Yale, a collegiate school, began its activities at Saybrook, Connecticut in 1701. There it functioned until 1716 when it was relocated some thirty miles to the west in New Haven as Yale College. Then began a learning which knew medieval scholasticism. Such geographic thought as there was derived either from the indigenous wilderness-conquest experience of the early settlers (perhaps more interesting now as a study in historical geoscopy), or from the work of European scholars including more notably Bernhard Varen (better known in the Latinized version of his name — Bernhard Varenus) who wrote Geographia Generalis (1650). It was Varenus who first made clear the distinction between the terms 'General' and 'Special' as applied to geography though he borrowed the conception from Bartholomew Kеккermann who had used the terms in lectures at Danzig in 1603 and in a book which he published in 1610. It was the second revision by Sir Isaac Newton of Cambridge (the Elsevir Press had published the book in 1650, 1664, 1671, and 1672: the Newton editions were dated 1672 and 1681) which came to be known at Harvard and Yale. Yet geographic study was not institutionalized at Yale during these years. By the 1730s Yale possessed two globes, and by the 1740s an orrery had been obtained. Perhaps the first stirrings of an institutionalized geography came in the 1770s when sophomores were required to read William Guthrie’s New Geographical, Historical and Commercial Grammar. Eli Whitney colored the maps in the Guthrie text for one dollar per copy. Wealthier students purchased the service, and found resale of the colored copies was accomplished at a higher price. Guthrie was displaced by Jedidiah Morse’s book, The American Geography in 1789.

Morse was graduated from Yale in 1783 and in the following year had published Geography Made Easy. This book, a compilation of lectures, was arguably the first geography to be published in North America, and earned for Jedidiah Morse the sobriquet “Father of American Geography.” In 1786 Morse was elected a tutor of the college, the same year in which he was ordained a minister (New England Calvinist Orthodox). He visited Georgia, returned to New Haven to take up the ministry and severed his relationship with Yale but not with geography. In 1789 he published American Geography and American Universal Geography; both texts were frequently revised and read widely throughout the republic. They were also read at Yale. By 1820 Morse’s geography was read by freshman and sophomores; four years later it was studied only by freshman. In 1825 geography was eliminated from the Yale curriculum, although it was retained as an examined subject for admission to the college. There does not seem to be any logical explanation for the abandonment of the subject at this time. William Warnitz has suggested that this termination was part of a pattern in the Ivy League Schools, and that this termination concludes what he calls the first cycle of academic geography. Certainly these institutions exhibit a marked similarity in their break with a consistent and early form of geography.

Continuing the geographic work at Yale was Francis Walker, who, in 1872, assumed a Professorship of Political Economy and History. Walker began offering a variety of regional and statistical geography which he continued until he too left to become a university president, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1881). Walker had been Superintendent of the Ninth Census of the United States (1870), and developed an atlas from the census data which won much attention from other academics. Incidentally, it seems to have been Walker who first developed the idea of “center of population.” When Walker superintended the Tenth Census (1879–1881)
working under a new law that freed him from party patronage, he appointed his own staff of enumerators. The result was a twenty-two quarto volume work widely used and noticed in both North America and Europe. He published much in the field of economic thought though he did not contribute apparently to the field of economic geography which was shortly to make its debut.14

Meanwhile, in 1864 William H. Brewer had accepted the Chair of Agriculture in the Sheffield Scientific School. He lectured on physical geography (and to a lesser extent botany) for nearly forty years, built a large collection of maps and books, revised Warren's Physical Geography, "making of it one of the most authoritative textbooks on the subject." From the 1880s until his retirement in 1903 he carried on experiments of the mechanical suspension of clays in river waters and the conditions under which their sedimentation takes place. He also became keenly interested in forestry and in genetic studies relating to race horses.

Gilman, Walker and Brewer, were each learned and extraordinarily talented men. They retained for physical geography a place in the course structure at Yale, won the attention of geologists and others, and perhaps laid a foundation upon which Herbert Gregory could later build. For much of the second half of the 19th century it must be remembered that geography was without discipline or even organizing concept. If evolution were sweeping away an earlier telology it is difficult to see how a rational causal geography could have made progress on a campus to which the first secular president, Arthur T. Hadley, was appointed in 1889. Curiously, Gilman did not inaugurate a geography department at the Johns Hopkins University (and in 1935 Isaiah Bowman, a latter-day Johns Hopkins President was asked not to) and the opportunity for establishing a model to be emulated was lost.16 In fact the first geography departments in America seemed to have been located in 1898 at both the University of California (Berkeley) and Teachers College, Columbia University. Geography had become powerfully entrenched at Yale; geologists had benefitted greatly from the Surveys of the West. A geographic component had inevitably emerged with the geology which had been written up in the Surveys. It was through the sympathy and curiosity of some large minded geologists at Yale that geography was there to win its way.

