



# BIG SAVINGS

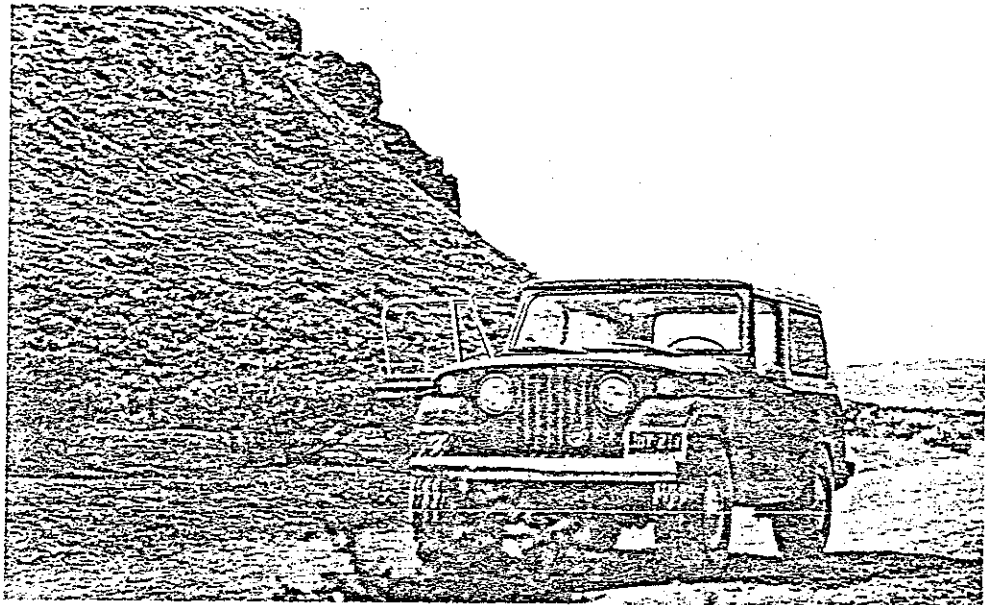
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Eagle's Nest cliff is on the left. Petrified wood and oolite are found in their original deposits on top of the hill. All along the base and sides of this cliff are pieces of oolite, flints, and occasionally petrified wood. Look for arrowheads on the right. Two older abandoned gravel pits are also on the right.

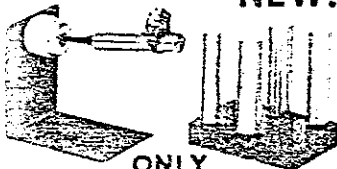
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Millions of years earlier great flows of lava and pumice ash embedded water-logged forests, eventually producing petrified wood. Hot water, laden with silica and other dissolved minerals percolated through beds of lava and sedimentary rocks, leaving nodules of agate, jasper, and flint. Sometimes it completely filled the empty pocket where a tree limb had weathered and dissolved out of the rock, leaving a perfect cast of the original limb. Oolite formed when ancient lake beds deposited small, spherical calcifications around organic or dust particles, to be finally covered or completely replaced by harder quartz.

It has taken millions of years to form some of these rocks. Agates are found in many colors and varieties, from milky chalcedony to banded, dendritic and crystalline, in many shades and colors. Petrified limbs are often found, excellent in color and grain formation. Jaspers, flints and cherts are common.

The flints and agates of these beach gravel deposits were favorites with the ancient people who lived here and used them to make tools and weapons. Undoubtedly the Indians who later lived in this valley used some of the more highly polished and beautiful stones as ornaments or charms. I have found them in old campgrounds among broken arrowheads and chips of flint and obsidian, many miles from places where they naturally occur.

The general area of these gravel pits may be the only place where exactly the right combination of agates and semi-precious gemstones was present in sufficient quantity, in conjunction with the polishing agents, to produce such beautifully polished beach pebbles. Of course it must be remembered that the stones were washed down in rivers and streams, and partially tumbled and polished before they reached their final resting places on the ancient beaches.

Judging from the amount of rock and

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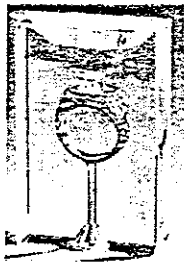
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The author has himself worked into a hole in search of snake agate.

the relatively large size of some of them, this was not a beach of the modern (post glacial) Harney Lake. The gravel appears to have been dropped into its present place by tremendous water forces operating thousands, if not millions of years before the recent geological times.

It is quite possible that this same combination of conditions and materials existed in other parts of Oregon and the Great Basin, although the gravel pits at the Narrows are the only place I know where these beautiful naturally polished pebbles are to be found. But then, who knows where else these same conditions may have produced something as good, or even better? Certainly countless thousands of pebbles still lie buried all along the former beaches in the same area where the diggings have so far unearthed them.

