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## [\[meteorite-list\] Mifflin, Amiss](#)

[jason utas Sat, 07 May 2011 18:12:48 -0700](#)

Hello All,

My story begins in the summer of last year. I saw some strange pieces of 'Mifflin' on ebay that I thought looked funny. People were talking about the meteorite having two lithologies, but...the slices and individuals that I saw looked 'off.' A select few looked like H-chondrites, and they had the telltale signs of wear that freshly-imported Moroccan falls bear: worn edges, exposed metal flakes on protruding corners (where the fusion crust had been worn off due to improper packing), etc.

At the time, I did nothing but send a private email to Anne Black notifying her of my suspicions. I spoke with some other prominent list-members addressing it, and they all agreed that the material looked funny, but that nothing could be done about it given the required burden of proof.

So, I sat on my hands for several months.

Just over a month ago, I saw a piece of the funny-looking 'Mifflin' on ebay. It looked similar to some pieces that I remembered seeing on ebay months before, and, being an end-cut, I was able to see both the stone's funny-looking inside -- and the apparent metal grains on the stone's exterior.

I used the 'buy-it-now' option to purchase the end-cut, and it arrived while Peter and I were in Morocco. When we returned, I promptly shipped the end-cut off to Tony Irving of the University of Washington; he agreed to analyze the stone posthaste.

The results came back, but Tony wanted to wait until the probe was recalibrated so that he could run it again to be sure.

Lo and behold, he did confirm that my end-cut was an equilibrated H-chondrite, with an olivine Fa of 18.6. For comparison, Chergach and Bassikounou both have Fa contents of 18.4 and 18.6, respectively.

University of Madison, Wisconsin performed most of the work on the Mifflin fall. Between them and the Field Museum, over twenty separate stones were analyzed. They were all L5. Mifflin is classified as an L5, with an Fa of  $\sim 24.9 \pm 0.2$ .

I then sent Tony the link to the ebay auction so he could confirm that the piece that he had analyzed was indeed the piece that I had sent him. He did.

I purchased my end-cut from Bryan Scarborough (IMCA), who purchased it from Michael Cottingham, who purchased it from Greg Catterton (IMCA), who purchased the stone with Carl Esparza from the finder.

Carl told me the following story over the phone:

He was contacted "out of the blue" by someone hunting in the Mifflin strewn-field. According to Carl, the finder stated that he thought there was a "conspiracy against him," because no one would offer him more than \$5/g. and he believed his finds were worth more than that.

So, according to Carl, he then offered the finder \$10/g, and a deal was struck.

But...the finder asked that he not be paid via paypal or wire transfer; he wanted cash mailed to a P.O. Box.

So, Carl mailed the money to the P.O. Box and the first of two 'Mifflin' stones was over-nighted to him the next day. It should be noted that Carl included Greg Catterton as his partner in this deal, and Greg sent over several hundred dollars to help pay for the stones.

Unfortunately, as Carl said over the phone, his old computer recently died, so he lacks the name and email address of the finder, as well as the number/address of the P.O. Box to which he sent the money. Carl is also unwilling to share the bank receipt from the transaction which would prove that he did make a large cash withdrawal for the stones. I asked Carl for the finder's phone number, but he told me that he had recently tried to call the finder, himself, only to find that the number had been disconnected. He was unwilling to share the number with me, regardless.

On the phone, Carl suggested that his source had likely ripped him off, and he said that he believed that it was the reason why he had been asked to send the money untraceably, as he did; Carl described the situation as a "typical scam."

He also suggested that the stones \*might\* be from an unrelated fall -- or could be the result of Mifflin being an 'Almahata Sitta sort of fall.'

I can't disprove either of those ideas, but they are unlikely for the following reasons:

1) Almahata Sitta is a unique event in the history of meteoritics. Different lithologies have been observed in many meteorites, but to have individual stones of completely different and unrelated meteorite types falling separately is unique. Out of the 1,238 accepted observed falls in the meteoritical bulletin, only one has exhibited individuals that have consisted of different meteorite types (for example, H + L, Ureilite + EH, etc).

And it's not that we haven't been looking for similar events; with each and every fall, multiple stones are analyzed, and the simple fact of the matter is that they are always similar...with \*one\* exception.

So, Almahata Sitta is an exception. How much of an exception? 0.08% of meteorite falls are like it. Less than a tenth of a percent. Possible...but extremely unlikely. We also have to wonder about why or how this hunter managed to find the only two H's from the fall that were recognized. Over twenty other stones were studied and this finder supposedly turned up two or three that were all H's. It's 'funny.'

The other possibility that Carl advocated is that the stones may actually have been found in Wisconsin -- and they may be part of a new fall that somehow slipped under the radar. He initially suggested that they were from the fireball widely seen across the Midwest on May 10th, but, at the time, I had paypal records from Greg that stated that he had sent Carl the money for the stones as early as April 24th. So we ruled out that possibility..

But, I agree; the stones could theoretically have come from a different fall. The end-cut that I bought showed no visible signs of weathering. No oxide, no anything. Given the weather in and around Mifflin at the time of the fall, we can assume that the stones were picked up within a week or so of having fallen. No AMS reports of

anything in the region for the given timeframe doesn't disprove anything since meteorites often fall without much ado, but...two falls in the same place \*at the same time?\*

Granted, it's possible. Not very likely, though.

And you've still got to wonder about why no one else found any H-chondrites while looking for Mifflin. It's not like meteorites were laying thickly on the ground. Everyone who found stones out there put considerable time into hunting -- and they all found only L5's. So if Carl's source were telling the truth, and he did find the stones, it seems best to assume that he wasn't hunting in the Mifflin strewn-field, because, if he were, he would 1) probably have found L5's, and 2) other people would probably have found H's as well.

The conclusion I draw from this is that the truth has become well-hidden. What is certain is that I have been refunded by Bryan, and I know for a fact that Bryan has been refunded by Michael Cottingham, who has in turn been refunded by Greg Catterton.

What I have heard, however, is that Carl has been defending the legitimacy of his stones, and is refusing to refund Greg Catterton.

Regardless of whether the material is Mifflin or another meteorite (from Wisconsin or from NWA -- it doesn't matter), the simple fact of the matter is that the material sold by Carl has been shown to be different from how it was advertised, and as such, he should be willing to accept its return for a refund. If he wishes to get it analyzed and sell it to others as a new meteorite, that is his concern.

I am fairly certain that Bryan, Michael, and Greg unknowingly sold the material as Mifflin, believing that it was indeed what they sold it as.

That is my 2 cents.

Regards,  
Jason Utas

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