

# 50 Year History of the Tidewater Gem & Mineral Society

By Brooks Britt, Collaborator

*The following information is a culmination of accounts from a number of documents maintained by the club through the years. These accounts attempt to reflect the significant events from before the club was formed until now. We must thank many pioneers of our club who maintained these records and allow us to now celebrate their vision.*

Through a next door neighbor, H.P. Gaven met Warren Redford, in the year of 1958. Right off they, like all true rockhounds, talked and swapped specimens. The possibility of a future club was mentioned even then. Warren was a resident of Richmond at the time, but was a frequent visitor of Norfolk.

Months passed, by the spring of 1959, H.P. (Pat) had found others who shared his enthusiasm in the mineralogical field of natural occurrence. Among these were Bernard Gearheart, Michael Jawalka, George Stetson, and Lynn Forehand. Then through a mutual acquaintance he learned of the Matthews family, Robert, and Dorothe, with their daughter Leslie-Beth, had been studying, and collecting for years. Warren had moved his family to Norfolk. Pat now with his wife Elna's encouragement, really began working to get enough people interested, together to organize a club. He investigated every rumor he heard of anyone "liking rocks". Most turned out to be false, some amusing, like the one he ran down that resulted in meeting an astronomer! Some of the rumors led as far as Hickory and Great Bridge.

When inquiring of authorities as to information concerning the formation of a rock club, Pat says he received the most encouragement and information from Dr. Ben Hur Wilson, and Mrs. Bernice Rexin. Now all that remained to be done was to get those interested together. This he accomplished by inviting them to his home for the purpose of organizing a club.

The first meeting was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. H.P. Gaven, 5539 Elizabeth Avenue, Lansdale Gardens, Wednesday, July 15, 1959, at 8:00 p.m. Those present were the following: Warren Redford, Michael Jawalka, Bernard Gearheart, George Stetson, Lynn Forehand, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Matthews, Leslie-Beth Matthews, and Mr. and Mrs. H.P. Gaven.

The club was organized and named, "The Norfolk Gem and Mineral Association". After planning to hold another meeting at an early date for the purpose of electing officers, the meeting was adjourned.

The second meeting of the Norfolk Gem and Mineral Association was held at the house of H.P. Gaven on Wednesday, July 22, 1959. The purpose of the meeting was election of officers and to further organize the activities of the club. The officers elected were:

- H.P. Gaven – President
- Robert Matthews – Vice President
- Michael Jawalka – Treasurer
- Mrs. Vivian L. Ott – Corresponding Secretary
- Warren Redford – Recording Secretary

After the election, the President appointed the following:

- Ralph Cheatham – Membership Chairman
- George Stetson – Program Chairman

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- Warren Redford – Field Trip Chairman

It was decided the club would hold its next meeting, August 12, 1959, at 8:00 p.m. Mrs. Ott extended an invitation for the club to meet at her home, 6100 Sylvan Avenue.

Mr. Stetson informed the club at that time that the Norfolk Museum of Fine Arts and Sciences has space available for the club to hold its meetings there. Everyone agreed that the club would hold one regular meeting each month. They also agreed that two early projects of the club should be; the organization of a Junior Club, and that a permanent mineral display be placed in the Norfolk Museum of Fine Arts and Sciences, for exhibition.

After some discussion the dues of the club was agreed upon at \$3.00 per annum for one member of a family, each additional member of the same family the amount of \$1.00.

Several members brought gem and mineral specimens that were viewed with keep interest. Some of them were planning to bring trading material to the next meeting for a swap session. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned in favor of a general discussion of mineral locations and coming events.

By late September 1959, the club had grown from twelve charter members to more than fifty. At this time the youngest member of the club was eight year old Larry Redford.

Of significance is the guest speaker for the December 2, 1960, meeting of the club. At this meeting John Sinkankas, author of “Gemstones of North America” and “Gem Cutting A Lapidary Manual”, addressed the club. Newly elected officers were also installed. They were H.P. Gaven, President; Robert Matthews, Vice President; Mrs. Albert S. Morris, Secretary; and Michael Jawalski, Treasurer.

