Internet, some of which were seen in Ste.-Marie and some of which (unless I missed them) were not. (Additional examples will be shown in the magazine report.)

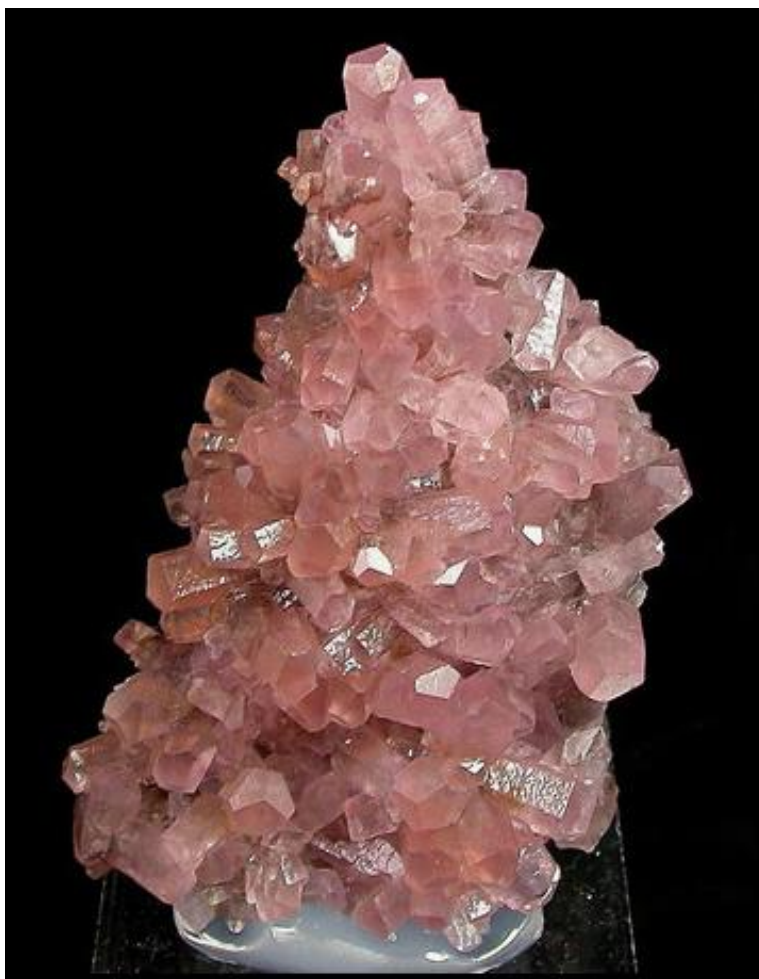
Morocco Online

A July-August update on the site of Joan Rosell's *Rosell Minerals* (rosellminerals.com) offers some good-looking specimens of **pyromorphite** from the Bou Iboulkhir mine, Moulay Bouazza, Khénifra, Meknès-Tafilalt region: Joan writes a bit mysteriously that "They come from a Moroccan locality that once was known by the presence of pyromorphite but not with this quality and less represented in collections." Bright yellow-green barrel crystals to 5 mm are sprinkled, sparsely to fairly generously on brown goethite matrix; the find occurred in April 2015.



Pyromorphite, 4 cm, from the Bou Iboulkhir mine, Moulay
Bouazza, Khénifra, Meknès-Tafilalet region, Morocco.
Rosell Minerals specimen and photo.

Another Spanish dealership, that of *Mch Minerals* (mchminerals.com) has a “New minerals Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines edition” update featuring items picked up—as you might expect—at the Ste.-Marie show, including six splendid miniature to cabinet-size groups of **cobalt-rich calcite** (not “cobaltocalcite”—an invalid species name) from the Agoudal mines area of the famous Bou Azzer cobalt-mining district. We have seen pink cobalt-rich calcite from Bou Azzer on the market for a while now, and sometimes its specimens boast an even richer, deeper pink than the *Mch Minerals* examples do; however, these specimens, from “a very recent find,” are large, clean, nearly damage-free (to judge from the pictures) rounded clusters of sharp, trigonally terminated scalenohedral crystals protruding evenly all around.



