

## NORTHWEST NEBRASKA 28TH ANNUAL ROCK SWAP, 2014

by Susy McMahan

Carolyn and Paul Ashmore, and I arrived in Crawford, Nebraska on Thursday, August 28, so we could be up bright and early Friday morning for the field trip of the day. A guided field trip is always held Friday, Saturday, and Sunday mornings.

After a helping of my favorite, home-cooked sausage and biscuits, we set off into the grasslands to hunt for the elusive Fairburn agate, jasper, petrified wood, among others. The rainy weather made for great hunting. While the three of us didn't find that elusive Fairburn, others did. We found plenty of keepers though, and are now able to go out on our own to hunt.

There were many dealers at the outdoor swap near the park in Crawford. There was everything from agates to fossils. The weather was perfect, with a few rainy patches here and there. We saw old friends and we always make new friends!

The 16th Agate Collectors meeting was held Saturday afternoon, with author Roger Clark speaking on Fairburn agates. He offered some new tips for collectors. Another speaker was Pat McMahan (to our knowledge we are not related, but we plan to share genealogy). Pat has traveled world-wide, collecting agates with inclusions. He has co-authored two books, and his website can be found at <http://www.agateswithinclusions.com>. Pat had fabulous pictures of probably every type of plume agate, and the colors were amazing. He even shared tips on his methods of photographing rocks, which many photographers today won't share.

That evening was a bar-b-que and live auction. We ate in Chadron at a favorite Mexican restaurant, rather than at the bar-b-que, then hurried on to the auction. Carolyn got some nice specimens, as did I. I also won a crocheted art piece that says "I am a Rockhound." It will be part of my show and tell at the next meeting. The lady who made it takes orders for anything, family names, etc.

On Monday, we were off on our own collecting, and got caught in a storm. We watched the black clouds closely, and the lightning, too. When it got close enough, we hopped into the car and left. It was both scary and exciting.

If you have never been to the "Crawford Swap," try to go next year over Labor Day weekend. It is beautiful country, and there are many attractions in the area. Fort Robinson State Park is very close to Crawford. You can rent a soldier's barrack, or a room in the main building.

There is horseback riding and many other activities and history located there, much to be found at the Fort Robinson Museum. You can even buy rocks in the gift shop. We stopped by there and also went to the Museum of the Fur Trade at the suggestion of Richard Farlow from the Omaha club. It was amazing. For example, they have the largest collection of guns that were traded to the Native Americans. There were also many, many historical items related to the fur trade.

Other attractions in the area are the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center, Dawes County Museum, Chadron State Park, Nebraska National Park (mainly for hiking), Toadstool Geological Park, and the Hudson-Meng Bison Bonebed which is much like Ashfall State Park, but the animals died in a different way. Crawford is very near South Dakota and Wyoming; those places boasting their own activities.

Thanks to the members of the Northwest Nebraska Rock Club, their families, and friends who help make this great event happen each year! Did I mention they have homemade breakfast and lunch, plus water, soda, and the coffee is always on, at reasonable prices? And lots of rocks! If you can't find what you want, you can more than likely buy it there.

### Silversmithing classes

**The Jewelry Connection Ltd.  
Indian Village Shopping Ctr.  
13th & Arapahoe, Lincoln**

**Tuesdays**

**August 12, 2014**

**thru**

**September 30, 2014**

**7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.**

**Tuition: \$120 plus \$30 supply deposit**

**Contact:**

**Jayne Beer 402-890-3307**

**Judith Bay 402-423-7058**

**or e-mail**