FOMS NEWSLETTER — 2026.11

Franklin-Ogdensburg Mineralogical Society

FRANKLIN, NJ

November 2026

Ptygmatic folds in migmatite in gneiss.
Hamburg Quarry, 2026. Photograph by Dave Wellbrock.

!! > New link < !!
You can now RSVP for all the digs at once with Google.
Use the QR code above. Use your cell phone camera to access the form.

Problems registering:
Email: foms.nj.us@gmail.com
Call Dave Kaminski: 845-548-9042

You cannot view the whole message in your email alone!
View this email in your browser
See link at top!

Saturday, November 21, 2026
9:00 a.m. - Noon - FOMS - Field Trip
Collecting at Andover Mine, Members only
Limecrest Rd, Andover, NJ (per MinDat: 1.75 miles NNE of Andover Boro on Limecrest Rd). Meet at the roadside pull off on the east side of Limecrest Rd at 8:30 sharp to sign waiver forms and check your membership status.
Personal protective gear is advised. Safety glasses are mandatory!
This is off a busy road and parking is limited at the pull off here, so park quickly and efficiently. The property is overgrown with thorny Japanese barberry and is rugged. Wear clothing suitable for the thorny shrubs, and keep your glasses on while walking through the thorns. Be prepared to exert yourself, as there is a long walk, difficult terrain. Unlike all other locations, this is a natural setting with mostly surface collecting. The area is large and has numerous separate locations of interest. A bright PPE vest will allow others to see you from a distance. Carry a whistle if you get easily lost. Watch for critters. Check mindat for species you might encounter.
Register here.

Meeting, Saturday, November 21, 2026
1:30 PM - 3:30 PM, members and public welcome
Franklin Mineral Museum, 32 Evans St., Franklin, NJ 07416
Agenda: Voting for 2027-2029 Trustee

Taylor Road Dig

Trip report by Cristian van Rossen

On Saturday, October 17th, FOMS visited the Taylor Road Dumps in Franklin, a location which has been very productive in years past. This year was no exception as much of the classic material and some surprises from the site were found in abundance. The Taylor Road Dump is a small wooded area where material originating from the early workings of the Taylor Mine were dumped many years and are owned by the Franklin Mineral Museum, which graciously allow FOMS to visit the site. Although the morning was cool with autumn being in full swing, a sizable group of FOMS members participated in the morning dig.

The Taylor Road Dump is largely known for having fantastic examples of sphalerite and for being the location where pyroxferroite, a mineral first found on the moon, was described from the Franklin Mining District. For further information on the discovery of pyroxferroite at Franklin, make sure to check out the Spring 2010 issue of The Picking Table and read the article on page 14, “Lunar Mineral Found at Franklin, New Jersey” by Tony Nikischer and Joe Orosz. Taylor Road is a site that still has much potential and will likely produce many more unusual specimens as collectors dig deeper into the old dumps.

