

HUMBOLDT PARK STONE WORKERS EMULATE CELLINI

Turn Leisure Time Into Precious Gems.

(Pictures on page 1.)

A group of amateur Cellinis is hard at work these spring evenings in the craft shop at Humboldt park fieldhouse. Instead of spending their leisure evenings over a bridge table or at the movies, they utilize those hours to turn out delicately wrought jewelry, set with stones they themselves have cut and polished.

The lapidary shop at Humboldt park, which has been operating for the last five years, is believed to be the largest purely recreational one of its kind in the United States. Ray C. Mitchell, 2114 N. Karlov av., who has been in craft work with the park district for the last nine years, has instructed lapidarists for four years.

From the stock of semi-precious rocks and stones the hobbyists pick up at auctions, thru bartering, and on their own travels, they turn out exquisite rings, earrings, and pendants. Some of the amateur craftsmen work only in metals, making delicately wrought brooches, charm bracelets, and clips.

Furnish Own Gold.

The silver for the jewelry made in the shop is furnished thru the park district at 10 per cent over cost. The little gold used comes thru the craftsmen themselves, being recovered from old gold objects, dental fillings, and gold plated pieces. The shop has complete equipment for recovering this old gold.

Settings for most of the rings, and many of the other metal pieces used in the jewelry making, are cast. The setting is modeled in wax and the model enclosed in a plaster cast. This cast is then "burned out" for two hours, during which process the wax model burns out, leaving the impression in the hardened plaster. Into this impression the silver is poured, being driven into every crevice with centrifugal force. Once the metal has hardened, the plaster cast is broken open and the setting removed for finishing and polishing.

Stones to be placed in the settings are made from crude chunks of agate, petrified wood, onyx, moonstone, opal, or other semi-precious stones. The stones are cut with diamond saws, discs of steel or copper which are charged with diamond fragments around the edge. These discs were donated to the shop by the Western Electric company, thru the efforts of George A. Greenlee, 2673 Orchard st.

Select Best Plane.

Among the varieties of stones fancied by the hobbyists are Lake Superior agate, found north and west along the Rock river valley; opal; malachite; agate in a half dozen different varieties; onyx, and carnelian. The cutting is a painstaking operation, for the cutter must decide what plane will bring out the stone's pattern to best advantage, and at just which spot in the stone the color will be most vivid.

After the cutting, when the lapidarist has a slice of stone to work with, the grinding and polishing begins. The stone is ground to the oval or round shape desired, then polished to a high gloss, first by hand with emery paper, then on wheels of wood and felt.

The members of the Humboldt lapidarists come from widely varied fields. Between 50 and 60 members are registered, and an average attendance of 15 shows up every night the shop is open between October and May.

Several of the hobbyists are technicians on the staff of Presbyterian hospital. Mrs. Val H. Rutkowski, 1570 Miner st., Des Plaines, is a chemist at the hospital; Mrs.

Charles Clark is a pathological technician, and Miss Margaret Redfern a pathological secretary.

Makes Synthetic Emerald.

William Menzel, 1840 N. Austin Blvd., one of the group, is an expert on synthetic gems. He has built a synthetic emerald believed to be the only one of any size in existence. Altho he had been working on the project for some time, the stone materialized thru some accident of science, and he has been unable to duplicate it. This synthetic emerald was built in approximately four hours, while nature would take about a million years to make one of similar size.

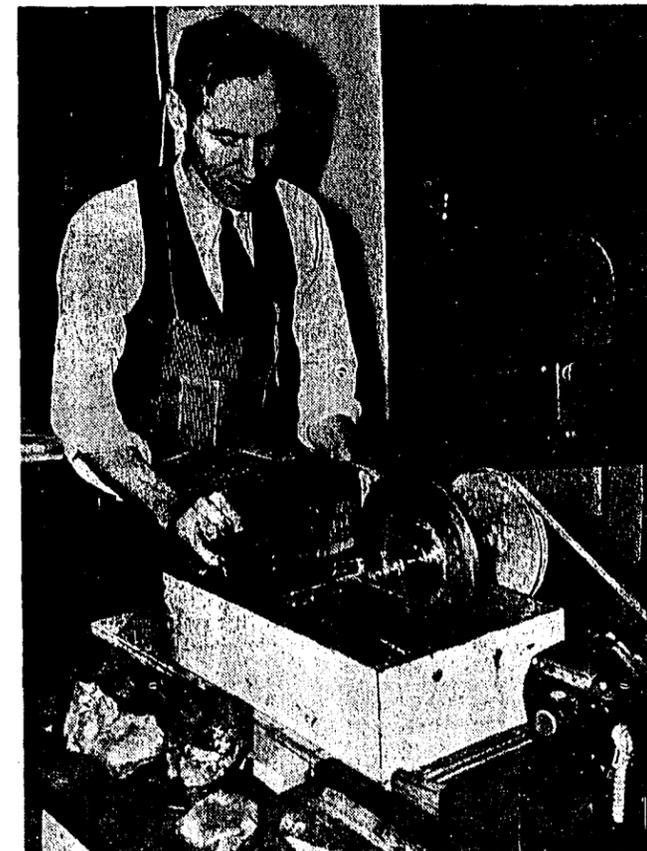
Secretary to the group is Archie Nisbet, who has a wood turning shop at 1818 Milwaukee avenue. Mr. Nisbet's other hobby is astrology. Other members of the group include Carlos Cossin, 2507 N. Ashland av., a machinist at the Automatic Screw Machine company; Russell McFall, member of The Tribune editorial staff, and Glen Putnam, 1923 N. Neva av., personnel manager for Dallas Brass company, who attends with Mrs. Putnam. Many jewelers drop in occasionally, to use the equipment, which is much more complete than that of most small jewelry shops.

