Letters from My Mentor #8 by Anthony J. Albini

January 28, 1985

Dear Tony,

How I’m itching to get back to some of our good localities. Spring and autumn are my only field seasons, as you know. That South Glastonbury area certainly merits a lot of attention, particularly before the snake season begins. I’m intrigued by the persistence of Bi and Mo mineralization in the pegmatites there.

Since Wendell Wilson has invited me to submit other articles, in addition to one on the Strickland quarry, I’m going to make a very serious effort to clear up as many Middletown District unknowns as possible. Maybe a couple of samples, now and then, to Jim Ferraiolo [then of the National Museum, AJA], would be helpful. And possibly, with the knowledge of a serious study to be published, someone with access to a probe may delineate a few of the unlabelled “hornblendes”... I’ve wrapped up several of the lithiophilite alterations, intending to mail them to Paul Moore [University of Chicago, AJA]. He can’t do worse than decline, can he? How I wish a stricklandite could turn up in the batch. If you’ve sent any off, to the Smithsonian for example, so much the better.

Re-examining my best specimen of the green foliated Swanson mine triplite alteration, I noticed a bluish mineral that’s soft enough to yield a bluish powder under a knife blade. I’d previously confused it with the common blue tourmaline which rims triplite. The material may be a slightly altered triphylite; for that matter, what would triphylite , rather than lithiophilite, be doing with high-Mn triplite? Don’t forget I once found a small isolated cleavage of ludlamite, evidently, there.

Going over my meager State Forest mine material [a separate location from the state Forest quarries, AJA], I found another tiny orange-red mass of wolfeite in triphylite; also a few more spots of tan arrojadite. There are certainly possibilities there, if one is willing to dig.

I bought one of those cheap hand magnifiers, 3 or 4 inches in diameter, for field use; thee enable one to much better examine large masses of ro9ck.

Splitting an old Jail Hill quarry specimen of bustamite and johannsenite?, I exposed some little lavender-pink cleavages and elongated prismatic crystals of what looks very much like leucophoenicite…which [Don, AJA] Peacor and others have found at several alleghanyite or sonolite occurrences.

Any more good stuff on that Strickland quarry dump? I, also, found highly modified colorless to pinkish fluorapatite crystals, tiny ones, with the lithiophilite, etc.

Bastin, 1910, “Feldspar Deposits of the United States” USGS Bulletin 420, says:

John C. Wiarda & Co. operate a small feldspar quarry about 1 ¼ miles south of South Glastonbury, in the same belt with the Howe quarry and the quarries formerly operated by the Eureka Mining and Operating Company. The largest pit is about 40 by 60 feet and is 15 feet in maximum depth. The rock is granite pegmatite, not very coarse, and seldom showing feldspar crystals more than 6 to 10 inches across. The quartz is light gray to dark gray in color and is not present in commercial quantities”. Etc.

“A new pit about 100 feet northeast of the one described above is just being opened, and expose a small mass of gray granite gneiss in which the pegmatite is plainly intrusive.” Etc.

“Two quarries formerly worked by the Eureka Company, but not operated at the time of the writer’s visit, in November 1907, are located in the town of Glastonbury, about one-half north of the Howe quarry. These consist of two pits on a western hill slope lying about 100 feet by 40 feet apart on a north-south line. The southernmost one is 100 by 40 feet in horizontal dimensions and 30 feet in maximum depth”.

Of the Howe quarry he says:

“It is operated by Lewis W. Howe, and is the largest feldspar quarry in Connecticut as well as the oldest, having been worked over forty years”.

Also:

“A small quarry one-half mile east of South Glastonbury, on the south side of the valley of Roaring Brook, was formerly worked by the Eureka Company”. Well-formed feldspar crystals up to 3 feet.

A feldspar quarry 2 ½ miles northeast of South Glastonbury, near the road to East Glastonbury, is worked by a firm that uses the product entirely in the manufacture of abrasive soaps. This quarry is on the farm of Frank G. Curtis and consists of a single pit about 250 feet long, trending northeast and southwest.”

Sterrett, in “Mica Deposits of the United States”, a few years later, mentions the Wiarda and Howe quarries together.

Seaman, “The Walden Gem Mine”, Rocks & Minerals, 1963, says of microlite and pyrochlore:

“ Both are present in the Walden pegmatite as two distinct , rare, and separate crystallizations of different color and sizes. Yellow microlite crystals, frequently with a darker blackish-green core, occur as harp octahedral crystals to a quarter of an inch or slightly larger completely imbedded in massive lepidolite, embedded in pollucite, upon the prismatic faces of rubellite tourmaline, or as squeezed, misshapen crystals between plates of cleavelandite, and occasionally imbedded in quartz.

“Pyrochlore ocuurs in dark brown to black crystals some of which are octahedral but the greater number of which are highly modified. They occur completely embedded in granular-massive lepidolite, or as isolated crystals in quartz, some of which is of the smoky variety. They are very tiny. Both the mcrolite and pyrochlore were identified as belonging to this group by x-ray powder photographs. The yellow microlite appears to be the more common mineral and to be earlier than the darker pyrochlore.”

Unfortunately, however, color is no criterion, elsewhere. Some of my blackest material has turned out to be microlite, with some Ti (as if grading toward betafite).

I hope this helps you.

Cordially,

Dick