Three Months in the Field: September 12 to December 12, 1934

By Walter W. Ristow
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"Throughout his teaching career," as Koelsch has reported, Wallace W. Atwood’s "emphasis on the primacy of field studies was to be a significant influence on student thinking 'in the field’."¹ It was inevitable, therefore, that the Graduate School of Geography, which Atwood founded in 1922, would place considerable emphasis on individual and group field studies. Accordingly, in the fall of 1927 a special field school in geography was established.

The 1927 field camp, located near Greenfield, Massachusetts, in the northern part of the Connecticut River Valley, operated during the first three weeks of the fall semester. Success of this first camp induced the faculty to make this a regular feature of the Graduate School of Geography curriculum. In the succeeding three field seasons the central and southern portions of the Connecticut Valley were studied and mapped.

In 1931, the locale was shifted to Cape Cod where, from two successive camps, the entire extent of the Cape was surveyed. Field parties for the first three weeks of the fall terms for the years 1932 and 1933, again operated in the Connecticut River Valley. By this time the field camp had become an accepted and valued feature of Clark’s Graduate School of Geography. Success of the three-week camps suggested the possibility of devoting most of the fall semester to work in the field.

The School of Geography faculty, therefore, announced a three-months field season to commence September 12, 1934. The announcement brochure noted that

The idea of the comprehensive field course originated several years ago. Some of the former Clark students may recall the evening in camp when the plan was first proposed. From that enthusiastic meeting came the determination which has made the dream a reality. The plans have been patterned after the field camps of the past seven years, but in the more comprehensive program for 1934, the graduate school is scheduled to operate in the field for the greater part of the first semester of the academic year.²

Tentative plans for the three-months field course were made some two years in advance. In fact, the split-coach trailers which were to house faculty and students throughout the excursion, were purchased in the summer of 1933, and were used in the fall of that year at the camp set up near South Hadley, Mass. The cost for five standard, one deluxe, and one cook coach was under twenty-four hundred dollars. Shortly before the 1933 field camp opened, the staff of the School of Geography also authorized the purchase of three used Ford V-8 touring cars, at a cost not to exceed five hundred dollars per car.

Preliminary plans for the three months trip were formulated at conferences of the Geography faculty, including laying out the route, selecting camp sites, deciding on the nature of the studies to be pursued at each, and the assignment of faculty members to the several camps. To obtain first hand information, Dr. Clarence F. Jones, in August 1933, drove down the Cumberland and Shenandoah Valleys, and through the length of Florida to check out prospective camp and studies sites. Jones’s reconnaissance was followed up more comprehensively in May 1934 by Dr. and Mrs. Wallace W. Atwood, Jr., who traversed the entire course of the proposed itinerary and success-

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fully negotiated camp site arrangements with colleges, universities, summer camps, state parks, and agricultural experiment stations. This dry run also helped prepare Wally Atwood for his varied and demanding responsibilities as general manager, quartermaster, and head of the commissary department of the expedition.

Concurrent with these logistical plans and arrangements, the faculty was accepting student applications for the academic year 1934/35, and for the Three Months in the Field party. Tuition for the first semester was one hundred and ten dollars, and the field trip fee was set at three hundred dollars. The economic depression, which had begun in 1929, gave little indication of easing by 1934. To insure filling the quota for the field party, the faculty voted, on May 16, 1934, that “as the autumn field trip is to take the place of regular graduate work during the first semester, acceptance of all appointments in the Graduate School of Geography will indicate the enrollment of the appointees in the autumn field work.” In brief, it was mandatory on all recipients of fellowships or grants to participate in the field program. Liberal policies were also adopted, by the Graduate School of Geography, in approving student loans to help cover field trip fees, and five of the male participants received a small reduction in fees as compensation for driving cars on the expedition.

By the end of the 1933/34 academic year it was apparent that the country’s depressed economy was seriously limiting applicants for the scheduled field trip. As departure time drew every closer, requirements were relaxed to accept applicants who had no previous graduate training. By early September the roster numbered eighteen students, two less than could be accommodated in the five student trailers. The group included fifteen men and three women. Eight of the individuals (six men and two women), had had one or more years of previous study in the Graduate School of Geography. Six were Ph.D. candidates and two were working towards their masters degree.

