

TISHOMINGO MS

One winter day in southeastern Oklahoma, a young 14 year old boy named Glenn Orr was out quail hunting on a neighbor's farm, when he literally stumbled over a piece of what appeared to be metal sticking out of the ground. That day, January 14, 1965, turns out to be the day of discovery of the buried Tishomingo meteorite. At the time, Glenn noted the location of the strange metal piece but continued hunting. A few days later, he came back to investigate wondering what could have been buried there. As he started to dig around the protruding metal, the shape was unlike any type of machinery common to the local farmland. As digging continued in the sandy soil overlying the granite bedrock of the area, it soon became obvious that this rounded mass was not some manufactured piece of equipment. Glenn then managed to dig out two large masses that turned out to weigh 360 lbs (163kg) and 214lbs (97kg).

Although there was great doubt, some early guesses were that this mass might be an old meteorite because nothing similar had ever been found locally. It was at this time that someone locally suggested the Orr family call Oscar E. Monnig whose reputation as a meteorite "expert" was known in the U. S. Southwest. Two months later, Monnig and others visited the site and, with deeper digging, found three more smaller pieces, 5 1/2 lbs (2.5kg), 2 1/2 lbs (1.1kg) and 1 lb (0.45kg). Although Monnig early became convinced these were likely iron meteorite masses, particularly when told a local college had reported the metal had a "high Ni content", questions remained. The closeness of the five pieces suggested all were part of one piece originally although there was very little surface weathering on the irons. The two smaller pieces, 2.5kg and the 1.1kg, fit well together but the others did not. Monnig, convinced at this point that this was a meteorite and willing to gamble, offered the Orr family one dollar per pound for all the pieces. They declined.

Although all of the original pieces remained the property of the Orr family, the 1.1kg piece was lent to Monnig for confirmation that this strange iron mass was truly a meteorite. The piece was cut in half and each half polished and etched by Glenn Huss at the American Meteorite Lab in Denver. The etch soon demonstrated that this material was truly unique showing an etch pattern that had never been seen previously. One half then was sent to Ed Henderson at the Smithsonian who subsequently reported to Monnig that on its arrival there that they were not convinced that this was a meteorite. In a letter of January 11, 1966, to Henderson, now two years

after the discovery, Monnig asked why the Smithsonian folks "are still not convinced that this is a meteorite".

Demonstrating that the Smithsonian's interest remained, however, Monnig was asked if it were possible to get a slice from the middle of one of the larger pieces which was still the property of the Orr family. The family had by that time decided to sell the two largest pieces and had, therefore, on Feb. 10, 1969, accepted Monnig's offer of \$2,500 for these two big masses. Monnig wrote to Henderson "At last I have closed the deal on the Tishomingos although part of the final agreement was that half of each of the smaller pieces be retained by the finder". The small pieces remained with the family but the two largest became part of the Oscar E. Monnig Meteorite Collection, now held at the Department of Geology, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas. The middle slice of one of the largest individuals requested in 1966 finally came to the Smithsonian in 1997.