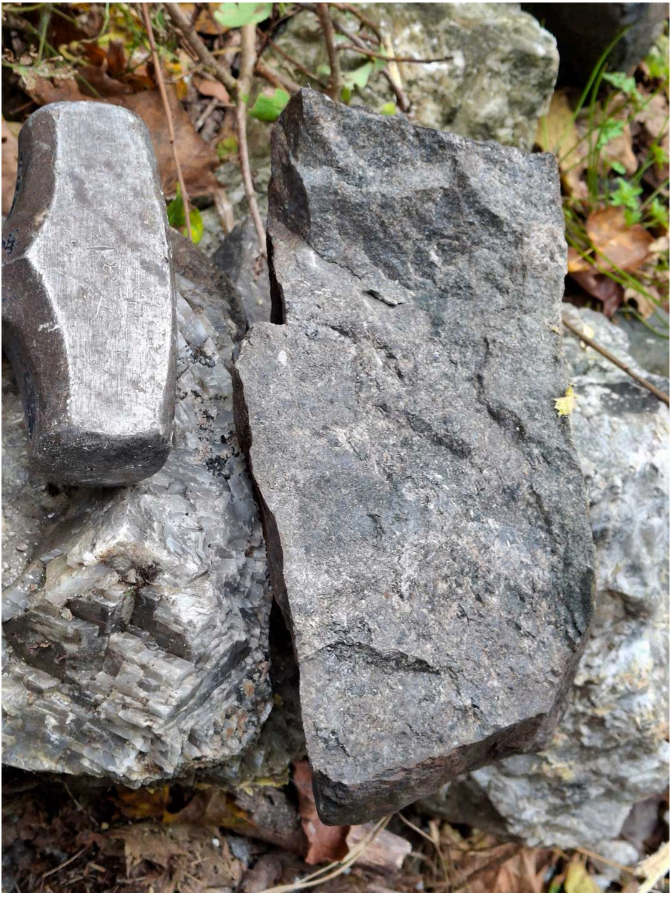
Sphalerite was found in abundance, occurring as individual grains and larger granular masses, producing attractive fluorescent specimens that some have referred to as “starry night” or “galaxy” sphalerite. An apatite group mineral (exact species not determined) is also common in the same rock as the sphalerite, and it fluoresced an attractive melon orange, best seen under midwave UV light. The author found an attractive piece rich in crystalline, highly fluorescent apatite, sphalerite, and chlorophane, best viewed under midwave.

An interesting find from this assemblage was that of grains of a metallic mineral, likely arsenopyrite or lollingite. When splitting the rock in which these grains were found, collectors mentioned a strong sulfur smell, which has been documented from these species. Also found occasionally in this assemblage are grains of fluorescent scheelite-powellite that fluoresce cream-to-white under SW and yellow-white under MW. Other notable finds by the author was a piece of quartz that fluoresce pale cream under SW, and crystalline hardystonite in a calcite matrix.

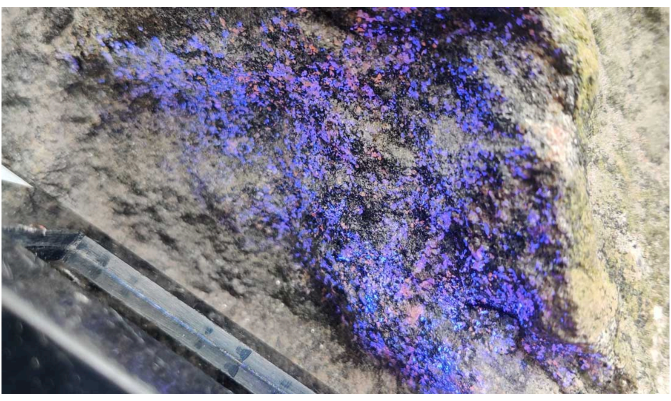
Other notable finds were small but well formed pyrite crystals in non-fluorescent calcite in the Buckwheat dolomite, sphalerite and stilpnomelane in the dolomite, and blue crystalline apatite in calcite. Overall, the Taylor Road dig was quite successful and many good specimens were found by all.

Taylor Road Photos

October 2026



Tactite, assumed massive gahnite with spots of sphalerite and loellingite.
Taylor Road Dump, 2026. Photograph by David Vonderheide.



Sphalerite lit with UV in daylight. Taylor Road, 2026.
Photograph by Noah Horwitz.

Sterling Mine Tour by Dr. Earl Verbeek

Trip report by Cristian van Rossen

Following the dig at Taylor Road, FOMS members attending the monthly meeting were treated with a fantastic tour of the Sterling Mine and its geology, led by geologist Dr. Earl Verbeek. The tour focused on the many faults and origin of the various cave formations which occur throughout the mine. Dr. Verbeek discussed how rainwater, rich in carbonic, fulvic, and humic acid that permeates through the carbonate marble results in the dissolving, or etching of the calcite. This calcite is then transported through the slightly porous marble and along fault surfaces, allowing for the deposition of this dissolved calcium carbonate as various cave formations.

