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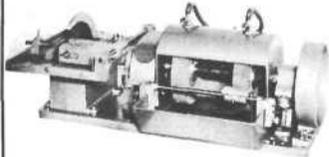


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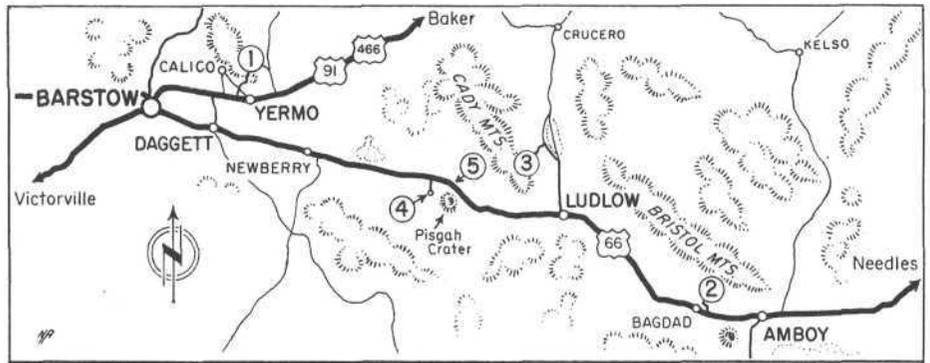
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Five Gem and Mineral Field Trips in the Barstow Area

By CHARLES SILVERNAIL

In the "early days of rockhound-
ing"—a decade ago—Desert Maga-
zine's field trip stories and Norton
Allen maps led countless hobbyists
into new gem-mineral fields. After
10 seasons of "overgrazing," many

of these fields are depleted—some
will never be. Here is a current re-
port on five of these gem fields on
the Mojave Desert—four of which
are still productive and well worth
your visit.

(1) CALICO MOUNTAINS — These
colorful hills were one of the first Mo-
jave Desert collecting areas to become
popular with rockhounds, and today
they yield just as much material as
ever, though you will have to work
harder for it now.

Plan to spend no less than a week
end on this trip, first described by
Harold O. Weight in *Desert's* January,
1948, issue. In addition to your rock
hunting you will want to see Calico,

Odessa Canyon, Phillips Drive and
other scenic places. The area has sev-
eral good campsites where you may
take a trailer. No firewood or water.
Supplies may be obtained at Yermo.

From Barstow follow Highway 91
east 11.4 miles, to just past the Marine
Corps installation. Turn north on a
graded road which makes a complete
loop through Mule Canyon, returning
to Highway 91 a couple of miles east
of Yermo. A trailer may be pulled

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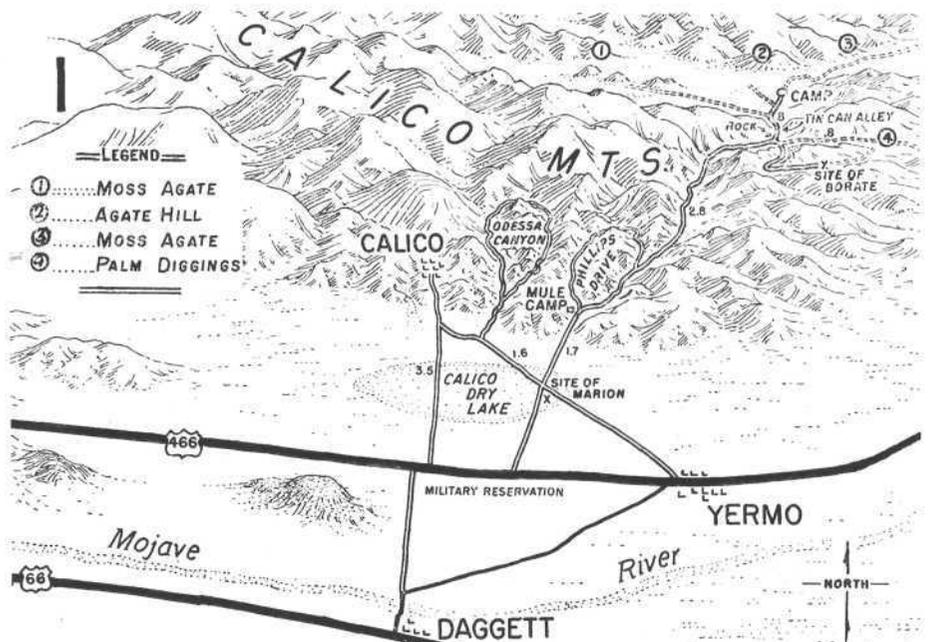
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through the canyon — or you may leave the trailer at one of the campsites while you prospect.

