

Where Old Boreas Bows and Zephyrus Waits

Weatherman Welsh, Who Mingles Medicine Hat and Tampa Town in His Crucible for Omaha Uses : : :

Service of the Weather Bureau

The United States Weather Bureau is one of the functions of the general government that touches the people very closely. Its service is to all society, especially to the transportation and agricultural industries, but is valuable to any enterprise the success of which depends on weather conditions. It is one of the highly specialized branches of the government, and its operations are directed by men of high scientific attainment. Long study, deep research and extensive experimentation, with absolute records, made by automatic self-recording instruments for every second of the day of climatological conditions at the points of observation, bring to the forecasts of the Weather Bureau the most complete knowledge man can possess of the subject and yet forecasts are not made for a longer period than thirty-six hours, and even with that limitation of time, 75 per cent of accuracy is considered a good record. Do you wonder, then, that these men of science hoot at the long distance forecasts of astrologers and necromancers, followers of the goose-bone and the corn-husk?

SEE, gentle reader, any week day morning, a man seated at a desk gazing upon a large sheet of paper on which is printed a map of the U. S. A.

The man has grey eyes and a short grey mustache and goatee. A hair brush wouldn't be a very good Christmas present for him. No, indeed.

The man has a red pencil and a blue pencil and he is making long, sinuous lines all over the map of the U. S. A. He is also writing figures, some in red and some in blue on the map.

What is the man doing?

He is figuring out whether it is going to be fair and warmer or colder with snow in Omaha tomorrow.

Who is the man?

Colonel Lucius A. Welsh, in charge of the United States weather bureau at Omaha, genial gentleman, jovial jokesmith, perennial youth in spite of well-nigh three score years and ten.

Observe please, that we said his name is "Welsh." If the typesetter were to put a "c" in place of that "s" we would deem it nothing less than a calamity, a catastrophe, a holocaust. The colonel is a precise man and he has saddled by a playful fate with a name that people are always getting wrong. They spell it all kinds of ways,—Welsh, Welch, Walsh, Walch, Walsch. Lots of them pronounce it "Wallsh," which is worst of all. That is "lese majeste," nothing less.

Oh, yes, we almost forgot. In painting our powerful, perspicacious and particularly pleasing pen picture of the colonel we forgot to put his pipe in his mouth. The colonel without his pipe is Neptune without his trident. Please add, therefore, one large briar pipe with glowing bowl and blue incense rising therefrom.

Yessir, this is the man who makes the weather. This is he whose daily remarks are read with greater interest and commented upon with wider unanimity than those of the president and all the crowned heads of Europe.

Thermometers, barometers, hygrometers, anemometers, pluviometers, anemoscopes, these are his playthings and he gazes unflinching and unafraid into the very eyes of the fierce telethermoscope. For a man must associate with these dread-named instruments every day if he would wrest from nature, from Boreas and Zephyrus, from air pressures, wind velocities and directions, temperatures and precipitations, the secrets of tomorrow's weather, and give it to an anxious world.

As said before, Colonel Welsh is a most genial man, a boon companion, who can tell stories by the hour, who can crack button-busting jokes and coin epigrams and "bon mots" in perfect georgic-cohan style.

But listen. If you're contemplating a visit to his office on the fourth floor of the federal building, don't, we beg you, don't venture in before, say, the hour of 11 a. m. Up until that time the colonel is reading the telegraphic dispatches from a hundred stations, drawing his isotherm lines on the map of the U. S. A., and making up the weather forecast. Until he has transferred the weather from the scales of uncertainty to the solid shelf of scientific knowledge, disturb him not. For if you do, naught shall save you from the vials of his wrath poured out upon people who pesticate around when folks are busy.

After that hour the colonel can be interviewed with impunity and even with pleasure. His name often finds its way to the public prints because of his prominence as arbiter of the weather in which all manner of men are interested, and because of his breezy personality.

For twenty-seven years now the colonel has been guiding the weather bureau at Omaha, he having taken charge here July 23, 1888, when there weren't any twenty story buildings in Omaha nor any automobiles. And he has been on the job ever since.