Of the ten participants who were first entering on graduate work at Clark, three (one woman and two men) had masters degrees from other institutions, and one, a Swiss citizen, had an advanced degree from the University of Zurich. Of the remaining six party members, all men, five had completed their undergraduate studies the previous June, and one was a senior at Clark College. Two of this group had, during the previous summer, done physiographic field work in the Rocky Mountains with President Atwood and Dr. Atwood, Jr.

Five of the then six members of the School of Geography faculty actively participated in the Three Months in the Field program. Dr. Wallace W. Atwood, Jr., as noted, served as field director, and remained with the party throughout the expedition. His excellent performance was recognized in the Three Months in the Field souvenir issue of The Monadnock, the newsletter of the Clark University Geographical Society. Under the headline “A Tribute to Our Field Director,” the editor wrote:

We congratulate our field director upon his successful execution of a tremendous assignment. The untiring perseverance, his jealous care of valuable equipment, his concern for our comfort and welfare, his amazing coolness in real emergencies — all these have won for him the profound respect of every student in the party. To his generous allowance for amusement and entertainment and his own hearty participation in our fun, we drink a toast in fellowship. Hails off to Dr. Wallace W. Atwood, Jr., Director of our epochal field excursion.

Wally also assisted President Atwood in directing physiographic studies, particularly at those study sites where the latter was not present. Dr. Clarence F. Jones was in charge of economic, industrial, and urban studies, and land utilization, agricultural geography, soils, and vegetation field work was directed by Dr. W. Elmer Ekblaw. Dr. Samuel Van Valkenburg’s responsibilities covered weather and climate. Except for Wally Atwood, faculty members alternated at the several study camps. A most essential member of the party was Hilbert Fern, a native of Sweden, who served as cook throughout the three month expedition. Mrs. Wallace W. (Celia) Atwood, Jr., shared the women’s coach at several camps, and contributed much to the general comfort and harmony of the field tripppers.

On Tuesday morning, September 12, 1934, the seven coaches and cars were lined up in front of Jonas Clark Hall. In addition to the participants, some fifty or sixty faculty, students, and towns people were on hand to witness the start of this eventful expedition. Shortly after ten a.m. the caravan pulled out of the Clark campus, led by Dr. Wallace W. Atwood, Jr., driving a Ford V-8 station wagon, to which was hitched the specially-constructed kitchen coach. Snaking behind him were a Buick convertible and five Ford V-8 cars, models 1932 to 1934, each towing a coach. One of the Fords was a two-door sedan, the others were four-door touring cars, with tops that could be collapsed in good weather. Bringing up the rear of the procession was President Wallace W. Atwood, in his Lincoln Continental, accompanied by Dr. Samuel Van Valkenburg, Dr. W. Elmer Ekblaw, and Dr. Clarence F. Jones.
The line of cars and coaches shortly reached the western limits of the city of Worcester, then moved westward across the New England uplands, and traversed the Connecticut River Valley and ascended the eastern slope of the Berkshire Mountains. Albany, New York was negotiated during late afternoon rush hour, with one car and trailer involved in a minor traffic accident. Overnight camp was pitched in New York’s Thatcher State Forest, on the crest of the Helderberg Escarpment, at the northern extremity of the Appalachian Plateau. Because the cook was still unfamiliar with the mobile kitchen and equipment, dinner was delayed until eight-thirty.

It may be pertinent at this point to describe the coaches, which were our living quarters for thirteen weeks. Manufactured by the Split Coach Manufacturing Company, York, Pennsylvania, the coaches, when closed for travelling, were the approximate width of a car and about seven feet high. Within the six dormitory coaches were four bunks, two upper and two lower, a closet, a bank of drawers, and a wash basin. The reservoir for the latter had to be manually filled. For overnight stops the coaches were not expanded, and interior lights were supplied from car batteries. At major camp sites the sides of the coaches could be expanded at the tops raised to provide more than twice as much interior space as when closed. A team of four men, after a week’s experience, could efficiently open or close a coach within fifteen or twenty minutes. The large kitchen coach was somewhat more of a challenge. The walls of the coaches were formed of thin steel plates, with no insulation. On cool nights during the latter weeks of the trip, contact with the cold walls was a chilling experience.

