

A Unique Field Trip to Pennsylvania by Dave Lines; pictures by Renee Newquist



About five months ago, I asked Harry and Tina if we could schedule a Club Field Trip to their home near York, PA. It wasn't the first time I had asked. I had been pestering them for over a year.



It all started when they brought to a club meeting some crystals which they had found on their horse farm.



They were Devil's Dice which is the nickname for the little cubes of the pseudomorph of limonite after pyrite. These pseudomorphs (which literally means "false form") are cool collectibles --- every detail of the original crystal shape is retained. In this case, pyrite, is slowly changed to another mineral --- limonite --- due to a chemical replacement of each atom in the crystal with another mineral. But I digress.

This time, they replied "Yes" and, somewhat surprisingly, added "We want to have a cookout and a treasure hunt and have everyone bring a potluck side dish or dessert --- and attendees can bring items to have a Rock Swap/Sell." Wow! What a generous offer --- and a neat idea.

So we scheduled a trip in late June. Unfortunately, only 9 people signed up -- and that was not enough to justify all the effort necessary. Seems there were too many people planning vacations and other events that time of year. We decided to postpone the idea until the Fall when more folks would be available to participate. Tina and Harry chose September 16th -- which turned out to be a fantastic day --- perfect weather. (Especially when I consider that just a week later, it is blowing a gale and pouring rain outside from a Tropical Storm as I write this! We definitely had divine intervention on the 16th. Thank you.)

Fast forward to September 16. We had 26 club members (which included 7 kids) show up around 9:00 am at Harry and Tina's place. Their home and horse farm located on a ridge with sweeping views of the surrounding countryside of fields and woods was a truly beautiful location.



Harry and Tina gave us safety brief (keep all the gates closed after you go through them because of their horses and a reminder of horse etiquette: only approach a horse from the front where they can see you --- never approach from behind them.)



They explained how the day was planned --- 10 am to noon --- look for Devils Dice where there was bare ground --- by the hay barn, in the horse pasture, on the dirt road and in the garden; then lunch from noon to 1 pm; from 1 pm to 2 pm, Treasure Hunt for everyone around the perimeter fence of the horse pasture plus an added bonus for kids in the garden where H and T had placed a “sandbox laced with crystals” (think Utah topaz and Arkansas quartz) for the kids to sift out; from 2 pm to 4 pm Swap/Sell.

Every part of the plan went without a hitch. A few of us decided to look for a couple of hours on the shores of a nearby lake for devil’s dice since the lake levels were way down in the entire area due to drought.

It was obvious that Harry and Tina (Harry said Tina did most of the work) had put a great deal of effort into the preparations for us. The following is a list of what I saw (and I am sure that there were lots of other preparations we did not even notice) ---

- *preparing the horse pasture and other areas for us to look for Devil's Dice pseudomorphs
- *donating and placing all those rocks and minerals around their property for the treasure hunt
- *donating the sand and minerals and fossils – and placing the “sandbox” laced with those specimens for the kids (and some adults ☐)
- *providing sifting screens for the “sandbox”

*making a “sampler” tray with labels and a guide sheet of all the various minerals and fossils they “hid” for the Treasure hunt

* setting up tables and chairs and a tent in their garage for our lunch

*providing and cooking hamburgers and hotdogs for us

*Providing us condiments, plasticware utensils, paper plates and cups as well as table coverings

Several of the participants expressed their gratitude in an email to Harry and Tina afterwards. Here are some of their comments:

“My sincere thanks to Harry and Tina for everything they did to make our family day so much fun. Their farm was beautiful, and the weather was wonderful. I was so happy to find some pyrite cubes, my favorite rock to collect. I wish we lived closer to Harry and Tina. They are great people.”

“Thank you so much for your hospitality! The day was amazing! Thank you so much for all the treasures you provided and the extra specimens you gave to (my granddaughter)! She so loved your horses and dog! Stay blessed and hope to see you again sometime soon.”

“Thank you for the wonderful time at the picnic. We all had fun, and it was a great success. Thank you for your hard work to pull it all together.”

“Thanks for what I gratefully collected at (your) beautiful farm.”

“Thank you so much for a fabulous experience. Your generosity and efforts were greatly appreciated. No matter where we looked there were smiling faces and excitement. Those of us who know you were not surprised. You have always given of yourselves. This event was totally over the top. So much FUN!! Seeing the joy in the young ones made the event even more special. Everyone went home with many treasures and fantastic memories. Words really fail to express how much (we) enjoyed ourselves. You really outdid yourselves!! Awesome day!! “

“You may not be old enough to remember Bob Hope, but his famous line was “Thanks for the memories.” As a grandmother, I love making memories, and getting snuggles. Saturday, we made wonderful memories, and we met some great people. It was easy to talk and get to know folks walking around looking for rocks, and at lunch. Everyone in our club took time to answer questions, and to help us find Devil Dice. The boys loved the open spaces in which to run and hunt for items and bugs. They were excited to show off their treasure to their friends and parents. By the way, thank you, for taking time to provide the labels, it really helped us when we arrived home. Saturday was great, all because you opened your hearts and allowed us to invade your beautiful home. Someday, they will show off their treasures to their children and grandchildren and tell them about you and their wonderful day. “Thanks for the Memories!”.

“You both did a great job for today’s Field Trip. You accomplished exactly what an event like this is supposed to do --- ensure everyone has fun and gets to know other club members better. Everyone did have fun – a super trip that set the bar higher than it ever has for field trips. Well done! The huge amount of thought and work that you --- especially Tina --- both put into designing it was just fabulous. A great idea that you carried through to perfection. WE LOVED IT! Thank you! Thank you!”

That pretty well sums it up. If you were one of those who attended, you understand. If you missed it, you missed a great experience.

More Pictures from Trip to Harry and Tina's Farm
September 16, 2023

