

Amethyst Localities in Virginia

(Excerpt from *Virginia Minerals*, Vol. 38 No. 5, Commonwealth of Virginia, Dept. of Mines, Minerals, and Energy, Richmond, VA, 1992.)

Over 30 occurrences of amethyst from Virginia have been reported (Diethrich, 1990; Gaul, 1980). In this report only the most notable localities will be described, the remaining counties with amethyst occurrences are found in Diethrich (1990).

Albemarle County - Pale lavender to deep violet amethyst crystals up to 3 inches in length (clusters may be as much as 6 inches) were found in a road cut in the Sunny Fields subdivision off State Route 795 near Ash Lawn (Mitchell and Bland, 1963-64). A few of these crystals were faceted and made into jewelry.

Amelia County - Gem quality amethyst has been reported from the Rutherford mines (Pegau, 1932).

Amherst County - Well formed deep purple single crystals and clusters to 2 inches in length have been found on Fancy Hill near the old Sandidges's Post Office. The majority are stout prisms with one or both ends terminated by rhombohedral faces (Sterrett, 1913). These crystals make excellent specimens but very few have large enough clear areas to make good gem material.

The Schaars Farm site has been a fee collecting locality for many years. For information contact Mrs. Charles R. Schaar of Amherst, Virginia, telephone (804) 946-5721. At this locality light to deep purple amethyst crystals up to 2 inches in length (clusters to 3 inches) occur in residual clays derived from underlying granite. Most crystals are singly terminated and many contain enough clear areas to be suitable for cutting.

Charlotte County - Amethyst is found on the old Donald Plantation north of U.S. Highway 40 about 2.5 miles northwest of Charlotte Courthouse. Purple and pale lilac crystals with several intermediate shades are found over a large area along the ridge top. This deposit was mined on a small scale in 1912 (Sterrett, 1913). The crystals are found loose in the soil and have apparently weathered from underlying pegmatites.

Louisa County - Amethyst crystals have been found in loose soil 4 miles southwest of Trevillians. Most of the crystals found on the surface were small and pale in color. However, trenching revealed a vein which produced larger crystals of deep purple and lilac color some of which were gem quality (Zeitner, 1968).

Gem quality amethyst has also been found northeast of Ferncliff (Rudolph Bland, personal communication).

Nelson County - Gem quality amethyst was mined in 1907 by the American Gem and Pearl Company of New York on the J.S. Saunders farm 2.5 miles northeast of Lowesville. A dozen or more pits were dug along the summit of a low flat ridge. The pits cover an area 300 feet long by 125 feet wide and were up to 7 feet deep. Amethyst crystals were found in pockets in saprolite with bluish opalescent quartz and kaolin (Sterrett, 1913).

Prince Edward County - The George Smith farm 3 miles north of Rice produced some of the finest amethyst found in Virginia. This was a fee locality for a period of time in the 1960s and 1970s but is now closed. On the Smith farm large single crystals up to 3 inches long and clusters to 6 inches across were found by hand digging shallow pits. A large crystal cluster with deep purple color is in the James Madison University collection in Harrisonburg. Generally the deepest color and clearest areas for

faceting are concentrated near the tips of the terminations (Zeitner, 1968). Amethyst has also been reported from the following counties: Appomattox (Dietrich, 1970), Bedford (Earl, 1980), Buckingham (Zeitner, 1968), Campbell (Zeitner, 1968), Culpeper (R.S. Mitchell personal communication), Fairfax and Fauquier (Rudolph Bland, personal communication), Floyd (Sinkankas, 1959), Fluvanna (Smith and others, 1964), Henry (Cauley and others, 1968), Pittsylvania (K.E. Samuels, personal communication), Prince William (Schlegal, 1957), and Rockbridge (Zeitner, 1968).