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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

LONG TORNADO PATHS

According to statistics collected many years ago by Lieut. Finley, the average length of a tornado path is about 25 miles, but the length in individual cases varies all the way from a few hundred yards up to 300 miles or more. C.J. Root, of the U.S. Weather Bureau, has gathered information concerning paths of exceptional length. He finds that on March 20, 1875, two tornadoes followed parallel paths across Georgia and South Carolina; the path in one case was 350 miles long and in the other 375 miles long. There were, however, some long breaks in these paths, the tornadoes having, as such storms often do, played leap-frog over certain parts of the regions traversed. Two other tornadoes in the southern states, later in the 'seventies, appear to have had paths more than 350 miles long, but information about them is meager.

A tornado that passed over Tennessee April 29, 1909, is credited with a path 315 miles long. Reports do not state whether the path was continuous or interrupted by large breaks, but the record of losses does not indicate ~~continuous~~ destruction. The so-called Mattoon tornado of May 26, 1917, which crossed the whole state of Illinois and three-fourths of Indiana, had a track 293 miles long, which was almost continuous, though there were some short skips. The storm took 7 hours and 20 minutes to cover this path.

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