

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 4, 1933

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

THE HIGHEST WEATHER STATION

One of the most remarkable feats in the history of meteorology was the establishment and maintenance of the former weather station on the summit of El Misti, Peru - the loftiest installation of the kind ever operated in the world. This magnificent volcanic mountain, adjacent to the city of Arequipa, rises to a height of 19,200 feet above sea-level. The station was established in 1893 by Prof. S.I. Bailey, then in charge of the astronomical observatory long maintained by Harvard College at Arequipa.

Although the mountain had been climbed many times and a large iron cross had been erected many years before on the summit, the climb was so difficult, especially on account of the effects of mountain sickness, that Prof. Bailey decided to construct a trail for mules all the way to the top, thus facilitating access to the proposed station. A preliminary ascent was made on September 27. On October 12, with two other members of the observatory staff, twelve Indians and thirteen mules he again reached the summit, this time taking up a portable hut, an outfit of instruments and an instrument shelter.

The station was equipped with self-registering instruments, most of which ran without attention for ten days, and eventually a meteorograph designed for running three months was added, but this did not prove satisfactory. No observer remained constantly at the station, but it was visited and its instruments were read, record-sheets changed, etc., about three times a month. One observer, G.A. Waterbury, made fifty ascents during the two years 1894 and 1895. In some months no ascents could be made on account of stormy weather. The station was closed and its instruments were taken back to Arequipa, January 1, 1901. The results of the observations made at this lofty spot have been published in detail in the Annals of Harvard College Observatory.

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