Co-rich calcite, 6 cm, from the Agoudal mine, Bou Azzer, Morocco. *Mch Minerals* specimen and photo.

John Veevaert of *Trinity Minerals* (trinityminerals.com) didn't attend the Ste.-Marie show this year, but he *was* in Europe at about that time, and he has returned with miscellaneous one-of-a-kind of "classic" persuasion (I'll show one of these later). He also has a fine lot of **acanthite** from the Imiter mine, concerning which John writes the following:

The Imiter mine in Morocco has produced some of the finest specimens of acanthite known. This mine is nearing its end, and no new specimens have come out in the last few years. This group [of specimens] is from a small hoard squirreled away by miners at the mine. All of the pieces have better than average luster for acanthite.

Indeed: while most of the familiar loose groups of sharp, somewhat distorted acanthite octahedrons from Imiter are tops for form, most are luster-challenged; by contrast, the several miniatures now on John's site are as bright as the best from the old hallowed places in Germany and Mexico. And if John is right that "the mine is nearing its end" you'd be wise to pick up one of the best-and-the-brightest now, while you can.



Acanthite, 4.2 cm, from the Imiter mine, Ouarzazate, Morocco. *Trinity Minerals* specimen; John Veevaert photo.

To return briefly now to the Bou Azzer cobalt mines—this major locality has recently turned out some of the best, most beautiful **roselite** specimens ever seen, and John Veevaert picked up a few in Europe *before* the Ste.-Marie show. Specimens reaching into the small-cabinet size range are thick, lush coverages of translucent to transparent, red-purple roselite crystals to 9 mm individually over matrix plates which seem fairly to drown in all that vivid color.



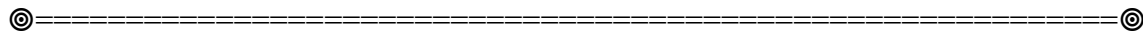
Roselite, 6.7 cm, from the Aghbar mine, Bou Azzer, Morocco. *Trinity Minerals* specimen; John Veevaert photo.



Azurite, 3.5 cm, from the Oumjrane mining area, Er Rachidia, Meknès-Tafilalet region, Morocco. *Fabre Minerals* specimen and photo.

Morocco has several fine localities for **azurite**, and one of the most recently come to light is the occurrence near the towns of Oumjrane and Alnif in Er Rachidia Province, Meknès-Tafilalt region—see, in the January-February 2011 issue, my report on the 2010 Denver show, with a photo of an Oumjrane azurite thumbnail that I picked up there for just \$100 (exemplifying the HQLP, i.e. High-Quality-Low-Price, phenomenon or principle). Azurite from Oumjrane is distinctive in that the crystals are flattened and wedge-shaped such that in subparallel aggregates they suggest overlapping fish scales, and in that they commonly have the brilliant “electric” blue color that’s rare, and highly prized, in the species. April 2015 saw new finds of azurite of this type at Oumjrane, and Jordi Fabre (fabreminerals.com) offers gorgeous specimens on his site which are loose crystal groups between 3.5 and 9 cm, with malachite and white barite as minor accompaniments to the vivid blue azurite.

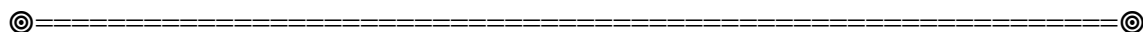
Also the Oumjrane-Alnif area is the site of the currently very active, rapidly deepening Bou Nahas mine, exploiting a polymetallic deposit so far chiefly noted for good specimens of yellow-gray barite and miscellaneous sulfides. For many particulars, go to the site of Tomasz Praszkiér’s *Spirifer Minerals* (spiriferminerals.com) and click on his just-posted feature, “Minerals of the Oumjrane-Bou N’has area, Morocco.” This is the latest of a continuing, excellent series of field trip reports which Tomasz and his