The second day’s route took us down the face of the escarpment to the Mohawk Valley which we followed westward on a rather raw and bleak September day. Our objective was the campus of Wells College for Women, near Aurora, New York, where we arrived shortly before five o’clock. Because this was to be our study site for ten days, the coaches were opened for more comfortable occupancy. Ardors of the male members of the party were quickly cooled when it was learned that the college term did not begin until the day before our departure.

Field studies in the central New York Finger Lakes area focused on depositional glacial land forms, agricultural land utilization, and the industrial and urban geography of the city of Seneca Falls. Recollections of this first study region include the delicious autumn apples, pears, and grapes, first K.P. duty, and a number of rainy days and nights, and because of misunderstanding about a meeting place, one team of two being stranded miles from camp. They managed to hire a ride and arrived back at the coaches, disgruntled and hungry late in the evening.

With cool autumn nights in the offing, we were glad to break camp on September 24, and head towards warmer regions, via the southern New York portion of the Appalachian Plateau and into Pennsylvania. Here we crossed the terminal moraine on the dissected plateau, then followed the trend of the ridges and valleys of the folded Appalachians. Our overnight stop was in a wooded area adjoining Pennsylvania State University’s athletic field. Several P.S.U. faculty members and wives were our guests at dinner that evening, among them Dr. and Mrs. Raymond Murphy. Ray some years later joined the School of Geography faculty and, after Dr. Van Valkenburg’s retirement, succeeded to the directorship.

From State College on September 25, we drove southwest following a broad anticlinal valley flanked on the east by Tussey Mountain. After a lunch stop the caravan turned east, crossing several ridges through gaps, and reached the Great Valley at Chambersburg, in mid-afternoon. Another hour’s drive brought us to the second major field camp on the campus of Shippensburg State College, in the Cumberland Valley. A distinct advantage of campus sites was the availability of warm showers.

Agricultural land use, Pennsylvania’s early iron industry, and geomorphology of the northern Appalachian Mountains were the principal studies pursued in the Shippensburg region. Particularly striking was the contrast between the prosperous “Pennsylvanian Dutch” farmsteads, in the limestone valleys, and the marginal farms on the igneous and metamorphic rocks on the slopes of South Mountain, a northern extension of the Blue Ridge. In this region of folded and eroded geologic formations, the students became intimately acquainted with peneplains and vestigial erosion surfaces. From a fire tower on the summit of Sherman Mountain, there was a magnificent panoramic view of Kittatinny Mountain and the level crest of Kittatinny Peneplain. The Shippensburg stay was also enriched with a Sunday visit to historic Gettysburg Battlefield.

The expedition left Shippensburg on October 4, for a three-day drive down the Great Valley, much of it through steady rain. After reaching the first overnight, at Massanutten Caverns in Virginia, several cars were unhitched from coaches, and the group had a short drive over the still uncompleted Skyline Drive, in the new Shenandoah National Park. Later we were entering the caverns for a night
tour when President Atwood and Dr. Van Valkenburg rejoined the field party.

From Massanutten the route continued down the Great Valley in western Virginia, on rather poor roads and with a cold unfriendly rain. The scheduled camp site for the night was on the grounds of a small country club at Marion, Virginia. The lodge proved to be at the summit of a hill which had to be ascended on a dirt road which had been rendered slippery by the all-day rain. Man power was required to assist cars and coaches in negotiating the slimy incline. It was by this time past six o’clock, with little daylight remaining when all had attained the summit. Finding the clubhouse locked, Wally Atwood was obliged to make a forced entrance through a basement window. The dilemma was compounded when it was discovered that electric power was disconnected in the lodge. After a late dinner, we managed to kindle a fire in the fireplace and were able to warm up and dry out before retiring for the night.

