

Record Late Season Snowfalls

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While most of the extreme weather attention (deservedly!) has been on the phenomenal tornado outbreaks this month, I thought I'd buck the trend and discuss record late season snowfalls. In fact while the Midwest was being hammered by violent thunderstorms and tornadoes April 19-20, Green Bay, Wisconsin was 'enjoying' its greatest late season snowfall on record with a 10" accumulation. Ironically the snow impacted the same area that was struck by a tornado outbreak just nine days earlier.

The fact is that the greatest snowfalls ever experienced in the world have occurred during the month of April and that for portions of the High Plains and Rocky Mountains April and May usually produce the heaviest accumulating snowstorms.

This blog is a bookend to the blog I posted on November 3, 2010 "Record Early Season Snowfalls".

Below is the same table I produced last November in the aforementioned blog (then for *earliest* record snowfalls) but here for the *latest* on-record-snowfalls:

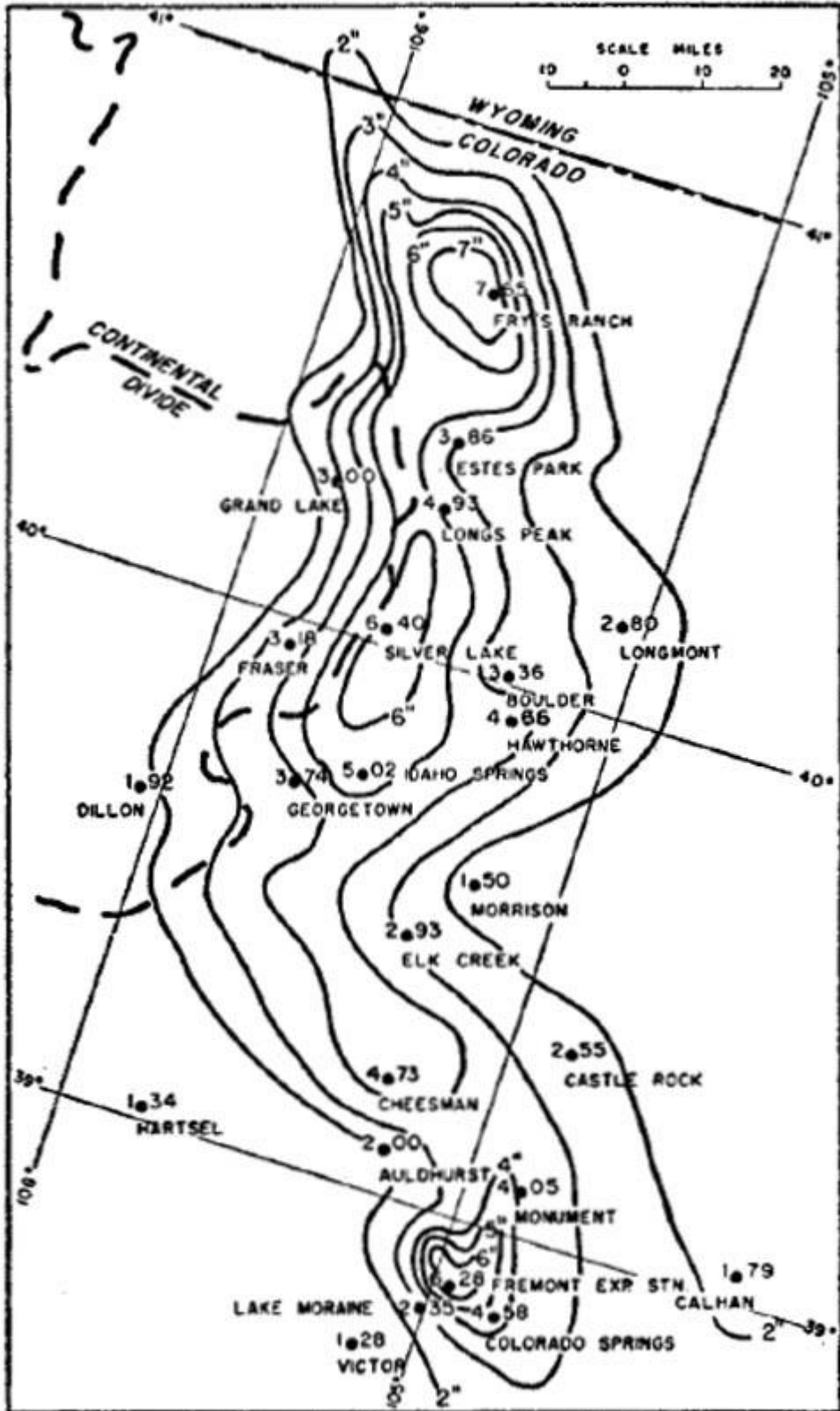
Latest Measureable Snowfall for Selected Cities in the USA