Altho the shop is located in Humboldt park, in the heart of the northwest side, lapidarists from all over the city use its facilities. And, as Instructor Mitchell genlally points out, there is always room for a few more ardent hobbyists.

Humboldt Park Hobbyists Turn Stones Into Beautiful Jewelry



Carlos Cossia, 2507 N. Ashland av., is a machinist at the Automatic Screw Machine company. He applies his trade skill when he makes jewelry in the lapidary shop, working from a solid piece of silver, and filing patiently away until he turns out an exquisite butterfly setting for a brooch, or a minute pair of scissors for a charm bracelet. Mr. Cossia came to this country from Italy in 1917. His formula for jewelry making is "time and patience," but the fact that he turned out 32 intricate charms for a bracelet during two weeks shows that by his skill he has practically eliminated the "time" element. (Story on page 4.)



Ray C. Mitchell, 2114 N. Karlov av., heads the craft shops at Humboldt park. Mr. Mitchell is preparing to cut a slice from a piece of semi-precious stone. He has removed the guard from the saw, to show how the cutting wheel is geared to the small motor.

[TRIBUNE Photos by Julius Gantner.]

A piece of agate is not just an item for the curio shelf to members of the Lapidary club at the Humboldt park craft shop. In it they see potential rings, pins, and pendants. The group meets each week for a session over the cutting wheels and polishing benches, making silver settings for rings, and grinding the stones to go into those settings. At a recent meeting, Mrs. George Huss, 1718 S. Jefferson

st., right, brought a slice of Wyoming agate, which is being inspected under the light by William Menzel, 1840 N. Austin Blvd. Pausing for a moment at his task of grinding another stone is Val H. Rutkowski, 1570 Miner st., Des Plaines, who also looks over the vivid colorings of the agate slice. Mr. Rutkowski, one of the most ardent of the hobbyists, has a complete lapidary shop in his basement at home.



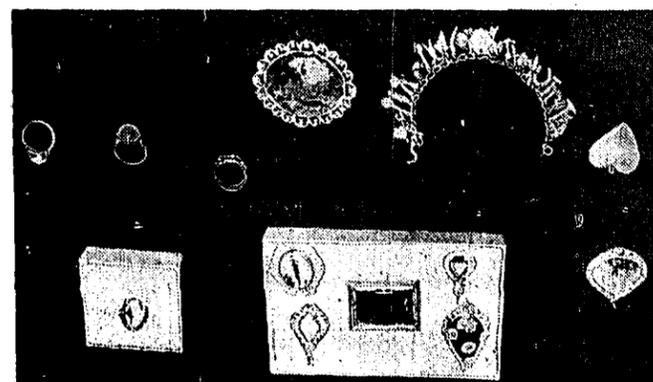
Professionally, Mrs. Val H. Rutkowski is a chemist at Presbyterian hospital. But when she leaves the lab behind, she becomes an artisan in metal, spending much of her leisure time in the Humboldt park craft shop, or in Rutkowski's own basement lapidary shop. Here she holds a ring over the burner, soldering it into a circle. She is demonstrating the proper method to Mrs. Charles Clark, 6330 Kenwood av., a pathological technician at the hospital, who is also one of the lapidary enthusiasts.



After a ring is finished, and the stone placed in the setting, a final polish must be given on the felt polishing wheel. Miss Margaret Redfern, 2970 Sheridan rd., a pathological secretary at Presbyterian hospital, shows how the polishing is done.



To the uninitiated, it seems improbable that such an array of crude stones, silver wire, and sheet metal could be turned by amateurs into objects of value and beauty. But this is the stuff with which the Humboldt park lapidarists begin to work. In the photo are pieces of rock crystal, Egyptian hematite jasper, turtle-back agate, calcite, obeditite, limonite, Texas agate, Oregon thunder egg, Montana moss agate, and petrified wood, a piece of sheet silver, and coils of plain and twisted silver wire.



And these are the finished objects. All the jewelry shown was made by Carlos Cossia, and the settings are all in silver, a few having gold or copper motifs superimposed. In the top row, left to right: A pendant of Mexican agate, in the box pendants of snowflake obsidian, amethyst, opal, and Mexican agate, and a pin of petrified wood, and on the right a ring of Montana agate. In the bottom row, a heart shaped pendant of onyx, a charm bracelet with 32 hand wrought charms, a brooch of plume agate, a ring of silver with a unique buckle design in copper, and rings of moonstone and opal.