Perhaps the most satisfying experience of all is that of tracking down these stones to their source. After I had spent some time examining the gravel pits and collecting specimens, I began hunting for the sources of these interesting materials in the surrounding hills. I was able to locate the sources of some of the agates, petrified wood, oolite and flints. Since they can all be included in one field trip, I will describe them in the sequence in which you would encounter them.

### How to Get There

Leave Burns on Highway 78 East, and turn south at a well marked intersection about a mile and a half east of Burns. You turn onto State Highway 205, which leads to Frenchglen, Fields and Denio. A sign at the turn directs you to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. The road is paved, and mile posts are measured from this intersection, not from Burns.

The first landmark you reach is a high, narrow ridge sticking out into the valley, capped with a dense lava flow, and known as Wright's Point. At the top of Wright's Point you can pull off the road and survey the vast extent of Harney Valley beyond. All of the collecting points except Saddle Butte are visible from this vantage point.

Ahead and on your right you will see a mountain slightly higher than Wright's Point, named Dog Mountain. About midway along the base of the highest part of the mountain, several miles south, you can see a ranch house and possibly some evidence of digging. This is the Clyde This-

(Continued on Page 542)

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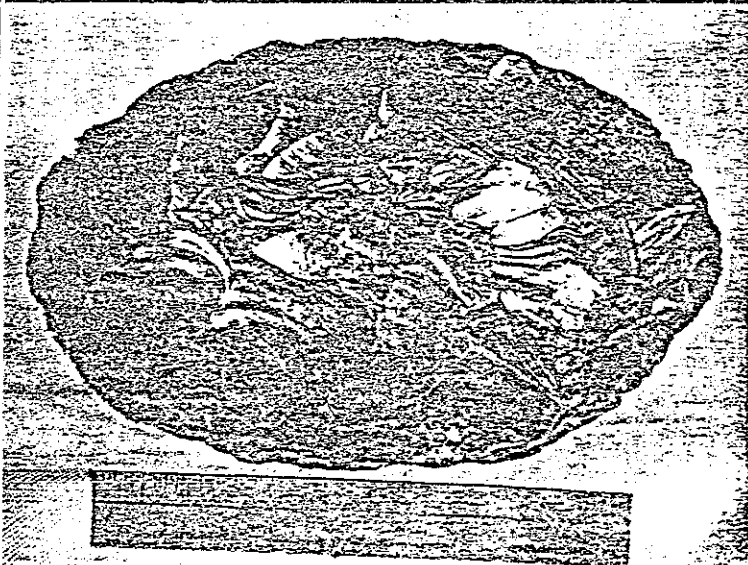
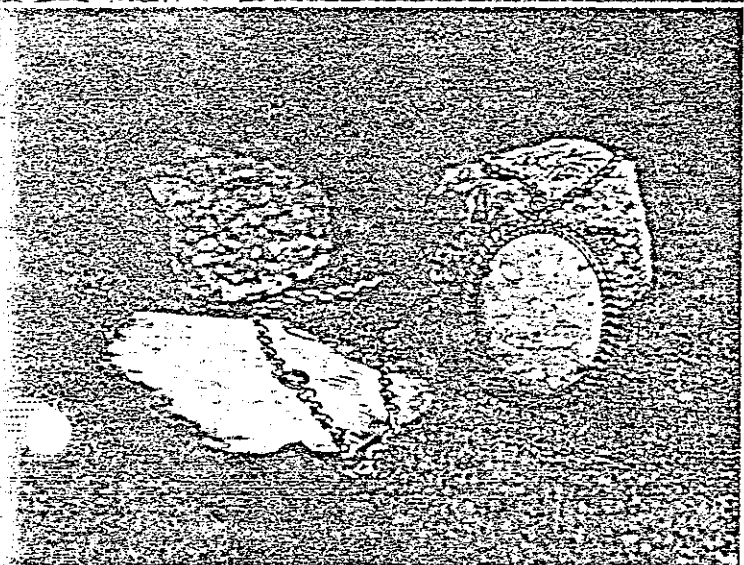
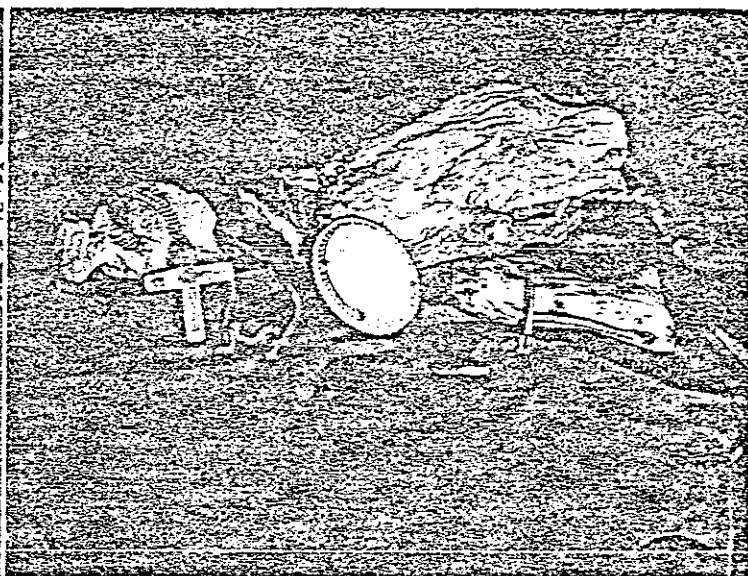
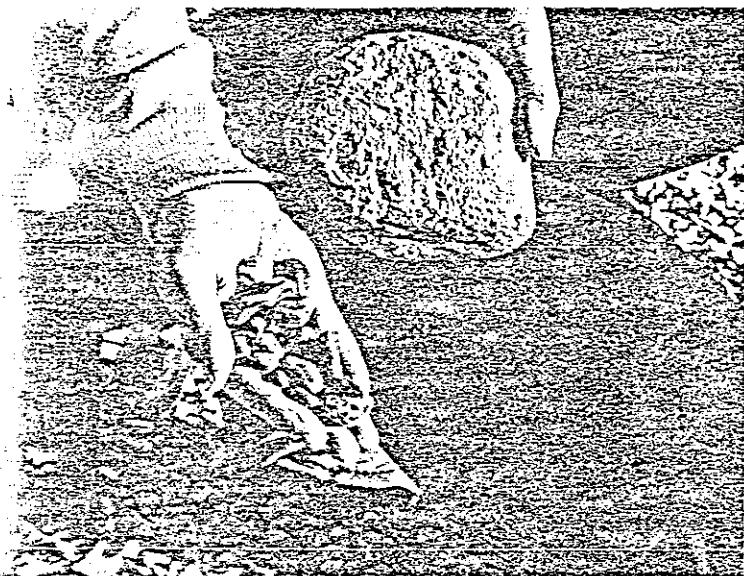
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Top Left—A handful of polished “beach pebbles” in contrast with a piece of pumice foam. The handful of stones is heavier than the pumice, which will float on water.

