

February 2009 - Leadership Letter (35)

THE GREAT WARMING

Dear clients, colleagues and friends ... **No**, this is not a piece by Al Gore!

Brian Fagan has written an excellent, readable, and enjoyable summary of effects around the world, from what was called "**The Great Warming**" in Europe about 1,000 years ago.

While Europe enjoyed several centuries of a nicer climate, much of the rest of the world did not! These climatic changes had dramatic effects on civilizations from America to Asia to Africa.

I hope you enjoy my brief summary (following); I **know** you would enjoy Fagan's book!

Mel

Mel Hensey, PE, F.ASCE
Management Consulting Engineer
Hensey Associate
8220 Riversedge Cir., Maineville, OH 45039
513/919-7672, MHensey@aol.com

Don't forget that all past **Leadership Letters** can be found on our website at www.henseyassociates.com.

Some Surprises from the NY Times Bestseller ...

THE GREAT WARMING: HISTORIC CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE RISE AND FALL OF CIVILIZATIONS

Brian Fagan

Bloomsbury Press 2008

Between the Eighth and Twelfth centuries, Europe experienced a “great warming” that brought slightly higher temperatures and increased rainfall. The result for **Europe** was greater prosperity for most, more food, less disease, more arts and crafts and science.

This was followed by the “Little Ice Age” in **Europe**, when temperatures there were slightly lower, resulting in more hunger and hardship for several centuries.

Less well known is that during the “great warming” of Europe, much of the rest of the globe was also having higher temperatures, bringing extreme dryness.

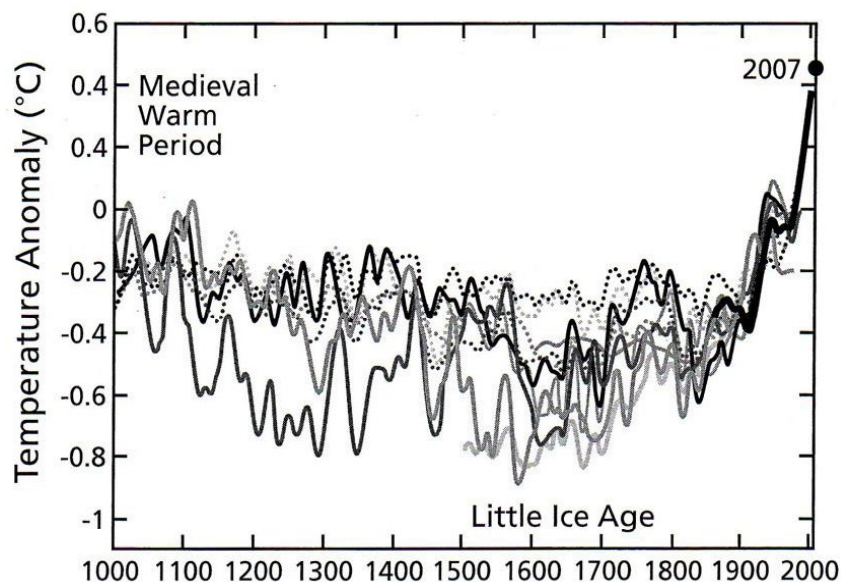
Severe droughts and death were widespread in central Asia, northern Africa, western South America, western and southwestern North America, and much of Australia.

Author Fagan makes use of lots of research on historic temperature change, including studies of tree rings, coral changes, ice cores, and sediment borings, by many researchers over the past 100 years, from many areas.

These temperature changes were actually quite small, but had profound effects on crops, trees and grasses, wildlife, lakes and rivers, glaciers, deserts, ocean currents (including El Nino), and major wind patterns.

For me, the most interesting effects were on **civilizations** (Mayan, Muslim, Mongolian, Peruvian, Chinese, Indian, and Native American) and on **explorations** (Viking, North Atlantic, Polynesian, North African, Indian Ocean).

Shown below is his reconstruction of northern hemisphere temperatures compiled from the work of six different research teams. They are generally consistent over the past 1,100 years, especially the past four centuries, and the past 150 years with their warming trend.



*Reviewed by Mel Hensey, PE
Management Consulting Engineer*

www.henseyassociates.com
January 2009