

Released on receipt  
but intended for use  
August 8, 1927

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed August 1, 1927

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology

JULY WEATHER - AND MURPHY

July, 1927, has passed and the American farmer is cheerful. Most of the great staple crops of this continent are flourishing. Wheat will be a bumper crop. Corn has made rapid recovery from the effects of adverse conditions last spring. The weather of the past month was in no way exceptional or remarkable.

The unofficial prognosticator who threatened us with devastating cold waves in July took a long shot. The odds were a hundred to one against him, but he might have hit the mark. Such things have happened. There was the case of Murphy.

In England, after the lapse of nearly a century, they still talk of "Murphy's Winter". Daniel Murphy published a "Weather Almanac", in which, among a number of vague and haphazard prophecies, he declared that the lowest temperature of 1838 would be experienced on January 20. This prediction was verified in the fullest measure. January 20 was the coldest day England had known for generations. The prophet became famous overnight. People flocked to the booksellers to buy copies of his almanac. The edition was soon exhausted and this work actually underwent more than fifty reprintings to satisfy public demand.

Meteorologists have since compared the daily predictions in Murphy's almanac for 1838 with the weather that prevailed day by day during that year in London. The announcements for 197 days were decidedly wrong. The others were wholly or partly right, but were mostly as indefinite and elastic as almanac weather predictions are wont to be. One lucky guess made the author immortal, and, incidentally, rich.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

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