Top Right—A cross cut from Snake Agate, against a piece of the natural stone, an oolite cabochon and a pendant of black petrified Eagle's Nest wood, along with a piece of raw wood and a partially tumbled limb.

Lower Left—Oolite from Eagle's Nest makes beautiful cabochons. Solid, dense pieces are well worth cutting and polishing.

Lower Right—This Harney County Indian artifact, probably a combination knife and scraper, is shown with a six inch ruler for size comparison.

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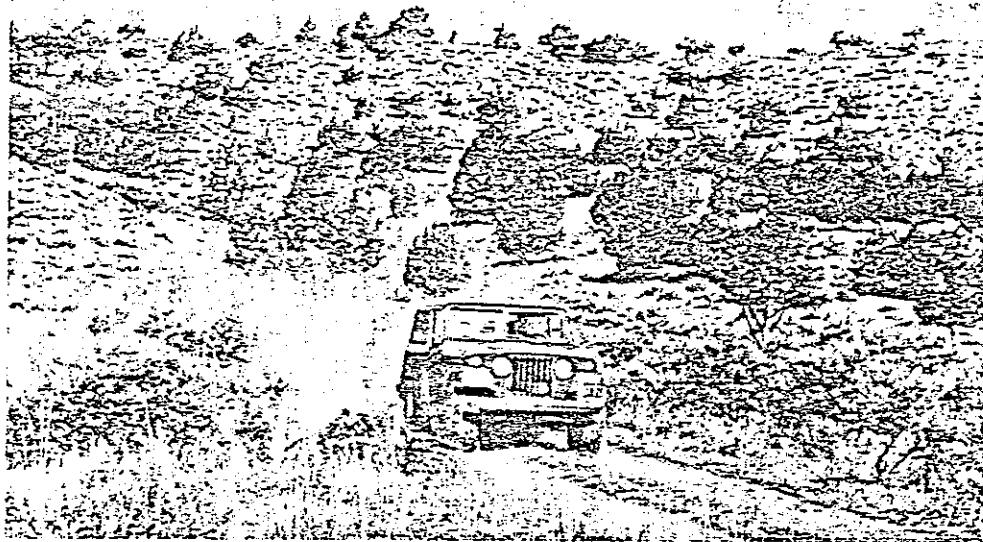
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A closer view of the Snake Agate diggings with a rig coming out.

sell Ranch, and the site of the solid, milky chalcedony known locally as "snake agate." The name is a corruption of the term "snake skin," in which the outer surface of the stone has a pattern reminiscent of the scales on a snake's back.

