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RALPH HALL BROWN: GENTLESCHOLAR OF HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

RALPH HALL BROWN: GENTLESCHOLAR OF HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

LINDA JEANNE MILES

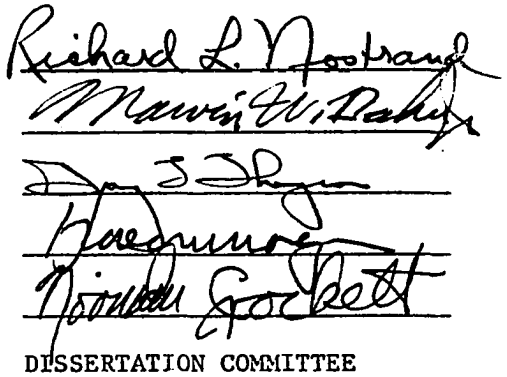
Norman, Oklahoma

1982

RALPH HALL BROWN:

GENTLESCHOLAR OF HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

APPROVED BY



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PREFACE

Ralph Hall Brown is best known for his two books, Mirror for Americans (1943) and Historical Geography of the United States (1948). These unique publications stand in a class by themselves. In them Brown reconstructed past American regions, a practice that later historical geographers largely abandoned. Yet Brown's extensive use of primary sources became standard practice in historical geography, and his pioneering emphasis on environmental perception foreshadowed a major later trend in geography. Brown was a respected leader of the Association of American Geographers as well as a prolific, original, and thorough scholar.

Brown's life is the story of how one individual carefully planned and pursued research in a new branch of geography. It is a microcosm of the development of American geography during the first half of the twentieth century. Geography was a young field when Brown entered college, many workers were searching for new goals and methods, and Brown participated actively in geography's development. He attended universities that were well-known for their geography programs, and he studied with, knew, and worked with many of the field's leaders.

I was introduced to Brown's writings in a historical geography graduate seminar at the University of Oklahoma. I was impressed with Brown's scholarship and his literary style, and I decided to undertake research on his life and thought. In tracing Brown's remarkable career, I have attempted to show the development of his views of geography and his interactions with other geographers, and I have tried to place his activities and writings in the larger context of the growth of American geographic thought.

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the many people who helped me with this study. G. Burton Brown gave me complete access to his father's papers and provided family photographs. Through correspondence, Nan Bruno described aspects of her father as a person.

Brown's friends and colleagues, Richard Hartshorne, Preston James, Philip Jordan, Raymond Shove, and J. Russell Whitaker generously took time to write to me about Brown as they knew him. Warren Kress and Frank Seawall were especially helpful in portraying Brown as a teacher. Samuel Dicken, Hildegard Binder Johnson, and Herman Friis gave me additional perspectives.

William Koelsch generously shared his Brown correspondence file with me. Fred Lukermann arranged for me to study the Brown papers and Cotton Mather sent me photographs from the geography department at Minnesota and from his own private collection. John W. Morris encouraged me in this work and suggested sources, and Geoffrey Martin advised me on many aspects of my study and took time to critically read the entire manuscript.

I also thank my committee for their valuable suggestions and comments. H. Wayne Morgan, in particular, was of great assistance. My advisor, Richard Nostrand, supported this project from the beginning, and I am grateful for his encouragement, his ideas, and his careful reading and editing of the study.

On a more personal level, I thank Samuel Friedman for his support and assistance, and I thank my daughters, Lynne and Cynthia, for their interest in this study, their help, and their understanding.

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RALPH HALL BROWN: A CHRONOLOGY

1898--born in Ayer, Massachusetts

1921--received B.S. in Economics from the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, University of Pennsylvania

1924--married Eunice Rasmussen in Park Falls, Wisconsin

1925--received Ph.D. in Geography and Economics from University of Wisconsin--appointed instructor at University of Colorado
--Shirley Grace Brown born, Boulder Colorado

1927--George Burton Brown born, Boulder, Colorado
--promoted to assistant professor at University of Colorado

1928--elected fellow, Council of American Geographical Society

1929--appointed assistant professor, University of Minnesota
--elected member, Association of American Geographers

1930--Nancy Eleanor Brown born, Boulder, Colorado
--elected fellow, American Association for the Advance of Science

1932--Laura Leavitt Brown born, Minneapolis, Minnesota

1933--elected councilor, Association of American Geographers (3 year term)

1936-7-took sabbatical leave from University of Minnesota

1939--promoted to associate professor, University of Minnesota

1941--elected secretary, Association of American Geographers

1943--Mirror for Americans published

1945--offered his resignation as secretary, Association of American Geographers
--promoted to professor, University of Minnesota

1946--chosen editor, Annals, Association of American Geographers

1948--Historical Geography of the United States published
--died in St. Paul, Minnesota

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RALPH HALL BROWN: GENTLESCHOLAR OF HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

CHAPTER I

MASSACHUSETTS ROOTS

From the hilltops, young Ralph Brown could see apple orchards, well-tilled farms, wild flower fields, and the stone fences of Middlesex County, Massachusetts. Nestled in that well-manicured landscape was the town of Ayer where he was born in 1898. Brown loved the Massachusetts hills where he grew to adulthood. His roots in that rural environment must explain some of his appreciation for the outdoors and the sensitivity to landscape change which captured his lifelong interest.

Ancestry

The Hall family, Brown's maternal ancestors, lived in southern England in the 1600s. Young Edward Hall, tired of poor economic conditions and political oppression, decided to migrate to the New World, and left his home in 1636. He sailed across the Atlantic, and settled in the colony of New Hampshire.[1]

Some 200 years later Brown's paternal ancestors migrated to America. In 1848, Michael Brown and several brothers left County Cork, Ireland, to join a flood of migrants bound for America.[2] Suffering from famine and

unemployment, these Irish sought a better living in the New World. Most of them--unskilled--accepted low-paying jobs in New England mills, factories, and homes. Michael Brown, however, was educated, and found a satisfactory job in a small bicycle shop in Ayer, Massachusetts. Many other Irish immigrants lived in this part of the state, and Brown prospered in his new homeland.[3] He eventually bought the bicycle shop, married, and had seven children.

One of his progeny, William Brown, met and courted Nellie Eliza Leavitt, a descendent of Edward Hall. They were married in 1890. Brown was a pharmacist, having learned the trade by apprenticeship to the Ayer druggist. When the druggist retired, Brown bought the store. The Browns encountered some difficult times, for the Nativist movement was strong in Massachusetts and many Irish suffered discrimination. In the long run, though, business prospered, and the Browns were accepted in the community. They bought a house on Main Street, and added to it as the family grew. Henry Leavitt Brown was born in 1892, and was followed by Edna Caroline, Frank Edwin, Ralph Hall, and Phyllis.[4]

Ayer Upbringing

William and Nellie Brown complemented each other. He was kind, patient, and good natured; she was quick, vibrant, and self disciplined.[5] Their division of labor was typical of the early 1900s: he ran the drugstore, and she attended to the household and children. Nellie--a former school teacher--was an untypical woman of her era. She was not religious, and had little patience with conventional ways. Intelligent, well-read, and "interested in words for their own sake,"[6] she taught Brown and his

siblings the value of individuality. She imposed high standards upon herself, and expected no less of her children; Ralph Brown later referred to her as his "most severe critic."[7]

The Brown children were raised with discipline. They were urged to excel in school, and taken to the Congregational church each Sunday. There were chores at home, and they helped their father at the store. But having fun, too, was also part of growing up. Life in the big family was rarely dull, and favorite aunts and uncles lived nearby. The Brown clan and their friends gathered on Sunday evenings for food, fun, and lively conversations. In summers they vacationed on nearby Sandy Pond, where William and his sons built a cabin. All the Browns liked to swim, fish, and hike.[8]

Ayer in the early 1900s was a pleasant little town with an air of local history. Nashoba Indians had roamed the area, and museums displayed their pottery shards and other relics. Generations of residents told Indian lore and legends. Two Ayer inns exhibited spinning wheels and other colonial items--reminders of an earlier era.

When Brown was 12, Ayer had a population of barely 3,000.[9] It was an enticing and beautiful setting for an adventurous child. Young Brown climbed Pingry and Snake hills, east of town, and he built small twig and leaf bridges and dams on Nonacoicus Brook. At the edge of the village, the land slopes upward, forming, in part, the watershed between the Connecticut River and the Atlantic Ocean. Brown liked to ride his bicycle up and down this slope. When he was older, he wandered further from Ayer, and climbed the higher summits of Mt. Wachusett and Pine Hill.[10]



Fig. 1. Ralph Hall Brown, age 5, 1903
A. B. Farwell Studios, Ayer, Massachusetts

(courtesy of G. Burton Brown)

Brown was curious about the natural world. He befriended a local hermit from whom he learned about trees and plants. He chatted with park rangers about New England reforestation and conservation plans.

As a teenager, Brown became a more serious student of nature and collected, pressed, and mounted wild flowers. He also gathered tree bark and leaves and carefully constructed a display for the high school.[11] An essay on the distribution and characteristics of the town of Ayer's trees, portended a thoroughness that characterized his later geographical writings.[12]

Though young Brown enjoyed solitude, he was a companionable boy and had a circle of friends. A courteous and sensitive teenager, he was especially kind to his younger sister Phyllis. He occasionally bought her gifts--a leghorn hat with streamers, boots with astrakhan fur cuffs, and a matching hat and scarf set. He took her out to dinner at a nearby inn, invited her to camp out, and wrote to her after he left home.[13]

Brown did well at Ayer High School. With two aunts on the faculty, he was pressured to make good grades, and as a senior received all As and Bs. He earned his diploma in 1915. The question of more education had already been decided: he would attend Massachusetts Agriculture College. This was a practical choice as the school was in nearby Amherst, and tuition was inexpensive. His brother Henry had been graduated from "Mass Aggie," and from Henry, young Brown could undoubtedly learn about college life.

The Browns expected their male children to attend college. A college degree hopefully assured professional success. In the early 1900s America was becoming more urban and industrial, and specialized



Fig. 2. Ralph Hall Brown, ca. 1915

(courtesy of G. Burton Brown)

professions had been created to meet the demands of an increasingly complex society. A college degree was needed for entry into the professional world; it was a status symbol, and almost assured the holder of economic and social and economic mobility.[14]

Massachusetts Agricultural College

Some years before Brown attended the college, Kenyon Butterfield, the new president, changed the school's aims. In the 1800s, the goals of the school were, in part, to teach young men better agricultural methods. New national educational goals developed, however, during the early 1900s. Many leaders believed that educated men and women should try to solve society's problems, including urban congestion, rural poverty, and mismanagement of agricultural land. Kenyon Butterfield believed in this goal, and wanted the college to produce researchers to work on the problems of New England agriculture. He was a social scientist, and advocated the importance of understanding social institutions, and the interactions of man and society.[15] Butterfield obtained additional funding from the state legislature, and made improvements and changes at the college. When Brown enrolled, there were new chemistry and physics laboratories with modern experimental apparatus, and the curriculum had acquired breadth and depth. Two of the new departments were History and Government, and Economics and Sociology. The schedule included specialized offerings such as "Agricultural Economics," and "Rural Sociology." A new group of faculty had doctorates, and did specialized research. Some worked on new types of fertilizers, and experimented with plant cross breeding. Others developed ways to improve crops.

Brown enrolled as a freshman in 1915 and decided to major in agriculture. With his degree, he would be a trained expert and job possibilities were many. He could work in a government agency, at a university experimental station, or he could be a county extension agent, who would teach farmers improved agricultural methods. The first year Brown took sciences, social sciences, and languages. Classes stressed scientific methods; finding facts and drawing conclusions from them. He learned to use the federal census, and to find other sources of statistical data. He learned farming principles, such as how soils, topography, and climate influence agriculture.

Brown found the science classes difficult and his grades were poor the first year. He failed algebra and trigonometry, and barely passed chemistry. His term average was 67, though the next year he managed a 70 average.[16] His social life was more successful and was, in part, the cause of the poor grades.[17] Brown joined a fraternity, and attended parties and dances. He also explored the Amherst countryside which had hills and woods for climbing and hiking. A favorite spot was Mt. Holyoke, and Brown would walk up the hill, or ride the cable car to the top. The view of the Connecticut River Valley was impressive to young Brown, and he returned to the region several years later. He did field work for his doctoral dissertation on the valley's changing agriculture.

The tranquility of campus life was interrupted during Brown's second year in Amherst. By fall 1917 news of the war was on every radio. Faculty and students were restless; many joined the army, others returned home to help on family farms or with family businesses. The campus gradually emptied, leaving few students by the end of spring.

Home for the summer, Brown found that Ayer had changed. Camp Devens, a military training camp was built south of the city, and drug-store business was booming. Brown would forgo college for the next year, for he was needed at home. He appreciated the vacation from studies, and enjoyed an active social life.[18]

A year later, with the war over, Brown's thoughts turned again to college. He was discouraged by his low grades at Massachusetts Agricultural College and concluded that the program did not suit him. Perhaps he would do better at the University of Pennsylvania, where his brother Frank had attended. Brown applied for admission to Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, and was accepted with sophomore standing in 1919.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1]G. B. Brown to W. Koelsch, 20 December 1971.

[2]Nan Bruno to L. Miles, 1 November 1980.

[3]In the mid 1800s, there were so many Irish in Massachusetts, that the term "immigrant" was synonymous with "Irish." In 1860, in Middlesex County (where Ayer was located), one quarter of the residents had been born in Ireland. R. Brown, Massachusetts: A Bicentennial History (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1978), p. 154.

[4]Edna Caroline was born in 1893; Frank Edwin in 1895; Ralph Hall in 1898, and Phyllis in 1908. Ralph Hall Brown Papers (Hereafter referred to as RHBP.)

[5]N. Bruno to L. Miles, 1 November 1980.

[6]Ibid.

[7]R. Brown to A. Hale, 2 November 1940. American Geographical Society Archives, Geographical Review File. (Hereafter referred to as GRF.)

[8]G. Brown to W. Koelsch, 20 December 1971.

[9]In 1910, the population of Ayer was 2,797. U.S. Department of Interior, Thirteenth Census, 1910, vol. 2 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913).

[10]Brown recalled his boyhood wanderings, especially riding his bicycle on the slope, in a letter to Lawrence La Forge. R. Brown to L. La Forge, 2 November 1923. RHBP.

[11]P. MacBrier to L. Miles, 12 October 1980; G. B. Brown to W. Koelsch, 20 December 1971.

[12]R. H. Brown, "Ayer's Trees," n.d. RHBP.

[13]P. MacBrier to L. Miles, 12 October 1980.

[14]Burton Bledstein discusses the importance of a college degree, and the meaning of higher education in this era in The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the development of Higher Education in America (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1976).

Notes--continued

[15]H. Cary, The University of Massachusetts: A History of One Hundred Years (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1962).

[16]Transcript of Ralph H. Brown, University of Massachusetts, September 1915-June 1917.

[17]P. MacBrier to L. Miles, 12 October 1980.

[18]Ibid.

