

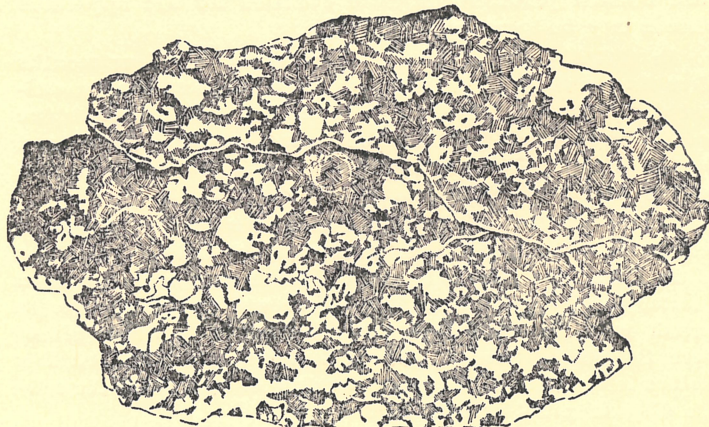
The dedication of the "White Way" in 1933 was a memorable event in a long period of intelligent civic development.

The Meteorite

Late on a Saturday afternoon, May 10, 1879, many persons in and near Estherville were startled by a terrific explosion in the sky. The earth trembled, china shifted on cupboard shelves, doors and windows jarred, and window panes in at least two houses near Estherville were broken. The explosion was followed by thunderous sounds and the appearance of what seemed a ball of fire, traveling from southwest to northeast. Three persons north of town, more than half a mile apart, saw dirt fly high into the air. A meteor had fallen.

Reports of its flight came from a wide radius. A civil engineer surveying a railroad near Jackson, Minn., 15 miles northwest, saw the heavenly body emerge, "brilliantly white," from a storm cloud in the west. Estimating its height at 40 miles and its speed at three miles per second, he said it seemed to draw portions of the cloud after it. Two people crossing the prairie in an open rig near Superior, six miles west of Estherville, found themselves directly under the mass when it exploded. They reported the three large pieces took separate directions, trailing ribbons of vapor which formed a crow's foot in the sky. A herdboys near Superior reported that falling stones had caused his cattle to stampede, and other boys at Four Mile Lake said the placid waters had been peppered with small pebbles.

The largest piece of the meteor fell in a six foot hole on the Sever Lee farm, two miles north of Estherville. On May 11 eight young men of the neighborhood vainly attempted to raise it from the mud and water, where it lay buried 14



feet below the surface. Lee's seeming indifference to the meteorite induced the boys to hire a well digger, George Osborn, to raise it. Weighing 437 pounds and measuring 27 by 22¾ by 15 inches, its "fearfully rough" black surface was broken with a metallic glitter.

The lively interest manifest at Estherville led the farm boys to realize the commercial value of the meteorite. Loading it into a wagon, they set out across Minnesota, displaying on a large placard:

"I am the Heavenly Meteor.
I arrived May 10th at 5 o'clock.
My weight is 431 lbs.
From whence I came nobody knows,
But I am En Route for Chicago!"

Hearing that their ownership was being questioned, the boys returned to Estherville, wrapped their treasure in quilts and buried it in Osborn's cornfield. Later, feeling secure in their ownership, they removed it to the home of one of the group, Chester Rewey.

Charles N. Birge, an attorney of Keokuk, through Lee's temporary default in payment on his farm purchased from a railroad company, made claim to the land. On the strength of this he obtained a writ of attachment on the meteorite which permitted him to take it away from Rewey's farm. Later he sold it to the British Museum for a sum reputedly large. In the following October the Lees were deeded their farm by Birge.

The second meteorite was found on the A. A. Pingrey farm, four days following its descent. Weighing 151 pounds, it was buried four and one half feet on a dry knoll two miles west of the first find. Pingrey, unaware of its value, gave the stone to a neighbor, John Horner, an act which he later regretted. Horner hid his treasured gift in a cave on the land of one Ab. Ridley where, by the glimmer of a lantern, occurred the transaction by which the University of Minnesota became owner of the piece.

The third large portion, 92½ pounds, was found by the Pietz brothers, trappers, in February 1880. It had dropped into a dry slough four miles southwest of the first find, and had penetrated five feet. Birge ultimately purchased this piece.

