

FAMOUS MINERAL LOCALITIES. 2. THE GEM
REGIONS OF NORTH CAROLINA

HARRY W. TRUDELL

Philadelphia, Pa.

IN almost every publication dealing with the gems to be found in the United States prominent mention is made of North Carolina's production of precious stones and other valuable minerals. In addition there are very few mineral collections which do not contain some specimens from this state. Any one interested in collecting or studying minerals is likely to have their ambition stirred with a desire to visit such a locality, where, it would be expected, the dumps of the mines might yield some very attractive material.

After reading several such articles and Dr. George F. Kunz's admirable "History of the gems found in North Carolina" the writer and Mr. Samuel G. Gordon decided to make a trip to this promising field. After investigating routes, costs, etc., we left Philadelphia July 29 via the Pennsylvania Railroad for Baltimore, where we had arranged to take the York River Line steamer, a pleasant, comfortable and interesting way of getting to Richmond; leaving Baltimore at 6 P.M., we reached Richmond the following morning at about 9 o'clock. The day was spent enjoyably in visiting some of the many historical spots for which the old Confederate capitol is noted. A Southern railway train left promptly at 6 o'clock for Danville, and the earlier part of the trip was interesting and entertaining by reason of the new country and incidents to be seen at the various stops. Danville was reached at 11.30 P.M., and leaving there at 12.45 A.M., we reached Salisbury, N. C., at 3.20 A.M. In normal times it is possible to get a thru train, but military needs had disrupted conditions considerably. We remained at Salisbury until 5.50, being treated to a beautiful sunrise with a concert of mockingbirds. We found ourselves at Statesville at 6.35, where we breakfasted and rambled about the clean shady streets. From Statesville our route lay to the northwest over the Taylorsville Branch, to the town of Hiddenite, about four miles beyond Stony Point (usually spoken of as the place from which were obtained the wonderful specimens of hiddenite and emerald).

The run of 20 miles was soon accomplished and we found ourselves at last in the "promised land."

Inquiries at the station disclosed the fact that one of the mines was about a half mile to the north. We walked up the road paralleling the railroad, to the farm of Mr. J. E. Turner, where in the front garden we saw many immense quartz crystals, chiefly of the smoky variety, surrounding the flower beds. We found Mr. Turner to have had considerable experience in gem and precious-metal mining, and in addition to be very hospitable to visiting mineralogists. The old mines, now much overgrown with vegetation and fair-sized trees, are almost obliterated, and the red top soil has washed into the openings, completely hiding the rock from sight. In the nearby woods are numerous small prospects, many of which produced good specimens of hiddenite in the past, but the present outlook, for a short stay, was very unpromising. We attacked a large pile of rocks, the old dump, which produced only a little rutilated quartz. Our spirits were by this time considerably toned down, but we decided to try another location south of the station, after obtaining the permission of Mr. Turner, who is also in charge of it. Mineralogically there was no result, but we had the unique experience of falling under suspicion as possible cow poisoners; we are not sure that we completely cleared ourselves of this suspicion, but Mr. Turner greatly enjoyed the episode, and no doubt later lifted the stigma from our reputations. We camped out overnight, but after two days of fruitless search in the vicinity, decided to "break camp," and with our belongings in knapsacks, and a kindly farewell from Mr. Turner, we started for the station.

Statesville was reached at 6.40, but we had to wait until 11 P.M. for a westbound train. At 3 A.M. the train stopped at Black Mountain Station in a steady downpour of rain; everything was black here, even the two fellow-travelers who got off with us, but they soon merged into the surrounding blackness and we were alone. Fortunately the station building was unlocked and we managed to make ourselves comfortable until daylight. The dawn was gray and wet, with ragged clouds about the surrounding peaks. Such weather conditions were of course decidedly poor for our proposed four-days' tramp over

