



# Mineral News

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*The Mineral Collector's Newsletter*

## Recent Collecting at the Belvidere Mt. Quarry, Lowell, Vermont

*Ken Hollmann  
P.O. Box 134  
Center Rutland, VT 05736*

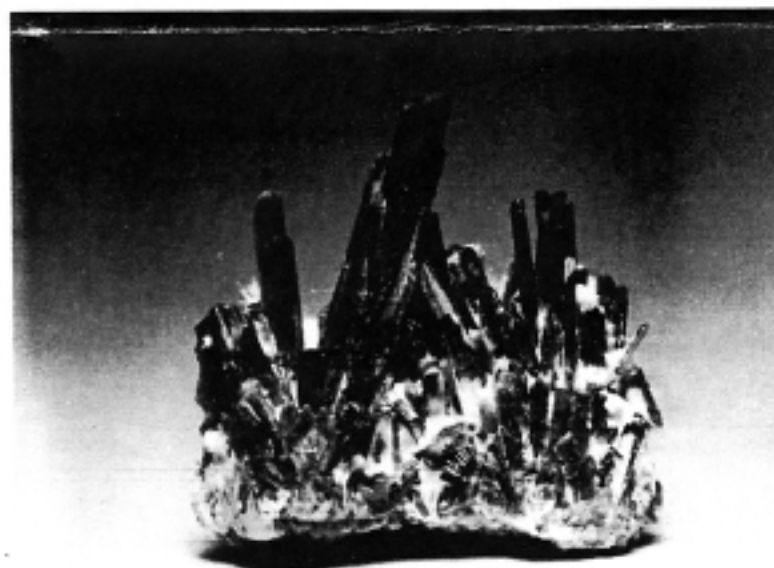
The asbestos quarry located on the East side of Belvidere Mountain, in the town (township) of Lowell, Orleans Co., Vermont. (a minute portion of the southern end of the quarry extends into the township of Eden, Lamoille Co.), has produced a number of exceptional specimens over the past few years

### History

Chrysotile asbestos has been known from the area since the early 1800s. Early reports mention "amianthus" being found in Kellyvale, the original name for the present town(ship) of Lowell, which was changed from the aforementioned in 1831.

In 1892, a French-Canadian lumberman in the employ of Judge Melvin E. Tucker, discovered asbestos on the East side of Belvidere Mountain. Development of the property began in 1901 under the name of the Tucker Asbestos Company, but in

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**Fig. 1** Clinozoisite/epidote, 2.2 x 2.2 inches (5.5 x 5.5 cm), collected by Haritos in 1993.

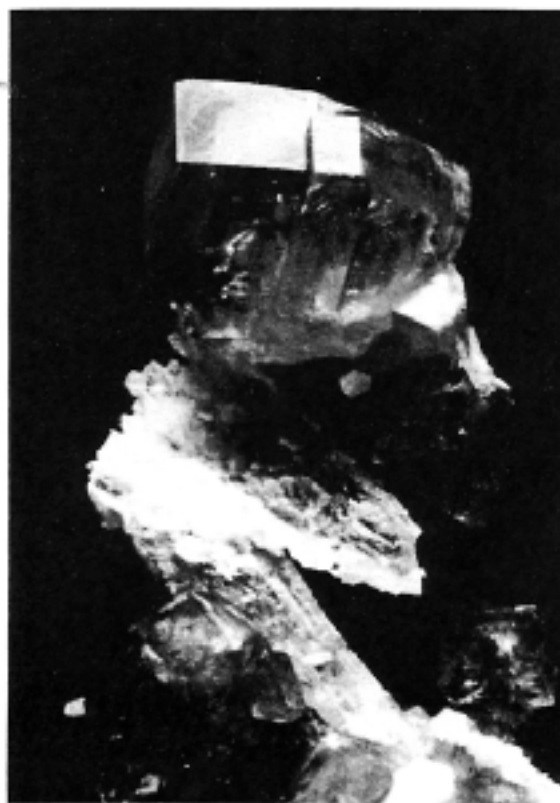


Fig. 2 Lime green grossular, 5 mm crystal, collected by Haritos in 1995.

