GEOGRAPHY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA (a)

Leslie Hewes
Department of Geography
University of Nebraska, Lincoln
Lincoln, Nebraska 68588-0135

ABSTRACT. Geography was recognized as an academic discipline in the first years of the institution. University catalogs listed physical geography in the preparatory school consistently for the first dozen years, beginning in 1871, and for several years in the university itself. However, Geography as a continuing field of university instruction and research dates from 1903. At first, geography was associated closely with the Department of Geology, but separate from 1909 to 1918, and has been an independent department since 1928. The first masters' degrees were completed in 1908 and the first doctorate was awarded in 1909. The University of Nebraska ranks second only to the University of Chicago in the Middle West in the length of time in which graduate instruction in geography has been given. Doctoral degrees now number 88 and masters 230. (b)

Geography was recognized early as an academic discipline at the University of Nebraska. According to Blouet, such recognition was favored by a provision of the Morrill Act (1862) that subjects useful to agriculture should be taught in land grant colleges. In the first year in which students were admitted, 1871-72, physical geography was one of three courses offered in the preparatory school (Latin School). In 1872-73, and for the next two academic years, Comparative Physical Geography was listed in the catalogs as an elective for students enrolled in the Scientific Course in the university and, apparently, was a required course in the Agricultural College, as well as being given in the preparatory school. In some years the information was provided that "physical geography is taught in daily recitations from Guayot's textbook during the second Latin school year" by Samuel Aughey, Professor of Natural Science, best known for his advocacy of the theory that "rain follows the plow." The text for the university level course was not given in university catalogs. Although physical geography remained in the preparatory school and in the Agricultural College, according to the university catalog of October, 1876, it was listed as "sub-freshman" for both the Scientific and Classical university courses. Physical geography remained a required course in the Agricultural College through 1878, somewhat longer in the preparatory school. Professor Aughey left the university in 1883. By this time, geology appears to have replaced geography at the university level. However, the catalog of 1885-86 included geography as one of the courses in the Elementary Agricultural Course; and the catalog of 1886-87 listed geography as one of six fields in which students were to be examined for entry to the freshman class in the College of Literature, Science, and Arts. In short, geography was still considered useful preparation for college students, but the discipline seems to have lacked someone to champion its place as a basic college field.
According to Nels Bengtson, former chairman of the department, the need to prepare teachers to give high school courses in physical geography, which were in vogue in the 1890s, led to a Mattie Cook Ellis at Peru State Normal School becoming "the first teacher of geography at the college level in Nebraska." Either Bengtson ignored or was unaware of Aughey as a teacher of college geography. Both Bengtson and Earl Lackey, another long-time member of the Department of Geography at the University of Nebraska, took work at Peru Normal, and Bengtson had served as Professor of Geography there before becoming a student at the university.

George Evert Condra initiated instruction and research in geography at the University of Nebraska as an on-going field. Although he had no known association with Peru Normal, he must have been aware of developments there. His academic preparation included work at Shenandoah (Iowa) Normal, and B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees in geology at Nebraska. Perhaps it is significant that Condra took a "special course" at Cornell University in 1902, probably in the summer, before giving the single course in geography at the University of Nebraska in the spring of 1903. Ralph S. Tarr, at Cornell, was then a leading spokesman for physical geography. Perhaps Condra sensed that geography offered an opportunity to carve a niche for himself. At any rate, in the second year after his appointment as Instructor in Geology in 1902, Condra began offering work in geography. Obviously, Condra had big plans for geography because the university catalog of 1902-03 listed three geography courses under geology numbers, namely, General Geography, United States, and Advanced Geography, the latter "especially for graduate students." The catalog for 1904-05 listed still more courses in geography in the Department of Geology but under a sub-heading of "Geography and Economic Geology," a heading as prominent as that for Geology. These were General Geography, United States, Advanced Geography (two courses), Industrial Geography, Teachers' course, as well as Economic Geology, and Agricultural Geography. By this time Condra was associate professor.

