

Knoxville, May 25, 6.00 pm

Dear Prof:

We have just got back from a 108 mile chase after the Wheat meteorite. It was away from home, as luck would have it, but I expect to have my hands on it next week.

The village of Wheat, one store, one school and one Church, is actually about 20 miles from Knoxville airline, but as it is on the other side of the Clinch river, we actually clocked 46 miles before we got there. After inquiring for Mr. Gallaher, we had to double back on the same road we had come 2 miles to find his place. Well, Mr. Gallaher isn't the owner and didn't even know for sure where it was. Incidentally, the local pronunciation of the name Gallaher is Golly-har, the 'a' as in bar! Gallaher, however, gave us the name of some fellows in Harriman who would locate the real owners for us and possibly the meteorite itself. Harriman is 10 miles on down the road from Wheat. The finder of the meteorite is a guard at Petros, state prison farm, and he lives near Harriman. The name of the meteorite will have to be changed to the Harriman iron, to be correct.

Well, we found our parties at Harriman, all but the real owner. Its a partnership affair. The man who found it, was working for a tenant. He took it to the tenant farmer who in turn took it to the owner of the land on which it was found. They didn't know just where they stood nor the value of the thing so they decided to incorporate. A fourth man got in on the deal somehow, I never did understand just, how, but I could tell from the faint leers on the faces of the two I talked to that they figured on beating this fourth man out of his share.

Anyway, after having reposed in the vault of the local bank and acted as door stop for the past two years, some fellow wanted to take it to Chattanooga to show off down there and that's where it is now. They promised to have it back and in Knoxville next week.

Besides Amick's test, they had sent small samples to Field Museum and to the Smithsonian. All agree it is an iron meteorite. I think there is little doubt that its the real thing. Probably from one of these sources they got some idea of the what it was worth. I told them frankly that I wouldn't agree to buy it and couldn't make a price until I saw it. They think they ought to have about \$100 for it. I did tell them that if it was a genuine meteorite in an average state of preservation I could offer them about \$1 a lb. for it, so I think that that offer will buy it. It weighs 79.5 lbs. As a matter of fact, what I intend to do when they bring it in is to look at it, and find some flaws somewhere, object the pieces that have been cut from and otherwise pan it and then offer them \$50 flat for it. I have an idea that I can pull it for that and if not, I judged from what you have said that you would be glad to get it for even the \$1 a lb. or more, and I can always go up, if necessary. I feel pretty sure, however, that I can get it for less than \$100.

Since there will be no question about the genuineness of it, I think, and if you want it at the price I have approximately indicated, its yours. You had best send a certified check, money order or something for the \$100 and I am sure that will be more than enough to buy it. You can make a deposit to my credit at the Hamilton National Bank with the stipulation that any check drawn on it will be in favor of one of the following names: S.H. Hembree, A.R. Davis or R.M. Dodd. Or you can send it to me direct remembering VEGA!

Of course, I will return any money not needed immediately. I want to have the cash right on hand and I want to be able to write a personal check for it for two reasons, first so you can have a receipt for your money and second because one of these old fellows out there is a rock collector and says he knows where he can get another meteorite or two and I want to make a good impression for future reference. In other words, if they bring this meteorite in and I can give them a check for the thing without any trouble and as though I were used to writing out checks of \$80 for meteorites, they might-- a remote chance-- but still they might, bring in another one, if they know where they can get cash on it quick. ~~and with that delay~~

Better send me the money special delivery airmail. ~~xxxxx~~ Those fellows may get to thinking the matter over and one of them may jump in his car and go to Chattanooga after and have it over the first of the week.

I hope the next time I write you I can say I have it.

Best regards,

Bunch.