

HOW TO DISPOSE OF ROCK COLLECTIONS

Recently our rock club, NWA Gem and Mineral Society, lost two long-time members. It is a difficult time for the family and it continues later when faced with going through their loved one's belongings and having to decide what to do with many of the things. As they were rockhounds, one of the huge tasks is what to do with the rocks, slabs, tools, machines, chemicals, books, etc.

I have watched several families carefully dispose of a large rock collection as well as various lapidary equipment successfully. I thought I would give some suggestions for how to get the most value from what is left behind as well as make sure it goes to people who appreciate it as much as the original owner.

Many local rock clubs will accept donations of collections and/or equipment. Generally, they are willing to pick up the items from the current location and transport them. They can be used as specimens at their location or in display cases at their shows. They also may be used as door prizes or silent auction items in their shows or meetings.

One successful way that required less work for the family is an **online auction**. An auction was held recently by a company which is located in Northwest Arkansas (the family was from this area). They require items purchased in the auction to be picked up at their location. I know of other auction houses which will ship items to the purchaser for a fee. Ask for suggestions from friends on finding a reputable firm to auction off the equipment and rocks.

Another family in Oklahoma took the time to go through all of the rocks themselves and then sell it in a **garage-sale-type sale**. It took a number of weeks to sell everything but they were working on identifying more as the sale was in progress anyway so they were able to do double duty. I'm not sure how well that one ended for them as we visited them early on in their sale. They had help from their local rock club.

Unless family members are also rockhounds or do lapidary work, they are going to require help from someone who knows something about the rocks and can help identify them. The best way to get that help is to **contact a local rock club**. Generally, there are one or more people who are willing to help identify the rocks and group them in a logical order for auctioning them off or selling them. They can also identify rocks that are of little value and should probably just be dumped.

When it is time for the sale or auction, whichever way is decided to sell the items, the biggest draw that will generate more interest and money is to **notify every rock club in the state with details about the sale**. People who are interested will drive a long way to pick up the rock saw they wanted or get some amazing slabs or silversmithing equipment.

Here are sites where you can locate the clubs in your area. I would suggest also **notifying all the clubs in surrounding states as well**. The more that know, the better the turnout.

<https://www.rmfmts.org>- This is Rocky Mountain Federation of Mineralogical Societies and most of the clubs in the western states are members of this federation. Look under Affiliations to find a list of clubs by state which has a link to the club's website.

<https://www.mwfed.org> - This is Midwest Federation of Mineralogical & Geological Societies and encompasses 12 states in the upper Midwest. You can look by state for clubs.

<https://www.scfmts.net> This is South Central Federation of Mineral Societies and covers 3 states. You can find the clubs under "Find Member Club".

<https://www.southeastfed.org> This is the Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies and covers the southeastern US. Clubs can be found on their homepage.

Send letters and/or advertisements to the clubs and ask them to pass this information on to their members. Most are more than willing to do that. Depending on the volume of items to be disposed of, it might be best to break it up into several sales instead of all at one time. Possibly weeks apart so people have time to be more financially prepared for the next sale. If that is the case, be sure each of the sales is advertised with the clubs in advance and just before the sale again.

Generally, people in the rock clubs are very helpful. If you don't find that in the first club you contact, try other clubs. Rockhounds are generally helpful people as I'm sure the person was who created the collection.

I hope this helps someone.

Best of Luck,

Diane P

[Northwest Arkansas Gem & Mineral Society](#)