

It once got so cold that Bostonians were begging for a snowstorm to warm things up



This cartoon ran on the front page of the Boston Sunday Globe on Dec. 30, 1917, as the city endured a record-setting bitter cold snap.

By [Matt Rocheleau](#) and [Jeremiah Manion](#)

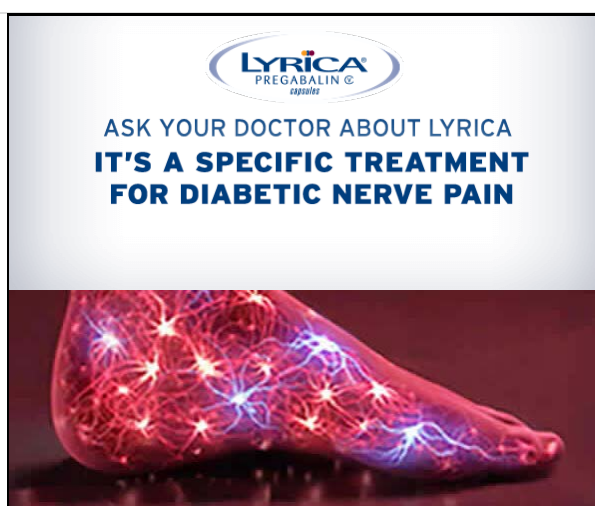
GLOBE STAFF DECEMBER 27, 2017

The longest stretch of sub-20-degree temperatures ever recorded in Boston — a seven-day period that featured five straight days of temperatures falling below zero — crippled the city.

One hundred years ago, the Charles River and much of Boston Harbor froze over, trapping boats in thick ice. Engine troubles delayed trains.

Police were ordered to round up people who were in danger of freezing to death, and municipal workers were reassigned from their normal duties to help deliver coal to families in short supply.

ADVERTISEMENT



LYRICA
PREGABALIN [®]
capsules

ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT LYRICA
**IT'S A SPECIFIC TREATMENT
FOR DIABETIC NERVE PAIN**

Some people did not survive the cold. Dozens, if not hundreds, of others were hospitalized for frostbite treatment, according to archived copies of The Boston Daily Globe that open a fascinating window on the long-ago cold snap.

Get **Metro Headlines** in your inbox:

The 10 top local news stories from metro Boston and around New England delivered daily.

Sign Up

Firefighters were swamped, responding to dozens of fires, including many ignited by people trying to thaw out frozen pipes. The freezing pipes also had plumbers working overtime.

Travelers inside unheated street cars jumped up and down to try to keep warm. Horses slipped and fell on icy streets.

Many residents were forced to conserve fuel and food, and stayed inside, avoiding shopping and even — gasp! — skipping Sunday church services.

Couples put off getting hitched. Nearby Providence saw “a slump in the marriage market.” “Officials assert they never saw such a falling off in New Year marriages,” according to an article published in the Globe on Jan. 5, 1918.

ADVERTISEMENT

The extremely frigid, unrelenting cold was the talk of the town.

On Dec. 30, 1917, coverage of the bitter weather appeared as above-the-fold, front-page news in the Sunday edition of the Globe. “East in Cold Wave’s Grip,” blared the headline. In an approach you wouldn’t see in a news outlet today, a large cartoon poked fun at the miserable city.

The other big news of the day? Reports on the global conflict that would later become known as World War I.

Toward the end of the bitterly cold stretch, Bostonians were so fed up with the frigid weather they were actually disappointed and jealous that a blizzard with blinding snow, but also somewhat warmer temperatures, narrowly missed the city, instead slamming Cape Cod and other coastal towns.

“Bad as were the prospects of a blizzard, a blustering snowstorm would have been hailed with delight by a vast majority of New Englanders, for, according to the wise men of the weather world, a storm of generous proportions would have effectively dissipated the siege of extremely cold weather, a record siege that has extended over six consecutive days,” one article said.

