

## The Wrangell Garnet Ledge



The only way to the ledge is by boat or floatplane and both must be accomplished at high tide. Parents will take their children and their children's friends to the ledge and spend the day mining garnets making a day of it. Then the hard work of cleaning the garnets and chipping the gems out of the matrix begins back at home. Many of the garnet sellers are second and third generation garnet sellers and many have put themselves through college with the garnet money they have saved over the years.

Wrangell Garnets can be found for sale around the country and now on the Internet. However, if you want a true Wrangell Garnet with a lot of history and tradition behind it—not to mention supporting Wrangell's youth—contact the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce. They will put you in touch with a local garnet seller and you will be continuing a long tradition in Wrangell and be a supporter of the youth of Wrangell.

**Wrangell Chamber of Commerce**

[www.WrangellChamber.org](http://www.WrangellChamber.org)  
907.874.3901

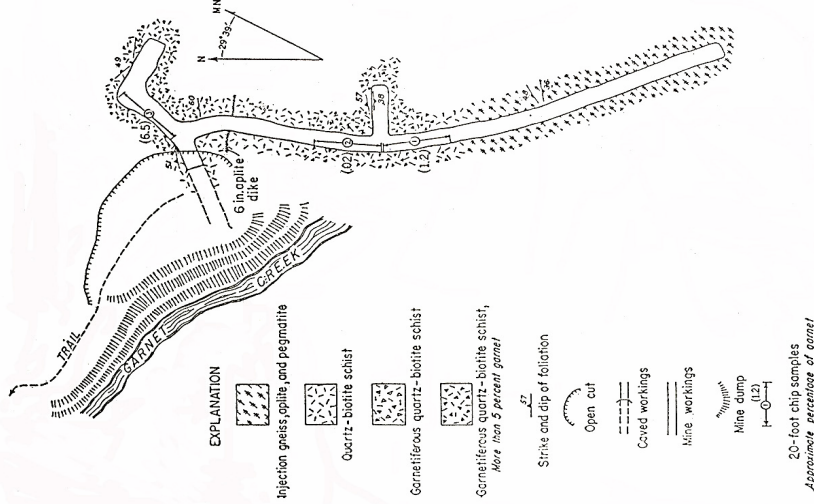
**Southeast Alaska Area Council,**

**Boy Scouts of America**  
[www.ScoutingAlaska.org](http://www.ScoutingAlaska.org)  
907.789.8440

**The Annual Garnet Festival**

Third Week in April—contact the chamber

Colonized picture of Anna E. Durkee was done by R. Gess-Smith [www.GessWhoTo.com](http://www.GessWhoTo.com)



Map from: USGS Bulletin: Garnet deposits near Wrangell Southeastern Alaska By C. T. BRESSLER MINERAL RESOURCES OF ALASKA, 1945-46 (pp. 81-93) GEOLOGICAL SURVEY BULLETIN 963-C

*Trish Neal has been researching the women of the AGM&M for 25 years. For more information about the Wrangell Garnet Ledge and the women, please visit the web site. A book about the women, their operation of the garnet mine and history of the garnet ledge should be published by late 2006. Are you a descendant of anyone who had a claim to the Garnet Ledge? Please contact me!*

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## The Wrangell Garnet Ledge and the Women of the Alaska Garnet Mining & Manufacturing Co., Inc.



Anna E. Durkee  
*From New York School Teacher to Successful Mining Woman!*

# ALASKAN RUBIES!

There is a long history connected with the Wrangell Garnet Ledge. In fact, the Tlingits may have first mined it for the semi-precious gems to trade with other tribes. At the very least, they certainly must have known about the garnet ledge.

Prior to the women of the Alaska Garnet Mining & Manufacturing Company, Inc. owning the ledge, others had filed claims with the idea that they would mine the ledge for profit. However, those claims never amounted to much and were soon left for an easier way of making money. The all-woman mining company was formed in 1906 at Minneapolis, Minnesota. The women worked the mine for several years, turning the gems into jewelry and selling the garnets to cruise ship passengers from a small shelter set up on the cruise ship dock.



**Actual Garnet mined by the women of the AGM&M Co., Inc.** for an easier way of making money. The all-woman mining company was formed in 1906 at Minneapolis, Minnesota. The women worked the mine for several years, turning the gems into jewelry and selling the garnets to cruise ship passengers from a small shelter set up on the cruise ship dock.

In 1909 the women had a booth at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition held in Seattle, Washington. They again exhibited the garnets at the 1915 Pan Pacific International Expo held in San Francisco, California.

For a few years in the 1920's, the women leased the mine to two different British Columbia mining companies which mined the garnets for the abrasive market. After

that, the mine apparently ceased to be worked commercially. It isn't known why the work stopped, but it's possible that it just wasn't financially feasible to operate the mine any longer and by then, Anna E. Durkee (the manager and controlling stockholder) was involved in mining in Arizona.

For the next 30 years or so, the garnet ledge was the site of picnics and continued to be used to dig for garnets by Wrangellites and visitors.

The ledge was deeded to the Boy Scouts in 1962 by Fred Hanford, a Wrangell businessman. Because the local scouts could not own property, the ledge was deeded to the Southeast Alaska Boy Scout Council in Juneau.

Hanford stipulated that the property was to be used for scouting purposes and for the use by Wrangell children. No fees were to be charged for the use by the local children and if the scouts ceased to use it for scouting purposes or not permit the children of Wrangell to take garnets, it was to revert to the First Presbyterian Church of Wrangell with no conditions on their ownership.

While the garnets are considered an industrial grade mineral, its unique appeal is the history of the garnet ledge and the ownership by the scouts and the sales of the gems by the local children to the cruise ships and ferries that call on Wrangell throughout the year. Many of today's garnet sellers are carrying on a tradition that their parents participated in when they were a child.



## Claims Filed to Garnet Ledge Area

- **1881** Barney Johnson, Phillip Starr, and Col. R.D. Crittenden
- **1889** David L. Shoemaker
- **1893** F.F. Heath and Louis R. Dempster
- **1897** Alaska Garnet Mining Co. Frank A. Brooks, A.G. Bays. Kenneth M. Jackson partnership October 1898.
- **1899** "Discovery Claim" T.D. Stewart and James Harding.
- **1899** "Thinklet Bonanza Mining Claim" George Clark
- **1900** Alaska Gold Mining Association George Clark
- **1905** "Ruby No. 1" and "Ruby No. 2" Alex Vreatt and William McKean Taylor
- **1905** Alaskan Ruby Mining and Development Co., Chicago, IL: Harry Overman, P.A. Le-wald, Orval J. Stephenson, and Harry F. Parsons,
- **1905** Wilson Foster claim.
- **1905** "King Solomon Garnet Claim" Calvin H. Barkdall and in **1909** the "North Star" Garnet Claim
- **1906** Alaska Garnet Mining & Manufacturing Co.: Anna E. Rose, Minnie Towler, Anna E. Durkee, Jean Anderson, Miss Letitia (Lettie) M. Crafts, Miss Mary T. Elmer, Pearl Hewitt, Pearl A. Gunders, Rebecca Bausman and Maria A. Crane five others form corporation..
- **1954 & 1959** Larry and Lola Heiner
- **1962** Fred Hanford deeds Garnet Ledge to Boy Scouts & children of Wrangell