

A Science Service Feature

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! WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 9, 1928

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MORE ABOUT "BLIZZARD"

The long controversy that has raged about the history of the word "blizzard" has been previously mentioned in these notes. Fresh light is shed on this interesting subject in the current number of American Speech, where it is discussed at great length by Mr. Allen Walker Read, an instructor at the University of Missouri.

It is an old story that this word was applied colloquially in America to a violent blow (not of wind), the discharge of a gun, etc., long before it began to be used in the present sense. Mr. Read supplies many examples of these earlier uses.

There is another familiar statement, found in dictionaries and elsewhere, to the effect that the word was used as at present some time prior to 1870 in a newspaper called the Northern Vindicator, said to have been published at Esherville, Ill. It now appears that there never was an "Esherville" in Illinois, but that there was and is an "Estherville" in Iowa, where the Northern Vindicator (now the Vindicator and Republican) began publication in 1868. The earliest example of the word found in the old and incomplete files of the Vindicator is dated April 23, 1870, and refers to the storm of March 14, 1870. There is much evidence that the editor of the newspaper, O.C. Bates, borrowed the word from the picturesque vocabulary of an eccentric inhabitant of Estherville named Ellis. There are, however, several alternative stories as to both the place and the mode of origin.

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