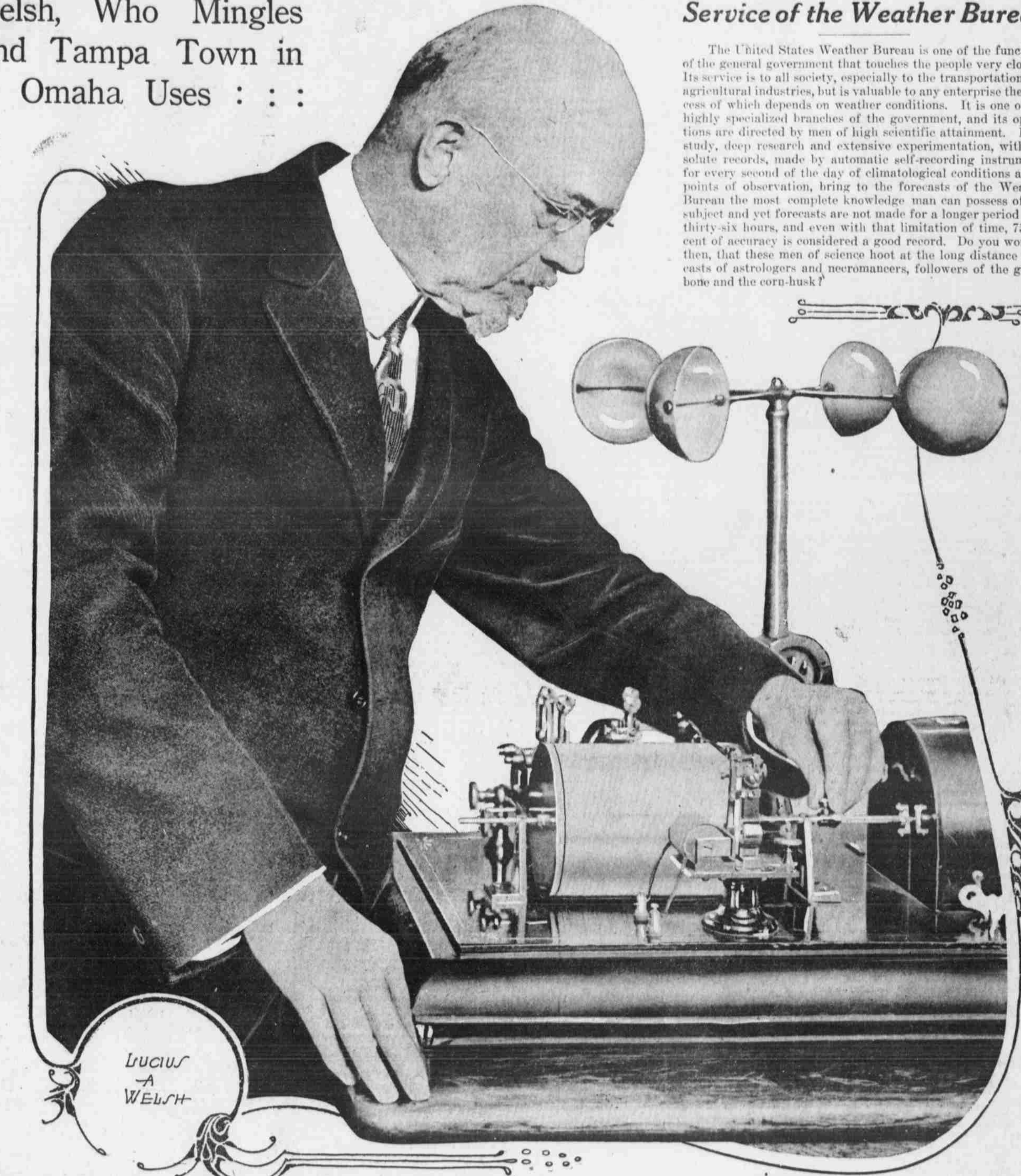
Prior to that time there were a few little details of his life such as his birth, education and marriage, which it may be well to glance at briefly.

He was born in Union county, Ohio, just north of Columbus, September 30, 1848 and his family moved into the neighboring town of Marysville when he was a child. His father was prominent in politics until the time of his death.

Lucius went to grade schools and a private academy and when he was 12 years old the civil war broke out. Immediately he got the fever to enlist and played hockey many a time from school in order to watch the soldiers drilling.