That spring, following the prairie fires, "gathering meteors" became a diversion of picnic parties and Sunday expeditions participated in by hundreds of men, women and children. Some 5,000 of the sparkling bits were found, ranging from trifles the size of a pea to lumps weighing a pound. Many finger rings were made from the larger pieces; today some are unpurchasable keepsakes of local citizens.

Three great meteoric showers have occurred within the State of Iowa. One fall was at Homestead, in Iowa County, in February 1875, the meteor weighing 460 pounds. In 1890, occurred another shower at Forest City, Winnebago County, when masses weighing between 200 and 300 pounds fell. With a total weight of 744 pounds, the Estherville meteor is the largest and, from a scientific standpoint, the most important. Berzina classifies it as Mesosiderite (iron-stone), but Meunier found it sufficiently distinctive to list it as Esthervilleite. This is principally because the iron appears in nodules.

A specimen of the Estherville meteor is on display in the Estherville Public Library through the courtesy of the University of Minnesota. The University retained the rest of its specimen. The Musee National d' Histoire Naturelle of Paris and the Naturhistorisches Museum of Vienna each contain portions of the meteorite originally sold to the British Museum of Natural History, London. Pieces are found in the Field Museum in Chicago, the U. S. National Museum in Washington, the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, and in the Peabody Museums at Yale, Harvard, and Amherst.

Industry In Estherville

Embracing a trade territory of 80 to 100 miles, with a population of 30,000, the development of Estherville as a distributing and manufacturing center has been marked by a steady growth. Construction in 1937 totalled \$409,000, 75 per cent of it industrial.

The annual volume of industrial business is in excess of \$5,000,000, with about 500 persons employed. Commercial, service, and professional occupations employ about 1,000.

The newest industry is a horse slaughtering plant which slaughters horses, bringing the live animals here from several states surrounding Iowa. Edible meat is exported for human consumption; the non-edible meat is made into dog and cat food.

One of the largest industries is a beef packing plant, established in 1937. Other large industries are the grain, stock food, lumber, wholesale grocery, candy and fruit businesses. There are bakeries, a yeast factory, a sawmill, feed mills, a cigar factory and a bottling works. Creameries and poultry and egg plants offer cash markets for farmers. There are 170 retail outlets, and 43 wholesale organizations.

Black silver foxes are bred at the Brockway fox farm in northwest Estherville. The farm was started in 1924 with breeding stock costing \$1,000 a pair. The five acre tract at west end of W. 5th Ave. N., on which the foxes are raised, is shaded by native timber and enclosed by a mesh fence. Each pair has its separate cage. Since the quality of the fur depends on

feeding as well as on type, the animals' winter diet of jack-rabbit meat and beef heart is supplanted in summer by a prepared fox food to keep the fur from turning a brownish cast. Spring litters, which usually average four to six pups in number, are pelted for the New York fur market in November. Death is produced by a wooden block on a lever which is pressed over the animal's heart. The Brockway farm averages about 100 pelts annually.

Two railroads serve Estherville; the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, and the Minneapolis & St. Louis. The Rock Island maintains division offices, car repair shops and a round-house.

A scenic studio established in 1900, the only one in the State, is believed to be the first to use dyes for coloring drops. Its products go to all parts of the United States and have been used at points as distant as Key West and Nova Scotia.

Estherville has one daily, a semi-weekly and a weekly publication.

Industry finds complete cooperation from the city council (with low rate municipally owned utilities and low tax rate), from the Chamber of Commerce, and from transportation companies. Desirable industrial sites are available; labor and living conditions are ideal.

Agriculture In Emmet County

The landscape of Emmet County presents the appearance of a farmer's ideal: gently rolling or level land with hard surfaced roads and trim fences; the horizon is broken by lines of comfortable looking homes, large barns, shed-like hog houses and chicken houses, tower-like silos, and groves of deciduous trees, and evergreens.

Of the approximate land area of 251,520 acres more than 97 percent is occupied by farms, with an average size of 193 acres. On this land lives almost 50 percent of the county's population.

Designated as one of the "lake" counties of Iowa, the soils of Emmet County were formed largely by the Wisconsin glacier, which also scooped out many of the lakes. Of the three major surface soil groups—drift, terrace, and swamp or bottomland—drift soils cover 89 percent of the county's total area. In this category Clarion loam, a dark brown to brown, friable loam, is the most extensive, forming 70 percent of all soils. Much of this land is underlaid by a network of drainage tiles.

Diversified farming is practiced, grain farming being balanced by livestock raising. The principal cash crops are corn, oats and hay. In accord with the national trend toward soil