

## Ligon Mine Field Trip

by Dave Lines, Trip Leader - Pictures by Joe Davis



On Saturday July 17, 2010, seven members --- Joe and Paula, Harry and Tina, Robert and Stephanie and myself --- of the Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club met at the MacDonald's in Amelia, Virginia. The Ligon Mine, located on a farm about 15 minutes north, is actually the dumps of a mica mine which has long since been shut down. We hoped to find some of the star quartz, mica, schorl (black tourmaline) in matrix and beryl --- especially.

Actually, we were very excited as I recently had received word that one of the Richmond Club members had found a large chunk of beryl weighing 25 pounds from a new pit that the landowner had dug the previous year. Seems he was trying to locate the opening of the original mine. In the process of using a backhoe, he created a pit about 25 feet long, 15 feet wide and about 10 feet deep in the horse pasture area (for those of you familiar with the Ligon). The ample dumps all around this hole had not been looked at very much, so the hopes were high that we could find some real nice specimens.

We arrived at the farm about 9:00 a.m. and met the owner, Ken Hooley. He informed us that he had just bulldozed the dumps to clean off the vegetation for us, since I had called earlier in the week and told them we were planning to come. This was a very good thing as the weeds and huge poke berry plants could be daunting in July. He also had installed two new gates and left both open for us and encouraged us to drive as close as we wanted to. So we parked within a few yards of the mine. Nice.



Despite very warm temperatures that day (well into the 90's), we searched the dumps very thoroughly with garden scratchers, shovels and screens until lunchtime. Lots of chatter between club members the whole time.

After lunch, we kept at it until about 2 p.m. when Harry and Tina decided to depart. The rest of us kept searching until just before 3 p.m. when we could hear rumbles of thunder, at which time we all left.

Our finds were interesting and plentiful (so much so that we paid the owner for an two extra 5-gallon buckets of material when we left). We found copious quantities of schorl in mica schist matrix, lots of star quartz, some beautiful hunks of clear and smoky quartz, lots of mica (some books were an inch thick), some very nice pieces of pegmatite showing mica crystals - quartz - feldspar together, --- but alas, no beryl. Stephanie clearly found the best specimen of schorl --- which had several well formed  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch diameter, terminated crystals perched nicely atop a fist sized chunk of mica schist matrix.



As the last person to leave and give our goodbyes to the owner, I drove only a mile or so when the sky opened with heavy rain. We had left just in time.