

A Science Service Feature

Released on receipt
but intended for use
December 23, 1929

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed December 16, 1929

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A NEBRASKA HAILSTORM

Hailstones "as big as grapefruit" that fell at Potter, Nebraska, on July 6, 1928, established a new American record for size, so far as well-authenticated and trustworthy statistics go. The largest one that was measured, weighed and photographed on that occasion, was 17 inches in circumference, with a weight of 1-1/2 lbs. It is likely, however, that bigger hailstones have sometimes fallen in this country, and a storm in which this may have happened was the one that occurred in the same state of Nebraska on June 20, 1881. Strange to say the details of this storm have only just been brought to the attention of the scientific world. No reference to the event is found in Weather Bureau records, nor is it mentioned in the list of destructive hailstorms published in Greeley's "American Weather," which describes five other storms of that year.

According to a description which the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society reprints from the Omaha Bee, the storm was attended by high winds and torrential rain as well as hail, and caused immense damage in Thayer and Jefferson Counties. At Alexandria, Thayer County, according to this story,

"Not only were the sidings of houses broken, but the 'pieces of ice' that fell actually pierced the sidings and the roofs of the houses and pelted the inmates...breaking dishes and smashing furniture. Outside the buildings the falling ice killed cattle, horses, hogs, dogs and chickens. Accompanied by a tornado-like wind, the hailstones leveled all the growing crops, stripped trees of fruit and foliage, and bruised and battered human beings who were caught in it. Stories were told of persons who tried to save livestock from the fury of the storm being knocked down and sustaining broken bones when struck by the huge hailstones. The stones were said to be jagged lumps of ice, some of them as large as small heads of cabbage.

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