Dr. Verbeek noted that a common misconception with the cave formations present in the mine is that they are largely the calcium carbonate aragonite. However, through much analysis by Dr. Verbeek, the vast majority of later stage carbonate material is calcite. Dr. Verbeek also pointed out how faults act as a conduit for fluid transport, referencing faults as “nature’s plumbing.” Many examples of faulting and cave formations were shown throughout the tour with two notable occurrences being the mine’s largest flowstone deposit, found just before the hoist in the shaft station, as well as a mylonitic fault which is found midway between the long passage connecting the rainbow room to the adit.

The latter fault showcased a fantastic example of mylonite, a highly metamorphosed, fine–grained layer of marble rich in graphite. This fault preceded many of the younger, brittle faults, and formed during peak metamorphic conditions. At such pressures and temperatures, the rock behaves as a very stiff fluid, and when moving in a shear zone, will not fracture like that seen in the younger, brittle faults.

Two other points of note brought up by Dr. Verbeek were related to fluorescence in specific minerals. The first was about activators within calcite. The common response as to why calcite fluoresces the bright red-orange seen within the mine is the presence of a small amount of Mn^{2+} substituting for Ca^{2+} in the crystal lattice of the calcite. This is partially true, but as Dr. Verbeek mentioned, Mn^{2+} is not the only cause, as pure Mn^{2+} replacement only results in moderate fluorescence. Bright calcite fluorescence within the orebody typically involves some replacement of Ca^{2+} with both Mn^{2+} and Pb^{2+}. The Pb^{2+} ion in this role is a co-activator or sensitizer that allows the calcite to absorb UV energy much more effectively and results in bright fluorescence.

The final stop of the tour was to observe some truly spectacular crystals of tephroite with exsolved willemite. These crystals are found in the lower stope, adjacent to a flooded section of the mine often referred to as the “underground lake.” Dr. Verbeek spoke of how these crystals were at one point at higher pressure and temperature, homogenous in chemical composition. Eventually the homogenous mineral began to separate into two separate, chemically different zones. The Mn–rich areas became the manganese silicate tephroite, while small Zn-rich zones became the zinc silicate willemite. This results in the spectacular exsolution pattern seen in these crystals and many other samples from the zinc ore deposits.

Those who stayed for the tour were incredibly appreciative of Dr. Verbeek and the remarkable tour he gave. I can speak for all who attended that we are thankful for the opportunity and for the knowledge and time that Dr. Verbeek gave us. Everyone on the tour came away with new insight into the complex geology of the Sterling Mine.

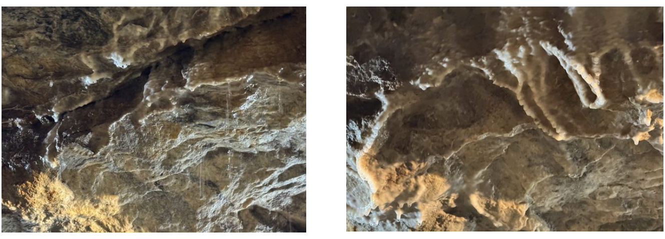
Sterling Mine Photos

October 2026

Mark Boyer lights up the Sterling Mine wall. Sterling Mine, 2026.

Photograph by David Vonderheide.

Earl Verbeek explains flowstone and faults. Sterling Mine, 2026.
Photographs by Dave Kaminski.



Fault dripping with water and "dragon's teeth" stalactites on ceiling.
Sterling Mine, 2026. Photographs by Dave Kaminski.

Water-hollowed fault (calcite dissolved) and small pool of water as the result of a dripping ceiling, creating "mine pearls" and separating out non-dissolving minerals.
Photographs by Dave Kaminski.

Braen Limecrest Quarry

Trip report by Cristian van Rossen

Despite being on a chilly, late October morning, the Limecrest Quarry trip saw near record attendance, with around 40 FOMS members attending. A visit to Limecrest is always a privilege, and FOMS is indebted to the wonderful staff at Braen for allowing our club to visit so regularly. Before collecting could begin, FOMS had to undergo mandatory site specific training.

