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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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JANUARY EXTREMES

January is usually the coldest, though not the snowiest of the winter months. No one can tell whether the present January is likely to have weather close to the average or whether it will be a record breaker. Two unusual Januarys, those of 1918 and 1919, show what different possibilities January affords.

The January of 1918 with a frigid heritage from December was extraordinarily cold east of the Rockies. According to an Amherst record, it was the coldest month at least since 1836. In the Middle West a true blizzard with snow driven by a gale at a temperature down to 20 degrees below zero Fahrenheit tied up traffic almost completely for two days. Relative to the cold land or snow surfaces the open waters of the Great Lakes, Atlantic and Gulf were excessively warm; and, therefore, favored the development of numerous storms. Near the Great Lakes snow fell almost daily, in some places the total for the month reached 3 to 5 feet.

The January of 1919, on the other hand, presents quite a different picture. As a whole it was unusually warm over all central and northern districts, the temperature for the month ranging from 6 to 18 degrees Fahrenheit above normal. Whole months commonly vary from averages by 3 degrees Fahrenheit or so, but departures of 10 degrees or more are rare. The snowfall of January, 1919, was nearly everywhere remarkably light. The month started with a moderate snow cover, but under the influence of much sunshine, particularly potent in the month when the earth is nearest the sun, and moderate temperatures the snow rapidly diminished until "by the close of the month the snow cover had disappeared except for small areas in the more northern districts and at the higher elevations in the western mountains."

(Tomorrow: Snow In Railroading)
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