

Herkimer and Crystal Grove Mines

by: Tina League



During the week of May 12-17, 2013, four SMRMC members: Harry, Tina, Ralph B., and Joe went to Herkimer, NY in search of Herkimer Diamonds.



Harry and Tina arrived on Sunday, May 12 and began collecting on Monday, May 13. The weather was a bit of a shocker- a bit of snow in the morning and then **cold rain** all day. Harry decided that this was the year he was going to try his luck working the wall at the Herkimer Mine. He had a very promising spot in a corner that had previously produced nice pockets of diamonds. He

and Tina spent the day laboriously tearing down the wall. During their breaks they found some nice crystals in the old pockets next to the wall. At 5:00 it was time to pack up and head back to the hotel to get **hot showers** and food.

They met Joe and Ralph at the hotel that evening and were surprised to see only one truck. Unfortunately for Joe, his truck broke down 1 mile from town. He had to put all of his gear in Ralph's truck and find a shop that could fix his truck in a hurry. Undaunted by his automotive challenge, Joe was very excited to get to work in the mine the next day.



The next morning, they all headed out to the mine. Their friend Tom was at the mine and they had fun catching up on news from the past year. The weather was cool and cloudy, but at least it wasn't raining. Harry and Tina went back to their spot at the wall while Joe and Ralph worked several areas of the floor digging and breaking rock. Tom shared his knowledge and even some hand tools to help everyone during the day. Joe and Ralph were rewarded with nice crystals from their efforts. Harry and Tina made a lot of progress on the wall- but were still far off from the "pocket paydirt".

Back to the mine on Wednesday- and a bit of sunshine greeted the diggers. Joe's truck was being repaired and things were looking up. Joe and Ralph continued to work various areas of the mine while Harry and Tina stubbornly chipped at the wall. They had removed most of the "shelf" and were trying to get to remove the "table" that was wedged in on both sides by "seats". Tom stopped by the wall several times to give them a pep talk and some helpful advice (and a few hammer swings). **THAT IS SOME HARD ROCK!** was there mantra for the day. A thunderstorm conveniently broke out around noon- chasing the diggers to their trucks for a much needed lunch break. After the storm they all went back to work until closing time. That evening they all went to their favorite seafood spot "Fat Cats" and enjoyed a delicious dinner and story telling...and sleep!

Thursday was their last day to work at the mine. The weather was beautiful- sunshine and seventy degrees. The repairs to Joe's truck were to be completed

that day and he was relieved to know he would be able to drive home the next day. Harry and Tina were not very confident that they would be able to get to the pocket in time. They had only managed to remove 1 square foot of rock the previous day and they were a bit frustrated. They decided to press on and see if they could get through the impenetrable table. Joe and Ralph found some very nice specimens throughout the day.

Around noon Harry's arm fell off (just kidding) and he decided to admit defeat on the wall. Tina stared in stupefied horror as Harry packed up his hammers and chisels and walked away. Tina does not like to admit defeat; she banged on the table rock, and banged some more; and more,.....and sighed, admitted defeat and walked away, shoulders sore and drooping and her head held low, mumbling "hard rock.....dynamite needed.....hard rock".....(kind of like a zombie). It must have been scary to watch.

Two minutes later she was in a pile of rocks hammering away trying to find some crystals to take home (she gave the BIG ones to Harry to break up- a great frustration reliever).

Joe and Ralph had to leave a bit early to collect Joe's truck from the repair shop and check out some other areas. Harry, Tina and Tom met at Fat Cat's that evening for one last great seafood dinner.

Friday arrived too soon, it was time to go. Joe had his truck back and he and Ralph had several fossil spots they wanted to stop at on the way home. They said their goodbyes and headed out.



Harry and Tina decided to check out the Crystal Grove Mine in St. Johnsville before heading home. Crystal Grove is about 30 miles northeast of Herkimer. They drove to the mine and went to the gift shop to pay the fee and get the map of the collecting areas. Crystal Grove has a very nice quiet campground and laid back atmosphere.

They had several areas to collect in- and they were the only ones there- it was nice having the mine to themselves....except for the snakes, flies, mosquitoes....



They checked out the mines and started collecting. The wall there was only a few feet in height and the rock broke like butter! Yeah!!! They found some very

unique specimens...including: black diamonds, calcite formations with dolomite and herkimer crystals, glacier formations and beautiful druse.



The herkimers were small, but had an interesting rainbow effect to them. Around 4:00 pm they packed up their specimens and headed down the road for the long ride home.