

May 16, 1996

Dr. Kenneth Steigman, Curator of Collections
Heard Natural Science Museum
One Nature Place
McKinney, TX 75069-8840

Dear Kenneth:

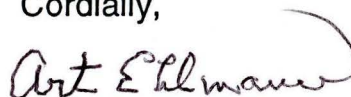
It was good to meet you and Diane Brownlee yesterday. I have boxed up and will mail two mineral specimens for the Texas exhibit. One is a microcline feldspar from Llano, Texas, and the other is a talc mass from Allamore, Texas. Allamore is a small town (read that railroad loading dock) about 8 miles west of Van Horn, just north of Interstate 10. It is one of the long-time active mining ventures in West Texas so this piece should add to your exhibit on Texas minerals.

About the McKinney meteorite - we have a number of polished slices and one whole 1,814 gram fragment. The fragment is, as is true for most meteorites, just a black piece of "rock" with little or no aesthetic appeal. One of the slices, made from another piece of McKinney, is polished and is attractive in that it shows the interior of the meteorite. I would be willing to lend you both if you feel a display would be useful for your museum and that you have a reasonable security system. These specimens are fairly valuable. I say that only to indicate that they should be encased and not "portable".

I can see the possibility of some good PR locally if the newspaper carried a note about a specimen of McKinney being there. I feel very strongly that education of the public through museum displays is important. Getting the public's awareness may also help financially, something we always hope will happen.

I will await your feelings on the loan of the meteorite specimens. The two mineral specimens are gifts and require no formal response. If you ever are in need of any type of display material, let me know.

Cordially,



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MR. Ehlmann:

John McCraw gave me a copy of your letter and suggested that I send you these columns on meteors + astronomy in Collin County.

Page 4-The McKinney Courier-Gazette-Sunday, May 27, 1990

Regards,
R. J. Duncan

R. J. Duncan
1801 Erwin Place
McKinney, TX
75069

A look back at 1870 Collin County meteors

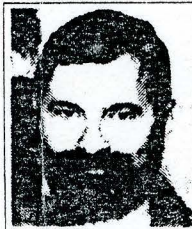
My last two columns have been on the great meteor storm of 1833, and Collin County millwright Henry S. Moore's 19th century contributions to the science of astronomy. Recently, I was discussing these matters with Steve Runnels at the Heard Natural Science Museum.

"You ought to do some research on the large meteor that was found west of McKinney in the last century," Steve said.

"Huh?" I responded, articulately. I had never heard of such a thing.

Cecil and Marcia Coale, longtime friends of the Heard Museum, have a son who is attending Harvard. Three years ago, when the Coales were visiting the Harvard's Peabody Museum, they ran across something that stopped them cold: a meteorite from, of all places, McKinney, Texas.

Marcia inquired about the specimen, and the curator sent her some information on the McKinney meteor from the Catalogue of Meteorites by Max Hey, published by the British Museum of Natural History. She and Cecil shared the material with Steve Runnels and recently with me.



Robert J. Duncan

Lone Star Lore

It turns out that there were two meteorites that were found eight miles west of McKinney in 1870. The larger stone weighed about 220 pounds. There is some indication that the meteors may have been seen while falling, rather than just found in a field.

Apparently the meteors changed hands two or three times and were broken into smaller chunks. Several decades later, many pieces were sold by Ward's Natural Science Establishment to various museums around the world. The Harvard specimen, which is small compared to some of the others (it weighs a little over a pound), was purchased from Ward's in 1923.

The Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago has a chunk of the rock that weighs over a hundred pounds. A museum in Vienna, Austria, also has a large piece. Other pieces are in Washington, Arizona, Connecticut, California, Budapest, Prague, Copenhagen, Sarajevo and Berlin.

As you can see, the far-flung chunks of these two large meteors from McKinney have eventually landed all over the world. It's too bad we don't have a piece of the rock right here at home to gawk at. It would have made a very interesting exhibit for one of our local museums.

I haven't been able to find anything about the meteors in any of the county histories, and the McKinney newspapers only go back to the 1880s. It seems as though there was no existing local knowledge of these big, important meteors until the Coales stumbled onto the piece, and the story, at Harvard.

But then again, maybe I haven't talked to the right person yet. If any reader has more information about these 120-year-old meteors, I would appreciate a call at 542-2912.