CITY	RECORD	LATEST SNOWFALL/DATE	AVERAGE DATE	2010 ACTUAL LAST SNOW
EAST				
Burlington, VT	0.5"	May 10, 1926	Apr. 20	Apr. 28
Buffalo, NY	0.1"	May 20, 1907	Apr. 10	Feb. 28
Boston, MA	0.5"	May 10, 1977	Mar. 25	Mar. 1
New York, NY	3.0"	April 25, 1875	Mar. 20	Feb. 26
Philadelphia, PA	0.1"	April 27, 1967	Mar. 15	Feb. 26
Washington D.C.	0.5"	April 28, 1898	Mar. 15	Feb. 27
Raleigh, NC	1.8"	April 18, 1983	Mar. 1	Mar. 3
Atlanta, GA	1.5"	April 25, 1910	Feb. 15	Feb. 12
OHIO VALLEY				
Detroit, MI	0.5"	May 10, 1902	Apr. 1	Mar. 25
Cleveland, OH	0.2"	May 10, 1907	Apr. 1	Mar. 25
Pittsburg, PA	0.5"	May 2, 1925	Apr. 1	Feb. 28
Louisville, KY	1.0"	May 6, 1898	Mar. 20	Feb. 27
MIDWEST				
Bismarck, ND	0.5"	May 27, NA	Apr. 25	May 7
Minneapolis, MN	0.1"	May 24, 1925	Apr. 15	Feb. 23
Omaha, NE	2.0"	May 9, 1945	Apr. 1	Mar. 19
Chicago, IL	0.2"	May 11, 1966	Apr. 1	Mar. 20
St. Louis, MO	4.0"	May 2, 1929	Mar. 20	Feb. 14
Kansas City, MO	1.7"	May 3, 1907	Mar. 20	Mar. 20
Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX	0.1"	March 30, 1926	Feb. 15	Mar. 21
WEST				
Great Falls, MT	3.0"	June 10, 2008	<u>May 10</u>	May 5
Denver, CO	0.8"	June 2, 1951	Apr. 25	Apr. 7
Boise, ID	0.5"	May 12, 1970	Mar. 20	Apr. 2
Salt Lake City, UT	0.2"	May 24, 2010	Apr. 20	<u>May 24</u>
Albuquerque, NM	0.5"	May 4, 1979	Mar. 20	Mar. 24
Seattle, WA	2.3"	April 15, 1972	Apr. 15	no snow season 2009-10
Reno, NV	0.2"	June 3, 1995	Apr. 20	Apr. 21

World-record Snowfalls During April

World Record 24-hour Snowfall at Silver Lake, Colorado

The greatest 24-hour snowfall officially measured in the world was the 75.8" that fell at Silver Lake, Colorado (in the mountains just west of Boulder) on April 14-15, 1921. The storm total was an amazing 95.0" over a 32½ hour period.



Storm precipitation (melted—in inches) total for Silver Lake event from April

1-15, 1921 Map from 'Monthly Weather Review', Feb. 1953, p. 39.

World-record Single Greatest Snowfall in the Sierra Nevada

The greatest single-storm snowfall on record in the world was 194” (over 16 feet!) that fell during a massive spring blizzard at the Sierra Nevada railway summit station of Norden over the four day period of April 20-23, 1880. Sacramento, California’s capital city, received a record two-day rainfall of 8.37” during this event.



