

1955, May 9

Dear Mr. Pickney:

Thought you might be interested in how I came out on the Pacific Museum lead (the fellow at Shelly Beach, Calif.) I assumed from your remarks that you had had some not too favorable experiences with him.

I wrote him for details on his "meteorite section, Allegheny Fall, 1" x 4" x 7", rough surface, \$25.00". I pointed out there was no such recorded fall, and asked if he referred to the "Allagan, Michigan". I am familiar with that stone and have some small samples; it is a very crumbly light gray rock material. It has a thick black crust, but the interior is fine and grainy and almost falls apart when you handle it.

He replied that the "Allagan (sic) item was in father's collection and he'd had it for many years. It is quite rough as if it had been in the ground many years." He said he had no further information, but did not answer my question as to whether he would send it on approval.

In his first answer to me he also mentioned an Australian stoney meteorite, but when I asked for details on it, he only said "We have decided to keep the stoney meteorite". Funny guy; signs "H. Brown".

Now, as to the Boaz iron; you deserve an answer to your letter of March 30th enclosing Mrs. Chitwood's of March 14. I have had a little difficulty with Henderson as he didn't want to accept money for the cutting work, but wanted a piece for the work; I wanted to swap him a piece for some other piece of an iron meteorite. He finally worked out a complicated deal, which I may or may not take advantage of; I shall see.

In the meantime, I had some good photographs made of the iron and sent him a set; he was worried by the somewhat spherical appearance and the funny almost porous oxidation on one side, and kiddingly asked me whether I maybe had bought an old Civil War cannon ball. I have accordingly ground a little flat spot on one corner just to remove all doubt, and it is clearly an octahedrite, with lines of moderate width; I would call it "medium" but the experts may call it "wide". You can often see these lines just by grinding, without any polishing or etching. The nickel "taenite" bordering the "kamacite" bands shows up differently on the ground section, and near the surface the taenite is sometimes oxidized to a black or brown, clearly separating the bands.

Henderson also had some hopes it might be an ataxite, which he has particularly worked on chemically; the thing that gave him that hope was the very shapelessness of the object, indicating no particular cleavage along crystalline planes; but unhappily for him, it is not. I am still intrigued by the peculiar crust on one side, which may indicate some odd inclusions of silicates, or maybe even that the iron is pallasitic in this section.

In handling and studying it I find more and more indications of a definite "ground line", indicating that the object was about half buried for a long period and oxidized much more in the portion below ground. This is quite at variance with the tale of its being a fresh fall, unless it was thereafter neglected for a considerable time and allowed to lay in the mud of the farmyard. In general, however, the more I look at this object the older it looks to me, and I don't think it could have arrived when they said it did. It has more tendency to superficial cracks than I first thought (a tendency for the oxide to shell off, which is very common with older, unprotected irons), but has not shown any signs of exuding lawrencite—that corrosive greenish-brown liquid which sometimes appears in bubbles and eats the meteorite away.

What do you think of my idea to come over and see Mrs. Chitwood and try to trace and check school records? I started to come the last of April—I had a chance for a free trip to Atlanta to inspect the P-2 Mills at Cartersville, Ga. However, two of my main men were in New York and other circumstances made me decide against it. I could still fly over that way, either to Atlanta or Birmingham, but might have to ask you to spend a day with me, and don't know if you could. Would the school records be at Boaz or some other point?

Yours sincerely,