

## Mineral Spotlight: Gypsum

This week's mineral is gypsum! As a museum located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, gypsum is a mineral of special interest. Michigan's gypsum was deposited out of shallow seas in the Mississippian Period.

The gypsum deposits in the Grand Rapids area were discovered due to the occurrence of surface beds near creeks (which is, in fact, how Plaster Creek got its name, as gypsum is used to make plaster).

In 1898, a gypsum mine was constructed underneath the Grand River, with a mineshaft just west of where the iconic Blue Bridge now sits.

Gypsum is a hydrated calcium sulfate – but before it can be used for plaster, it needs to be dehydrated. This is done by grinding up the gypsum and heating it to extremely high temperatures to boil off the water, essentially turning it into anhydrite (calcium sulfate without any attached water molecules).

Gypsum comes in many forms. Its long, bladed, crystalline form is called selenite, and its massive form is known as alabaster.

This feature was posted on Dice Museum social media by Museum curator Jillian Herlinger on 6/21/2022.