The deposit is on private property, and the owner charges \$2.00 per person to dig, for six pounds of material; plus a charge of 40 cents per pound for anything over six pounds. The digging is fairly easy, however, and success is assured.

To reach the diggings, follow 205 south until you are at the south end of Dog Mountain, just past mile post 16. Turn right on a posted, gravelled road following a power line. After two miles, take another right turn (north) at a posted dirt road, and go another two miles along the base of the mountain until you reach the ranch house and the diggings. The owners will show you the most productive places to dig.

While you are still on Wright's Point, observe where the road disappears to the south over a low range of hills. At the base of the hills is the turn-off to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, to the left, just before mile post 24. The gravel pits are on both sides of the road to the east. The pit north of the road is the most extensive, and seems to yield the best polished stones.

Still on Wright's Point, look again at the distant hill where the road disappears. Notice that it ends in an abrupt cliff a couple miles to the right of the road. This cliff is called Eagle's Nest because eagles have regularly raised a brood of young in a nest high on the cliff. At the top of this cliff, and scattered all the way back on the hill as far as the highway, are extensive deposits of oolite and petrified wood.

To reach the top of the cliff, turn right on a dirt road a few hundred feet ahead of the turn to the gravel pits. Go about a mile and a half and follow the road around the base of the cliff and then up a steep, dusty hill on the back side of it. Before you reach the cliff, you will pass several older, abandoned gravel pits which are excellent digging spots.

On top of Eagle's Nest you will see  
(Continued on Page 544)

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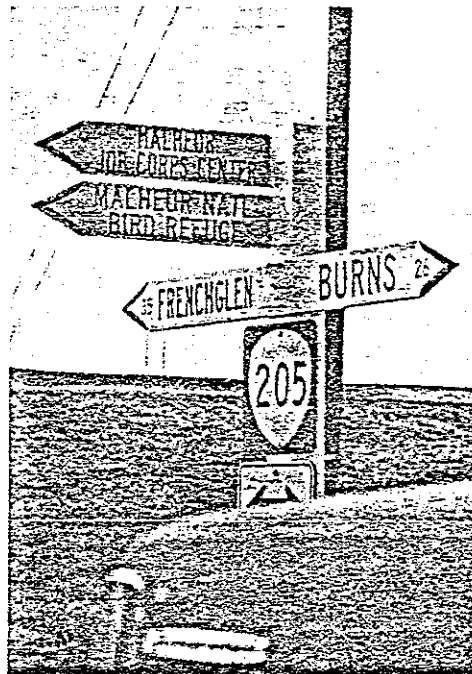
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This sign identifies the turn off to the gravel pits, (left) and Eagle's Nest Hill (right).

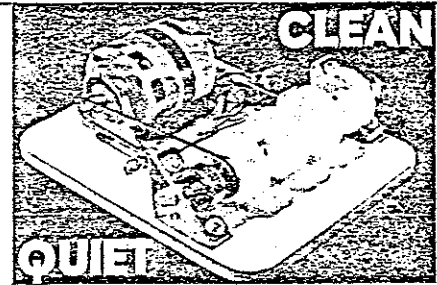
where great quantities of earth and rock have been moved by eager rockhounds digging for the beautiful petrified wood, particularly small limbs and roots, which are found here. Good specimens of oolite used to be scattered all over the place, but now you may have to dig for it.

The petrified wood is not concentrated in this one spot, but logs and limbs have been found in an area covering many square miles. For instance, drive for exactly three miles on a dirt road leaving the base of Eagle's Nest, directly south, into the Salt Grass Hills. Here, in soft digging, you can find chunks of good quality flint and agate which often appear to be log and limb casts.

Your best bet in most of this area is to scout the surface for "float," and then try digging wherever you find it in ground that has not previously been dug. You will note that the original area on top of Eagle's Nest is under claim by the Stinkingwater Rock and Relic Club of Burns. The club took this precaution to prevent rock hogs from coming in with power equipment and other methods that quickly deplete the area. The club welcomes all legitimate rockhounds and trusts them to leave a clean camp, take only what they can use, and leave some for the next rock hunter.

You can reach other digging areas on the hill by following the pavement on up the hill south of the gravel pits. A jeep trail leaves the road on the right just past mile post 25, and another about three quarters of a mile farther on.

