

Calcite at Rucks Pit, Florida – Ken Ceglady, March, 2009



Thumbnail calcite crystal clusters

In South and Central Florida, it is not uncommon to find fossil shells and golden calcite crystal fragments on dirt roads and parking lots. The gravel used for these applications may come from Rucks Pit, located south of Yeehaw Junction in Ft. Drum, Okeechobee County.

Rucks Pit was for many years used only for roadway gravel. In recent years, Dr. Edward Petuch has discovered many new species of extinct mollusks in some strata. Other levels produce large quantities of crystallized calcite. Collecting at the site is allowed for a fee.

In October 2006, the Ceglady family organized a trip to the pit. My late father Ken Sr. had always collected calcite fragments from local roads, and he wanted to go to the source. When we arrived, the pit itself was not accessible due to high water. The dump site was open – basically a staging area where the material is stored before being trucked off for fill use.

The most sought-after (and commercially available) specimens are whole fossil clams in which the cavity is partially filled with undamaged dogtooth calcite. The clams (*Mercenaria* sp.) are up to six inches long, and the crystals can be up to four inches.

Whole clams and large crystals are rare, but smaller crystals can be found in partial shells and on shell fragments. Smaller species of clam and whelks are also found replaced by or filled with calcite.



Scanning the ground at the dump site



Small fossil clam filled by calcite crystals

Nearly all of the calcite at the pit is bright golden yellow in color, and can be perfectly flawless. Crystals are often intergrown and distorted by the curved confines of the shells in which they often form. Crystals also form directly on dark grey siltaceous limestone conglomerate.



Miniature with freestanding calcite crystals

Much less common at the pit is marcasite. It occurs as tiny iridescent crystals forming a secondary crust over the limestone, shells, and calcite.



Marcasite crust on fossil shells

We found quality cabinet and large cabinet specimens to be scarce, but brought home miniatures and thumbnails by the bucket. Thanks for the great trip, Dad. We'll miss you at the next one!



Ken Ceglady Sr. and son Mike Ceglady

For information on visiting the pit, call Eddie Rucks at 1-863-634-4579.