

Excerpt from article by Janet Cares in
Micromounters of New England Northeast Meeting, May 13, 1989
Transcribed by Anna Wilken

Micropersonalities: Meet Gunnar Bjareby

Gunnar Bjareby was born in Sweden in 1899. Though his full name was Alfred Gunnar Bjareby, he was universally known by his middle name, and used the initials G.B.

At the age of 24 Gunnar Bjareby came to the United States to pursue art studies, particularly at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Since art could seldom be relied on for total support, he worked regularly as an interior house painter, adding artistic touches and an occasional mural to some of Boston's old homes and public buildings.

Gunnar's mineral collecting began at the age of ten, and his enthusiasm continued for the rest of his life. He was a mineral collector, **never** a rockhound or rock hunter, as he believed hunting was done only for wild animals. As one of the early members of the Boston Mineral Club, he was always active in one capacity or another and was voted an honorary member in recognition of his contributions. As locations committee Chairman he maintained a set of bound volumes of Geological Survey maps of the New England states. Each map was overlain with tracing paper on which he marked the location of known quarries, mines, road cuts, and prospects, complete with lists of minerals found there. In this way the localities could be pinpointed without marking up the map itself. At present these maps are in the care of the Harvard Mineralogical Museum in Cambridge.

A portion of Gunnar's mineral collection, one of the finest of its day, was displayed in wall cases in the living room of his fourth floor walk-up apartment on Palace Road in Boston. Collectors would often visit to study minerals or to purchase reasonably-priced specimens, many of which were taken from his collection when he replaced them with finer ones. Whether by trade, sale or donations, many of his minerals have found their way to museums in such far-flung places as Australia, Sweden and South Africa.

He kept in touch with knowledgeable field collectors of his day, among them Philip Morrill, Neal Yedlin, Phil Foster, Dick Schooner and Peter Zodac. He was one of the first to scout the now well-known MDC Shaft 10 in Hardwick, MA, and learned early of the danalite/genthelvite locality in Cumberland, RI.

The Palermo Mine, from which bjarebyite was later to be named, was a great favorite, as was the Gillette Quarry, usually the first trip of the season for the Boston Mineral Club in their early days. He made several trips to Mont St-Hilaire, and was quite excited about its minerals.

