

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
October 1, 1930.

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 24, 1930.

By Charles Fitzhugh Talmen,
Authority on Meteorology.

EARLY SKY NOMENCLATURE

One of the earliest attempts to introduce standard methods of describing the state of the sky and indicating the kinds of clouds was made in the second half of the 17th century by that versatile genius Dr. Robert Hooke. They form part of a more comprehensive scheme for recording weather observations submitted by the author to the Royal Society of London. Modernized as to spelling, punctuation and capitalization, the proposals read in part thus:

"For the faces of the sky there are so many that many of them want proper names, and therefore it will be convenient to agree upon some determinate ones by which the most usual may be in brief expressed. As let 'clear' signify a very clear sky without any clouds or exhalations; 'checkered,' a clear sky with many great white round clouds, such as are very usual in summer. 'Hazy,' a sky that looks whitish by reason of the thickness of the higher parts of the air by some exhalation not formed into clouds. 'Thick,' a sky more whitened by a greater company of vapors; these do usually make the luminaries look bearded or hairy and are oftentimes the cause of rings and halos about the sun as well as the moon. 'Overcast,' when the vapors so whiten and thicken the air that the sun cannot break through; and of this there are very many degrees, which may be expressed by 'a little,' 'much,' 'more,' 'very much overcast,' etc. Let 'hairy' signify a sky that hath many small, thin and high exhalations, which resemble locks of hair, or flakes of hemp or flax, whose varieties may be expressed by 'straight' or 'curved', etc., according to the resemblance they bear. Let 'watered' signify a sky that has many high thin and small clouds, looking almost like watered tabby, called in some places a 'mackerel sky.' Let a sky be called 'waved,' when those clouds appear much bigger and lower, but much after the same manner."

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

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