

Pink, Brassy, Coppery and Sparkly White in Garrisonville by Dave Lines with photos by Ralph Gamba, Tim Smith, Sandra Fielder and Sam Linton



It was 7:30 am, the gates were still locked and there was no sign of anyone. The eight souls (Sarah, Rich, Sondra, Ralph G., Tim F., Tim S., Lorna S. and Dave) from Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club along with about six from the Montgomery County club were waiting patiently outside the front gate of Vulcan's Stafford Virginia quarry. Our host and Trip Leader Sam was busy on his cell phone trying to reach his Vulcan point of contact. Oh well --- it was a gorgeous morning – sunny and cool. Everyone took it in stride and hoped for the best. Meanwhile, we passed the time looking at a flat of specimens I had brought from the trip the previous week to Vulcan Manassas. I also had another flat of “samples” from this quarry from past trips here --- small calcite, massive pyrite and laumontite crystals – to show others approximately what to look for. Additionally, we were parked next to an area covered with 3 to 4 inch rock that was spread evenly across a shallow drainage area adjacent to the entry road --- so we did what any good rock hounds would do to pass the time and began searching it for possible keepers. We found both chalcopyrite and calcite.

By 8:00 am or so, Sam finally was able to reach the quarry rep who thought the trip had been scheduled for the following Saturday. The quarry rep said he would head that way asap. In less than 10 minutes, a quarry worker (Dave) who lived nearby showed up and let us in. We followed him to the area in front of the office. While we waited for the quarry sup, several of our group

utilized the restroom --- especially important since there were no such “facilities” down in the quarry. A comment of note – Vulcan prides itself with keeping their quarries neat and plant entrances attractive. The ¼ mile long area leading from Garrisonville Road to the office was neatly mowed and landscaped with flowers, trees, a rock bordered stream and a beautiful pond with a fountain spraying water into the air. A strong first good impression that showed their pride and professionalism.

Aaron, the quarry supervisor, arrived in a few more minutes and, for the safety brief, he passed out a detailed check lists for us to initial each item he went over and then sign regarding safety rules as well as the current status of activity in the quarry. We were going to be restricted to level 5 (the bottom) of the quarry due to men and machinery operating on level 3 and 4. They had several very large pieces of equipment moving, loading and breaking rock in two different locations. There was a new shot, but we were instructed to stay off it as well as all berms. While it was ok to look along the edges, we were reminded to stay away from all highwalls. Basically we were allowed to collect from the rows and piles of rocks on the quarry floor. And, best of all, he said they had found some large pieces of “rose quartz” which they would move out on the floor for us to collect. That created some high anticipation. And finally, we would be allowed to stay until 1:30 pm due to our late start. Wow!



At 8:30, we all caravanned down toward the pit and stopped just above level 4 and waited for while they moved the “rose quartz” out for us. Awesome. In a few minutes we all followed the quarry rep Dave onto the floor of level 5 and parked. It was not obvious as to where they had placed the “rose quartz”, so we spread out and began looking through the maybe 8 short rows of rock. There was a LOT of material laced with very showy pyrite and chalcopryite crystals scattered throughout the rows plus we found the “rose quartz”. It turned out to be pink dolomite which was both solid and pretty. Although it has a grainy texture, it will probably take a nice polish.



Several people found small crystals of light pink stilbite. Sam found a beautiful specimen of pink stilbite crystals on a piece of matrix several inches square (see Sam’s pics). I saw some nice fresh (as well as weathered) laumontite. Sam also found a good deal of sparkly calcite crystals and a huge boulder with some larger calcite crystals up to one inch across (and he actually persuaded the quarry rep to bring a giant loader to move the boulder to a safer position for him to extract). On a micro level, Ralph G. found several nice specimens (see Ralph’s pictures).



Most of us spent a good deal of time collecting the attractive pyrite and chalcopryite crystals embedded in white quartz/calcite stringers in various boulders. The crystals were cubic indicating pyrite and they were brass colored when freshly exposed. But the same crystals which were weathered had turned to a beautiful copper color. Very pretty. Also, when viewed with a loop, there was much iridescence (red, green, purple, blue) which indicated that the pyrite was actually chalcopryite. This material was very showy and it was really fun to find and collect all these great specimens. We as a group stayed busy collecting quite happily the rest of the morning. Some left

at noon and a few remained longer. All in all, it was a great trip. Thank you Stafford Quarry! As Sam put it, "We had a blast!"

