

## Arizona Centennial

# Copper Is Only One of Arizona's Many Unique Minerals

The geological elements that help define areas like Saddle Mountain provide scenery unlike anywhere in world. The mountainous regions surrounding Tonopah are comprised from elements combined and weathered to form many unique minerals.

Arizona is known for gold, silver, turquoise and one of the state's Five C's - Copper; (*others are Climate, Cattle, Cotton, & Citrus*). Additionally, Arizona is now known for the annual Tucson Gem and Mineral Show which has grown over 56 years to be the largest rock, gem, mineral, and fossil event in the world!

Plus, for hobbyists, the Quartzsite 'powwow' combines RV camping snowbirds with rocks, gems, and jewelry. In 40 years, this multifaceted event now hosts over two-million winter visitors and it has made the Town of Quartzsite the 'Rock Capital of the World'.

Why in southern Arizona? Climate helps but the core is that mountains in the Basin & Range Province display eons of geologic change that created rocks that hobbyists have found rewarding. Since the 1920's rock hounding guides have listed sites like Saddle Mountain where a trained eye can find a waxy-white chalcedony highlighted in the rusty-red that creates the popular "fire agate".



**Desert Rose is a milk-white chalcedony found at Saddle Mountain.**

In one way, rock hounding is exploration. But in *Rock Hounding Arizona* Gerry Blair says, the hobby includes, "an interest by rock hounds and mineral hounds in every aspect of the rock and mineral hobby – collecting minerals, preparing gems, and displaying their finds". Rock hounds are also attracted to the landscape, to natural phenomena, to mines and to mining history. Plus, the regions rare plants and animals add to the enjoyment of the hobby, he says\*.

The Western Desert of Arizona contains agate, quartz, crystals, bornite, chrysocolla, malachite, diopside, pyrite, chalcophyrite, wickenburgite, obsidian nodules (sometimes called Apache tears) plus "to many more to mention" says Blair.

Worth Noting: Rock collecting is **prohibited** on State Trust Land, National Parks, tribal nations, and some other areas like bombing ranges. Privately owned sites require permission. However, most BLM lands including Saddle Mountain and nearby Wilderness areas allow hobby collecting.

*\*Rock Hounding Arizona - Guide to 75 of the State's Best Rockhounding Sites.*

By Gerry Blair, 2008. Article from *Tonopah Tribune* 2012. Copyright WDA 2012.