

WHERE'D THE ROCK GO?



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Neighborhood rocked by Seminary Park landmark's disappearance

By Jonathan Babalola

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As they relax in the modest living room of their home near downtown Noblesville, Jan and Lois Melvin said they have not felt the same for about a week. Something is missing.

A large historic rock, which had rested comfortably near the corner of 10th and Division streets near Seminary Park for more than a century, was removed from the spot sometime late last week and has sparked a firestorm of controversy.

The Melvins, who have lived in the house for almost 10 years, said they had no idea something was amiss until they received a strange visit last weekend.



"A man we didn't know came to the door and asked how much we sold the rock for," Lois Melvin said. "When we told him that we didn't sell it, he apologized and said that it was gone, and we were just floored."

Depending on who is asked, the missing boulder was anywhere from a 1 1/2 to 3 feet high and about the same width. But everyone agreed the rock – along with the concrete base it rested on – was too heavy for even several people to just stroll along and carry it away.

"You would've needed a front loader or some heavy machinery to lug all of that away," said Jan Melvin.

City officials say they have received calls about the landmark but they are just as baffled as everyone else regarding its whereabouts.

Initial thoughts were that a truck from the street department swept it away during last month's huge snowstorms but a representative from the street department said that was untrue.

Another rumor spread that an outside contractor the city hired to do some work on the sidewalks last summer near the park may have had something to do with the disappearance. But according to Noblesville's engineering director, they took additional measures to make sure nothing would happen to the marker.

"We paid a little extra last year so they'd protect that rock," said John Beery, the city's head engineer. A call to the contractor, C, C & T Construction, was not returned.

The rock's inexplicable demise can only be matched by its mysterious arrival to the county seat. According to local legend, the rock was supposed to have been a meteorite which fell from the skies as part of a meteor shower in the early part of the 20th century.

"We all thought that it was a meteorite, because that's what they told us when I was in grade school," said Jerry Snyder, 77, a lifelong Noblesville resident. "They always talked about the day the meteorite landed in Noblesville."

According to local historian David Heighway, the rock has been tested several times and it was said to be a glacial erratic – or of the same qualities of a glacier.

Just as ambiguous is who owns the land where the rock sat.

The Melvins explained that when a Noblesville police officer came to their residence – per Lois Melvin's request – they were told that a complaint could not be filed because the land belongs to the city. Snyder said she was also told the rock was on city property by officials that she called.

But Beery said, according to the department's records, the place in question was private property.

Though there are still more questions than answers, the Melvins say neither their Seminary Park neighborhood – nor the city – will be the same until the rock is found.

"Why would anyone take that rock?" Lois Melvin wondered. "It's not like they're stealing it from us ... they're stealing it from the city and the people of Noblesville."

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The spot where a large boulder-type rock sat for more than a century near the corner of 10th and Division streets now sits bare and its disappearance has left Noblesville residents and officials scratching their heads.

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