

## Abitibi Glacial Clay Concretions, A.K.A Fairy Stones

Clay stone glacial concretions are known by many names around the world. They are called “Imatra Stones” in Finland, “Fairy Stones” in Scotland, Ireland and Quebec, and “Mud-babies” or “Clay Dogs” in Connecticut. They are also known as Abitibi by the American Indians.



The Abitibi stones or “Fairy Stones” that we offer were picked on the shores of the Harricana River, Abitibi, Quebec, Canada. They were formed thousands of years ago and are a calcite-based concretion made of fine sand and clay, solidified by nature. The morphology (shape) of the concretions varies by locality. The unique forms of these Abitibi stones are a phenomenon unique to Northern Quebec. They tend to be spherical in shape and a light to deep

colored gray. The superior face of the concretion is usually smooth and regular and the interior face is often rough with puffed up spheres. The irregular lines on the stones are caused by traces left by miniature worms or organic remains which were fossilized thousands of years ago. Many are found on the bottom of the big Lakes with a glacier origin.

When the Algonquin’s first came up the Harricana River in their canoes towards Abitibi and stopped on the beaches they saw these pebbles which looked like biscuits. Hence they named the river, Harricana, meaning “River of Biscuits”. “The Algonquin Indians, pronounced, Al-GON-kin called them “Fairy Stones” and often carried them as lucky charms or talismans when they went on fishing or hunting expeditions. According to legend, these stones assured protection against bad spirits and protected homes and their occupants. They were also believed to bring good health and prosperity to those who carried them or had them in their home. Lovers offered the most beautiful “Fairy Stones” to their loved one. The largest specimens occupied a place of honor in the home.



There is a State Park in Patrick County called “Fairy Stone State Park” in which a 50 acre field sits atop of Bull Mountain. To this day, many people go and pick the Fairy Stones that seem to pop out of the soil in that region. Twinned staurolite crystals often form into a cross shape that simulate the Roman, Maltese, and St. Andrew’s crosses and are usually brown in color. They can be as large as an inch in length. As the earth’s crust heated, cooled and folded during the formation of the

Appalachian Mountain range, iron aluminum silicate crystallized into six-sided shapes. These staurolite crystals, like quartz and diamonds, are harder than surrounding materials, so the crystals erode at a slower rate than the softer surrounding material. As the softer materials wash away the crystals literally come to the earth’s surface.

Fairy stones formed in this area of the country are primarily made up of staurolite, which is a combination of silica, iron, and aluminum. Staurolite crystalizes at 60 or 90 degree angles, hence the sometimes cross-like structure. These specimens are found in the soft deposits of the Quaternary where they were found in the ponds having occupied the depression of the retreat of the glacial front and then were carried by the water and deposited on the shores of the lakes.

The legend of this region is that hundreds of years ago before the reign of Chief Powhatan, fairies were dancing around a spring of water when an elfin messenger arrived from a faraway city to tell them about the death of Christ. When the creatures of the forest heard the story of the crucifixion, they wept. As their tears fell upon the earth, they crystalized to form beautiful crosses. The Fairy Stones that formed in this region in Virginia were formed during the rise of the Appalachian Mountains. Many people believed that if they wore or carried these fairy stones it would protect them from harm or illness.

Once found, the stones are cleaned and dried. Some people apply a light coat of sealant to bring sheen and prevent scratching. The coating also prevents the natural oils in your fingers from discoloring the specimen. Our specimens are in their natural state and have not been adulterated. If you do decide to coat them or purchase specimens that have a sealant on them you can return them to their natural state by soaking them in 1 cup of warm water with 2 tablespoons of vinegar for 15 minutes. Brush the stone gently with a toothbrush, rinse well several times and dry.

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