### **Belvidere Mountain Quarry** *Continued from page 1*

1907 it was sold to William G. Gallagher, president and general manager of the Lowell Lumber and Asbestos Co. During that period, the location of the quarry was noted as being in "Chrysotile," a small mining community no longer in existence, located near the mill site. After several years of vigorous activity, the mine became idle due to financial difficulties. In 1919, the Asbestos Corporation of America bought the mine along with other asbestos properties on the Eden side of Belvidere Mountain. Although much money was invested, the property remained idle until it was acquired by the Vermont Asbestos Corporation in 1929, which installed modern equipment and began to produce profitably.

In 1936 the mine was sold to the Ruberoid Company, which called it's new division, Vermont Asbestos Mines. A new mill was built, and another area that was named the Gallagher Quarry was opened. It was from the Gallagher Quarry that the fine specimens the location is noted for began to appear. In 1941, Clifford Frondel of Harvard visited the quarry and found abundant amounts of vesuvianite, grossular, brucite, clinocllore, etc. In 1967, the Ruberoid Co. merged with General Aniline & Film Corporation (GAF). In 1974 GAF decided to close the mine due to the cost of complying to EPA anti-pollution requirements. In March of 1974, the property was acquired by the mine employee organized, Vermont Asbestos Group, Inc. (VAG). At that time, it was the largest employee owned operation in the U.S. The mine is now closed permanently, having ceased operations in 1993.

The popular locality name given for the quarry is Eden

Mills, the small village 4.5 miles south in Lamoille Co. This is incorrect, but the name has become so entrenched in usage and literature, I expect it's use will never totally die out. Depending on ownership and development, the location has also been known as the Gallagher, Gallagher, Ruberoid, GAF, Belvidere, Lowell and C-area quarries/mines, and at present, the Vermont Asbestos Group Lowell Mine, or VAG Mine. Unless specimens can be dated/placed with certainty, the best locality nomenclature would be, "Belvidere Mountain Quarry, Lowell, Orleans Co., Vermont." There is another old abandoned asbestos quarry on the south side of Belvidere Mountain that is in the town(ship) of Eden, Lamoille Co., but it has not produced any specimens of interest to collectors that I am aware of. Interestingly, the town of Eden received it's name in 1781 when it was chartered by the Independent Republic of Vermont to "Col. Seth Warner and his associates, our worthy friends, the officers and soldiers of his regiment in the line of the Continental Army," in the hope it would be a postwar "Eden" for them. As far as known, none of the 72 listed in the charter actually settled there.

### **Recent Collecting**

In 1992 Eugene Stiles collected many **brucite** specimens. The color ranged from white to gray to light and medium blue-green. The crystals measuring up to 6 mm, occurred as crusts to several inches, coating fractures in serpentine. Numerous specimens have been collected by others since then, but I have

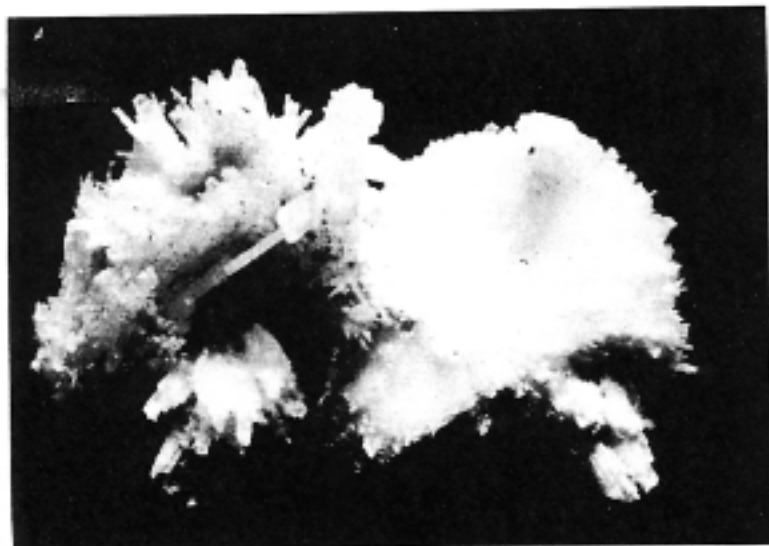


Fig. 3 Aragonite, 1.6 inches (4 cm), collected by the author in 1995.

seen none that equal the best Gene found color-wise (similar to Kelly Mine smithsonite).