You can have an hour's profitable fun digging in the old Marion town-site smelter dumps. You will be amazed at the beauty of some of the pieces of slag you will find (and you can cut the stuff). Don't neglect the smaller pieces. Fine bits of costume jewelry can be made by cleaning and applying fingernail polish to these specimens.

Two miles farther up the road is Cathedral Rock (the old mule camp of Borate days)—an excellent campsite. The road makes a "Y" at this point—take the right fork through the canyon. A little over two miles up the canyon a poor road leads to the dumps of the old borate mines on the hillside. These dumps still yield crystals of colemanite and selenite.

A short distance farther on is Tin Can Alley—a famous rockhound locale with an infamous name. At Agate Hill agate with some sagenite can be dug up—but it takes a lot of hard work. Today, the best material is found in the west-end of the valley. These specimens are in veins running along the ridge that forms the valley's west wall, and in the hill directly north. Again much hard climbing and digging is necessary to get out the moss agate, sagenite and blue agate that "grows" here.

A mile east of Tin Can Alley is the "old palm diggings." This area is pretty well depleted, but an occasional nice piece of palm root comes from

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here. The main palm wood diggings today are a mile east of the old location. Here a road leads south around a fenced area guarding an old mine shaft. The palm is mixed with chert and it takes hard digging to remove it, but it's there.

(2) BAGDAD OBSIDIAN — "Gray Jewels of Bagdad," Harold Weight called these beautiful little obsidianites when he first reported their presence near Bagdad in the November, 1949, issue of *Desert*. And gray jewels they are—and smoky and black, too. After years of being picked over by rockhounds there appears to be just as many of the nodules today as ever, though the best collecting area now seems to be closer to the lava hills than indicated by Weight.

On the day I visited this field it was pretty rough going the last couple of miles, as a recent flash flood had wiped out all evidence of any trails or road up the bajada. By now, however, new trails probably have been made—but those last miles are best covered by jeep or afoot.

To reach the area, travel a half-mile east on 66 from Bagdad. A fair desert road angles off north across the railroad. Just past the tracks the road forks. Take the left branch to the poleline and gas-pipe line. Here turn sharp left and follow this trail for .6 of a mile. Turn right under the pole line. A few yards north will bring you to the faint trace of the old mine road running northeast. A jeep can negotiate this road for a mile or so, but if you are in a standard car, look for signs of trail leading north toward the lava hills. A good driver, avoiding the soft washes and bigger boulders, can make it up the bajada. The hills to the north and west hold some nice opalite.

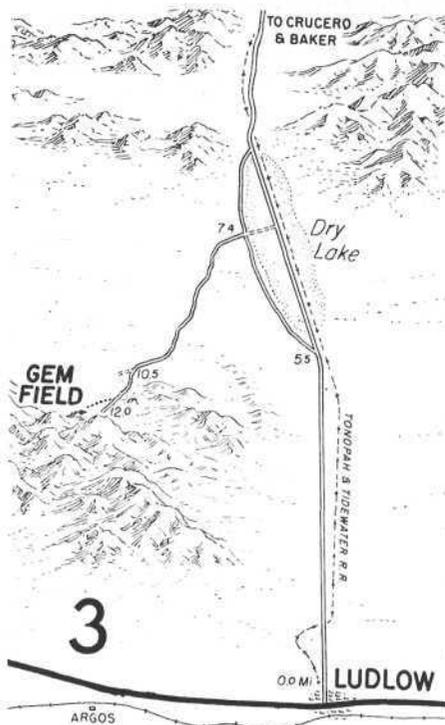
(3) SOUTHERN CADY MOUNTAINS—

"OVERLOOKED FORTUNES"

IN THE RARER MINERALS

Here are a few of the 300 or more rarer minerals and gemstones you may be overlooking while mining, prospecting or gem hunting. Uranium, vanadium, columbium, tantalum, tungsten, nickel, cobalt, selenium, germanium, bismuth, platinum, iridium, beryllium, golden beryl, emeralds, etc. Some minerals worth \$1 to \$2 a pound, others \$25 to \$100 an ounce; some beryllium gems worth a fortune! If looking for gems, get out of the agate class into the big money; an emerald the size of your thumb may be worth \$500 to \$5000 or more! Now you can learn how to find, identify, and cash in on them. New simple system. Send for free copy "Overlooked Fortunes"—it may lead to knowledge which may make you rich! A postcard will do.

