

The New Mexico Mineral Symposium, a Forty-year Journey

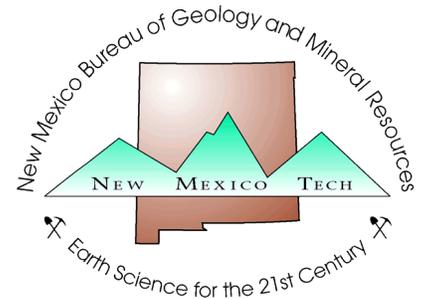
Peter J. Modreski

40th Annual New Mexico Mineral Symposium
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The annual [New Mexico Mineral Symposium](#) provides a forum for both professionals and amateurs interested in mineralogy. The meeting allows all to share their cumulative knowledge of mineral occurrences and provides stimulus for mineralogical studies and new mineral discoveries. In addition, the informal atmosphere encourages intimate discussions among all interested in mineralogy and associated fields.

The symposium is organized each year by the [Mineral Museum](#) at the [New Mexico Bureau of Geology & Mineral Resources](#).



Abstracts from all prior symposiums are also available: <https://geoinfo.nmt.edu/museum/minsymp/abstracts>

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—Peter J. Modreski

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When I proposed to give a talk this year about the 40-year history of the symposium, I knew I had given a retrospective talk about it before, but in honesty I was quite amazed to realize that this talk had already been 20 years ago—how time goes by! The symposium has grown greatly in attendance, moved its location around for the talks, banquet, and motel tailgating sessions, and the Mineral Museum itself has moved twice, ultimately to its present superb new building in 2015. Since most of our present attendees will be least familiar with the early years of the symposium, the bulk of this abstract will be a repetition of the text of my 1999 20-year summary (Modreski, 1999). Which follows!

The New Mexico Mineral Symposium was organized in 1979 to provide an opportunity for amateurs and professionals interested in the mineralogy of New Mexico to meet and exchange information about minerals and their occurrence in the State. The first symposium was held in Northrop Hall of the University of New Mexico (UNM) on Sept. 29-30, 1979. The co-chairmen were Ramon S. DeMark, Rodney C. Ewing of UNM, and Peter J. Modreski, and the symposium was identified as being cosponsored by the Albuquerque Gem and Mineral Club, UNM Geology Department, and Friends of Mineralogy. It was Ray and I who basically conceived the idea of a symposium and started organizing it. This first symposium consisted of 10 talks held on Saturday, and a field trip Sunday to the Blanchard mine, Bingham NM. This was in the “old days”, when a visit to the Blanchard mine with its well known and well crystallized fluorite, barite, and galena was a special event that required permission from the company, Hansonburg Mines, Inc., that was then working the property.

The second and all subsequent symposia were held on the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (NMIMT) campus in Socorro, NM, under the sponsorship of the New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources. Cosponsors over the years have included the Albuquerque Gem and Mineral Club, New Mexico Tech Mineralogical Society, Los Alamos Geological Society, New Mexico Geological Society, Chaparral Rockhounds, UNM Department of Geology, New Mexico Museum of Natural History, NMIMT Geology Department, and New Mexico Tech Cooney Mining Club.

After the second symposium in 1980, there was a gap of a year when no symposium was held. It seems to have been the feeling at the time that perhaps

there was only enough interest to support a biennial symposium. However, enthusiasm appeared high after the 1982 symposium, and it has been an annual event on the NMIMT campus ever since, held from 1980-84 usually in Weir Hall and from 1985 onward in the Macey Center auditorium. New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources staff organized and chaired the symposia; Robert M. North was the chair from 1980-87, Marc L. Wilson from 1989-91, and Virgil W. Lueth from 1994 to the present, with Robert W. Eveleth regularly assisting and doing the job in during the intervening years.

Beginning in 1983, keynote speakers were invited to give a special presentation (or two), beginning with the Bureau's own Bob Eveleth. Bob's talk and slide show, presented in a somewhat impromptu setting in the back of the El Matador Lounge at the El Camino restaurant, was a particularly enjoyable and memorable one for its treatment of the tall tales and shifty characters in New Mexico's mining history. His talk may also qualify for the longest title of a presentation at the symposium (see below).

A Saturday evening banquet became a regular feature of the symposium starting in 1984; these were held in the Macey Center except for 1989-92 when the banquet was in the quaint and historic (but acoustically challenged) Garcia Opera House. Collectors who wished to sell or swap specimens began setting up mineral displays in their rooms at the El Camino Motel, starting on Friday evening, and this became an “officially” publicized feature beginning with the 6th (1985) symposium. In 1993 the “tailgating” was moved to the Super 8 Motel, which then became the principal conference motel.

The first three symposia included field trips held on Sunday. As noted above the first year's trip was to the Blanchard mine, the second trip was to the Magdalena district (Graphic-Waldo and Lynchburg mine dumps), and the third was to the Orogrande district, Otero County. In 1984 and thereafter no formal field trip was held, and the symposium talks were expanded to 1½ days, with a silent auction held on Sunday afternoon. In lieu of a field trip, field guides for self-guided trips to various mineral localities in the state were prepared by the Bureau and made available at the symposium.

