

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE TERM "INDIAN SUMMER"

Thanks to the industry of Albert Matthews, of Boston, a copious fund of information concerning the history of the term "Indian summer" was published in the year 1902, though the origin of the term then remained in doubt and does to this day. At that time the earliest known use of the name was in an entry dated October 13, 1794, in the journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, kept in western Pennsylvania. Three examples dating from 1790 have since been found in a journal kept by Gen. Josiah Harmer during an expedition against the Indian villages near the present site of Fort Wayne, Ind. No earlier use of the term is known in English, but the French equivalent of "Indian summer", with a description of the season, occurs in a book published in Paris in 1787, quoting a letter supposed to have been written in 1778.

The first dictionary record of the term is said to be that found in the 1841 edition of Webster. De Quincy used the term in England in 1830, and it has long been well established throughout the English-speaking world. Alfred Austin, as poet laureate, found "An Indian Summer" a fitting title for the poem he addressed to Queen Victoria on her eightieth birthday, containing the lines:

"Long may the Indian summer of your days
Yet linger in the land you love so well."

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