

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed January 28, 1929

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SNOW LOADS ON BUILDINGS

It is a paradoxical fact that though climatic data for all parts of the civilized world have been worked up and published in elaborate detail, these data are quite inadequate to answer the innumerable questions that are constantly arising about particular features of climate. For example:

Not long ago Professor Ward, the well-known Harvard climatologist, was asked by an architect exactly what weight should be planned for in building roofs in a certain locality to support the heaviest snow that would ever fall upon them. "The question," says Professor Ward, "was a reasonable one, but the answer was not quite so easy to give in the precise figures that were desired. Our ordinary numerical data of snowfall include the mean annual and mean monthly depths, the number of inches on the ground at the middle and end of each month, and so on, but they do not give the maximum depth on the ground at any one time during the period of observation. Even if they did, as the weight of snow depends on its density and the density is not tabulated, the exact weight is unknown.

"Engineers and architects would be benefited if our snowfall records were more complete. I believe many city building ordinances regarding the weight that a flat and a sloping roof must be able to support might well be revised."

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