Discover More in Highlands East

Although Tory Hill, Wilberforce and Cardiff have long been known as home to many world famous collecting locations like the Bear Lake Diggings (now closed) and the Earle Farm Fluororichterite occurrence, vast tracts of the unexplored are only just beginning to yield their secrets - with tantalizing results.

For information on how to access other collecting locations in the Municipality of Highlands East, come to the Visitor Information Centre from May to October at 2733 Essonville Line, Wilberforce. From November to April go to the municipal office at 2249 Loop Road, Wilberforce.

Information can also be found at www.highlandseast.ca by searching on the municipal site for the word rocks.
Minerals You Can Find - in weathered calcite veins cutting gneiss and amphibolite:

**CALCITE**
- Pinkish white, massive (not as crystals), occurs as vein fillings. Very soft and breaks easily along flat surfaces. Often enclosing crystals of other minerals. In weathered veins it occurs as rounded, crumbly chunks in brown soil.

**FLUORAPATITE**
- Bright green lustrous crystals with hexagonal cross-section. Crystals are quite gemmy (transparent) although usually highly fractured. Beautiful faceted gemstones have been cut from this material.

**FLUORORICHTERITE**
- This is a rare fluorine bearing amphibole mineral which occurs in only a very few locations around the world. Dark green to black, often as stubby crystals with diamond-shaped cross-section. As a result of the complex mineralogy of the area, other rare amphibole minerals are also likely to be found here, although they might be difficult to distinguish visually.

**TITANITE**
- Dark chocolate brown to reddish-brown, highly lustrous wedge shaped crystals. Sometimes resembles the shape of an arrowhead.

**MICROCLINE**
- Buff coloured, blocky crystals, often in groups. Member of the feldspar group of minerals.

**BIOTITE MICA**
- Dark brown to black, stubby six-sided crystals. Separates easily into thin sheets and plates (called books).

Numerous similar occurrences in the Tory Hill area have been worked over the past hundred years for phosphate (apatite) for use in fertilizer, and for mineral specimens - which have found their way into major collections all over the world, and made the area famous. These include the Bear Lake Diggings and the Millar Apatite Mine. At this location there still exists great potential for exciting new discoveries, however, as it was only just discovered a few years ago.

Look for elongated depressions in the earth surrounding the main exposure that could indicate the presence of a weathered calcite vein. Dig through the organic material and glacial debris that accumulates in these depressions until you start to see sticky brown soil with bits of calcite or crystals. Take it slow from here and work by hand to avoid damaging crystal specimens. At one time, these cracks in the surrounding rock were completely filled with solid calcite, but over time, the calcite has dissolved away leaving crystals of the other, more resistant minerals ‘floating’ in the dirt. Some of the solid calcite also remains and may contain crystals “in matrix”. The best strategy, especially for beginners, is usually to start where it is clear someone else has had some success and continue from there.

TOOLS: shovel, trowel, rock pick or bricklayer’s hammer, safety glasses, gloves, newspaper, and a collecting bag.

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THE FINE PRINT: Mineral collecting can be a safe and fun experience for the whole family, BUT... It is your responsibility to assess the risks involved. Haliburton County, the Municipality of Highlands East, its councilors, directors, employees, contractors, and volunteers (whew!) are hereby released from any liability for any claim or cause of action, howsoever caused, that may arise from any person using this guide.