

A Science Service Feature

Intended for use
Jan. 25, 1926, but
released on receipt.

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed, Jan. 18, 1926

By Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University.

MID-WINTER

The coldest period of the season, throughout most of the United States, occurs, usually some time in January. Daily mean temperatures show well the lag of the weather behind the sun, so that "When the days begin to lengthen, then the cold begins to strengthen". The lag is greater and the coldest time comes later near large bodies of water rather than inland, because water cools more slowly than land and so delays the minimum. Three stations of about the same latitude illustrate this. For Des Moines, Iowa, an inland station, the coldest period on the average is centered about January 21, for New York City, on the coast, about January 28, for the island Nantucket, still more under ocean influence, about February 6. Buffalo and Sault Ste. Marie, stations on the windward sides of the Great Lakes, both have late minima, the first week of February being usually the coldest.

Another set of comparisons shows that northern regions usually have a later coldest period than southern locations. They are nearer the Arctic cold spot, the source of cold waves. The frigid north of the continent does not begin to warm until March when the sun rises again. Then, too, in the north, the coldest weather does not come till the snow-cover is well established. So Boston expects its coldest weather on the average about January 26, Richmond about January 5, and Tampa about New Year's Day.

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21st and B Sts.,
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