

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 18, 1931

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GLACIALS AND INTERGLACIALS

Geology has been busy of late in tracing the climatic history of bygone - ages. The most striking events of this history are the great ice ages, at least four in number, that spread blankets of ice over vast areas normally ice-free. Naturally the best known of these events is the latest one -- the Quaternary Ice Age -- and there is abundant evidence that this age included relatively cold and relatively warm periods, called respectively, glacial periods and interglacial periods.

The clearest record of ice age subdivisions is found in the Alps. In naming the successive glacial periods supposed to have occurred in that part of the world the geologist Penck chose names from representative Alpine districts, viz, in chronological sequence, Günz, Mindel, Riss and Würm. It will be noticed that these names run in alphabetical order, and that there is space between the initial letters for inserting additional names, if sufficient evidence of other cold periods should come to light. The interglacial periods were given the corresponding names Günz-Mindel, Mindel-Riss, and Riss-Würm.

Similar alternations of climate during the last ice age are supposed to have occurred in North America, and names have been given to the glacial and interglacial periods, especially as indicated in the Mississippi Valley, but there is some uncertainty about the relations between the period thus distinguished and those of Europe.

We are indebted to Dr. C. E. P. Brooks for the following tentative synopsis of the glacial periods in both continents:

Alps	North America	Date. B.C.
Günz	Jerseyan or Nebraskan	?
Mindel	Kansan	430,000-370,000
Riss	(Illinoian	130,000-100,000
Würm	(Iowan	
	Wisconsin	40,000- 18,000

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