Rain continued to fall through the night and the access road to our camp site, by morning, resembled a muddy river. Manual power was again required to get several of the cars and coaches down the slope. By early afternoon we crossed the state boundary into Tennessee under clearing skies, and several hours later reached the Great Smoky Mountain camp site, near the town of Gatlinburg. The coaches were set up on the grounds of a boys summer camp, and we had use of the lodge and shower facilities. The Little River, a torrential mountain stream, cascaded down a V-shaped valley adjacent to the camp, and provided an opportunity for cold dips and some primitive laudering. Physiographic studies, directed by President Atwood, weather and climate surveys by Dr. Van Valkenburg, and mountain land utilization work with Dr. Ekblaw filled the ten days at the Great Smoky Mountain camp. Particularly memorable is Dr. Van’s twelve-hour temperature profile across the mountains and valleys. In teams of two we were stationed at intervals over the terrain, and from five a.m. to five p.m., we took temperature readings every half hour. At my post, which I shared with Jim Minogue, the twelve-hour range was from forty-four degrees to seventy-one degrees.

A sixteen-mile hike to the summit of Mt. Le Conte (6,593 feet), one of the highest peaks in eastern United States, rewarded us with a magnificent panorama of the forest-covered Great Smoky Mountains. One well-remembered afternoon, four of us explored the Cades Cove region, where there were still small settlements of mountain people. We stopped at the log cabin home of five Walker sisters, who had spent their entire lives in the region, and were virtually self sufficient. In recording this day’s experience in my diary, I stated “this afternoon was without doubt the most interesting of the entire Great Smoky Camp.”

President Atwood, Drs. Ekblaw and Van Valkenburg, and Mrs. W. W. (Celia) Atwood, Jr. left the party toward the end of the Smokies camp, on October 17, and headed west through Tennessee. Our overnight stop was in Cookeville, on the campus of Tennessee Polytechnic Institute. The following day we drove up the slope of the Highland Rim, and by noon assembled in the center of Nashville, to fuel the cars and repair several minor tire leaks. We saw our first cotton field that afternoon where a crew of colored laborers were picking the white bolls. Florence, Alabama, our next overnight stop, was reached by mid-afternoon. Camp was pitched on the banks of the Tennessee River, about a mile below Muscle Shoals Dam. In late afternoon and the following morning we visited several of the buildings and facilities of the Tennessee Valley Authority, which was then much in the news, as a major development of President Roosevelt’s New Deal.

From Florence it was a fairly easy run to Birmingham, where our camp site was on the grounds of Birmingham Southern University. Under Dr. Jones’s guidance, the students prepared an urban land use map of Birmingham, and studied the iron and steel industry, including a visit to a coal mine, at this study site.

Birmingham was also the home of Sara Waites, who had the previous year received her M.A. degree from the Graduate School of Geography. On Saturday evening, October 27, Sara’s parents, Methodist Bishop, and Mrs. Waites, entertained the field party at a buffet supper. Sara’s brother, Bennett, a student at Southern, won kudos from the male members of the party for his extraordinary feat of arranging blind dates with some dozen or more of the university’s most attractive coeds. This, needless to say, proved to be the most enjoyable social evening of the entire three months.

On October 30, the caravan moved southwest from Birmingham over some rough and unsurfaced roads. Upon arrival at our overnight bivouac in Ellisville, Mississippi, we found heavy deposits of dust in the coaches. On the last day of October a short drive took us to New Orleans where, early in the afternoon, we pulled onto the athletic grounds of Tulane University, where we set up the coaches for our six-day stay. Projects in the river delta included the pattern of settlement and land utilization on the flood
plain and levees of the Mississippi River, sugar cane culture, and studies of the port and warehouses for coffee, bananas, and cotton. There were also several evening tours of the bistros in the Vieux Carre and, on Sunday evening November 4, we were treated to a sumptuous five-course dinner in one of the French Square’s better restaurants.