Another petrified wood collecting area, possibly part of the same formation as



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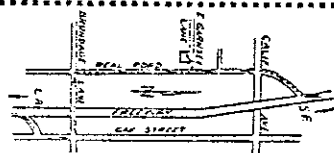
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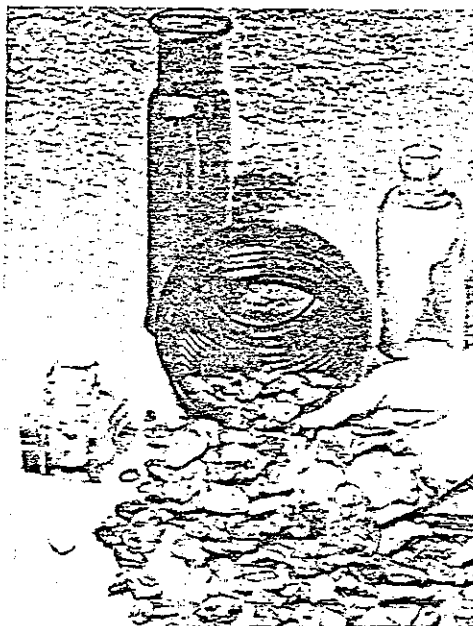
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 (33 years in Lapidary - 26 years Lapidary Instruction)



An assortment of naturally polished agates, oolites, flints and petrified wood just as they come from the gravel pits, along with some Harney County homestead artifacts.

the Eagle's Nest deposit, is at Saddle Butte. Follow the pavement on south from the gravel pits to mile post 32. Here you are exactly opposite Saddle Butte which is on the left of the road. Some good logs have been dug on the south flank of the butte. Follow the pavement to a jeep trail leaving the road to the left a short distance before you reach mile post 33. A State Highway gravel pile is opposite the turn. Petrified animal bones have been found in the walls of some gullies at the southern base of the butte.

In case you don't find anything on Saddle Butte, drive out on the flat past the gravel dump and scout for float. Some nice limbs and even fairly chunky pieces of weathered logs have been found out here on the flat under the power line.

Two things to watch for while you are rock hunting in this area are arrowheads and rattlesnakes. Both were much more common in the past than they are now, but you can still find both if you are on the watch. The snakes will stay out of your way if you make enough noise with your feet as you walk. They hear the vibrations in the earth, but not the sound waves in the air. So stomp your feet as you walk, and you will seldom, if ever, see a rattlesnake. The arrowheads are a different matter. They are even harder to find, but at least they stay put while you search for them. ☺

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**WATCH THIS!**

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MIX STONES  
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LET SET—  
 SLICE THIN

— THEN —

**DIP SLAB IN POLYTHANE  
 FOR BRILLIANT—  
 INSTANT—  
 POLISH—**



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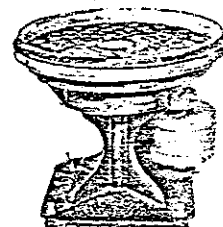
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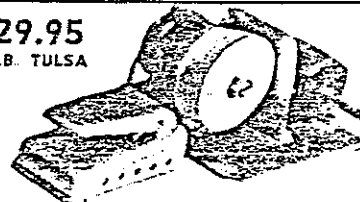


