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## Daytripping The Lizzadro Museum

By Charles Herbst

Would you cut up this ancient Chinese carving for a pair of jade cuff links? In the 1940s, Joseph Lizzadro didn't either. As a lapidary hobbyist, he had been seeking a piece of jade to fashion into personal jewelry. This is the piece of jade that he received, which formed the beginning of his personal collection and, ultimately, the Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art.

Joseph Lizzadro was born in Southern Italy in 1898. As a young boy, Joseph was fascinated by rocks and minerals while playing marbles with agates. He and his father emigrated to Chicago, where he started working in his father's cobbler shop and learned the value of fine craftsmanship.

In 1916, at age 18, Lizzadro began working for the Meade Electric Company, which was then a retail appliance store. Thomas Meade, the proprietor, admired the work of Lizzadro and another employee and gave them stock in the company. Meade died unexpectedly in 1929, leaving the company to his two employees. The Meade Electric Company branched out into the installation of traffic signals. The company prospered and it made Lizzadro a wealthy man.

During the Great Depression, Lizzadro and his daughter Bonnie traveled to Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula in search of agates and other minerals. Lizzadro became interested in cutting and polishing the agates and other materials he collected. He reached out to skilled local people, who taught him lapidary and silversmithing skills.

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Joseph Lizzadro's first jade piece



Ron Wait passed on Sunday at age 80. Wait served as an Illinois Republican State Representative for Boone County for 26 years. He received a law degree from Drake University and an MBA from Northern Illinois University.

## State Lawmakers Consider Tier 2 Pension Changes

*Public employee unions seeking changes to Tier 2 retirement system*

By Ben Szalinski Capitol News Illinois

Changes that would make Illinois pension systems compliant with Social Security by improving benefits for government employees hired since 2011 could be on the table when lawmakers return to Springfield in January.

The General Assembly passed legislation in 2010 to create a second tier of state pension benefits in hopes of reducing long-term liabilities. But the latest benefits structure for employees entering the government workforce after 2010,

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## Illinois' Minimum Wage Increases to \$15 On Jan. 1, Completing 6-Year Transition

*2019 law was Pritzker's first major legislative victory*

By Ben Szalinski Capitol News Illinois

The minimum wage in Illinois will increase to \$15 an hour on Jan. 1, completing a six-year

transition period since the increase was approved in 2019.

Beginning New Year's Day, Illinois workers making minimum wage will see wages rise by \$1 and tipped workers will see their paychecks bump to \$9 an hour. Youth workers under 18 who work fewer than 650 hours a year will have a \$13 minimum wage.

The final increase, ending a six-year ramp which began with the minimum wage rising from \$8.25 to \$9.25 on Jan. 1, 2020, puts a bow on Gov. JB Pritzker's first major legislative victory. He signed the wage increase in February 2019 about a month after being sworn in for his first term, checking off a top campaign promise.

"Since day one of my administration, I've made it my mission to build an economy that works for everyone and raising the minimum

wage to \$15 an hour fulfills that promise to our working families," Pritzker said in a statement. "This increase honors the workers who power our state and ensures they can better support their families, bringing us closer to a stronger, more equitable economy for all."

Illinois will be one of 10 states with a minimum wage of \$15 or greater, according to the National Employment Law Project. Twenty-two other states are also increasing their wages on Jan. 1.

The minimum wage increase is one of many

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## Bill Aims to Reduce State Requirements For Name Changes

*Sponsors cite safety concerns for victims of domestic abuse, transgender people*

By Atmika Iyer  
Medill Illinois News Bureau  
for Capitol News Illinois

Illinois lawmakers in early January could consider easing requirements for residents to change their names, a move proponents say will reduce risks for victims of domestic abuse, transgender residents and others.

The measure must clear the full Senate in the first week of January to reach Gov. JB Pritzker's desk, otherwise it must go through the entire

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*Imperial screen*

*Photos compliments of Lizzadro Museum of Lapidary Art*



*Blue jade incense burner in the shape of a pagoda*

## Lizzadro

from page 1

Lizzadro began collecting fine pieces, particularly jade from China. After the war, during the regime of Mao and the Great Leap Forward, ancient artifacts became disfavored in China. Using the wealth he had accumulated, Lizzadro was able to acquire many significant jade and other artifacts at a small fraction of the price that these pieces would have otherwise commanded. As his collection grew in the 1950s, it quickly overwhelmed his home and led to the establishment of the Lizzadro Museum of Art.

The museum opened in 1962 in Elmhurst. The museum has grown to become the largest museum of lapidary art in America. The Lizzadro Museum was fortunate to receive the contribution of a significant jade collection from the Oakland Museum. It has also received lapidary contributions from the collection of Richard Dreihaus. In 2019, the Lizzadro Museum moved to Oak Brook.

Much of the museum's collection focuses on Jade. Jade is the name for two semi-precious metamorphic stones, jadeite and nephrite. It is a very hard metamorphic rock that is found in various places on the earth. Chinese carvers had access to jadeite mines in what is now northeast Myanmar (Burma). Jade is very difficult to carve using traditional methods, and artists would use water and abrasive sand to produce their works. The museum has a good exhibit that explains both the geology and lapidary aspects of jade.

Jade is naturally white in color. Jade can come in a rainbow of colors, depending on the other minerals in the stone. We think of jade as green, but it is chromium contained in the rock that gives imperial jade its familiar greenish hue. Iron will cause jade to be blue. Black jade is from graphite. An artist working with a piece of jade does not know the color of the rock until it is exposed and must work with the color as it appears. Jade resists carbon dating and it is often impossi-

ble to determine exactly when a piece was made. The goal of a Chinese jade carver was to produce an article that matched a standard of perfection, rather than leaving a distinctive hallmark.

The museum also has an impressive collection of stone mosaics from both the Florentine and Roman tradition. In the entry vestibule, there is a stone mosaic of Joseph Lizzadro. Miniature dioramas showcase other pieces in the collection. Another gallery explores general aspects of geology, including birthstones. There are also special exhibitions.

This is a very unusual museum with a truly beautiful collection of objects. Regardless of your knowledge of geology, the collection is impressive. If you are looking for scientific background supporting the lapidary art, you'll find it here. Or, you can simply focus on the beautiful stones and carvings. Either way, you won't be disappointed. It should take about 60-90 minutes to tour the museum.

The museum is located at 1220 Kensington Road, at Jorie Blvd. in Oak Brook, just south of Oakbrook Center. Open daily 1-5 except Monday. Admission \$10. The website is [lizzadromuseum.org](http://lizzadromuseum.org).



*detail, Imperial screen*

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