

BOOK REVIEW

Book Review: *The Pinch Collection at the Canadian Museum of Nature.* (2020) By Michael Bainbridge. Edited by Gloria A. Staebler with David W. Bunk, Paul W. Pohwat, and Tom Wilson. Lithographie. ISBN 978-0-983-63238-2, 288 pages. \$75 Hardcover.

This stunning hardcover book is published by Lithographie and it delves into the William Pinch collection, which presently resides in the Canadian Museum of Nature. The author Michael Bainbridge also did the mineral photography for the volume, providing 535 high-quality color photos. The author worked on the book for more than 10 years and completed it shortly after the death of Pinch.

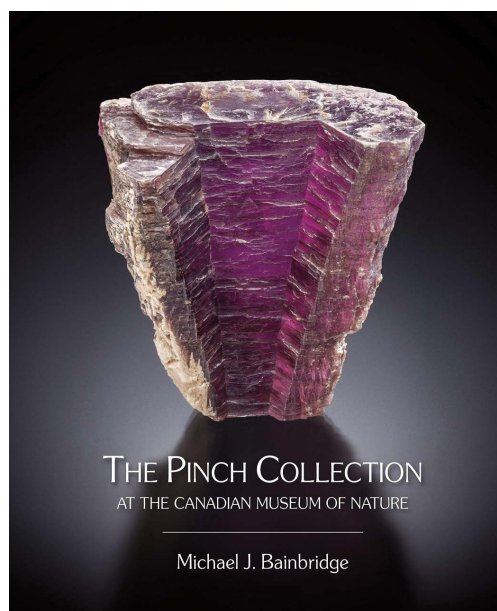
Through the anecdotes and life experiences of Pinch, readers are shown a window into the world of elite mineral collectors. His life story demonstrates the dedication, strategy, and privilege, which contributed to building his comprehensive mineral collections.

The book is divided into two parts: Part 1 is The Collector and His Collection and Part 2 is Selections from the Pinch Suites. The Collector and His Collection is subdivided into interconnected sections that provide perspective on the life experiences of Pinch, his rationale and manner for collecting minerals, and his ability to position himself to be in the right place at the right time to conduct a trade or purchase a specimen.

William Pinch showed an intense interest in minerals at an early age and was encouraged by his mother who bought a mineral sample for him as a Christmas present and lent him \$300 to buy the Vance micromount collection at the age of sixteen.

Pinch positioned himself in a spot where knowledge, desire, connections, and luck intersect, and continuously purchased mineral collections through his life. At an early age he purchased collections and befriended curators, receiving access to explore museum collections. He found a job at Kodak, which included access to analyze personal samples on an X-ray diffraction (XRD) machine, and later was employed as a buyer for Ward's and a gemstone buyer for Investment Rarities, selling gemstones to finance his collecting habit.

As the author describes in the section labeled Carving a Niche, using the Vance collection as a base, Pinch decided to focus his collecting on searching out the most aesthetic samples of rare mineral species rather than looking for the most expensive and unattainable samples of more fashionable minerals. Furthermore, Pinch had the resources and scientific interest to confirm (or dis-



prove) the identity of specimens he collected. That is, if there was any question of the validity of the mineral identification, it was subjected to both XRD and electron microprobe (EMP) analysis. Before William Pinch sold his collection, he had acquired and documented 350 type specimens for his collection.

The section labeled Reformation describes the shift in how Pinch structured his collection. This also led to a difference in his trade and purchasing philosophy. Indeed, Pinch described himself in the mid-1980s as “a mineral collector of the old European tradition, adding specimens in much the same way that major exhibit and research collections would add specimens if their budgets would allow.” In essence, Pinch believed that his mineral collection should be both complete and showy.

Within the section labeled Care and Feeding of a Mineral Collection, the author summarizes Pinch's philosophy on how to obtain top class species and grow a collection, as well as the strategy of collecting several samples of the same species in order to not to give away one's best pieces. Some of the quotes by Pinch in this section are memorable, such as “nobody collects micas” and “keep the best, trade the rest.” While other collectors were paying fortunes for gem tourmalines and beryl, Bill was obtaining world-class rock-forming minerals (feldspars, micas, quartz) for a pittance.

He also advocated working with major museums and curators to obtain important specimens. Pinch's relationship with Paul Desautels, who was at the time the curator of the mineral collections at the Smithsonian Institution, netted him many important specimens for his collection some of which are captured in photographs in this book. Through a course of events in the 1980s, Paul Desautels was forced to resign from Smithsonian for perceived wrongdoing.