Mount Mitchell and the country beyond, to Spruce Pine some sixty miles away. Nevertheless, as there seemed but little prospects of the weather clearing, we started for the summit of Mount Mitchell about 18 miles away and 6,711 feet above sea level. The climb, while severe and disagreeable, when it showered, was on the whole interesting, and about 2 o'clock it cleared off nicely. Our camp that night was very agreeable, being at the head of Mill Creek Valley, and affording a wonderful view. Our only mineral find here was cyanite, on the north slope of Mt. Mitchell, along the government trail. After a day of more or less rain and much mud, we reached the mica mine on Crabtree Creek, the exact location being about two miles northwest of the junction of Yancy, Mitchell and McDowell Counties. Here, due to the rain, we spent the night in a mine tunnel. An investigation disclosed nothing of interest on any of the dumps about the place. There is a sameness to the pegmatite from which mica is obtained in this whole district. Finally on Saturday evening at 6 o'clock, rain-soaked, muddy and footsore, we arrived at Spruce Pine, where we were fortunate in securing accommodations at "The English Inn," conducted by Mrs. Josephine English Dorsett, whose warm hospitality will always make us look back on this part of our trip with the greatest pleasure and satisfaction.

We remained here for 5 days, making excursions to the various mines in operation near Spruce Pine; at the Deake Mines (usually misspelled Deake) about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles from Spruce Pine, on the south bank of the North Toe River, we found garnets, traces of uraninite, autunite, etc. About two miles further, on the same side of the river, are the Bailey Mines, where there are very extensive operations, some of great depth. Here we found small specimens of uraninite, autunite, gummite, monazite, ilmenite and garnets. We located Flat Rock Mine about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile across the river, but after a steep climb, we found absolutely nothing, as the mines were not in operation. We made a visit to the kaolin washery at Spruce Pine, but the soft material is pure, and we made no mineral finds. The Wiseman Mines are on the west side of Beaver Creek about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Spruce Pine, high up above the creek bed. We here obtained fergusonite (or cyrtolite), some attractive oligoclase, and autunite in limited

amounts. These mines are being worked for feldspar, but mica and other minerals are frequently encountered; for instance, a 300-pound mass of samarskite had recently been found, which was held at \$1.00 per pound. The quarrymen know most of such rare-metal minerals, and carefully save them, so that the chance visitor requires a "silver pick" to obtain much in the way of specimens. There are a large number of mica and feldspar mines within a radius of 5 miles of Spruce Pine, most of which are within three miles and can be reached over fair roads, which wind their way thru very picturesque scenery. If one had sufficient time to devote to this district, doubtless interesting finds would be made, but our time was too limited and while we worked very hard, we accomplished but little. The Grassy Creek aquamarine mine, located 5 miles southeast of Spruce Pine, is now closed due to litigation, and we were advised not to visit this, as the dumps had been gone over most carefully, and washed by the owners; furthermore visitors were not permitted on the property. Nor did we get to the emerald-matrix mines which are located 7 miles from Spruce Pine ($3\frac{1}{2}$ miles due south from Estatoe). It was from these mines that most of the emeralds in matrix came which we saw used in jewelry so much about Spruce Pine. We finally left over the Clinchfield, Carolina & Ohio Railroad for Marion. The distance is about 23 miles and the route most picturesque, embracing some very extensive mountain scenery of great beauty; nineteen tunnels were passed thru on this short run. Close connections were made at Marion for Danville via the Southern Ry., and from there we went to Amelia Courthouse, Va. What happened here will be described in another article.

NOTES AND NEWS

The editors will appreciate receiving for this column items of interest to mineral collectors.

Mr. Albert B. Peck, formerly in the department of mineralogy of the University of Michigan, has been appointed assistant physicist in the U. S. Bureau of Standards at Pittsburgh, Pa., where he will carry on petrographic studies on cement, porcelain products, etc.

Dr. Horace B. Patton, for twenty-four years professor of mineralogy at the Colorado School of Mines, has opened an office at 817 Fifteenth St., Golden, Colorado, as a consulting geologist.

Mr. Earl V. Shannon, of West Haven, Connecticut, and Mr. M. L. Jandorf, of York, Pennsylvania, have been called into the national army.