

A Science Service Feature

Released on receipt
but intended for use
June 14, 1927

? WHY THE WEATHER .

Mailed June 7, 1927

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology

WELLS THAT PREDICT THE WEATHER

Wells that predict weather changes are local curiosities in many parts of the United States. If the well is open at the top, its manifestations consist of occasional disturbances of the water and the discharge of numerous bubbles. If it is covered, a strong current of air is, at times, emitted from any small orifice in the cover. This may be strong enough to lift and blow away light objects placed over the aperture. Its emission is frequently accompanied by a loud whistling or roaring sound. Such wells are generally known as "blowing wells".

As a rule these phenomena correspond to fluctuations in barometric pressure and therefore are, in a rough way, indicative of changes in weather. It is obvious that a body of air enclosed in the earth and communicating by one or a few small openings with the air above will set up outdrafts and indrafts in adjusting its tension to that of the latter. The amount of air contained in the well itself would not suffice to produce the violent effects observed, and it is therefore assumed that the typical blowing well taps a subterranean reservoir of air, probably filling the interstices of sand and gravel beds. When the pressure of the external air diminishes, some of the imprisoned air escapes. For a given body of enclosed air, the smaller the channel or channels by which it emerges, the stronger the outdraft. When the barometric pressure outside increases, the current of air flows in the reverse direction, and the well is then said to "suck".

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE,
21st and B Sts.,
Washington, D.C.