

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
UNITED STATES NATIONAL MUSEUM
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20560

April 17 1971

Mr. Oscar E. Monnig
29 Chelsea Drive
Fort Worth, Texas 76134

Dear Oscar:

Your letter of February 24th gave me many serious moments and after making a search to see what we had and racking my brain to recall the events related to the Tishomingo meteorite I started a letter. Was about ready to have it typed when I realized it was drafted in hast, so I should follow the old proverb "count 10 before doing anything." Apparently I am a slow counter or I counted to a high order of 10.

Your former leter was never forgotten and daily I wanted some bright idea to come to me but as you know "bright ideas " do not come to me very often.

Now to the Tishomingo problems that you introduced in the last letter. I am glad to hear that the finder of that iron appreciates that he turned up a wonderful specimen.

A lot of us have done work on that meteorite and think we have produced considerable information from that small specimen. Actually this little specimen we have is a type sample of that kind of meteorite, thus it is more important than just another specimen in the collection.

Since this Museum has more visitors who come here to seriously look at meteorite than anyother museum in the world , if there is a place where the Tishomingo specimen belongs it is this Institution. I am sure you agree with me this far.

Since you have some sizable specimens of this iron, samples that weigh as many pounds as our sample weighs in grams, may I suggest you loan him one of your large individuals?

It will not only make for them a more satisfactory display but it will lessen their security risk. Sizable masses such as you have are not easily carried off nor are then easily dammaged. To display a sample, that has been polished requires special equipment, perhaps equipment that they do not have. Also one can not touch the polished surface with the fingers, and I know they will not be able to avoid having the polished surface fingered and perhaps scared. To refinish a polished surface takes time, also there is some loss of material, and this is a useless loss of material.

This man knows you there is a darn good chance that he will follow your wishes and if you provide him with one of your large specimens you know your chances of getting it back. I will give you good odds that they would not be pleased with getting a small sample such as we have also even if they tried to follow instructions about how to take care of it someone would do some harm to it.

Our experience with loaning meteorites is not always a happy one. Not long ago we were asked to send to a local Library a stone which fell in their town. We did and told them they must protect it as a security risk and also to send it homw properly packed. When the time came to return the meteorite, they got a box, filled it with this synthetic packing material, placed the meteorite in the box and closed it. Since the meteorite was free to move and was much heavier than the packing material, every time that box was upset the meteorite went through the packing to the bottom.

When we opened the box there was a lot of crushed packing material and a lot of atomized dust of the packing material worked into the surface of the stone. So, today the appearance of that meteorite is unique. Little good was accomplished that could not have been done my pictures and a sample has been somewhat spoiled.

We did get a letter from them telling how sorry they were, but that done not replace the loss.

So I feel you will be safe to loan him one of the large specimens and he will have a better display.

We just added a new fall last week. This one fell in Conn. its a small stone. We got it rather quickly and now it is in another laboratory having its short life products counted. They hope there is another one but I only know of one stone which hit a house.

Dont think we will be going to Tubingen this summer. Ifs a beautiful place to visit and I am sure you will enjoy the trip but we have been there. It seems that this season we are ging west.

Have a little bit of moon dust to play with and hope to find some metal in it. Just got that sample.

Kindest personal regards and hope everyboty is well

cordially yours

Ea

E.P.Henderson
Curator Emeritus