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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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ICE CRYSTAL PICTURES

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In the days of our grandfathers there existed in books a few hundred drawings of snow crystals and other kinds of ice crystal. Today the total number of drawings and photographs available for inspection in scientific libraries amounts to several thousand.

The old drawings varied in quality. The earliest extant, published in 1555 in a book by Claus Magnus, show us among the forms supposed to have been found among snow crystals such imaginary patterns as the crescent, crown, arrow-head, human hand and human eye! On the other hand many painstaking artists have drawn snow and ice crystals; but even the best drawings are usually too much conventionalized. They tend to ignore the little irregularities nearly always seen in such objects, despite their symmetrical patterns.

The earliest microphotographs of ice crystals appear to have been made in the eighties of the last century, when Wilson A. Bentley had already begun his wonderful work in this field in America and a now nearly forgotten photographer was taking similar pictures in Russia. The earliest published photographs appeared in Germany in 1892.

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