CHAPTER II

PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLING

The Wharton School

In 1881, Joseph Wharton, a wealthy Philadelphia businessman, suggested to the University of Pennsylvania trustees that they create a school of finance and economy. This would fill a gap in professional education. Young men could study law and medicine in universities; why not provide formal training for business and government careers? The trustees liked the idea, it was timely. America was becoming an industrial world power and trained leaders were needed to guide the nation's affairs. Wharton donated $100,000 and the school opened in 1883.[1]

At first a two year school, in 1894 Wharton had a four year program, and 113 students were working toward degrees.[2] By 1915 enrollment surpassed 2,000.[3] The curriculum offered greater depth and breadth, to train students for employment in a more specialized society. Courses in accounting, taxation, business law, statistics, finance, and insurance were offered, as well as various courses in sociology, history, geography, political science, public debate, and modern languages. Students could prepare for careers in social work, journalism, teaching, civil service, and a multitude of business professions. Wharton faculty spoke with pride of the curriculum's practical and modern orientation: "[The

Wharton student can study] the problems of our life, rather than those of classical and remote epochs," explained a Wharton geographer.[4] Registration dropped to 1,100 during the war years, but when Brown enrolled in 1919, he was one of 2,098 Wharton students.[5] One reason for the postwar growth was the school's fame. As the nation's oldest business college, it had an excellent reputation and a Wharton degree was prestigious. It was a useful degree. Educators predicted that business and government careers would be plentiful in the next decade. "Wharton students will grow to maturity in a most interesting period and will have a share in the material and social reconstruction of the world,"[6] claimed Emory Johnson, Wharton Dean. Administrators and faculty revised and expanded the curriculum so students could learn about the postwar world. Political science professors taught about "the new map and new nations of Europe"; historians lectured on "problems of the Great War"; and geographers explained "the geographic influences in the Great War."[7]

Brown enrolled as a sophomore, having received a year's credit for his work at Massachusetts State College. He was now a more serious student; the years at home during the war had matured him and at age 21 he was ready to prepare for a profession. Moreover, the Pennsylvanian curriculum--with emphasis on the social sciences--suited him well. The first year he took required courses, including economics, finance, physical education, political science, history and geography.

The Geography Department

Geography was required in Wharton's early days as an important part of a businessman's training. Economist Emory Johnson initiated the

geography curriculum by developing a course in the history and geography of commerce. As the Wharton curriculum added depth and breadth, more geography courses were needed and J. Paul Goode, Johnson's doctoral student, established courses in economic geography.[8]

When Goode left Wharton, J. Russell Smith took over the geography program. Smith originally intended to become an economist. He received a Wharton bachelor's degree in 1898, then began work with Johnson on a master's degree. Johnson thought highly of his able and hard working student, and when the older economist was selected as a member of the U.S. Congressional Isthmian Canal Commission, he chose Smith as his assistant. The two men studied and compared commercial benefits of two proposed canal sites. This involved predicting future canal traffic--a difficult job, as little published world trade data were available. Smith later recalled, "We floundered like a pair of landlubbers trying to swim . . . our chore in trying to find facts in the literature of 1899 was a tough one. . . . We came out of the job with a firm conviction that the American educational field neded geography in the colleges . . . quick."[9] Smith then decided to become a geographer. Like other American geographers of the early 1900s who wanted advanced training, he needed to study in Europe. Some American universities were beginning to develop graduate work, but there were no geography graduate programs in 1900. Smith traveled to Germany and studied under Frederick Ratzel, a geographer at the University of Leipzig. In 1903, returning to the United States, he completed work for his doctorate at Wharton and three years later accepted the directorship of a new Wharton department--the Division of Geography and Industry.[10]

Smith diligently developed geography at Wharton. He sought and hired a strong faculty, and built the curriculum, adding research seminars and classes in field methods, natural resources, and industrial location. He organized some of the classes around a regional focus, a new trend in geography. The year Brown entered the Wharton School, Smith left for the Columbia School of Business, but he left behind a strong and well known economic geography program.

Economic geography was an established part of geography in the early 1920s. Economic geographers studied manufacturing, industry, commerce, and trade. Many viewed their goal as analyzing the effects of geographical factors--climate, natural resources, and physical features upon manufacturing, industrial development, and world trade patterns. "Here is a study as wide as the world," proclaimed geographer J. Paul Goode. He cited the need for well trained economic geographers to work in government and business. "[America's] manifest destiny is to do the manufacturing for half the world, and to hold the first place among the nations in world commerce," he wrote. "[We need] an intimate knowledge of the economic geography, not only of our own land, but of the new lands outside, in which our Trade will be developed. There is a future for the ambitious geographer!"[11]

Brown's first geography class was "America's Resources and Industries." The course was intended to present America as "a place in which men live and make a living."[12] Brown learned how natural resources and the physical environment influenced America's industrial growth. The class included field excursions, which Brown enjoyed; and the teacher was Frank Williams, whom Brown liked. He decided to major in geography.

His second class, "Physical Environment," was typical of American college geography in the 1920s. The class included topographic and weather map interpretation, study of the origin and distribution of land forms, and an introduction to the relationships between man and the environment. Brown learned how mountains, plateaus, plains, rivers, valleys, and islands influence social and economic development, how weather influences man's affairs, and how climate influences civilization and economic development. Brown's other geography classes were on the contemporary world. He took the "Economic Geography of Europe," "Economic Geography of Asia," "Manufacturing Industries of the United States," and "Industrial Opportunities and Resources of South America." These classes involved a study of facts, statistics, and predictions of trade, resources, and commerce. Brown also took "Commerce and Transportation" in which he learned "the geographic, economic and social causes of commercial changes and trade progress."[13]

History Courses

Brown studied European history with William Linglebach and American history with Albert McKinley. Both professors were devoted teachers as well as scholars. Linglebach was active in the regional history teachers' association, and McKinley published a journal for history and geography teachers.[14] Both historians taught the importance of geographical knowledge in history. "In connection with the War," Linglebach wrote, "the world has been studying not only political and historical geography, but economic and physical geography as never before."[15] Both historians insisted that their students learn basic place name geography.

Brown's history classes were important to his development as a geographer. Both Linglebach and McKinley awakened young Brown's intellectual curiosity and developed his interest in history. They strongly emphasized the complementarity of history and geography, and Brown's best known writings were to be a blend of the two subjects. They used geographical techniques in history; Brown later applied historical techniques to geography. These historians gave Brown an additional perspective on geography. They cautioned against overstressing any one factor in the study of human affairs. "Human progress is too complex to be explained by any single set of factors." Linglebach warned "Specialists are apt to overemphasize their own particular subject . . . and explain human history by general reference to geographical condition."[16] This helped Brown to develop a balanced view point, and his early writings did not over stress the importance of the environment's influence on man. "Geography does not attempt to give a final answer to every human activity," he wrote in his doctoral dissertation. "It is content to show man's relation to the natural environment and stop there."[17]

Geography in the United States

Geography, as Brown studied it at Pennsylvania, was a new version of an old subject. A leader of the new professional American geography was William Morris Davis, a Harvard scholar at the turn of the century. Davis saw American college geography as loosely structured and unorderly with too much emphasis on description and study of "isolated and unrelated items." He called for a new explanatory emphasis in which geographers would study concepts, relationships, and develop general

principles. Davis suggested that the new geography be defined as a "study of the relationships between earth and life." A science, he explained, is defined "not in terms of the things studied . . . but only in terms of the relationships involved in the study."[18] No other scientist studied earth-life relationships; by this definition geography would be a unique discipline. Davis divided the new geography into two branches: physiography, the study of the physical environment, and ontography, the study of life responses to the environment. Davis was energetic, active and outspoken. He wrote articles and lectured in America and Europe on the new geography, explaining its value.

Davis organized the Association of American Geographers in 1904, and became the first president. This was not America's first geographical organization. The American Geographical Society had been established in 1852; the National Geographic Society, in 1888, and numerous local and state societies came to exist in the 1800s.

These older societies, however, were for men and women with a general interest in discovery, exploration, and travel. In contrast, the Association of American Geographers was a scholarly research society, whose membership was limited to those who had done original work in geography. Its aim was to cultivate "the scientific study of geography in all its branches."[19]

The new group's formation was part of a general trend of changes in scholarship. By the late 1800s urbanization and industrialization were transforming the United States. There were advances in science and technology, and knowledge was more specialized. Younger scholars and scientists with university degrees were replacing the amateur, self-taught

men and women of learning.

While the amateurs had cultivated broad areas of learning, the new scholars and scientists wanted depth rather than breadth. Academic professionals began to redefine and limit their fields of expertise. Their goal was more precise and specialized research which they hoped would meet the needs of a more complex society.[20]

Plans for Graduate School

By the end of his junior year, Brown had accumulated enough credits to graduate, and he received a B.S. in Economics in June 1921. He had done well at Pennsylvania; his grades in his junior year included five "Ds" (distinguished) and 4 "Gs" (good).[21] Brown had already chosen teaching as a profession, and that summer made plans for graduate study in geography.

Frank Williams, Brown's advisor, had done graduate work at the University of Wisconsin, where geography was taught in the Geology Department. Geography enrollment, however, had increased since the war and by 1921 there were more students in geography than in geology, and the department was renamed "The Department of Geology and Geography."[22]

Applying to graduate school was an informal procedure in the 1920s. Brown wrote to Ray Whitbeck, Director of Wisconsin geography, and asked if he could enroll that fall, and was a teaching fellowship available? Whitbeck replied that Brown could study at Wisconsin, but no fellowships were open at present.[23]

Another choice was Clark University--a school that had been in the news that winter. Clark's new president was Wallace Atwood, a geographer

who had plans for a "Great Geographical Institute" at the University. This would be a graduate school of geography where students would be taught by experts in world regions, and would have access to a large geographical library[24] Brown wrote to Atwood, and asked if he could enroll at Clark, and teach to pay his way. "I prepared myself at Pennsylvania for such an occupation, [teaching] and am, of course, most anxious to carry out my intentions," wrote Brown.[25] Atwood replied that Brown could enroll for the fall, and though there were no vacant teaching positions, he would try to arrange for a scholarship.[26]

At the end of July, Brown received good news from both men. Atwood proffered a $100 scholarship, and Whitbeck wrote that a teaching fellowship would be available for Brown. He accepted the Wisconsin offer, because he wanted to teach, but thanked Atwood politely for the scholarship offer. "I hope you will not think me unappreciative of your kind consideration," Brown wrote to Atwood, "for I had looked forward to going to Clark University of which I had always heard most favorably."[27]

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

[1]E. Johnson, The Wharton School: Its First Fifty Years (Philadelphia: n.p., 1931.)

[2]E. Slosson, Great American Universities (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1910), p. 372.

[3]In 1915-16, enrollment at Wharton was 2,405, and total enrollment at the University of Pennsylvania was 8,069. H. Elliot to L. Miles, 14 April 1980.

[4]J. Russell Smith, "Geography with a Purpose," The Bulletin of the Geographical Society of Pennsylvania 5 (1907): 271.

[5]H. Eliot to L. Miles, 14 April 1980. Total enrollment at the University during 1919-1920 was 10,120.

[6]E. Johnson, The Wharton School (Philadelphia: n.p., 1931), p. 27.

[7]Wharton Announcements, pp. 38, 46, 90.

[8]Geoffrey Martin enumerated Goode's courses in p. 23, "The Ontographic Departure from Davisian Physiography," paper presented at meeting of The Association of American Geographers, April 1976, New York City.

[9]V. Rowley, J. Russell Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), p. 22.

[10]Ibid.

[11]J. Paul Goode, "The Trend in Economic Geography," The Journal of Geography 21 (1922): 18, 20.

[12]University of Pennsylvania Catalogue, 1919-21, p. 142.

[13]Transcript of Ralph H. Brown, University of Pennsylvania, September 1919-June 1921; Wharton Announcements 1920-21, pp. 33, 38, 39.

[14]Linglebach and McKinley are characterized in Dictionary of American Biography 1944, v. 2, supp. 1, s.v. "McKinley, Albert Edward," and R. Nichols, A Historian's Progress (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968): W. Robbins, "The Retirement of Dr. William E. Linglebach," The American Philosophical Society Library Bulletin (1957): 507.

Notes--continued

[15]W. Linglebach, "European Geography and the War," The History Teachers Magazine 9 (April 1918): 219.

[16]Ibid., p. 220.

[17]Ralph Hall Brown, "Man and Nature in the Connecticut Valley," Revised edition of unpublished doctoral dissertation, 1 May 1926, p. 115. Ralph Hall Brown Papers.

[18]William M. Davis, "Systematic Geography," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 41 (1902): 238, 241.

[19]Constitution of the Association of American Geographers, reprinted in P. James and G. Martin The Association of American Geographers (The Association of American Geographers, 1978), p. 221.

[20]These trends are discussed in Laurence R. Vesey, The Emergence of the American University (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), and in Burton Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America (New York: W. W. Norton and Co. Inc., 1976).

[21]Transcript, Brown, Pennsylvania.

[22]R. H. Whitbeck wrote of the department, "The number of students in geography is probably three times the number in geology." R. Whitbeck to J. J. Pettijohn, 10 November 1921. University of Minnesota Archives (Hereafter referred to as UMA).

[23]R. H. Whitbeck to R. Brown, 28 June 1921. RHBP.

[24]W. A. Koelsch, "Wallace Atwood's 'Great Geographical Institute,'" Annals AAG 70 (December 1980): 567-82.

[25]R. H. Brown to W. Atwood, 22 June 1921. Clark University Archives (Hereafter referred to as CUA).

[26]Atwood's reply was noted by Brown in, R. Brown to W. Atwood, 1 July 1921. CUA.

[27]R. H. Whitbeck to R. Brown, 8 July 1921, RHBP; W. Atwood to R. Brown 6 July 1921; R. Brown to W. Atwood, 2 July, 1921. CUA.

CHAPTER III

WISCONSIN GRADUATE WORK

Teaching Assistantship

Brown was one of a handful of teaching assistants at the Wisconsin Geology and Geography Department, and assisted geographer Vernon Finch with a class in economic and physical geography. Brown taught the lab sections, helped prepare and correct exams, and led field trips. The pay was only $500, but Brown was pleased to have the assistantship.[1] It gave him teaching experience and the chance to associate with senior geographers. Their recommendations would help Brown obtain an academic position after receiving his degree. An additional benefit was participation in the department's social occasions, which included a weekly luncheon and an occasional cook-out, party, and dinner at faculty homes.

At age 23, Brown was a slim and attractive young man with a serious demeanor. He wore his dark hair cropped short and parted in the center, as was the fashion of the '20s. Like his fellow graduate students, he dressed formally for class in a suit, waistcoat, and necktie. He was a conscientious student who studied hard and prepared class assignments carefully. He often sought solitary activities in his spare time, and liked to walk around the wooded campus or the nearby countryside or read in his room. Brown read history, the classics, biographies, and an occasional detective novel.

Brown's closest friend was Joe Russell Whitaker, another geography teaching assistant whose undergraduate degree was from the University of Chicago. His major interests were conservation of natural resources and geographic teaching. The two men had offices near one another and they rented rooms in the same small house. They developed a close friendship which continued beyond graduate school. Brown later wrote a chapter for a book of Whitaker's and Whitaker in turn edited Brown's textbook.[2] Whitaker also supported and encouraged Brown throughout his professional life.

