

Trip Report for National Limestone Middleburg, PA Quarry by Dave Lines



“Imagine a large 3 foot tall mound of very sparkly clear to white crystals topped with deep purple.... And when the sun shone, they reflected thousands of little flashes of light. It was gorgeous!”

That is exactly what “we” --- as a group of 8 (Alyson, Rich, Tim S., John and his son Ian V., Sondra, Tom Z. and Dave)) from our Southern Maryland Club and 13 from our sister Delaware Mineral Society --- collectively gathered at the Middleburg Quarry owned and operated by National Limestone in Middleburg, Pennsylvania. I estimate that we took several tons of beautiful calcite crystals.



And since nearly all were found in clusters in cavities inside a matrix of gray and/or tan limestone, there was little to no damage to these specimens. They were abundant and the rockhounding was super. Yes, most required some

sledge hammer and chisel work, but the calcite crystals could be found just about everywhere --- either in piles of large boulders or in the rock around the berms or simply laying around the edges.



At the safety briefing by owner Eric Stahl, he said that the calcite crystals at Middleburg quarry were plentiful and he was right. He led our caravan of about 10 vehicles into the lower level of the quarry about 9:15 a.m. and we immediately started finding crystals. In some places, the host rock limestone was riddled with cavities filled with calcite crystals ranging from druzy to one inch in size with the average single crystal being about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. We broke open the boulders and collected huge amounts of calcite. I saw several pickup trucks beds completely covered with specimens in hunks of matrix up to 2 feet across.





There was also massive calcite in the form of seams 2 to 4 inches thick. And that is where the "purple" came from. It was fluorite. Dark purple and bigger than I have ever seen it there. Ross --- one the DMS guys --- found a motherlode protruding from the edge of a big boulder in one of the piles. He worked on it diligently for over an hour and extracted several great specimens with large 1 to 2 inch cubes of fluorite. The cubes were laced with white lines of calcite, so they were not easily extractible because they would fall apart in acid. Nevertheless, they were very pretty specimens as is.



After Ross finished collecting what he could, he gave the boulder to Tom (DMS trip leader) and Tom chiseled on it for quite a while. When I found Tom to ask him about moving to the other quarry, he invited me to help --- and the two of us started pounding and chiseling on the boulder which was wedged between 2 larger boulders. We could clearly see the seam of massive calcite which contained the fluorite. Our goal was remove the surrounding limestone matrix and extract the calcite seam in one piece. With some carefully aimed whacks from my 20 pound sledge, we created a crack through the entire boulder. Then we inserted chisels into the crack and gently, but firmly started widening the crack until the boulder split in half --- leaving part of it still between the other boulders, while the other half fell to the ground. About 10 minutes later, we had the entire calcite-fluorite seam out and we broke it into pieces and gave some to everyone who wanted some.



Interestingly, while we were breaking apart that boulder, Tim S. of our club found similar excellent specimens just laying loose about 100 yards away. He did it the (much) easier way. Nice going Tim!

At about 1:00 p.m., we all caravanned to the Mount Pleasant Mills quarry, but we were very disappointed as there was not much to collect. Several folks drove around to the backside of the ridge to collect wavellite, but it, too, was very scarce. At 2:00 p.m., the part of our Southern Maryland group who remained in the main quarry decided to start our 4 hour drive back to Southern Maryland. I had an email later from Tom who said everyone else decided to call it quits at 3:00 p.m..

Overall, it was another great trip. Hope you can join us on the next one.