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Comments on “The Myth of Cleveland Abbe: A Review of a Manufactured History of the Creation of the National Weather Service”

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Romano et al.’s (2022) recent article argues that “the image of held of [Cleveland] Abbe today was actively manufactured” and offers to “shed a clearer light on those who contributed to the creation of what is now called the National Weather Service, which recently celebrated its 150th anniversary.” Part of the Cleveland Abbe story is his role at *Monthly Weather Review*, which is also celebrating its 150th anniversary and is part of the National Weather Service history. While Romano et al. (2022) show that others may have misrepresented Abbe’s accomplishments, the evidence for Abbe misrepresenting his own accomplishments is nonexistent, as the AMS ad hoc Committee’s *Abbe Report* determined (AMS 2022). Unfortunately, Romano et al. (2022) make assertions that misrepresent the early history of *Monthly Weather Review* and whether a single person could have been responsible for its creation. This comment attempts to set the record straight with regard to Abbe and *Monthly Weather Review*.

The relevant quotation in Romano et al. (2022) is the following:

In a speech he gave in 1890 to the South African Philosophical Society, later published in the *Transactions of the South African Philosophical Society* in 1892, Abbe pointed repeatedly to the bureau's accomplishments for which he alone was responsible. In a variation of this "I have started..." theme, he claimed responsibility (albeit "for" General [Albert J.] Myer) for starting the *Monthly Weather Review*, stating: "In 1874 the scope of the Signal Service organization was greatly enlarged by the addition of the observers who had hitherto reported to the Smithsonian; these are known as the voluntary observers. By means of all this new data the monthly weather review, that I had started for General Myer in January 1873, and that had hitherto dealt principally with the phenomena of storms, was enlarged so as to cover the general climatology of the States" (Abbe 1892). This statement gives short shrift to contributions by Thompson B. Maury and Observer-Sergeant Henry Calver, who were also engaged in the early efforts of developing the *MWR* within the signal service, as noted by Schultz and Potter (2022).

This quotation has two problems. First, Romano et al. (2022) write that Abbe "claimed responsibility ... for starting" *Monthly Weather Review*. As detailed in the 150-year history of *Monthly Weather Review* (Schultz and Potter 2022), no single person was responsible for "starting" *Monthly Weather Review*. Abbe, an employee of the Signal Service, wanted to develop it within the Signal Service and General Myer agreed. Abbe never makes the claim that he was its *sole* creator, nor do Romano et al. (2022) provide evidence where he says that. Indeed, Romano et al.'s (2022) quote that Abbe "alone was responsible" was contradicted by their parenthetical that Abbe said he started it "for" General Myer. As further evidence that Abbe did not claim to be the sole creator of *Monthly Weather Review*, Abbe (1895) later wrote,

The need for preserving in some permanent form a brief history of the successive storms and other prominent features of the weather led me early to propose some form of weather review. The same idea was simultaneously suggested by another, who, however, left it for me to execute, and my first review was published at the close of January, 1873....

Second is who was responsible for producing the early issues of *Monthly Weather Review*. Romano et al. (2022) write that Abbe's claim to have produced the January 1873 issue "gives short shrift to contributions by Thompson B. Maury and Observer-Sergeant Henry Calver, who were also engaged in the early efforts of developing the *MWR* within the Signal Service." It is true that Abbe did produce the January 1873 issue and that other editors were also involved in producing the other 1873 issues (Schultz and Potter 2022, their Table 1). It is also true that Maury and Calver were responsible for creating the 1872 issues at a later time to complete the set of *Monthly Weather Reviews* for the 1872/73 federal fiscal year starting in July 1872. Yet, no one was ignoring their contributions, including Abbe, as these quotes below indicate.

The preparation of the deductions...and the editing of the regular publications, the "Weekly Weather Chronicle," "Monthly Weather Review," "Synopsis, Probabilities, and Facts," have been during the year in immediate charge of Prof. Cleveland Abbe, assistant;

First Lieut. Robert Craig, acting signal-officer and assistant; Prof. Thompson B. Maury, assistant; and First Lieut. H. H. C. Dunwoody, acting signal-officer and assistant. (Myer 1873, p. 303)

Accordingly the *Monthly Weather Review*, which had been first compiled by Professor Abbe, for January 1873 (although reviews for earlier months were subsequently made up in order to complete the series), was now by him enlarged to a comprehensive systematic summary of all the reports received by the office for the month of April 1874, accompanied by the proper charts. General William B. Hazen, written testimony submitted to the Allison Commission (1886).

...corresponding reviews for the latter half of 1872 were subsequently written out by Mr. [Henry] Calver for publication in the annual report of the fiscal year 1872/73. From that time forward until 1883, inclusive, the monthly reviews were annually reprinted as appendixes of the Annual Report of the Chief Signal Officer. (Abbe 1895)

The first copy and the initial steps toward the regular publication were taken by the present Editor [Abbe], but subsequent numbers were prepared by various officials, alternately. (*Monthly Weather Review* 1901).

Based on the evidence presented here and elsewhere, Cleveland Abbe may have been directed to create the first issue of *Monthly Weather Review* and manage production, but others were involved, which he and others acknowledge. Abbe does not even claim originality of the idea of a (lower-case) monthly weather review as solely his own, which Romano et al. (2022) incorrectly suggest. Thus, Romano et al.'s (2022) argument about Abbe claiming sole responsibility for starting *Monthly Weather Review* is not true. My attempts to rectify Romano et al. (2022) with the authors before the publication of their manuscript were not successful, so this comment to the editor is necessary.

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