

## The OTHER National Limestone Quarry Trip

By Jim White



On April 3<sup>rd</sup> I picked up Tom Piscitelli at his home and we headed for the National Limestone Quarry in Middleburg, Pennsylvania. Tom and I were the only members of our club going on the trip. Everyone else was from the Northern Virginia and Richmond clubs.

I had traced our route out on Google Earth and found that there was no quarry at the spot indicated on the directions supplied for the trip. I thought this was a little odd. However, there was a quarry visible about a mile away on the other side of the road, so I assumed that was our destination.

We got there at 9:00, a little earlier than the scheduled time of 9:30, so I wasn't concerned when no other rockhounds were present. What was disconcerting was that the name of the road was wrong. When no one else had appeared by 9:20 we decided to ride over to the quarry office.



We pulled into the quarry office parking lot and were encouraged by a vehicle with Virginia license plates. The owner of the vehicle appeared within a minute or two and introduced himself as Jack Donner, a member of the Northern Virginia club. While we were talking to him other cars began to arrive with other members of the N. Va. Club, and one from the Richmond club. Our trip leader, Ted Carver, however was not among them, and there was no quarry representative.

When 10:00 came and went we became a little concerned. A call was made to Ted, who explained that he was running late and had been in contact with the quarry rep, so our fears were allayed and we occupied ourselves by taking photos of the rocks that were on display in the office yard and by searching through the piles of crushed stone for small flecks of fluorite mixed in with the calcite.

After 10:30 we were beginning to get a little antsy, so another call was made to Ted. I was only able to hear half of this somewhat surrealistic exchange. "Ted, where are you? "pause," no, you're not at the quarry, we're at the quarry" pause" but we're at the quarry and you're not here". Debate on this philosophical conundrum was soon abandoned for a more productive dialogue when Ted revealed that there was ANOTHER National Limestone quarry approximately 8 miles away. So we obtained directions and caravanned to the other quarry.

It was after 11:00 when we arrive at the 2<sup>nd</sup> site and our trip had been scheduled to end at "one-ish", so I was not too optimistic about our prospects at this point. But we met with Ted and some other rockhounds and went to the office trailer for the usual safety briefing. We were surprised to learn that we were meeting the quarry OWNER, Eric Stahl. He took us into his office and had us sign his register (not the usual waiver). He explained that he enjoys sharing this resource with rockhounds, but that the first time there's a law suit, the place will be closed. After we had signed the register he showed us some very impressive specimens of the material we would be searching for, Wavelite, Strontianite, Calcite, and a new and rare find, Turquoise! This last is more of a mineralogical curiosity than a lapidary material. It's a VERY pale green.

Before we started into the quarry Mr. Stahl suggested that we take a bucket of water to the Wavelite site. It is everywhere but difficult to recognize when dirty. So we filled buckets with water and headed for the Wavelite site, which is found in a road cut around the back rim of the quarry, turn left when you enter the pit, and left again at the top of the hill.

The Wavelite site also contains some fossils and I found a brachiopod before I found a piece of Wavelite. It must have rained since the last group was in, because there was

Wavelite all over the place, all we had to do was pick it up. Most people were splitting seams in the rocks looking for specimens, but I opted to take promising rocks home and open them later. I had driven my truck so I had plenty of room. It wasn't needed otherwise, the road was passable in a passenger car. The specimens we were finding had very few whole "bubbles". Most of them were smaller than BBs, the largest I saw was smaller than a pea. The broken ones were larger, but all smaller than a dime. Mr. Stahl had told us that a group of 12 year old girls had been in a week or two before and one of them had found a specimen with two bubbles that were the size of a quarter and on the other side two more that were the size of half dollars. If they hadn't been broken he estimated it would have been worth \$1,000.

After we had a fair amount of Wavelite, and a few fossils we decided it was time to see if we could find some Strontianite and Calcite. There was no good place to turn around, so with varying degrees of skill, we backed out of the road, emerged relatively unscathed, and headed into the pit.



Mr. Stahl had had a long line of rock laid out in the middle of the pit for our convenience and safety. Calcite was fairly plentiful, including some massive material with a pastel pink color. Strontianite was very scarce. One member of the N.Va. club found a small piece. The real find was a boulder with purple Flourite which Ted spent quite a long time hammering on. That appeared to be the only Flourite in there ,because no one else found

any. Ted was more than willing to trade for other material but unfortunately I hadn't found anything worth trading.

At about 3:30 we decided leave the quarry and go to Suedeburg fossil site. Tom had downloaded pictures from the internet showing intense multi colored trilobites in red, green ,yellows and even some shades of blue and we were anxious to see if we could find any like that.

We found the site without any trouble. The fossils proved to be another matter. We dug around for a little while finding nothing but rather mundane examples of brachiopods, but eventually discovered some better material at the other end of the hill.

Tom found a snail, and some of the members of the N.Va. club found pieces of trilobites. I wasn't as lucky.

By 6:30 Tom and I had had enough and headed home. The spectacular multi colored fossils had eluded us. Well, maybe another day.