After completing our site specific training, the caravan of FOMS members were led down to the collecting area at the lowest level of the quarry. Much interesting material was present at this site. The star finds of the visit were those of a salmon-calcite vein that was graciously moved over to our collecting area. Large boulders of the material were slowly broken down by a group of sledgehammer-wielding FOMS members and pieces were distributed amongst members.

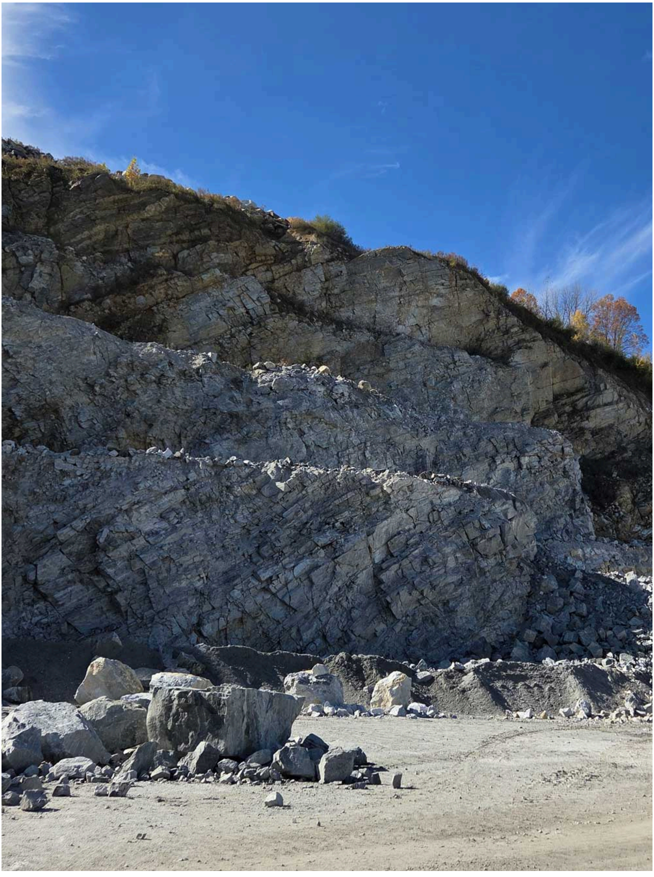
Other boulders brought over included that of a hematite-stained calcite vein which was found to have LW fluorescent grains of sphalerite, as well as a boulder with a pinkish mineral thought to be scapolite, although further analysis is needed.

Much of the typical Franklin Marble minerals were also found in abundance. The author noted much norbergite/chondrodite (unfortunately not very fluorescent), tremolite, graphite, and fluorophlogopite. Large amounts of iron sulfides were observed as well, with some occurring as large masses or grains with a slight iridescence/tarnish. The author did manage to find two samples that had pink spinel in them, but unfortunately the spinel did not occur as the sharpest crystals, and were rather small.

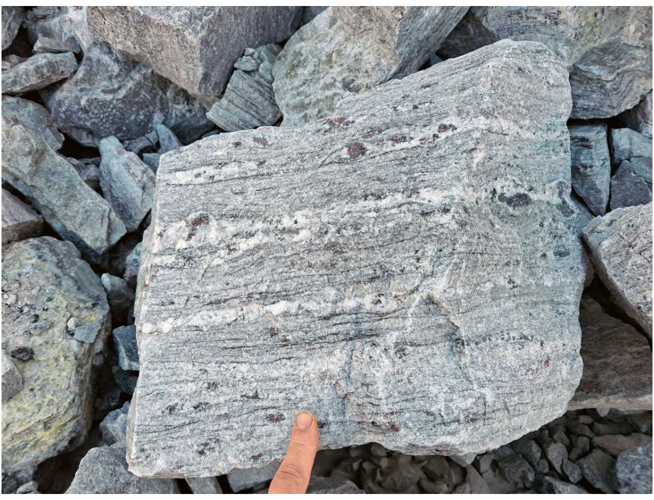
A more unusual find by the author was that of fluoborite, which occurred in a single specimen as a band of translucent, pale grains which fluoresced a cream-white under SW UV light. Other notable finds included large garnet crystals within boulders of granitic gneiss, some nice graphite slickenside surfaces, and feldspars that exhibited moderately strong fluorescence. Like always, the Limecrest Quarry did not disappoint, and everyone went home with many great pieces.