compatriots at *Spirifer* have been providing for several years now. The report features photos of desert landscapes, towns, people, specimens, and Tomasz and his friends disappearing into old mine adits and coming out again, grinning possessively, with clumps of rock on which crystal points twinkle under the dirt, as if politely asking for fuller exposure...and in the report there is text as well, and a map, so that by the time you finish you'll know quite a bit about this exciting contemporary locality. You will know, for instance, that there are two distinct azurite collecting sites in the area. One, just south of the village of Oumjrane, is an underground mine begun by the French and abandoned in the 1970s, but worked by specimen-seekers in 2000-2010: it is from here that the "electric," fish-scaly azurite specimens come. The second site, 15 km northwest of Oumjrane and near the village of El Fecht, consists of underground workings productive of rounded clusters of azurite crystals found floating in layers of marl, the crystals distinguishable from their Oumjrane brethren by a darker blue color, blockier shape, and only medium luster. Azurite specimens of both types are now up for sale on the *Spirifer* site.



Azurite, 5 cm, from the Oumjrane mining area, Er Rachidia, Meknès-Tafilalet region, Morocco. *Spirifer* Minerals specimen and photo.





Azurite, 2.3 cm, from near El Fecht, Oumjrane mining area, Er Rachidia, Meknès-Tafilalet region, Morocco. *Quebul Fine Minerals* specimen and photo.

Between the two azurite-producing places lies the Bou Nahas (*Spirifer* writes “Bou N’has”) mine, now exceeding itself for **barite** specimens. Transparent yellow, tabular barite crystals to 10 cm are coming out as loose floaters, jumbled groups, and matrix specimens with barite crystals rising from a white, chalky material. A visit to the *Spirifer* site to check out Tomasz’s good, brief “locality article” on Oumjrane is heartily recommended.



Barite, 7 cm, from the Bou Nahas mine, Oumjrane mining area, Er Rachidia, Meknès-Tafilalet region, Morocco. *Spirifer Minerals* specimen and photo.

Onward from Morocco

The specimens of **volborthite** which are just beginning to come out from the Milpillas mine, Cuitaca, Sonora, Mexico are far and away the best examples of that very rare species ever found anywhere. Just a handful of them made it to the 2015 Tucson show, and about 30 came with one dealer to the 2015 Ste.-Marie-aux-Mines show (as will be seen in the September-October issue), but among web dealers it seems to be Jordi Fabre (fabreminerals.com) who has most of the volborthite goods so far. Jordi's posted specimens, collected in April 2015 from Level 26 of the Milpillas mine, show little elongated clusters and fans, mostly under 1 cm, of lustrous yellow-green to forest-green, tabular volborthite crystals on a matrix of hardened white clay. Small thumbnails typically have one or two isolated volborthite aggregates, and miniatures and a few small-cabinet-size specimens show several aggregates sparsely spotted around the same white matrix material. Of course, good volborthite doesn't come cheap, at Jordi's or anywhere else. This remarkable find reinforces Milpillas's status as one of the "hottest" localities in the world right now.



Volborthite, 1.5 cm, from the Milpillas mine, Cuitaca, Sonora, Mexico. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

Also Jordi has five specimens, 6.4 to 9.1 cm, of **hyalite opal** from a November 2013 find at Tarcál, Eperjes-Tokaj Mountains, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Hungary. This hyalite forms thick, colorless, totally transparent, waxy-looking blankets, in some cases with further crown-shaped hyalite excrescences rising from them, all over white aragonite coatings on dark brown matrix of volcanic rock: unusual and attractive specimens from a

locality which has been proving generous (at Ste.-Marie this year and last year there was a Hungarian dealer with a tent-full of similar pieces, presumably from the same discovery). Like most hyalite, this is intensely fluorescent green in shortwave ultraviolet light.



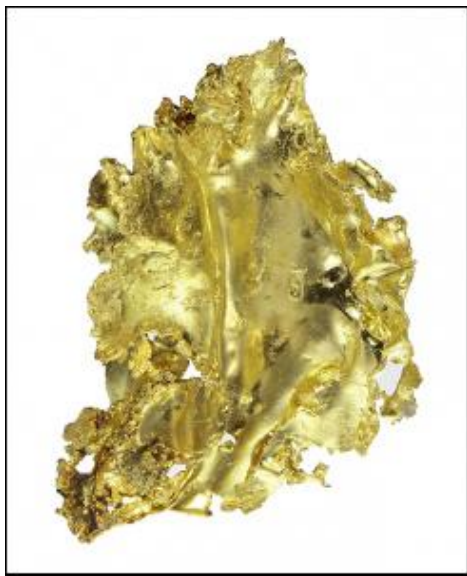
Hyalite opal, 6.6 cm, from Tarcál, Eperjes-Tokaj Mountains, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Hungary. Fabre Minerals specimen and photo.

