# 43½ Lb. Meteorite Found At Wade Farm Near La Villa

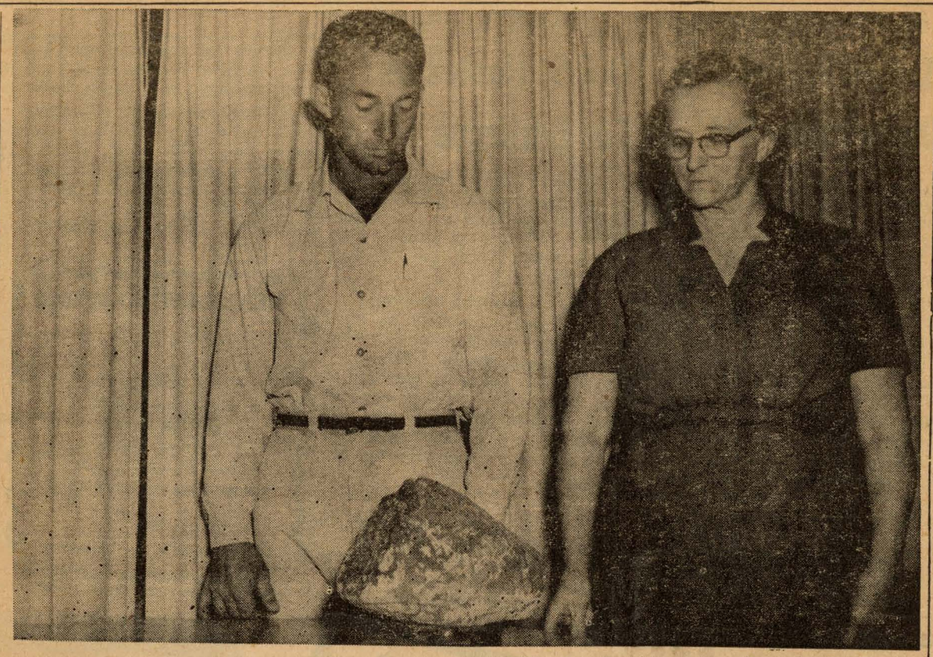
By Mrs. Ethel Inez Wade

LA VILLA — Possibly the first meteorite ever found in the Valley recently was discovered near La Villa.

Last year while cultivating a field of cotton on the J. R. Wade Farms, Inc., about 3 miles southeast of La Villa, one of the farm employes, Alfonso Robles, plowed up what he supposed to be an ordinary rock which he placed upon his tractor and carried out to the end of the row. He showed it to the farm foreman, Carlos Gonzalez, and one or two other farm workers. None of them suspected anything other than that they plowed up an ordinary rock. They did think it was an extremely heavy one.

Time passed with the rock lying almost in plain view and the owners and employees passed by dozens of times without noticing it. Then, recently, the same man was sent to the field to plant it. Gonzalez and Elmo Wade, the farm manager, while assisting this man in getting his job started off, re-discovered the rock. Young Wade parked his car near it and almost stepped on it when he got out. He, like the others, at first throught this to be an ordinary rock but upon closer scrutiny and after testing its weight decided that it was not just an ordinary one since it was far to heavy for its size. He and Gonzalez brought it to the farm headquarters where young Wade's mother, Mrs. J. R. Wade, Sr., resides. They unloaded it near one of the barns to be used for a doorstop and forgot the matter until the next day. As soon as Elmo told his mother about this rock they immediately decided to weigh it. They did and found it to weigh 43½ pounds, which is far too much for an ordinary rock of its size, being 11½ inches long, and a circumference of 26 inches at its widest point. It is oval shaped with one end being flat. Both suspicioned that it just possibly might be a meteorite. Mrs. J. R. Wade had seen some once in a museum in Mexico City while vacationing with her late husband, J. R. Wade, Sr.

Knowing of the Observatory at Pan American College at Edinburg, and of the outstanding work of Dr. J. Lell Elliot in science, Mrs. Wade immediately called the college to ask their opinion. Dr. Elliot, Director of Science and Mathematics at Pan American College and Mr. Paul R. Engle, Instructor of Astronomy, also of Pan American College, tentively identified the "rock" as being a meteorite. As soon as possible, Mr. Oscar E. Monnig, of Ft. Worth confirmed the identification after he came to the valley. He is listed as one of the 4 outstanding meteorite experts in the United States, having been doing this type of work for over 30 years.