Braen Limecrest Quarry Photos

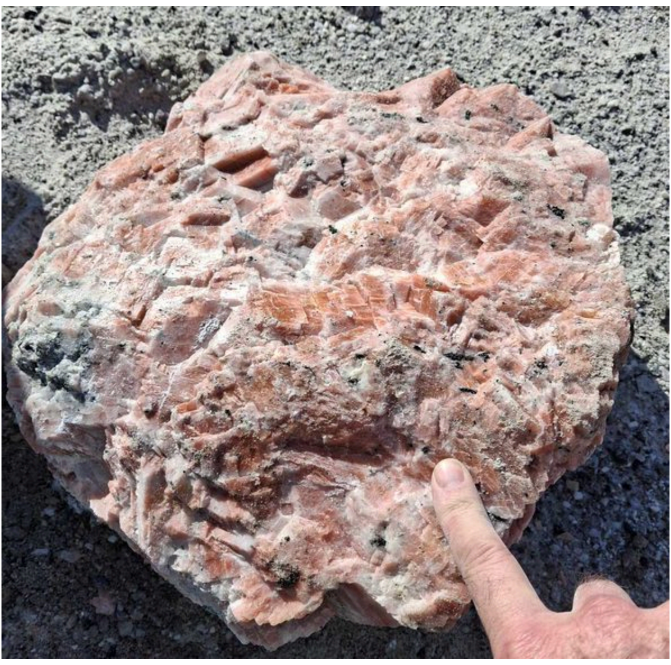
Braen Limecrest Quarry, 2026. Photograph by Luann Reed-Siegel.



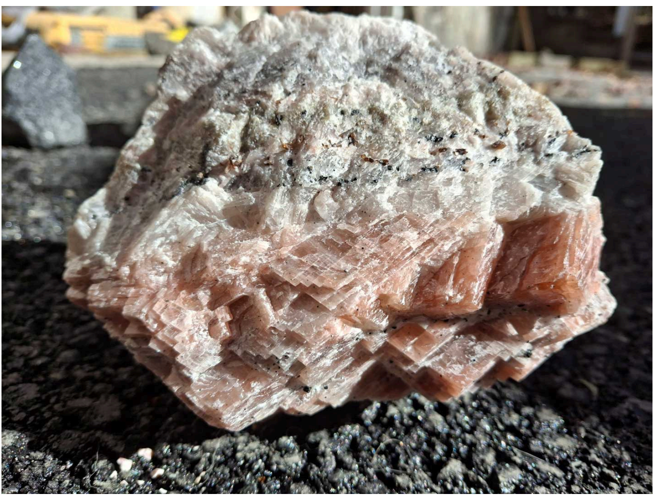
Braen Limecrest Quarry, 2026. Photograph by Luann Reed-Siegel.



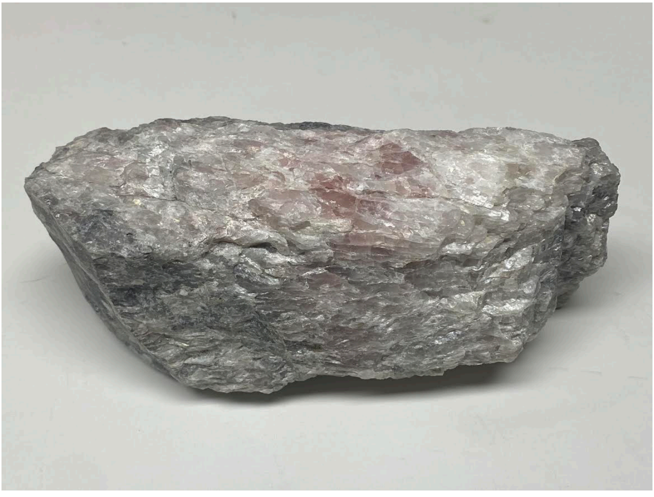
Calc-silicate gneiss, made up of quartz and feldspar layers with knots of reddish-colored garnet (grossular/andradite composition).
Limecrest Quarry, 2026. Photograph by David Vonderheide.



