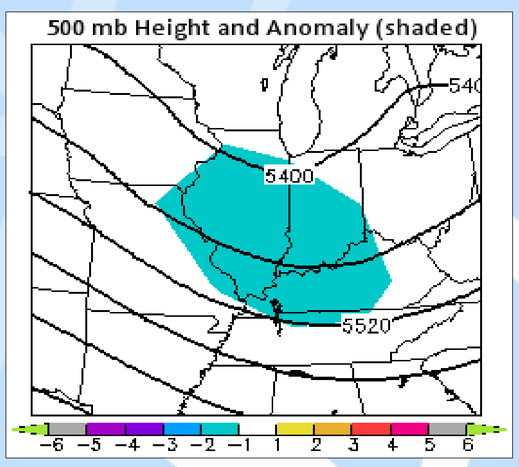
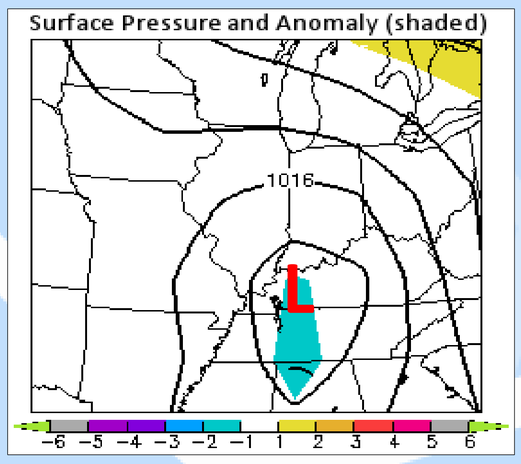
March 1960 Snowstorm

A "snowpocalypse" for southern Kentucky

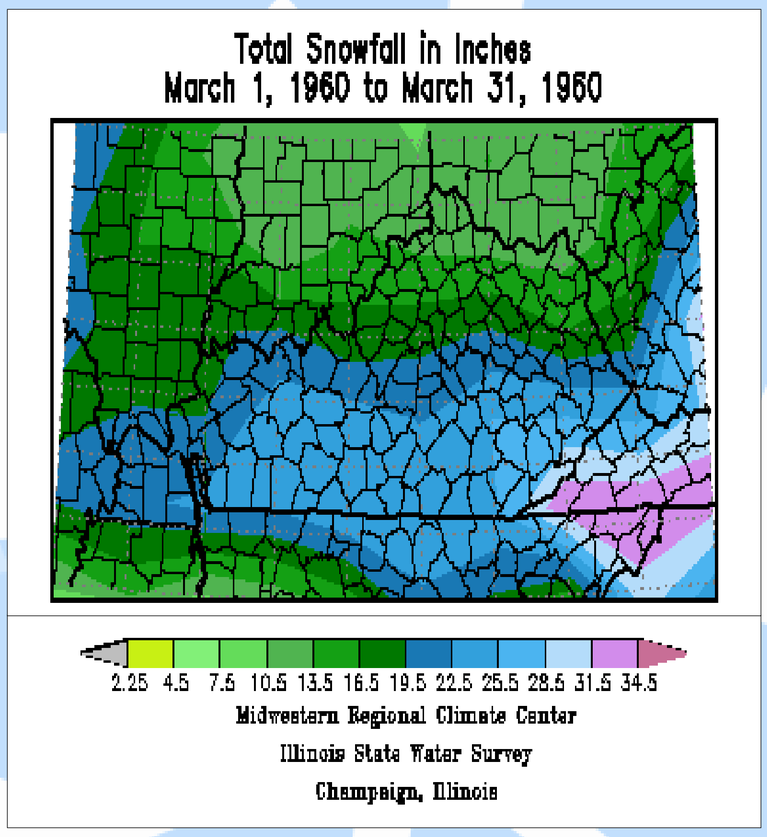
An Anomalous Month

- March was very cold and snowy in the Ohio Valley, especially across southern Kentucky, due to the presence of a persistent upper-level trough axis.
- Many fast-moving disturbances rotated around the trough in early March giving Bowling Green a trace or more of snow on 9 of the first 12 days.
- Temperatures were well below normal. To this day, the month is the coldest March on record by far at Bowling Green with an average temperature 5.2° colder than the second coldest March on record.
- The heaviest snow fell late on March 8 through early March 9 as low pressure moved over south-central Kentucky, with 21" of snow in Bowling Green.



