

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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DARK DAYS

Forest fires are the principal cause of so-called "dark days" in North America. Probably the most celebrated of such days was May 19, 1780, when, in consequence of great forest fires along Lake Champlain and down to the vicinity of Ticonderoga, darkness like that of night prevailed in New England. All but the most necessary business was suspended, the schools were dismissed and the greater part of the population flocked to church to prepare for the end of the world, which was believed to be at hand. Whittier, in "The Tent on the Beach," has described this wonderful darkness, when

"Birds ceased to sing, and all the barnyard fowls
Roosted; the cattle at the pasture bars
Low'd, and look'd homeward; bats on leathern wings
Flitted abroad; the sounds of labor died;
Men prayed and women wept; all ears grew sharp
To hear the doom-blast."

The great Idaho fire of August, 1910, was responsible for daytime darkness over a larger area than in any other case on record on our continent. Artificial light was required during the day over a broad belt extending from Idaho to northern Vermont, but smoke was observed far beyond this area. The British ship "Dunfermline" reported that on the Pacific Ocean, 500 miles west of San Francisco, the smell of smoke was noticed and haze prevailed for days.

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