

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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COLD MAY WEATHER

The coldest May we have had east of the Rockies was that of 1917. Farming activities were seriously delayed. On the upper Great Lakes ice hindered navigation quite to the end of the month, and even as late as June 6 the harbor of Duluth was tightly icebound. In 1915 the temperatures of May averaged a degree or two lower than those of April over the north-central United States.

Snow in May is a normal event over more than half the United States, the fall, in an average year, ranging from a few flakes along the border of the Sunny South to an inch in the extreme North, with a good deal more in the mountains. This is the month when highway engineers in the West resort to heroic measures to open the mountain passes, still choked with a winter's accumulation of "the beautiful." Herculean rotary plows buck the drifts, and charges of dynamite, planted the previous autumn, are set off to speed the operation. In some places these undertakings last until mid-June.

In Europe the three days May 11-13 (or, in southern Europe, May 12-14) are known as the "ice saints," in allusion to the popular tradition that they always bring unseasonably cold weather. Unlike a great deal of other European weather lore, the tradition of the "ice saints" has never taken root in America.

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