An historic photo of the Norden station during the winter of 1887.

World-record 19-hour Snowfall and European Record

Europe’s greatest 24-hour snowfall happened at Bessans in the French Alps on April 5-6, 1959 when 67.8” accumulated in just 19 hours (a world record for a 19 hour period).



Bessans, France is a popular ski resort in the French Alps.

Some All-time Single-Greatest Storm Snowfall Records in the U.S.A. that occurred during April and May

CITY	STORM SNOWFALL TOTAL	DATES
Juneau, Alaska	45.9"	April 1-4, 1963
Dubuque, Iowa	19.3"	April 9-10, 1973
Sioux City, Iowa	22.9"	April 9-10, 1973
Detroit, Michigan	24.5"	April 6, 1886
Bemidji, Minnesota	25.7"	April 5-7, 2008
Billings, Montana	42.3"	April 2-5, 1955
Butte, Montana	40.5"	May 27-29, 1927
Havre, Montana	33.8"	May 2-4, 1899
Scottsbluff, Nebraska	28.7"	April 11-16, 1920
Dickinson, North Dakota	28.5"	April 27-28, 1984
Akron, Ohio	24.6"	April 19-20, 1901
Rapid City, South Dakota	32.2"	April 11-16, 1927
(the above storm also resulted in Nebraska's all-time record for a single snowstorm with 49.5" at Hay Springs)		
Lander, Wyoming	52.7"	April 24-26, 1999
Sheridan, Wyoming	38.9"	April 3-4, 1955

The Southern Appalachians have also recorded some phenomenal late season snowfalls including a reported 60.0" accumulation at Newfound Gap, North Carolina on April 2-5, 1987 and, even more incredible, another 60.0" accumulation at Mount Pisgah, North Carolina on May 5-8, 1992!

Some Historic Pre-NWS Late Season Snowstorms

The May 4th Snowstorm in 1774

A general snowfall of around 4" occurred from northern Virginia to southern New England. Both Philadelphia and New York City reported "a considerable quantity of snow". Thomas Jefferson and George Washington both noted the event in their diaries.

The Great April Fools Day Snow of 1807

Probably the deepest April snowfall in modern history occurred on April 1, 1807 from Illinois to the Mid-Atlantic. The track of the storm was not the

usual coastal nor'easter variety that normally produces great snows but rather the low moved northeast from the lower Tennessee Valley and across the mid-Atlantic states and offshore around New York City. To the north of the storm path incredible snowfalls were reported. The westernmost report we have come from Vincennes on the Illinois-Indiana border with an 11" accumulation but it was in Pennsylvania, New York and New England that astonishing snowfall was reported including: 52" at Montrose, Pennsylvania near Scranton; 54" at Utica, New York, 52" at Lunenburg, Vermont; 60" at Danville, Vermont; 48" at Montpelier, Vermont; and 42-48" at Norfolk, Connecticut.

The June 1816 Snows of the 'Year without Summer'

Most famous of all cold and snowy late season events would have to be the infamous 1816 'Year without Summer' and the snowfall in June that occurred in the eastern U.S. and Canada. On June 6th accumulating snow was observed as far south as the Catskills in New York (where one inch was reported) and highlands of central and northwest Pennsylvania. Snowflakes were seen at sea level as far south as ten miles north of tidewater on the Hudson River just north of New York City. The deepest accumulations were reported in the mountains of Vermont where drifts of 12-18" were measured. Quebec City in Canada reported 12" on level with drifts up to two feet deep.

The even Greater Snow of June 1842

It should be noted that June snowfall in the Northeast is not a unique event to 1816. On June 11, 1842 widespread snow fell over northern New York and New England and snowflakes were observed in Cleveland, Ohio; Boston, Massachusetts; and even Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (a low elevation site). Accumulations of 10-12" were common in Vermont, so this event was actually more extreme than the more famous snow of June 1816.

REFERENCE: *Early American Winters: Vol 1: 1604-1820 and Vol 2: 1821-1870* by David M. Ludlum, American Meteorological Society, 1966, 1968.