

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 3, 1933

"INDIAN SUMMER"

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With the possible exception of the word "blizzard" there is no term in the weather vocabulary whose origin and early history have been the subject of more research and discussion than "Indian summer." A classic memoir on this term was published by Albert Matthews in the Monthly Weather Review in 1902. The earliest example of its use that Mr. Matthews was able to cite at that time was one from the journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, dated 1794. Later Mr. Matthews discovered an example of the French equivalent of the term in a work published in 1787, but perhaps written in 1778; this work being a French translation from the English. In 1911 the late Josiah Morrow, of Lebanon, Ohio, found three examples in the journal of Gen. Josiah Harmar, kept in the Northwest Territory, in what are now the States of Indiana and Ohio, in 1790.

We do not know where or when the term was first employed and we are equally in the dark as to how the name "Indian" came to be applied to a summer-like period in the autumn. About a dozen different reasons have been suggested. They are all mere guesses, though one or another of them is often stated in positive terms as the true explanation.

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