

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed August 26, 1933

NORTHEAST STORMS

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The weather maps for the days during which the recent great storm prevailed along the Atlantic seaboard show clearly enough how a tempest coming up the coast from the south can be attended by northeasterly winds over the northeastern part of the United States. The relation of storm winds to storm movements has long been familiar to meteorologists, but seems not yet to have become common knowledge. Hence some press reports of the recent event described it as a combination of two distinct storms having differently directed winds. There was only one storm, but the winds, directed about its center, blew in various directions at various times and places. It was northeast winds that caused the big waves and floods along the coast, and thus the worst of the storm, but not the whole of it, was a "northeaster."

The fact that "northeast storms" frequently come from the southwest was discovered by Benjamin Franklin before the middle of the eighteenth century, but it was not until the 'thirties of the nineteenth that meteorologists discovered why. As soon as the winds blowing at the same time in different parts of a storm area were charted, the reason was clear. All big storms were found to be whirlwinds, and not, as they had formerly been thought to be, straight-blowing winds.

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