

FRA Merit Badge Program

Jim Brace-Thompson, AFMS Juniors Activities Chair, has developed a Merit Badge Program for all registered Future Rockhounds of America. Because you are a member of MAGS, you are a registered Future Rockhound of America [FRA].

This new program consists of an FRA membership badge, 9 merit badges, and a “Rockhound Badge” that will go to youth members who earn 6 of the 9 merit badges. A 100-page guidebook describes and outlines requirements for each of the 9 badges. There are 52 activities to choose from, or about a half dozen activities per badge. You are required to complete only 3 activities to earn any particular badge. Checklists in the guidebook make it easy for your youth leader to sign off on activities as you complete them. In addition, brief back-up pages and suggestions help your leaders guide you through each activity. The guidebook is available in both hardcopy (photocopied) and on the AFMS web site (www.amfed.org). To save on costs to the program, which is being provided entirely free to members, we encourage you to download a copy from the web. If this is not possible, please contact Mike Baldwin at 367 North Main Street, Collierville, TN 38017 or 901-853-3603 or

rockclub@earthlink.net.

The merit badges available for you to earn are:

1. Rocks and Minerals
2. Earth Resources
3. Fossils
4. Lapidary Arts
5. Collecting
6. Showmanship
7. Communication
8. Field Trips
9. Leadership

While working on your merit badges, you do not have to do each activity precisely as described in the guidebook. Ask your leader and activities can be adapted to best match your age and ability. For instance, Activities 1.1 and 1.2 are on learning how to identify minerals using various characteristics and tests, such as color, streak, hardness, luster, crystal shape, cleavage, fracture, etc. For the very young children in our club, we may focus on just a handful of easily identifiable minerals, using a couple of characteristics (such as color, hardness and crystal shape). The older the kids, the more characteristics should be learned.

We will try to do as many of the activities as

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possible as group projects. This will make it more fun for you and easier for your leaders.

It is the hope of AFMS that this program will prove useful and successful. To help ensure its success, comments are welcomes from you, not only on the existing activities, but on suggestions for creating new activities that will help us all learn and grow, while, as always, we have fun.

Here's a look at what the badges will look like. I'm not sure which is which yet, but the real ones are being made right now and we will have a full set of them soon. We will label each badge and place them in a display case for you to see. I hope you earn them all. If you have any questions about the merit badge program, call Mike Baldwin at 901-853-3603 or email rockclub@earthlink.net.



Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park Manchester, Tennessee

Thursday, July 22, 2004

From Rhena A. V. South's Adventures of a Rockhound Journal, 2004

The Old Stone Fort was built 2000 years ago. It is a Native American ceremonial site. The fort takes up about 50 acres and was used for 400 years. We arrived at the park just after it opened at 8:00am. I looked at the artifacts and toured the museum.

The park ranger said that the Native Americans that used this fort were of the Middle Woodland Tradition. There is a complex set of mounds at Old Stone Fort. The people who lived there carried all the dirt using baskets. They had no horses to help them carry the dirt.

We walked down one of the trails along one fork of the river. There small water falls in the river and the trees along it's banks looked like they were 200 years old.

Editor's note: Rhena South is a youth member of MAGS. Thank you for your journal entry, Rhena.