From New Orleans, on November 7, the expedition headed east, crossing the southern tip of the states of Mississippi and Alabama, and traversing most of Florida’s panhandle. From November 9 to 29 we drove over much of Florida studying various types of land utilization. All of our camp sites in the state were on the grounds of agricultural experiment stations. At Quincy, in the north, the tobacco industry, Fuller’s earth mining and processing, hardwood lumbering, and stock farming invited attention. At Gainesville, the second Florida camp, night temperatures dropped to twenty-seven degrees, and we wondered where we would find that good Florida sunshine. An evening at the home of Dr. Rollin and Mrs. Atwood, was one of the highlights of the Gainesville stop. Rollin, the older son of President and Mrs. Atwood, was then on the geography faculty of the University of Florida.

The Lake Alfred Experiment Station, where we camped from November 13 to 15, specialized in citrus fruit. The coaches were set up in a grove of live oak trees, draped with Spanish moss, and surrounded by an extensive citrus orchard. We had carte blanche to pick as much of the fruit as we wished, and orange and grapefruit juice flowed like water throughout our stay. A Sunday drive through the central Florida citrus groves had as its goal the famous Bok carillon tower, near the city of Lake Wales.

From Lake Alfred to Homestead in the southern part of the state, was a two-day drive. The overnight, on November 21, was at Naples, on the grounds of a country club, on the shore of the Gulf of Mexico. We spent a delightful afternoon, evening, and morning here, enjoying the warm Gulf bathing, the fascinating shell beach, and (for some) the golf course.

The Homestead state farm was, at the time of our visit, experimenting with growing avocados, truck crops, mangoes, papayas, and coconuts. That camp also included a drive to the northern Florida Keys, where there were several lime orchards. A free day on Saturday, November 24, provided an opportunity to explore the city of Miami and, at depression prices, to enjoy a delicious sea food dinner at a cost of fifty cents.

The Belle Glade Experiment Station, in the Everglades at the south end of Lake Okeechobee, was our final study camp in Florida. Because of the soft muck soils, the coaches had to park on concrete tennis courts. Truck crops, especially beans and celery, and sugar cane, were the crops being developed in this area.

We were on the road again on November 28, heading north parallel with the Atlantic Coast. While crossing a small, high angle bridge the hitch on one of the coaches snapped, necessitating a stop for repairs by the driver, Rube Parson, and Wally Atwood. The remainder of the party, under Dr. Van’s leadership, proceeded to Daytona Beach, where the coaches were lined up on the sand, above the high tide line. Rube and Wally arrived in the Buick, with the repaired coach hitch, later in the evening.

A late breakfast on Thanksgiving Day, November 29, was followed by lectures on the climate of Florida, by Dr. Van Valkenburg, and a summary of coastal plain physiography, by Dr. Atwood, Jr. The remainder of the holiday we enjoyed the sun, surf, and beach. Thanksgiving dinner, somewhat below expectations, was served at a shore restaurant. A drive on the hard packed Daytona Beach speedway, and a dance at the Pier Casino occupied the evening hours.

For the first five or six miles after leaving the Daytona camp, the caravan moved northward on the smooth sand as far as Ormond Beach. We spent several hours at historic old Fort Marion, St. Augustine, and had a short stop, for refueling and purchasing food supplies, in Jacksonville. Beyond St. Augustine the palm and palmetto vegetation gave way to deciduous forests, and by mid-afternoon we crossed the state line into Georgia. As the sun lowered, temperatures fell sharply and we were uncomfortably aware, in the open V-8s, that we had left the sub tropics behind us.

Because of the long St. Augustine stop, the caravan was behind schedule, and when darkness fell, around five p.m., we were still fifty miles from our planned overnight stop, some ten miles south of Savannah. The caravan leader accordingly increased speed to make up the lost time. The Ford V-8 driven by Norm Carls was second in the procession, with Dr. Van in the front passenger seat and Bob Simpson and I trying to keep warm in the rear. Suddenly a small unlighted truck loomed directly in front of us and, in a split second, we had struck it a glancing blow. Our car and trailer ended up in a shallow ditch, but remained upright. A quick survey confirmed that there were no injuries in our car, and that the driver of the small truck was more frightened than hurt. We hailed a passing car and asked the driver to inform Wally
Atwood (who was driving the lead car) of the accident. The remainder of our caravan had, by this time, also been flagged down.

