

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
February 15, 1930.

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 8, 1930.

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

THE STRONGEST WINDS

Years ago the United States Signal Service, the predecessor of the present Weather Bureau, maintained a small observatory just below the summit of Mount Washington, New Hampshire. Many high winds were recorded there, and the highest of all was on January 11, 1879, when an anemometer held out of the window by the observer registered 186 miles an hour. The instrument used was one requiring certain corrections at high velocities, which would make the true speed of the wind in this case about 140 miles an hour. It is said, however, that the instrument was partly sheltered by the building so that it was not exposed to the full force of the gale, and one especially competent authority has expressed the opinion that the sheltering effect approximately offset the instrumental error, so that the actual wind force may have been about what was indicated.

This was the highest wind of which we have any definite measurement, though higher winds undoubtedly occur in tropical cyclones and very much higher in tornadoes. At San Juan, Porto Rico, during the hurricane of September 13, 1928, an anemometer of newer type, which gives much more accurate readings, registered 160 miles an hour just before it was wrecked by the storm.

Tornado winds are beyond measurement, but a rough estimate based on the observed explosive effect of the vortex when it passes over a building and the dimensions of the vortex leads to 500 miles an hour as the "order of magnitude" in a full-fledged storm of this type.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
21st and B Sts.
Washington, D.C.