This is discussed further in the follow up section King of Trades. The broader history of museum mineral collections is discussed, including competition between U.S. museums (Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburg, Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale, Harvard, American Museum of Natural History in New York) as to which had the best mineral collection. During the 1920s, the donation of the Roebling and Canfield (and endowments) put the Smithsonian to the forefront of American museum mineral collections. However, in the early 1980s, a seismic shift occurred that changed how museums allowed donations, trades and purchases. The inquiry by Smithsonian administrators on inflated tax donation values, a "Sixty Minutes" (1980) piece on the world of mineral collectors (and curators), and an IRS inquiry on how Desautels, Pinch, and Charles Key evaluated specimens were central to this dramatic change. Paul Desautels resigned in 1983, and although charges were never brought against William Pinch, he sold his collection to the Canadian Museum of Nature.

The final three sections concerning the life of William Pinch (A Coup for Canada, A Living Collection, and The Pinch Legacy) are short, succinct, and lay the foundation for the subsequent journey through the highlights of the collection at the Canadian Museum of Nature in Part 2.

The second, larger, and most charming portion of the book

(over 200 pages long) is devoted to exquisite photos of selected samples, organized in suites primarily by geographical location. This arrangement reflects Pinch's decision to organize the collection by locality rather than by mineral class. In running order in the book, the suites are: Tsumeb, Namibia; Radioactive Minerals, Russia & the Former USSR; Japan; Australia; European Classics (Germany, United Kingdom, Alpine Classics, Långban, Sweden); Canada; Mexico; American Classics (Franklin District, New Jersey, Arizona); and Brazil. At the beginning of each suite chapter, a short description is provided of the mineral deposits with a focus on Pinch's collecting history, strategies, or interests for the locality or suite.

Due to the high quality of the photography by author Michael Bainbridge, this book documents a variety of "type" minerals that most collectors would never be able to view in detail. Captions on photos include the size and locality of each sample, and the lighting conditions where applicable since some samples were photographed in both natural and ultraviolet light. A few of the photo captions include mineral formula, but most do not. Some document additional information about the samples, such as the name of the collection to which the sample formerly belonged, which includes other private collections as well as museum collections.

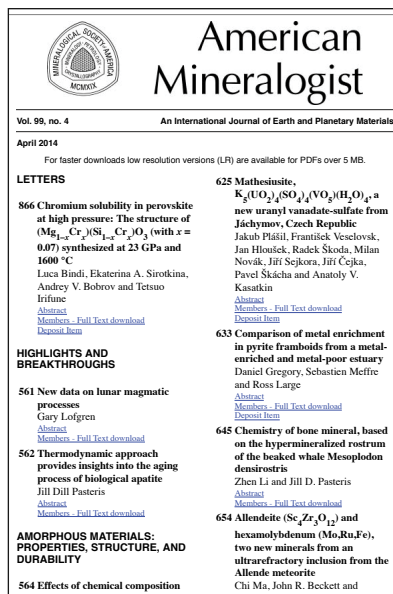
The book assumes that the reader is already familiar with the collecting localities discussed in the book, so students or others wishing to learn about the geology, geography, or human history of these sites will need to turn elsewhere. All told, this is a wonderful, large format book that all mineral collectors should have in their bookcase.

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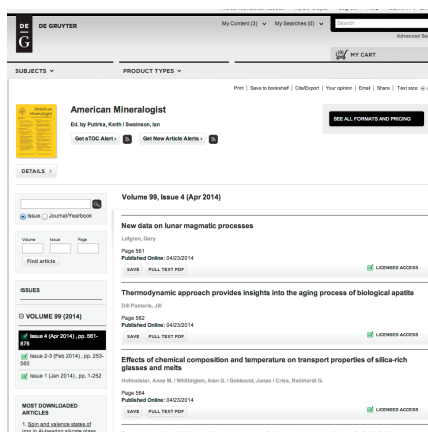
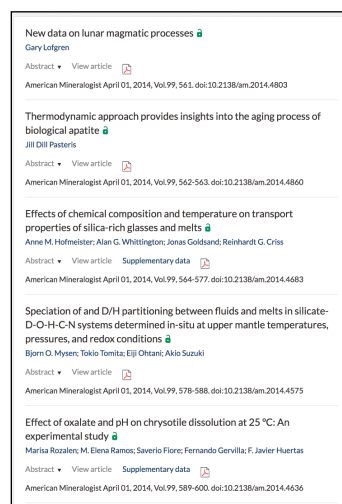
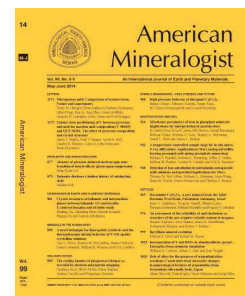
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