Increasing enrollment, one hundred students per semester by 1907, led to Nels Bengtson's addition as full-time instructor. The roster for Geography and Economic Geology for 1907-08 included Condra, then professor, assistant professor George Loveland, from the Weather Bureau, and instructor Nels Bengtson. Courses in geography included Physical Geography, North America, Nebraska, the Atmosphere, Industrial Geography, Economic Geography, Physical Laboratory, Regional Laboratory, two field courses, and two seminars. Condra no longer taught geography courses other than economic geography. He was listed for the seminars and as principal instructor for the other courses in geography except the Atmosphere, Economic Geography, and the laboratory courses. Bengtson was listed for Economic Geography, and the laboratory courses and shared instruction with Condra in the other geography courses except the seminars. Loveland was the instructor in the meteorology course (Atmosphere). Although not carried on the roster, Mrs. Condra, perhaps to attract women to the courses, was listed with Condra and Bengtson for the field courses.

The experiment of teaching geography in the university might well have failed if undertaken by someone with fewer qualifications than Condra. Bengtson credited Condra's ability to draw students to his popularity among recent graduates from Lincoln High School, where Condra had served as science teacher and athletic coach. An outgoing individual, he had a booming voice. Such were
his eloquence and intensity that an associate, James Thorp, Coordinator of Soils, Great Plains Division, United States Soil Survey, declared that Condra could bring tears to his listeners' eyes in speaking about the Ogallala formation. Also, Condra was a prodigious worker with a keen sense of tasks that needed to be done and was not bashful in pushing his claims. Condra was an applied geographer at the forefront in tackling problems important to Nebraskans. As stated by Blouet,

In a letter to Chancellor Andrews, University of Nebraska, Condra reported on the work he and his graduate students were doing in 1908. There were six major areas of study: utilization of the Sandhills, control and development of the Missouri River waters, soil erosion, the consequences of climatic fluctuation, the climate of soils, and the agricultural geography of Nebraska. The group was linked to the work of the U.S.D.A.

Graduate credit was first given in geography in 1906. Apparently, Charles Newton Gould, shortly to become State Geologist of Oklahoma, was the first at Nebraska to receive an advanced degree that recognized preparation in geography. His Ph.D., 1906, was in geology, geography, and hydrology. The first two to receive advanced degrees in geography, each with an M.A. in 1908, were Nels August Bengtson, thesis: "Meanders of the Missouri River;" and George Andrew Loveland, thesis: "Hot Winds, their Cause and Effect." As noted, both found places in the department. Thus, the University of Nebraska ranks second only to the University of Chicago in the Middle West in the length of time graduate work in geography has been given. Others to receive advanced degrees in geography very early, all in 1909, were Joseph Allen Warren, Ph.D., dissertation title, "An Agricultural Survey of Nebraska;" Mary Nolte Bardwell, M.A., thesis title, "A Study of Mineral Fuels;" Edward Charles Bishop, M.A., thesis title, "Geographical Control of Social Organization in Nebraska;" and William George Bishop, M.A., thesis title, "Changes Wrought by Irrigation in the North Platte Valley." According to Bengtson, W.G. Bishop, already at Nebraska Wesleyan University, in Lincoln, was responsible for the development of geography there so that "college geography in Nebraska was founded on a three-point basis, namely Peru, University of Nebraska, and Nebraska Wesleyan University."

In 1909, Geography was given departmental status as Department of Geography and Economic Geology, with Condra as head, as reported in the Minutes of the Board of Regents. Thus, the department was formed just six years after the Department of Geography at the University of Chicago. The department was renamed Geography and Conservation in 1912, a title it bore until 1918. Condra was head, Bengtson his chief support, with auxiliary help listed as Loveland (Weather Bureau), and staff from Teachers College and the United States Soil Survey. Except for the addition of work in soil survey, there was little change in courses. Rather curiously, separate field courses for men and women, with instructors of the same sex, were offered then, and into the 1930s.

