

A Science Service Feature

Released on receipt  
but intended for use  
March 8, 1928

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed March 1, 1928

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology

"POLAR BANDS"

No cloud formation is more striking than the long stripes of cirrus that are occasionally seen apparently radiating from a point on the horizon and sometimes stretching entirely across the sky, in which case they appear to converge toward a point opposite. Baron Humboldt was responsible for the idea that such clouds are under the influence of the earth's magnetism. He thought their points of convergence were generally in the direction of the magnetic poles, and therefore named them "polar bands". This name is still often applied to them, though the belief that they are under magnetic control has long been abandoned. In English folklore such clouds are called "Noah's Ark"; also sometimes "wind-reels", "salmon", etc.

The clouds are actually parallel or nearly so, their apparent "fanning out" being an effect of perspective. Some meteorologists have laid much stress upon observing the direction from which the stripes seem to radiate. This has been called the "R-point", or the "V-point" (the latter being an abbreviation for "vanishing-point"). H.H. Clayton, formerly of the Blue Hill Observatory, found that the bands moved most frequently in the direction of their length, and least frequently at right angles to it.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE,  
21st and B Sts.,  
Washington, D.C.