California, that most apocalyptic of U.S. states, is now undergoing a terrible drought and widespread wildfires, but *under* the ground all is well: Rick Kennedy of *Earth's Treasures* (earthstreasures.com) continues to dig the distinctive specimens of **aquamarine beryl** which he has been bringing to shows for the last few years from his California Blue mine in San Bernardino County. The aquamarine crystals now being offered on his website are rather pale-colored but gemmy for the most part, and distinctive in that they taper towards the terminations (rather reminiscent of some crystals from Adun Chilon in Russia). The very likable 3.2-cm crystal shown here costs \$300. Rick also has matrix specimens showing aquamarine and quartz crystals on crests of “cleavelandite” albite and/or on tan-colored microcline.



Aquamarine beryl, 3.2 cm, from the California Blue mine, San Bernardino County, California. *Earth's Treasures* specimen; Rick Kennedy photo.

As if Rick Kennedy's aquamarines were not enough for the devoted California collector, there are also the many superb **gold** specimens shown in a June 29 update on the site of Brian and Brett Kosnar's *Mineral Classics* (minclassics.com). In size these California gold specimens range from thumbnail to a robust 7 cm, and they represent three classic localities, namely the Jamestown district, Tuolumne County; the Eagle's Nest mine, Placer County; and (more vaguely) the Grass Valley district in the Mother Lode country. Habits vary, but all of these are outstanding gold specimens, and if you can't afford them you can at least ogle them on your screen. My favorite is the single example from Jamestown, of the "bent leaf" style—once in the late Richard Kosnar's personal collection.



Gold, 4.2 cm, from the Jamestown district, Tuolumne County, California. *Mineral Classics* specimen and photo.

Tom Spann's online *Mineral Masterpiece* dealership (mineralmasterpiece.com) has a "New Fine Mineral Specimens" page with 18 cabinet-size specimens of the winning baby-blue **hemimorphite** that has been coming lately from the M'Fouati mine, Bouenza Department, Republic of Congo (Congo "Brazzaville," that is—the former French Congo). Some of these large and dramatic specimens are simple botryoidal coverages of solid hemimorphite on matrix plates; some are stalactiform aggregates; and many specimens of both styles are attractively peppered with small crystals of cerussite, willemite and mimetite. We've been seeing this material around the market for a few years now, as this old locality, long dormant, is now enjoying attention from French prospectors and dealers. Tom's online selection of blue hemimorphite is one of the most impressive lots I've seen yet.



Hemimorphite, 9.5 cm, from M'Fouati, Bouenza Department, Republic of the Congo. *Mineral Masterpiece* specimen and photo.

And in the “Thumbnail Gallery” of *Mineral Masterpiece* there are also many fine things, and just because it’s a “masterpiece” in my favorite size range I can’t fail to show you the superb 2.4-cm **bixbyite-on-topaz** specimen from Maynard’s Claim, Thomas Range, Utah, for which Tom asks \$950.



**Bixbyite on topaz, 2.4 cm, from Maynard’s claim, Thomas Range, Utah.
Mineral Masterpiece specimen and photo.**

I return now to *Mch Minerals* (mchminerals.com) in order to display something very new from Portugal: **elbaite in lepidolite** matrix specimens newly rescued from some open-pit lepidolite workings called the Alvarrões mine, Goncalo-Seixo, Amarelo-Vela, Guardia district, Portugal. No, these aren’t elbaite specimens in the same league as those from the pegmatites of Brazil, Afghanistan or California; rather, they are chunks of silvery gray-white matrix in which gemmy, bright pink to red elbaite (“rubellite”) crystals to 2.5 cm lie flat; the suggestion is of the elbaite-in-lepidolite specimens which once came from the old Stewart Lithia mine in California, except that the Portuguese crystals are brighter, gemmier and better individualized than the Stewart mine ones. According to the website, “This new locality...has produced a [small] number of pieces,” and a few miniature to small-cabinet-size examples are now being offered in a July “New Minerals” update.