The third advance of geography at Yale was inaugurated by Herbert E. Gregory (Yale, 1896) who had studied with William Morris Davis at Harvard. In 1898 Gregory returned to Yale and with the support of anthropologist William Graham Sumner commenced offering a course entitled "Environmental Influences on Man." Soon Gregory became chairman of the Geology Department and began to hire geographers... Angelo Heilprin and Leonard M. Tarr (1903) Avarl L. Bishop (1904), Isaiah Bowman (1905), Hiram Bingham and Ellsworth Huntington (1907) and George T. Surface and Theodore H. Bogg (1908). An attempt had been made to secure J. Russell Smith (then at the University of Pennsylvania) in 1908. This growth was amazingly swift. The unseen mover behind this intellation was Davis. He had repeatedly encouraged Gregory to develop a variety of human geography which he called onography. Davis had offered the possibility of discipline with his concept of the cycle of erosion, and his elaboration of the causal notion in "A Scheme of Geography."17 Davis' own department at Harvard had specialized in physiography. The Yale Geology Department under Gregory's management, developed an intellectual strength in human geography unmatched in North America at that time. The Yale geographers were particularly active in the field, wrote many books and papers, held professional office and hosted the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers in 1912. Bowman made field trips to South America in 1907, 1911 and 1913. Resultant to these excursions he published Forest Physiography. South America, A Geography Reader, and wrote the manuscript "The Andes of Southern Peru." Huntington's The Pulse of Asia was published in 1907; there followed Palestine and Its Transformation (1911), Asia: A Geography Reader (1912), The Climatic Factor as Illustrated in Arid America (1914), and Civilization and Climate (1915). These publications only hint at the prolificacy of Huntington in these years. Bingham is given credit for the discovery of Machu Picchu (lost city of the Incas); he also wrote Across South America (1911). Bishop, Keller, and Gregory wrote Physical and Commercial Geography (1912). Heilprin had been the first scientist to ascend Mount Pelee after the eruption of 1902 and had been constant in a program of writing and lecturing until his premature death in 1907. Gregory, who helped inspect Connecticut high schools, went west to improve the living conditions of the Navajo and Hopi Indians. In 1910 he suffered food poisoning and became very ill. Later when ill health obliged him to relinquish the chairmanship, the cause of geography in a geology department was lost. In 1915 the department collapsed.18 Shortage of funds was only part of the story. Gregory wrote in the 1896 Clase Yearbook:

Yale college is a particularly unfavorable field for the development of geography, for the departments of history and economics seem to be organized on the theory that there is no such thing as Nature and that Man is the whole show. Sometimes I feel very much discouraged that geographical work is not more highly thought of by my colleagues...19

Gregory soon went to the Bishop Museum in Hawaii, Bowman became Director of the American Geographical Society, and Huntington returned to his home in Milton, Massachusetts where he planned to make a living from his pen. A very distinguished decade of geography at Yale had come to an end. It is a curiosity to note collapse of a geographic undertaking in a war year, albeit that the United States was not a combatant, the conventional wisdom being that geography and medicine are the two fields which are most advanced from hostilities. Huntington returned to Yale in 1919 as Research Associate, although the salary that he paid his secretary exceeded the salary that Yale paid him.

Huntington remained the sole geographer at Yale until 1943. Incidentally, Yale did offer some of the early doctorates in North American geography, e.g., Isaiah Bowman and Ellsworth Huntington (1909), Gladys M. Wrigley (1917), Kirk Bryan (1920), George M. McBride and Stanislaus T. Novakovsky (1921).20 There were numerous others whom Huntington advised but whose doctorates were awarded in other departments.