In 1918, when Condra was made director of the newly created Division of State Conservation and Soil Survey (the word "soil" dropped shortly) geography was again merged with geology, in a Department of Geology and Geography, under a geologist as head, with little change in course offerings although Condra was
no longer on the teaching staff. Esther S. Anderson became Instructor in Geography in 1919. In the second year of the merged departments, the scattering of geography courses among those in geology seemed, in retrospect, to threaten the identity and viability of geography. However, shortly geography courses were grouped together again in a variety and number that must have taxed the efforts of regular faculty, Bengtson and Anderson. Earl E. Lackey was brought in from Wayne State (Nebraska) Teachers College as Associate Professor of Geography in 1924. In 1924–25, listed courses and instructors were: General Geography (Lackey and Anderson); Regional Geography (Lackey); Geography of the Land (Bengtson); Economic Geography—Minerals (Bengtson); Economic Geography—Non-Mineral (Bengtson); Field Course—Men (Bengtson); Field Course—Women (Anderson); Nebraska (Anderson); North America (Bengtson); Latin America (Bengtson); Europe (Bengtson); Teaching Geography in High School (Lackey); Teaching Geography in Elementary School (Lackey); Seminar in Educational Geography (Lackey); Seminar in Economic Geography (Bengtson and Anderson); Seminar in Regional Geography (Bengtson), and Research. Geography remained with Geology until the Department of Geography was created in 1928.

After a few years, Condra, with assistants, was back in teaching in a newly organized department, Industry and Survey. The offerings in that department in 1924–25, because of their pertinence to geography and Condra's ties to geography, may be considered largely allied courses—Nebraska Resources and Development, Conservation of Natural Resources, Geological Survey, Road Materials, Hydrology of Nebraska, Soil Survey, City Planning, and two courses for graduate students. Later, in 1936–40 and again in 1941–42, after discontinuance of instruction in 1940, Condra headed a Department of Conservation, apparently not being content just with administering an outstanding Division of Conservation and Survey, carrying on research, and taking a leading role in the national conservation movement. Some graduate students in geography included minors in conservation.

Identification of individuals who helped shape or direct developments is in order. Also, it seems fitting to acknowledge the long tenure and interest of those who provided continuity. First was George Condra as initiator of instruction in geography, long-time teacher and head of department (1909–1918). Condra's persistent interest in geography was shown by his continuing active participation in meetings of geography sections in teachers conventions, and by his taking part in the AAG Great Plains regional meeting and field trip sponsored by the University of Nebraska about 1950. Others who served as chairmen for a period of years included Nels Bengtson, 1928–1946, as first chairman of geography after separation from geology; Leslie Hewes, 1946–68; Richard Lonsdale, 1971–76; and Brian W. Blouet, 1976–81. The present chairman is Merlin P. Lawson, beginning in 1981. Colbert C. Held, Dean S. Rugg, and Robert H. Stoddard, served a year each as chairman or acting chairman in the period 1968–71. Long-term members of the faculty now retired or resigned in addition to Condra, Bengtson, and Hewes were Anderson (1915–58, with time out for service in Washington in World War II); Lackey (1924–48); William Van Royen (1930–40); Colbert C. Held (1950–56 and 1967–69); Robert G. Bowman (1949–78), now emeritus; C. Barron McIntosh (1958–82), now emeritus; and Norman R. Stewart (1962–68).