Brown's Courses

With his background in economic geography, it was natural that Brown should choose economics as a minor field. He took courses in land economics, economic institutions, land problems, and agricultural economics. Some of the issues addressed in his seminars were: types of world agriculture, the effect of land policies on land use, the principles of agriculture. Some of Brown's geography classes emphasized how man uses the land, and how people adjust to their particular environment. Brown's geography professors were Ray Whitbeck, Vernor Finch, and Armin Lobeck.

Ray Whitbeck was well published and was the editor of the Journal of Geography. While a student at Pennsylvania, Brown read many of Whitbeck's articles and was eager to meet and study with him. Brown and his fellow students at Wisconsin were inspired by the fact that Whitbeck published so much, and their professor encouraged them to write. He told them, "If everyone published one article a year, the field would be



Fig. 3 J. Russell Whitaker, 1921
University of Wisconsin, Madison
photographer: Guy-Harold Smith

(courtesy of Geography Department, University of Minnesota)



Fig. 4. Ralph Hall Brown, 1922
University of Wisconsin, Madison

(courtesy of G. Burton Brown)



Fig. 5. Geology Club, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1922-23

Top row, left to right: R. H. Brown, R. C. Emmons, N. H. Stearn, G. L. Knight, R. L. Rutherford
Third row: G. Wood, R. H. Whitbeck, R. C. Lentz, G. T. Trewartha, H. R. Aldrich
Second row: A. W. Weeks, F. T. Thwaits, W. S. Fusch, A. E. Walker, W. Osgood
Bottom row: E. F. Bean, V. C. Finch, C. K. Leith, W. H. Twenhofel, O. N. Rove

(courtesy of Geography Department, University of Minnesota)

on a sounder basis."[3] Brown found Whitbeck a kind and conscientious teacher although his seminars were not intellectually demanding.

Whitbeck viewed geography as the study of the relationship between man and the environment. Brown accepted this definition at first, but in later years developed a different viewpoint. Nonetheless, he retained respect and fondness for Whitbeck, whom he recalled as "an exacting taskmaster, a resourceful teacher, a gifted writer, and a friendly and unselfish counsellor."[4]

Finch was a modest, quiet, and conservative man. His lectures, low keyed and well-organized, appealed to the advanced students. He was known for his text Geography of the World's Agriculture, in which he used dot maps to show crop distribution.[5] Brown took his courses in advanced agricultural and economic geography, mapping, and teaching techniques. Finch, an astute critic and editor, was Brown's thesis advisor and from him Brown learned high standards of scholarship.

Armin Lobeck taught physiography of the United States, a study of the nation's physical characteristics. The artistic Lobeck drew on the blackboard, block diagrams--sketches with a three dimensional perspective--of land forms. Brown enjoyed this class and found it interesting to learn about the physical terrain. Eager to study more physiography, he took the advanced course the next semester. Lobeck liked his young student and encouraged him to pursue research in physiography. Brown wrote an article, published in The American Journal of Science,[6] on the origin of some hills near his Massachusetts home town. Brown also took Lobeck's block diagrams course and his artistic talent emerged under the professor's patient tutelage. He learned to draw block diagrams,

regional diagrams, and to sketch in the field. Brown had a great deal of patience and took pains to learn the drawing techniques. He later illustrated his publications with hand drawn block diagrams and pictures, and other geographers praised his skill.

Field Work

Field work was an important part of a geographer's training, and in the 1920s geographers were developing new techniques and methods for the detailed study of small regions. In 1915 Wellington Jones and Carl Sauer published a guide for field techniques and by 1923 some midwestern geographers had organized a series of annual field conferences at which they discussed problems and techniques of mapping agricultural areas.[7]

Brown followed this work with interest, for he was convinced of the importance of field work. He maintained that it was the best way to gather first-hand information about a region. In a seminar paper he discussed the importance of field work in the writing of more accurate geography. "We want more detailed information about regions," he wrote, "[to bring about] a more thorough understanding of regional geography."[8] Brown's field training included several summers in Massachusetts studying past and present land use in Hampshire county. Brown explored the area thoroughly, taking photos, looking for indications of earlier cultures, and interviewing the inhabitants.

A more extensive field trip Brown took was Lobeck's summer field course to the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains. The trip was by car and train and involved numerous stops to investigate western social, cultural, and geographical features. Brown enjoyed the excursion and

participated actively. He hiked up mountains, rode horses, and climbed glaciers. He absorbed Lobeck's lectures and thus learned much about the geography and geology of the west.

The students were required to keep a notebook and prepare a written report. Brown's was lengthy, detailed and carefully illustrated with hand colored diagrams and sketches. Lobeck was pleased with it. "Not bad," he scrawled on the cover, next to an "A."[9]

Among the trip participants was Eunice Rasmussen, a young secretary from Ashland, Wisconsin. She joined the group for the adventure and the fun but was interested in Lobeck's lectures and made Brown's acquaintance. In the course of the summer, they sat together on the train and danced at the hotels during overnight stops. Brown told her of his work and his plans, and she was impressed and interested. After the trip they corresponded, and became engaged in the fall of 1922.

That same fall, Brown considered leaving Wisconsin. At the term's end he would have a master's degree. Since he was planning to marry, he thought he should find a teaching job and continue graduate work part time. He wrote to Frank Williams to see if there was an opening at Pennsylvania, but his former advisor suggested that he stay to finish his Ph.D. Brown took the advice and remained at Wisconsin to complete his doctorate.[10]

New Viewpoints in Geography

When Brown was in graduate school, geographers were attempting to reshape the definitions and goals of their field. Since the war, new changes had come about in social science methods. The trend was away

from broad generalizations and principles and toward the collection of facts and statistics. Brown thought geographers should heed this trend. He maintained that geography texts often contained generalizations about regions which "lacked support," and that students were introduced to broad concepts too soon. "It would be far better to ascend from the small intricate principles to the large general principles," he wrote.[11]

By the 1920s, Davis and his colleagues were the older generation. Their definition of geography--man's response to the environment--seemed out of date. Many geographers suggested alternative goals and methods, and one viewpoint was presented by University of Chicago geographer Harlan Barrows, president of the Association of American Geographers in 1922. In a presidential speech, Barrows redefined geography as "the science of human ecology." He suggested that the new goal of geographic inquiry should be the study of how man adjusts to the environment--how man uses the land and its resources--rather than how he is influenced by the environment. This definition of geography had a number of advantages. First, it would rid the field of the deterministic viewpoint that the environment controls human affairs. Second, it would allow geographers to study people as well as the land. Barrows believed physical geography was overemphasized. Third, it would give geography unity and uniqueness. "Geography finds in human ecology . . . a point of view unique among the sciences which deal with humanity,"[12] claimed Barrows. This speech was important to many young geographers. As Association president, Barrows had authority, and the clarity of his talk helped open a discussion of the nature of geography.[13]

Barrows presented his address to the Wisconsin students. Young Brown listened with great interest and wrote a paper entitled "The Place of Ecology in Modern Geography." He sent it for publication to the Journal of Ecology. Ellsworth Huntington, who reviewed manuscripts for the journal, rejected both the paper and Brown's view of geography. "You take Barrows' definition of geography too seriously," he rebuked Brown. "[His] definition was interesting, suggestive, and worth thinking about, but . . . it was not the true definition of geography." Brown, disappointed at the rejection, nonetheless replied to Huntington that although he agreed that Barrows' definition was inadequate, "definitions have a certain value to those of us who are just feeling our way."[14]

Completion of Graduate Work

In the spring of 1925, Brown put the finishing touches on his dissertation, "The Economic Geography of the Middle Connecticut Valley," and anticipated receiving his doctoral degree. He was eager to begin his career as a college professor; he and Eunice had married the previous year, and wanted to begin a family.[15] Brown had a summer position. For the fall he had accepted an instructorship at the University of Colorado in the Geology, Mineralogy, and Geography Department. The teaching load sounded heavy, but the job seemed to offer a good future. Department head P. C. Worcester wrote to Brown, "The members of our department are unanimously back of a program to develop Geography and we feel that the opportunities for advancement are reasonably good."[16]

Brown completed his dissertation, and in June, 1925, he received his Ph.D. in geography and economics. He and Eunice left Madison for

Nashville, Tennessee, where Brown spent the summer teaching Geography at George Peabody College.



Fig. 6. Dr. Ralph Hall Brown, ca. 1925

(courtesy of G. Burton Brown)

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

[1]R. Whitbeck to R. Brown, 8 June 1921. RHBP.

[2]Whitaker was the editor of R. H. Brown, Historical Geography of the United States (Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1948); Brown wrote "Utilization and Conservation of our Arid and Semiarid Lands," pp. 115-146 in J. R. Whitaker and A. E. Parkins (eds.) Our Natural Resources and Their Conservation (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1936).

[3]J. R. Whitaker to L. Miles, 4 July 1978.

[4]R. Brown to R. Whitbeck, 10 April 1934. RHBP.

[5]Vernor Finch and O. E. Baker, Geography of the World's Agriculture (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1917).

[6]R. Brown, "A 'Blue Ridge' in New England," The American Journal of Science 6 (July 1923): 15-21.

[7]One such guide to field work was W. Jones and C. Sauer, "Outline for Field Work in Geography," Bulletin of the American Geographical Society 47 (1915): 520-52. P. James and C. Mather discuss the importance of field work in geography, and especially at the spring field conferences in "The Role of Periodic Field Conferences in the Development of Geographical Ideas in the United States." The Geographical Review 64 (October 1977): 446-61.

[8]R. Brown, "The Development of Field Work in Geography," seminar paper, University of Wisconsin, 21 November 1923, p. 9. RHBP.

[9]R. Brown, "The Physiography of the Rocky Mountains, Adjacent Plains, and Yellowstone Park," paper, University of Wisconsin, 1922. RHBP.

[10]F. Williams to R. Brown, 14 December 1922. RHBP.

[11]R. Brown, "The Development," pp. 8, 9.

[12]Barrows' presidential address to the annual meeting in 1922 was reprinted in The Annals. H. Barrows, "Geography as Human Ecology" Annals AAG 13 (1923): 7.

[13]R. Hartshorne, "Notes Toward A Bibliobiography of The Nature of Geography," Annals AAG 69 (1979): 65.

[14]E. Huntington to R. Brown, 30 April 1925; R. Brown to E. Huntington, 25 May 1925. Yale University Archives.

[15]The Browns were married in Park Falls, Wisconsin on 21 March 1924, RHBP.

[16]P. G. Worcester R. Brown, 26 March 1926, p. 2. RHBP.

CHAPTER IV

THE COLORADO APPOINTMENT

Teaching at the University of Colorado

The Browns moved to Boulder in the fall of 1925, and it took time to find a house, unpack, and settle into the community. Eunice Brown needed Ralph's help, as she was pregnant with Shirley Grace who was due in December. In addition to these family concerns, Brown soon struggled under a heavy teaching load, and complained that he had no time for research.[1] The University of Colorado was in competition with the other state schools. Each offered a large selection of courses, hoping to attract students. The junior faculty bore the brunt of this administrative policy, and Brown taught 13 classes in his first year at Colorado.[2]

Despite the heavy course load, Brown was conscientious and planned each class carefully. He maintained that if properly taught, geography was an exciting subject. Brown emphasized the study of people in his classes. In "Principles of Geography," he stressed "man's adaptation to the environment," rather than the traditional physiography. In "Geography of the Great Plains," class topics included the grazing industry, and man's adjustment to the region through irrigation and dry farming. In his regional courses Brown emphasized how settlers adjusted to the region's geographical conditions.[3] Brown also taught classes on teaching

techniques. He suggested that geography could be made interesting through the use of "projects and problems." He advised his students how to evaluate and select texts, maps, and pictures for their courses.[4]

While teaching at Colorado, Brown published an article in The Journal of Geography, on how to teach regional geography.[5] He perceived geography at this time as "the study of the interrelationships between man and his environment."[6] The purpose of a regional course, he believed, was to learn about these relationships in a particular region. He thought this could be done best through the use of graphics, and his method for teaching the course was to have students make a series of maps. First, a population dot map of the region would be the base map. Next, students should map on tracing paper the region's topography, vegetation, and natural resources. By superimposing the transparent maps onto the base map of population, the students would see the relationship between where people live in the region, and the natural setting. Brown pointed out that this method allowed the students to learn geographical information on their own, rather than be "spoon fed" from a text or teacher. Making the maps would encourage creativity. He suggested that the teachers display the best maps, to make the students compete with each other, and to do more careful work. Most important, this technique would make the course interesting, because it would show that geography is the study of "human life and its conditions." This method, he concluded, could be applied to a region of any size.[7]

During his Colorado years, Brown gained a good reputation for his dedication to geography, interest in teaching, concern with students, and for his research on the state. In Colorado educational circles, he

became known as "Mr. Geography."[8]

Field Work

Since 1923, some members of the Association of American Geographers had been meeting annually at field conferences. At these gatherings they discussed problems and techniques of surveying and mapping agricultural land. Brown and some of the other young geographers, not yet Association members, were not invited to the field meetings but they were interested in developing better field methods, and decided to organize their own field conferences. In May 1926, Brown attended the first junior field conference, held at Monroe, Wisconsin.[9]

Among the participants were Richard Hartshorne and Preston James, who were to become prominent within the profession. All six young men attending the conference had recently received their doctorates, and were hard-working, eager to exchange ideas about field methods and problems. They were inspired by Carl Sauer's recent publication, "The Morphology of Landscape," in which he suggested that the area or region is the geographer's purview. They discussed at the conference, his suggestions about how to study the landscape. They were particularly interested in the processes by which man changed the landscape, and how to map remnants of earlier cultures.[10]

Brown returned home full of inspiration. There was much research to be done in Colorado, and he was particularly interested in how irrigation had changed the state's landscape. Little field work had been done in the western United States. Most geographers lived in the east, and had established field methods for studying the nation's humid areas.

Less had been done in the drier western United States, which presented an interesting challenge to Brown, who liked to do original work.

Brown spent the summer in the field. He decided to study the Monte Vista region, a trade center in South-Colorado's San Luis Valley. Parts of the area had been irrigated, and Brown was interested in how this had affected land use. In an article on Monte Vista, he wrote, "This report represents the first attempt to describe and interpret the [land use] of an irrigated region."[11] Brown classified the Monte Vista region into sub-regions, or "environmental and cultural complexes." His groupings were based on similarities such as soil profile, natural vegetation, type of irrigation, and land use. Brown delineated and mapped four different regional complexes.[12]

Brown wanted to present his findings at the next Association of American Geographers' meeting. The Association in 1927 was a small and elite group of 136 members.[13] To join, one had to be elected by the members and the strict criteria required that one have published original research. Nonmembers, however, could attend meetings and read papers if introduced by members. Brown's paper was accepted and he traveled to Nashville that December to present it.[14] He had worked hard to organize it carefully and to illustrate it with maps and diagrams. Still, he was nervous and worried that his professional colleagues would not accept it. As became his custom for many years, he read it beforehand to his good friend J. R. Whitaker who "provided an appreciative audience."[15] Brown need not have worried, the paper was well received and several Association members urged him to publish it.[16]

Publications

Brown was flattered by the acclaim of his paper and decided to send it to the Geographical Review, a quarterly published by the American Geographical Society and aimed toward a broad readership. Like many geographers, Brown read the journal regularly. Its articles were well written and interesting. Editor Gladys Wrigley, who had a doctorate in geography, was an astute critic with high professional standards. She was highly selective about accepting manuscripts for publication.