In 1945 Stephen B. Jones inaugurated the fourth periodic surge of geography at Yale. Jones had been hired into the Yale Institute of International Studies in 1943, but in 1945 was given the title Associate Professor of Geography, promoted to Professor in 1948, and made Chairman of Geography. However, in the Yale Bulletin (1948-49), one reads, "Instruction in Geography is under supervision of the Geography Committee of the University. No major in Geography is given. Instruction is oriented toward the curricula in other fields, including Anthropology, Political Science, and Foreign Area Studies.21 Karl Peterz and Herold Wiens were his colleagues; Alexander Victor was the map curator. It was a small group to which additions would be made.
Recommencement of geography owes very largely to the significance attached to the subject resulting from the Second World War in which geographers played a large role, even yet not the subject of inventory. It is meaningful to observe that the Yale community had been very aware of the career of Isaiah Bowman. From 1915 to 1935 Bowman had been Director of the American Geographical Society, and from 1935 until 1949 he had been President of the Johns Hopkins University. In the early 1940s Bowman spent three days a week in the State Department and had participated at Dumbarton Oaks, in the Stettinius Mission, and the San Francisco United Nations Conference. He had also helped to negotiate feasibility studies for the relocation of several million European Jews pursuant to “Kristallnacht.” Bowman was widely known as a geographer, and certainly so on the Yale campus where he had offered geography in the years 1905–1915. And for many years Nicholas Spykman had taught political science courses with a global perspective, all the while adopting Bowman’s *The New World* as text. Importantly, Charles Seymour, Austro–Hungarian expert at the Paris Peace Conference (where Bowman had been chief of the Territorial Division), had developed a keen interest in what the geographers had accomplished on that occasion. When Seymour became President at Yale he was prepared to support geography. Consequently one may read in the Yale Catalogue for 1953–1954, “students wishing to concentrate in Geography may do so.” In the catalogue for 1958–1959 one notes that a student may major in geography. One year later 23 geography courses were listed in the catalogue, a format which was continued with little change until 1966–1967. In the following year the notion of a major had been dropped: nine courses were offered in the *Bulletin* together with the limp statement “geography courses are open as electives to students in any department of instruction.”22 By 1969–1970 Pelzer and Williams offered four “service” courses. Geography had once again failed to establish itself.

Stephen Jones reports “The problem at Yale was competition for money: this was aggravated by the fact that the Yale department grew up with the foreign area grants, with which foundations at one time were very generous.”23 Yale had three such programs – East Asia, Southeast Asia and Soviet Union. Later, a Latin America program and an embryonic Africa program were added.

Wien was the geography department’s East Asia man, Pelzer the Southeast Asia man and Burke was initially the geographer in the Soviet program. Aloys Michel replaced Burke who was not retained. David Snyder was brought in for the Latin American program. Then foreign area studies began to lose popularity. At Yale these programs led to a two year M.A. degree; students learned that by entering a disciplinary program they could save at least one year in a Ph.D. program. The Yale Geography Department lost students. Meanwhile Pelzer had become chairman and did not seem inclined to revamp the regional perspective into a systematic offering; he had also become chairman of the Committee in Southeast Asian Studies. This latter post took much of Pelzer’s time and Jones felt that geography suffered in consequence. When Seymour, an “easy-going president,” was succeeded by Alfred Whitney Griswold, circumstances changed. Griswold, Jones claimed, wanted everything packaged in departments. He quarreled with Frederick S. Dunn, head of the Yale Institute for International Studies; then Dunn moved his group to Princeton. Griswold abolished an institute for Chinese language training. And, Jones claims, Griswold did not appreciate geography. Kingman Brewster (1963) succeeded Griswold. Early in Brewster’s regime he met with each chairman. About his meeting with Pelzer Jones has written, “Karl made a mistake, as he freely admitted. He began

by discussing the history of geography at Yale, going back to Gilman. What Brewster wanted was a chart of the course ahead. I’m not sure Karl had a very good idea of the course ahead— perhaps no sin in geography where the future always seems foggy... Karl told me when I next met him... I lost Brewster in the first few minutes.”24 Brewster did talk to Pelzer about a plan for what he called hyphenated geography but it came to nought. Pelzer moved over to the Southeast Asia program and remained on the campus after geography had fallen. Williams was retained as service cartographer. Yet another Yale program in geography had been terminated.

The history of geography at Yale has been punctiform; performance defies logic. One can only place developments in the context of their time and say “it seems as if.” Over the years Yale underwent change and so did geography as written and practiced in America. Yale changed from small to large, from theoclastic to secular, from the classics to business administration, from idealism to pragmatism. And American geography passed through distinct stages (paradigms if you like)... “teleological theology” (prior to 1859), Darwinian natural science (1859–1892); physiography and causation (1892–1925); field and region (1925–1957); and eclectic pluralism (1957–present). Geography at Yale experienced marked growth in each of the first four paradigms. The point is that Yale was undergoing rapid change as was American geography. The same forces were not uniformly at work throughout the period, neither were the same values in evidence during that time. Hence assigning reasons for declination at different times is hazardous business. Yet archival evidence suggests that the first growth period failed because geography was not—growth business with Morse as text. At best, geography was inventory and this at a time when academic life was entering a period of rapid and exciting development. The first American scholar had gone to Germany and returned with a doctorate in 1817. That was Edward Everett (Göttingen). There followed Ticknor (1819), and George Bancroft, (1820) among others. Yale was keenly aware of this flow of traffic across the Atlantic, and in 1861 itself offered the first doctorate in the history of the U.S.25 Geographers had not participated in the journey to Germany and in fact could not demonstrate a doctorate (awarded by a geography department) until 1907.26