An unusually large number of visiting staff, both American and foreign, and those passing through the "revolving door" of academia brought in a rich variety of viewpoints and expertise to what was long a small department. The following
Americans have held teaching appointments of a summer, semester, year, or longer since 1940: H. Homer Ashmann, Thomas F. Barton, Francis H. Bauer, Ruth E. Baugh, Robert L. Carmin, William C. Crowley, Edwin J. Fosque, Arthur V. Douglas, Loyal Durand, Andreas Grotewold, Edwin H. Hammond, Chauncy D. Harris, Eric Johnson, A.W. Kuchler, Harold H. McCarty, V. Calvon McKim, John Morrison, Raymond Murphy, Howard J. Nelson, Ralph E. Olson, Karen Pearson, Benjamin F. Richason, William M. Roberts, Thomas Rumney, Charles Sargent, Jr., Rayfred Stevens, James E. Vance, Jr., and Alfred J. Wright. Visiting staff from abroad included Brian W. Blouet (later on regular staff), John F. Davis, Robert E. Dickinson, John W. House, Gwyn Rowley, Edward E. Simpson, and John Tarrant, all from England; Hans Bobek and Walter Stryzgowski from Austria; Gunnar Alexandersson and Goren Norstrom from Sweden; R.L. Heathcote from Australia; Joëll Reumert from Denmark; Jacqueline Desbarats from France; Robin Butlin from Ireland; C.J. Robertson from Scotland; and Mladen Frigonovic from Yugoslavia. Some of the visitors had come back "home" to the department from which they had received a graduate degree: Barton, Carmin, Heathcote, McKim, Olson, and Richason. Also, a number then taking graduate work and those who had recently been graduate students helped fill gaps as part-time or full-time instructors. In addition, John C. Weaver, as Graduate Dean, and G. Malcolm Lewis, Sheffield, and Andrew Warren, University College, London, as Fellows of the American Council of Learned Societies, were also associated with the department. Lecturers on campus taught courses over a period of years — among them George A. Loveland, Thomas A. Blair, Ray Dyke, Welby Stevens, and Richard Myers from the U.S. Weather Bureau, James Thorp and Andrew Aandahl, Soil Survey, and Frank E. Sorenson, Teachers College.

Dating innovations and trends in emphases in departmental interests and linking them with individual members should help tell the story of the evolution of geography at Nebraska. Physical geography, regional geography (Nebraska and United States), field geography, and meteorology were offered early. As the University grew and horizons widened, the number of regional courses increased — for example, Europe and Asia (Bengtson 1909-10); Europe (Bengtson 1918-19); Latin America (Bengtson, after working there as petroleum geologist 1921-22); Regional-Continents (Lackey, 1924-25); Eastern Asia (Van Royen, 1929-30); Western Europe (Harris, 1942-43), Great Plains, in Seminar in Regional Geography (Hewes, c 1950); Near East (Bobek, 1952); Soviet Union (Morrison, 1955); Eastern Europe (Rugg, 1962-63). Perhaps seminar in Historical Geography, (Hewes 1948-49) should be included as regional. The emphasis on regional geography reflects the thought that geographic instruction organized about places is both consistent with the aims of the discipline and the furthering of liberal education, as well as valuable in the preparation of teachers.

Instruction in systematic geography became both more diversified and specialized, with both continuities and additions. Political geography as a field was represented first in 1928-29 (Bengtson), later in a seminar (Bengtson and Van Royen, 1933-34). Old interests in physical geography and in meteorology were emphasized in Seminar in Physiography (Van Royen, 1930-31), and re-iteration of meteorology (Blair, 1933-34), with a new Seminar in Meteorology and Climatology (Bengtson and Blair, 1933-34). Another on-going interest was emphasized when upper-division-graduate level courses in economic geography were added to the lower-division courses. Geography of Mineral Industries and
Geography of Agricultural Industries, introduced in 1931–32, with Van Royen and Anderson as instructors, continued for about thirty years, when they were modified to Primary Production and Industrial and Commercial Geography. Innovations are to be seen in Joint Seminar in Geography and Anthropology (Van Royen, 1931–32), Urban Geography (Anderson, 1937–38), Cultural Geography (Hewes, 1946–47), and Geography of Soils (Thorpe, 1948–49). Other additions were Systematic and Regional Climatology (both Hammond, 1948–49), Physiography of North America (Bowman, 1952–53), Introductory Human Geography (Hewes, 1958–59), and Seminar in Urban Geography (Rugg, 1970–71). A re-focusing is to be seen in the change of title from Geography of Manufacturing to Industrial Location (Lonsdale, 1971), and a new emphasis was given in Man's Physical Environment (Lawson and McIntosh, 1972–73). In the last few years several new courses in meteorology and climatology have been added, including Seminar in Climatic Change (Lawson).