Officers for 1963 were James T. Schermerhorn, President; Charles R. Spencer, Vice President; Charles McBee, Treasurer; Ruth Schermerhorn, Secretary and Bulletin Editor. At this time they were meeting the first Friday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the River Terrace Room, Giant Open Air Market, Campostella Road, Norfolk.

In August, 1963, club meetings were taking place in the Hospitality Room, Norfolk Federal Savings and Loan Association, on Tidewater Drive and Cromwell Road.

In 1971, the Norfolk Gem and Mineral Association hosted its first club show at the old Virginia Beach Civic Center, also referred to as “The Dome”. This show included competitively judged exhibits with ribbons given for the winners.

On April 4, 1980, in a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Norfolk Gem and Mineral Association it was determined that it was in the best interest of the organization to offer an amendment to change the name from Norfolk Gem and Mineral Association to Tidewater Gem & Mineral Society.

On May 2, 1980, a quorum being present, a meeting of the members was held and the proposed amendment was adopted by receiving more than two-thirds of the votes entitled to be cast by

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members present or represented by proxy at the meeting. Thus the club became known as **Tidewater Gem & Mineral Society**.

Officers elected for 1991 were Mac Davis, President; Marilyn Dupree, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Rena Cassidy, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Sandy Danysh, Secretary; and Terry Wells, Treasurer.

Officers elected in 1992 were Charlotte Hall, President; Ed Gatling, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Orena Cassidy, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Terry Wells, Treasurer; and O.P. Danysh, Secretary.

In January of 1993 the club meeting location was changed from Tidewater Community College, Virginia Beach Campus, to The Salvation Army Recreation Center on the corner of Raby Road and Virginia Beach Blvd.

In February of 1993 the club decided to have a contest to name the monthly bulletin. By March 1993, there were 60 entries submitted for the board to choose from. The winning entry was submitted by Al Miller and "The Tidewater Prospector" was born.

In April of 1993 the club conducted its first annual auction. The auctioneers were Jim Baker and Emery Dixon.

Officers elected for 1993 were Charlotte Hall, President; Ed Gatling, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Marilyn Gardner, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Lloyd Schiffelbian, Treasurer; and O.P. Danysh, Secretary.

Officers elected for 1994 were Sonny Conner, President; Caroline Hatley, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Mac Davis, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Lloyd Schiffelbian, Treasurer; and Rose Schumacker, Secretary.

Officers elected for 1995 were Sonny Conner, President; John Schumacker, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Charles Gregory, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Lloyd Schiffelbian, Treasurer; and Rose Schumacker, Secretary.

Officers elected for 1996 were Rose Schumacker, President; Charles Gregory, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Deb Fild, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Lloyd Schiffelbian, Treasurer; and Marilyn Dupre, Secretary.

Officers elected in 1997 were Rose Schumacker, President; Paul Midgett, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Dot Arguelles, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Lloyd Schiffelbian; and Kelly Midgett, Secretary.

Officers elected in 1998 were Paul Midgett, President; Joaquin Issac, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Sonny Conner, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Lloyd Schiffelbian, Treasurer; and Rose Schumacker, Secretary.

Officers elected in 1999 were Bob Barnhill, President; Bubba Ward, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Lynn Barnhill, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Lloyd Schiffelbian, Treasurer; and Ginny Zaun, Secretary.

Officers elected in 2000 were Bob Barnhill, President; Bubba Ward, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Lynn Barnhill, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Lloyd Schiffelbian, Treasurer; and Ginny Zaun, Secretary.

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Officers elected for 2001 thru 2008 were Mac Davis, President; Warren Redford, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Michael Jackson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Lloyd Schiffelbian, Treasurer; and Cheri Jackson, Secretary.

In May of 2008 the club meeting location was changed from the Salvation Army Recreation Center on the corner of Raby Road and Virginia Beach Blvd. to the Calvary Temple on Brickell Road.

Officers elected for 2009 were Brooks Britt, President; Warren Redford, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Michael Jackson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Lloyd Schiffelbian, Treasurer; and Cheri Jackson, Secretary.

*Of special note is the fact that our current Treasurer, Lloyd Schiffelbian, has been in office serving this club for seventeen (17) consecutive years from 1993 to present.*