The second surge of geography faltered when Gilman departed Yale after offering geographic work from 1863–1872. His interests in evolution and concomitant studies in causation were essentially contraposed to the theologic orthodoxy of the Yale establishment. But Gilman was properly acknowledging of religious trappings, and, with ministers in the immediate family, was acceptable. His was a large native intelligence that admired and had tapped German geographical knowledge. He was on cordial terms with Yale officials, with the geologists, with other faculty members and the townspeople. And he had a keen sense of humor. He was particular fond of asphorisms, and especially, “he who drives fat oxen must himself be fat.”27 When he left Yale there was no one who could quite take his place. Walker was after all a statistician and economist, though one who recognized the worth of geography, and Brewer was eccentric. While the latter was retained and contributed much, a departmental nucleus could not be built around an eccentric, at least not at Yale. And so one might be forgiven for suggesting that the second period of geography at Yale failed for a lack of an appropriate successor to Gilman.

The third period of development of geography at Yale (1898–1915) came with Herbert Gregory. Here was an accomplishment of heroic proportion, yet soon after Gregory fell ill and relinquished the chairmanship the undertaking was terminated.
Geography was part of a binomial department and when geologists regained the chairmanship, geography languished. Lack of sympathetic management seems to have been largely responsible for the failure of the geographic enterprise in 1915.

The fourth and final period of geographic revival (c. 1945–1967) offers the spectacle once again of considerable promise, but eventual failure. The faculty members representing geography did not develop a reputation for publication. Members accepted the role of geography as a synthetic subject, not as an independent discipline. While they were employed in area study programs the posture was satisfactory but when the area studies commitment failed, geographers were left without a disciplinary haven. Perhaps, too, they were without the type of firm leadership needed in a competitive environment, and chairmanship duties were undertaken by at least three persons in an eighteen year period. The demise of Harvard’s geography department was still near, and the poor record of geography in other Ivy League schools also hovered close by. It was thought on the Yale campus that the performance of the geographic profession was lacking. It matters little whether such thoughts were justified for they are the stuff of which decisions are made. Yale geographers were no longer offering a doctorate (they had done so commencing in 1909). When Time magazine published its front page story about Yale’s gut geography courses the department accepted the episode without rejoinder, though Jones had pointed out that “grades in political geography were lower than the average grade in Yale college.”

Kingman Brewster, a jurist by training from Harvard, was now President of Yale University. He was not ready to support geography either by inclination or by circumstance. The department simply did not seem to have those attributes considered to be necessary for retention on the Yale campus. In sum, a study of the vicissitudes of geography at Yale seems to reveal not meaningful lessons of history but an idiosyncratic odyssey.

NOTES


3. For these and other data see the Jedidiah Morse family papers. Yale University Library (Archives). Jedidiah Morse (1726–1819) was the father of Jedidiah Morse the geographer (1761–1826).

4. See Yale University Catalogues.


7. Daniel Coit Gilman papers, letter of resignation from library folder (Group 582, Series No. 4, Box No. 3, Folder No. 3). He was assistant librarian, 1856–1858 and librarian 1858–1865, succeeding Edward C. Herrick.

8. Letter, Daniel C. Gilman to Mrs. Dana, December 6, 1859.

9. These geographical articles constitute only a sample of what Gilman wrote in the period c. 1858–1872. A number of them were published in *The New Englander*, *North American Review* or *Roundtable*.


11. Gilman was considered for the presidency of the University of Wisconsin, 1867. See Yale Archives, D.C. Gilman Collection, Series No. 1, Box 2, Group No. 582, Folder 151. See especially D.C. Gilman to Mr. VanSlyke, February 9, 1867.


25. Three doctoral degrees were awarded by Yale University in 1861. Interestingly one of these was granted in geology, “The Darwinian Theory of the Origin of the Species” by William North Rice. Rice became Professor of Geology at Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut.

26. F.V. Emerson was awarded a doctorate at the University of Chicago, 1907. E.R. Johnson had written what might be considered the first geographical dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania in 1893: this work had not been undertaken in a geography department.

27. D.C. Gilman papers,“To The Relatives and Friends of Professor Daniel Gilman” undated, Series 1, Box 3, Folder 159.