

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE "SNOWFLAKE MAN"

The name of Wilson A. Bentley, who died December 23, was known to every scientific student of weather in the world, though Bentley was neither a man of science nor a scholar. He was a Vermont farmer, who, with little book learning to aid him, enriched science with thousands of marvelous microscopic photographs of snow crystals and of other minute forms of ice and water. His hobby for 46 years was to photograph such objects. His collection of snow crystal negatives numbered more than 5,000, and no two were exactly alike.

From time to time pictures from this collection appeared in books, magazines and newspapers, and the photographer thus eventually became a national celebrity. He was often referred to as "the snowflake man". Many of his best pictures, however, remained unpublished until the American Meteorological Society, with the aid of funds provided by a generous Bostonian, who modestly remains anonymous, secured the publication of a book, entitled "Snow Crystals," which contains a copious selection of Bentley's photographs, with descriptive text by Dr. W. J. Humphreys. This unique volume appeared only a few weeks before the death of the skillful photographer.

Bentley told me a few years ago that, including the value of his time, estimated at the low rate of \$1.50 a day, he had invested upwards of \$15,000 in his photographs, while the gross proceeds from the sale of them did not exceed \$4,000. And to Mary B. Mullett, of the American Magazine, he once said: "I am a poor man, except in the satisfaction I get out of my work. In that respect I am one of the richest men in the world."

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