

The Astronomical Sites of Sylacauga

By weird coincidence, if the meteor could be animate enough to pick where to land, it might have thought where it was going was home, but missed—the meteor hit the house in a then-unincorporated area named Oak Grove. It just missed a better named target; across the street was a drive-in movie theater named....**Comet Drive-In**.

Let's identify and tour the relevant locations. We will start at the *northern end of Old Birmingham Highway* (sometime listed as *Old US-280*) where it diverges off to the east today's NW-SE-oriented US-280. See the map on page 25.

A **historical marker** for the Hodges meteor fall stands on the right side heading Southeast on Old Birmingham Highway. The historical marker is a mere 0.8 miles from our starting point.



At most two-tenths of a mile onwards the old highway crosses *Odens Mill Road* at a narrow angle, where the two Comet-named businesses are located.

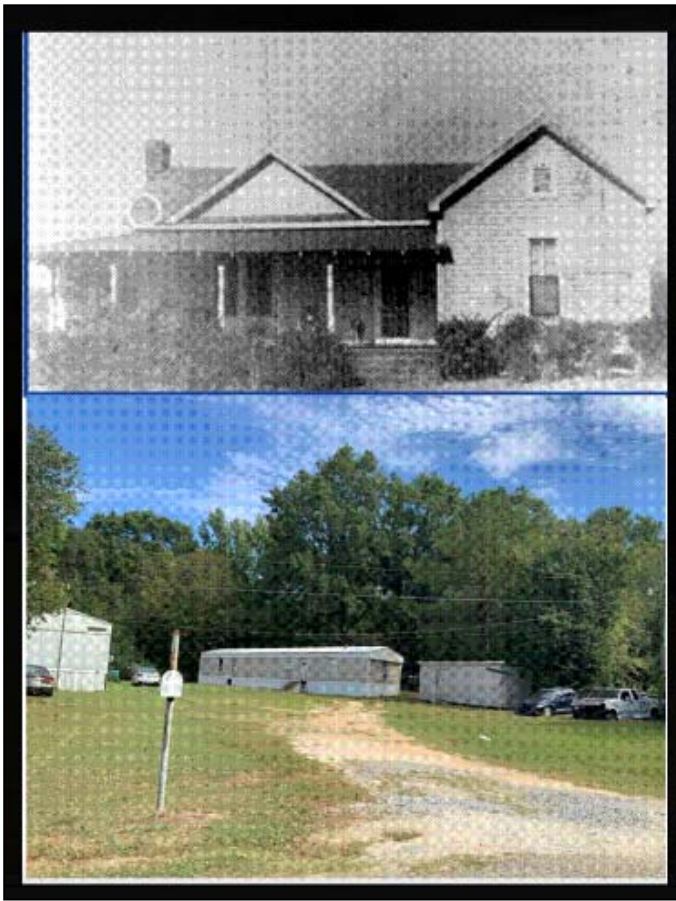
These two businesses, perhaps connected through ownership, are the **Comet Mini Mart** (a.k.a. Comet BBQ & Deli—the signs are different on opposite sides of the building and **Comet Used Furniture**. Whether they were there when the Comet Drive-In existed, or the when the meteor hit, is unknown.

A similar two-tenths mile heading back west of the intersection but on the cross street, *Odens Mill Road*, would lead you to the **Hodges house site**, where the meteor struck Mrs. Hodges.

The house had a patch to the roof after-



Comet Used Furniture on the left, Comet Mini-Mart on the right.



wards long visible from the street, lasted for many years until fairly recently, when it burned down. The building has been replaced by a mobile home or trailer.

Today the **Comet Drive-In** theater is long gone, too. The Comet Drive-In site is now partly a brand new subdivision of very similar and repetitively designed homes *across the street from the house site, and along the nearby stretch of Old US-280* from the intersection until you reach a recycling center. Like any drive-in site, it is very flat there.

There are two other places in Sylacauga that have a connection to the Hodges fragment. The first is the **Comer Museum and Art Center**, at Broadway and Eighth Street.

From the *intersection of Oden's Mill and Old US-280*, head east pass Comet BBQ and Deli on the latter road for 2.5 miles, where the road ends at *Fort Williams Road* in the north part of downtown Sylacauga.

Turn left and go another half mile to *Broadway*.

Head north (left) to *Eighth Street* in 0.8 miles, turn left and park in the rear.

Once a library, it was taken over by one of the city's leading families, the Comers, descended from a Sylacaugan who had once been governor. In this building, run with a limited staff and budget, an admirable effort to display the history of the town has a small area dedicated to the incident, with photos, copies of newspaper articles and a replica of the rock from space.

The second site is back down Broadway, about a half mile, at *Third Street*, in front of the city municipal building.

There are several statues made from the famous Sylacauga marble, one of which is a fanciful **representation of the rock falling to Earth**. (See next page for photos.)