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October 10, 1927.

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed October 1, 1927.

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology

BEARDING TORNADOES IN THEIR DEN

The man who has had more personal experiences with tornadoes and has written more about them than anybody else in the world is Colonel John P. Finley, a retired officer of the United States Army. He was a lieutenant in the Signal Corps in the days when that branch of the Army conducted the meteorological service of the country, now carried on by the Weather Bureau. In the early eighties he was placed in charge of the field investigation of tornadoes and other violent local storms, with headquarters at Kansas City. In execution of this duty he traveled about the country, visiting the scenes of recent tornadoes and occasionally running into one of these storms in active operation. He organized a corps of 2,500 tornado reporters representing every state and territory in the Union, from whose records he assembled a remarkable fund of information concerning the deadliest storms on earth.

By an odd coincidence, Colonel Finley was in the Weather Bureau office in Washington, recounting some of his experiences with tornadoes, at the very moment the recent disastrous storm struck St. Louis. On one occasion he was driving over the prairie when he saw unmistakable signs of a coming "twister" on the western horizon. He stopped at a farmhouse, where he found a woman preparing supper. Briefly explaining the danger he instructed her to put out the fire, and aided her in doing so. He then rounded up other members of the family, who were out in the fields, and assembled them all in the southwest corner of the cellar. Hardly had they reached this refuge when the bellowing monster reached the spot, lifted the entire house from its foundations and set it down, almost intact, in an adjoining field. Nobody in the cellar was injured. That night the farmer's family slept in their house, which was still habitable despite its change of location.

EDITORS: Clients of WHY THE WEATHER were given advance coverage on the background of the St. Louis tornado through the emergency copy sent out May 16. In this packet giving coverage of typical summer spot news weather stories were contained a story: TORNADO FACTS and a two column matrix photograph of a typical tornado. The emergency packet covering fall and winter spot weather news will be sent out shortly.

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman
Authority on Meteorology

ST. LOUIS'S PREVIOUS TORNADO

St. Louis shares with Galveston the doubtful honor of having been the scene of two historic storms. There were two "Galveston Hurricanes" - 1900 and 1915. Now there have been two "St. Louis Tornadoes".

St. Louis's earlier visitation was on May 27, 1896. The storm entered the city from the west about 6:10 p.m. and traveled 6 miles eastward to the Mississippi River at a speed of about 36 miles an hour. This figure does not, of course, represent the velocity of the wind, but the progress of the whirl as a whole. The storm track was at first about a mile and a half wide and then narrowed to a mile. The storm was most severe in Lafayette Park and the surrounding district. Nearly every tree in the park was twisted or broken off, and some were uprooted. The bark was stripped from many.

A striking feature of this tornado was that, as it passed through the city, it did not descend to the ground but remained with its lower edge at a nearly uniform distance of about 30 feet above it. In a great majority of houses that were struck the damage was above the first floor, except in the case of collapse, near the center of the track, and of the crushing of lower floors by the weight of debris falling from above. Hundreds of walls were blown out above the first floors while the lower walls remained intact. In the park nearly all the trees were broken off above a height of 30 feet.

The storm crossed the river and passed through East St. Louis, Ill., where further havoc was wrought. The loss of life in both towns was 306, and the property loss was estimated at \$12,904,000.

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