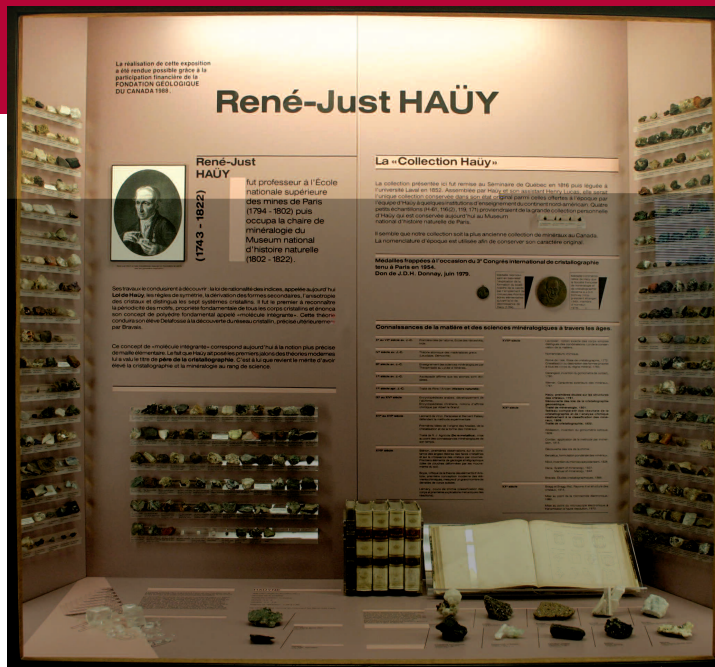


## AN OLD WORLD MINERALOGICAL COLLECTION IN THE NEW WORLD

As an undergraduate student at Université Laval, I walked by this display just about every day and did not realize its historical significance. The display represents what is thought to be the oldest mineral collection in Canada. It was one of the few mineral collections assembled by **René-Just Haüy** (1743–1822), the father of modern crystallography, and his assistant Henry Lucas and offered to North American teaching institutions. This collection was offered to the Séminaire de Québec in 1816. In 1852, it was transferred to Université Laval and is now part of the Musée de Géologie René-Bureau, housed in the Department of Geology and Geological Engineering.

Haüy, a priest, was a professor at the École nationale supérieure des mines de Paris from 1794 to 1802. Thereafter, he occupied the mineralogy chair at the Musée national d'histoire naturelle until his death in 1822. Haüy was the author of many important works, including *Essai d'une Théorie sur la Structure des Cristaux* (Paris, 1784), *Traité de Minéralogie* (Paris, 1801), and *Traité de Cristallographie* (Paris, 1817). He made important contributions to our knowledge of crystal symmetry and was largely responsible for transforming mineralogy and crystallography into a science. He lived during turbulent times in France. During the Revolution, he was imprisoned for his convictions but was later appointed to the Legion of Honour by Napoleon. It is said that few teachers have so thoroughly gained the affection of their students and the esteem and respect of their contemporaries. I wonder if his efforts to assemble mineral collections and send them to the New World were an 18<sup>th</sup> century attempt at outreach and public education.

**Pierrette Tremblay**  
Québec, Canada



The pride of the Musée de Géologie René-Bureau at Université Laval (Québec, Canada): a display showing off a mineral collection assembled by Haüy himself. PHOTO COURTESY ANDRÉ LÉVESQUE

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