Brown sent the paper to her and wrote: "If you find my study acceptable to the Review, I would be very glad, but if not, please return it by American Express Charges, and I would appreciate your comments on the study."[17]

Brown sent his paper to the right place at the right time. As it happened, the Society's director, Isaiah Bowman was interested in pioneer belts which he defined as areas of the earth yet unsettled. He was especially interested in how to make unproductive lands productive for agriculture, and how settlers in pioneer belts could adapt to their new environments.[18] Brown's paper, on irrigation, fit into this theme. Moreover, it was well written, original, and contained numerous well-drawn maps. Wrigley had a keen feel for writing talent, and was always on the watch for a steady contributor for her journal. She saw promise in the manuscript.

Brown received the good news in a few weeks. "We should be happy to publish your study . . . with certain revisions,"[19] she wrote. She suggested that he emphasize the region's historical development as "This

would tie it in with our pioneer belt studies, and would appeal to a larger audience."[20] She also advised him to use the word "environment" more sparingly, since "technical terms lessen the readability of a well told story." Brown revised the manuscript, and Wrigley praised, "It reads very well."[21] The article was published in the fall 1928, and Brown sent copies to his colleagues. Geographer Robert Hall thought it was particularly well done. "I am carefully watching the writings of the younger geographers," he wrote to Brown, "and yours is certainly one of the best."[22]

Brown had two other triumphs that fall. He was elected a fellow of the American Geographical society, and the editor of The Scientific Monthly accepted another manuscript on The San Luis Valley. Brown now claimed six publications, a good record for a young man only two years out of graduate school.[23]

A Job Search

Despite these professional successes, Brown was unhappy at Colorado. His teaching load was too heavy and there was insufficient time for research. Since the Browns needed the additional income, he had to teach during the summer, although he preferred to be in the field. Moreover, personal tragedy had overtaken the Browns. Shirley, a little toddler, who was just learning to speak, had suddenly become sick, and died during the summer of 1927. The birth of George Burton Brown the month after his sister's death help lighten the sadness, but spirits were low in the Brown household. Both Ralph and Eunice thought a move to a different locale would help ease the pain of their loss, and Brown was ready to

leave the university.[24]

He began to search for another teaching position. His initial letters of inquiry yielded two possibilities, one opening at the University of Illinois and another at Miami Teachers College in Ohio. Further correspondence, however, indicated that these were both jobs with a heavy teaching load.[25] Since Brown wanted time to conduct research, he did not pursue either option.

A better opportunity presented itself in November. A new geography department had been created at the University of Minnesota, and Darrell Davis, the department's head was looking for more faculty. Davis was searching for a good teacher, but placed a high value on research and the new faculty member would be expected to publish. Davis viewed Brown as a good candidate--he had a number of publications, and seemed a promising young scholar. A visit to Minnesota was arranged, and in spring 1929, Brown accepted Davis' offer of a teaching position for the next fall.[16]

Studies of The Landscape

Brown's last two quarters at Colorado were busy ones. He had become more interested in history, and attended a conference at the University on the history of the Trans-Mississippi West.[17] He also began to spend time at the state historical society, looking at old documents and maps which showed characteristics of Colorado's past landscapes.

Brown was interested in the many mountain passes in the southern Rocky Mountains, and especially in their changing uses, as new transportation modes evolved. He mapped, listed, and described the region's past

and present mountain passes, and wrote a paper on this, which he sent to Wrigley. He explained, "This study has extended over several months and is, I believe, accurate and comprehensive."[28] Wrigley did not publish it though it later appeared elsewhere.[29]

Brown continued to spend time at the State Historical Society, and used both documentary sources and field observations to reconstruct Colorado's past landscapes. He was particularly interested in some of the former mining communities near Boulder. Exploring the area, Brown found examples of previous land uses, such as abandoned mills, old mine dumps, and broken mine car tracks. These relics were indications of an earlier cultural landscape. "Nothing is more striking in this mountain region than the clearness with which the cultural forms reflect the stages of man's occupance of the site," he wrote in an article about the region.[30]

Brown's conception of geography began to change in the late 1920s. When he first came to Colorado, he viewed his goal as the study of the interrelationships between man and the environment. As he did more field work, read publications in geography, and exchanged ideas with his colleagues at meetings and at field conferences, he developed a different viewpoint. He became more interested in studying the landscape, especially as people settled and changed it.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

[1]F. Williams sympathized with Brown's complaint about his lack of time. F. Williams to R. Brown, 30 November 1926. RHBP.

[2]Michael McGiffert discussed the rivalry and competition for students in The Higher Learning in Colorado (Denver: Sage Books, 1964). In the fall, 1925, Brown taught: Physiography and Conservation of Natural Resources; in the winter: Climatology and Europe; in the spring: Cartography, General Geography, and North America; in the first summer session: Geographic Influences in American History, The Great Plains, and Latin America, and in the second part of the summer: North America, Principles of Human Geography, and Teaching of Geography.

[3]J. R. Whitaker to L. Miles, 4 July 1978; P. Jordan to L. Miles, 13 July 1978; Courses described in University of Colorado Catalogue, College of Arts and Sciences, 192-226, pp. 60-62.

[4]Ibid.

[5]R. Brown, "A Method of Teaching Regional Geography," The Journal of Geography 26 (October 1927): 270-76.

[6]Brown defined geography in the article cited in note 5; and Brown's colleague at Colorado, Harold Hoffmeister, recalled this as his and Brown's viewpoint of geography. H. Hoffmeister to L. Miles 20 July 1978.

[7]Ibid., p. 276.

[8]David Lantis, "Ralph Brown," oral letter, taped in September 1980, in possession of L. Miles.

[9]The conferences are discussed in P. James and C. Mather, "The Role of."

[10]C. Sauer, "The Morphology of Landscape," University of California Publications in Geography 2 (1925): 19-53; Outline for Field Work . . . p. 452.

[11]R. Brown, "Geography of a Portion of the San Luis Valley," The Scientific Monthly 27 (December 1928): 492-501. (quotation on p. 9 of reprint.)

[12]Ibid.

[13]Membership in 1927 was 136. P. James and G. Martin, The Association, p. 83.

[14]R. Brown, "Study of the Monte Vista Region, Colorado," paper presented at the AAG Nashville meeting, 1927.

[15]J. R. Whitaker to W. A. Koelsch, 2 December 1971.

[16]Brown mentioned this to Wrigley. R. Brown to G. Wrigley, 7 January 1928. Geographical Review File. (Hereafter referred to as GRF.)

[17]Ibid.

[18]Isaiah Bowman, Director of the American Geographical Society mentioned his interest in pioneer belt studies, and called for studies such as Brown's in: "The Scientific Study of Settlement," Geographical Review 16 (October 1928): 647-653).

[19]G. Wrigley to R. Brown, 18 January 1928. GRF. The published article was R. Brown, "Monte Vista: Sixty Years of a Colorado Community," Geographical Review 28 (October 1928): 567-78.

[20]Ibid.

[21]G. Wrigley to R. Brown, 8 February 1926. GRF.

[22]Robert Hall to R. Brown, 19 October 1928. RHBP.

[23]Brown was elected a Fellow of the American Geographical Society on 20 November 1928. RHBP. The six articles were: the articles cited in this chapter, notes 5, 11, and 18; the article cited in chapter 3, note 6; and "Philadelphia," The Journal of Geography 21 (1922): 214-18; and "Muscle Shoals," The Journal of Geography 24 (1925): 30-34.

[24]Shirley Brown was born 15 December 1925, and died in April 1927. G. Burton Brown was born in May 1927. RHBP.

[25]T. T. Quirk to R. Brown, 12 March 1927; T. C. McConnell to R. Brown, 22 June 1928 and 5 July 1928. RHBP.

[26]D. Davis to R. Brown, 27 November 1928, and 5 December 1928. RHBP. R. Hartshorne to L. Miles 10 May 1978.

[27]Wrigley asked Brown to write a report of the conference for the Review and Brown complied. G. Wrigley to R. Brown, 6 June 1929, R. Brown to G. Wrigley, 2 June 1929. GRF; R. Brown, "The History of the Trans-Mississippi West," Geographical Review 19 (October 1929): 672-73.

[28]R. Brown to G. Wrigley, 5 April 1929. GRF.

[29]G. Wrigley to R. Brown 7 May 1929; R. Brown, "The Mountain Passes of Colorado," University of Colorado Studies 18 (August 1930): 29-42.

[30]R. Brown, "The Mountain Communities of the Boulder Region, Colorado," The Journal of Geography 29 (October 1930): 286.

CHAPTER V

THE EARLY MINNESOTA YEARS

Establishing Geography at the University of Minnesota

The Minnesota Geography Department was only a few years old when Brown joined it. Though geography had been taught at Minnesota since the early 1900s, administrators did not establish a separate department. In 1921, J. B. Johnson, dean of the College of Sciences, Literature and the Arts, suggested to President Lotus Coffman that they hire more geographers and establish a geography department.[1] Coffman liked the idea, as did George Dowrie, Business School dean, who wanted commercial geography added to his curriculum.

There were a number of decisions to be made before acting, not the least of which involved what kind of geography to add to the curriculum. Geography had many branches, ranging from physiography, a study of the earth's landforms, to economic geography, which emphasized facts and statistics about trade. "There is, I find, a wide difference of opinion as to the kind of geography that should be taught in universities," claimed Coffman. "The geography which the Economics Department, for instance, desires to have us teach is not the geography which has the sanction of the geographers." He told Johnson that they should find someone with a "scholarly interest in geography," who would not teach it with a bias.[2]

Another matter was the administrative organization. Should the department be separate? Most American geographers taught in geology departments. The Minnesota administrators wrote to geographer Ray Whitbeck, at the University of Wisconsin for advice. Whitbeck replied that geography had been growing away from geology and toward the social sciences. He stressed, "In its very nature, geography is a coordinating science overlapping many other fields . . . [and] there are a number of branches of learning which ought to be assembled in one department." He suggested they could put geography with geology temporarily but that eventually they should create a separate department. He concluded, "Geography is making a place for itself in American universities and there is no doubt of its future."[3]

In seeking a geographer, a suggestion came from J. Paul Goode, of the University of Chicago. An active Minnesota alumnus, Goode advocated a strong geography department, and recommended that they hire Carl Sauer, who had studied at Chicago. "I believe there isn't a better man above the horizon available," Goode wrote to Coffman. "Mr. Sauer is under consideration for a position at the University of California, but I have a feeling he would take the University of Minnesota in preference . . . so as to be closer to the growing body of geographers of which he is so promising a member."[4]

Sauer was invited to Minnesota to discuss the position, but would not come for an interview unless he were promised his own department immediately. He stressed, "The trend of Geography is away from Geology. Geology has been a good foster mother to us, but what we want now is independence."[5] Johnson was not ready yet to promise a separate

department, and thus the negotiations failed.[6]

A few years later, Coffman hired Darrell Davis, who at age 44 had recently received his Ph.D. in geography from the University of Michigan. Davis taught geography in the Minnesota geology department. He perceived geography as the study of the earth and man, and defined it as "a body of organized facts related to definite places and concerned with the adjustment between population groups, and the areas where they live."[7] The first year he taught "Human Geography," and "Geography of Commercial Production." In his first class students learned "the distribution and activities of man, as affected by the geographical environment." In the second, they learned about "trade commodities, their areas of origin and consumption."[8]

Davis came to Minnesota an experienced instructor; he had taught in high schools, normal schools, and junior colleges. He was a precise and orderly individual who took roll each day, and presented well organized lectures. He would tolerate no interruptions and locked the classroom door before starting his morning lecture. Many students appreciated Davis as "a man of integrity who kept his word." Others liked him because "one knew what was called for and where one stood." The geography classes were well attended, and the enrollment in 1923 was 315.[9]

The next year, Richard Hartshorne accepted a position at Minnesota. His Ph.D., in economic geography, was from Chicago. Described by a former student as "brilliant, clever, and entertaining," Hartshorne was a cheerful contrast to the more sober Davis. Expanded geography offerings that year included "Cartography," "Climatology," "Trade Routes and Trade Centers," "Introduction to Regional Geography," and regional courses.[10]

Davis' and Hartshorne's geography was indeed different from geology. The men were reclassified as social science faculty, and for closer association with the history and political science departments, they were given offices in the Old Library Building. In 1925 dean Johnson recommended to Coffman that it was time to create a separate geography department. He noted that work in geography was growing and "Reports from both students and faculty seem to indicate that . . . it meets with general approval." He added that having geography under geology's wing "gives students the erroneous impression as to the character of geography . . . and discourages them from taking an active interest in advanced work in geography." The board of regents approved creation of the geography department in 1925, and appointed Davis as head.[11]

Four years later, an enlarged department included Davis, Hartshorne, Ralph Brown, Samuel Dicken, Joseph Schwendeman, and Ethel Nelson. Davis decided to keep the department small and to emphasize undergraduate teaching. He did not want to build a large graduate program, perhaps to keep closer control. Davis took a strong hand in his faculty's work. He knew that Hartshorne was interested in international relations, and suggested that he teach political geography. Reviewing Brown's Colorado publications, he noted the historical emphasis, and advised him to teach historical geography. He encouraged and expected the faculty to publish, and would lock the department doors at noon, so they could work uninterrupted.

Davis "ran a tight ship." He was an autocratic, "hard-nosed" administrator who had the final say on all matters. He did not hold departmental meetings, but discussed business separately with his faculty.

