

“Many Shades of Green” HK Penn-MD Quarry, Peachbottom, PA by Dave Lines



As soon as we got out of our truck, I looked down and spotted a small piece of green rock. I pried it out of the gravel and held it up to the sky ---- it was very translucent --- almost clear --- and the color of a green beer bottle. Maybe it was a piece of “williamsite” --- the clear to translucent green variety of “antigorite”. Williamsite is a great lapidary material. Awesome!

All over the quarry, the rocks had been washed clean from all the recent rain. And looking closer, there was a LOT of green showing. I grabbed a rock pick and started filling my bucket with green rocks --- bright green, dark green, pale green, milky green, green with black specks, green with black stripes, green on white rock --- many shades of green!

Twenty three (23) souls had showed up for our joint Field trip with the Montgomery County Gem and Mineral Society to the serpentine quarry which is situated exactly on the Maryland – Pennsylvania state line. Nine of us (Dave, Rich, Ralph G., Mary C., Harry, Tina, Robin. Joe and Cheryl) were from Southern Maryland club. Some had visited this same quarry back in December 2017 and really liked it. Despite a dreary weather forecast (60% chance of all day rain), the early clouds gave way to a warm sunny morning --- wonderful short sleeve shirt conditions.

The quarry manager welcomed us and directed us to the tiny scale house where we read and signed a site specific list of rules and restrictions. Then after our group photo, we received a safety brief in which

the quarry boss advised us where we could and could not go. He asked that we stay off the berms, out of the 5<sup>th</sup> level down which was filled with water and to remain away from the “sumps” which were used to collect water before pumping it out of the quarry.



At about 8:15 a.m., we returned to our vehicles and followed his truck down a fairly steep perimeter road into the quarry to the 4<sup>th</sup> level where we all spread out and parked. There was adequate room for us to search for specimens with many rows of boulders lined up in rows awaiting further processing.



There was also a wide, open, flat area with a couple of shallow trickles of water flowing across. These “streams” came in handy for rinsing off our specimens.



At about 10:00 a.m., a group of 10 or so Pennsylvania Geology Teachers who were attending a nearby conference drove their multi-passenger van into the quarry and began collecting specimens as well. They spent about 40 minutes, mostly discussing the geological formations as they observed the highwalls. There was still plenty of room for everyone.



According to Mindat, there are 31 mineral recorded for the nearby “Cedar Hill Quarry”, which is immediately adjacent to HK Penn-MD quarry. Mindat’s description of Cedar Hill, which also applies equally to Penn-MD, says it is “...an aggregate quarry exploiting the serpentinites of the Baltimore Mafic Complex, State Line District.” The most famous mineral in HK Penn-MD quarry may be williamsite, but the more abundant minerals --- at least in the color green --- seem to be many variations of antigorite and picrolite. These specimens are distinguished by long striations or very thin columns of mineral. “Columnar” better describes the appearance.



There are several other interesting minerals which would probably make good micro specimens, but on a macro level, the most striking one that I saw was a hand size rock found by “Lee” of the Montgomery County Club --- it was covered in a quarter inch thick layer of bright, electric turquoise blue color. It was exquisite. Checking back over the Mindat descriptions and pictures, I believe it was “Mcguinnessite”. I found a few small (tiny) pieces of the same blue and a one inch square of material with a thin layer of this blue material. There was also familiar minerals --- such as one that appeared to be mica. I noticed pyrite in one of my specimens. I noticed a good deal of quartz in the form of a light tan colored, bubbly chalcedony in a thin coating on some boulders. This may have been the “prase” referred to in Mindat.



By 11:00 a.m., several attendees had already departed, and at 11:30, Rich and I headed back to our truck and began packing up for the trip home. By 11:45 most of us were out of the quarry and by 11:55 everyone was out. I thanked the quarry rep again for allowing us to collect and for their hospitality.





Overall, this quarry is definitely a “keeper”. It is within a 2 hour drive, it provides easy accessibility and excellent specimens. You can simply drive in, get out of your vehicle, walk on a level gravel surface and find stuff. That is about as good as it gets.