



American Mineral Treasures. East Hampton, CT: *Edited by Gloria A. Staebler and Wendell Wilson*, 2008. 354 p., about 500 color photos of minerals, bibliography (430 titles). 24 by 33 cm, 2.5 kg weight.

This new wonderwork of the authors', designing and printing skills came into being in a purely American manner. The project started at the 2005 Tucson Show in February 2005 while "American minerals in the next show" was discussed. Tens of dealers, specializing in American most interesting and famous localities, came forward and were ready to be involved. In the air of general enthusiasm and willingness, a lot of top quality specimens has been rounded up and photographed, and texts have been written. By the Tucson-2008 opening, this collective work saw a light, demonstrating high competency and erudition of its sixty-five authors, mostly collectors and mineral dealers.

The book opens with a Foreword by H. Schmitt, the U.S. Senator and lunar astronaut, and a detailed sketch by W. Wilson, *The Mineralogical Records'* editor and publisher, about the American collectors and history of collecting minerals in the United States. In America, collector movement is as young as the nation itself. While this movement established its traditions in Europe, first colonists in America were engaged entirely in their survival and could think of neither collections nor museums. First Americans were interested in ores but not at all in aesthetics of the minerals. However, already in the early 1800s, the first private museum opened its doors for the public in America, as well as the first mineralogical journal did. In 1837, the famous *System of Mineralogy* was published by Dana. The readily spreading interest for aesthetic collections produced a specialized trade in mineral specimens. A number of very rich mineral collections were donated to the U.S. museums (e.g., J.P. Morgan's collection, consisting of 12,500 best specimens; or one of W. Roebling, the Brooklyn Bridge builder, included 16,000 specimens), some of them accompanied with large sums of money to support and enrich them.

Hereafter, the sketches follow 44 American localities that yielded best and world-wide famous mineral specimens. Descriptions are arranged by conventional scheme, describing history of discovery and working, situation map, geological features, and mineralogy. One has to appreciate a narration ingenuity of some authors, e.g., in *A Miner's Life Deep Inside a Mountain (Sweet Home Mine)* by Bryan K. Lees and Paul S. Harter. A lot of top quality, best in the world, rhodochrosite specimens was obtained here by very hard labor under extreme conditions; just one pocket alone yielded more than 1,000 finest specimens, whose careful extraction took three weeks!

Hundreds of photographs, quite a few of which should be referred to true photographic masterpieces, brightly represent the finest minerals, the honor to the American museums and collectors. The W. Wilson's phrase stating that "Natural mineral specimens are indeed rare treasures of nature just as the works of the Old Masters are rare treasures of human expression" could be a proper epigraph to this excellent book.

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