

Feb 2.

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

By Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University.FEBRUARY'S WEATHER POSSIBILITIES

Whatever prognostic we may attach to the hypothetical emergence and shadowing of Mr. Groundhog today, the rest of this month is not likely to outdo to any extent the worst or the best February in the past half century. Picking an outstandingly cold February, that of 1899, we find that February temperature has been, and sometime will probably be again, as low as 50 degrees below zero Fahrenheit in Montana, 20 to 30 degrees below in the central states, 10 below in the neighborhood of New York and Boston, and even 10 above on the north Pacific coast and 30 degrees on the coast of southern California. Nevertheless, the temperature rose to over 50 degrees above with a chinook on the northern Great Plains. In a warm February, such as that of 1898 the thermometer may rise to 55 degrees Fahrenheit at Boston, 60 degrees at Philadelphia or Chicago, and even 70 degrees at Pittsburgh. In this month the lowest temperatures were about 30 degrees below zero in the White Mountains, and 20 to 30 below in the northern interior of the United States. The Middle Atlantic states did not cool below 10 or 20 degrees above zero. In the Canadian Northwest some Februaries average as much as 40 degrees warmer than others, so great a difference being largely the expression of the prevalence of northerly or southerly winds. February may or may not follow the lead of January; not even a widespread and heavy snow cover can prevent a major change of wind from bringing mild weather. February, 1918, afforded a notable example of a sudden shift from the direst cold to the softness of early spring.

Besides cold the other formidable feature of February is its snowfall. Although it is a short month, its snowfall often exceeds that of January. In snowfall as well as temperature February offers a wide range of possibilities. The February of 1919 with but one inch of snow and no expense for snow removal was in New York City as delightful as the excessively snowy and sleety Februaries of 1916 and 1920 were disastrous. In a single storm in February, 1899, snow fell to a depth of over three feet in the middle Atlantic states.

(Tomorrow: Are the Seasons Changing?)
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