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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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EARLY MARINE METEOROLOGY

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"The history of marine meteorology," writes H.T. Smith, of the British Meteorological Office, "is of necessity linked with the history of the development of shipping, but it is a peculiar fact that while shipping made almost incredible advances during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the advantages to be gained from a systematic collection and compilation of weather observations at sea was not generally realized until half through the nineteenth century."

It was, of course, Maury who first gathered such records on a large scale, and the earliest of his famous Wind and Current charts, relating to the North Atlantic, did not appear until 1847. He had, however, some precursors. When Maury's latest biographer, John W. Wayland, says of the chart just mentioned that "it was the first great map of its kind for the guidance of ships in the open seas," he overlooks the fact that the English astronomer Halley published a chart of the trade winds and the monsoons in 1688 -- the earliest of all meteorological charts -- and that Benjamin Franklin published one of the Gulf Stream in 1770,

A fairly accurate account of the trade winds was published in 1675 by John Sellar, hydrographer to the King of England. In 1809-11 Capt. James Horsburgh, hydrographer to the Honorable East India Company, published his "India Directory," which gives very full descriptions of the winds on the Eastern routes, and contains an analysis of a number of East Indiamen's logs for the period 1791-1807 to determine the limits of the trades.

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