Hartshorne, Brown, and Dicken were quite unhappy with Davis' administrative methods, but eventually realized there was nothing they could do about the situation.[12]

Brown at Minnesota

Brown came to Minnesota with the reputation of a promising young scholar. He had seven publications, and was soon to become active in the Association of American Geographers.[13] He was quiet, unassuming, and courteous and his colleagues liked and respected him. Davis thought highly of him and in a grant recommendation wrote: "I have no hesitation in recommending him highly as to intellectual calibre, originality, ability to organize data and other such qualities as are desirable for the prosecution of geographic research."[14] Samuel Dicken also respected his colleague. He recalled him as "a scholar of the old school," and noted that he "went about his work quietly, modestly, and usually underestimating his contribution to the department and to geography."[15]

Brown and Hartshorne had met as graduate students, and Hartshorne was glad when Brown joined the faculty. They became good friends and congenial colleagues, for they had much in common. Both had begun graduate work when American geographers were redefining their field. The two young men were stimulated by Barrows' and Sauer's ideas and were interested in European geography as well. They spent hours discussing geography at annual meetings, in the department, and at field conferences. Hartshorne, who read German, introduced Brown to Alfred Hettner's writings. Hettner, a German geographer, viewed the discipline as a chorological science, and believed that geographers should study the character of

regions and places. Brown was influenced by Hettner's viewpoint and in his later work in historical geography he recreated the character of past American regions.[16] Hartshorne admired Brown's scholarship and commented, "Here we have combined with rare degree the ability to pursue . . . detailed facts with the intellectual ability to draw effective generalizations from them." He also noted his colleague's originality: "Ralph was never bound to well beaten paths . . . but was ever experimenting with new methods."[17]

Brown was uninterested in campus politics. He did not want power, disliked administrative duties, and "was not a big operator."[18] His teaching load was lighter than that at Colorado. He generally taught two classes each quarter; "South America" in the fall, "Climatology" in the winter, and "Historical Geography of North America" each spring, as well as sections of "Human Geography" each quarter.[19] This lighter teaching load gave him time for research, which he enjoyed and did well. Brown would always plan his research carefully, specifying in detail his methods and the significance of the work. He was no less careful in carrying out his plans, and was a painstaking worker both in the field and the library. He once wrote to Wrigley about the importance of being thorough, but he admitted to her, "It is quite likely (as some of my co-workers have broadly hinted) that I lean too much toward detail in my field work."[20]

Brown was often serious and even moody, but he had a lighter side. With those he knew well, Brown was "cheerful, animated, and outgoing."[21] He had a dry wit, and appreciated humor from others. He liked to have fun. He played volleyball with Richard Hartshorne, and pool with Palmer

Johnson, a mathematician. He often lunched at the faculty club with his good friend, historian Philip Jordan. Brown joined the Minnesota Folklore Society and enjoyed chatting with Theodore Blegan at folklore dinners. Another good friend was Raymond Shove, head of the library acquisitions department. They met when Brown returned a booksellers catalog, and discovered a common interest in books. Ralph, Ray and their wives often got together on weekends for card games and stimulating conversation.[22]

The Brown Family

At home Brown read, wrote, and prepared for class; for relaxation he kept a vegetable garden, refinished wood furniture and listened to the opera and Spike Jones on the radio. He left most of the domestic chores to his wife Eunice, and the household revolved around his need for peace and quiet. His daughter recalled, "We took it for granted that all fathers were important and busy and you had to keep quiet when they were around." Though he did not play a major role in his children's upbringing, he was a "kind and affable" father. During the late 1930s, Eunice developed recurring osteomylitis, a condition which involved frequent hospital visits and lengthy recoveries. During these times, Burton, Nancy, and Laura saw more of their father, and enjoyed the hamburgers which he commonly cooked for dinner. The whole family looked forward to summer camping trips, and it was a true vacation for Eunice, since Brown took care of all the details. An avid camper, he built a wooden packing box for supplies that fit on the car's running board. He shopped for groceries, and on the trip did the cooking, and supervised cleaning up

and packing for the return home.[23]

The Brown's marriage was happy and satisfying on the whole, though Eunice often wished he was more attentive to her, and less involved in his work.[24] He was fortunate to have Eunice as his wife, since she played a major role in his work. She edited and typed for him, designed and drew maps, and made pictures and sketches for his books and articles. When her health and the household needs permitted, she accompanied him on research trips. He credited her as being, with him, "also a pioneer student in . . . historical geography."[25]

The Mendoza Study

In the early 1930s, Brown applied for a grant to study the Mendoza Region in Argentina. Mendoza and its surrounding Ardine piedmont, was a productive and flourishing oasis with a diversified population. Brown wanted to "analyze and intreprete" the Mendoza landscape so as to predict future changes in the cultural landscape. He outlined his methods. First he would map the region, in particular the city's land use and the area's agriculture, transportation, and canals. Then he would reconstruct Mendoza's past geography. Sources would be interviews with older residents, and documentary evidence such as manuscripts and old maps obtained from the municipal offices. Brown speculated, "It is quite possible that obscure though valuable maps showing past conditions can be brought to light by careful search."[26]

Brown's interest in landscape change was not unique among geographers. A well known work of this type was Preston James' study of the Blackstone valley, in which he traced "human occupance" in the New

England valley beginning with the Indians.[27] Another geographer, Derwent Whittlesey suggested a method for studying landscape change in his article "Sequent Occupance."[28] However, Brown's method was unique. In addition to field work, he used documentary sources to re-create past landscapes. Another characteristic of Brown's work was his emphasis on originality. In the Mendoza proposal, he wrote, "Emphasis will be placed in the gathering of new materials, rather than merely the use of materials already available." Brown made plans to spend time in Argentina pursuing this research, but unfortunately, his grant was not approved.[29]

The Association of American Geographers

The disappointment of not getting the grant was offset by an important honor accorded him the next year. In 1932 Brown was selected as a councilor of the Association of American Geographers. Nominating committee chairman Charles Colby wrote to Brown, "Our committee made a thorough survey of the younger men of the Association and believe that you are the most fitted to serve in this important capacity."[30] Brown accepted the position with pleasure.

To be chosen as an officer of the Association was a mark of high esteem, and it was most unusual to be selected at age 35. During Brown's first term as councilor, Darrell Davis wrote: "I rank Dr. Brown as one of the most promising of the younger geographers in the United States. His election as a member of the Council . . . would indicate that other geographers would agree with me in this ranking."[31]

Brown was one of nine council members who guided Association affairs. They organized the annual meetings, rejected or approved candidates

for membership, and organized elections for each year's candidate slate. The Association was a powerful group and it presented the image of academic geography to the outside world.

To succeed professionally in geography, one needed to be an Association member. Members could discuss goals and trends, and present papers at annual meetings, and could publish in the Annals, a national outlet for their research. To join, one had to be nominated by a member. Then the council considered the nominee's qualifications, and approved, deferred, or rejected the candidate. The entire membership then voted on the candidates, and ninety percent approval was needed for confirmation. Preston James explained to Brown that "a candidate should have shown some evidence of active field research in geography, and should have published substantially beyond the Ph.D."[32] These strict stipulations kept the organization small. As members died or retired, few new ones were elected, and the net membership gain between 1926 and 1935 was only three. In 1932 there were only 133 members.[33]

As geography programs found a place in universities, and more doctorates were granted, the number of candidates proposed--and often rejected--increased during the early 1930s. Nominees spurned by the Council often felt hurt, and their sponsors became angry. Some members viewed the council as an elite group with too much power. One member complained, "I fear there has been . . . prejudice . . . come in reference to some candidates." Wrote another, "I am convinced that our election to membership had been too often personal. Men pushed by individual members have got in, whereas others, equally meritorous, have not been considered."[34]

Brown had high standards of scholarship, and thus had no quarrel with the membership criteria. He could see, however, that the council's selection process was not impersonal. Years later, he suggested that the councilors vote by mail, using a ranking system. He emphasized, "This is a very objective method, far superior, it seems to me, than the 'give and take' manner of sifting the candidates which is almost inevitable when the councilors get together around a table."[35]

Brown took his job seriously, and he worked hard, but it was often a frustrating task. When he organized a symposium he had trouble finding people to participate. Some ignored his letters, others were too busy or not interested. When one colleague offered suggestions on the planned symposium, Brown replied, "I wish other respected members would take equal interest."[36]

Though Brown and others worked without remuneration at the difficult job of guiding the Association, many members were dissatisfied with how it was run. One member argued, "It seems that control is not so democratic as it should be. The membership play practically no part in the selection of officers, the determination of policies and the expenditure of rather high dues." Another complained, "I believe the minutes of each meeting of the Council should be sent to every member . . . we have a right to know what items are discussed and voted on."[37] This scattered voicing of discontent was to increase in the next decade.

Dissent in the Geographic Community

Another problem during the 1920s and '30s was the lack of agreement on professional goals. The objectives of the first American professional

geographers was the study of the environment and man's response to it, but many geographers abandoned this goal during the 1920s. Some proposed new definitions and goals, but no one idea was accepted by the majority. It was important to have a clear cut definition if geographers were to establish themselves in the academic world. A field of study warranting university departmental status had to be unique, timely, and above all, clear in its function.

Some geographers felt gloomy about the future of their discipline. One was Whittlesey, who wrote in 1929, "I am in the dark as to 'whither' geography . . . we have not yet proven our case that work in the field is worth while." He reflected, "The only phase of geography that is generally accepted is the economic geography of J. Russell Smith, largely a compilation of data . . . . Is geography a subject with enough feet to walk on?"[38]

Others were frustrated because the geography they had studied in college was no longer acceptable, and it was difficult to learn new methods. Sauer lamented:

> I sometimes speak of those of us who have come after Salisbury, Tarr, and Davis, and ahead of the post war generation as the 'wasted generation of geographers.' The old boys could tear out and make observations and slept soundly nights, there being no one to say is this Geography? . . . now it is a slow and hard experience for each of us to make the break with the faith of our fathers . . . . Such a mess: we use ourselves up unlearning the things we were supposed to propogate.

A third geographer, Almon Parkins, was unhappy about the controversy regarding geography's definition. He was distressed that so many claimed primacy for their own viewpoint. To obtain a "true picture of geography in America" in 1930, Parkins requested 30 geographers to state

their definitions. The respondents, as he expected, had diverse answers. Five of them defined geography as:[40]

1. "A study of relationships . . . between the earth and the life that exists upon it."
2. "A study of the facts in a region or area, and of the relationships between these groups of facts, either environmental or human."
3. "human ecology . . . largely a study of the adjustment of the organism to the environment."
4. "a description of the face of the earth."
5. "The science of areas."

The last respondent added that the function of the geographer is "to observe, describe, map, classify and explain the complex of natural and cultural phenomena which make up and give personality to such areas and regions."[41] This definition was close to the viewpoints of Brown, Hartshorne and some other younger geographers.

One rising leader in the geographic community was Preston James who, like Brown and Hartshorne, had studied the man-environment geography in graduate school, but gradually discarded this viewpoint.[42] In his 1935 textbook, James wrote that geography as the study of relationships leads geographers to study only those activities that are seen as responses to the environment. He stressed that "Geography as the study of responses or adjustments is in the stage of medieval alchemy; geography as the study of mutual space relationships on the face of the earth is a science."[43] James later wrote that "[geographers] analyze the significance of differences which are observed from place to place."[44]

James, who was active in the Association at an early age, and was secretary for many years, convinced many of his colleagues of the importance of regional geography.[45] In the early 1930s, Association leaders were beginning to sanction the study of regions as a valid goal for geographers. At the 1933 and 1934 annual meetings there were sessions on regionalism and Preston James presented a stimulating paper, entitled "The terminology of Regional Description." Whittlesey published all of these papers in the Annals.[46]

Brown, like James, believed that geographers should interpret and describe regions.[47] However, Brown rarely wanted to debate the definition of geography. He felt it was unprofitable and he never wanted to inflict his personal opinions on others. As an Association councilor, he tried to prevent controversy about the definition of geography. In preparing his symposium, he deliberately chose participants from "various schools of thought and of various ages." He firmly instructed Robert Hall, who gave the first paper, to "avoid the stormy shores of geographic philosophy and stick rigidly to methods, past and present, of delimiting regions of various sorts."[48] As the Association began to endorse the importance of regional geography through meetings, programs, and Annals articles, many geographers followed. Though the details were not yet agreed upon, it seemed that for many the study of regions would be an important organizing concept. Brown worked squarely in the regionalist tradition. His dissertation focused on problems in New England and his first group of studies were of the Colorado area. For his next major research plan, he turned to the Great Plains.



Fig. 7. Spring field conference, Menominee County, Michigan, 1935
Back row, left to right: Fred Kniffen, W. L. G. Joerg, Vernor Finch, Preston James, Robert Platt, Samuel Dicken, Wellington Jones, Ralph Brown, Loyal Durand, Derwent Whittlesey
Front row: K. C. McMurray, Richard Hartshorne, G. Donald Hudson, Charles Colby, Glenn Trewartha, Stanley Dodge

(courtesy of Cotton Mather)



Fig. 8. Field conference, South Carolina, 1938
left to right: Otto Guthe, Ralph Brown, Vernor Finch,
Richard Hartshorne, Charles Davis, George Cressey

(courtesy of Otto Guthe)

Great Plains Irrigation Articles

In 1931, Brown designed a research program on the Great Plains. "The aim of the entire program," he wrote, "is a descriptive and interpretive study of the areal differentiation of the Great Plains." The first step would be to study landscape changes wrought by irrigation. "Such changes in the landscape in the Great Plains as caused by irrigation have never been revealed," Brown stated.[49]

It was a timely research proposal. During the Great Depression many Americans were concerned with planning and conservation. Geographers and other social scientists showed special interest in society's practical problems, J. R. Whitaker wrote, "As the nation comes of age and the limits of its resources . . . begin to appear more fully, the necessity for great care in the utilization and renewal of the resources is impressive indeed."[50] Brown's proposed study of irrigated areas fit in well with the work that was needed. Brown received a Rockfeller grant which funded work in the field for the next three summers. In 1932, he went to Newell, South Dakota to study the Belle Fourche Irrigation Project. This time, his wife Eunice could not accompany him. A second daughter, Laura Leavitt, had been born in the spring and Eunice now had three small Browns to care for.[51]

Brown's plan was to map the project so as to obtain "a complete geographical description of the project."[52] He would interview the older residents to get a picture of how the area had changed. Brown wrote to Eunice that he planned to give the residents cigars to help get them talking. He added, "They will be so relieved to find out that I am not a collector or sales agent that I'm sure I'll be in good standing."[53]

Upon his return to Minneapolis in the fall, Brown wrote the results of his field work. He explained that traditionally, irrigation projects were not mentioned in studies of the Great Plains: "There is a belief, quite firmly entrenched, that the irrigated areas of the Great Plains are essentially different from the region in which they lie . . . . [They] are felt to be in the region but not of it."[54] Contrary to this belief, Brown had found that the Belle Fourche Project was culturally similar to its region, the Black Hills, and that in many ways it was untypical of an irrigation project.

Brown sent the manuscript to the Annals editor Whittlesey. He wrote, "I have tried very hard to make my first effort for the Annals a satisfactory one." Whittlesey liked the piece. The maps were detailed and well drawn and it was an original study, the first by a geographer of an American irrigation project. He accepted it with the stipulation that it needed rewriting. "You have taken too many words to say what you have to say," Whittlesey criticized, adding, "I realize I am asking you to alter your whole style of exposition. I do this first because you are young and have time to change, and second because your material is too valuable to be concealed in a haze of words."[55]

Brown was happy with the acceptance, and grateful to have Whittlesey's help. He replied to the editor, "In my revision, I shall rigidly inspect every sentence, in order to be as economical of words as possible. . . . The revision, which perhaps still lacking perfection, will be the result of painstaking work."[56]

Whittlesey, as Wrigley had done, helped Brown improve and develop his writing style. For example, Brown's article had new ideas in it,

but he had failed to point these out clearly. Whittlesey suggested, "If you decided to fly in the face of general belief, then you must do so in no uncertain way," and suggested how to do it.[57]

The published article received much praise from Stanley Dodge, a geographer at the University of Michigan. Dodge wrote to Brown, "Ordinarily geographical articles leave me cold, for they fall so far short of the ideals that I have for geography, that I turn away in disgust." He continued that Brown's article was a perfect example of "a regional description" written in a "succinct and lucid" style. Dodge added that the other Michigan geographers had the same opinion.[58]

Brown also studied irrigation projects in Wyoming, Montana, and New Mexico. His method was similar for all--he would map the land use of the project and surrounding area, interview the residents, and search for old maps and other documentary evidence. In a second publication Brown described the irrigation project at Sun River, Montana.[59] Like the Belle Fourche Project, this was untypical of an irrigation project. Farms were larger than those of the typical irrigated area, and the farmers practiced extensive rather than intensive agriculture. Brown suggested that this was because the original settlers of the area had previously farmed in dry areas, and brought dry land customs, traditions, and farming equipment with them. When the project was established later, the farmers did not want to relinquish their old ways, and thus they did not use the irrigated land to its full advantage.