Mike Haritos has done exceptionally well in his collecting efforts. In 1993 he found many **clinozoisite/epidote** matrix specimens, having thin terminated crystals to over 2.4 inches (6 cm). In 1995 Mike relocated the area that in the '60s, produced the dark green **diopside** crystals overgrown with olive green **grossular**, on which later generations of white **diopside**, transparent light green **grossular**, **pyrite**, and **aragonite** had formed. In the past, they were sometimes erroneously described as pseudomorphs. Also in 1995, he found exceptional groups of dark red-brown **grossular**, with individual crystals to 0.8 inch (2 cm).

In 1995, Richard Ransom collected some unusual **vesuvianite**; medium olive green square prisms, with unmodified, flat reddish-brown terminations, up to 2.8 x 0.6 inch (7.0 x 1.5 cm) on matrix; one 1.9 x 0.4 inches (4.7 x 1 cm) crystal was doubly terminated. Rich also found flesh colored **sphenes** to 1.3 inches (3.2 cm), which may be the largest ever from here, and a number of **clinozoisite/epidote** crystals to 1 x 0.4 inch (2.5 x 1 cm) on matrix (Fig. 1). On June 9th of this year, Rich found a few crude crystals of **bornite**. One single and four on matrix were recovered, the largest crystal measuring 0.6 inch (1.5 cm). Also on June 9th, working a different area from Rich, I collected a small number of important, unusually large, opaque medium brown, **grossular** crystals from a calcite seam. They exhibit a predominant dodecahedron form modified by the trapezohedron. The largest crystal measured over 2.8 inches (7 cm).

I'm sure there have been other significant and interesting finds that I am not aware of. Since I will be reporting on the location again, I would be interested in hearing from anyone with new information.

### Caveat!

During the past 25 years I have seen a number of fabricated specimens and also a few that were misidentified as to location. I have two specimens of the classic orange-brown grossular on diopside that were bought many years ago from northern Vermont and New Hampshire collectors. Attractive pieces, but the grossulars were glued on! I kept the pieces as a lesson to myself to "look before I leap (buy)." A couple of years ago, I mail ordered a clinocllore on matrix that was in an old collection a dealer recently purchased. After it arrived, I was suspicious since I had never seen clinocllore on that particular matrix before. Sure enough, the crystal was glued into the matrix—not repaired, but fabricated. Needless to say, I returned the specimen and the dealer refunded my money. Recently I have seen specimens in private and dealer collections purported to have come from the Belvidere Mountain Quarry that were actually from Canadian localities; siderite on albite from Mont St.-Hilaire, calcite from Black Cape, green grossular on diopside from the Orford Mine, and gem grossular from the Jeffrey Mine. How did this come about? A few of the local miners and managers had specimens from the quarry, and on occasion traded with visiting mineral collectors, or were given



Fig. 4 Langis "Fou" Anctil (left) and Richard Ransom, outside of gate, June 9, 1996.

specimens. When those collections were disposed of, the uninformed recipients "assumed" since the specimens came from one of the miners, all the specimens were actually from the quarry, and with no deception intended, labeled them as such, and passed them along.

Last year while collecting in the quarry, I spotted what at first glance appeared to be some small dark red grossulars. A closer look proved it to be eudialyte. Next to it on the quarry floor were small specimens of acmite, microcline & astrophyllite! Some unthinking person recently collecting at Mont St.-Hilaire, contaminated the location by emptying his pack in that spot! I picked up all I could find and removed them from the site. This is another example of how specimens may become incorrectly attributed to a location, although in this instance the origin was obvious. ☺