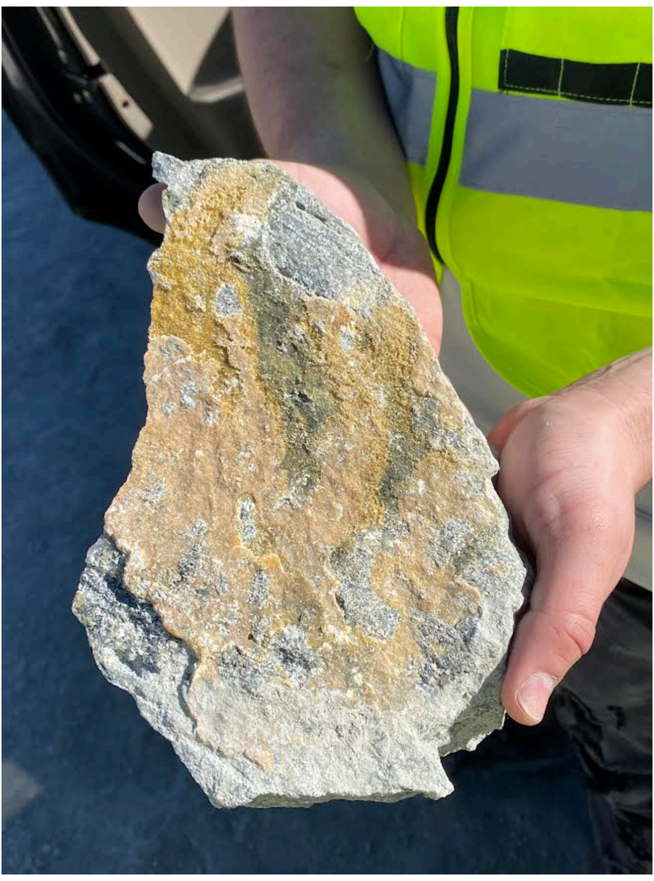
Salmon calcite with norbergite and phlogopite.
Limecrest Quarry, 2026. Photograph by Dave Vonderheide.



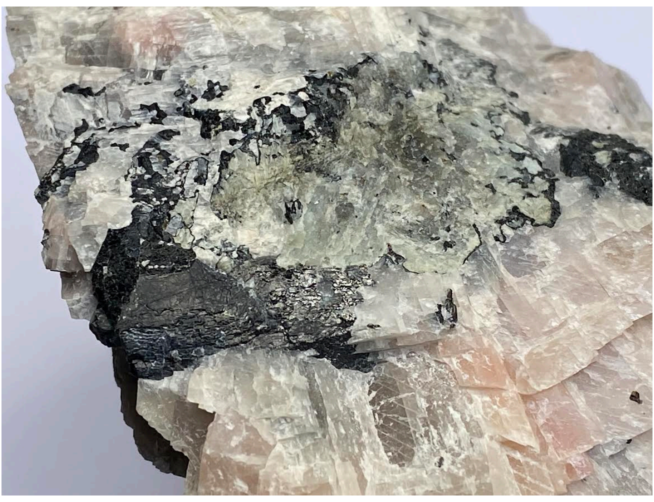
Salmon calcite in White Franklin marble
with norbergite and phlogopite.
Limecrest Quarry, 2026. Photograph by David Vonderheide.



