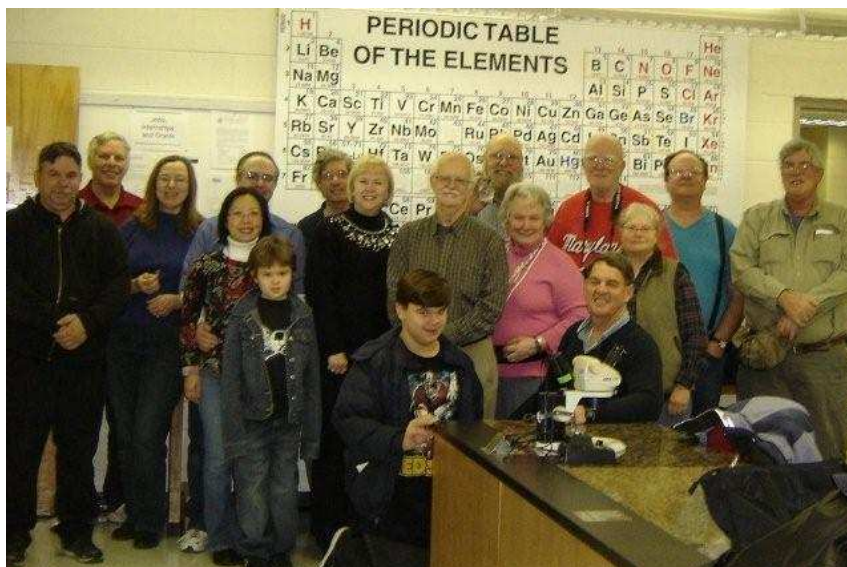


James Madison University (JMU) Field Trip January 29, 2011

By Dave Lines

Our first field trip of the year is always FUN. The rockhound in us is eager to get out. Snow and ice covering the ground did not matter at this location because the rocks and minerals are *inside* where it is warm and toasty.



As the result of several weeks of planning (and the good Lord providing excellent traveling weather), seventeen club members of the Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club all converged at the designated parking lot at JMU at the early hour of 7:45 a.m. --- *sort of....*

Some had arrived earlier and found a warm hallway adjacent to the parking lot to

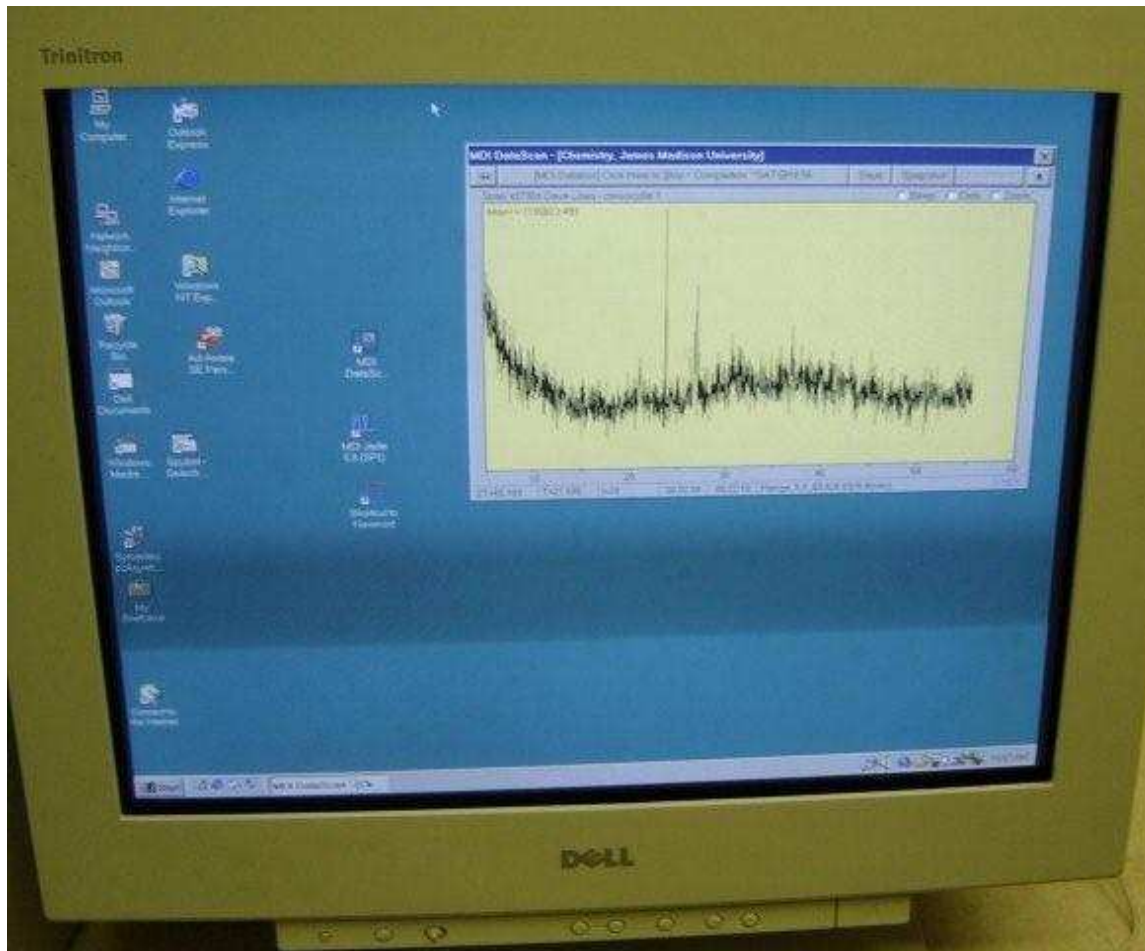
gather in. Some could not find us and called me for help --- (that's okay). Some were just late. And some were already in the Geology Lab "shopping" through the 10 flats of mineral specimens that Dr. Lance Kearns had put out for us to purchase for a "donation".

