

## SEPIOLITE



Sepiolite occurs as asbestiform fibers and masses of matted microcrystals in a variety of geological environments. The massive, white, nodular variety “meerschaum” has been used to make pipes and other carved objects for centuries. It is often confused with the chemically similar mineral, palygorskite. Northern Peninsula.



*Felted masses of gray-white sepiolite with octahedral pyrite crystals from the Bengal (Cannon) mine, Iron County; 4 × 5 cm area. A. E. Seaman Mineral Museum specimen DM 25379, George Robinson photograph.*

**Baraga County:** Ohio mines, near Michigamme: Several fibrous, white, asbestos-like aggregates in iron formation labeled as “palygorskite” from the Ohio mines have been shown to be sepiolite by X-ray diffraction and energy dispersion X-ray spectrometry. It is highly suspected that other such specimens from this locality labeled “palygorskite” are probably also sepiolite.

**Dickinson County:** Metropolitan mine, Felch: often mislabeled as “palygorskite,” the white, fibrous, asbestiform mineral associated with calcite and dolomite in limonitic carbonate matrix from Metropolitan mine has been shown by X-ray diffraction and energy dispersion X-ray spectrometry to be sepiolite.

Specimens are paragenetically similar to those from the Ohio mines, Baraga County (q.v.).

**Iron County:** Bengal (Cannon) mine, Stambaugh: As felted white masses coating octahedral pyrite crystals on hematite-stained barite. Verified by X-ray diffraction.

**Marquette County:** Empire mine, Negaunee: As small asbestiform aggregates on amethystine quartz. Verified by X-ray diffraction and energy dispersion X-ray spectrometry (D. Fountain, personal communication, 2010).

**UPDATE FROM: Robinson, G.W., and Carlson, S.M., 2013, Mineralogy of Michigan Update: published online by A.E. Seaman Mineral Museum, Houghton, MI, 46p.**