

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed April 15, 1931

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"ALBERTA LOWS"

In years gone by the network of weather stations reporting their observations by telegraph to forecasting centers in the United States and Canada was much more restricted than it is today. There were no reporting stations on land far to the northward and nobody then dreamed of getting reports via the ether from ships at sea. In classifying the tracks of cyclones, or lows, that crossed North America meteorologists found that the largest number first appeared on the weather map in the province of Alberta. Hence these became known as "Alberta lows." Some of them traveled eastward in southern Canada, but a much larger number moved southeastward into the United States, eventually turning northeastward before leaving the continent at the eastern seaboard.

The expression "Alberta low" dates from the period when Medicine Hat, in Alberta, then one of the more northerly outposts of observation, acquired its undeserved popular reputation of being the breeding ground of cold waves.

Now that the forecaster has a much broader geographical outlook, he finds that "Alberta lows" seldom if ever begin their careers in Alberta. According to C. L. Mitchell, of the U. S. Weather Bureau, these lows either come as primary cyclones from the Pacific or are secondaries derived from such cyclones.

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