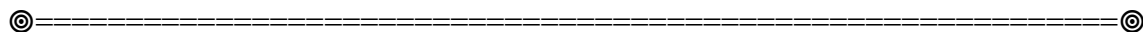


Elbaite in lepidolite, 9 cm, from the Alvarrões mine, Goncalo-Seixo, Amarelo-Vela, Guarda district, Portugal. *Mch Minerals* specimen and photo.

And now for your dessert at *Mch Minerals*: a wonderful 6-cm V-twin of **ferberite** from Panasqueira for a wonderfully HQLP-type price of 85 Euros (about \$93):



Ferberite, 6 cm, from Panasqueira, Portugal. *Mch Minerals* specimen and photo.

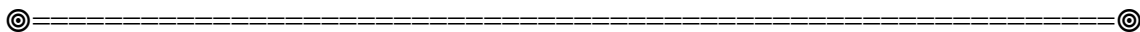


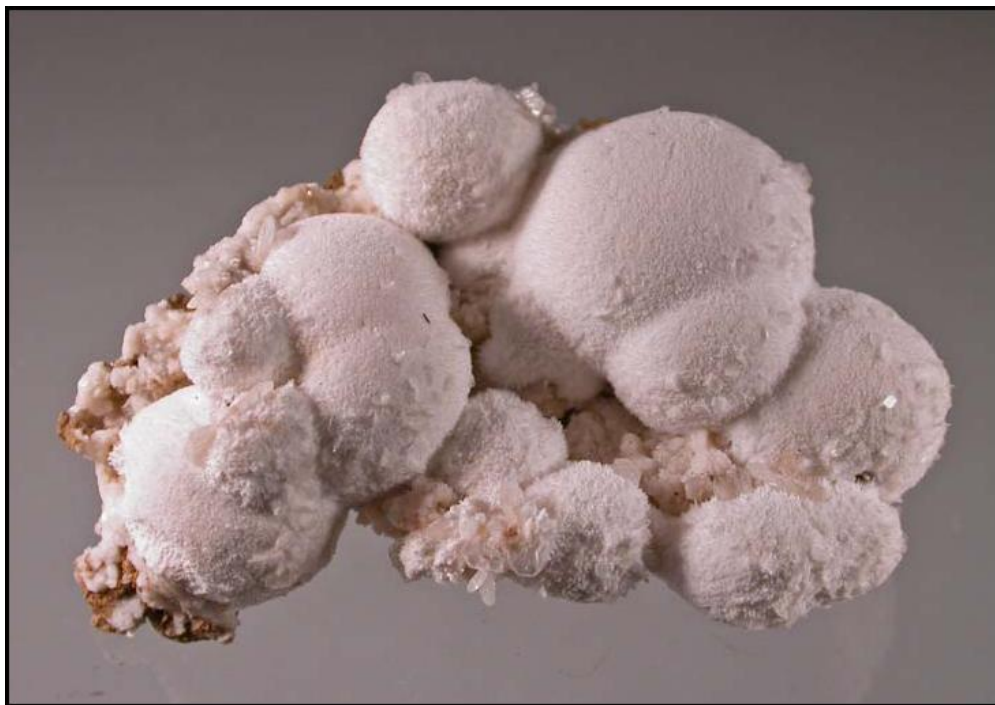
A July 8 update on the site of Rob Lavinsky's *The Arkenstone* offers 15 cabinet-size specimens (five of which are now sold) which are thin druse coatings of blue-green microcrystals of the copper hydroxide-sulfate **langite** over chunks of matrix to 16 cm across. These come from a find in 2013 at the ancient Podlipa deposit in the L'ubietová (Libethen) ore field near Banská Bystrica (formerly Neusohl), Slovakia—the type locality and namesake for libethenite. The specimens do not have what you'd call dramatic aesthetics, being just uniform coverages of microcrystals, but they do represent a revival of sorts at a venerable classic locality, and langite is certainly a very rare species in attractive specimens which *never* have crystals larger than this.



