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WINTER WINDOW-PANE PATTERNS

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The late Wilson A. Bentley, the great photographer of snow and ice crystals, devoted much attention to the beautiful designs that Jack Frost traces on window-panes when the temperature gets well below freezing. In describing his observations he distinguished between "window-frost," the crystals of which are deposited directly in frozen form from the air, and "window-ice," which results from the freezing of a thin film of water on the pane. The larger and more striking designs occur in window-ice, and were classified by Bentley as "feather forms" and "arborescent forms."

Window-frost tends to form along scratches on the glass, including the invisible curved grooves left on the pane by the ordinary process of cleaning with a rag. Bentley scratched his initials with a diamond on a windowpane at his house in Vermont, and each winter thereafter they were outlined during cold spells with tiny crystals. Window-ice patterns, on the other hand, do not seem to be much influenced by grooves and scratches.

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