Wally shortly returned and coolly and competently assessed the situation. Plans to reach the Savannah camp site were abandoned in favor of spending the night in Riceboro, Georgia, some four or five miles north of the accident site. It was after ten-thirty when the damaged car and trailer were towed into Riceboro. Damage to our coach was limited to the tow bar, so we were able to sleep in it that night.

The following morning, December 1, the six functional cars and coaches headed for Columbia, South Carolina, the final study camp. Norm Carls and I remained in Riceboro to await repair crews from Savannah. In the course of the day the coach tow hitch was welded and the wrecked V-8 was towed to Savannah to be repaired. Norm and I again spent Saturday night in Riceboro, and were becoming fully steeped in the town's geography and history. Late Sunday morning we welcomed Kirkendall and Bob Simpson, who had driven down from Columbia, to retrieve us and our coach. Because of the cool temperature, we found it more comfortable to ride inside the coach for much of the journey to South Carolina.

Columbia and vicinity were studied as a Fall Line settlement, as a center of cotton textile manufacturing, for the history of water power utilization, and for its fertilizer, granite, and sand industries. Physiographic studies of the coastal plain and the piedmont were also carried out, but Dr. Van's pre-dawn micro-temperature survey had to be aborted because of a cloud cover.

Departing from Columbia on December 7, all the touring cars had their tops up and side curtains attached because of the frigid temperatures. An hour or so before noon the caravan entered North Carolina, and during the afternoon there were brief tours of the campuses of Duke University and the University of North Carolina. Shortly after four p.m. we reached an overnight campsite on the grounds of a country club near the city of Henderson, North Carolina. Snow flurries that evening were a chilling reminder that were back in the cold north. An uncomfortable drive on Saturday, December 8, brought us, via Mount Vernon, to Washington's tourist camp in East Potomac Park. Here most of the party accepted the trip director's offer to sleep in heated tourist cabins.

Notwithstanding an inch or more of snow, on Monday we toured the U.S. Geological Survey facilities. The closing banquet of the trip was held that evening in the tourist camp lodge. Special guests included Dr. O. E. Baker, Dr. C. F. Marbut, and Dr. Carleton Barnes, of the Department of Agriculture, and Dr. Mendenhall and Dr. François Matthes of the Geological Survey.

Because the three month trip had obviated possibilities for dissertation field work during the fall semester, Norm Carls and I had opted to return to South Carolina for independent field studies. On December 11 we, therefore, bade good-by to our colleagues, and remained in Washington an additional day, to interview local geographers and to procure publications and maps of our respective study areas.

Other group members reported a cold and bleak two day trip from Washington to Worcester, brightened by a dinner at the home of Johnny Fairchild's parents, in Glen Ridge, New Jersey. Overnight camp was in Upper Montclair, New Jersey, where heated rooms were secured at the Y.M.C.A. For the final day, December 12, the weather warmed slightly, along with the spirits of the group. Shortly before six p.m. the caravan, less several of the original participants pulled in to the Clark campus. The eventful trip was over, but many hours of work remained writing reports and papers on special studies that were initiated at the several field camps. Articles were also prepared for the January 1935 souvenir issue of The Monadnock, the newsletter of Clark University Geographic Society. During the thirteen weeks the expedition had travelled more than five thousand miles and had carried out field studies in seventeen states and the District of Columbia, and in some fourteen or fifteen different physiographic regions. Each of the cars had logged almost ten thousand miles.

It may be of interest to review the Three Months in the Field experience after the elapse of almost half a century. Several of the participants had hoped to compile and publish, in 1974, a forty year perspective. Unfortunately this did not materialize. Some information was assembled, however, on the present status of the eighteen students and five faculty members who shared experiences and contacts in the field during some ninety days. Six of the field campers, Norman Carls, Franklin C. Erickson, Carol Y. Mason, Ruben L. Parson, Walter W. Ristow, and Robert B. Simpson, were subsequently awarded Ph.D. degrees by Clark University. Hans J. Boesch earned a doctorate at the University of Zurich, Switzerland, and Lloyd D. Black received a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. Johnson E. Fairchild and James A. Minogue had completed all Ph.D. requirements except the dissertation when the outbreak of World War II terminated their studies. L.
Lemar Stephan, Elizabeth Love, and Margaret Stevens Tuttle earned M.A. degrees at the University of Wisconsin, Clark, and Oberlin College, respectively. John F. Pyle, James S. Nelson, Milton J. Prescott, Walter E. Kirkendall, Margaret Stevens Tuttle, and Fred W. Allen subsequently pursued non-geographic careers.

