

CHATS WITH THE WEATHER MAN.

Friday, Sept. 18, 1931

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

ANNOUNCEMENT: This is our time to chat with the weather man. Our old friend Ob. Server, is here. He has evidently been to the United States Weather Bureau again. He seems to be all filled up with weather lore. -- What is it this time, Mr. Ob. Server? ----- What's on your mind? -----

I've just found out that, as a rule, our long-distance, cross-the-oceans aviators spend considerable time at the library of the United States Weather Bureau. They study over the daily weather maps prepared in this and other countries they expect to fly over. For instance, flyers headed East across the North Atlantic like to get hold of the maps prepared in Germany and Denmark. Those and other from all the civilized countries of the world are there in our Weather Bureau library.

And the librarian tells me he is now looking for one of those ancient brick tablets of Babylon, known to contain weather proverbs of some three or four thousand years ago written in those queer cuneiform characters baked in the clay.

From the bricks of Babylon to the latest airplane flight; that gives you some idea of the range of weather information in the field of the U. S. Weather Bureau Library. In fact, that library is the world's greatest collection of modern weather science books, periodicals, and daily weather records. On weather, it outranks the Library of Congress and other great libraries of the world.

One of the problems of the librarian is to find space for the big volumes of bound copies of the daily weather maps published in all civilized countries and which must be ready for use at any time.

You see, while some of us can just take the weather as she comes, but for those with business affected by the weather, the Weather Bureau library is a veritable treasure-trove.

It was used extensively during the World War for looking up climatic information about many parts of Europe in order to properly plan military operations, make proper provision in the way of clothing for soldiers, and the like.

It is used from day to day by those going abroad, and by merchants

shipping goods to foreign countries. Merchants want to know whether shipments susceptible to certain types of climatic damage will encounter that kind of weather before they reach their destination. --- But come into the library with me. I want you to meet Mr. Talman. Mr. C. F. Talman is the librarian of the U. S. Weather Bureau. He has charge of this strongest meteorological collection in the world. Incidentally, the two hundred small branch libraries located at the two hundred Weather Bureau Stations scattered throughout the country are also under his direction. And in his spare time, he is compiling an encyclopedic weather dictionary, of more than fifteen thousand weather terms, including slang, dialect, and scientific names for weather phenomena. He calls that dictionary his life hobby and says he collect weather terms as some other people collect postage stamps.

He figures that it may be some years before that unique dictionary is finished, but in the meantime each of the definitions collected is filed on a card and the collection is in daily use as a ready reference to strange weather terms which crop up in the work of the weather scientists.

Of course, one of the chief uses of the Weather Bureau library is for purely scientific purposes. The very heart of the collection is the part of the library devoted to the science of meteorology proper. It is not only used by the scientists of the U. S. Weather Bureau itself and other scientists who come to the Bureau for information, but it lends scientific books to proper accredited scientific people all over the country.

About one-third of the whole collection of books in the Weather Bureau library are bound volumes of scientific periodicals including publications in English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, Russian, Magyar, Japanese and other tongues.

Another department of the library has some ten thousand books giving descriptions and statistics of climate in all parts of the world. For instance, the Weather Bureau of India, where rainfall is often a matter of life and death to the people, issues each year a bound volume of rainfall data that is as big as an unabridged dictionary and weighs nearly twelve pounds. One of his haunting nightmares, Mr. Talman says, is what that file of volumes will be like in the year 5000. Germany, also has a great deal of weather, and leaves none of it unrecorded. The British are lavish publishers of weather statistics. The Russian weather experts are now trying to make up for lost time, with the publication of weather statistics for their vast territory.

Weather as a science, however, is comparatively young. As an organized science it extends only to about the middle of the nineteenth century. But when you realize that for years there have been more than thirty thousand observers in different parts of the world making observations two or three times a day, the volume of statistics already accumulated is tremendous.

But the collections of books on the weather at the U. S. Weather Bureau goes back far beyond the time of telegraphic weather reports and systematic measurement. It goes back beyond that first attempt at the collection of weather data through the cooperation of several observers in Italy in 1654.

Mr. Talman showed me a treatise on the weather published by old Albertus Magnus in 1494. That was just a paraphrase of the first scientific treatise on the weather written by the Greek philosopher, Aristotle more than three hundred years before the Christian era.

He also showed me a weather journal of the Rev. Wm. Morle in which were recorded the weather conditions in his locality in England day by day from 1337 to 1344. The first weather records kept in America as far as is known were also kept by a minister, the Rev. Johan Campanius. He kept a weather record day by day in the little Swedish colony of New Sweden near the present site of Wilmington, Delaware, for the years 1644 and 1645.

At that time, meteorological instruments were in their earliest infancy. There were no instruments used and no accurate measurements recorded. They were just everyday observations of the general condition of the weather at that place. Old books such as those journals may throw some light on whether or not there have been any changes in our climate, but for the most part they are merely of antiquarian interest.

Mr. Talman says, however, that some of the meteorological libraries abroad surpass our U. S. Weather Bureau library in the matter of antiquities, but very few of them. As far as modern works on the weather are concerned, the library of the U. S. Weather Bureau, with its nearly fifty thousand volumes, is without doubt the largest and strongest meteorological collection in the world. Whether it is old or new, if it concerns the weather in any of its many and varied ramifications from prehistoric weather legends to the latest effort at long range forecasting it has a place in our great reservoir of weather information at Washington.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Our old friend, Ob. Server seems to have enjoyed his visit to the greatest weather library in the world. It is certainly good to know where to find the facts. --- This time two weeks from today, with the cooperation of the United States Department of Agriculture, Station _____ will present another of these chats with the weather man.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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