Steps taken in techniques, theory, and miscellaneous sub-fields include the following: three courses, including a seminar in Educational Geography in 1924–25 (Lackey, author of elementary textbooks and later president of National Council of Geography Teachers); General Seminar (Bengston, 1928–29); History of Geography (Lackey, 1930–31); Bibliography, (Lackey and Van Royen (1933–34). Also the field course was re-instated (Hewes, 1946–47); and Advanced Cartography (Held, 1952–53), Quantitative Methods (Stoddard, 1969–70); Quality of Environment (Lawson and Rugg, 1972–73); and Spatial Analysis (Amedeo, 1972–73) were introduced. Other courses in spatial theory were added soon.

Seen broadly in historical perspective, continuities, false starts, and new emphases can be seen. Continuing attention has been given to physical geography, regional geography, the latter especially at the undergraduate level, and to economic geography. Attention continues on cultural and historical geography, urban geography, history of geographical thought, cartography, and the Great Plains, the latter with close affiliation with the Center for Great Plains Studies. The General Seminar has survived as a meeting place of staff and graduate students and a sounding board for research proposals and a forum for visiting speakers. However, political geography has been de-emphasized and educational geography has been eliminated. Major emphasis has been given to meteorology and climatology. The field of conservation and environmental quality and that of quantification and spatial theory received explicit recognition in the department somewhat belatedly. The reasons may be inferred. When Hewes, newly arrived, suggested a course on conservation and environmental quality, Bengston objected that these concerns were already dealt with in most existing courses, although the real reason may have been that Condras's efforts to continue the teaching of conservation after the creation of the Division of Conservation and Survey had, in effect, "muddied the water." Perhaps recognition of quantification was not quite as late as would appear because Lackey used formal statistics in some of his research and probably in teaching, and McCarty introduced members of his Seminar in Economic Geography to quantitative methods in the summer of 1957. Regular staff at that time had their hands full with existing programs and in the main were committed to cultural-historical approaches in geography.

Graduate work in geography has been emphasized from the early years, although more specialization is possible now. The specializations advertised in the departmental graduate brochure cover a broad spectrum, namely physical...
geography, historical-cultural geography, spatial analysis and theory, industrial location, and cartography for the M.A.; and climatology, historical-cultural geography, spatial and environmental behavior, and Great Plains studies for the Ph.D.