Black, Carls, Fairchild, Minogue, Parson, and Simpson were in uniformed service during the War. Erickson and Ristow had civilian wartime responsibilities. Black, Boesch, Carls, Erickson, Fairchild, Love, Mason, Parson, and Simpson taught geography at various institutions in the post-War years. Several in this group became department chairpersons, and Erickson additionally served for ten years as Assistant Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Boston University. Minogue and Ristow remained in government service after World War II, the former with the Department of the Army, and the latter with the Library of Congress.

Of the field trip participants who pursued geographic careers, Black is the only one still professionally active. Carls, Fairchild, Minogue, Ristow, and Simpson have retired. Individually and collectively the "1934 Three Months in the Field" alumni have authored an impressive number of monographs and articles, and have held responsible positions in various professional organizations. Six of our former colleagues are deceased: Hans Boesch, Elizabeth Love, Franklin C. Erickson, Carol Mason, Ruben Parson, John Pyle, and Lemar Stephan.

All five faculty members who contributed to the 1934 field excursion continued on the staff of the School of Geography until the disruptions of World War II. President Atwood retired in 1946, and Dr. Samuel Van Valkenburg succeeded to the directorship of the School of Geography. Atwood and Ekbaw both died in 1949. Dr. Van served as Director until his retirement in 1962. For the next decade or so, however, he continued to teach one course a year at Clark. At the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the School of Geography, in 1972, Dr. Van was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. He died four years later, on April 18, 1976.

During the war years Clarence F. Jones served as a consultant to several federal agencies, in addition to his work in the Graduate School of Geography. In 1948, he was named Distinguished Professor in Northwestern University's geography department. Several years later he succeeded to the chairmanship of the department, a post he held until his retirement. For the past two decades or so he has lived in retirement, with his wife Ida, in Oneida, Illinois. Here he supervises work on several farms and has compiled a comprehensive genealogy of the Gehring family.

Dr. Wallace W. Atwood, Jr. served in the U.S. Army during World War II, with the successive ranks of Captain and Major. He was assigned to the Office of Strategic Services where, in quarters in Washington's historic Ford Theater, he supervised the construction of three-dimensional relief models. When the O.S.S. was deactivated after the War, the model shop was transferred to the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army. Following his release from service, Wally held administrative and research positions in the Department of Defense and, after 1951, in the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council. In 1951-52 he served as Chairman of the United States Organizing Committee which planned and staged, in Washington, D.C. in 1952 the Seventeenth International Geographical Congress. On leave of absence from the Library of Congress, I served as Secretary of the Organizing Committee for fifteen months, in 1951-52.

Following his retirement from the NAS-NRC, in 1960, Wally Atwood planned, constructed and managed a large marina and resort facility at Windmill Point, at the seaward tip of the historical Northern Neck, in tidewater Virginia. In 1974, Atwood sold the Windmill Point Marina. The purchaser failed to operate the facility successfully and, in 1978, went into bankruptcy. In 1979, Dr. and Mrs. Atwood, in collaboration with Karl Eugene Kohler, retrieved the property. Wally Atwood now holds the office of president of the Marine Resort Corporation, which operates Windmill Point Marine Resort.

As president of Clark University Geographical Society, in 1934-35, I was selected to speak for the student participants at the December 10 dinner, at the Washington, D.C. tourist camp. My diary reveals that I informed the gathering that "the trip is but a memory to us — but a happy one. The recollections and experiences that we shared will henceforth be an important part of us and will bind this group of students and faculty in a strong fellowship. There may," I noted, "be other long field trips, but there will never again be a first one." It proved, however, to be the last and only three month field trip sponsored by the Graduate School of Geography.