ADVERTISEMENT



Eventually, a storm did arrive, and it was praised for its moderating effects. “Tomorrow, hail the day, unsettled conditions will gradually prevail, and by nightfall there should be a well developed snowstorm in progress,” an article said.

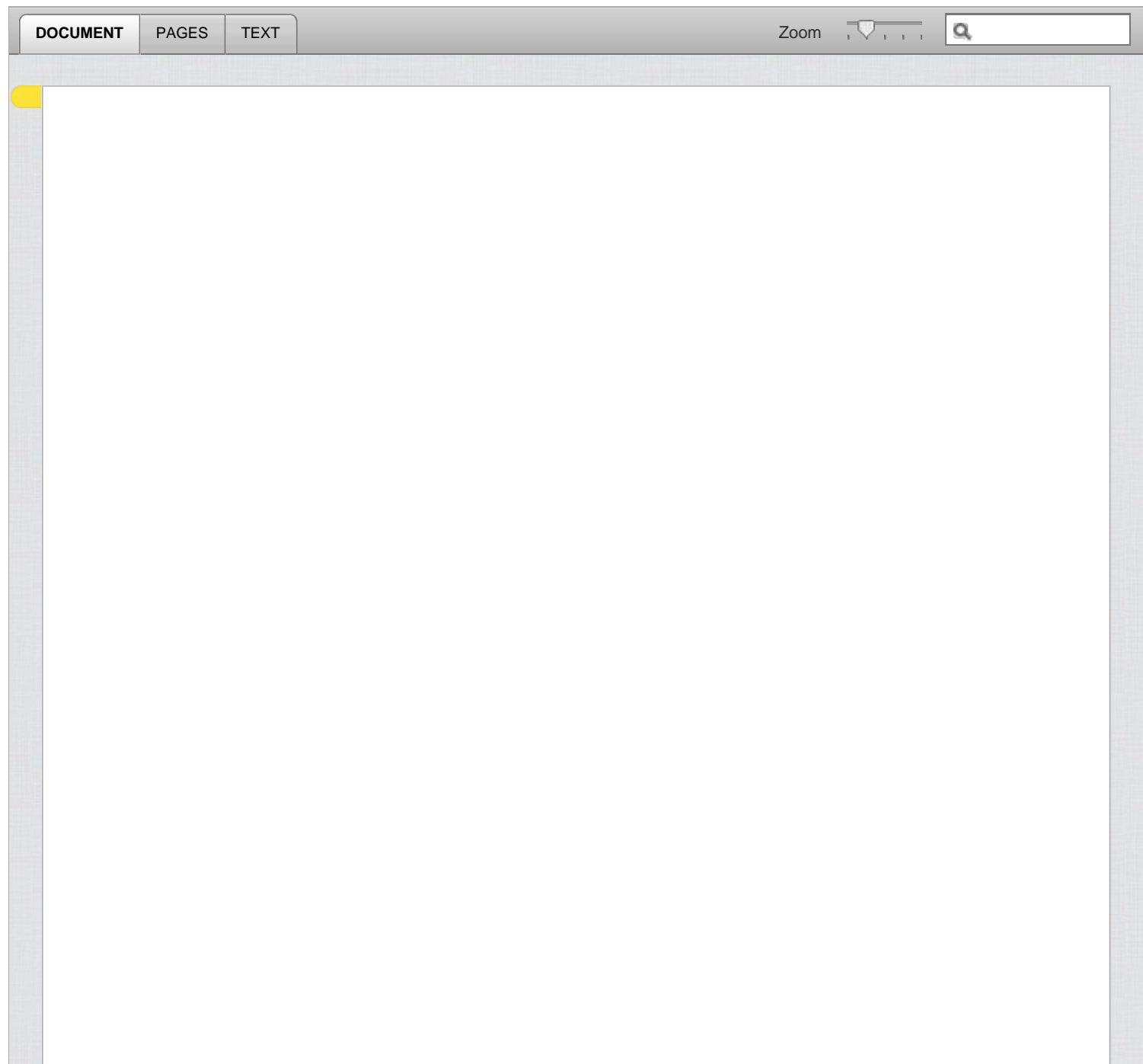
The cold snap also served as a counterargument to people who, at that time, were noting that New

England winters were less severe than in previous generations, one article observed.