DISPLAYING the 43½ lb. meteorite, possibly the first ever found in the Valley, are Mrs. J. R. Wade and her son, Elmo. They have given the meteorite to Pan American College.—Photo by Brad Smith.

How did the Valley get its first meteorite? How old is it? These two questions are uppermost in the minds of everyone interested. It is now fairly well agreed that meteorites originate in the space between the planets Mars and Jupiter. There are two major theories about how they are formed.

One theory is that a "Lost Planet" broke up to form meteorites and asteroids—small planets with orbits between Mars and Jupiter. The other is that meteorites and asteroids are products of collisions between a number of original smaller bodies. Investigators from several sciences—astronomy, chemistry, geology dark objects makes a spectacular display when it collides with the earth's atmosphere. The meteorites either explode, pass on through the atmosphere and vanish or fall to the earth, as was the case of the one found here in the Rio Grande Valley.

As to the age of the meteorite, Mr. Monnig, who has seen many, and who also owns a large collection of them, it being his hobby, comes up with this information, this is an old meteorite. This is proven by the amount of lime deposit on the outside of the meteorite and the amount of oxidation of the iron that is shown by the rust color. (The natural color of a meteorite is black) It could even have fallen as much as a hundred years or more previous to the time it was discovered.

However the rapidity with which the above named effects

ings on the meteorite it would appear they were made by a hard or sharp implement such as a chisel point. These markings also furnish adequate proof that the meteorite had been deeply buried in the ground for many years but finally in the process of subsoiling the land (the third time over a period of 8 year) the sharp chisel points loosened the meteorite. All of the many operations involved in growing cotton-disking, light chiseling, laying up rows, planting and cultivating could have brought the meteorite near enough to the surface to plowed out with a cultivator. It is entirely possible that it could have been struck many times with the heavy machinery without being noticed by the tractor drivers.

It is perhaps a coincidence that the fireball of 1956, which was reported to have fallen in the Gulf east of Rio Hondo, was seen to pass nearby this area by several residents of La Villa, among them being some of the employees of the J. R. Wade Farms, Inc. This newly discovered meteorite—one of the three newest meteorites to be found in the state of Texas—now brings the total number of meteorite locations in the state to over 80. Texas has the largest number of meteorite locations of any state in the United States, according to statistics on meteorites.

This meteorite is the first ever to be reported south of San Antonio, according to Mr. Monnig. The other meteorite locations nearest to the Valley are Nordheim, Cuero, San Antonio, Boerne, two other locations in Kendall County, Uvalde, Junction and Sanderson.

The rock, which is the stony type of meteorite, has been officially declared as the "La Villa Meteorite of Hidalgo County, Texas" by Mr. Monnig, because it was found near La Villa.

The Wade Family consisting of Mrs. J. R. Wade, Sr., La Villa, Howard of Mercedes, Mrs. Ben F. Freasier, Lubbock, J. R. Wade, Jr., Mercedes, Mrs. Martin Gaiser, Harlingen, Elmo of Mercedes and Mrs. Bob Free, Savannah, Georgia, and their respective families, have presented the meteorite to Pan American College where it can be used for educational purposes. Dr. Elliot and Mr. Engle were chosen by the donors to accept the gift on behalf of the College. It will be placed on public display at Pan American College according to Dr. Elliot. Dr. Elliot, in accepting this gift for the college, stated that he hopes they will be able to acquire a collection of meteorites for the college. If anyone in the Valley thinks they might have found or own a rock that could be a meteorite, they are urged to examine the surfaces of the rocks and compare the features of the surrounding rocks with those of any suspected meteorites. Compare the weight of the suspected meteorite with that of nearby rocks. Meteorites are much heavier than rocks of comparable size. Then if the specimen passes these tests all persons are urged to contact Dr. J. Lell Elliot or Mr. Paul R. Engle of Pan American College.

Mrs. Wade has had several consultations with Dr. Elliot and Mr. Engle regarding the scientific data in writing her story on Texas' newest meteorite, "The La Villa Meteorite of Hidalgo County," Texas".