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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 22, 1932

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THE EARLIEST WEATHER MAPS

It is a remarkable fact that, although the keeping of daily weather records began in Europe in the middle of the seventeenth century, nobody conceived the idea of charting the geographical distribution of weather day by day until the second decade of the nineteenth.

The inventor of the "synchronous" weather map, as we now call a chart depicting instantaneous meteorological conditions occurring simultaneously at numerous places, was H.W. Brandes, who was a professor at the University of Breslau when, about 1819, he drew the first maps of this character. Utilizing records published long before by a famous international association of weather observers, the Meteorological Society of the Palatinate, together with some data from other sources, he constructed daily weather maps of Europe for the whole of the year 1783. These maps were never published, but the conclusions he drew from them were embodied in a book that he published in 1820.

Other meteorologists -- notably Espy and Loomis, in America -- soon developed further this idea of charting instantaneous weather. Their maps were necessarily drawn from old data, since the day of telegraphic weather reports had not yet arrived, and hence these maps could not be used as a basis of weather forecasts, but they threw a flood of light upon the habitual processes of weather and thus paved the way for the scientific methods of forecasting that, with the introduction of telegraphy, came later into vogue.

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