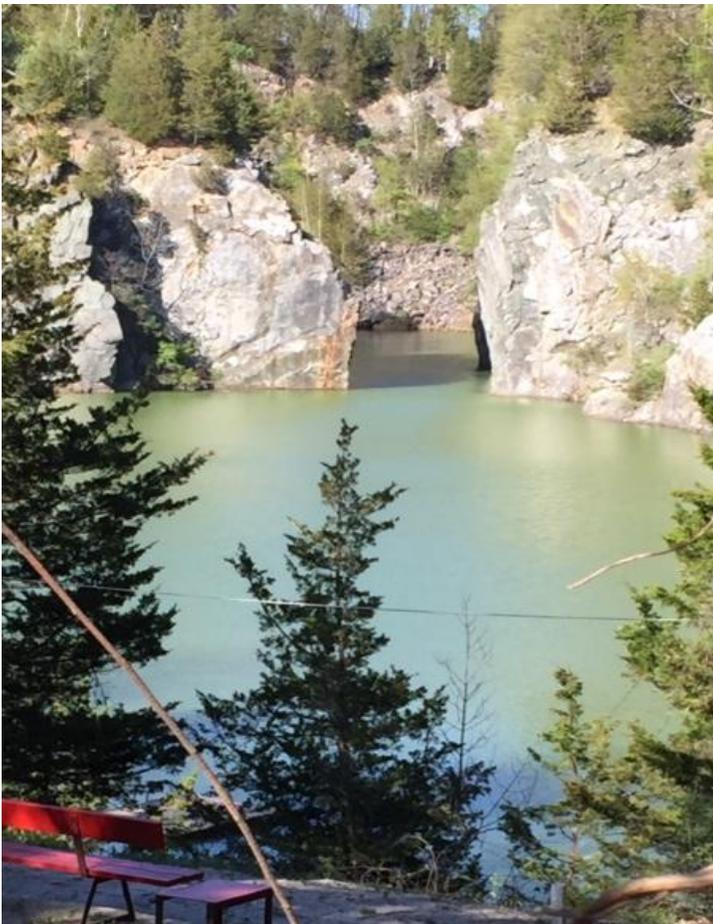


## WMC Field Trip Report:

### A New Jersey Gem, Set in Sterling

On Saturday April 23, 2016 more than 200 rockhounds from clubs throughout the northeast and elsewhere converged upon Ogdensburg, N.J. to participate in the annual Super Dig extravaganza at The Sterling Hill Mine. At least 8 members from the Worcester Mineral Club made the 4 hour trip (one way) to experience one of the best glow shows south of the Aurora Borealis. Despite a touch & go weather forecast, the early morning dampness and overcast skies gave way to clear skies with warm, dry air by early afternoon. The cost of admission, a modest \$21 per person (add a few dollars if not paid in advance), included a good, long 14 hour day at the mine digging through the quarry tailings, hammering, chiseling, and doing the usual things we rockhounds like to do. For viewing collected specimens, there were several darkrooms with ultraviolet lights set up to enable us to evaluate the appeal of the fluorescence



of specimens before we would make our purchases (at \$1.50 per pound).

The Sterling Hill Mine was the last working underground mine in New Jersey. The price of admission came with multiple opportunities throughout the day to take guided tours, at our option, in the quarry, inside the tunnels, some of the mine buildings, the Sterling Hill Mine Museum, the zinc ore processing mill, and a tunnel Blackout Tour. Of the 5 tours my entourage took, my favorite was the lower mine tour. Our guide, Doug, was a mine worker who was working at the mine on its last day of operation in 1986. The mining operation was forced to close for economic reasons, despite being situated on the richest zinc concentration of any mined deposit on Earth. Doug's memory is a treasure trove of first hand experiences; a rare treat for a history nerd like me.

The most fruitful time to collect rocks here is after dark. This is what separates this mine from other mines in a visually dazzling fashion. Having a good shortwave fluorescent light was critical. Matt Wagner's popularity instantly spiked when we strapped my power pack onto his back and an 18 Watt shortwave lamp in his hand. In addition to Matt's charming personality, it attracted a crowd at his every stop throughout the night dig.

A few pointers for anyone thinking about going to the next **Sterling Hill Super Dig:**

- The Super dig is Super Kids Friendly! I'd take any (grand) kids older than 6.
- Buy a shortwave lamp in advance. They are available to purchase at Super Dig, but at full price. Without one, you are going to find yourself left out *in the dark*, or following someone like Matt around.
- Pack your own food. The food from the snack bar was, well, buyer beware! It was really awful! I later thought about the smell of it, the layout with the "kitchen," and the smell of it, and it being immediately adjacent to the rest rooms... and it occurred to me that *this* was a lot closer to Valley Forge, *and the smell of it before the arrival of Baron Von Steuben!*
- Stay overnight nearby and go to the Franklin Mining Museum the next day. The worldwide

crystal/specimen rooms there are spectacular! I could have spent a day there without collecting anything in the less impressive tailings dump. The quarry is closed but impressive looking, tucked away behind a chain link fence across the street.

The Franklin Mine Quarry in Franklin, NJ. April 24, 2016

If you are a rock hound and you've never done this before, put the Sterling Hill Super Dig on your bucket list for next year. If you don't do it then, you'll be at least a year older when you do. The Super Dig is super good and I will do this again!

Rick Cernak  
Worcester Mineral Club  
Field Trip Leader  
April 23, 2016

