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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

By Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University.

FLOODS AND DROUGHTS

There is only a certain amount of water vapor available for rainfall. If one region is a rain hog and robs another region of its due share of rainfall the first is likely to experience floods while the second suffers from drouth at the same time. This summer our Middle West has shown a characteristic concentration of rainfall. The northern plains states got some of the rain that belonged to Texas. The rainfall for the Mississippi Valley region is furnished mostly by moist southerly winds blowing up from the Gulf of Mexico. This year the winds were unusually strong, went right through Texas without pausing, and deposited their rain much farther north. It has been found that on the coast of Texas the stronger the wind in summer, the less the rainfall. Summer time showers, of the type common in the South, cannot develop far in a strong general wind. For a heavy horizontal wind interferes with the rising columns of heated air which support shower clouds and breaks up the clouds themselves before they become large and dense enough for rain.

(Tomorrow: The Storm Halo)

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