

Jan. 14, 1926

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed Jan. 7, 1926

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THE JANUARY THAW

The notable cold of late December was followed by the usual January thaw. On December 27, thermometers reached zero in central New England for the first time during the winter. "Ten below" froze up the Middle West. December 28 was marked by snow on the coast of Texas, a temperature of zero at Asheville, North Carolina, and freezing south nearly to Tampa.

But on New Year's day a January thaw began. This thaw, which started in Texas on the 1st, spread north to about latitude 40 degrees on the 2nd. By January 3 the warm wave had covered the Great Lakes region, and on the 4th it extended over the entire northeastern United States and part of Canada. The next day the Maritime Province became involved. Mild weather continued through the 6th in the Northeast and removed the thin snow cover laid down at Christmas time back to the snowy haunts of central New York and northern New England.

What caused such a widespread thaw? A large, slow moving low which appeared first off the coast of southern California December 26 and passed inland the night of January 1 was responsible. This low, or storm area, provided a large indraft of southerly winds in front of itself. As it progressed but slowly towards the northern Lake region, the southerly current had ample time to become general and well established. Warm weather began almost too suddenly in the South. At Pensacola, for instance, the thermometer jumped from a morning temperature of 18 to 66 degrees Fahrenheit within a week. Violent overturnings and consequent heavy rains followed, even a tornado in Louisiana was reported.

The generally thin snow-cover, light winds and moderate rainfalls in the North during this thaw saved us from any approach to the disastrous flood conditions of Europe.

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