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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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MEDICAL WEATHER OBSERVERS

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology

Long before the organization of the present official meteorological services of North America, a system of weather observations was founded in the United States by the Medical Department of the Army. An order dated May 2, 1814, makes it the duty of hospital surgeons to keep a diary of the weather, and one such journal, specifically recognizing this order and kept at Cambridge, Mass., is dated July, 1816. This order had the hearty endorsement of the first Surgeon General of the Army, General Joseph Lovell, appointed in 1818. In his approval of the order he says:

"Every physician who makes a science of his profession or arrives at eminence in it will keep a journal of this nature, as the influence of weather and climate upon diseases, especially epidemics, is perfectly well known. From the circumstances of the soldier, their effects upon diseases of the army are peculiarly interesting, as by proper management they may in a great measure be obviated. To this end every surgeon should be furnished with a good thermometer and, in addition to a diary of the weather, should note everything relative to the topography of his station, the climate, complaints prevalent in the vicinity, etc., that may tend to discover the causes of disease."

Several volumes of meteorological registers were published by the Surgeon General's office, covering the years 1822 to 1854, inclusive.

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