

ESTHERVILLE CLAIM TO FAME

Estherville's 1879 meteorite has a new claim to fame. According to the Chicago Sun Times of August 18, a new mineral has been found in a sample of the meteorite. It was discovered at Argonne National Laboratory, and has been named "stanfieldite" after the late Chicago civic leader, Stanley Field.

The clipping telling of the discovery was sent to the Richard Lymans by their daughter, Mrs. Floyd Linder (Lois) who lives in Joliet, Illinois. The extraterrestrial substance was identified as a phosphate of calcium, magnesium and iron by Louis H. Fuchs, a geochemist at the Atomic Energy Commission research center 25 miles southwest of Chicago.

A sample of the meteorite which fell near Estherville in 1879 was supplied by the Field Museum of Natural History. The museum has acquired 21 pounds of the 700 pounds of the meteorite's fragments known to have been recovered after the fall. Fuchs said he believed it would be appropriate to name the new mineral after Stanley Field, a founder, former president, and former chairman of the board of directors of the museum. Field, who died in 1964, established the museum's meteorite collection, which is regarded as one of the most complete in the world.

Unknown to Earth, stanfieldite is one of a group of rare phosphate minerals that Fuchs said he has been finding in other stony iron meteorites. The naming of the mineral, stanfieldite, has been approved by the Commission of New Mineral names of the International Mineralogical Association, Fuchs said.

The Argonne geochemist said that he found only a few grains of the new mineral in a piece of the meteorite two inches long, an inch wide and three quarters of an inch thick. However, the largest grain, 1-25th of an inch in diameter, was large enough for analysis.

Fuchs identified the compounds in the grain by examining them under a microscope and with X-rays. He is preparing a paper on stanfieldite for a mineralogical conference in Canada.

The meteorite in which the new metal was discovered, has made the name of Estherville familiar to scientists in all parts of the world. Unfortunately, the name of our town is more often than not spelled without the "h" and, no doubt pronounced with a long "E". It was so misspelled in the Chicago Sun Times story and probably is incorrect on the label and record in the Field Museum.

When we visited the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D. C., several years ago we found the fragment of the meteorite on display there. We were distressed that the name of our home town was misspelled and asked an attendant if it would be possible to correct it. We've never been able to check on whether this was done. Perhaps we should write to the Field Museum and to Mr. Fuchs so that, in the midst of all their scientific accuracy, they won't be guilty of a careless misspelling and mispronunciation.

Ours is the only town in the world listed in our office Atlas with the name of Estherville. We don't mean to be fussy, but if our town is famous for something, the least the scientists can do is spell its name correctly.