

The Gillespie Museum has been a center for earth science on campus and in the community for 55 years. We celebrate T.B. and Nellie Gillespie's generous gift and their reverence for the natural world. Their founding collection of 15,000 mineral specimens established this museum on November 14, 1958. Mrs. Gillespie put their mission best: to make their private collection available for students of Florida, a state she described as "scarcely mineralized."

A walk through this exhibit, in our newest gallery space, provides a glimpse of the Museum's past and present, with sharp focus on the Gillespies' well-informed and systematic collecting. As T.B. Gillespie gave the account, the beginning was almost an accident. While vacationing in Seattle in the late 1920s, they were intrigued by a small display of unusual mineral specimens in a jewelry store and soon after began their study and collection of fine minerals from around the world. Accident or not, their circumstances would certainly have prepared them for that first

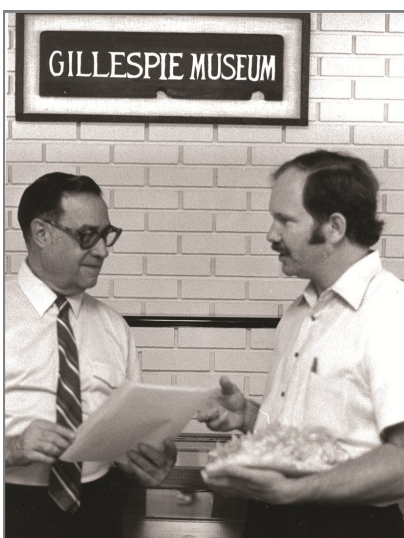
spark. He had recently retired from his firm, T.B. Gillespie Paving Company of Palatka, Florida. Mrs. Gillespie was the daughter of a jeweler in that lovely town on the St. Johns River. In an appraisal of their collection in 1938, noted mineralogist Arthur Montgomery recognized its balance of rare specimens with a teaching emphasis: "I only wish there were more private collectors of this sort," he wrote, comparing the Gillespies' private collection to one other, and that in Paris. Much later, reflecting on their golden anniversary, Mr. Gillespie remarked that the idea to create a mineral museum bound them together. That shared passion has been on display for over five decades.



The Gillespies' wedding photo

The Exhibit

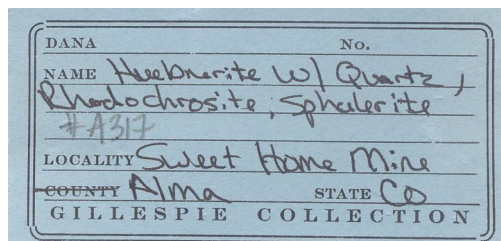
- A reproduction of a display in the museum as it first opened, **Case 15: Pseudomorphs and Paramorphs** reflects the educational mission of the Gillespie Museum in 1962.
- The **Photo Gallery** offers a pictorial history of some of the founding moments.
- The **Collectors' Cabinet** encourages our visitors, especially the younger scientists, to pursue their own hobbies with the vision and deliberateness of the Gillespies.
- The **Atlas of a Collection**, the large case on the west wall, traces some of the influences, the destinations, and the comprehensiveness of the museum's holdings.



Curators, Chauvin & Bradford

As our **Timeline** shows, many have worked tirelessly in caring for the collection, the museum, and its educational programs. Its curators—Robert Chauvin (1958-1975) and Bruce Bradford (1975-2012)—have shaped the mission from the first. It was Robert Chauvin, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and Professor of Geography and Geology, who first befriended the Gillespies, taking his geology students to the collection on display in their home in St. Augustine in the 1950s. With Professor Chauvin’s guidance and inspiration, the museum moved in 1984 from its original site in the center of campus (currently the Print Shop) to this beautiful home on the southeast corner of campus.

With the leadership of Bruce Bradford, professor of Geography and Environmental Science, the building was renovated to include a Florida gallery, a museum shop, and through his superb grantsmanship, a number of earth science displays— notably the Underground World and the Connections Room, with its focus on volcanism and rock formation. On Earth Day 2009, the Rinker Environmental Learning Center opened, providing an informal classroom and new possibilities for studies in biology, ecology, environmental science, geography, and informal science education.



T.B. Gillespie’s specimen ID card design

An Earth Science Museum, With and Without Walls

The grounds of the museum now feature a well-established Native Florida Plant Landscape and urban wildlife habitat, and at the adjacent environmental center, the Hatter Harvest Garden, a Native Plant Screenhouse, the restoration of a Volusia Sandhill Ecosystem, *Teaching Landscape*, and new projects such as Stetson Beekeeping and The Seed Library. Stetson undergraduates contribute to the development and interpretation of the landscape as well as the educational programming of the museum. Thousands of Florida students visit each year during field trips, Science Saturdays, Science Cafes and a range of earth-centered events, taking full advantage of Stetson University’s “earth science museum in a natural setting.”

Mrs. Gillespie lived to see the museum open on the Stetson campus; Mr. Gillespie celebrated his final, one-hundredth birthday in this building. Even after his collecting trips with Dean Chauvin ended, he remained involved, whether with the design and contribution of its first specimen card or through the gift of an endowment for building and managing the collection. We are equally indebted to Mrs. Gillespie for her careful record-keeping and detailed correspondence: Through the fifteen journals she kept on specimen acquisitions and the files of over 1,000 letters and invoices, Stetson University has a rare treasure in both the collection and its archives. Few collectors of any period have managed the long commitment of time, study, and resources to the creation of a museum-worthy collection. Their devotion to Central Florida continues to shape the Gillespie Museum.