In another article,[60] Brown showed how a class might learn about irrigation. He wrote that teachers usually stress where the projects are located, but they should also emphasize irrigation's effects on land use."

Brown wrote, "The most satisfactory way of showing the effects of irrigation is to compare the present with the past." Using his Belle Fourche materials, Brown made four land use maps of the project and surrounding area. Two of the maps showed the "pre-irrigation landscape" and the remainder showed the area in subsequent years, after it had been irrigated. "These maps," he explained, "show the sequence of changes which irrigation has brought about in this region."[61]

In another publication, Brown presented techniques of exposition.[62] He spent a summer mapping land use in an irrigated area of the Big Horn Mountain piedmont in Wyoming. From this map, he carefully constructed a regional diagram, or a three dimensional picture of the region, as viewed from above, with a block base. "The map by itself," Brown wrote, "does not always reveal to others . . . the essential qualities--areal extent and pattern--of a particular landscape." A regional diagram, however, presents "an interesting, clean-cut, and unconfused picture of a region." Brown suggested that such a diagram can provide "a suitable introduction to, or summary of, a carefully worked out regional analysis."[63]

In his publications Brown noted the false ideas people have about irrigation. He wrote:[64]

> People as a rule think of irrigation in the most glowing of terms as tho it were a specific of magic through which an area suddenly becomes transformed from utter desolation to an oasis of unrivalled productivity and charm. . . . There is much fiction combined with fact.

Brown hoped to show, through these detailed studies of irrigation projects, that expectations of irrigation were too great, and unrealistic. He stressed especially that irrigation in semi-arid areas is not a "spectacular" type, and will not produce an abundance of cash crops.[65]

"The value of our irrigated lands to the nation should not be measured in terms of productivity but in terms of their stabilizing effects on developed communities and industries," Brown maintained, "in a vast part of the country where without irrigation both would be out of the question."[66]

This phase of Brown's career helped establish his reputation in geography. He presented his irrigation research in papers at annual Association meetings, which were well received.[67] Of one paper, Hartshorne commented, "Everyone agreed that Brown's was the most artfully perfect."[68] Wrigley heard the favorable reports and asked if she could publish his papers in her journal.[69] This helped establish Brown as a regular contributor to the Geographical Review, and initiated a friendly correspondence between Brown and Wrigley that lasted until his death. Moreover, this work gave Brown the reputation as an expert on the Great Plains, and he later spoke on this region at an Association symposium.[70]

This stage of his career also initiated his friendship with Whittlesey, who considered Brown a promising young scholar. Whittlesey admired Brown's thoroughness in field work. The older geographer realized the value of field work and had once complained, "Too much geography is derived from books and the slender remainder from hasty trips [in the field]."[71] Whittlesey saw promise in Brown's writing, and termed one of Brown's articles, "polished perfection."[72] He later helped select Brown as Annals editor, and recalled of his younger colleague, "Ralph was one of the pleasantest people I have ever worked with."[73]

Brown planned to return to his Great Plains work at a later date,[74] but in 1935 began to plan for a sabbatical leave. He was eager to spend

a year pursuing research in what was to become his specialty--historical geography.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

[1]J. B. Johnson wrote to L. D. Coffman in 1921, "I have of course for two years suggested the advisability of creating a Department of Geography but have not strongly recommended it because of our present financial condition." 13 June 1921. Other correspondence showing support of geography: L. D. Coffman to J. Paul Goode, 2 June 1921; J. B. Johnson to L. D. Coffman, 13 June 1921; G. W. Dowrie to L. D. Coffman, 6 June 1921. UMA.

[2]L. Coffman to J. Johnson, 7 November 1921. UMA.

[3]R. Whitbeck to J. J. Pettijohn, 10 November 1921, p. 2. UMA.

[4]J. P. Goode to L. Coffman, 25 May 1921. UMA.

[5]C. Sauer to J. Johnson, as quoted in P. Goode to L. Coffman, 4 June 1921. UMA.

[6]Johnson wrote to Coffman that "it is not desirable that the organization of our work in this university be dictated by a possible candidate for appointment, either directly or through the intervention of the professor under whom he had part of his training." 13 June 1921. UMA; I could find no more correspondence on possible candidates other than Davis.

[7]D. Davis, The Earth And Man (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1921), p. 12.

[8]Bulletin of the University of Minnesota 26 (1923): 78.

[9]F. Seawall, "Ralph Brown," oral letter, taped in September 1980, in possession of L. Miles; W. Kress to L. Miles, 5 September 1980, p. 5; W. Kress, "Darrell Huag Davis," Minnesota Council for Geographic Education Newsletter 19 (1964): 3-8. Enrollment figure is from J. B. Johnson to L. Coffman, 5 February 1925. UMA.

[10]J. Schwenderman to L. Miles, 30 January 1981; The Bulletin of the University of Minnesota 27 (1924): 64-65.

[11]J. Johnson to L. Coffman, 5 February 1925; L. Coffman to J. Johnson, 19 February 1925. UMA.

[12]Interpretation of the department under Davis, from F. Seawall, "Ralph Brown;" W. Kress to L. Miles, 5 September 1980; R. Hartshorne to

L. Miles, 10 May 1978 and 11 December 1981.

[13]Brown was elected a member of the Association of American Geographers in 1929.

[14]Recommendation by Darrell Davis, 11 December 1933. RHBP.

[15]Transcript, Dedication ceremony of The Ralph Hall Brown Room, Social Science Tower, University of Minnesota, 3 May 1963, p. 10.

[16]Hettner explained his view that geographers study space rather than time, in Geographische Zeitschrift, vol. II (1905): 556. (See Chapter VI, note 59.)

[17] Transcript, Brown Room, pp, 7, 8; R. Hartshorne to W. Koelsch, 3 December 1971; R. Hartshorne to L. Miles, 4 April 1978 and 1 March 1978.

[18] Transcript, Brown Room, p. 7. This remark, by Robert Platt, was in reference to Brown as secretary of the Association, but it is true of Brown in general.

[19]University of Minnesota Class Schedule, College of Sciences Literature and the Arts, 1938 through 1942, and The Bulletin of the University of Minnesota, 1929 through 1937.

[20]R. Brown to G. Wrigley, 23 April 1935. GRF.

[21]R. Shove to L. Miles, 19 May 1980.

[22]Description of Brown is from: R. Shove to L. Miles, 28 March and 19 May 1980; R. Hartshorne to W. Koelsch 3 December 1971; P. Jordan to L. Miles 13 July 1978 and 8 September 1978.

[23]Nan Bruno to L. Miles, 1 December 1981 and 11 February 1982.

[24]Ibid.

[25]R. H. Brown, Historical Geography, v.

[26]R. H. Brown, "Objectives of the Study," n.d. RHBP.

[27]P. James, "The Blackstone Valley, A Study in Chorography in Southern New England," Annals AAG 19 (1929): 67-019. P. James defined "occupance" as "the process of occupying or living in an area, and the transformation of the initial landscape which result," in "The Terminology of Regional Description," Annals AAG 24 (1934) p. 81, Brown and others used this term frequently. Another term they used was "cultural landscape," which they distinguished from "natural landscape." The former was the area modified or changed by people's activities; the

latter was the original land, before people settled in the area. Later geographers dropped the distinction between the two.

[28]Derwent Whittlesey, "Sequent Occupance," Annals AAG 19 (1929): 162-165.

[29]Brown wrote of his travel plans in a letter to C. Jones, 2 May 1931, and to G. Elder, 3 June 1931. Davis wrote a grant recommendation for this project in 1933, 31 March 1933. RHBP; I could find no details about the particular grant for which Brown applied.

[30]Charles Colby to R. Brown, 15 October 1932. RHBP.

[31]D. Davis, recommendation for Brown, 11 December 1933. RHBP: The average age of an AAG officer in 1933, was 47. Another young councilor was Glen Trewartha, councilor in 1931, also at age 35.

[32]Preston James to R. Brown, 1 November 1934. RHBP.

[33]P. James and G. Martin, The Association, p. 83; Brown later wrote, "Insufficient thought has often given in the past, to the growth of the society . . . the average age is probably higher than it should be . . . I was shocked to learn, upon looking into the records, that the Association's net increment from 1925 to 1935 was exactly three members. R. Brown, "Memo to AAG Council." May 1945. RHBP.

[34]These problems are discussed in James and Martin, The Association, pp. 49, 83. Comments from members are from a draft entitled, "Suggestions and Comments that have come in during the last few weeks from members of the Association of American Geographers in response to the circular letter sent out by the President." n.d., but appears to be written during the Depression. RHBP.

[35]R. Brown to D. Whittlesey, 21 May 1945. Derwent Whittlesey Papers. (Hereafter referred to as DWP.)

[36]R. Brown to R. Dodge, 3 November 1934. RHBP.

[37]Quotes are from "Suggestions and Comments."

[38]D. Whittlesey to C. Colby, 14 March 1929. DWP.

[39]C. Sauer to D. Whittlesey, 25 September 1929. DWP.

[40]Almon Parkins, "The Geography of American Geographers," The Journal of Geography 33 (1934): 22-29.

[41]Ibid., p. 225.

[42]R. Hartshorne, "Introduction," in D. W. Meinig (ed) On Geography, The Selected Writings of Preston E. James (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971), p. xiii.

[43]P. James, An Outline of Geography (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1935); Preface reprinted in Meinig, On Geography, p. 287.

[44]P. James, A Geography of Man (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1949); Preface reprinted in Meinig, On Geography, p. 288.

[45]James was elected a member of the Association in 1925, at the age of 26, and became secretary in 1936, an office he held for six years. David Robinson discusses James' career in "On Preston James and Latin America, A Biographical Sketch," in D. Robinson (ed.) Studying Latin America: Essays in Honor of Preston James (Ann Arbor: United Microfilms International, published for the Department of Geography, Syracuse University, 1980). W. Pattison described James' leadership in geography in pp. 16-28, "The Geographer's Way," unpublished manuscript.

[46]Geographer Robert Hall noted in 1935: "A cursory review of our regional literature shows that there are nearly as many concepts of the region; as there are regional geographers," in R. Hall, "The Geographic Region: A Resume," Annals AAG 24 (1935). The 1933 AAG meeting papers were: P. James, "A Terminology of Regional Description; W. Jones, "Procedures for Regional Investigation, and V. C. Finch, "Written Structure for presenting the Geography of Regions." The 1934 meeting papers were: R. Hall, "The Geographic Region," R. Platt, "A Field Approach to Regions," and G. T. Renner, "The Statistical Approach to Regions."

[47]Brown especially stressed the importance in interpretation. In a discussion of how to study regions, he declared, "I feel that a mere description is not sufficient, but that we should devote considerable time and space frankly to the matter of interpretation." Comment in Annals AAG 27 (1934), p. 110.

[48]R. Brown to R. Dodge, 3 November 1934. RHBP.

[49]R. Brown to G. S. Ford, 13 February 1932. RHBP.

[50]J. R. Whitaker, preface, in J. R. Whitaker and A. E. Parkins, Our Natural Resources and Their Conservation (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1936), p. vii.

[51]Laura was born on 22 June 1932 and Nancy Eleanor had been born on 20 August 1930, in Boulder, Colorado.

[52]"University Professor Here," The Valley Irrigation, 4 August 1932, (no page). RHBP.

[53]R. Brown to Eunice Brown, 15 August 1932. RHBP.

[54]R. Brown, "Belle Fourche Valley and Uplands," Annals AAG 33 (1933): 127.

[55]R. Brown to D. Whittlesey, 16 December 1932; D. Whittlesey to R. Brown, 14 February 1933; D. Whittlesey to R. Brown, 25 May 1933. DWP.

[56]R. Brown to D. Whittlesey, 29 May 1933. DWP.

[57]D. Whittlesey to R. Brown, 5 June 1933. DWP.

[58]S. Dodge to R. Brown, 19 October 1933. RHBP.

[59]R. Brown, "Irrigation in a Dry-Farming Region," The Geographical Review 24 (1934): 596-604.

[60]R. Brown, "A Map Sequence of the Belle Fourche Irrigation Project," The Journal of Geography 35 (1935): 109-19.

[61]Ibid., pp. 110, 111, 112.

[62]R. Brown, "On the Merits of Regional Diagrams in Field Reports," Annals AAG 25 (1935): 75-83.

[63]Ibid.

[64]R. Brown, "A Map Sequence," p. 109.

[65]R. Brown, "Utilization and Conservation," p. 127.

[66]Ibid., p. 132.

[67]He presented the Montana study at the 1933 meeting, and the New Mexico study at the 1935 meeting.

[68]R. Hartshorne to D. Whittlesey, 8 January 1936. DWP.

[69]G. Wrigley to R. Brown, 13 January 1934, and 3 January 1936. GRF.

[70]Brown's remarks at the symposium were reprinted in pp. 159-61, Annals AAG 27 (1937).

[71]D. Whittlesey to C. Sauer, 6 May 1929. DWP.

[72]D. Whittlesey to R. Hartshorne, 6 January 1936.

[73]D. Whittlesey to Eunice Brown, 23 April 1948. DWP.

[74]Research proposal by Brown on "Type Studies of High Plains Irrigation," 18 May 1947. RHBP.

CHAPTER VI

THE ATLANTIC SEABOARD

Plans for a Historical Geography of North America

"I have . . . been considering satisfying an ambition of long standing,"[1] wrote Brown in September, 1934, to John K. Wright, librarian of the American Geographical Society. Brown's ambition was to spend a year pursuing research on the historical geography of North America, and he wanted to begin this work at the Society's library. Brown knew that it was the nation's largest geographical library, containing hundreds of maps, travel accounts, journals, letters and other descriptive materials on North America. The collection was also organized and cataloged from a geographical point of view, a valuable time saver for Brown. It was the ideal place to pursue his research in historical geography.

Brown viewed historical geography as the geography of the past. "Studies in this field," he explained, "are designed to reconstruct the regional geography of antecedent periods."[2] Brown intended to write a book on the historical geography of part of eastern North America. "No treatment of this subject is at present time available," wrote Brown. "Such a book would fill an important gap in an area of knowledge which is primarily geographical, but definitely bordering on history."[3] This plan marked a new research phase for Brown. Previously he had studied small

regions, whose past geography he reconstructed to explain the present. In this proposed research he would study a larger region, and would concentrate on the past, rather than the present.

