

Related Articles »

[Frantic volunteers rush Haiti school ruins](#)

November 9, 2008

[Boys school probe stirs painful memories](#)

December 15, 2008

[Florida reform school investigation finds no grounds for prosecutions](#)

March 11, 2010

Find More Stories About »

[Space Rock](#)

[Wisconsin](#)

[Meteorite](#)

Advertisement

SPACE ROCK

Meteorites turn sleepy village into a boomtown

April 26, 2010 | By Chris Welch, CNN

Recommend

350 recommendations. [Sign Up](#) to see what your friends recommend.

It's the end of the day in rural southwest Wisconsin, and the Trocke family wanders through a ditch along a county road, their eyes fixed on the earth.

Dan and Laurie Trocke, and their three kids, are on a mission for fragments of rock that came from about as far away as one can imagine.

"We're not finding a lot, but that's beside the point really," Laurie Trocke says. "We're not professionals. It's purely for fun."



It all began the evening of April 14, when what looked like a giant fireball came crashing through the atmosphere.

Advertisement

"It just lit up the whole sky," she says. "You thought it was thunder and lightning, but it just kept going and going and going."

"It really didn't sound natural," Dan Trocke adds.

What they were witnessing was a meteor -- and a pretty spectacular one at that.

Michael Farmer, whom the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, Illinois, calls the "world's top meteorite hunter," said that as soon as he saw video of the display, he hopped a flight to Wisconsin.

"Most of them don't make a light show or a sound show," Farmer said. "When this one came in, the energy released was like nuclear bomb-type energy. ... [I knew] there would be thousands of pieces on the ground."

By definition, those pieces are what scientists call meteorites: the remnants of the meteor that don't burn up along the journey and instead make it all the way to the ground.

Farmer headed to the sleepy Wisconsin village of Livingston, which was about to become ground zero for the latest meteorite hunt.

Livingston, with a population of 597, was the town nearest to where the otherworldly bits were turning up.

Soon, everyone wanted a piece of the action -- from internationally known experts to the locals, like 7-year-old Jackson McCluskey.

Jackson, along with dozens of other students at Iowa Grant Elementary School in Livingston, learned about the meteors from geologists and meteorite-hunting experts at a school assembly. Later that day, the kids combed the school grounds for meteorites during recess.

McCluskey found a rock that one of the experts confirmed was a meteorite, weighing 35 grams. He sold it to a collector, but they wouldn't say for how much.

On average, prices for pieces of this particular space rock have been set at about \$10 to \$20 per gram, according to Farmer. He added that a meteorite's worth can vary, depending on the amount of buzz surrounding an event and how much media attention has been devoted to it.

1 2 > >>

We recommend

From around the web

[Arctic Lake Yields Planet's Most Continuous Record of Ancient Climate Wired](#)

[what's this]



SEARCH

- [Home](#)
- [Video](#)
- [NewsPulse](#)
- [U.S.](#)
- [World](#)
- [Politics](#)
- [Justice](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Tech](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Living](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [iReport](#)
- [Money](#)
- [Sports](#)

SPACE ROCK

Meteorites turn sleepy village into a boomtown

April 26, 2010 | By Chris Welch, CNN

Recommend

350 recommendations. [Sign Up](#) to see what your friends recommend.

(Page 2 of 2)

It's easy to compare it all to a mini gold rush. Most folks aren't hunting with the mere hopes of winning bragging rights. Brian Nodolf, who lives on a farm near Livingston, said his wife found a meteorite weighing about 100 grams.

"I'm told it's worth maybe a thousand dollars," Nodolf said.

So far, about two dozen pieces had been found, one expert hunter said. But there's no way of knowing for sure, since many don't announce it when they do find one.

Advertisement

But what do the residents think about the influx of people to their small town? They've welcomed them with open arms -- primarily because it's a boost to the economy.

Who needs a government stimulus when you've got money falling from the sky?

"We've gotten business we never would have had," said Tom Brown, village president. "I mean, who was going to come to Livingston? It's off the map."

Tim Loeffelholz, owner of The Friendly Place, a local gas station and convenience store, says business is up by about 30 percent since folks started finding meteorites.

"It's what we needed, a little boost," Loeffelholz said. "It's been great for the town, great for the whole area."

His store has become a pseudo-trading post, where people looking for or wanting to sell meteorites have put their contact information on signs along the counter.

If and when the Trocke family gets their hands on a meteorite, they say it won't be from a want ad. They'll do it all on their own.

As 11-year-old Connor put it, "It's a sense of pride to find one."

<< < 1 2

Related Articles »

[Frantic volunteers rush Haiti school ruins](#)

November 9, 2008

[Boys school probe stirs painful memories](#)

December 15, 2008

[Florida reform school investigation finds no grounds for prosecutions](#)

March 11, 2010

Find More Stories About »

[Space Rock](#)

[Wisconsin](#)

[Meteorite](#)

Advertisement

We recommend

[Tornadoes rip through southern Wisconsin, Illinois sees strong storms CNN US](#)

[Boys found alive after 50 days at sea This Just In](#)

[S. Korea and U.S. military drill pushing toward war, N. Korea says CNN World](#)

[Tomas threatens Jamaica and Haiti CNN World](#)

['Kryptos' sculptor inspires hope in weary code-breakers CNN Entertainment](#)

From around the web

[Arctic Lake Yields Planet's Most Continuous Record of Ancient Climate Wired](#)

[what's this]