Being afraid that the war could be over before he became old enough to enlist, he ran away when he was less than 15 years old with the Eighty-sixth Ohio regiment. He was a tall, skinny youth and he was passed in as a regular soldier. His mother, as soon as she learned where he was, brought him back home by means of habeas corpus proceedings, and he chewed the cud of discontent until 1864, when he enlisted in the One Hundred and Thirty-sixth Ohio regiment, in which he was the youngest soldier.

His regiment was used along the Potomac to take the place of the veterans, who were sent to Petersburg and Richmond and young Welsh found



LUCIUS
A
WELSH

most of his duties in the capacity of orderly and messenger. He is inclined to look not very seriously on his military service. Sometimes he cocks a reminiscent and mournful eye, takes his pipe out of his mouth and remarks with deep and confidential seriousness:

"D'you know, sometimes I wish I had let the South win the war."

After the war he had a bad case of the wanderlust and used to disappear from home for months at a time. He finally became employed by a commission firm in Indianapolis and later with a larger firm in New York City.

There, in 1873 he became acquainted with C. R. Estabrook, then in charge of the United States signal office, which developed into the weather bureau. Estabrook persuaded him that it was a good service to belong to. So he took the examinations, passed and was ordered to Washington and that same year was assigned to Milwaukee as assistant. July 5, 1875, he took charge of the station in Pittsburgh, Pa.

Early in 1876 he was taken with rheumatism which kept him in bed for six months and on crutches five months longer. This was the only sickness he had in his life.

In January, 1877, while still walking with a

cane, he took charge of the station at Springfield, Mass. Two years later he took charge of the station at Escanaba, Mich. Then he opened a station in Champaign, Ill., and in 1883 he went to Shreveport, La. After a year there he was assigned to St. Louis, where he remained until 1885. Then he took charge of the station at Leavenworth, Kan., and went from there to open a station in Kansas City. Thence he came to Omaha and took charge of the station here, where he has been now more than twenty-seven years.

And the colonel declares, warmly, enthusiastically and forcefully, that in all his daily searching examinations of the map of the well-known United States he hasn't found any better place to live than Omaha.

"No, sir," says the colonel, "Omaha looks good to me and it has looked good to me ever since I landed here."

At this point the colonel is apt to go off into a meteorological rhapsody over the beauty and comfort and loveliness of the Omaha climate, which we will omit.

You've probably seen the colonel coming down to the office from his home at the Merriam, Twenty-fifth and Dodge streets, a tall, ruddy-faced man, who swings along with a vigorous

stride. Or you've seen him go south on Sixteenth street to Farnam about noon and hop lightly on a West Farnam car. People stop him on the streets for some joke about the weather or to put a serious question as to what it's likely to be.

Yes, sixty-seven, that's his age though he doesn't look it by about a score of years. He's the friskiest kid for his years you ever saw. But he won't give away the secret.

"Most men just let themselves get old," he says. "I'm not old and I'm not going to get the foolish idea that just because I happened to be born sixty-seven years ago I ought to be starting to use a cane. No, sir."

Regular habits are one of his conserving virtues. "The neighbors set their clocks by the time I leave the house and get back," he declares.

"I eat twenty-one square meals a week," he further deposes and says, "and I take after both my mother and my father—the one ate fast and the other ate a long while."

He has no bad habits except smoking and he says he has been at that continuously since he was 10 years old. But he is even resolved to cut this out.

"After I'm a hundred years old," he says, "I'm

going to quit smoking for fear it might shorten my life."

About thirty-five years ago he persuaded Miss Katherine Winegar to marry him and they have three children, all grown up, and they're the most wonderful children ever born. The colonel never gets tired talking about them and their accomplishments.

Mr. Welsh was quite an athlete in his younger days, later considerable of a billiard sharp and still later an enthusiastic base ball fan. He's thinking of taking up golf now.

About that middle initial of his, "A." What does it stand for? Nobody knows. It is a deep, dark, dank secret. The colonel won't tell what it stands for. "That doesn't mean anything," he says. You can print it, Alcibiades, Artaxerxes Aguinaldo or anything you want. The terrible secret is locked in the colonel's buzzum. Maybe it's Algeron!

The colonel wants it known that the Omaha office is second to none in equipment and administration, that it is in charge of good, capable men, that it is here for the benefit of the people and that he and his staff are always at the command of the people for any information they can give regarding the weather.