Brown outlined his sources and methods. First he would locate primary materials such as maps, statistical records, travel diaries, and letters. "Original sources provide the ground work for reconstruction,"[4] he stressed. He would also seek secondary sources, such as published travel accounts, map reproductions, and early geographical writings, and test their validity by comparing them with the primary materials. He would then arrange the materials into a regional geography. Brown wanted to recreate an accurate geography. "The purpose of the project," he stressed, "is to ascertain just what the geographical conditions of the past really were."[5]

He was wary of the accuracy of promotional literature and maps, which geographers often viewed as good descriptive sources. Brown maintained that official explorers sometimes emphasized only certain aspects of a region, thereby presenting a simplified picture. He noted that promoters often deliberately falsified maps and facts to give a more promising view of the region. And too, much of the North American descriptive literature was written by those who had never seen the area. Brown wanted to find accounts of North America that were written by "eye-witness" observers, travelers, and local inhabitants. These accounts, he believed, would be more accurate than the official published literature.[6]

Brown's proposed study of America's past landscapes was a timely one. America--its land, people, traditions and customs, was being "rediscovered."[7] Times were hard during the Depression and New Deal legislation

authorized projects to employ writers and artists. These projects were focused on America's people, history, and geography; and the "common man" rather than the well-known hero, was to be the subject. Artists painted murals of working men and women, and writers wrote of the lives, thoughts, and values of the typical American.[8] One such book, concerning tenant farmers, migratory workers, and waitresses, was a transcript of interviews. Explained the editor, "The first principle has been to let the people tell their own stories. With all our talk about democracy it seems not inappropriate to let the people speak for themselves."[9] Brown's method for his book on historical geography was to be similar. With his emphasis on "eye-witness" reports, he wanted to write the geography of eastern North America, as contemporaries viewed it.[10]

Brown's Interest in History

Historians were also becoming more interested in the typical American. Since the war, the scope of historical scholarship had broadened to include social history, and many younger historians were fascinated with American life and customs. Some wrote books and articles on the cowboy, the missionary, and the immigrant. Three of Brown's acquaintances in the Minnesota history department were working within this mode. Theodore Blegan was undertaking research on the customs and traditions of Norwegian immigrants; Ernest Osgood was studying western cattlemen; and Philip Jordan was becoming well known for his publications in American folklore.[11]

Brown liked to compare history and geography and he maintained that geography was not as fascinating as history. "Geography," he once

suggested to Jordan, "is like a mummy awaiting post mortem, but history is like a living being, ready for a physical examination."[12] Brown thought that if geography were presented in a more human and historical fashion, it would be of greater interest to the general public. As for the historians, Brown wished they would weigh more carefully the importance of geographical conditions. He particularly disliked history books that began with a chapter on the environment, then never again mentioned the land.[13]

Brown read widely in history. Lawrence Wroth's An American Bookshelf and Ernest Oswood's Day of the Cattlemen were two books that particularly impressed him, and influenced his later works.[14] He read history at the University of Minnesota library, and at the state historical society. He was particularly interested in the writings on early Minnesota, and published an article on how territorial promoters viewed Minnesota's climate.[15]

Wrigley, aware of Brown's reading habits, asked him to review recent history books for her journal, which Brown willingly did. By the mid 1930s, he reviewed two or three history volumes a year. This work further sharpened his critical skills, which he later put to good use as editor of the Annals. It also gave him considerable knowledge in history. Brown was a thorough reviewer, for he read far more than the book to be reviewed. When Wrigley asked him to write a critique of C. Q. Qualey's Norwegian Settlement, Brown replied, " I have just completed a preliminary study of it, together with other preceding studies by the same author published in various state journals, and thus feel reasonably well qualified to render a judgment."[16] Brown was modest about his talents and

general knowledge. Once he had trouble preparing a review of some diplomatic history books, and confessed to Wrigley, "I interpret my difficulties to mean that I do not know enough about the area and period of these studies to justify my writing a critical account of them."[17] Though Wrigley generally found his reviews excellent, he often had doubts about his critiques. A typical comment accompanying a review was, "If it should prove unsatisfactory, either through its length or contents, will you let me know so that it may be done over?"[18]

Brown was pleased when the Paullin and Wright Atlas of Historical Geography of the United States was published, and he reviewed it favorably.[19] He commented on the accurate cartography, the attention to sources, and its "distinct scholarly tone." He praised the breadth of the contents, and noted that it portrayed far more than boundary changes and the locations of historical events. "Earlier atlases," he wrote, "have been mainly teaching devices, used by college students, most of whom resort to an atlas even less often than a dictionary (if such a thing is possible)."[20] The Paullin and Wright work, though, could be used by scholars as well "This atlas," Brown concluded, "appears opportunely and fills a long recognized gap in some of the source material of history and geography."[21]

The Historical Geography of Brown's Contemporaries

When Brown outlined his research in historical geography in 1935, the term "historical geography" had different meanings to different people. Nels Bengtson, University of Nebraska, University of Nebraska geographer expressed one viewpoint. Bengtson, advisor to the Prentice-Hall

Publishing Company, was asked by the editors to comment on the "advisability" of Brown's proposed book on the historical geography of North America. "I shall be most happy to endorse any manuscript of which you undertake the preparation," wrote Bengtson to Brown, "but I am wondering just what you mean to include in the term . . . historical geography. Do you contemplate preparing a manuscript on the history of geography or along the lines of geographic influences in history?"[22]

Some of the early professional geographers outlined the latter definition. As geography in the early twentieth century was often viewed as the influence of physiography upon man, so historical geography could be defined as physiography's influence upon history.[23] Geographer Ellen Semple had illustrated this interpretation in her book, American History and Its Geographical Conditions, published in 1903.[24] She wrote of how the course of American history was influenced by the environment--in particular the nation's rivers and mountains. Though some critics acclaimed the book when it was published, by Brown's time, it was viewed as outdated because of its environmentalist approach. Nonetheless, it was a text for historical geography classes, and a second edition was published in 1933. A work of similar design was Albert Brigham's Geographic Influences in American History, also published in 1903.[25] Brigham took a regional approach; he discussed the geographical influence of each physiographic region upon history. Semple's treatment was more historical than geographical, and Brigham's was more geological than historical.

Brown was well acquainted with these two early works. He admired some aspects of both, and used Semple's book for supplementary readings in his historical geography class, but informed students that neither

book was an example of historical geography.[26]

Contemporary to Brown was University of Chicago geographer Harlan Barrows, who taught a well known course in the historical geography of the United States. Barrows, of the generation previous to Brown, had studied with Frederick Jackson Turner and Semple, and was influenced by both. His early historical geography class was based on Semple's book, but by the mid 1930s, he developed his own view of the field. "It is the business of the historical geographer," stated Barrows, "to describe and explain the adjustments which people have made to the natural environment."[27] Barrows' course stressed stages in America's settlement and growth. His students learned the origin and growth of cities, industrial development, and the growth of manufacturing. Barrows was an exceptional teacher; his lectures were clear and well organized, and his teaching style was dynamic. His course was popular at the University of Chicago, and many students revered him. Barrows did not publish books on historical geography, yet he had an important impact as teacher. Many of his students saved their lecture notes, and taught versions of Barrows' course in universities and colleges. During the 1920s and 1930s, Barrows' course was a major source of information in historical geography.[28]

Brown was familiar with Barrows' course, since he had borrowed the lecture notes from J. R. Whitaker, who worked with Barrows at Chicago. At Colorado, Brown taught a historical geography class that stressed stages of growth and westward movement, and his approach may have been inspired by Barrows. By the late 1930s, Brown had developed a distinctly different approach to historical geography, though he nonetheless maintained respect for Barrows' version.[29]

Barrows' course was so well known that many geographers from the University of Chicago viewed historical geography as synonymous with it. Derwent Whittlesey, for example, upon learning that Brown was to write an historical geography, assumed it would be a published version of what Barrows taught.[30]

Whittlesey respected Barrows' work because he believed the historical dimensions of geography were important. When asked if he thought regional geography would benefit by a historical treatment, Whittlesey replied, "I can't think of any study of geography that can be complete if confined to the present time."[31] He maintained that geographers should reach back in time to explain present conditions. Whittlesey had won recognition for his 1929 article, "Sequent Occupance," in which he suggested a method for studying landscape change.[32] He explained to a colleague why he had written the piece: "I have been more and more distressed at the almost exclusive thinking of geography in the present tense in the United States," he explained. "It seemed to me that someone ought to stress the importance of preceeding stages of occupance of the land."[33] Several Chicago doctoral students used Whittlesey's model for their dissertations during the 1930s and '40s, though the approach was less used by the 1950s.[34]

Carl Sauer was a third contemporary of Brown's who advocated the historical approach, though he did not consider himself an historical geographer. Sauer wanted to do things his own way, and wanted to be a leader, not a follower. After receiving his A.B., he enrolled at the University of Chicago to study geography, but found the department not to his liking. "I never wanted to be anything but a geographer," he later

recalled, but I ran away from Chicago after a year and a half because I couldn't stand it anymore."[35] Sauer disagreed with the Chicagoan's "environmentalist interpretation of civilization," and he did not like the emphasis on teaching. "That the best of me should go into kneading the brains of students was an appalling prospect," Sauer maintained. He left Chicago, "drifted" for a while, and then began reading on his own in the Chicago library. Here he discovered the writings of German geographers. Sauer was inspired by these works, and decided he would pursue this kind of geography. He returned to Chicago to complete his degree, and then accepted a teaching job at the University of Michigan. Later, he established work in geography at the University of California at Berkeley and liked to refer to his department as "a small research institute."[37]

Sauer adopted the term "cultural" rather than "human" geography. "My object," he explained, "is not the fearfully inclusive thing, man, but material culture in its areal massiveness."[38] Sauer insisted that geographers must use the historical approach. He argued that early cultures were foundations and must be studied to understand present culture. Sauer was a powerful and influential figure at Berkeley. He had an unusual ability to inspire students, and many became devoted to him. A former Sauer student recalled that Berkeley was "less a department than an individual."[39] Sauer led field expeditions to Mexico and the American Southwest, but he rarely traveled east to attend the meetings of the Association of American Geographers. He kept the Berkeley group isolated, partially because he had a low opinion of most American colleagues; he was especially contemptuous of Barrows' work. He recruited European

geographers for his staff, though he occasionally invited Americans to teach summer courses. Sauer did, however, respect Brown's work.[40] Brown, in turn, respected Sauer, though the two had little professional association.

Though the work of both Brown and Sauer fell within historical geography, how they went about it was quite different. Brown's professional ties were with historians, while Sauer's were with anthropologists. Brown was primarily interested in the historical geography of eastern North America, while Sauer's focus was the western part of the country. Sauer studied the America of the Indians, while Brown studied the nation after European settlement. Brown and Whitaker would often jest that Sauer's course ended with the European settlers arriving in the New World, while Brown's course began at that point. Together, the two essentially covered the whole field, they agreed.[41]

Another basic difference lay in each man's approach to the subject. Sauer insisted that geographers must study the landscape genetically,[42] while Brown maintained that a genetic approach was not essential in historical geography. "Geography functions best in history," wrote Brown, "when relatively limited areas and periods of time are considered. Thus the flow of history must frequently be stopped in order to inspect the relatively static conditions of geography."[43] Though Brown clearly and firmly explained his approach to historical geography, he did not decry others' viewpoints. This was best illustrated years later, when Brown and an editor were discussing a title for Brown's text book on the historical geography of the United States. The editor suggested the title "American Historical Geography," or "Historical Geography of America,"

but Brown rejected these suggestions. "It would be claiming too much," he argued, "especially in view of the various definitions of the field."[44]

Brown's Research in Historical Geography

In 1935 Brown applied for a Social Science Research Council grant to fund his research, and listed Wolfang L. G. Joerg and Whittlesey as references. Joerg, on the American Geographical Society staff, knew Brown's work and thought highly of his younger colleague. He wrote to Brown, "Your plan seems to me of great value both in scope and method, and I have been very glad to support it."[45]

Whittlesey, however, would not endorse Brown's grant application. He first explained to Brown: "Publishers would jump at a book in historical geography and research funds should not be used for a book which can be so easily published and that will command a ready sale. Second," he wrote, "I have no way of knowing that you have the proper equipment to write a book of this sort. It is my own feeling that no one trained in the historic method should embark on such a project as this."[46] Brown, stunned by the reply, showed Hartshorne the letter. Hartshorne wrote to Whittlesey, "For his sake I am hoping that he gets this grant. He takes things hard and the failure to get the fellowship a year or so ago was quite a disappointment . . . I should add that while he takes things hard he does not take them personally."[47] Whittlesey replied to Hartshorne: "I'm sorry if I hurt Brown in finding myself unable to recommend him. Perhaps I'm unduly skittish when I'm on the thin ice of a subject of which I myself haven't mastered." He added, "I know too much about history to have any illusions about it being an easy subject to deal

with in any authoritative way."[48]

Brown was so unhappy with Whittlesey's response that he began to doubt his ability to write a historical geography of North America. He conjectured that perhaps Whittlesey was right, and he did not have the ability to complete this project. He wrote to Whitaker about the situation and confessed his anxiety. His friend replied immediately. "There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that you are thoroughly qualified to write a historical geography," Whitaker insisted. "Of all the men who might undertake it you are the best prepared to do it." He urged, "I am sure you should go on with this. If Whittlesey's action blocks you entirely, I shall feel geography has suffered a genuine loss." He added that he thought Whittlesey's letter was "harsh and needlessly rude."[49] Brown was consoled by Whitaker's letter. A few weeks later, when he received the grant his confidence was renewed.

