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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 5, 1931

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VOLUNTEER WEATHER OBSERVERS

The United States Weather Bureau employs a small army of salaried observers and a much bigger army of observers who receive no pay for their services. The latter are known officially as "cooperative observers." C. J. Root, who supervises the 81 cooperative weather stations in Illinois, has recently published an account of the work in that state, where two existing stations have maintained continuous observations for more than 35 years, several more than 25 years, and 19 more than 15 years. Observations are taken once a day and the records are mailed monthly to the "section center" at Springfield.

Before the days of the Weather Bureau and of its predecessor, the Signal Service, the work of volunteer weather stations in Illinois and many other states was under the direction of the Smithsonian Institution. One of the early observers, John West James, began observations on his farm near Marengo, Illinois, in 1860, and continued them at the same place almost without interruption until his last illness in 1917, a period of 57 years.

A substantially unbroken record was kept by Dr. Friedrich Brendel, at Peoria, for 50 years, beginning 1855. It is stated of this faithful observer that in his later years, while seriously ill and lying apparently unconscious, he would still rouse regularly at the observation hour and direct his nurses to read the thermometers.

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