Langite, 13.8 cm, from the Podlipa deposit, L'ubietová, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. *The Arkenstone* specimen; Joe Budd photo.

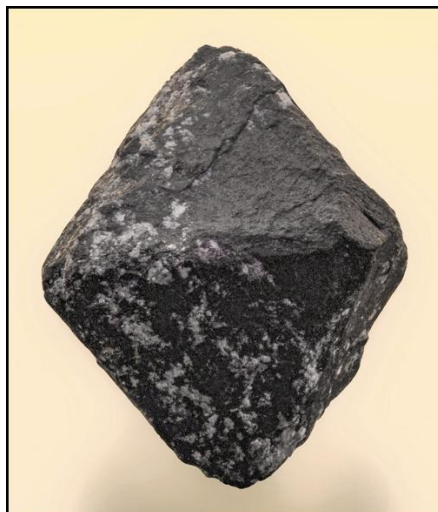
The always-interesting, Canada-based website of *David K. Joyce Minerals* (davidkjoyceminerals.com) has a new lot of good specimens of several zeolite species from the Bay of Fundy, Nova Scotia, of which the most notable, I think, is **mesolite**, in miniature to small-cabinet-size pieces which show well-articulated spherical aggregates of radiating acicular mesolite crystals on stilbite, the spheres to several centimeters in diameter. Specifically, the mesolite specimens come from Cap d'Or; also new from this and other collecting sites in the basalt cliffs around the Bay are good specimens of thomsonite, natrolite, gmelinite and calcite.





Mesolite, 6.7 cm, from Cap d'Or, Bay of Fundy, Nova Scotia. *David K. Joyce Minerals* specimen and photo.

Not even I am quite old enough to remember it well, but in the years around 1960 there was a surge on the mineral market of what have held up, in all the years since, to be easily the world's finest crystals of **chromite**: loose, complete, dull black, only slightly rough-surfaced octahedrons to 2 cm on edge. The locality for these remarkable items is Hangha (or Hanga), Kenema district, Eastern Province, Sierra Leone—possibly a chromium mine, or possibly a place where the loose chromite crystals were found in an alluvial concentration. In any case, and naturally, the chromite crystals are almost never seen on the market today; however, four of them *are* to be seen (although two are already sold) in an August 3 update on the site of *Andy Seibel Minerals* (andyseibel.com). If you don't want to purchase either of the remaining two, you should at least check them out and thus educate yourself regarding the best known examples of an important and common ore species seen elsewhere almost exclusively in massive form or at best, very rarely, as microcrystals. The chromite octahedron shown here measures 1.6 cm on edge, and Andy has priced it at \$450:



Chromite, 1.6 cm, from Hangha, Kenema district, Eastern Province, Sierra Leone.
Andy Seibel Minerals specimen and photo.

In 2010, Paul Melville and David Rosewell revived a locality for distinctive specimens of **pyromorphite on malachite**: Brown's deposit (or "Rum Jungle"), Northern Territory, Australia. In the 1970s the unmined Pb-Cu-Zn orebody, accessed by surface trenching, had produced small numbers of very good specimens of cerussite, malachite and pyromorphite (see the article in the September-October 1980 issue of *Mineralogical Record*). But the 2010 specimens which debuted at the 2011 Tucson show are something else again: rolling masses of deep green, botryoidal malachite spotted all over with yellow-green to olive-green pyromorphite crystals from 2 or 3 mm to 1 cm individually. We have seen no fresh supplies of this material for the past five years, but Geoff Krasnov of *Geokrazy Minerals* (geokrazy.com) relieves the drought by offering ten specimens from the 2010 lot. On his website, under "Pyromorphites," you'll see very good pieces from this Australian occurrence from 6 to 14 cm across for mid-three-figure prices. Geoff says that no further specimen mining at Brown's deposit is anticipated.



