

CHATS BY THE WEATHER MAN.

Wed., March 7, 1928.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

ANNOUNCEMENT: Would you know where to go for special information on the climate of any particular part of the United States? Let's say that you live in New England and are thinking of moving to Southern California. Or say you live in Oregon and want to move to Florida--- or in the Mid-West and want to go somewhere else. Where would you go to get information on the kind of weather they have in your chosen spot? Why, to the U. S. Weather Bureau. And the Weather Man, in his regular bi-weekly chat today, is going to tell you all about it. Please stand by.

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As a rule, I call on the Weather Man in the forenoon, just after he has made his regular daily observations of the state of the weather, and is taking a few minutes to go through his mail. I find he usually has a bit more time to talk to me then.

This morning was no exception. I was after a radio story and told him so.

"How about this?" he asked. "Seems to me that your radio audience would be interested in this."

He picked up a letter from his desk and handed it to me. This is what it said:

"Dear Sir:

I am a farmer living in.... (he mentioned a town down near the Mason and Dixon line)and would like to know if I can grow cotton successfully in this part of the country. Any information you could give me on this subject would be greatly appreciated by,

Very truly yours,

John Doe."

I turned to my friend, the weather observer. "What does Mr. Doe think you are, an' agricultural encyclopedia?" I asked, rather jokingly.

The Weather Man turned from the papers on his desk and said. "Mr. Doe's question is fair enough. One of the main duties of the Weather Bureau is to answer just such questions."

"Oh, sure-ly," I said, accenting the sure, "but why doesn't your friend plant cotton and find out if it will grow for himself? Why doesn't

he ask his neighbors what their experience with cotton has been?"

"That's not the most intelligent question you have asked in your life," the W.M. replied. "And I'll tell you why. And, incidentally, I think you will be interested in what I am going to say. It ought to make a pretty fair radio story for you."

"Fire away", said I.

"You know", he began, "it's quite an expensive experiment to plant cotton when you're not sure beforehand that it will make good in your locality. And, of course, I'm using cotton only as an instance of the service the Weather Bureau renders to people who are interested in other crops and other climates. Furthermore, the neighbors haven't always learned just what's best for their particular neighborhood. To raise a good cotton crop, you need a certain amount of heat and moisture. You need a growing season of some length. You need a certain number of what are called heat-days or heat-units. The Weather Bureau has accurate, scientific information on the weather--- the rainfall, temperature, wind conditions, snowfall, sunshine, and so on-- for all parts of the United States. Farmers and other folks are learning this and beginning to call on us in case of need".

He picked up another opened letter. "This man", he said, "is interested in the weather of Southern California. He wants to know if it would be good for a man in his condition. Here's another fellow who wants to know about how much rain they have in northern New York State. And the man who wrote this letter is after information on what kind of a summer they had in the Corn Belt last year".

"I can see that part of it", I said. "I can easily understand how you can give information on the rainfall and temperature of last summer, say. But maybe last summer was a freak. The weather's pretty changeable".

The Weather Man agreed with that. "But," said he, "one season doesn't make a climate of a particular section of the country any more than one swallow makes a summer."

He pointed to the well-filled batteries of filing cases, to the stacks of bound volumes in the book cases. I couldn't quite see through it all, but I was certainly impressed.

"Now, listen," he said, "and I'll tell you how we go about this climate work. This special work is done in what we call the Climatological (Kli'-ma-to-log'-i-kal) Division of the Weather Bureau. Dr. P. C. Day is the head of the Division and the central office is in Washington.

"Well, the United States is divided into 106 sections for the purpose of this climatological work. Most States have more than one of the sections. Utah, for example, has two and Texas has five. The sections are numbered. Southern Texas is number one and Maine is 106. Now, in the entire United States, there are about 200 official U. S. Weather Bureau observatories, but there are more than 5,000 places in the U.S.A. where weather observations are taken and recorded every day and then sent in to regular Weather Stations. There is a trained weather observer at each station--- and several at some. There is at least one official Government weather observer, or meteorologist, at each official U. S. Weather Station. Do you see what I'm driving at?"

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"I think you are showing me how you make the climate," said I with a wink. I knew how the Weather Man would take that.

"Wrong", he said with a smile. "You know better than that. I'm trying to show you how we record the weather from day to day. The day-by-day, year-by-year, century-by-century weather makes the climate of a section or a nation. See?"

"You know," the W.M. went on, "the meteorologists stationed at the various Weather Bureau posts make daily records of the weather in their territory. These records are sent in to the central Weather Bureau office in Washington.

"They include rainfall and snowfall, heat and cold, wind velocity, length of season, sunshine and cloud, that sort of thing. All the many conditions that go to make up the weather from day to day are carefully observed and entered in these records. When the central weather office receives these records, we condense them and tabulate them for months and years. For each section, mind you. For each of the 106 sections I told you about."

"The records tell, then, how much rain a certain section had in a certain season, eh?" I said. "And how hot it was, how windy, how cold."

"Right," my friend replied.

"How long has this been going on?" I asked.

"This has been going on officially since 1871. The Weather Bureau has rather complete records for the 57 years since that time. Of course we had some records even before 1871. Many people keep accurate weather observations in their diaries or family records. But the official records date from 1871 and are published--- for each section and for the Nation as a whole--- in regular printed reports issued each month and year. The Weather Bureau also gets out an extensive report on the weather and climate of each section at intervals of about 10 years. The last ones published, brought the records down to 1920. Another edition is due in 1930. In addition to giving tables of precipitation, temperature, and such things, the reports tell about the general climate of each section and about any peculiar or unusual weather conditions, such as floods, cyclones, droughts and extreme cold, hot, or dry periods. Do you understand?"

"I think I do," I said. "But can a man get these reports as well as other information on the climate and weather of any section he's interested in?"

"Of course he can", the Weather Man assured me. "That's one reason why we publish them. Detailed weather information to a reasonable amount is furnished free on application to the Weather Bureau."

"Well, how do they use the information when they get it?" I next wanted to know. The Weather Man had some instances of how the information has been used. He told me that farmers thinking of moving from one locality

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to another are naturally
/interested in knowing what kind of crops can be grown successfully in the place they plan to move to. Business men, doctors, lawyers, all classes of people, he said, use the published weather records in some way or another very often. A man wants to take a vacation--- an invalid wants to move to a healthier climate--- a man wants a change of scene. They all find the answers to their questions in the central office in Washington or in the various district offices of the Weather Bureau.

"For example," the W. M. went on, "a big insurance company used our records in rating a western city for fire insurance. The company wanted to find out the number of days there were in the year in that place on which the wind blew 25 miles an hour or more--- also the snowfall and temperature of the city. Real estate dealers use our publications to show prospective buyers the climate in the places where they plan to buy property. A city engineer in a western town made good use of the Weather Bureau reports in determining the size of the sewer mains laid in the town. Mains that could handle a maximum rainfall for that town, were installed."

I was convinced. "It looks like a man can just about choose his own climate these days," I said as I arose to leave.

"He can," said the Weather Man, "if he first finds out accurately what that climate is like."

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ANNOUNCEMENT: This Station will broadcast another timely weather chat from the U. S. Department of Agriculture on Wednesday, March 21, 1928.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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