

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed April 19, 1930.

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ADVERTISING THERMOMETERS

About a decade ago a rather extensive business was built up in the United States and Canada in connection with the display of so-called "advertising thermometers." These were glass thermometers, four to ten feet long, mounted in a groove of a board on which space was available for advertisements. Agents went from town to town selling the space to local merchants. Their advertisements were painted on the board, the thermometer was hung up in some conspicuous place, and the agent passed on his way, perhaps never to return. The instruments, often quite unreliable to begin with, were hung up without regard to correct exposure, and they received little or no attention after being installed.

Dr. A.H. Palmer, who investigated these instruments, wrote: "The unfortunate fact in connection with the matter is the confidence which the public places in the temperatures indicated by these thermometers. With few exceptions, they are found displayed in small towns only. The temperature data are sometimes published in the local newspapers. In traveling about California the writer has discovered a number of these thermometers in public places. Several were so exposed that the sun shone directly upon them during a large part of each clear day. In one case it was found that the glass thermometer tube had slipped along the groove in the wood, making the indicated readings inaccurate, as the scale marks were painted upon the wooden background."

It would be interesting to know how many small towns are still being misinformed by these crude instruments, and whether the business of displaying them is still carried on.

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