

Meteorite Ownership

By J. HUGH PRUITT
Pacific N. W. Director,
American Meteor Society

Interest aplenty has been aroused by recent reports in the press regarding the nine-pound rock which came tumbling down from the high heavens over Alabama one afternoon late last November. It tore a three-foot hole in a roof at Sylacauga where Hultt Hodges and his wife were living, bounced off a radio and severely bruised Mrs. Hodges, who was resting on a sofa.

Almost immediately the Air Force took possession of the celestial missile for examination. Reports at Christmas time indicated that some institutions had offered \$5000 for the bruising meteorite, although the Smithsonian Institution had said it was not worth \$500. The house where the Hodges lived — they have now settled elsewhere — was rented property. The owner, Mrs. Birdie Guy, has filed suit to get possession of the unique sky rock. Mrs. Hodges says, "It's mine!" Each side has retained legal help.

Other Noted Cases

There are two noted meteorite possession cases on record in the United States. The earlier one was the "Wennebago" case in Iowa. The tenant on a rented property had seen the actual meteorite which buried itself three feet in the ground. The next day the tenant dug it up and assumed ownership. Later he sold it. The owner of the land, finding such objects were valuable, claimed it was his and brought suit for its recovery. After several years of litigation, the courts decided "such objects belong to the owner of the soil upon which they fall."

A still more noted case was that of the famous Willamette meteorite, almost 16 tons of metal, the largest object of this kind ever found in the United States and Canada, and the fifth in size for the entire world. In the fall of 1902 Ellis Hughes near Oregon City, Ore., recognized as meteoritic this huge mass which rested on the property of the Oregon Iron and Steel company adjacent to his own land.

Trusted No One

In 1903 Hughes — reasoning that "possession is nine points of the law" — decided to move the mass to a spot near his own house, three fourths of a mile away. He trusted no one to help him except his wife, his 15-year-old boy and his horse.

After three months of hard work he had brought the meteorite to its destination, ready for display for a fee. Soon the company from whose land the object had been moved brought suit to recover it. While the case was in the circuit court, public sympathy was generally with Hughes. The plaintiff was finally awarded the meteorite by the court's decision.

After the award the defendant appealed the case to the Oregon supreme court. This court on July 7, 1905, announced: "Meteorites, though not imbedded in the earth, are real estate and consequently belong to the owner of the land on which they are found. . . . Seeing there is no error in the record, the judgment of the circuit court will be affirmed."

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Wheat, Hay, Rye Stocks on Oregon Farms on Decrease

Portland — (U.P.)—Wheat, hay and rye crops stocked on Oregon farms showed a marked decrease in the Jan. 1 census taken by the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture.

The USDA Marketing Service said Saturday, however, the drop was offset by increased storage of oats, barley and corn.

Totals Listed

Wheat stocks totaled 5,755,000 bushels on Jan. 1 as compared to 7,546,000 bushels a year ago. Hay was down from 1,306,000 tons in 1954 to 1,250,000 in 1955. Rye storage dropped from 128,000 to 83,000.

Barley stocks showed the greatest gain during the period, rising from 2,673,000 bushels in 1954 to 4,364,000 on Jan. 1, 1955. Oats rose from 4,017,000 to 5,131,000. Corn was up from 359,000 to 497,000 bushels.

Longest on Records

The USDA said the 2,302,000 bushels of corn held on Northwest farms was the largest on record. The total was 33 per cent larger than last year and almost double the average. On a national level, the corn crop was slightly below the figures reported last year.

Elsewhere, the northwest trends followed the same pattern as in Oregon.

The greatest east-west distance across Texas is 773 miles from Newton county to El Paso county.

Is That So?

By Eugene Burns
Ranger-Naturalist

Free: By special arrangement with the editors of the Encyclopedia Americana, my panel of judges will award each week to the reader who sends me the best question on nature and wildlife a complete 30-volume set of this world-famous reference work in a handsome Seaicraft binding. Each week, new questions will be considered. Sorry, I simply can't answer your many friendly letters. Please address your questions to: IS THAT SO! care Medford Mail Tribune, P.O. Box 575, Sausalito, Calif.

