

## POTASSIC-CARPHOLITE AND THE MYTH OF CENTERVILLE, IDAHO

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### Abstract

The type locality of the recently described mineral species *potassic-carpholite* was reported to be near Centerville, Idaho. This note sets the record straight; the correct type-locality, deliberately kept secret for 22 years, is here divulged; it is in the Fall Creek drainage, in the vicinity of Glens Peak, Boise County, Idaho.

*Keywords:* potassic-carpholite, type-locality information, Sawtooth batholith, Idaho.

### SOMMAIRE

LA LOCALITÉ-TYPE DE LA POTASSIC-CARPHOLITE, ESPÈCE MINÉRALE DÉCRITE RÉCEMMENT, A ÉTÉ CITÉE COMME ÉTANT PROCHE DE CENTERVILLE, EN IDAHO. CETTE NOTE SE VEUT UNE CORRECTION À LA LOCALITÉ-TYPE, DÉLIBÉRÉMENT GARDÉE SECRÈTE POUR 22 ANS; LA POTASSIC-CARPHOLITE A ÉTÉ DÉCOUVERTE DANS LE BASSIN DE FALL CREEK, PRÈS DE GLENS PEAK, COMTÉ DE BOISE, EN IDAHO.

*Keywords:* potassic-carpholite, information sur la localité-type, batholithe de Sawtooth, Idaho.

### INTRODUCTION

The existence of the new mineral species potassic-carpholite,  $(K, \square)(Li, Mn^{2+})_2Al_4Si_4O_{12}(OH)_4(F, OH)_4$ , was recently established in this journal (Tait *et al.* 2004). The sample containing the potassic-carpholite was actually discovered over 22 years ago, as I will explain. The authors inadvertently propagated a misconception when they attributed the type locality to “Centerville, Idaho”. Most local geologists and collectors seriously question the validity of this attribution. The authors reported that the locality is “from the Sawtooth batholith, an anorogenic Tertiary granite pluton near Centerville, Idaho.” Aspects of this statement can be challenged. In this note, I set the record straight on the correct type-locality of potassic-carpholite.

### A CASE OF DECEITFUL LABELING

Collector Geary Murdock, formerly from Stanley, Idaho, a town located on the edge of the Sawtooth Range, spent many years exploring back-country deposits for various minerals found in miarolitic cavities, especially gem-quality beryl (var. aquamarine). Early reports of the occurrence of aquamarine were available (Reid 1963, Pattee *et al.* 1968), and eager

collectors sought the rare gem-quality minerals for many years subsequent to these reports. Unfortunately, the area was declared a Wilderness Area in 1964 by an act of Congress, and it was withdrawn as a mineral location. In addition, although prospecting in a wilderness area was still allowed, sale of collected material is not legal, such that specimens recovered from the Sawtooth batholith were sold clandestinely.

Geary Murdock of course was aware of these legal aspects. He also knew of a deposit located in the area between Centerville and Pioneer ville that had produced quantities of similar material, most notably gem-grade aquamarine. Coupled with his desire to keep his own digging localities secret, he began to sell all his specimens as being from Centerville. This practice was considered by many to be both deceptive and dishonest at a very early stage (Ream 1985a, b), and interviews with the late Mr. Murdock and some of his friends seemed to indicate that there was a deliberate attempt to mislead buyers. This ploy effectively shielded him from prosecution, however.

Evidence of this deception is sparse and incomplete, but there are clues concerning the real provenance of the potassic-carpholite. First, the sheer variety of mineral species sold by Mr. Murdock far exceeds what could be expected to have originated from a single source: beryl (var. aquamarine), smoky quartz, topaz, hematite,

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spessartine, carpholite, potassic-carpholite, bertrandite, zinnwaldite, among others, were all sold with labels indicating "from Centerville, Idaho". All of these minerals have been found in the miarolitic cavities of the Sawtooth granite (Menziés & Boggs 1993, Van Laer & Ream 1986), but the occurrence in Centerville has produced aquamarine only (Sinkankas 1959).

As Mr. Murdock was known to collect in both areas (Richard Knoblock, pers. commun., 1992), it is extremely unlikely that everything he sold was only from Centerville. In 1986, when I visited Geary Murdock's mining claim on Swede Creek, which flows into the Grimes Creek between Centerville and Pioneer-ville, Boise County, Idaho, the deposit was entirely worked out. I saw an eluvial deposit of pegmatite weathered along the banks of Swede Creek, with abundant pegmatite debris in the dumps (quartz, feldspar, and mica). Further examination of the area showed that it was underlain by the Idaho batholith, of Cretaceous age. It is not miarolitic, but locally contains numerous pegmatites, some of which have vugs or cavities lined with euhedral rock-forming mineral species typical of the host granite.

The available maps (Reid 1963, Pattee *et al.* 1968) show that the Sawtooth batholith does not extend to anywhere near Centerville; the nearest outcrop of the Sawtooth batholith is many kilometers to the east. Bennett (1975) further established the extent of the Sawtooth granite; whereas he showed that the Boise Basin pluton is near Centerville, the area where Murdock claimed to have found his minerals is not in any of the Tertiary-age miarolitic granites.

The trend for such "secret" localities has been around probably since the first gemstones and gold were found, and it has now appeared in the scientific literature. As Geary Murdock passed away in 2002, the information about his diggings has been lost forever, but it is clear that there has been at least some deception on his part. The late Richard Knoblock, who maintained claims along the Payette River in the Sawtooth Wilderness Area, saw and spoke with Geary Murdock on many occasions (pers. commun., 1992). He reported that Murdock claimed to be collecting in the Fall Creek drainage, although he only admitted to seeking "garnet". In maps published in *Reconnaissance Geology of the Sawtooth Range*, Reid (1963) noted an "aquamarine concentration" in Fall Creek, and this occurrence was also reported by Pattee *et al.* (1968) as well. Although I have not explored the Fall Creek drainage, this is the most likely locality for Murdock's potassic-carpholite, which was the sole specimen on which all the work to characterize the species was conducted. The "second" occurrence mentioned by Tait *et al.* (2004) is one that I found in 1982; Dr. Russell Boggs (pers. commun.,

1983), who did the original work on potassic-carpholite, has long considered it the only specimen unquestionable as to locality (1.6 km west of Glens Peak, Boise County, Idaho).

#### PARTING STATEMENT

Tait *et al.* (2004) could not have known the complex history behind the label on their specimen. Unfortunately, such erroneous information about provenance easily works its way into the literature if it goes unchecked. The type locality of potassic-carpholite should be quoted as being in the Fall Creek drainage, in the vicinity of Glens Peak, Boise County, Idaho.

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