

**Trip Report --- National Limestone Middleburg and Mt. Pleasant Mills
Quarries June 29, 2019 By Dave Lines**



This trip report is due to the generosity and selflessness of one man ---- Mr. Eric Stahl --- owner of National Limestone in Pennsylvania. He basically gives up every Saturday morning from late Spring time to well into the Fall every year to host dozens and dozens of Rock Clubs from as far west as Wisconsin. He does this in order to give his Christian testimony to each and every person who rock hounds in his quarries. This is his only requirement --- his price of admission. He says that God put beautiful rock, mineral and fossil specimens there so people would come to him. But this opportunity may not continue much longer because Eric's body is wearing out --- his hips are painful and inoperable. Currently, he is able walk only short distances using 2 canes. He says his son (and successor) has stated that he will not come in on Saturdays to host rockhounds. So this may well have been our last chance to collect there.



With that in mind, our Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club presented Mr. Stahl a handsome "Thank You" plaque which featured four specimens which were actually found there --- a calcite crystal cluster, a group of green wavellite balls, a purple fluorite specimen and some cave onyx (travertine). He accepted the plaque with a big smile and said he would display it on the mantle of the stone fireplace in his office. We then all signed in individually and turned in signed waivers. Then he gave us a safety brief and his testimony to the 30 people present. At about 9:15 am, we started our convoy of vehicles into Middleburg Quarry. We had 13 folks from our club ----Joe and Paul, Harry and Tina, Jim W., Joyce and Pam, Wendy, Adrienne, Tim and Lorna S., Rich and Dave.



Everyone headed to the area where Eric said there was a fresh shot. Rich and I drove past it to get an overview of the quarry from above. Looking back across the new shot, it was easy to see that the shot covered at least an acre. If it exposed some calcite crystal veins, it would be a good day.



We returned and parked on the edge of the new shot. Calcite crystals were sparkling everywhere. It would be a very good day. For the next 1-1/2 hours, we collected calcite crystals by the 5 gallon bucket full as fast as we could fill them.



If the pieces were too large for the buckets, we hand carried them to our vehicles. If they were larger than we could carry, we hammered them into smaller pieces. It was a collecting frenzy. We also found clear calcite crystals covering pink dolomite.



The combination was beautiful. At 11 am, I found an 18" by 12" chunk with delicate strontianite crystal sprays over calcite crystals in a large cavity in the rock. It was spectacular --- but despite my special handling, the crystal sprays were too delicate and they crumbled during our trip home.

About that time, people started leaving Middleburg quarry and headed to Mt. Pleasant Mills quarry. I screwed up and joined the move to the other quarry. It was a mistake because we found nothing worth keeping in the second quarry.

Despite Eric's report of celestite there, we found none. Rich and I then drove to the backside of the quarry to search for wavellite, but had similar poor luck there. Several of the Montgomery County Club (our host club on this trip) found a few fossil gastropod moon snail casts by digging down near the back wall of the second wavellite pit.

Most people just found small pieces of wavellite on the surface of the sandstone chunks. We should have stayed in the Middleburg Quarry. Oh well. The grass is not always greener on the other side. Live and learn. Rich and I ---- as well as everyone else --- did really well at Middleburg.



I will be trimming calcite crystals for a long time. If you missed this trip, I hope we will have another chance next year. Time will tell.