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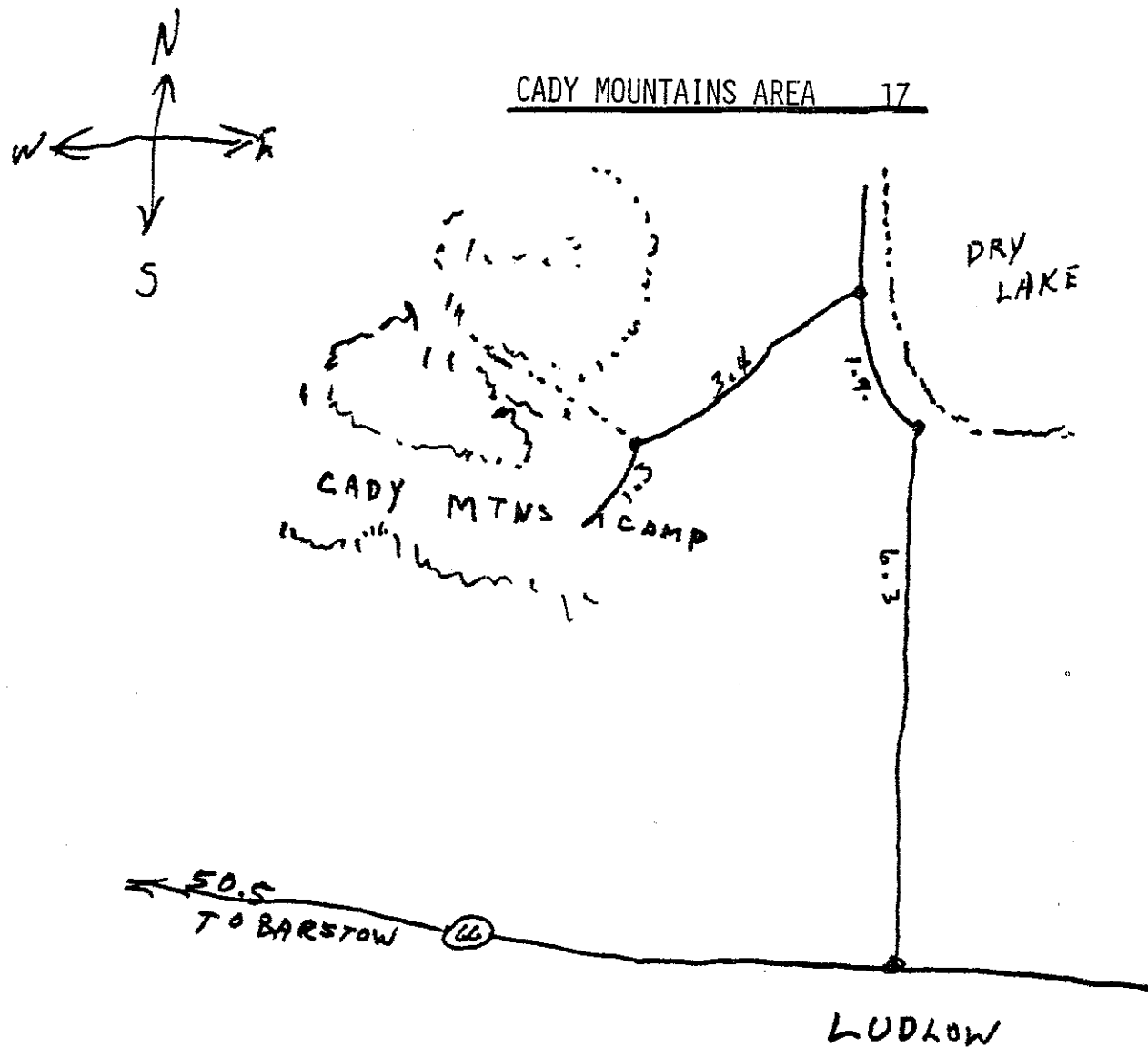