Looking back at past topics presented at the symposium, the first symposium included papers on several areas then relatively little known but now considered “classic” New Mexico mineral localities:

the Red Cloud fluorite-copper-rare earth deposit in the Gallinas Mountains, and the red beryl and pseudobrookite occurrence near Paramount Canyon in the Black Range, as well as papers on the Harding pegmatite, the Blanchard mine (Hansonburg district), and others. The 3rd (1982) symposium saw the first paper, by Ray DeMark, on the unusual minerals of the Point of Rocks phonolite sill, a locality that provided subject matter for a number of subsequent talks. The first presentation about minerals from the schists in the Picuris Range near Pilar was made in 1986, also by DeMark who described cyprine (blue vesuvianite), piemontite, thulite (pink zoisite), and associated minerals. Talks at the first three symposia were confined to localities in New Mexico, but beginning in 1983 with a talk by Richard Graeme on Bisbee, Arizona, talks on neighboring states, Mexico, and occasionally beyond have been included. Beginning in 1982, abstracts of those papers dealing with New Mexico were reprinted in *New Mexico Geology* in addition to being printed in the abstracts booklet distributed at the symposium.

Invited keynote speakers from the first twenty symposia are listed below; the titles of their presentations are approximate (given in parentheses) when

these were not printed in the symposium program. A table giving additional details about each symposium and the featured speakers was included in the article by Eveleth and Lueth (1997) about the history of the Mineral Museum.

Now (I'm writing back in the present now, 2019), abstracts of the talks from all the past symposia are available in a searchable database on the Museum website. Some things about the symposium don't change: Ray DeMark remains the one speaker who has presented a talk at every symposium throughout its whole history! We all look forward to many more years of rewarding symposia, continuing to expand our knowledge of New Mexico mineral occurrences and our camaraderie with fellow collectors!

References

- Eveleth, R.W., and Lueth, V.W., 1997, A rocky history—the first 100 years of the Mineral Museum in Socorro, New Mexico, USA: *New Mexico Geology*, v. 19, no. 3, p. 65-75.
- Modreski, P.J., 1999, Reminiscences on 20 years of the New Mexico Mineral Symposium: 20th Annual New Mexico Mineral Symposium, NMIMT campus, Socorro, NM, p. 4-5.

Symposium Keynote Speakers 1979–2019

Year	#	Keynote speakers and Abstract
1979–1982	1–3	
1983	4	Robert W. Eveleth, “Of Bridal Chambers, jewelry shops, and crystal caverns—a glimpse at New Mexico’s mining camps, characters, and their mineral treasures”
1984	5	Laurence H. Lattman, President, New Mexico Institute of Mining & Technology; “High-tech materials for modern society”
1985	6	Peter Bancroft, “Gem and crystal treasures”
1986	7	Vandall T. King, “Pegmatite petrology through phosphate mineralogy”
1987	8	Robert W. Jones, “Copper throughout history”
1988	9	Peter Bancroft, “Gem and mineral treasures II”
1989	10	Philip C. Goodell and Kathryn Evans Goodell, “Adventures in the Sierra Madre, Batopilas, Chihuahua”
1990	11	Peter K.M. Megaw, “Mineralogy of the rhodochrosite-bearing “silicate” ore-bodies of the Potosi mine, Santa Eulalia mining district, Chihuahua, Mexico”
1991	12	Gilbert Gauthier, “Mineral classics of Shaba, Zaire”
1992	13	Stanley J. Dyl, II, “Mining history and specimen mineralogy of the Lake Superior copper district”
1993	14	Bernard Kozykowski, “Franklin—its mines and minerals;” and, “The Sterling mine—a precious hillside preserve”
1994	15	Fred Ward, “The ‘precious’ gems: where they occur, how they are mined;” and, “Jade”
1995	16	Dr. Miguel Romero Sanchez, “The Romero Mineral Museum”
1996	17	Robert W. Jones, “Gemstones of Russia”
1997	18	Carl A. Francis, “A fourth world occurrence of foitite at Copper Mountain, Taos County, New Mexico”
1998	19	Terry Huizing, “Collectible minerals of the Midwestern United States”, and, “Colorful calcites”
1999	20	Rodney Ewing, “Mineralogy, applications to nuclear waste”
2000	21	Richard Houck, “Sterling Hill: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”
2001	22	Jeff Scovil, “Sampling the Finest”
2002	23	Robert Barron, “Recovery of A 17 Ton Copper Boulder from Lake Superior”
2003	24	John Rakovan, “The Cause of Color in Fluorite with special reference to the Hansonburg District, NM”
2004	25	Harrison H. Schmidt, “Lunar Geology and Mineralogy”
2005	26	Terry Wallace, “Silver of the American West”
2006	27	Ed Raines, “The Leadville Silver Deposits”
2007	28	John Rakovan, “Mineralogical Meanderings in Japan”
2008	29	John Medici, “Some highlights of 45 years of Medici Family field collecting”
2009	30	Ray DeMark, “Thirty Years of symposium presentations: a retrospective”
2010	31	R. Peter Richards “Geology and Mineralogy of Mont Saint-Hilaire, Quebec, Canada”
2011	32	Dr. Anthony Kampf, “Solving Mineral Mysteries”
2012	33	Jean DeMouthe, “Ancient and modern uses of gems & minerals: talismans, tools & medicine”
2013	34	Allan Young, “Collecting Thumbnail Minerals”
2014	35	Virgil W. Lueth, “The Past, Present, and Future of the New Mexico Bureau of Geology & Mineral Resources—Mineral Museum”
2015	36	Robert Cook, “An Overview of five great American Gold Specimen Locations”
2016	37	John Cornish, “Upside down and in the future, mining Tasmania’s Adelaide Mine”
2017	38	Bob Jones, “The History of the Bristol Connecticut Copper Mine”
2018	39	Peter K.M. Megaw, “The Santa Eulalia Mining District, Chihuahua, Mexico”
2019	40	Brad Cross, “An overview of the agates of northern Mexico and southern New Mexico”