“The below-zero spell of the last four days, now apparently ended, should put a quietus on those numerous individuals addicted to declaring that the climate of New England has changed, and that ‘we no longer have the severe winters we use to have a generation or two ago.’ ”

As for Boston’s current cold spell, forecasters are [predicting](#) that the city, just as it did 100 years ago, will experience a seven-day stretch of temperatures failing to crack 20 degrees — from Wednesday through Tuesday, Jan. 2.

The city is better prepared now than it was a century ago, but it also won’t get as cold this time around. Forecasts for the coming week call for temperatures to only dip as low as zero in Boston. On the final three days of 1917, the low temperatures were -11, -14, and -8.



The Boston Sunday Globe

VOL XVII—NO. 158 BOSTON, SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 30, 1917—SEVENTY PAGES PRICE FIVE CENTS

JANUARY BARGAINS—Be sure to read the store ads in today's Globe. Advertise your wares in the Daily Globe to get the most satisfactory results.

EMPLOYERS—Remember the Globe offers the best help wanted notices in New England. Be sure to read the want and classified ads in today's Globe.

DRUMFIRE IN LORRAINE

Germans Batter Marne Canal

Line Where U. S. Men Were Captured

Paris Urges Americans Be Mixed With French

CREW ON THE DECK OF A GERMAN SUBMARINE SURRENDERING TO U. S. DESTROYER FANNING



These men, their boat disabled by the destroyer which, with shells on board and deck guns were shooting, after the treatment they received they were hoisted. On board the Fanning, when the submarine was hoisted port, the prisoners showed their captors.

U-BOAT TAKEN BY THE FANNING

Disabled by Depth Bomb—All Crew Surrendered

German Naval Captain—Crew Men Highly Praised by British

WASHINGTON, Dec. 29.—Full details of the capture of a German submarine by the U. S. destroyer Fanning, which disabled the U-boat with depth bombs and hoisted the crew on its deck, were received here today from the British admiralty.

McADOO MOVES TO CLEAR UP FREIGHT CONGESTION

Directs Pooling of All Railroad Facilities in Formal Order

Names Walker D. Hines His Assistant—Federal Corporation to Handle Securities Proposed—Railroad Chiefs See U. S. Ownership Soon

WASHINGTON, Dec. 29.—Embodied in a formal order of the Federal Trade Commission, the U. S. government today directed the pooling of all railroad facilities to clear up freight congestion.

MAN MISSING IN FERRYBOAT FIRE

General Sumner Damaged \$50,000 at East Boston

Two Alarms for Mysterious Blaze—Three or Another in Old District

Without a word of explanation, a fire broke out in the General Sumner, a ferryboat owned by the Boston Ferry Company, at East Boston, today.

EAST IN COLD WAVE'S GRIP

STORROW PLEADS FOR COAL

Must Have Fuel to Complete War Contracts, Sec. Baker Is Told—Yesterday Most Frigid Day in Boston Since Feb. 12, '14—Nine City Fires Due to Cold—100 Frostbite Cases



WASHINGTON, Dec. 29.—The U. S. government today directed the pooling of all railroad facilities to clear up freight congestion.

NOTICE

January 1, 1918

The evening edition of the Globe will be printed. The Globe Wednesday morning will contain all the news of the day.

TODAY'S GLOBE CONTENTS

Page 1. Further reduction in business confidence reported yesterday.

TODAY'S GLOBE CONTENTS

Page 1. Increase of 40 cents for United States government bond.

TODAY'S GLOBE CONTENTS

Page 1. Value given to the United States government bond.

TODAY'S GLOBE CONTENTS

Page 1. Value given to the United States government bond.

TODAY'S GLOBE CONTENTS

Page 1. Value given to the United States government bond.

