

2. Data Bases in North America

The history of precipitation chemistry measurements in North America have been extremely erratic. National, regional, and local networks have been established and disbanded without thought of long-term considerations. In order to organize these efforts into a historical perspective, three major chronological thrusts can be recognized--agricultural (1875-1955), atmospheric (1955-1975) and ecological (1975-present). Though no one period can be identified by a single theme, they formed the major impetus in the given time period. To explain in more detail, each period is discussed in the following:

Agriculture (1875-1955)

Before the advent of commercial fertilizers, agricultural scientists both in Europe and North America were interested in the amount of substances such as nitrate and sulfate which were brought to the soils by rain. Throughout the western world, collection networks were established generally at agricultural research sites. The studies were generally limited to the measurement of only one or two ions. The method to measure pH was established generally after these studies were completed. Thus a full chemical balance could not be established. Also questions on collection methods, analysis techniques, site criteria and other important factors are not always clear from the references. It might be useful to