

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE PARIS OBSERVATORY

A recent announcement--since denied--that the famous Observatory of Paris was about to close aroused interest among the weathermen as well as among the astronomers. Though now devoted entirely to astronomical work this institution is conspicuous in the history of meteorology as the birthplace of "weather telegraphy," the introduction of which made possible existing methods of predicting weather from synoptic charts.

During the Crimean war, on November 14, 1854, a violent storm swept over the French and British fleets in the Black Sea, resulting in the loss of the French warship "Henry IV." U.J.J. Le Verrier, who had recently succeeded Arago as director of the Paris Observatory, was appealed to by the French minister of war, Marshal Vaillant, to study the meteorological conditions leading up to this event. Le Verrier accordingly gathered information from various parts of Europe, which showed plainly that the storm moved in such a way across the continent that its occurrence on the Black Sea might have been foreseen if telegraphic reports had been collected from more westerly places.

On February 16, 1855, he presented to the French emperor plans for a telegraphic storm-warning service. The plan was approved and was shortly afterward put into operation, reports of current weather conditions being furnished regularly from the principal cities of Europe. A daily bulletin of these reports began publication Jan. 1, 1858, and a daily weather map in September, 1863. The map has appeared continuously since that time, though its features have undergone many changes.

The Paris observatory was the headquarters of the national meteorological and climatological service of France until 1878, when a separate service was organized and the observatory reverted to its original character of a purely astronomical institution.

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