

HISTORY OF THE METEORITE COLLECTION AT THE NEW ROBERT A. PRITZKER CENTER FOR METEORITICS AND POLAR STUDIES AT THE FIELD MUSEUM

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Introduction: In March 2009, the Robert A. Pritzker Center for Meteoritics and Polar Studies was established through an endowment from the Tawani Foundation and a donation of meteorites from the Planetary Studies Foundation. Housed at the Field Museum in Chicago, IL, the center focuses on collections-based research, public outreach and education.

Team: The team that staffs the Center consists of Curator Philipp R. Heck, Adjunct Curator Paul P. Sipiera and Collections Manager James L. Holstein.

Collections: The Field Museum's collection of Meteorites has a long history. It began with the 1893 Columbian Exposition held in Chicago to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the new world. The exposition displayed new technologies, architectural innovations and advancements in the sciences. 170 meteorites from Ward's Natural Sciences Establishment were displayed along with various fossils, minerals and gemstones in the Mines and Minerals building. After the Columbian Exposition the meteorite collection was purchased by Marshall Field and displayed at Columbian Museum of Chicago, later renamed The Field Museum of Natural History. In 1921, the meteorite collection moved to the Museum's current location, south of downtown Chicago. Over the years, the collection grew through donations, purchases and exchanges. In 2009 the meteorite collection increased dramatically with the donation of the Planetary Studies Foundation and James M. DuPont Collections. At the time of his death in 1991 DuPont held the world's largest private collection of meteorites [1,2]. The Center houses over 2200 named meteorites and over 6600 total specimens stored in dust-free cabinets in a climate controlled facility.

Research: The current research focus at the Center is on presolar grains to understand our parent stars and the history of our Galaxy, and on the delivery history of extraterrestrial matter to Earth through the study of fossil meteorites and micrometeorites found in sediments and terrestrial impact craters. A Cosmochemistry Laboratory and a SEM are available at the Field Museum. The Center is part of the Chicago Center for Cosmochemistry and has access to state-of-the-art analytical instruments.

Public Outreach/Education: We are engaged in graduate and undergraduate student education in collaboration with the University of Chicago. We work with the Field Museum's Department of Education in the professional development of educators, high school student education, family and public outreach.

References: [1] Sipiera, P. P. et al. 1995. *Meteoritics & Planetary Science* 35:A148–149. [2] Sipiera, P. P. et al. 2005. *Meteoritics & Planetary Science* 40:A5008.