

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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GONE: five billion tons of air

In only 24 hours, about 5 billion tons of air left the eastern United States and Canada for parts unknown. On February 24 about a third of this great mass of air moved out, and during the following night the other two-thirds left. It was perhaps the greatest disappearance of air over such a large area that has been witnessed for many years.

The natural result of this exodus of air was a great inflow from regions round about. From the southeast came a flood of springtime. From the northwest came the blast of winter. A heavy rain and windstorm developed overnight, and quickly passed on into the east. It did not last long enough to discharge a great quantity of water at any one place, though the amounts were considerable, and seemed larger in the northeastern regions where snow water augmented the runoff.

A heavy onslaught of spring like this removed much of winter's capital, the dense snow-cover in the Northeast. But winter immediately put some more of his cold in storage in a plentiful snow-cover over the upper Mississippi Valley. And reports of 44 below zero in Alaska, the coldest since early December, give us warning that all wintry weather is not past. However, with the three months usually allocated to winter now a matter of record - generally mild - we can stand anything that March has in store.

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