Just before 8:00 a.m., most of us walked into the building together and down into the geology lab. The shopping immediately became fast and furious --- especially since 30 members of the Shenandoah Valley club also arrived at the same time. Whoa --- talk about "competitive shopping". If you picked up a specimen, you better decide immediately, because if you put it back down, someone else grabbed it. Hesitate and your choices were lost! It got so bad that people tried to take specimens that I had already selected out of my personal flat that I was holding! I noticed several books that were available --- but I never reached them before they were gone. [I had brought several empty beer flats with me with my name printed all over them in black marker ("This belongs to Dave Lines"). Those empty flats disappeared and I never even saw who took them. Next year, maybe I should spray paint my empty flats a *hot pink color* to (hopefully) prevent *unauthorized use!*] Dr. Kearns even had some equipment, typed handouts and some textbooks on one end of a counter and people were taking that stuff! Whoa Nelly! I would say that some people were a bit out of control. Anyway the entire offering of mineral specimens were gone in only a few minutes.

Several people asked me about what they should donate for a specimen. I told them to be generous since the Mineral Museum would be the only beneficiary. The folks who asked me did donate a healthy amount. I hope everyone was generous.

Later in the morning while talking with Dr. Kearns, he said that there had been two substantial donations from the estates of Dr. Mitchell (University of Virginia geology professor) and Dr. Mitchell's father. Both had stipulated that their gifts were to be used *only* for the purchase of *Virginia* minerals. This requirement has limited the ability of Dr. Kearns to add specimens to the Mineral Museum from elsewhere --- thus the "sale" of mineral specimens to raise money becomes an important source of income for the museum.

I should mention that upon our arrival, we were welcomed with hot coffee and those huge fresh muffins --- courtesy of Dr. Kearns. After things calmed down from the shopping frenzy, Dr. Kearns invited all of us to visit the Mineral Museum. It is always changing and improving. The quality and display of the specimens is absolutely first class --- beautiful, aesthetically pleasing, professionally labeled, stunning, just gorgeous. Each time I see this collection, I see it differently --- so much to learn. I asked Dr. Kearns about the shiny silvery-black sphere of rockbridgeite --- he said he collected it himself at the Dixie Mine near Vesuvius, Virginia. (Aside: we are currently planning a joint club trip to the Dixie on March 12th.) The Mineral Museum is well worth seeing again and again.



Following the museum visit, we trickled back into the geology lab where Dr. Kearns spent the next two hours patiently identifying mineral specimens that club members had brought. Most of the specimens were easy for him, but for the tougher ones, he prepared a small sample which he placed in the x-ray diffraction analysis machine. Results took about 20 minutes. One of the more interesting specimens was brought by Mike Bolster. From the Morefield Mine, it was a two (2) inch crystal of mica which contained a long, black crystal. It was not schorl. The x-ray diffraction machine showed it to be “prosopite and flourite”. Since this was exciting for Dr. Kearns, Mike donated the specimen to JMU. Thanks Mike.

Another aspect of this trip was the opportunity for us to meet club members from the Shenandoah Valley Club. I hope you now know some of these folks better because their trip planner and I took a few minutes to discuss several possibilities for joint field trips this coming year. They wanted to join us for a trip to Chestnut Ridge for quartz crystals and we wanted to join them on a trip to the Dixie Iron Mine for rockbridgeite and skolithos in quartzite. (Note: The dates for those trips are elsewhere in this newsletter.)



All in all, it was a great trip.

(* SMRMC Attendees: Dave Lines [trip leader], Mike B., Jim W., Sandy and Sam, Lorna and Mel, Linda and Kai, Ralph, Dale and Josh, Paul and Linda, Robert and Stephanie, and newest member Steve L.)