While preparing this paper, I posed several questions to Wallace W. Atwood, Jr.: Did the faculty of the School of Geography, I asked, consider the 1934 three-month expedition a success or a failure, financially and educationally? I asked this because no subsequent long trips were scheduled.
Here is Wally’s enthusiastic reply: “It was an outstanding success! Without doubt it was one of our most successful field trip programs. The reason we never did it again? — It was a difficult job and it presented problems for students who remained behind. Also it was a little expensive for the students. Money was scarce in those days of the depression and we put off a second 3-month trip and then, of course, never did it.”

According to my recollections, I also wrote to Wally Atwood, “eight of the eighteen students subsequently completed Ph.D.’s, six at Clark and two elsewhere. In addition, there were two ABD’s. Six individuals, one-third of the participants, did not remain in geography. Was this a normal attrition rate for the period?”

“I do recall,” Wally replied, “that we took along two probably four, who we never expected to make into geographers. We had a few ‘open slots’ and let in undergraduates to help with expenses. To answer your question in another way, I would say the attrition was above normal chiefly because we ‘opened the doors a little more than we would have done for a regular graduate academic year . . . . In short, it was financial considerations which produced the high attrition rate.”

For those of us who experienced Three Months in the Field, a particularly rewarding benefit has been in the lifelong professional friendships it engendered. These sentiments were echoed in a number of letters Rube Parson received, in 1974, when we were planning the since aborted perspective. It is, of course, difficult to assess, accurately and objectively, the tangible and intangible benefits we gained from having taken the trip. In other words, would our careers have been appreciably different if we had not had this experience?

One member of the party on whom the trip had a very significant impact was Hans Boesch, for some years the Director of the Geograph Institute at the University of Zurich. He wrote to Parson, in 1974, as follows:

It was really a chance coincidence of several things that brought me to the USA, labeled as an exchange student, in 1934 . . . . I had finished my MA in geology a few months before and was, quite naturally looking down upon geographers.

The first thing that I did learn rather quickly, was that geographers in the States knew what they were talking about. The Field Trip was to my liking, because as young geologists we had been trained to rough it and to observe with our own eyes. It was there and in the months that followed in Worcester that I moved more and more into geography . . . . I had taken a liking to that field called geography and shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War decided to enter the academic career in that field at Zurich University . . . . The War continued and Switzerland was encircled, my older colleagues retired or passed away and I had to take over much more than I ever dreamed of.

With nobody interfering, I could shape the geography training very much in accordance with what I had observed to be a good educational system at Clark . . . .

Switzerland is a small country and that first journey across the water satisfied to a certain degree my desires to travel abroad . . . . Based on this inclination and my first contact with the outside world, I became very much of what I would term an ‘Internationalist.’ I did not mind to spend twenty years for the International Geographical Union (as Secretary-Treasurer and Vice-President) and until today my publication show that geography has been able to give me the fulfillment of what I wanted to do in my lifetime.

The war could have seriously hindered this development. But my American friends never forgot me. As soon as the war was over, we established again contacts and visited. My fellow students of 1934-35 had already advanced into prominent positions, mostly in Washington, and I shall never forget when I went there for a lecture in the National Archives and so many of them turned out to see ‘Hans’ again that we had to move to a bigger lecture room.

Inevitably, many retired, some disappeared and a few have already left us forever . . . . In short, Clark has not only pulled my switches for a life career in geography and in doing this given me more than a professional satisfaction, Clark has also given me a lasting human association with outstanding colleagues. I am very content, that things went the way they did. I could even hesitate to make any changes, if I should do it all over again.

With this evaluation, I am sure, all of our colleagues would agree. None of us could express these sentiments with more eloquence and feeling. Hans, regrettably, died of a heart attack, August 16, 1978.

NOTES
2 Three Months in the Field with the Clark University Graduate School of Geography. Clark University, Worcester, Mass., 1933, p. 5
3 Atwood, Wallace W., Jr., personal letter dated June 26, 1981.