Read the Used Car Adverts

12, 13, 14, 15

Of Today's Globe

TODAY'S GLOBE CONTENTS

Page 1. Further reduction in business confidence reported yesterday.

TODAY'S GLOBE CONTENTS

Page 1. Increase of 40 cents for United States government bond.

TODAY'S GLOBE CONTENTS

Page 1. Value given to the United States government bond.

TODAY'S GLOBE CONTENTS

Page 1. Value given to the United States government bond.

TODAY'S GLOBE CONTENTS

Page 1. Value given to the United States government bond.

TODAY'S GLOBE CONTENTS

Page 1. Value given to the United States government bond.

PREPARE NOW FOR GOVERNMENT

New Year Begins Oct. 31 and Jan. 2

BURDETT COLLEGE

SAVOY

455 Columbus Avenue

THE BOSTON PENNY SAVINGS BANK

1315 Washington St., Boston

THE WEATHER

Forecast for Boston and vicinity.

COLDER

Advertisement for a cold remedy.

INDEX TO CLARIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Index of classified advertisements.

SAVINGS DEPT.

Advertisement for a savings department.

100 LARGE SIGHT-SEEING CARDS

Advertisement for sight-seeing cards.

UNITED STATES TRUST CO.

Advertisement for United States Trust Co.

Full Dress Suits Tuxedo Coats

Advertisement for a clothing store.

WANTUCKET AND BLOCK ISLAND QUOTE BALMY

Advertisement for a health resort.

REASSURE YOUR BUSINESS

Advertisement for a business insurance company.

SAVINGS DEPT.

Advertisement for a savings department.

Full Dress Suits Tuxedo Coats

Advertisement for a clothing store.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Show 11 Comments

Top 10 Trending Articles

Viewed

Commented

Shared

Mass. authorities face steep hurdles in shutting down sex trafficking

Ideas | Linda Rodriguez McRobbie: Too old to be president? Science says yes.

The backyard mechanic who is taking on Tesla

Julia Ruth Stevens, Babe Ruth's last surviving child, dies at 102

Road to Recovery: Drugs took their children, but not their hope that others might be saved

Six things to know about Michael Bennett, the newest Patriot

'SNL' tackles R. Kelly sex assault accusations with parody of CBS interview, Pete Davidson monologue

Yvonne Abraham | Recycling can't fix what really ails us

Patriots could be diving into the quarterback market

Can a former agent succeed in running the Mets?

Ashland finally gets its own noodlery

A new service takes travelers from Boston to New York in a Tesla, for \$99

Steelers are driven by fear, and other Combine leftovers

Give your china cabinet a 'cheeky' makeover

'Text me when you get home.' We shouldn't have to say it. But we do

Daughter recalls mother's inspiring role in story

Boston. Racism. Image. Reality: The Spotlight Team takes on our hardest question

'Your friendly neighborhood copy chief'

Who are you calling senior? For older folks, some terms are fast becoming radioactive

Turbulence injures 30 on flight from Istanbul to New York

Sex trafficking is in plain sight in Massachusetts communities

Recycling can't fix what really ails us

First lady has a growing ease in her official role, but not politics

Tara Sullivan: Enough with the PED excuses

At SXSW, Elizabeth Warren defends call for breaking up tech giants

New Orleans Saints fans need to get a grip

As UMass makes a big bet on online education, rivals offer words of caution

Drugs took their children but not their hope: That others might be saved

Kyrie Irving, Celtics finish off Lakers this time

Centrists squirm as 2020 Democrats swerve left

Most Popular In Metro →

Subscribe Now

Digital Access

Home Delivery

Gift Subscriptions

My Account

[Manage my Account](#)

[Mobile Customer Service](#)

[Sign Up For Newsletters](#)

Contact

[Help](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Globe newsroom](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Order back issues](#)

Social

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Google+](#)

More

[ePaper](#)

[News in Education](#)

[Archives](#)

[Privacy policy](#)

[Terms of service](#)

[Terms of purchase](#)

[Work at Boston Globe Media](#)

© 2019 Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC