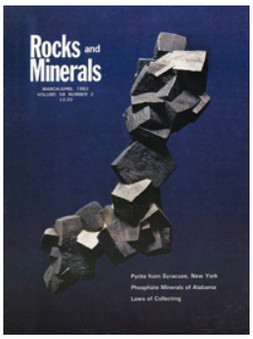

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WHO'S WHO in Mineral Names—NICHOLAS JAMES THEIS (1946–) and GEORGE GIBBS (1776–1833)

Richard S. Mitchell

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WHO'S WHO in Mineral Names

RICHARD S. MITCHELL
Department of Environmental Sciences
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

In addition to being an executive editor for ROCKS AND MINERALS, *Richard S. Mitchell is the author of the book* Mineral Names: What Do They Mean? *Van Nostrand Reinhold is the publisher.*

Nicholas J. Theis

NICHOLAS JAMES THEIS (1946-)

Theisite, Cu_5Zn_5 $((As,Sb)O_4)_2(OH)_{14}$, orthorhombic; pale bluish green cleavable crystal plates (up to 2 mm across) in thin seams cutting copper oxide minerals at a small uranium prospect near Durango, Colorado.

This new mineral, originally discovered by Nicholas J. Theis and Michael E. Madson, was studied and named by Sidney A. Williams (1982) who has stated: "I am grateful to Nick Theis for bringing the mineral to my attention as well as providing data on the locality. Dr. Theis has an interest of long standing in mineralogy, and the species is named in his honour."

Nicholas James Theis, the son of Nicholas and Margaret Marie (Folsom) Theis, was born at Willmar, Minnesota, on July 29, 1946. He began agate collecting along the shore of Lake Superior when he was eight, during a period when his father was working with construction at Silver Bay, Minnesota. Later, he continued collecting agates from glacial gravels on a farm where he lived near Randall, Minnesota. Donald K. Olson, now of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is the one "who started me collecting minerals in addition to agates. He always told me that the more I knew about minerals, the more fascinating they would be. He was right!" When Nicholas ("Nick") Theis entered the Institute of Technology of the University of Minnesota (Minneapolis), he originally wanted to become a high school science and mathematics teacher, but he soon entered the Department of Geology and Geophysics where he concentrated in mineralogy and petrology, with Prof. George R. Rapp, Jr., as his adviser. He completed the B.S. (Geology) in 1969. During the summers of 1967 and 1968, and for about a year after graduation, Theis worked as a field assistant and then exploration geologist for Phelps Dodge Corporation, working in Arizona, New Mexico, and Minnesota (Duluth Complex). Throughout this period his interest in mineralogy-geology was furthered by contacts with Sidney A. Williams, BaSaw Khin, Robert Murray, and others.

To further his education, Nick Theis entered (in 1970) the Department of Geological Sciences, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. Under the direction of Prof. Leonard G. Berry, he completed two theses, both involving the interrelationships between minerals, chemistry, and sedimentology of the uraniferous quartz-pebble conglomerates at Elliot Lake, Ontario. The M.Sc. (Engineering Geology) was conferred in 1973

and the Ph.D. (Geology) in 1976. His interest in field mineral collecting continued while he was a graduate student, and he and George W. Robinson, now curator of the economic geology collection at the National Museum of Canada, supplemented their graduate assistantships by selling specimens they found. Also, while he was in graduate school, he assisted in the teaching of various mineralogy and geology courses and was employed during the summers on various projects: mercury geochemical survey in Eastern Townships, Quebec; an archaeological dig in Greece and study of mines and archaeological sites in Cyprus and Turkey; mapping project in Labrador Trough, northern Quebec; study of uraniferous quartz-pebble conglomerates, Blind River-Elliot Lake, Ontario.

After receiving his graduate degrees, Nick Theis spent a year as a post-doctoral fellow with the Uranium Resource Evaluation Section of the Geological Survey of Canada and then was employed, in 1977, by David S. Robertson and Associates, consulting geologists. Subsequently, he was associated with the Bendix Field Engineering Corporation, in their Grand Junction District Office, Colorado, where he was involved in radiometric and geochemical surveys for uranium and in uranium resource assessment. Currently, he is with Mobil Exploration and Producing Services, Inc. in Dallas, Texas, where he works on regional geologic projects oriented toward petroleum development.

Although Theis has not concentrated on a specialty in mineral collecting, he likes metallic minerals, especially crystallized sulfides and metals, as well as meteorites, and is developing an interest in collecting various minerals from such specific localities as Bisbee, Arizona, Chino and Groundhog mines, Grant County, New Mexico, and the Keewenaw Peninsula, Michigan. He also continues to sell minerals and has shared a booth with Mike Madson in the wholesale section of the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show for several years.

Nick Theis holds memberships in the Mineralogical Society of America, the Mineralogical Association of Canada, the American Institute of Mining Engineers, the Mineralogical Association of Dallas, and the American Association of Petroleum Geologists. He has published several reports, especially on his work at Elliot Lake, Ontario, and on uranium resource evaluation of areas in Colorado and Kansas.

Other interests, besides those geological, that have been pursued by Theis include woodworking, and the collecting of stamps, coins, and insects. He married Linda Violet Murray of Scottsdale, Arizona, in 1973, and they have two daughters, Jennifer Claire and Kristina Anne.