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3

This area has long been a favorite with rockhounds. Today, just as much material (perhaps more) is being found as when Harold Weight first told *Desert* readers about the Southern Cadys in December, 1948. Agate of all kinds—fortification, moss, jasp-agate, chalcedony in all grades from excellent to bad, quartz crystals; celestite and flu-

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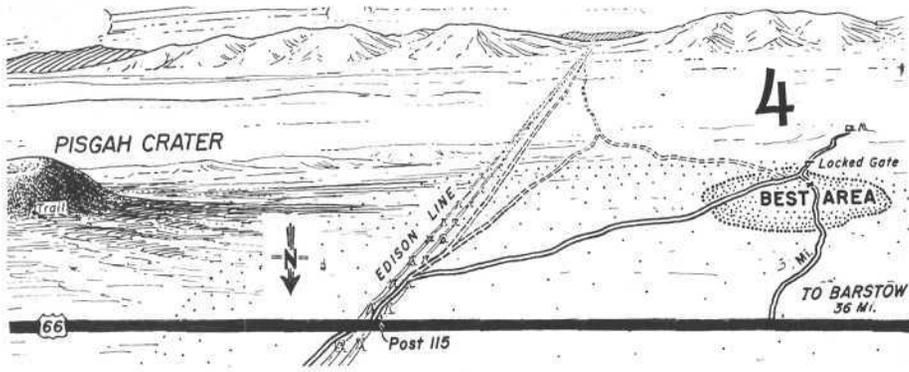
The Lakewood Chemical Kit can be used in connection with all the principal texts on minerals such as Dana, Pough, O. C. Smith, Pennfield, Duke's Course, and many others. The Lakewood Chemical Kit, because of the acids it contains, is not recommended for persons under 18 years old. Priced \$36.00 Express only.

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orescent calcite — is found here in abundance.

Leaving Highway 66 at Ludlow, go north on the Crucero Road to the edge of the dry lake bed. Follow the west side of the lake to where a coffee can nailed to a stake indicates the turnoff to the left leading to the collecting area.

Trailers can be taken to this turn-off (and it's a good campsite), but

from here on for about five miles the trail is winding and rough in places, although any standard car can make it. The trail is easy to follow.

The road branch at the 10.5 mile mark is no longer visible. Another coffee can marks the road branch at 11.8 miles, but it is advisable to leave your car at this point and do your prospecting on foot. The whole area for several miles is excellent rock country.

(4) PISGAH JASPER—This easy-to-reach area, described in the January, 1946, *Desert* by John Hilton in a story titled "Jasper Enough for Everybody" appears today very much the same as it did 14 years ago. One would think that rockhounds had never heard of the place—but they have.

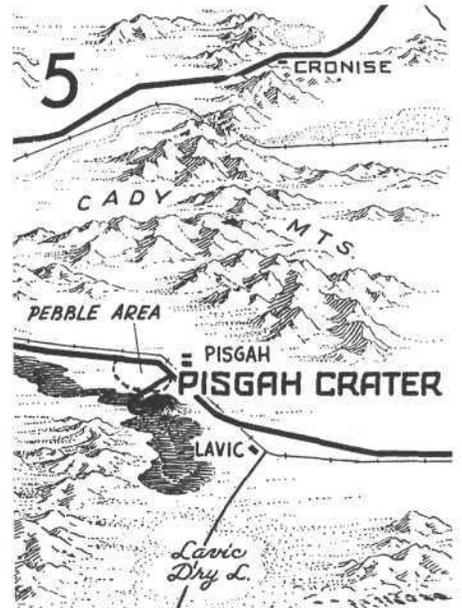
Leaving Highway 66 a few feet east of milepost 114, a good desert road leads south right to the collecting field. The best collecting is done on the low hills to the east and west of the road a short distance south of the new gas-pipe line. Jasper, in all its beautiful desert colors, some agate and chalcedony can be picked up as float. The only advice to be given here is to "high-grade" the stuff. There is still "jasper enough for everybody."

(5) TUMBLED GEMS AT PISGAH—

This area, described by Harold Weight for *Desert* readers in the November, 1954, issue, is not recommended as the object of a field trip today. Nature has not been able to turn out polished stones as fast as the rockhounds have picked them up. An hour's search may or may not produce a few stones. The area described by Weight is directly opposite Pisgah Crater right along Highway 66. The road into the area mentioned in the 1954 article, is not found today, so you will have to park along the highway and walk into the field.

Another area producing the same type of material—and in just about the same amounts—is a few miles west on the highway, at milepost 110 where the lava appears to be flowing across the road. Here small pieces of the lava have become semi-polished. These bits of rock make novel pieces of jewelry when coated with nailpolish. —END

Note: Maps accompanying this article appeared with the original *Desert Magazine* field trip reports on these areas. Road conditions have changed in some cases. Consult text—and always make local inquiry before driving the desert back roads.



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