

Trip Report for Vulcan Quarry Manassas, VA

by Dave Lines



We assembled in the Quarry Office parking lot at 7:15 a.m. for a Safety Brief by our host "K.T.". There were a total of 27 people – 14 from our Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club and 13 from the Montgomery County club. K.T. emphasized that we must remain clear of all high walls and safety berms at all times and be out of the quarry no later than 11:45 a.m. If anyone need to leave early, we must notify our trip leader (Dave [So MD] or Steve [Mont Co.]). He would lead us in a vehicle caravan to the location of the most recent blast, then we were free to go into other areas of the quarry that were not blocked off. He reminded us to drive only on the left side of the road once we departed the office lot and to always yield right-of-way to large trucks and mining equipment. He would remain in the quarry to monitor our activities.

Just before our departure into the quarry, we gathered for a group photo (with most of us wearing our safety gear) and lots of eager smiles and anticipation of finding some good specimens. Several of the attendees had never been in a commercial quarry and a few others had never been in this quarry --- so we kept a closer watch on these folks in order to keep them safe.

[



Vulcan Manassas Quarry is very large and deep with numerous benches. The bottom level contains a lake of several acres in size. The roads inside the quarry are very clean and well maintained with no debris or big rocks on the surfaces. The descent to the fresh shot area took about 10 minutes.



Once at our initial destination, we parked and exited our vehicles and carefully began searching for specimens. The new blast had perfectly shattered and collapsed a large area of rock that was spread out and gently sloped to the area where we had parked. We quickly began locating small, but plentiful, crystals of calcite in thin seams and small vugs.



Some of the calcite crystals were in turn covered with other small crystals of a drab, light tan colored layer of what we collectively estimated to be stilbite.

After about an hour of collecting at this location, I lead a long caravan of vehicles down further in to quarry to the level marked "40 ft" with a sign. Some of us went all the way to the bottom, several of us began a search of the 40 ft level. We soon located an area which had produced stellerite and chabacite crystals on previous trips. We then began a laborious process of removing small rocks, gravel and dirt from the floor of the bench to find where to dig into the rock floor. We concentrated our efforts on an easily seen area of weathered yellow stellerite xls. Within 30 minutes or so, we were able to remove rock down to 6 to 10 inches

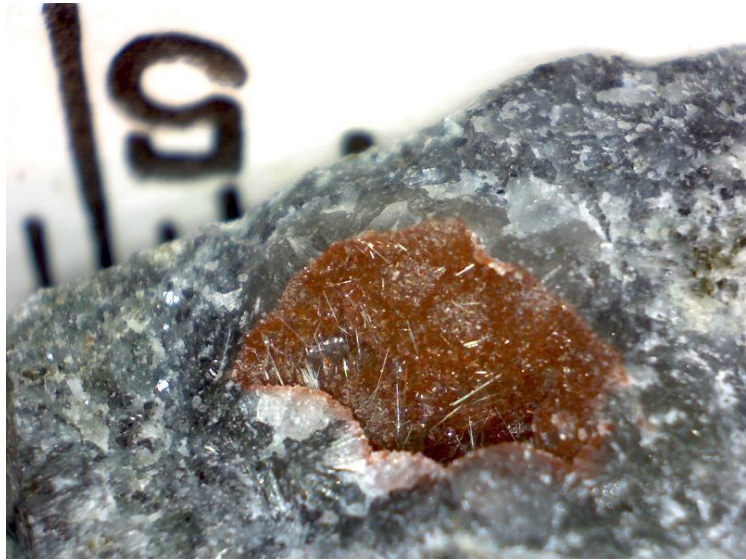
deep and found several layers of pockets of stellerite crystals. Unfortunately, most of the crystals were detached from the matrix rock and were laying in the mud in the bottoms of the pockets. Nevertheless, we were able to recover some interesting specimens --- some of which cleaned up nicely at home. Some of the specimens contained both yellow stellerite and red chabacite crystals.



During the rest of the morning, we remained at the 40 ft level, however members of our group explored many areas of the quarry. We exited the quarry about 11:40 a.m., thanking K.T. for his hosting of our field trip.

Later, through various emails, we compared our finds and as a group we found prehnite in massive seams to 2 inches thick, some massive magnetite, a few small vugs of micros of byssolite needles over prehnite, calcite, stilbite, stellerite and pyrite.





- micro pic of byssolite was taken by Ralph G.]

Overall, although the finds were relatively meager, we had an interesting and enjoyable morning at the Vulcan Manassas Quarry. We are very fortunate that Vulcan Materials allows us to collect here and we very much appreciate their generous hosting of our field trips.

-