Letters from my Mentor #5 by Anthony J. Albini

Late November 1984

Dear Tony,

The day after I saw you, just as I was preparing to leave, my mother fell in the yard, fracturing a bone in her hip. So I stuck around, longer than expected, helping out with a few things. On Saturday, Bobby Ulm and I did a little collecting, mostly in South Glastonbury on that end of Portland. We stopped at the Simpson (Wiarda quarry), and I managed to find several nice pieces of hyalite. Also, I broke several masses of that friable cleavelandite [albite, AJA] finding many dull yellowish microlite crystals, but mostly crude or broken. Some of the lepidolite, though, very scant, is as bright a purple as I’ve seen. Pink lithian muscovite seems to be intergrown, as at the Gillette quarry. But it might be lepidolite, too. Once, I collected some large masses of intergrown lavender and pink material, at the Strickland quarry, but both proved to be lepidolite. Next spring, I hope to do some good collecting there.

Looking over the Husband quarry [Huspband quarry, AJA], chiseled out of that back wall, I noticed many little striated green crystals, with the supposed ferrimolybdite. I didn’t know what the to make of them, until I saw unaltered grayish cleavages…of bismuthinite. So the green material is bismutite after bismuthinite, and very nice. The yellow looks an awful lot like bismite from the Case quarry prospect.

In Tuesday afternoon, on a whim, I drove over to the Strickland quarry. As soon as I got to the bulldozed dump, where people have been digging deep holes, I spotted two black-stained cleavelandite nodules, one of 2 inches , the other of 5. I knew there were Mn phosphates inside! When broken, they yielded fascinating material, consisting perhaps have a dozen different minerals, replacing lithiophilite, or triplite, or both. One of the large pieces is the best phosphate specimen I’ve ever collected there! I looked around for another hour, but could find no other such nodules. And they were only a foot apart on the dump! If you go there, be on the lookout for such black-stained cleavelandite rocks. [The author did and found one of these beautiful rare nodules, AJA]

I’d previously, years ago, found little pieces of identical material, so I know the black coating is groutite, and one of the alterations is lipscombite; they yielded excellent x-ray data. The little available iron must go into lipscombite. A foliated mineral, off-white, should be fairfieldite. But I have x-ray patterns of the other minerals, and have yet to identify them. I wonder if your friend at the National Museum(Mr. Ferroiolo…spelling?? Would help us out with our problematical phosphates? We Northeastern collectors are being sadly neglected!

I stopped at Wesleyan [University, AJA], yesterday. The collection is the same as ever. Some day, maybe in the spring, we ought to meet there, so I can show you the dozens of drawers of local minerals, many unique, in my collection stored there. [never saw them, AJA] If they’d let me use one more stack of drawers, I could get all the newer things organized too. There are hundreds of drawers of old rock samples, from various field projects in geology, some going far back…absolute junk!

Jim Gutmann tried his best to get the diffractometer going, but to no avail. X-rays were coming out of the machine, but the receiver wouldn’t pick them up. Tough luck! I’m way behind on identifying or confirming samples. And Wesleyan doesn’t plan repairing the old machine; they’ve applied for a grant to get a new one. I f I knew anyone at the University of Connecticut, which is much closer to Woodstock, I’d see if I could use their equipment for a few days. It seems to me that Russ [Behnke, AJA] knows someone there. Maybe he could help.

Dunn, Peacor, etc. must be scraping up every trace of minerals form Franklin-Sterling Hill, and of course they have the probe, etc. We should be so lucky. Some of their new ones: ferristilpnomelane, nelenite, local lennilenapeite…the latter named after the Lenni Lenape Indians, long since extinct. It’s the Mg analogue of stilpnomelane.

I’m pretty sure the orange mineral from Middletown, with vesuvianite, wollastonite, spinel, calcite, and fassaite(?) is chodrodite, or other member of that group. The broken crystal outlines resemble those on chondrodite I examined at Wesleyan.

Cordially,

Dick