

Aiming for Amethysts!

By Sheryl E. Sims



It was a mild, misty, morning when Pat Rehill and I, both relatively new rock hounds, made our way to the parking lot where we were to meet everyone for our first SMRMC field trip! Having recently joined the SMRMC club, we were anxious to get our boots dirty and our hands on some amethysts. Thanks to a swamp fire in North Carolina, smoke was in the air, but we didn't care because we had *amethysts* on our minds!

As we waited for everyone to arrive, Dave Lines showed us some flats of crystals that he had collected on his previous trip to the farm. That really whetted our appetites! After everyone arrived, Marco took a group shot of club members (*) and we proceeded to follow Dave to the location on Mary Kay Simpson's farm where we were to dig. We were then greeted by Mary Kay and George. Mary Kay was a little thing. George, her Great Dane, was not! However, we couldn't have felt more welcome! (Attendees included Dave, Ralph B., Rich, Joe and Paula, Marco, Sheryl, Patricia, Linda, Laurel and Kai, Ned, Elizabeth and Rebekah, Steve, Harry and Tina plus Tom and Pam from the Richmond Club)

Since some of us were new to the site and digging for amethysts, Dave gave us a short talk and demonstration on what to look and listen for in terms of finding crystals. He showed us how to dig around and remove them without destroying them. This was extremely helpful. As the day

progressed, the canopy, boots, and rain poncho he suggested also proved helpful.



With George-the-Great Dane planted firmly by my side, I held on to him to keep from slipping in the mud. I was able to maneuver to a spot that other club members suggested would probably be along the vein where they had worked the last time that they visited the site. With visions of amethysts flashing before my eyes, I was ready to dig in. Dirt was just-a-flyin'! It was great! I found some small crystals laying on the ground around me. I was instructed to dig a couple of feet further down. When I did, I discovered more crystals. Wow! I had never done so much digging in my life! I thought that I was doing well until I looked to the right of me and saw that Thomas and Pamm had dug a hole the size of a grave! It looked like they were digging to the center of the earth, but it also looked like it was paying off.

By this time, I had taken a seat on a mound of rock and mud. This would prove to be a painfully bad decision by the end of the day. My arms took over when my back called it quits. Heaving and hoeing until I thought I'd never be able to lift my arms ever again, I was happy to discover that I had filled my bucket up with what I am hoping ends up being more amethyst than white crystal. With all of the mud and muck, I couldn't exactly see much purple. Right around that time, Pat called me to see what was going on at the spot where she was digging. Unfortunately, I was too busy wrestling with my *EZ-Up* tent, with help from Ned, Thomas, and a few other kind souls to come right then. (It takes a village to help me when I'm becoming one with rocks and nature.)





Later on, when I finally made my way to Pat's location, I could have kicked myself for not joining Harry, Tina, and Pat there sooner. Frankly, I should have lined myself up in Harry and Tina's shadow to begin with because I know from experience that they always find the good stuff! Harry had been kind enough to help me dig my spot out some and to suggest that I *not* cover back up what he had just dug out. (That kind of patience should really be applauded.) Not wanting to waste anymore time, however, once I was at their spot, I enthusiastically stretched out on the dirt and began

scraping away at the line of crystals in front of me. I was hoping to find some *real keepers*. Oh yes, I must admit that I was quite the sight! I was dirty from head to toe, but happy! My position of choice was flat on my stomach with my right leg extended up in a 45-degree angle. In case you didn't know, that's how girly-girls do it. Minus a few broken finger nails, that position allowed me to grip and pull quite a number of crystals out using both hands. The extended leg acted like a rudder and kept me from falling head first into the hole. Try it! Speaking of hands, I had shoveled, hammered, and axed so much that day, that my right hand actually cramped shut in a very weird fist. I truly couldn't open my hand! This was a first! Tina yelled for me to wedge the handle of the hammer in my hand. I did and pried it open. This made Ralph laugh. That, and my leg being in a 45-degree angle. I'm sure that he's never worked along side of anyone quite like me. Neither had Thomas, for that matter. Earlier in the day he had to save me from a family of frogs. I almost croaked! Just as I was about to hack into their happy home, I spotted two beady little eye balls staring out around a wall of mud at me. I was too far down in my hole to jump out, so I let Thomas and Harry know that nature had gotten just a little too close to me. Thomas calmly reached in the hole and discovered not one, not two, but *three* frogs. He tossed them safely out of reach of my pick ax. I know, I'm a home wrecker and there will be no prince charming for me.

By the time that Pat and I prepared to head back Alexandria, we had both had a pretty productive day. We were dirty beyond belief—especially one of us. Still, we so happy to have finally experienced the joy of the Farmville field trip that we had both heard so much about. We had the best time ever! Thanks to expert field trip planning by Dave, we reached our destination safely and were well-prepared for the weather and hard work. Thanks to many of you, we enjoyed lots of laughs and camaraderie—and, our buckets were filled to the brim! Now, we are looking forward to the SMRMC pot luck/meeting and auction. In the meantime, I will continue to clean my crystals in hopes of finding purple! I know that this isn't your usual trip report, but then, I'm not your usual rock hound! Until my next trip, "happy hunting!"

More Pictures Below