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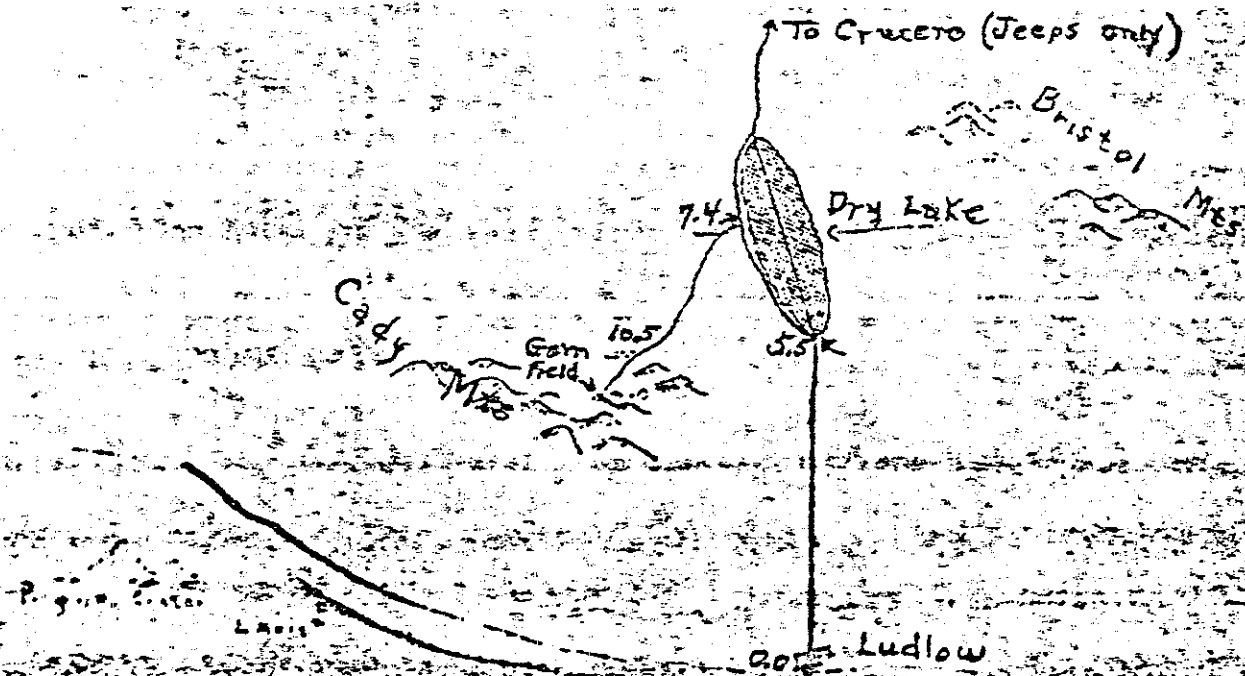
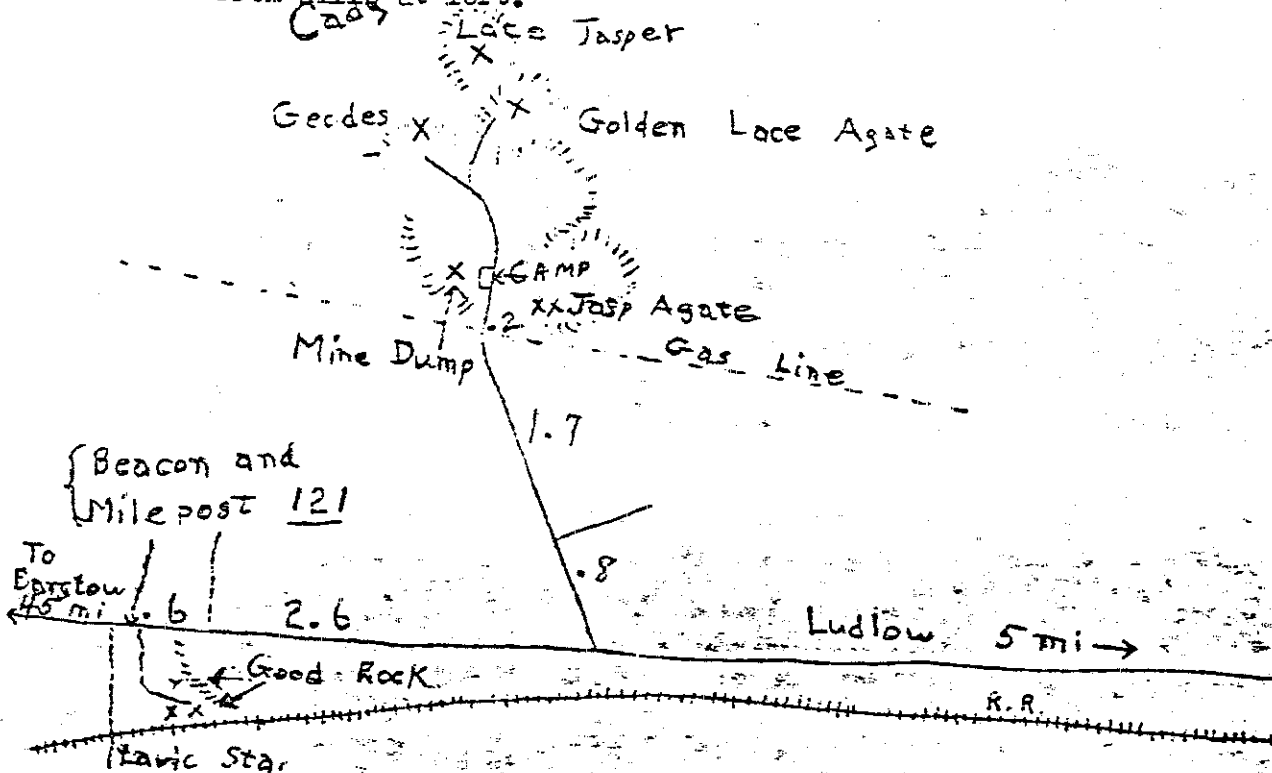


