

## Gilsum Mineral Show – 2014 – Tom Mortimer

The weather for the 2014 Gilsum Rock and Mineral Show was the best in recent memory; blue sky in the am and a few puffy clouds in the pm. The great weather brought out the crowds, so many, in fact, that the hosts had to provide a shuttle bus service to off-site parking, (I believe the first time that this has happened). It was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event. Commemorative “T” shirts and pins were available at the hospitality table. All booth sites along both sides of the ball field were occupied. A New Hampshire Chronicle TV video crew was on hand interviewing vendors and visitors.



The Gilsum “Rock Swap” legacy of the show has unfortunately succumbed to reality. Fifteen to twenty years ago, one side of the ball-field was designated for swappers and one side was for dealers. As the swapper group declined, the vendor booths began to march down the swapper side. This year only two or three swapper entrants remained. A number of prior swappers have switched over to dealer status. The swappers have now fallen below the critical mass to maintain a viable show activity. The sponsoring Gilsum Recreation Committee has recognized this, as the show flyer and commemorative pin now bill the event as the “Gilsum Rock & Mineral Show.” For old timers (as I am getting to be!), it will always be “The Gilsum Rock Swap.”

The most disturbing change for me has been the great reduction in the availability of local mineral specimens, and more specifically in the local species diversity. A couple of decades ago, field collectors from throughout New England

converged on the Gilsum ball-field with flats of specimens that were desirable to most collectors. Many of these specimens would benefit from a good cleaning and trimming, but the quality and diversity was there. Browsing the swapper and dealer booths back then revealed localities that were good places to visit. This year the majority of New England specimens offered for sale appeared to be the poor residue from old recycled collections. I paid particular attention to New Hampshire specimens, my collection focus. I counted only twelve to perhaps fifteen different NH mineral species amongst ALL dealers! As a comparison, I bought a beer-flat of NH specimens for "piggy-back" sale on Bob York's table. My flat had 22 distinct NH species. I was successful in selling just a few. The crowd may be large at Gilsum, but I suspect the majority of visitors are not seeking uncommon local minerals. The dealers recognize this and I cannot fault them. They display what sells. They have to cover their costs. Lapidary, beads and jewelry account for about a third of the dealers. The Gilsum show is still a great time. Many old friends still faithfully attend every year. I plan to return in 2015.

It is now the social aspects of the Gilsum show that I enjoy most, seeing old friends and swapping stories. In that vein, Bob York had brought along a number of fine topaz crystals collected from behind his home in Hales Location, NH. There were several, water clear, honest TN-sized crystals. Bob had brought these to loan to Don Dallaire to photograph for an upcoming article. Bob also brought a most amazing dinner plate sized microcline specimen from the Redstone Quarry in Conway, NH. This was collected decades ago, I think Bob said in the 1960's. I snapped a photo of this one.

