

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A WINTER WATERSPOUT

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The occurrence of a waterspout over a frozen lake is certainly one of the rarest of events. Such a case was observed at the eastern end of Lake Erie, on the afternoon of February 11, 1907, from the windows of the U.S. Weather Bureau office in Buffalo. One of several persons who saw it was David Cuthbertson, then in charge of that office, and he published an account of it in the Monthly Weather Review.

Near the mouth of the Niagara River there was a stretch of open water, due to the rapid current, and here a columnar cloud was seen to form about 2:40 p.m. The description says:

"The column in its early stages seemed to waver with the force of the wind for a few minutes, having the appearance of great waves of steam or fog, with a rolling motion against the wind. Suddenly, about 2:45, the cloud straightened up, the top having an altitude of about 100 feet, and started southwestward across the ice fields toward the south shore. It had all the characteristics of a well-defined tornado funnel, or waterspout, appearing to be from 30 to 50 feet in diameter at the base, and spread out to about 100 feet at the top. It retained its funnel shape as it advanced over the ice, licking up the snow as it went, until about a quarter of a mile off the south shore, when it began to waver and slowly vanish, breaking away at the bottom first. The wind at the time was blowing 36 miles an hour from the northwest, driving a current of air with a temperature of 2 degrees directly across the open water, whose temperature was about 34 degrees."

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