

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
UNITED STATES NATIONAL MUSEUM
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

April 18, 1955

Mr. Oscar E. Monnig
1010 Morningside Drive
Fort Worth 4, Texas

Dear Oscar:

In reply to your letter of March 29 about the Boaz, Alabama iron, the Head Curator has agreed to approve your request that this iron be cut and you be given the opportunity to pay and not to trade for the services. However, we do not want to become commercial cutters so please do not broadcast this special arrangement.

When people pay the U. S. National Museum the money goes into the Federal Treasury and it does the Museum no good. Actually we lose because the material used to cut a meteorite is purchased from funds appropriated to the Museum while the money received is deposited in the General Treasury funds and none of it is credited to us.

An arrangement will be worked out whereby our cutter will do this on his own time and you will pay him. We will keep a record of the cutting time and estimate the value of the abrasives used. From the money he receives he will purchase and replace the material used. You will pay \$2.25 per hour for his time. This is the rate we use to calculate the value of a slice of iron we cut for exchange purposes.

The prints you had made by John Farrell are very good ones, better than the average we receive from commercial firms. So let me congratulate you on that and the finding of a new meteorite. However, there are many cracks in this specimen, so there may be some difficulty in preserving the slices that come from the ends.

After looking at these prints I suggest that we cut the specimen in half and then take the slices you need by removing one from the cut face on one half and then going to the other for the next cut. This will give you two end pieces which possibly will present problems but the slices removed should be better than a series of cuts taken from one half of the specimen.

Oscar E. Monnig

Formerly iron meteorites were often sliced rather thick, but now we like to make the cuts just thick enough to hold together. So if the sample is fairly free from cracks in the center, the slices will be about $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick. We will try and cut the specimen so as to avoid as many cracks as we can.

This iron resembles a sphere and I suppose it was shaped this way by weathering because spherical masses of meteoritic iron are not very common. Although I have no criteria to estimate what type this one is I have been trying to guess, basing my thinking on the weathered surface. Could this one be a hexahedrite? Hope it is not a weathered Civil War cannon ball.

The McAlaster iron was listed in Nininger's "Stone Pelted Planet" but when he prepared his catalog in 1950 he omitted this name. Apparently he no longer calls the iron by that name. I do not know what meteorite he now believes it is a part of but on my cards it is marked as a doubtful iron.

Thanks for the news about the newly found Richmond, Navarro Co. Texas iron, we had no record of it. If it weighs 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ pounds there is enough material to be sliced and distributed. I suggest that you get after them and make a deal for the cutting. Perhaps we can recommend a good man to cut it.

Sorry to hear about the tax load you have. I join with you in hoping that some of that money will trickle down to this office. Please do not get the idea that there are many tax dollars spent to purchase meteorites for us. Those we added to the collection came from private funds. How about buying us an "oil well in Texas" and arranging that we use the income for study of meteorites or for the building up of a collection of them?

Have been thinking about going west this fall to the Meteoritical Society meetings because so many of those members never come east. Besides I would like to see some of the collections out there. Hope you will be there.

Thanks for the information and hope our cutting deal is satisfactory.

With kindest regards, I remain

Cordially yours,

Ed.

E. P. Henderson
Associate Curator
Division of Mineralogy and
Petrology

EPH:es