

Trip Report for HK Penn-MD Quarry by Dave Lines



We met at 7:30 a.m. at the quarry office where we each signed individual waivers. A few minutes before 8 a.m., the Quarry Manager --- James Lang --- held a safety brief for everyone. This was a joint trip of about 25 people with Montgomery County club as our host. We had 10 from our club --- Tim F., Tim S. and his wife Lorna and daughter Francisca, Orion and his son Arion and daughter Aby, Teresa, Rich and Dave. We would be limited to collecting on the 5th level – the very bottom of the quarry. James announced that there had been a fresh shot that we could search. The 4th level where we collected last year was off limits mainly due to another shot that had been drilled and loaded and was ready to set off.

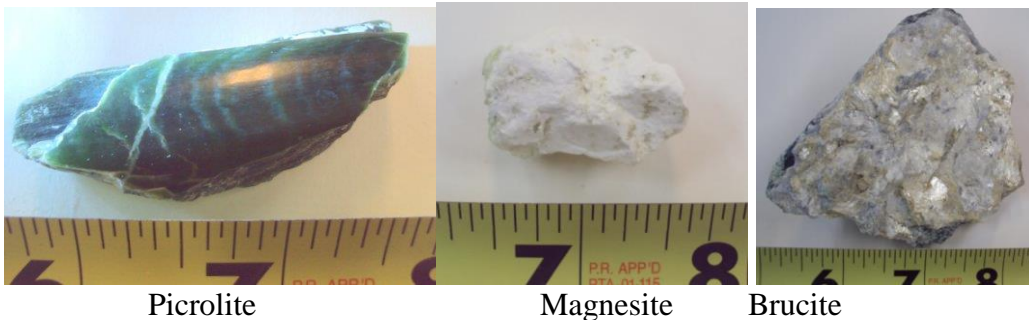
We then held an impromptu ceremony where we (Southern Maryland club) presented the Quarry Sup with a “Thank You” plaque to express our appreciation to him for allowing us to collect. He seemed surprised and pleased by our gesture.



It had rained the night before and there were still puddles of water in the quarry when our caravan of vehicles reached the bottom level. I was shocked and amazed at how much material had been mined since our last visit. The previous 4th level which had been a least 4 acres in size was almost gone. And correspondingly the 5th level was greatly enlarged. Wow! They had mined a LOT of rock!

Almost everyone immediately headed to the new shot to search for specimens. Except for me --- I spent the next hour introducing Teresa to skills necessary to *safely* and successfully collect in a commercial quarry. Since this was her very first field trip and her very first experience being inside a quarry, we wanted to get it right. I took her away from the shot area (which was covered with all sizes of loose rocks with sharp edges scattered across about half an acre and on an incline of about 20 degrees).

My purpose was get Teresa feeling comfortable with her safety gear --- hard hat, steel toed boots, safety glasses, gloves --- while carrying a bucket of tools. We conducted this lesson on the flat quarry floor. She did great. And along the way, I began to show her what to look for and how to collect it safely --- i.e., keep your gloves on because the rocks are hard and sharp, stay off the berms and well away from the steep walls because rocks can fall on you. After our beginner learning phase (“No, that rock is a leaverite”), I showed her how to improvise by filling a bucket with a few inches of water from a puddle so we could use the water and a brush to scrub off our finds to quickly determine what we had dug.



Then we found some different kinds of rocks --- some nice green translucent serpentine, picrolite, magnesite and some brucite (micaeous). Lots to learn. Anyway, she did fine and I left her to continue to collect on her own. She must have had a good time because she sent me a “Thank You” note later.



Serpentine

I then started around the rest of the 5th level but did not get very far because I started finding so much good material --- including gem quality translucent serpentine. I filled one bucket and took it back to the truck. I returned and moved on until I found an area where water was trickling over the rocks on the floor making it very easy to see the best pieces of translucent green. I probably spent two hours picking up small but nice pieces that would polish. Along the way, people kept using my water --- a 5 gallon bucket half full --- to clean off their finds. So I was able to see what they were finding.



Mcguinessite

Toward the end of the morning around 11:00 a.m., I finally wandered over toward the fresh shot where many people were still collecting. There, Orion and his daughter Aby showed me some of the material they had been finding up on the rocks of the shot. But their specimens were dirty and mud covered – so I washed them off in my bucket of water. And realized that they had found some REALLY nice mcguinessite. This

material is a beautiful turquoise colored mineral with a porcelain type of texture somewhat like common opal or glass. It was spectacular. It turned out that Aby had been the one that found most of it. Wow!

So I scrubbed off the rest of her mcguinnessite specimens and, in return, I asked Aby to actually lead me to the area where she found these brightly colored specimens. She did. Another lady from the Delaware club joined us. Aby and Orion said that that several more people had also searched all over that area as well. But try as I might, I could not find any. Meanwhile Aby spotted several more pieces and generously gave both the other lady and me each a very nice specimen. My piece was the last one that Aby found just before we had to leave the quarry. It was very pretty. She really made my day. Aby came through again! She is becoming quite a good rock hound and I told her so. But she and Orion reminded me of my own advice that “our eyes are our best tools”. How true.

I and the other club leaders all thanked the Quarry Supervisor and everyone left the quarry about 11:45 a.m.. Everyone except one of the attendees who had a dead car battery, but did not have a set of jumper cables. The Quarry Sup came to his rescue and got the car started. All in a day’s work for a great Quarry Sup. Thanks again.



Picrolite



Chrome Mica



White Botryoidal Quartz with Pink Dolomite



Green Antigorite with Black Chromite