Photos by Sam Linton, Montgomery County Club



golden stilbite patch



one inch calite crystal and stilbite



pyrite 2 inch specimen



quarter inch calite and laumontite

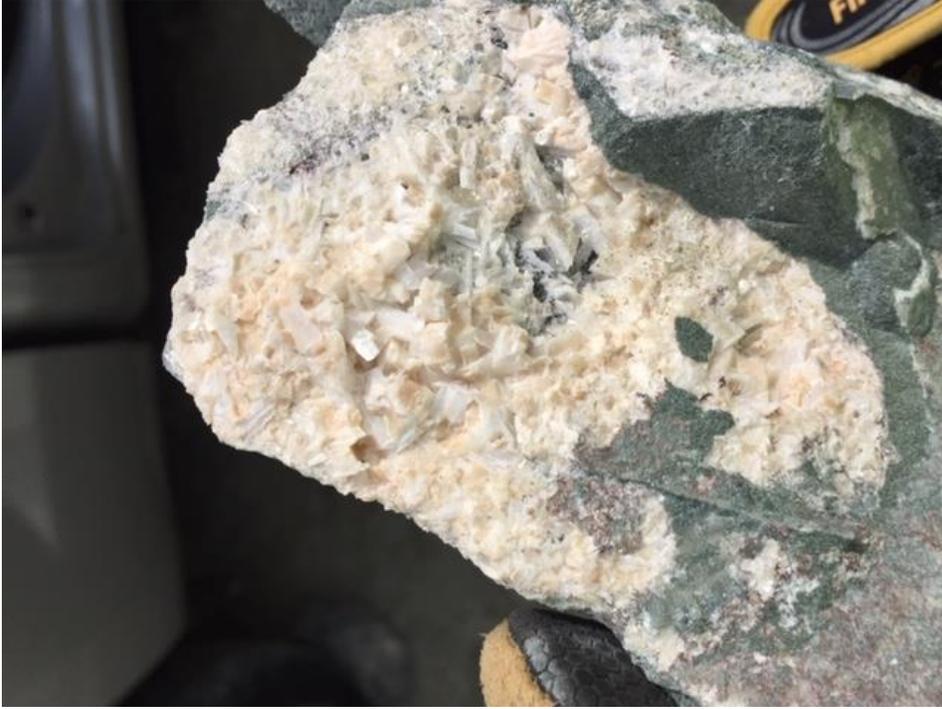


quarter inch calite cube

SMRMC Member Photos



chalcopryite crystals in calcite and quartz



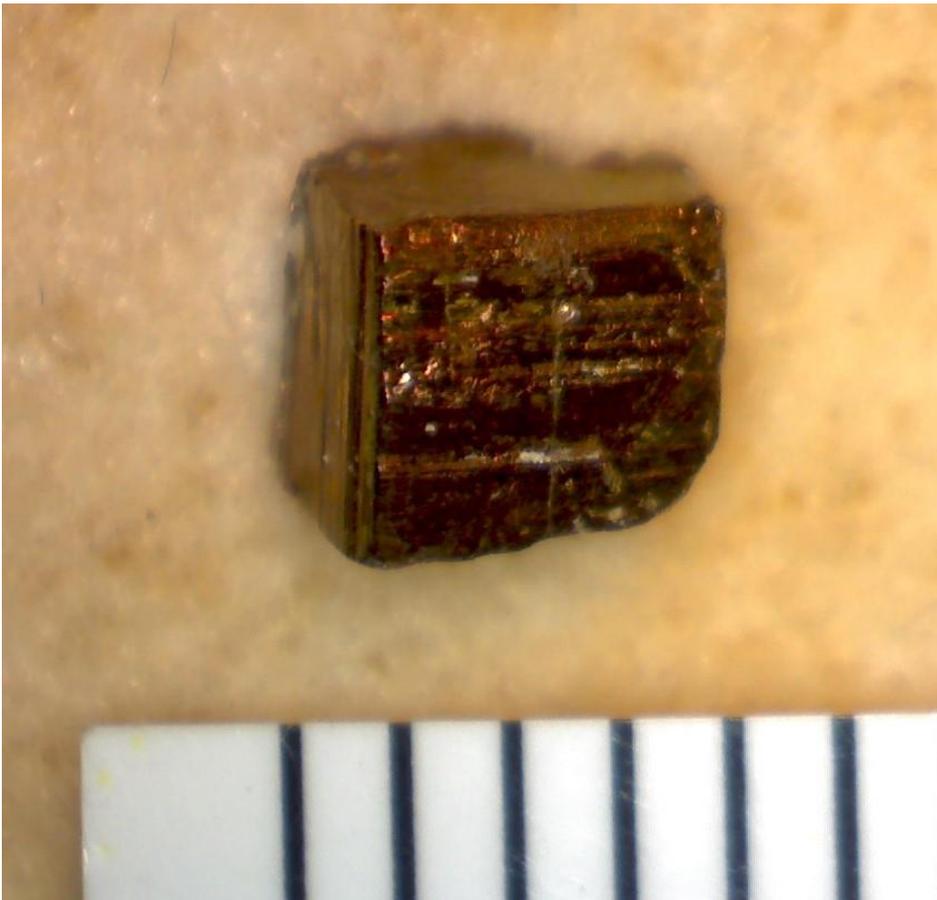
laumontite or pink stilbite with calcite



pyrite in quartz



Calcite The two on the right are about 4 mm across.



Pyrite - each division is 1/16 inch.