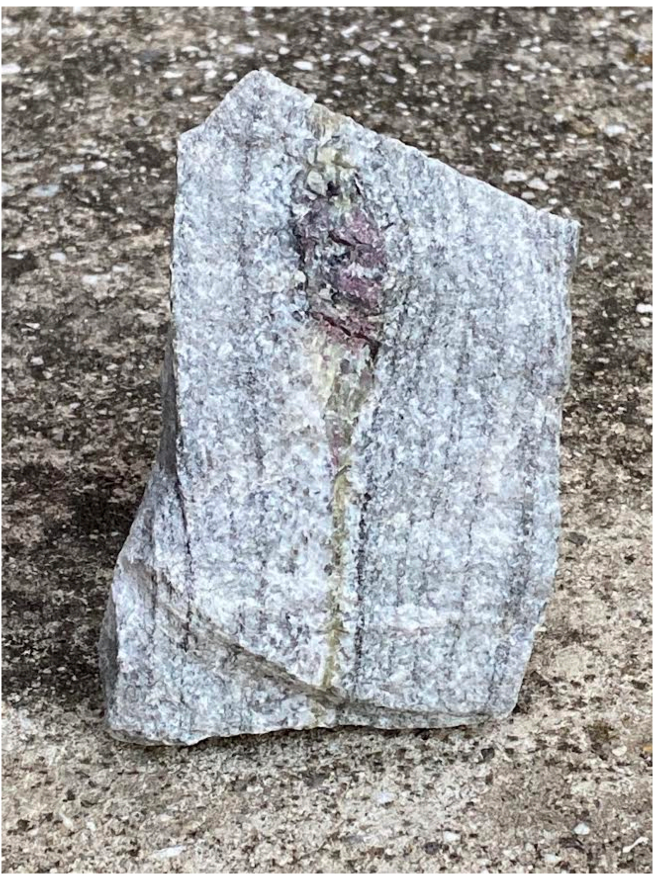
Rose quartz collected by Jillian Plotkin.
Limecrest Quarry, 2026. Photograph by Bradley Plotkin



Orange micro stilbite crystals on a gneiss joint surface
collected by Noah Garwood.
Limecrest Quarry, 2026. Photograph by Bradley Plotkin.



Black tourmaline in pink calcite. Limecrest Quarry, 2026. Photograph by Bradley Plotkin.



Radial garnet formation in granitic matrix. Limecrest Quarry, 2026. Photograph by Bradley Plotkin.

Radial garnet formation in granitic matrix. Limecrest Quarry, 2026. Photograph by Bradley Plotkin.

Franklinite.org

A New Website on Franklin and Sterling

By Dave Kaminski

I have been gathering the history of Franklin and Sterling Hill into a website of my own, franklinite.org. It is a personal project, not a FOMS site, and it does not speak for the Society. I hope it will be useful to members all the same. Please give it a look.

A few things I have tried to do on every page:
- Go back to the original. Quotations are read from the page itself, and each one links to a free scan of that page wherever one exists.
- Send readers to *The Picking Table*. Each history links the PT articles it uses, straight to the page, and ends with a short guide to what the journal has on the subject. I have tried not to repeat what the PT already does well, and to dig in a few new places.
- Give both sides. Where two sources disagree, and old sources often do, the page gives both and names them.
- Say how it was made. The pages were written with the immense help of Claude, an AI model made by Anthropic, from the sources listed on each page. Every quotation was read from the original page, linked to it, and checked. Claude shows as the author of many pages and says so at the bottom. I worked with Claude to propose or choose subjects, and I directed the AI research and parts of the drafting and final copies. This is a synthetic website. With two centuries of writing on these mines, and tens of thousands of pages to read and check just to make a start, I would not have done this myself. I am certain that local folks and scholars will find many wrong details.

It is a work in progress, and I would be glad of corrections, additions and leads. Please use the contact form on the site or talk to me any time. People interested in helping build the site are welcome.

Society Contacts & Websites

Information: info@foms-nj.us

Events, Digs & Sales
Local Only

FRANKLIN-OGDENSBURG MINERALOGICAL SOCIETY (FOMS) DIGS ONLY
November 21, Andover Mine Dig, members only
Meeting 1:30–3:00 p.m., at FMM, members vote for trustee; public invited

FRANKLIN MINERAL MUSEUM (FMM) NIGHT DIGS ONLY 2026
November 7, Night dig on Buckwheat Dump at FMM, 6:30–10:30 p.m.

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