Letters From My Mentor #3 by Anthony J. Albini

August 30, 1984

Dear Tony,

Thanks for sharing the samples with me! I’ll return those indicated, one way or another, when I’m able.

You may be right about manganocolumbite-manganotantalite; I honestly don’t know. I’d rather assumed that they were mutually exclusive, at least in close proximity. I’ll see what I can do…though I mustn’t overload J.G. [John Gillespie, AJA] with samples. [Samples sent by AJA to Petr Cerny for analysis showed both species can occur in the same granite pegmatite.] Two or three times a year, I send him five samples that I regard as important. The results, combined with x-ray diffraction, have pinned down quite a few rarities. The sample he did test was almost certainly the Nb end of the series; he didn’t detect any Ta, evidently. I’d certainly love to pin down pyrochlore for the region. Supposedly pyrochlore is characteristic of alkaline rocks; but it is known from a few granite pegmatites too. I used to find zoned crystals, yellow and nearly black, with an abrupt change, at the Strickland quarry; but I don’t have any left. There was a report, many years ago, of tantalite, from either Rt. 9 or the Nuclear Plant; but I can’t verify it. Ferrotantalite would be a nice one to add to the ever expanding list.

What’s the story on the loose white beryl crystal with the embedded microlite crystal? It’s not Slocum quarry material, but it could easily be from the Hewitt mine. The yellow crystal looks like helvite! It’s so poorly formed that I don’t think it would hurt to remove a tiny bit for x-raying. It could be spessartine but I strongly doubt it.

The glassy black Nike site mineral does look like samarskite. I’ve seen the same, though sparingly, at the Hale-walker quarry. I think samarskite is sort of typical of pegmatites in the Glastonbury Gneiss. Beautiful reddish crystals used to be found at the defunct Pelton quarry.

I’m anxious to get back out in the field. With September, I’ll be in East Hampton much more often. I’m sorry you’re free only on weekends…the time I’m not, usually.

With some time at my disposal, after this weekend, I’ll try again to ferret out that data on south Glastonbury quarries, according to Mrs. Ulm. I just haven’t been able to track it, in the 75 volumes of my Journal; I can’ t remember the year, except approximately. It’s an interesting account. [The writer believes this material may have been lost in the rain soaked shed and never found as I never saw it.]

I’d like to visit the Hollister quarry again, this autumn. I appreciate the copy of your fine map of Glastonbury localities.

My East Hampton rockpile was still yielding all sorts of curious things right up to my last outing there, in withering heat, back in June. Even standing next to the blocks of rusty East Hampton schist, one sees little of obvious interest, except for clusters of radiating acicular dark brown dravite crystals! But I’m definitely not through there! The narrow veins of are extremely complex. All the feldspar appears to be barian. The phosphates, triphylite, graftonite(?), etc., eluded me until I started tracking down the source of dull bluish and dull yellowish vivanite and mitridatite stains on joint surfaces.

I hope the Strickland quarry isn’t absolutely closed to collecting! Last spring, I was up there many times, and never met with interference. The Schoonmaker dump, I fear, is jeopardized by housing. Perk test holes all over the pegmatite, on that western side of the hill.

Cordially,

Dick

P. S.

When Bob Altamara wrote to me, A month ago, about the Collin Hill metagabbro, I told him I was still willing to write a concise bulletin on Connecticut minerals, for the State Survey…with which he’s associated, part-time. As usual, no answer at all! I don’t blame Bob; the fault lies with Mr. Quarrier, Pac, etc. Such apathy!

The finest of the Davis mine gahnite crystals occur in masses of granular pyrite. The pyrite grains separate, on scrubbing, revealing gahnite in superb octahedra up to over 1/8 inch. That was a large-scale mine, one of the most successful in Massachusetts history, worked in a huge pyrite vein, yielding sulfuric acid ore.