

"Make My Day"

Field Trip Report – Morefield Mine, April 24 2010
by Ralph Gamba

Ten members of the Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club ignored the forecast of rain and journeyed to Amelia Virginia to collect at the Morefield Mine. We stared the forecast in the face and said “Make my day.” Sporadic showers dampened the road to Morefield, but the rain did not dampen our spirits.

The group of ten, Fotini, Lorna, Christine, Serena, Stephanie, Mary, Mike, John, Robert, and Ralph, paid the entrance fees and headed to the field to collect.

At 10 AM, the mine workers let us in and we scavenged the ground (Figure 1) before the 11 AM dump.



Figure 1 Serena and Christine searching at Morefield

During this scavenging, Ralph spotted a piece of cleavelandite with a small brown crystal. After breaking off some of the cleavelandite blades with his fingernail, he exposed a 3/16 x 1/8 inch crystal which Sam Dunaway identified as monazite. Monazite is a phosphate of rare earth elements such as Lanthanum, Cerium, and Neodymium. It is often radioactive.

After the dump, Mike made the discovery of the day. He picked up a white rock with bluish areas. The blue mineral in the rock is prosopite, a Calcium Aluminum Fluorohydroxide. Figure 2 is a picture of Mike holding the sample.

Meanwhile, John gathered some nice mica books. Lorna and Fotini gathered amazonite. Fotini admired the display of amazonite samples on display.

Along with the fun of collecting, we enjoyed showing our finds to members of other clubs, along with telling stories of other finds and learning more about the minerals and geology.



Figure 2. Mike holding prosopite.

Collecting continued through the day with many of us spending time at the sluice (see Figures 3, 4, and 5). We found amazonite, spessartine garnets, amethyst among other minerals.



Figure 3. Stephanie and Robert looking for micros at the Sluice



Figure 4. John at the Sluice.



Figure 5. Serena at the Sluice

As we awaited the second dump (see Figure 6), a mine worker mentioned that YouTube[®] has a video of a Morefield dump called “Feeding the Pigeons”.



Figure 6. Sam Dunaway and Mine Worker “Feeding the Pigeons”

Those who stayed until 3 PM were treated to a third dump, in which we gathered amazonite. Ralph found a nice terminated amazonite in matrix. Mary gathered amazonite and quartz.

We became so engrossed in collecting that some of us did not notice if it rained or didn't rain. Others mentioned that the predicted rain did not come. We stared down the forecast of rain and our finds “Made our day.”

Ref: Descriptions of monazite and prosopite from Mindat.

Photos 1 through 4 and 6 by Ralph Gamba;
Photo 5 by Christine Proctor.