In the Day's News

By FRANK JENKINS

Interesting note from Salem: The nine members of the house tax committee of the Oregon legislature who are faced with the task of finding \$63,000,000 in new revenue for the next two years went back to school to learn all about taxation.

The school will run five days a week for 23 days, with sessions starting at 8:30 a. m. Outside experts are being called in to lecture to the committee. The first one, scheduled to speak today on "Theories of Taxation," is Dr. C. Ward Macy of the faculty of the University of Oregon.

The dispatch adds that the instruction course is necessary because only one of the nine members of the committee ever served on a tax committee before.

EXPERTS or no experts, I have an idea that in the long run the legislature will fall back on the ancient principle that "that system of taxation is best which gets the most feathers from the goose with the least squawking."

BUT—

Seriously—

I hope these experts who are instructing the members of the Oregon house of representatives go rather exhaustively into the effects of taxation on industrial development.

Everyone who has ever had anything to do with efforts to balance Oregon's economy by bringing more industrial development to the state has run into the fact that the tax systems of all of Oregon's neighbors (with the possible exception of Idaho) are MORE FAVORABLE TO INDUSTRY than Oregon's system.

That is a serious roadblock in the way of further industrial development.

SPEAKING of tax problems, here is a typical one from Washington:

"Congressional reaction to President Eisenhower's federal pay raise proposals seems to be generally favorable. Most members apparently support the idea of giving prompt increase to federal employees, but the companion proposal to increase postal rates has met considerable resistance."

WELL, gentlemen, it's as broad as it's long. If you raise wages without raising postal rates the increase will come out of the pocket in which the people keep their tax money. If you raise postal rates, the increase will come out of the pocket in which they keep their stamp money.

In either event, the people pay the bill.

IN his postal message this week, President Eisenhower said that second-class postal rates which apply on newspapers and magazines should be increased "until such matter makes a fair and reasonable contribution to postal revenues."

With that statement I am in complete agreement. If newspapers and magazines are carried at a loss in the mails, it amounts to a subsidy. As one newspaper publisher, I want NO subsidies.

Incidentally, less than ten per cent of this newspaper's circulation is carried in the mails at second-class rates.

Two Performances Set By Circus January 27

Afternoon and evening performances of Kaye Brothers Indoor circus have been scheduled for Medford on Thursday, Jan. 27, it was announced Saturday by members of the Medford 20-30 club, which is sponsoring the shows here.

Scheduled on the program, which will be held in the senior high school auditorium, are performing dogs, ponies, a baby elephant, jugglers, wire walkers and clowns.

Tickets may be obtained at the door or from members if the 20-30 club.



Change in Oregon's Law on Bids Studied

Salem — (U.P.)—Officials of the State Finance department and the attorney general were reported Saturday to be studying a change in the state law which would allow bids with erasures to be accepted.

Finance Director Harry S. Dorman said the plan under study would allow the bid to be accepted providing the change does not affect the figure or basic specifications.

Dorman said he thought the idea behind the existing law was basically sound, but that if it was modified, the state would be able to save considerable sums of money.

Recently a controversy developed when a state fire bid was thrown out because of an erasure, despite the fact that it was lower than any of the others received.

Added Financing Of Natural Gas Set

Seattle — (U.P.)—Two officers of the Cascade Natural Gas Corp., which serves 17 communities in Washington, Oregon and Idaho, left this week for New York to complete arrangements for financing a \$7,000,000 expansion program, the firm announced Friday.

Stewart Matthews, president, and C. Spencer Clark, chairman of the board of directors, were to talk with investment bankers and underwriters in preparation for the company's program of financing which includes the proposed issuance of 170,000 shares of common stock in addition to common shares already outstanding.

The firm said the expansion contemplates a 300 per cent increase in company employment and increase in sales activities

30 times greater than at present, after the arrival of natural gas in the Pacific Northwest.

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