

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
March 16, 1932

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed March 9, 1932

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

A WET SPOT IN HAWAII

One of the rainiest places in the world is the summit of Mount Waialeale, in the Island of Kauai, Hawaiian Islands -- and thereby hangs a tale. A rain-gauge was installed on this mountain in the year 1911. It was not a gauge of the ordinary kind, but one designed for holding an entire year's rainfall. Nobody lives on the mountaintop and the difficulty of reaching it is formidable. A visit generally involves a six-hour horseback ride the first day, two hours by horse and four hours on foot going up, and the same coming down, the second day, and six hours more by horse the third day. It is nearly always raining on the mountain, and when the traveler is on foot a misstep will frequently drop him into water up to his knees and sometimes to his waist. He is generally soaked and mud-covered throughout the hike.

All this explains why the gauge originally placed on the mountain was designed to be read only about once a year. It proved, however, to be too small. On three occasions it was found to be overflowing when visited, and hence in 1920 a larger gauge--the world's biggest--was installed by the U.S. Weather Bureau. It is planned to hold the amount of water resulting from a rainfall of 900 inches.

Since the first gauge was installed the record for 17 months has been lost on account of accidents to the apparatus. For this reason, as well as on account of the overflows already mentioned, and also because there may be some loss of water from the gauge by evaporation (though in this remarkably damp climate the loss is probably not great), the average yearly rainfall at this spot is somewhat uncertain.

The latest tentative figure given by the Weather Bureau is 436 inches a year; which surpasses by 8 inches the latest official average for Cherrapunji, in the mountains of Assam; long famous as the rainiest known spot on earth.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
21st and Constitution Ave.
Washington, D. C.