The latest departmental brochure identifies present and affiliated staff, together with their major professional interests. Staff members as listed are: Brian W. Blouet, Ph.D., Hull, 1964, Professor and Director of Center for Great Plains Studies—historical settlement, Great Plains, Mediterranean; Merlin P. Lawson, Ph.D., Clark, 1973, Professor and Chairman—Pleistocene and historic environments, climatic change, computer cartography, dendroclimatology; Richard E. Lonsdale, Ph.D., Syracuse, 1960, Professor—industrial location, small towns, Australia, Soviet Union; Dean S. Rugg, Ph.D., Maryland, 1962, Professor—urban, history and philosophy of geography, Eastern and Western Europe; Robert H. Stoddard, Ph.D., Iowa, 1966, Professor—field techniques, social, South Asia; Douglas M. Amedeo, Ph.D., Iowa, 1967, Associate Professor—spatial theories, quantitative analysis, environmental behavioral studies, diffusion problems; Kenneth F. Dewey, Ph.D., Toronto, 1973, Associate Professor—applied climatology, meteorology, quantitative methods; David J. Wishart, Ph.D., Nebraska, 1971, Associate Professor—historical, cultural, perception of past environments, Great Plains; Robert C. Baling, Ph.D., Oklahoma, 1979, Assistant Professor—climatic fluctuation, physical climatology, statistical climatology; Jay S. Hobgood, Ph.D., Ohio State, 1982, Assistant Professor—dynamic meteorology, tropical weather systems, computer graphics; Stephen Lavin, Ph.D., Kansas, 1979, Assistant Professor—cartography, map design and production, computer graphics; Michael M. Swann, Ph.D., Syracuse, 1980, Assistant Professor—historical and cultural geography, historical demography, Great Plains; Julie A. Winkler, Ph.D., Minnesota, 1982, Assistant Professor—synoptic climatology, severe local storms, natural hazards; Bruce Kopplin, A.B.D., Georgia, Visiting Assistant Professor—applied climatology, meteorology; Leslie Hewes, Ph.D., Berkeley, 1940, Professor Emeritus—historical and cultural geography, Great Plains; C. Barron McIntosh, Ph.D., Nebraska, 1955, Professor Emeritus—applied climatology, Great Plains settlement. Affiliated staff are: Frederick C. Luebke, Ph.D., (history), Nebraska, Professor—Great Plains, ethnic group settlement; Gary E. Moulton, Ph.D., (history), Oklahoma State-Center for Great Plains Studies, editor of Lewis and Clark Expedition journals; Mary Louise Quinn, Ph.D., (geography), U.C., Berkeley, Assistant Professor—water resources; Donald C. Rundquist, Ph.D., (geography), Nebraska, Assistant Professor—remote sensing; John F. Shroder, Jr., Ph.D., (geology), Utah, Associate Professor—tropical and periglacial geomorphology; William J. Wayne, Ph.D., (geology), Indiana, Professor—geomorphology, urban geology, Quaternary studies.

As noted, as many as one hundred students per semester were enrolled by 1907. In general, registration in geography has paralleled growth in the university, being especially notable just after World War II and again recently, now surpassing 2,000 class registrations in a semester. Undergraduate majors number over 100. The heaviest enrollments are in basic undergraduate courses. In autumn 1976, Man's Physical Environment, Meteorology, and Introductory Human Geography had more than 200 registrations each, and Introductory Economic Geography and Physical Processes in Geography more than 100 each. In the first semester of 1980-81, the leaders were Introductory Human Geography, Man's
Physical Environment, Introductory Economic Geography with more than 300 each; and Meteorology and Physical Processes in Geography 150 plus each. Establishment of the B.S. in Meteorology-Climatology in 1981 led to increases in enrollment and the number of undergraduate majors. Graduate majors have numbered in the 20s and 30s recently, down somewhat from the boom years.

The department's contributions to the profession may be gauged in part by the number of students receiving advanced degrees: as of October, 1982, 88 Ph.D.s and 230 M.A.s, most of these with theses. As stated earlier, the first masters degrees were awarded in 1908, the first Ph.D. in 1909.

Any effort to measure the public and professional contributions of the department should include the leadership shown by former and present staff members. Condra's chairing of national conservation organizations and his vision in the establishment of the State Division of Conservation and Survey are noteworthy. Both Bengtson and Lackey served as president of the National Council of Geography Teachers, and Bengtson twice was vice-president of the Association of American Geographers. A summary of major contributions and forms of recognition of those currently on the departmental roster shows: Members of AAG Council 2 (each twice or more), chairman of AAG Committee on Committees 2, chairman Editorial Board AAG, chairman of AAG national Program Committee 2, AAG Honors Committee 2, Visiting Scientist AAG 2, AAG Meritorious Contribution in Geography, Committee Advisory to the Office of Naval Research, Fulbright awards 4, president university chapters of Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi, university Distinguished Teaching award, books and monographs 18, books edited 11, in addition to numerous papers read and published, and several symposia held. The fact that fully half of the staff have not yet reached middle age suggests the potential for continuing professional productivity and contributions to the university.

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NOTE

(a) It should be noted that the University of Nebraska has had two departments of geography since the former University of Omaha became the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1968. This account does not include the work done in the newer department.

(b) This manuscript was completed for publication in Fall, 1982—editor.