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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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"CEILING" .

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The term "ceiling" has been used in various senses among weathermen and aviators. Originally it meant the greatest height to which any particular plane was capable of climbing. The ceilings of different planes, in this sense of the term, varied widely. Later it came to be more commonly applied to the height above the ground of the lower surface of low clouds, as limiting the practical height of flying. "Ceiling lights" and "ceiling balloons" were introduced for measuring this height.

The most recent official usage in the United States is indicated by the following definition, promulgated by the Weather Bureau:

"The 'ceiling' at any given time is generally defined as being the highest point at which a pilot may operate his plane and still distinguish the earth. However, the practical ceiling is usually somewhat lower than this, as most pilots prefer to be able to see horizontally beneath the ceiling to some extent. While it will readily be seen that in most cases the ceiling will coincide with the base of any clouds present, this is not always true. During heavy rain or snow, or when thick haze or smoke is present, the flying ceiling may be much lower than the cloud base."

The measurements and estimates of ceiling made by American airway observers relate to clouds of low or intermediate levels covering enough of the sky to interfere with flying. When the clouds, if any are present, are all of the lofty types that prevail above flying levels and there are only scattered clouds or none at lower levels, the ceiling is described as "unlimited."

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