

EDITOR DESCRIBES FALL of METEOR FROM PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

This article was written by the editor of the Jackson, Minnesota County Pilot newspaper in 1929.

The Jackson County Pilot says:

Is Anniversary

How many present day residents of southern Minnesota and northern Iowa can remember back fifty years ago this month and recall the excitement occasioned when a 400 pound meteor fell on the Lee farm northwest of Estherville, and a few miles south of the Minnesota line?

Many believed, as they heard a noise like the trampling of thousands of horses' feet, and looked up into the sky and saw a trail of smoke, resembling a hugh white ribbon, later to be followed by deafening explosion, that the world was surely coming to an end, and believe the writer, though he was a boy of only eight years of age at the time, the experience proved no laughing matter.

Event Inspires Awe

The country was sparsely settled those days and the advent of the telephone and radio, now so freely used in spreading news, was an unknown invention. People everywhere stood in awe, many trembling at what they feared might happen the next moment, however, the older and more learned heads of the community came to the rescue and explained the spectacle, and soon loads of people could be seen driving to the place where the meteor fell.

When the meteor burst, it seemed to slacken its speed, throwing off large pieces of molten stone, finally striking the ground near a small schoolhouse where the main meteor was buried in the ground to a depth of nearly fourteen feet. Daily newspapers sent reporters to Estherville and the press for several days was filled with colored stories about the strange phenomenon, and thousands of the smaller pieces were carried away by curious sightseers.

Start Investigation

As our mind remembers the happenings that followed, the University of Minnesota sent a man to Jackson to investigate, and we believe he was driven to the place where the meteor fell by E. W. Davies now of Pipestone, and a piece of the molten stone was brought to Jackson and shipped to St. Paul, where no doubt it now rests in the archives of relic owned by the State Historical Society.

History records the fact that it was the largest meteorite that has ever been known to have fallen in North America, and the fact that fifty years have passed by doesn't lessen the thrill old settlers feel as they tell of the excitement that came in that far away day back in 1879.

Sells Part of Meteor

Another article, published in the Lakefield Standard, describes how Robert D. Pietz sold a piece of the meteor weighing 100 pounds for \$100. Later this same piece was considered of inestimable value by museums. The article states:

The Spirit Lake Beacon, Estherville Daily News, Fairmont Daily Sentinel and the Jackson Pilot have had lengthy articles the past week or two concerning the meteor which fell three miles north of Estherville fifty years ago this month. Lakefield has a citizen in the person of Robert D. Pietz who has resided here and conducted a blacksmith shop since

1882, who saw the meteor fall and still has in his possession a ring made from a piece of molten metal with which the ground was sprinkled when it exploded the first and second times before striking the earth.

Mr. Pietz was playing in a game of baseball in Estherville when the meteor whizzed through the sky. He says the ground shook when the 400-pound chunk of hot metal hit the earth and continued to a depth of about 14 feet.

Hunt For Souvenirs

He says hundreds of people hunted souvenirs of the strange visitor for weeks afterward, and picked up the pieces that could be found and had rings, watch charms and various other articles made for keepsakes.

Mr. Pietz and brother discovered one hunk weighing 100 pounds and sold it for \$100. Later on, Mr. Pietz says, this piece was sold for \$200 and again at a price of \$500 after which he heard nothing more of it.

The first explosion, Mr. Pietz informs the Standard, occurred about three miles east and a short distance south of Superior. Some of the Rost family, who resided in Rost township at the time, still remember seeing the ribbon of smoke which followed in the wake of the meteor and heard the explosion which sounded like the firing of huge cannon.

Pieces Are Exhibited

The giant boulder was placed 482 feet west of the spot where the largest piece of the meteor fell and a bronze plate on the stone gives these salient facts: "The Estherville Meteorite fell 482 feet due East of this plot on May 10, 1879. It is one of the greatest 'falls' on record. Parts of the Meteorite are found in important museums of the world. Erected 1929 by Okomanpado chapter Daughters of the American Revolution."

The plot of ground on which the marker was placed was deeded to the state by Hans N., Carl O., Art T., Anna, and Louise Lee, heirs of Sever Lee, and owners of the farm. They co-operated to the fullest extent in arranging for the memorial.

It has been said that a large piece of the meteor was loosened and thrown about a mile west of Superior and fell in a pond in Richland township. This has never been verified. The meteor then separated into three parts, all falling in Emmet county.

Made Deep Hole

After the fall of the meteor the metallic stone was observed and considered a mystery. It was in a slough and made a hole 15 feet deep and about 12 feet in diameter. The largest piece weighed 431 pounds, although its dimensions were only 26 inches long, 23 inches high, and 14 inches thick.

Two other pieces were also found and weighed 151 and 106 pounds. Hundreds of fragments were discovered which were sold as souvenirs. The two largest pieces were bought by the British museum of London and the 106 pound chunk is owned by the Minnesota University museum at Minneapolis. It is said that a piece is also on exhibition in Austria.

The Estherville meteorite is considered as one of the three greatest "falls" on record, all of which occurred within the boundaries of the state of Iowa.

Commends D. A. R.'s

Judge Lee expressed the view in his address that the marking of the spot where the meteor fell and perpetuating evidence of it by the local chapter of the D. A. R. was a most worthy undertaking, as it is of importance to ourselves and to those who come hereafter that we preserve evidence of historic events.

He commended Mrs. F. H. Rhodes and Mrs. James Rainey, regent of the D. A. R. chapter, for their untiring efforts in erecting the native boulder as a marker to commemorate the fall of the meteor and also commended the children of Sever Lee for their ready co-operation with the D. A. R. in the erection of the marker and in donating the plot of ground where the marker stands, and the board of supervisors for the convenient approach in the highway.

SOURCE - This article was written by the editor of the Jackson, Minnesota County Pilot newspaper in May, 1929.