Pyromorphite on malachite, 14 cm, from Brown's prospect, Northern Territory, Australia. Geokrazy specimen and photo.

Another familiar presence in these online reports, Mike Keim of the online-only *Marin Minerals* dealership (marinmineral.com), writes in an August 15 update of a “recent large find” of loose, thumbnail-size crystals of chromium-rich and vanadium-rich **dravite** (“chrome tourmaline”) from Landanai, Arusha Region, Tanzania. The loose, gemmy crystals that Mike is now offering range in color from yellow-green to a luxuriant emerald-green; despite some small nicks and scuffed surfaces, these are fine gem-crystal items, and more evidence of the good job Mike does in keeping up with gem-crystal developments in Africa.



Chromium-rich dravite, 2.4 cm, from Landanai, Arusha Region, Tanzania. *Marin Minerals* specimen and photo.

In addition, an August 18 posting on the *Marin Minerals* site displays some loose, gemmy, bright yellow to yellow-orange crystals of “apatite” (surely this is **fluorapatite**) from a “mid-2015” find at Namalulu, Tanzania—a locality which Mindat lists as the Namalulu tsavorite deposit, Simanjiro district, Manyara Region. The singly terminated crystals have slightly rough surfaces and rounded edges (like the dravites from Merelani, they look a bit careworn), but they are beautifully colorful and have lots of gem-rough potential. Nor do I think I’ve seen *quite* this hue in fluorapatite crystals from any other locality.



**Fluorapatite, 2 cm, from Namalulu,
Manyara Region, Tanzania.**
Marin Minerals specimen and photo.

Quite a few entries back I promised to tell you about a classic or two that John Veevaert brought back from his recent visit to Europe—so let me conclude this report on that classic note. One of John’s prizes from that trip is a fine miniature of **galena pseudomorphous after pyromorphite (?)** from the lead mine called Wheal Hope, in Perranzabuloe, Cornwall, England—a mine long regarded as the world’s second-best locality for such pseudomorphs. (And you *do* know what the best locality is, if you think about it: the Kautenbach mine in the Mosel Valley of Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany.) Cornwall’s Wheal Hope turned out these specimens during the period 1790-1820, and, with their hexagonal-prismatic forms, they have always been taken for pseudomorphs after pyromorphite, like their German cousins...but in December 1993, Michael Merry went collecting on the old dumps of Wheal Hope and found specimens in which the galena pseudocrystals are accompanied by unaltered prismatic crystals, not of pyromorphite but of yellow **mimetite**; it is thus possible that the original, classic specimens are all galena pseudomorphs after *mimetite*. For the splendid oldie shown on a July 6 update on the *Trinity Minerals* (trinityminerals.com) site—and shown below—John asks \$300.

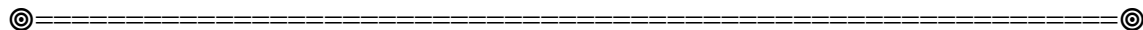


Galena pseudomorph after pyromorphite (or mimetite), 3.8 cm, from Wheal Hope, Perranzabuloe, Cornwall, England. *Trinity Minerals* specimen; John Veevaert photo.

Finally, how about the *color* on this, another one of John Veevaert's gleanings in Europe? It is a **copper-rich smithsonite** from the ancient mines of Laurium, Attika, Greece, worked during the 5th century B.C. "Golden Age" of Athens, then again for about a century until the 1970s by the French, and still being scratched at today by Greek and foreign specimen-fanciers. For this gorgeous smithsonite John asks an HQLP-level price of \$175:



Smithsonite, 4.5 cm, from Laurium, Attika, Greece. *Trinity Minerals* specimen; John Veevaert photo.



Have I whetted your appetite for fine minerals, dulled, before now, by too many dog-days of heat and ennui? Well, it's good if I have, because now the pulse of the mineral world is beginning to quicken: the Dallas Symposium is happening as I write, and the Denver Show comes in September and the Munich Show in October, and before too long the September-October 2015 *Mineralogical Record* will be arriving at your address. Isn't thinking about these things more fun than following fore-emanations of the coming year's *presidential campaign*...?