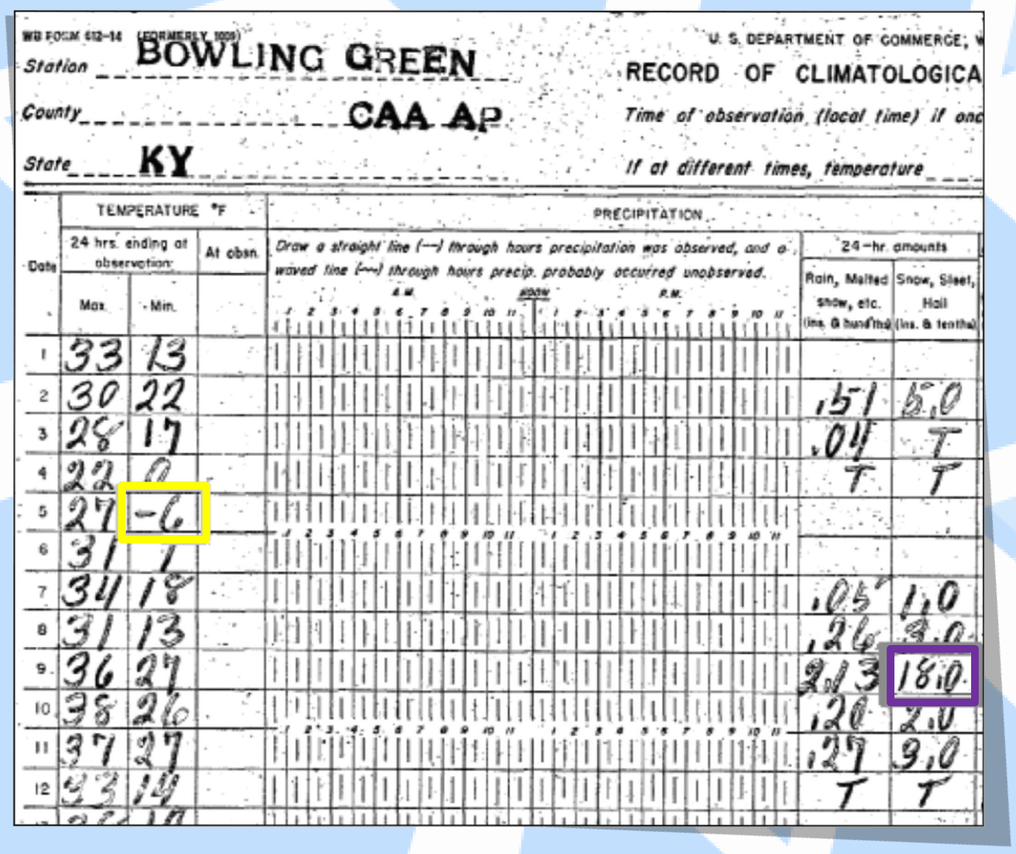


500 mb heights showed a trough over the Ohio Valley (negative anomaly), with surface low pressure in western Kentucky on March 9.



Right: The Bowling Green observer's form for March 1960 shows a low of -6 °F on the 5th, 18 inches of snow on the 9th, and an additional 14 inches from March 2-11. Temperatures stayed below 40 °F for the first 12 days of the month.

Left: Monthly snowfall totals during March 1960 indicate that the most snowfall occurred in southern Kentucky, with the majority during the first half of March.



WB FORM 612-14 (FORMERLY 1009) U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE;
Station BOWLING GREEN RECORD OF CLIMATOLOGICA
County CAA AP Time of observation (local time) if one
State KY If at different times, temperature

Date	Temperature °F 24 hrs. ending at observation: Max.	Min.	At obsn.	Precipitation: Draw a straight line (—) through hours precipitation was observed, and a wavy line (~) through hours precip. probably occurred unobserved.	24-hr. amounts: Rain, Melted snow, etc. (ins. & hundths)	Snow, Sleet, Hail (ins. & tenths)
1	33	13				
2	30	22			.51	5.0
3	28	17			.04	T
4	22	0			T	T
5	27	-6				
6	31	1				
7	34	18			.05	1.0
8	31	13			.26	3.0
9	36	27			2.13	18.0
10	38	26			.20	2.0
11	37	27			.27	9.0
12	33	14			T	T

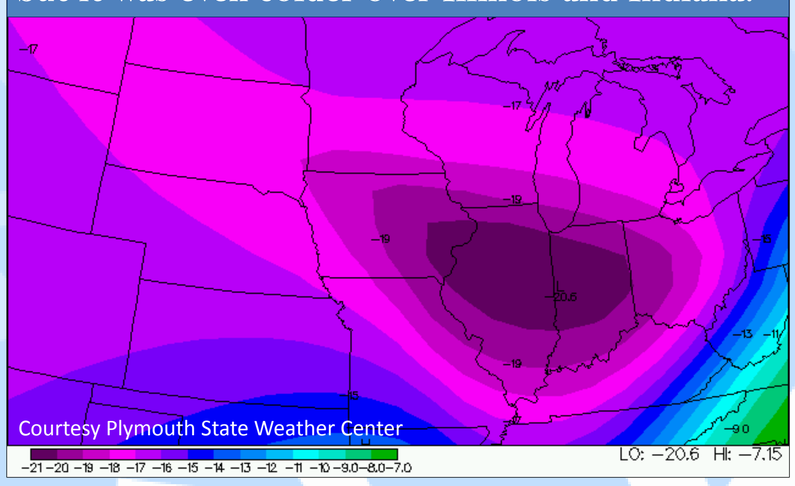
"I remember the National Guard had trucks and they were taking doctors and nurses in them up to the old city/county hospital on Reservoir Hill."

- Ernest "Bud" Lowe, an 89-year-old Bowling Green resident.

Shattered Records

- *Bowling Green:* March 1960 is the snowiest month on record and includes the heaviest 24-hour snowfall and coldest temperature (-6 °F) ever recorded in March.
- In addition, there were 6 other record low temperatures set during the month, with 5 of them still standing today.
- *Louisville, Lexington, & Frankfort* also recorded their all time record lows for the month of March.

Surface temperatures (°C) valid at 6 AM EST on March 5, 1960. Bowling Green dropped to -6 °F, but it was even colder over Illinois and Indiana.



Impacts:

- Due to little snow removal equipment, the snowstorm on March 9 made roads impassable and shut down the city.
- 30 volunteers from the National Guard used trucks and heavy machinery to help clear the snow from roads.
- The National Guard helped transport nurses and an expectant mother and injured 12-year old boy to the hospital.
- Nearly 1500 fans who traveled to see Western Kentucky University play in the NCAA basketball tournament in Lexington were stranded by the storm on the way home.
- Snow remained on the ground for 11 days after the storm.

Bowling Green Daily News photos showing the National Guard and impassable road conditions in Bowling Green after the March 9, 1960 snowstorm.

Created by NWS Louisville Summer Volunteers Zack Leasor & Emily Thornton