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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,
Secretary, American Meteorological Society,
says:

Benjamin Franklin who, with his many other accomplishments, was an excellent meteorologist, and his brother, knowing of an approaching eclipse of the moon, determined to observe it, Franklin in Philadelphia, his brother in Boston. A northeast storm came up the coast and the weather was stormy in Philadelphia. But the Boston observer had a clear view of the eclipse, and wrote to Franklin about it and mentioned that the sky had clouded over and a northeast storm had begun after the eclipse.

Franklin noted what may have seemed to him an anomaly: the northeaster always arrives from the southwest, "comes up the coast," as the saying goes. Storm signals are always displayed between Savannah and Hatteras earlier than between Hatteras and the Delaware Capes. While the storm is in progress the wind blows from the northeast, but it always begins to blow from that direction first in the south. The reason is that winds flow spirally inward towards and not away from the centers of storms. A storm over eastern Virginia causes northeast winds in Philadelphia. As it travels northwards the area of northeast winds also travels northwards.

(Monday: The Pressure of Wind.)

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