

THE METEORITE - PAGE 2

The second Meteorite was found on the A.A. Pingrey farm, four days following its descent. Weighing 151 pounds, it was buried four and one half feet on a dry knoll two miles west of the first find. Pingrey, unaware of its value, gave the stone to a neighbor, John Horner, an act which he later regretted. Horner hid his treasured gift in a cave on the land one Ab Ridley where, by the glimmer of a lantern, occurred the transaction by which the University of Minnesota became the owner of the piece.

The third large portion, 92½ pounds, was found by the Pietz brothers, trappers, in February 1880. It had dropped into a dry slough four miles southwest of the first find, and had penetrated five feet. Birge ultimately purchased this piece.

That spring, following the prairie fires, "gathering meteors" became a diversion of picnic parties and Sunday expeditions participated in by hundreds of men, women and children. Some 5,000 of the sparkling bits were found, ranging from trifles the size of a pea, to lumps weighing a pound. Many finger rings were made from the larger pieces; today some are unpurchasable keepsakes of local citizens.

Three great meteoric showers have occurred within the State of Iowa. One fall was at Homestead, in Iowa County, in February 1875, the meteor weighing 460 pounds. In 1890, occurred another shower at Forest City, Winnebago County, when masses weighing between 200 and 300 pounds fell. With a total weight of 744 pounds, the Estherville meteor is the largest and, from a scientific standpoint, the most important.

A specimen of the Estherville meteor is on display in the Estherville public library through the courtesy of the University of Minnesota. The University retained the rest of its specimen. The Musee National d'Histoire Naturelle of Paris and the Naturhistorisches Museum of Vienna, each contain portions of the meteorite originally sold to the British Museum of Natural History, London. Pieces are found in the Field Museum in Chicago, the U.S. National Museum in Washington, the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, and in the Peabody Museums at Yale, Harvard and Amherst.