

Vulcan Quarry Manassas, Virginia June 1, 2019 by Dave Lines



We all met in the office parking lot at 7:30 am. Since we (Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club) had set up the trip and invited other local clubs, we were joined by members from the Montgomery County Club, the Washington, D.C. Club and the Northern Virginia Club --- 28 people total. Our club members included Orion, Aby, Arion, Tim S., Lorna S., Francesca, Teresa, Sondra and Dave.



The quarry rep was Mr. K. T. Odum, a mining engineer who volunteered his time to host rockhound field trips like ours --- many times over many years. “KT” welcomed us and gave us a safety brief and pointed out where we could and could not go. He said there had been a recent shot and he would lead us there in a caravan of vehicles and that then we would be free to go in the rest of the quarry after that. There was a drill in place (not operating) which had been preparing holes for the next shot – and we were to stay clear of that area. We were also advised to stay away from the highwalls and to never go over the berms.



At the end of the safety brief, we (Southern Maryland Club) presented a handsome “Thank You” plaque to the quarry in appreciation for letting us come and collect mineral specimens. Everyone applauded and KT seemed very pleased and promised to display it in their office.



By 8:00 am we were all in the quarry near the recent shot searching for minerals. The material was mostly devoid of anything but gray rock that they crush for road gravel, concrete and asphalt. There were a few specimens of calcite found --- thin veins, some with small crystals. After about 30 minutes, I gathered up Teresa who was riding with me and we drove to other parts of the quarry hoping to find a more productive area.



We checked out some rock piles along the way and Teresa saved a few pieces that contained green prehnite. We continued driving along slowly looking at the berms for “something different” that might indicate collectible minerals, but no luck, so I found KT and asked if we could drive down to the 40 foot level. He said yes and mentioned that there were already 3 others down there.



We drove down about a quarter mile --- it is a HUGE quarry --- until we reached the sign indicating the 40 foot level where we parked close to the low piles of gravel blocking vehicle access. I grabbed some tools, my backpack and a heavy sledge and went over to a location that in the past contained small but attractive light yellow stilbite crystals in vugs in the quarry floor.

We found the area very quickly and could see where we had collected them on trips in years past. This location requires hard rock mining of the rock into the quarry floor to reach the crystals. It is difficult hammer and chisel work, but with time and patience, it is possible to find some very nice specimens. Today was no different. I spent the next hour clearing rock by hammering a pointed chisel into the rock with a 3 pound hammer. When the 3 pounder would not break it, I switched to the 40 pounder and usually after a few well-placed whacks, the rock would give way. Eventually I dug down about 6 to 8 inches until I reached the next layer of small vugs which contained the stilbite.

Then I began to remove the rock in a horizontal direction hoping to uncover a vug. Within 30 minutes I uncovered a small pocket which showed crystals of stilbite poking through fine gray mud. So I called Orion, Sondra and Tim S. on their cell phones and left messages for them to come join us on the 40 foot level. Since Teresa is a new rockhound, all along I showed her what I was doing and how to proceed.

By the time the others started arriving, I had recovered the first small pocket and had uncovered 2 more. Each pocket was different. The first had stilbite crystals only. The second had stilbite, tiny red chabazite cubes and druzy calcite. The third pocket had 2 parts --- one had mostly calcite crystals with a few stilbite crystals interspersed, and the second part was all calcite with 1/4 inch “squarish” shaped crystals which were fairly clear.

The druzy calcite was actually not visible until later when I rinsed the specimens off with plain water later and gently brushed them with a soft tooth brush. I also saved as much of the contents of the pocket in small plastic bags so I could sort through the gray grit and crystal bits later since there seemed to be a lots of stilbite and chabazite laying loose in the bottoms of the pockets. In the end, I gave this potential “micro material” to other rockhounds who enjoy collecting micros.



The word seemed to spread that we were finding stilbite and folks from the other clubs joined us, although none of them seemed inclined to tackle the hard rock of the quarry floor. Nevertheless, they picked up right many single stilbite crystals laying loose among the rubble around this area.

One father and his young daughter from the Northern Virginia club had previously collected in this spot and returned to look for more specimens. They also found a good many single stilbites.

We continued to remove rock and look for pockets until about 11:15 am when we decided to start packing up to leave. We all cleared out of the quarry by 11:40 or so and reconvened up in the office parking lot where everyone showed each other what they had found. Dave Hennessey of Northern Virginia had found right much prehnite scattered among the rock piles near the picnic area closer to the top of the quarry and he laid out a whole flat of prehnite for others to take. Everyone appreciated his generosity and took home some colorful and sparkly specimens. Thank you Dave.

Most of us waited until KT returned from his final security check of the quarry and thanked him again for allowing this field trip to take place. Vulcan Quarry in Manassas is a great location because it is close to most of the local clubs and because we always seem to find something worthwhile.



Stilbite

w/ druzy calcite

Vulcan Quarry

Manassas

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Dave L
VIA DA

Prehnite

Vulcan Quarry
Manassas, VA

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Dave Lines Collection

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Stilbite



**Stilbite with
chabazite**

Vulcan Quarry

c



**Stilbite with
calcite**

