

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE "PORTLAND" STORM

At this season of the year, disastrous snowstorms are rare. Indeed the ground is seldom even covered with snow at Thanksgiving south of latitude 43. Yet the "Portland" storm of November 26-27, 1898, deserves almost as much notoriety as the "March Blizzard" of 1888. In this "Portland" gale and snowstorm more than 450 lives were lost in over 140 vessels wrecked on the New England coast. This stands as probably the greatest loss of life in any storm along the North Atlantic coast. Railway traffic was blocked by the heavy snow.

The steamer "City of Portland", in spite of having been fully warned of the severe character of the storm by the U.S. Weather Bureau, sailed the evening of the 26th, and was wrecked the following morning with the loss of all on board, some 175 people; 141 other vessels were reported wrecked on the New England coast, with an additional death toll of more than 280.

The development of destructive strength in this storm began with the union, off the Virginia coast on the afternoon of the 26th, of two storms, one moving from the west and the other from the south Atlantic coast, the western storm being followed by a severe cold wave. The formation of the March, 1888, "Blizzard" was similar.

Passing northeastward the center of the disturbance reached Nova Scotia the night of the 27th. The storm reached its height during the morning of the 27th, when maximum wind velocities ranged from 50 to 70 miles per hour from New York City to Eastport, Me. The snowfall was excessive along the whole Atlantic seaboard north of Maryland, and varied from one to more than two feet.

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