Philagems International
Gems, Minerals and Jewelry Study Unit
American Topical Association

A quarterly bulletin featuring articles, reports and checklists covering all phases of gems, minerals and jewelry on stamps.

UNIT OFFICERS

President
Josef Charrach
P.O.Box 14
Metar, 85025
Israel
E-mail: jcharrach@gmail.com

Vice-President
François Brisse
289 Oakdale Crescent
Beaconsfield, QC
H9W 1X3
Canada
E-mail: fsbrisse@sympatico.ca

Secretary Treasurer
Gilberte Proteau
138 Lafontaine
Beloeil, QC
J3G 2G7
Canada
E-mail: gilberte.ferland@sympatico.ca

New Issues
Ian Hunter
6 Tiller Place S.E.
Airdrie, AB
T4A 1S6
Canada
E-mail: ighunter@shaw.ca

Editor
François Brisse

July-September  2015
No. 126

CONTENTS
Letter from the President
Josef Charrach 2
Another way to collect minerals
Fred Haynes 3
“The ABCs of Mining”, a postage stamp poem. H
Bruce Ryan 6
Sir Walter Raleigh and Tar Sands
Fathi Habashi 8
Bridal Jewelry from Jewish Communities
Josef Charrach 10
Salt and Sodium (Part 6)
Michel Vantillard 11
New Issues Illustration and Listing
François Brisse and Ian Hunter 15
Sir Walter Raleigh and Tar Sands
Fathi Habashi. Department of Mining, Metallurgical, and Materials Engineering
Laval University, Quebec City, Canada

Petroleum is sometimes ejected from underground to form lakes contaminated with rocks. The volatile components evaporate with time leaving behind a solid mixture known as asphalt or tar sands. Canada has large deposits of tar sands. At present Canada mines about one million tons of these rocks per day to extract oil. The tar sands are located mainly in Athabasca, Alberta (Figure 1) and the deposits are exploited by Syncrude and other companies. A stamp depicting the large machines used in the exploitation of these sands was issued by Canada in 1978 (Figure 2). Other huge mining machines are used in other countries (Figures 3).

Figure 1- Map showing the location of Canadian tar sands

Figure 2- Canadian stamp illustrating the exploitation of the Athabasca tar sands

Figure 3 - Huge mining machines

The Lake Asphalt in Trinidad (Figure 4) is beside the village of La Brea, in south western Trinidad has an area of about 40 hectares and is about 60 meters deep. It contains about 40% bitumen, 30% mineral matter, and 30% sea water. The liquid asphalt is black and viscous, but the surface can be walked on (Figure 5).
Trinidad and Tobago were explored by Christopher Columbus on his third voyage in 1498 (Figure 6). Trinidad remained in Spanish hands until 1797, then settled by French colonists. The islands changed hands between the British, French, Dutch, and Courlanders, but ended up a British colony.

In February 1595, Sir Walter Raleigh (ca 1554 –1618) sailed with five small ships to Trinidad in search of El Dorado, the fabled city of gold. He attacked Port of Spain with cannons, and sacked St. Joseph. The Caribs led Raleigh to the pitch lake, and he realized that the substance was ideal for caulking his ships. He took several barrels home with him, and has since been credited with "discovering" the lake (Figures 7, 8).

Figure 4- Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean Sea

Figure 5- A stamp showing walking on the Lake Asphalt [Pitch Lake]

Figure 6- Four hundred years anniversary stamp for the discovery of Trinidad in 1498

Figure 7- British stamps commemorating the discovery of Lake Asphalt by Raleigh in 1595