

Will the real trinitite stand up?

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Let me start by saying that these stones are gorgeous. I have shown your picture to a geologist friend, and he agrees with me that they do not appear to be trinitite. Trinitite usually has a top surface that is smooth to lumpy and a bottom surface that is rough with small glass beads embedded in it. It is also usually flattened more than your samples appear to be. The most common color is a pale green, although I am told there are reddish and black versions as well. The only way to be absolutely certain is with some pretty involved analysis of the radiation a rock is putting out. Actual trinitite is mildly radioactive.

An example of what actual trinitite looks like.

Two of the pieces look to me as if they could be obsidian or volcanic glass, but they are spectacularly free of blemishes for their size. Obsidian can be this clear, but finding such a piece is highly unusual. All of your pieces exhibit conchoidal, or shell-shaped fracture surfaces, which are typical properties of glasses. Rick, my geologist friend, thinks your pieces may be art glass. I think you have some treasures, and the family story that they came from the Trinity Site is fascinating. I would not encourage you to advertise them on eBay as trinitite, though. Many years ago, a trinitite specialist told

me that probably any rock advertised on eBay as trinitite probably is trinitite. At one time, a lot of the material was removed from the site, and it is not valuable enough to counterfeit. Still, buyer beware, and I would advise you to ask for some proof that the items are what the seller says they are.

Occasionally questions are sent in to edu-bsm@lanl.gov or are left in our feedback box in the Museum.

We work to provide answers to these questions on [our blog](#) and the site where we list our [favorite questions and answers](#).

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