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GEORGE GIBBS (1776–1833)

Gibbsite, *gamma*-$Al(OH)_3$, monoclinic; as well-developed pseudohexagonal crystals or as stalactitic or botryoidal encrusting surfaces, often with faint fibrous structures; white, or grayish, greenish, or reddish white; a widely occurring secondary mineral, for example, in bauxite, laterite, and limonite deposits.

John Torrey, the American botanist and chemist, named the mineral, originally from Richmond, Berkshire County, Massachusetts, in honor of Col. George Gibbs in 1822.

Col. George Gibbs (title by courtesy) was born at Newport, Rhode Island, January 7, 1776, the son of George and Mary (Channing) Gibbs. His father was a wealthy merchant in Newport. Although George Gibbs was not college-trained in the modern sense, he received the M.A. degree both from Rhode Island College (now Brown University) in 1800 and from Yale eight years later.

As a young man, George Gibbs spent several years abroad. First, he went to Canton (in 1796) on business for his father and then to Europe, where he had an opportunity to study mineralogy under Henri Struve at Lausanne and to meet other outstanding mineralogists of that day, including Count Jacques Louis de Bournon (French emigre in London), Francois P. N. Gillet de Laumont, and Jean Francois d'Aubuisson de Voisins. Through personal effort and extensive purchases he made a large collection of minerals, including 4,000 specimens collected by Gigot d'Orcy (Farmers-General under Louis XVI, who had collected minerals 40 years), 6,000 collected by Count Gregoire de Razamowsky (Russian nobleman who lived in retirement in Lausanne), and a third division from Count de Bournon. This collection of some 12,000 (some accounts say

Col. George Gibbs, portrait by John Vanderlyn from Gibbs (1933).

20,000) specimens was brought to Newport in 1805 and was the largest and by far the most valuable yet seen in the United States.

Gibbs' collection came to the attention of Prof. Benjamin Silliman of Yale in 1806 while Silliman was on a visit to see his brother in Newport. Although much of the collection was still stored in boxes in a warehouse and George Gibbs was again in Europe, Ruth Gibbs, his sister, accompanied Silliman to show him the materials. Later, when Silliman was instituting the first courses in geology to be given in America, Gibbs offered (in 1810) to loan his famous collection to Yale. In New Haven it attracted wide attention and drew many visitors from all over the country. The collection was purchased by Yale in 1825 for $20,000, the money being raised through the efforts of Prof. Silliman.

An accidental meeting between Prof. Silliman and Col. Gibbs, on board the Fulton steam-boat in Long Island Sound in 1817, resulted in the founding of the *American Journal of Science* which began in 1818 and is still one of the world's leading journals. Gibbs first suggested this project to Silliman. Gibbs had been a contributor to the *American Mineralogical Journal,* started in 1810 by Archibald Bruce of New York, and lamented its discontinuance after only four numbers because of the failing health of its founder.

Throughout his life George Gibbs had a continued interest in mineralogy and became a leading contributor in the field of applied science. Although he did not publish extensively, there are significant papers in Bruce's *Journal* and in the *American Journal of Science.* He studied masses of natural iron found in Louisiana and in France and concluded that they were probably of meteoric origin. He described two iron works, one at Franconia, New Hampshire, and one at Vergennes, Vermont. He reported experiments on augmenting the force of gunpowder for blasting rocks by adding quick lime. Also he published an interesting description of tourmaline and other minerals from Chesterfield and Goshen, Massachusetts. He apparently also worked on a "sketch of the mineralogy of the United States" which he planned to publish, but this manuscript has been lost.

Gibbs served as vice-president of the American Geological Society, the first society in America devoted to geology and allied subjects (it existed from about 1819 to 1828). He also was elected (in 1822) vice-president of the New York Lyceum of Natural History. Memberships also were held in several other American and European scientific and cultural societies.

For many years prior to his death on August 5, 1833, he lived on his estate Sunswick Farms, near Astoria, Long Island, which he had purchased in 1814. Here he was surrounded by his library, his laboratory and scientific instruments, his collections, his gardens, dogs, and horses; Sunswick became a seat of hospitality for his scientific colleagues and other friends. His home was presided over by his wife, Laura (married in 1810), daughter of Oliver Wolcott, secretary of the treasury under Washington and John Adams. They had three sons: George, lawyer and ethnologist; Oliver Wolcott, chemist at Harvard; and Alfred, a brigadier-general in the Civil War.

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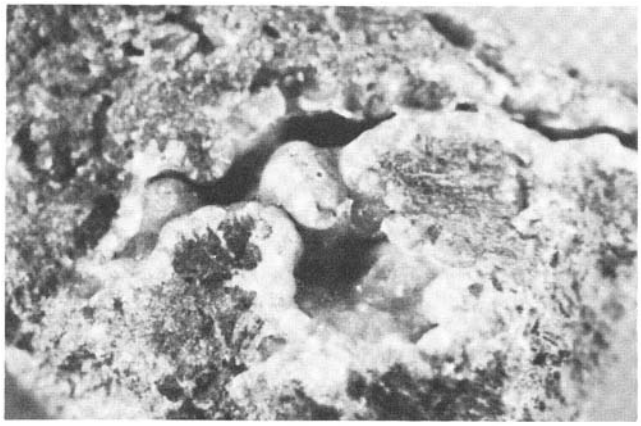

Gibbsite as botryoidal crusts, from Brazil. Photo by Howard Freeland.