

AMERICAN ROCKHOUND



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On The Cover: Afghan miner living in one of the old mine adits while working the lapis mines in Afghanistan. Photo credit and courtesy of Gary Bowersox, Jim Landon. The 7.27 carat Jacquot/Kyte Diamond, Richard Jacquot photo. Cover design, Sandy Jacquot, Richard Jacquot

NORTH CAROLINA DIAMONDS

Richard Jacquot
Wade Edward Speer

North Carolina is considered by many to be the gemstone capitol of the United States. A lot of rockhounds are partial to their home state: South Carolina, Colorado, Maine, Montana, California and more. These states and others in the US have produced some fine gems and minerals over the years. North Carolina has a wide variety of minerals, over 300 documented so far. All the precious gemstones are found here: emerald, ruby, sapphire and diamond, as well as many semi-precious gems: amethyst, topaz, aquamarine, apatite, citrine, garnet, moonstone, quartz, tourmaline and more. The mineral species list is too long to go into here. Of all the gemstones found in North Carolina, diamond is by far the rarest.

Diamond is the hardest of all the gemstones,

at 10 on the Mohs scale. It has a specific gravity of 3.52 and a typically octahedral crystal habit. Diamond, like corundum (sapphire) comes in a variety of colors including red and blue (rarely). The colors found so far in North Carolina are clear/transparent (white), yellow, green, black and grayish/green.

According to the North Carolina Geological Survey, 13 confirmed diamonds have been found in North Carolina. All of these diamonds were found during the middle and late 1800s as a byproduct of gold mining. In the *History of the Gems Found in North Carolina*, by George Frederick Kunz, Ph.D. (1907), which I reference throughout this article, there are more than 13 occurrences listed. Kunz discounts some of the reports as they could not be properly documented or accounted for.

The diamonds were found in gold washings, either loose in the soil or taken from the washings of auriferous (containing gold or gold bearing) gravel. All the diamonds have been found in the Piedmont region. According to Kunz, belts of itacolomite (flexible sandstone) run throughout this region and were believed to be the matrix of the diamond crystals. Many rockhounds have collected the flexible sandstone. I used to have a piece in my collection,



Belts of itacolomite, flexible sandstone, run throughout the diamond bearing region in North Carolina and are believed by some to be the matrix of the diamond crystals. This specimen is from the Clifford Glenn collection, collected in Burke County, North Carolina.



Richard Jacquot
Richard Buchanan

For a couple of years I had been reading on our American Rockhound talk forum about the rubies, gold and other stones that MAGMA member, Richard 'Buckshot' Buchanan, had been finding on his property. Richard had been posting a lot of information about his site and inviting people to come out and prospect his land as well. Early in 2014, I arranged a club trip to his property. He has opened the site in the past to gold clubs who would come and camp out and search the creek for gold. MAGMA would be the first rockhound group to visit the site. Gold is not the only thing to find at Treasure Valley. If you have the patience and determination, corundum, rubies and sapphires can be found in massive and crystal form with good color. I looked at some of the stones that Richard has found over the years, tourmaline, quartz, sapphire, ruby, gold and a variety of other gems. What got me excited was the location of his property. I had been researching the article on North Carolina diamonds for American Rockhound. Treasure Valley sits in the middle of a hot spot where diamonds have been found since the 1800s. The largest recorded diamond, the 4½ carat



Treasure Valley owner Richard Buchanan is a great host, here he is hauling a load of rockhounds to dig for garnets on Pinnacle Ridge at Treasure Valley.



Rob Whaley

Where in the world could you find world-class limonite pseudomorphs after pyrite that have warped sides? That show seemingly endless twinning? That have cores of unchanged pyrite? That will take a polish until they gleam like new steel? That are plentiful enough that even beginning collectors can find scores of them? That's right, such specimens have been collected right in our backyard in Norwood, North Carolina for the past 60 years.



Indian Money from Bowers Farm. Left specimen measures 3.5 cm x 3 cm, right specimen measures 3 cm x 2 cm. Clifford Glenn collection.

Well, not any more. I had not collected at the Bowers Farm limonite cube location for nearly 15 years when I heard the bad news in February that the site had been closed to collecting because predatory rockhounds had been digging there regularly without paying the modest \$5 fee to the family. I wonder whether these renegades had noticed that specimens from Bowers had been selling for decent money on eBay; ironically, the cubes had been called 'Indian money' by locals for generations, despite no information Native Americans had ever used them for anything.

Over the years, the Bowers family had been gracious in allowing collectors on their property, but that was ended by the greed of a few. The loss of this location to the hobby of mineral collecting is particularly sad because it was a place where novices and their children could easily find nice specimens with a little effort and learn how to dig while they were finding them.

The regularity of the cubes' occurrence in the

VIRGINIA'S EARTH SHAKING
AMETHYST
SCUFFLIN ACRES

Richard Jacquot
Tom Leary
Mary Kay Simpson

I first heard about amethyst in Virginia in 2007 when the MAGMA club made a side trip to a location called the Simpson Farm in Prospect, Virginia. The club had made its annual visit to the Morefield Mine in Amelia County, Virginia. Known for its amazonite and various other minerals, this mine is a collector's hotspot. The Simpson Farm was relatively unknown to most rockhounds. MAGMA member Tom Leary suggested that we check out this site as a side trip while we were in the area. I did not attend the trip myself so I did not see much of what was coming out at the time. This was pretty much a one shot deal for the MAGMA club, We did not return for many years after that first visit.

In the winter of 2013, I was contacted by club member James Hall. He told me he had been collecting at a site in Prospect, Virginia called Scufflin Acres Farm. At the time, I did not realize that this was the same site as the Simpson Farm. James had been talking with the owner of Scufflin Acres, Mary Kay Simpson, who had expressed an interest in having someone do some work at her amethyst dig site to make the site more productive and hopefully attract more rockhounds to the area. In December of 2013, I drove to Virginia with club member Steve Barr. We met with James Hall and the owner, Mary Kay Simpson. The site was at the edge of a large cow pasture on a slope leading down to a field. There were

shallow trenches that had been hand dug over the years. There was no evidence that any serious machine work had ever been done. It looked very promising to us. After looking over the site, I talked with Mary Kay about the various ways we could improve her site. We decided to bring in a medium size track hoe to expose the crystal bearing veins. This would benefit in two ways: It would give the rockhounds who enjoy vein digging and pulling crystals and matrix specimens



Alex Flinchum, Adam Flinchum and Drew Smith working the freshly exposed veins in the trench. The trench was dug along the fault line marked by Tom Leary.