

KEWEENAW MINERAL DAYS

Mineral collecting in the Copper Country

Mineral collecting is a great hobby as long as you have the correct attitude. If you expect to find a financially valuable treasure every time you go out to collect, you will certainly be disappointed more often than not. Successful collecting is a combination of skill, hard work, and luck. We want your collecting experience to be fun and rewarding, but there is no guarantee of finding a treasure. The joy of a great find is an uncommon event that we all want. Yes, many valuable minerals have been found during collecting events but often these are not recognized until long after the event, after they are cleaned. We encourage you to enjoy the challenge of collecting and celebrate all of your finds no matter their value.

The purpose here is to help participants have reasonable expectations and avoid complaints that “I did not find enough.” Mineral collecting events are not a staged “Cash and Treasures TV” event, and there is no guarantee of finding anything at all! Especially, there is no guarantee that participants will find something that exceeds the cost of the event. We certainly hope that our participants find enough minerals, good times, and camaraderie to be worth the cost of the event. But remember, collecting is a combination of skill, hard work and lots of luck.

We prepare the rock piles by moving around rock to expose “new” rock to increase your chance of success. For most rock piles we are exposing fresh rock, but inevitably some of the rock has been previously searched and is simply being turned over. No matter the case, every time rocks are moved around your odds of success are better. We move around enough rock to handle the number of participants in a particular event, but sometimes people find treasures in rock that has been exposed on the surface for tens of years!

The retreat organizers have obtained legal permission to access and prepare old mine rock piles for surface collecting. **You may be on the site ONLY during the times of the event.** The newly moved rock will often be coated with fine particles (“muck”), which will make finding minerals even more challenging. Your eyes are the most essential tool for mineral collecting (and eye protection is required but not supplied). For finding minerals such as datolite or greenstone, your eyes are the only tool. For finding native copper and native silver a metal detector can be quite valuable. But you can find native copper without a metal detector!

Metal detectors can interfere with each other when too close, so there can be problems and frustrations if there are a lot of people with similar metal detectors in a collecting area. We try to prepare a sufficient area to accommodate registered participants.

COPPER COUNTRY MINERALS

The Copper Country is notable for native copper mines and the rock piles are the waste rock from these old copper mines. It is possible to find native copper either in mass or crystallized form. Massive is much, much more common than crystallized, and virtually everyone will find some native copper at a locality notable for native copper. Native silver accompanies native copper and it, too, can be found, but much less frequently.

The common minerals that are typically findable at all of the prepared mineral collecting sites are listed below. The minerals that are capitalized and bolded are particularly common/abundant. We recommend you take the time to look them up online to learn how to identify them.

Native copper is the focus of the Seneca Mine and Central Mine rock piles, whereas native copper in agate (uncommon in the native copper mines) is the focus of the Wolverine Mine rock pile. At both the Seneca and Central mines, datolite, greenstone, and native silver are also usually, readily findable.

Primary Hydrothermal Minerals

analcime

anhydrite

barite

CALCITE

celadonite

chalcocite

CHLORITE

copper (native)

datolite

dolomite (ferroan)

EPIDOTE

FELDSPAR (microcline, adularia)

gypsum

hematite

LAUMONTITE

mohawkite (algodonite, domeykite)

PREHNITE

PUMPELLYITE (greenstone)

QUARTZ

silver (native)

Secondary Copper-Alteration Minerals

chrysocolla

cuprite

malachite

tenorite