

1982. June 18

Mr. H. H. Nininger,
Denver, Colorado.

Dear Harvey:

The Sep 17, 1945 Atoka, OK fall of meteorites came to my attention quickly thru newspaper reports. As I now recall we had no observations from here, but I drove up there immediately with Mr. Blakeney Sanders of our local group. .

The fall was detonating and one man saw a piece hit in a wet drainage spot about 10 or 15 feet from him, but feared to dig it out, thinking it might be a bomb.. The town was full of witnesses and they, including the local peace officers, had the general good sense to reassure him it was not a bomb.

Nevertheless, they got a life term prisoner from the nearby penitentiary (Syningtown?) to come down the next morning and gave him a long handled shovel with which to dig out the unknown object. He did, and the stone was taken to town and broken in two on the railroad track, after which it passed into the possession of a local school teacher from whom I later got it, in approximate halves.

The main thing I want to mention here is that the witness who saw it hit did not report any rain or the missiles or fragments or small objects around him.

I was told, however, of another piece which had been picked up in a bean patch not far from the first find. There I obtained a beautifully complete and entirely fresh small stone which had made a craterlet in the sand, which I photographed with my hat beside it. At this place I inquired about the circumstances of the fall and here is the intriguing part.

The man and his wife were at their house, a short distance from the garden including the dried up bean patch. I think he was outside running a Maytag Washing Machine at the time of the fall. I believe he heard the detonations over the noise of the washer. The wife was inside and apparently did not hear the detonations, but called out to him asking him if it was raining.

He thought she was referring to the detonations, having mistaken them for thunder, but she said no, she thought she had the noise of raindrops hitting on the roof.

Mr. Sanders and I doffed our shoes and climbed up on the roof to examine it carefully in hopes of finding small stones. It was a shingle roof and we looked especially in the open slots between shingles but a very thorough search revealed nothing.

There were no gutters on the house. We descended and searched all around under the drip line below the edges of the eaves. We found nothing and then tried an Alnico magnet all around the house in the suspected area.

Unluckily the old screens had been recently taken off and there was an amazing amount of rusty wire fragments and nails, etc., retrieved by the magnet, but no sign of any meteorites. We then looked carefully in some open containers sitting on a nearby outdoor table but again could not find any meteorites.

After coaching the man and his wife about what we were after and urging them to write us about anything else they found, we started back home. About twenty miles out of town I turned to Sanders and told him I knew where the little meteorites were: in the gizzards of the chickens we had routed out from under the house and mingled all over the yard!

You know how chickens will run after small things thrown out for them in a yard! I felt they had run out and picked up the meteorites, but it was too wild an hypothesis to justify a return trip and an overnight stay, besides disemboweling a chicken or two!

So there you have my best experience even though it is quite negative. A third stone was also found and although I had talked to the man who later found it, he lost my circular and address and Stuart Perry sneaked in on me and got it, which he finally gave to the U. S. National Museum. The fall is listed in the Hey catalog but I am not sure the details of the stones are correct.

The two carbonaceous chondrites we worked on did not yield any stories of little pieces or a rain of pellets. The first Crewcent was found in an open field. Some months later our Mr. Stelling, now deceased, personally picked up a fragment of complete little stone in a yard a mile away from the first find! It had apparently fallen within perhaps 10 feet of the man living there, who was out in the yard that night, but he heard nothing and had called us up there to see a suspected meteorite that was thought to be a piece of galena, etc., from the Tarrant State Mineral District.

The first Bells, Texas, carbonaceous chondrite hit composition roof and a boy reading a magazine in the house heard the thump and found the meteorite the next morning, where it had fallen off the roof, but mentioned not pitter patter of any small pieces. While we finally retrieved a total of five pieces we always felt they were before the subfinal point and that they might be more across the state line into Oklahoma. A kurtke quarry yielded nothing, however.

At Bells I flet about like I think you did at Pasamonte: there were more meteorites ahead but the circumstances make it seem impractical to recover them.

Another experience that miht interest you was an Oklahoma fireg ball search that ended quite unsuccessfully . The path was wevt to east and I set sail from hwre with a DR. SEhested and his two sons who were enxiuous to see out a fireball survey was made,we were gunningg fro the sub-final point and finalled thoughtat we got to it at a farm whose location I am not able to redceall without looking up my file (and then I can;t read it!)? Right after we drowve up to the place and began our inquiries and lecutrings, Nr. H. P. Stockwell drove up in hiis car! He had worked on the fireball from his of the fence up in Hitchinson, Kansas, and had come to the same place for the sub-final point!

W^h never found anything, tho all the facts looked good. What has bothered me most every since was an observation some miles back to the west almost under the projected ground path.

Here a farmer was under sa shed open to the south; he a biet north of the fire all path and did not see it or much of it. B₁t he did reporte a showere of parti les like pop corn, and that is where all the meteorite went!--and whwhere we should have hunted an canvassed!

I had another recent experence with an Oh@jlahome fireball that was similar. The path was south to noath and even the smart boys at H_Uston sent a team up. I think they estalished a point too far north but we alos had indications of a subfinal point o er a ranch just north of the mountains. I am sure that at least one piece carried on to theis areal one negro sitting on a po ch with his back to the approading fireg ll neverless saw the final piece go y him in the east!

B₁r bafk along the path there had been an area where dpakrs had been observed in a sort of shower, and that is whre I think we should concentrated and where little fragments might be. BUT we encounteed no reports oa little fragments hitting roogs or possible pellets.

I do think we sholud consider ince in this connection. Maybe a met critse is ice-coated when it comes in! Or would it be possible for the little pieder that shed off the from an icy coating as they descend?

This letter is writt4n hurriedly and rancomly, but feel free to use any of it or make further inauires for details. I have no ambitions to do any writing for puclication. So it's is a;l up to you!

Sincerely,