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? WHY THE WEATHER ? - Mailed Oct. 16, 1935

A SHRINKING GLACIER

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For some years there has been a remarkable general shrinking of glaciers in the western United States, several of which are now accurately measured from year to year. The case that has attracted most attention is that of the Nisqually Glacier, on Mount Rainier, which, besides others on the same mountain, is measured regularly by Park Naturalist C. Frank Brockman. In 1934 the Nisqually set a new record, with a recession of 155 feet. This, says Mr. Brockman, is a truly startling figure compared with 44 feet in 1933 and 50 feet in 1932. The greatest measured in any previous year was 118 feet in 1930. The average recession for the past 15 years has been 67 feet a year.

The total shortening of this glacier since 1918, when annual measurements were begun by the Park Service, now amounts to 1,164 feet. The position of the glacier's terminus in 1857 is known with fair accuracy from contemporary observations, and the total recession since that year amounts to about 3,374 feet, or a little less than two-thirds of a mile.

The size of a glacier--not always accurately indicated by its length--varies with temperature, precipitation (chiefly snowfall) and evaporation, and its relations to weather and climate are therefore quite complex.

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