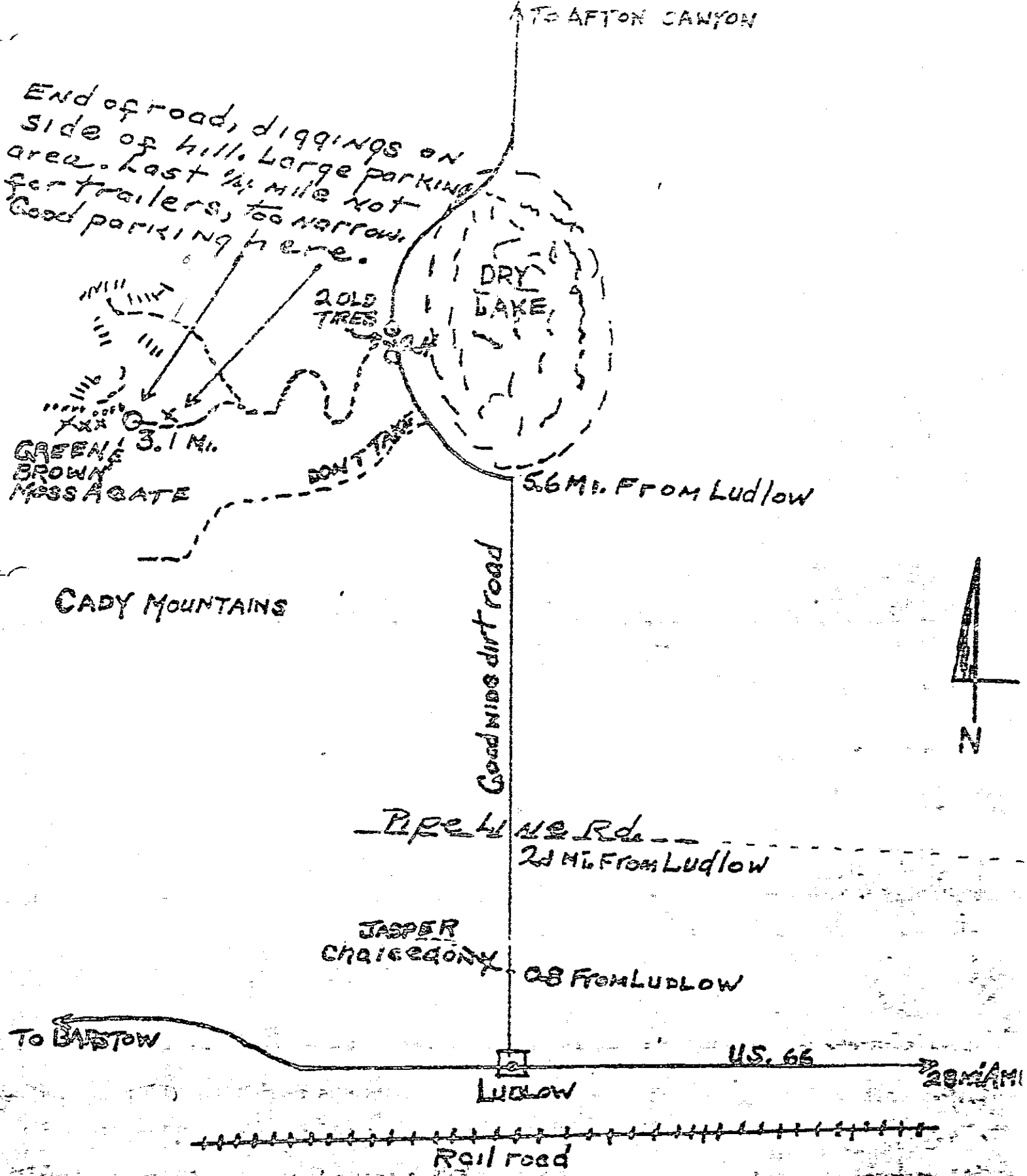
COLLECT: ROSEBUD AGATE AND....., THE CADYS  
 HAVE LOTS OF MATERIAL.  
 BRING: - HARD ROCK TOOLS - WATER  
 OK FOR STOCK CARS AND TRAILERS



When you go into the Cady's be sure and carry plenty of water and be careful of your tires.

The Lap map shows one of the oldest and still the best collecting areas for jaspers and jasp-agate to be found anywhere. All you have to do in several places is to drive a short distance from the highway, get out of the car and start picking up good materials. The bottom map shows a very good area for moss and lace agate, jasper and some plume agate. The directions for finding gem materials is as follows: Road branches at 11.8 mi. Left branch goes 100 ft. to camp site. Rt. branch goes .2 mile to base of hill. Bad twisty road. To reach gem field take wash right which reaches road at about 11.8 mi. and follow it about .5mi. keeping to right of low range of green hills. Go through narrow reddish cut and up a drainage channel that comes down from hills at left.





End of road, diggings on side of hill. Large parking area. Last 1/4 mile not for trailers, too narrow. Good parking here.

3.1 Mi.  
GREEN BROWN MASS AGATE

Good wide dirt road

DRY LAKE

OLD TREES

5.6 Mi. FROM Ludlow

CADY MOUNTAINS

Pipe Line Rd.  
2 mi. FROM Ludlow

JASPER CHACO CANYON  
0.8 FROM LUDLOW

TO BASTOW

Ludlow

US. 66

Rail road

