Two Virginia Staurolite Localities

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While vacationing in Virginia for one week during the summer of 1988, our goal was to collect at as many sites as we could find. This required corresponding with other collectors and obtaining useful books. Both led to a fun and successful vacation, both in sight-seeing and collecting.

In the course of our travels, we collected at two staurolite localities. One is so well known, they made it into a State Park! The other site, less well-known, is published (Frye, 1986). This paper will describe both localities, so other mineral collectors can visit them the next time they find themselves in Virginia or near the Virginia/North Carolina border.

The most famous staurolite collecting locality is at Fairy Stone State Park, near Stuart, in Patrick County. At this location, pioneers found twinned staurolite crystals weathered in great quantities in the soil. They coined the term "Fairy Stones". Twins occur commonly at 60 degree angles, less commonly at 90 degrees. In addition, single crystals and "twins" of three or more crystals are not rare. Crystals are highly weathered, often with pitted faces and rounded corners. It is possible to collect a number of excellent crystals in a short amount of time. Within the dry washes, the staurolite occurs in the sandy sediment. As collectors visit this site fairly frequently, the best crystals may be found by rooting under debris or after a hard rain gets water to flow through the normally dry stream bed. Rounded cobbles of schist containing 1-5 mm garnet crystals as wells as staurolite can also be found.

The staurolite locality is on the east side of the park office. It is interesting to note that while you are not allowed to collect plants, animals, and the usual forbidden things, you **are allowed** to collect "fairy stones". Please do not abuse this rule by over-collecting or bringing in digging equipment. It is possible to park within 100 feet of the collecting locale (which is in the woods), and almost anyone can pick up a handful of crystals in a few minutes.

The second staurolite locality may be found in the town of Galax, Carroll County. The outcrop is by the traffic light at the intersection of US 58/221 and the bypass Virginia 89. Frye (1986) describes this rock "as an unusually coarse phase of the Ashe formation". The exposure is a steeply inclined stratum with beautiful untwinned staurolite crystals of a lustrous brownish color. Crystals are imbedded in the mica schist and are often well-terminated. Crystal length varies from 2 to 8 cm (.8 to 3.1 inches). Larger crystals have been reported. Crystals of garnet, apatite, mica, and tourmaline have also been reported (Frye, 1986), but we found only conspicuous crystals of staurolite and mica (presumably muscovite).

One can park across the street from the outcrop. This is not the safest exposure. It is steeply inclined, and mica flakes make it slippery. There is poison ivy growing on part of the outcrop. On a rainy day, it would be foolish to attempt to scramble around on this locality. Although we have not done a lot of collecting at staurolite localities, this road cut in Galax provided the largest and prettiest crystals, even though they are not twinned.

There are many other staurolite localities in Virginia and throughout the Appalachians. A little research and personal contacts will go a long way to collecting this and many other mineral species.

References

Dietrich, R.V., 1970, Minerals of Virginia: Research Division *Bull. 47*, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, 325 p.

Frye, K. 1986, *Roadside Geology of Virginia*: Mountain Press Publishing Co., Missoula, MT, 278 p.

Post Cards - 1989

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Since I am a fairly new post card collector, each show is a revelation in that I learn something new. This fall in the Houston Post Card Show, I found that the colored mineral post cards are not particularly cherished by collectors and go for under a dollar each. Even a first day of issue of the U.S. Amethyst stamp on a postcard with an amethyst specimen went only for a buck.What are most in demand are photographs of recognizable places or things with dates. This is particularly true of the old black and white photographs of mines and mining scenes. Since the supply is somewhat limited, the prices are going up. They now go for from $5 to $18 with most in about the $8 range. Colorado and other Rocky Mountain mining scenes are the most valuable, but the others seem to be going up also, since I got into this thing three years ago.

This year I managed to pick up some cards on Arizona, including a scene showing the shaft of the Old Dominion

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