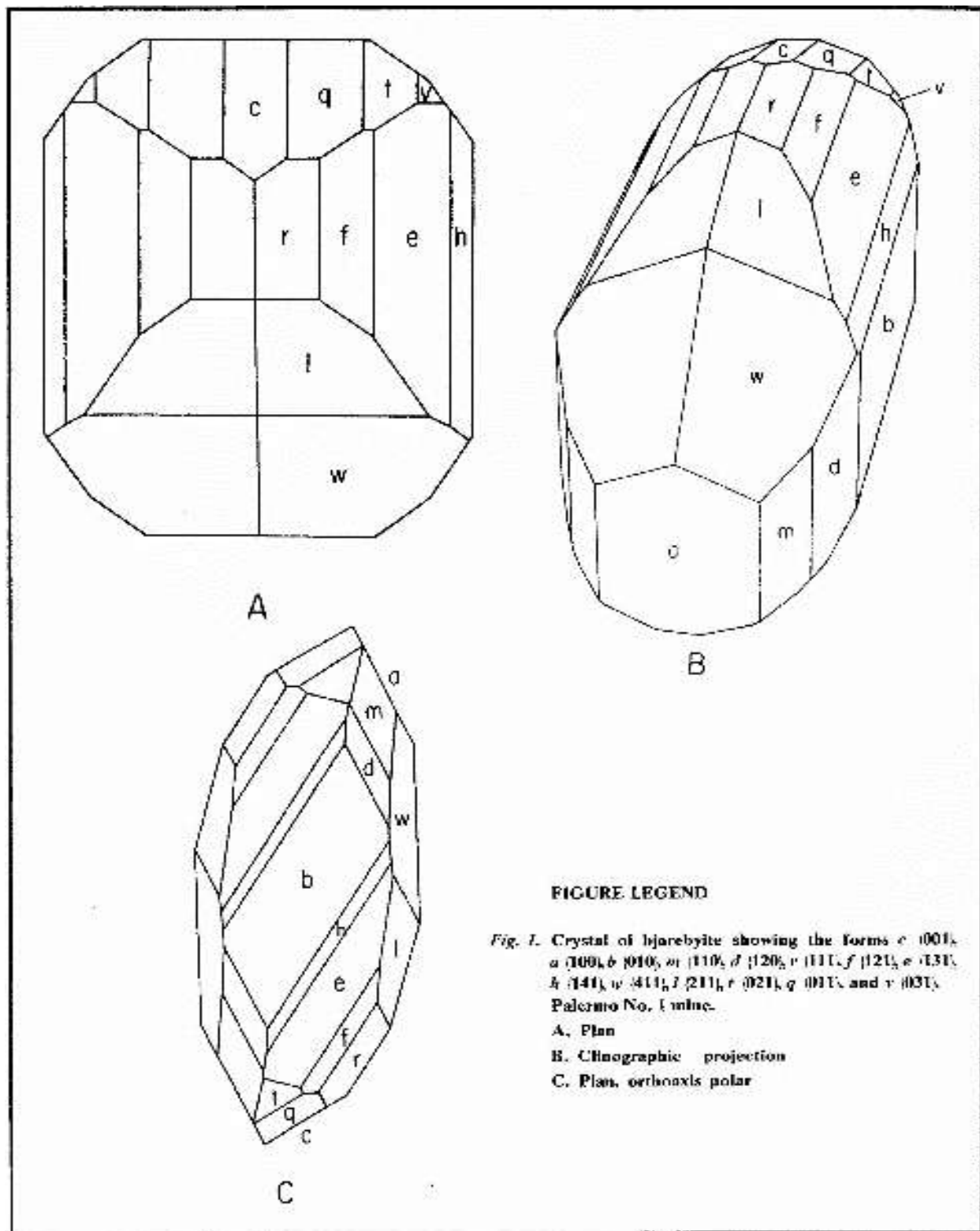


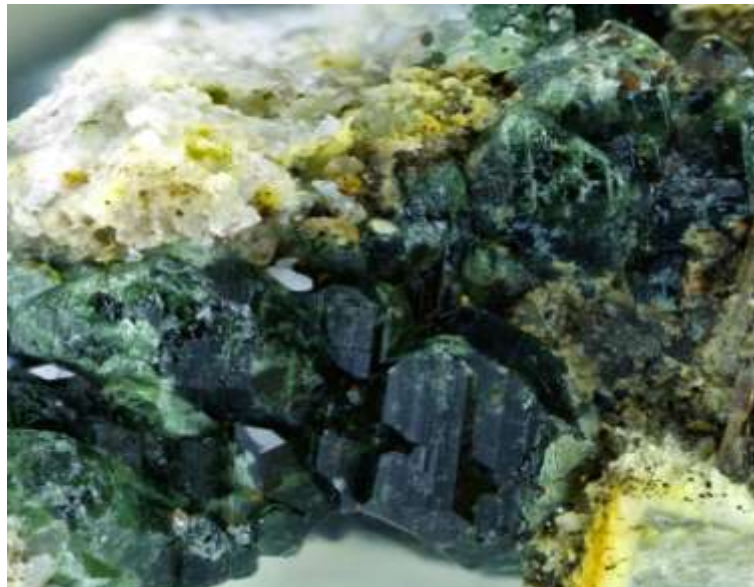
FIGURE LEGEND

Fig. 1. Crystal of bjarebyite showing the forms c (001), a (100), b (010), m (110), d (120), r (111), f (121), e (131), h (141), w (411), t (211), r (021), q (011), and v (031). Palermo No. 1 mine.

- A. Plan
- B. Cathographic projection
- C. Plan, orthoaxis polar



Bob Whitmore specimen – Tom Mortimer Photo



Bob Wilken specimen and photo

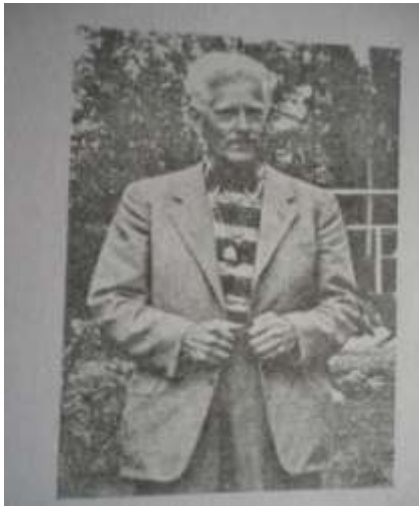
(The type specimen was collected in 1947 by Gunnar Bjareby and bore the label “Dickinsonite”. In 1973 the mineral was named “Bjarebyite” by Dr. Paul B. Moore and co-workers of the University of Chicago.)

Gunnar never owned a car, but was always in demand as a passenger, and knew exactly how to get to any collecting spot. He would always be sitting on the steps with collecting bag and tools in hand waiting for his ride. At lunch time he would reach into his pocket and draw out a battered sandwich which he would supplement with peanuts from another pocket or wild berries when available. He loved the outdoors, and when others chose to carry a tent, he would make a bed of pine boughs on which to lay his sleeping bag.

In the field Gunnar was a tireless worker, and unafraid to go after a superior specimen no matter how difficult the job. He used only hand tools, feeling that anything else was unsporting. On one occasion he worked with hammer and chisel for an entire afternoon on a group of fine crystals, only to have the entire mass shatter at the final blow. If he made a discovery while with a group he would take a few of the finest specimens and then call in the rest of the group to share in the find. He was an excellent sight identifier and willing to help the novice, but had little patience with those who failed to learn.

In the early days, there was no formal micromount club, but a number of interested collectors would get together informally to study, trim and exchange micros. Gunnar would bring a stack of boxes containing a variety of mineral specimens glued to paper labels. These were circulated at the meetings, and those attending could take a box home to go through at leisure. Many micromount collections got their start from these giveaways.

In November, 1966, a group of micromounters led by Gilbert George and Eldon Fettridge both of Rhode Island, sent out invitations to an all-day micromounting session at the Eliot Church in Newton, MA. There was a good response, and in January, 1967 the group was officially named Micromounters of New



England. Gunnar was elected vice-president, and in the few meetings held prior to his death gave brief instructional talks on some aspect of mineralogy.

Gunnar Bjareby passed away in 1967.

His micromount collection, representing over 1,000 mineral species, went to the University of Chicago.

In 1983 Gunnar Bjareby was elected to the Baltimore Mineral Society's "Micromounters Hall of Fame" in the old-timer's category.

References:

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