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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A PIONEER AMERICAN METEOROLOGIST

In the year 1730 a young Scottish physician, Dr. John Lining, settled in Charleston (then called Charlestown), in the colony of South Carolina, where he practiced medicine for 30 years. Throughout his life Lining pursued scientific inquiries in many fields, and among them was meteorology. He was especially interested in the relation of weather to epidemic diseases, and he was thus led to maintain regular meteorological observations, beginning in the year 1738 - the first series of such observations made with instruments in America. The principal results of his observations have frequently been published.

The weather instruments used by this early observer included a barometer, a Fahrenheit thermometer, another thermometer which he describes as "Hawksbee's", a rain-gauge of unknown pattern, and a hygroscope. Of the last he says in a letter to the secretary of the Royal Society: "The hygroscope is a whipcord prepared after the same manner as that of the societies in Edinburgh; the difference between its greatest and least length...I found to be 5 inches, for which I made an index 5 inches long and divided it into 100/<sup>equal</sup>parts." The instruments were installed outside a northeast window in a screen or shelter, which protected them from the sun.

In May, 1753, Lining performed the experiment of drawing electricity from the clouds by means of a kite, following the example set by Benjamin Franklin a year before.

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