

Precious Purple Gemstones

About thirty-five miles east of the City of Thunder Bay, north of Highway 11-17 on East Loon Road, is the Amethyst Mine Panorama. The mine, which occupies 2,200 acres on the east shore of Lake Elbow, was discovered forty years ago when a forest fire lookout tower was being built. The Mine is owned by Steve and Laura Lukinuk and is the largest commercial amethyst operation in North America. Amethyst production started in 1960; the Mine has produced continuously with a ninety-year reserve supply.

Amethyst is a semi-precious gemstone. It is a crystalline variety of quartz - a transparent, glassy mineral formed when silica solutions crystallized in the veins and cavities of rocks. This action took place over millions of years. Most of us, however, recognize the gemstone because of its deep, rich tones of dark-bluish purple.

Tourists to the Thunder Bay area of Ontario will find rings, earrings, necklaces, pendants and bracelets that contain the colourful gemstone. It is also used for ashtrays, pen sets, clocks and bookends. Sections of granite faced with amethyst are used in the building industry. Fireplaces, cathedrals, theatres, landmarks, patios, tabletops, and monuments are enhanced by its rich colour. And large quantities are shipped around the world from Ontario.

The Amethyst Mine Panorama offers informative tours: visitors start out climbing a ramp into the bed of a "million dollar truck," named not for its value, but because that's how many dollars worth of amethyst it has hauled out.

The extensive mine waste piles are open to the public. They contain twenty per cent



Amethyst hunting is an ideal family outing that fascinates even pre-school youngsters.

Photo courtesy of Precious Purple Gemstones, Ltd.

useable material, and are the main source of pick-your-own amethyst. The Mine is open from May to mid-October offering thousands of rockhounds a unique adventure.

If you decide that amethyst hunting is for you, pack a picnic lunch, put on some casual clothing and footwear, and bring along some newspaper in which to wrap your precious purple gemstones.

For more information about the Ame-

thyst Mine Panorama contact Steve and Laura Lukinuk at Precious Purple Gemstones Ltd., Box 832, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7C 4X7, Phone: (807)622-6908.

This information was extracted from promotional material printed by Precious Purple Gemstones Ltd., an Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources brochure, and an article from the Lapidary Journal, February, 1994.

Fascinating Facets of Amethyst

- ❖ Amethyst is the official gemstone of the Province of Ontario.
- ❖ Amethyst is the birthstone for the month of February and those born under the sign of Pisces.
- ❖ The name "amethyst" is derived from a Greek word meaning "not drunken."
- ❖ Amethyst was used in Egyptian amulets as early as 2000 B.C.
- ❖ Bishops traditionally wear an amethyst ring.
- ❖ Some people believe that amethyst brings good luck to petitioners. (Wear one when you ask your boss for a raise!)
- ❖ Traditionally, amethysts are supposed to guard England's rulers against contagious diseases.
- ❖ Amethyst has been used to symbolize deep love, happiness, humility, sincerity and wealth.
- ❖ Long ago, farmers believed that wearing amethyst would protect their crops from hailstones and locusts.
- ❖ The Hebrew word for amethyst is "ahlamah," which means "dream." Thus, the stone was supposed to cause lovely dreams and visions.
- ❖ If you dream of amethyst, you will be free from harm. In the Middle Ages, soldiers wore amethyst to protect them in battle.
- ❖ Leonardo da Vinci believed that amethyst had the power to control evil thoughts, to quicken intelligence, and to make men shrewd in business matters.



The Amethyst Legend

According to Greek legend, the god Dionysus, angered at an insult, vowed that he would set his tigers on the first person to cross his path. This happened to be a young girl on her way to worship at the shrine of the goddess Diana. When the tigers sprang at her, she cried out to Diana for protection. The goddess turned the girl into a rock crystal so the tigers couldn't harm her. Dionysus felt so sorry for his cruelty that he poured out an offering of wine to the maiden who had turned into crystal. The wine gave the crystal a purplish hue.