Relations between Brown and Whittlesey were eased when, some months later, Whittlesey wrote again to Brown. He explained that he had been surprised by Brown's plan to write a historical geography; that he admired the work of Barrows' and did not think it could be duplicated. Brown responded immediately. "I gather my plan caused you some surprise, but I have been pegging away at historical geography for about a decade now and have accumulated a great deal of material." Brown stressed, "What I plan is a very different treatment of the subject, not necessarily any better than that which Barrows has recorded in his class outlines."[50]

Brown and his wife left Minnesota in the summer of 1936 for the year in the east. They visited Brown's family in Ayer and Brown undertook field work in Virginia, arriving at the American Geographical Society

in November. Brown found it refreshing to have a year off from teaching and he enjoyed the daily company of Wrigley, Wright, and the other Society employees. They welcomed him as an "honorary staff member," and he took lunch with them each day at nearby restaurants in New York City.[51]

Brown became acquainted with John Wright during his stay at the Society headquarters. Wright grew up in a literary and scholarly environment: His mother was a well-known novelist and his father was a Harvard professor and dean. Family friends and neighbors were the prominent academics of the early 1900s. Across the street lived William Morris Davis, who fascinated young Wright with his detailed landform block drawings. Davis' influence, coupled with a trip to Europe, led young Wright to major in geography at Harvard. For his graduate work, though, Wright chose history. At that time, geography was closely allied with geology, and Wright was more interested in studying "man," than "nature-minus-man."[52] He resolved, however to make his history geographical, and he published articles on the history of geographical knowledge, discovery and exploration, and cartography. Upon receiving his doctorate, Wright joined the American Geographical Society staff. His work there included publishing a bibliography on geography, and editing Paullin's Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States.[53]

Brown was well acquainted with Wright's work; in particular he admired Wright's chapter in New England's Prospect: 1933.[54] With allied interests--Brown's in historical geography, and Wright's in the history of geography--they became good friends. They discussed history and geography and found each others' ideas stimulating. Wright became the American Geographical Society's director in 1938, and he was pleased to

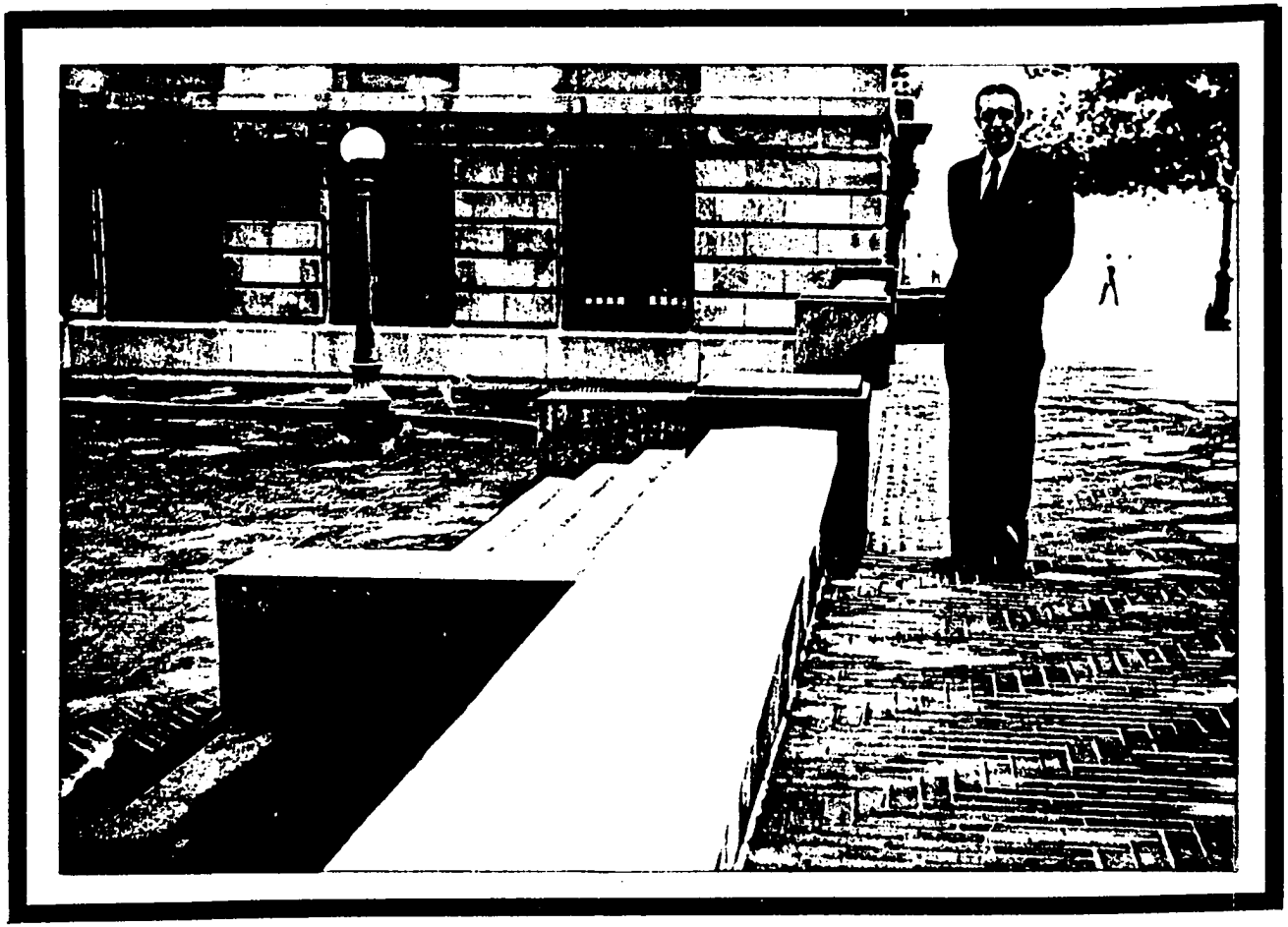


Fig. 9. Ralph Hall Brown outside the American Geographical Society Building, New York, N.Y., 1937

(courtesy of G. Burton Brown)

oversee the editing of Brown's first book. Though they saw little of each other after Brown's year in New York, they remained good friends. Wright recalled of Brown, "He was a gentleman and a gentlescholar, if I may coin such a term." He elaborated: "[Brown's] opinions, though firmly held, were so courteously expressed as not to grate on the nerves of either historians or geographers . . . but rather to make them wish to emulate him in studies . . . that he so ably pursued and so appealingly presented."[55]

That spring, Brown left the Society to pursue more research at Columbia, the New York Public Library, the Massachusetts Historical Society, and Harvard's Widener Library. It had been a successful year, and Brown had the needed materials to begin the manuscript.

Brown's first task was to find a North American region and an era for which there were enough contemporary materials to reconstruct a complete regional geography. After initial study at the Society's library, he discovered much contemporary material on the Atlantic Seaboard--a regional term commonly used in the mid 1700s. This material on the Seaboard was written during the period between 1790 and 1810, and although the authors did not view themselves as geographers, they nonetheless had written accurate and careful descriptions of their country's geography.[56] "The America of that period seems well worth knowing," Brown opined. "For one thing, certain men who lived there had much to say about their country, and they said it very well indeed."[57] Because of the abundance of this material, Brown decided to recreate the regional geography of the Atlantic Seaboard during 1790-1810.

Publications

Upon return to Minnesota, Brown wrote a methodological article on historical geography.[58] Defining it as "the geography of the past," Brown noted that few American geographers have done work in this branch of the discipline. He suggested that one reason was that they could not find enough materials to recreate a region's past geography. A second reason, he continued, could be that geographers assumed that historical geography would involve a time sequence, and the result might be a history, rather than a geography. Brown addressed the last issue by quoting Hettner: "Hettner was perhaps the first to point out that 'for geography the time is, in general, a minor matter . . . geography does not follow the sequence in time as such . . . it takes a limited cross section through reality at one particular point in time.'"[59]

On the issue of materials to recreate a past geography, Brown launched into a 25 page discussion on the sources he found for the seaboard study. He explained how he evaluated them for accuracy, and how he would use them to recreate the past geography of the Atlantic Seaboard. Brown sent the manuscript to Whittlesey, who responded: "I am much impressed with your paper. What you have done is to analyze the whole process of historical geography and to put into the hands of students the technique of doing a first class job."[60] Whittlesey published Brown's article in the September 1938 Annals.

In a footnote to the article, Brown explained that this was a "preliminary" to a monograph on the geography of the Atlantic Seaboard in the early 1800s. Wrigley was impressed by the article and asked Brown about

the forthcoming study. Brown had been writing the monograph since October 1937 and it was taking him much longer to complete than he had anticipated. He confessed his struggles to Wrigley. "My promise of a later, fuller treatment was a bold one indeed," he wrote. "I find that I have written large parts of it only to feel that it seemed quite artificial and presumably uninteresting to the reader. Then I would start over again and wind up in no better position." Brown continued, "Finally last summer I allowed my imagination full play and recast the thing along wholly different lines--but I will spare you an account of its present form."[61]

The Atlantic Seaboard geography took 18 months to complete.[62] In studying published geographies, he took pains to discover the authors' sources. This meant extra research trips for more manuscript study, which Brown always insisted on doing himself. "Work of this kind can not safely be delegated to assistants," he stressed.[63] Writing did not come easily to Brown. It was a struggle, for he was a perfectionist and took great pains with each sentence. When Whitaker once praised Brown's writing, Brown responded, "Let me pause to blush. If the final product has merit, it is because each page is done six or seven times, and Eunice has done the editing."[64]

Brown completed the book in the spring of 1939, and tentatively titled it The Atlantic Seaboard at the Opening of the Nineteenth Century: A Historical Geography.[65] A second title page indicated that the work had been "written" by Thomas Pownall Keystone, an imaginary, well-traveled and well-read nineteenth century Philadelphian, who owned a geographical library larger than Thomas Jefferson's. The imaginary author, whose

interests included natural science and philosophy, travel, and customs of his native land, believed there was a need for a geographical account of America. Using materials and maps from his personal library, Keystone "prepared" this "concise geographical view of the inhabited parts of Eastern America."[66] The book described the land, the people and their occupations and trade and commerce in the early 1800s. It also offered regional descriptions of parts of the Seaboard. Contemporary maps and pictures and Eunice Brown's period portraits enhanced the book.

Brown sent the manuscript to Bengtson in April, 1939, and reminded him of their earlier correspondence. "This work has no precedent as to major thesis or form of presentation," wrote Brown to Bengtson, "I have attempted to construct an informative and interesting treatment of the past geography of a large section of eastern North America." Brown added, "The manuscript is free from mechanical shortcomings, and if there are other faults it is not because I have not put my very best into it."[67]

Bengtson undoubtedly liked the work and recommended that Prentice-Hall publish it. Brown was unable to make acceptable arrangements with the firm's editors, however, and decided to look for another publisher.[68] That summer, Whitaker and his family visited the Browns. Whitaker had editorial experience, and Brown--trusting his friend's judgment--asked him to read the manuscript. Whitaker liked it, and suggested that Brown send it to the American Geographical Society for publication.[69]

In the fall of 1939, Brown sent it to Wright, who was by then the Society's director. He soon received good news. "Our publications Committee and the Chairman reported favorably and even enthusiastically on it,"[70] Wright replied. The committee unanimously endorsed its publication,

but the acceptance was contingent upon receiving donations. At present they did not have publication funds. "You may well wish to look for another publisher," Wright added, "but if not we should like to keep the manuscript here in the hope that we may be able to use it."[71] Brown was pleased with the acceptance. "I shall be glad to leave the work in your hands,"[72] he replied to Wright. The book--published four years later as Mirror for Americans: Likeness of the Eastern Seaboard, 1810--was an outstanding success, and critics acclaimed it.

After the acceptance of the Atlantic Seaboard study, Brown wanted to continue research in historical geography. "The next stage of my program," he explained in a grant request, "logically extends to the eastern interior. Specifically, the project is to reconstruct the geography of the Northwest Territory area during the period extending from 1820-1830."[73] As a companion book to the seaboard study, this too would be a past regional geography, from sources written by "trustworthy contemporary observers."[74] After a preliminary study of material on the Northwest Territory Brown found that there was much written about the region between 1820 and 1830. He requested travel funds to study at Michigan and Ohio libraries and archives. Brown explained, "Many collections at these and other institutions may be expected to yield original and rare maps, manuscripts of travels, diaries emigrant guide books and gazeteers."[75] He received the grant, and did this research during the summers of 1940 and 1941.

Even while planning his second book, Brown utilized materials from the seaboard research. He was particularly interested in Jedidiah Morse's books. Morse was well known for his many American geographies, published

in the later 1700s and early 1800s. Most biographers praised these volumes, but no geographer had ever analyzed them. Brown wanted to use these accounts in his seaboard study, and needed to determine their accuracy. He spent a summer examining the Morse papers, and traced the sources Morse had used. Brown discovered that the books contained little original material; moreover, some of Morse's materials and facts were out of date. Brown decided to write an essay on the Morse geographies. He explained, "The importance of this . . . may be appreciated when it is known that Morse is often referred to as 'the father of American geography.'"[76]

Brown sent the essay to Whittlesey and explained, "It was not written for the professional geographer, but for those who have some interest in Morse or early geographical works. It pretends to correct some of the errors which have crept into earlier critiques of his works."[77] Whittlesey was pleased with the piece and informed Brown he would publish it in the Annals. "I can't find anybody who dislikes your JEDIDIAH MORSE," he wrote to Brown. "Quite the contrary. Critics are keen about it and so am I." He praised, "It has the delightful flavor that only a New Englander could give it, and it captures the spirit of its period so delicately that it seems to me literature."[78] The essay appeared in the September 1941 Annals,[79] and Brown received numerous letters of Commendation from geographers and others. Commended Glen Trewartha, "I think you are to be congratulated on cultivating a field which has been practically ignored by American geographers." Ellsworth Huntington wrote, "I thank you for giving us this interesting study of one of our greatest predecessors in geography." Praised Vernon Kinietz, an anthropologist, "I was

very interested in reading about his career as a geographical author and compiler and I think you wrote an excellent biographical sketch too." Another tribute came from E. G. Swem, librarian at the College of William and Mary library: "It will be placed in our library collection and properly cataloged. . . . It is a very interesting sketch and may I add a most thorough one."[80]

By 1941, Brown had accomplished much work in historical geography. One book was accepted for publication, and he had begun research on a second. He had published seven articles on the history of geography, and a methodological piece on historical geography.[81] Marking his professional success in 1939 was a promotion to associate professor,[82] and that same year his views on historical geography were cited in Richard Hartshorne's book, The Nature of Geography.[83] This book -- defining the scope of geography as the interpretation and description of unique areas of the world--was to have a powerful impact on the next generation of geographers.[84] An additional mark of professional esteem came to Brown in 1941--he was chosen secretary of the Association.[85]



Fig. 10. The Brown Family at 1469 Hythe Street, St. Paul, Minnesota August, 1938. left to right: Laura, Nancy, Eunice, Ralph

(courtesy of G. Burton Brown)

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

[1]R. H. Brown to J. K. Wright, 2 September 1934. RHB.

[2]R. H. Brown, "A Description of the Project," n.d., p. 1. RHBP.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., p. 4.

[6]Ibid., p. 3.

[7]Richard Pells discusses "the rediscovery of America" in Radical Visions and American Dreams (New York: Harper and Row, 1973); and Warren Susman discusses the arts and writing of this era in Culture and Commitment 1929-1945 (New York: George Braziller, 1973).

[8]These projects are described in Arthur Ekrick, Ideologies and Utopias: The Impact of the New Deal on American Thought (Chicago: Quadrangel Books, 1969), and a contemporary account is Robert Cantwell, "America and the Writers Project," New Republic 98 (April 1939): 323-25.

[9]W. T. Couch, ed., These Are Our Lives (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1939).

[10]In the preface to his published book, Brown acknowledged the many individuals who wrote of their country in 1810. He added, "My responsibility with respect to much of their data . . . is not unlike that of an editor . . . to whom many persons have submitted observations on a common theme." R. Brown, Mirror for Americans: Likeness of the Eastern Seaboard, 1810 (New York: American Geographical Society, 1940: reprint edition, New York: DaCappo Press, 1968), p. ix.

[11]This trend in history is discussed in John Higham, History: Professional Scholarship in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), and in C. Alexander, Nationalism in American Thought, 1930-1945 (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1969). Theodore Blegan, whom Brown knew well, believed in the importance of what he called "grass roots history." Blegan wrote, "The pivot of history is not the uncommon, but the usual, and the makers of history are 'the people, yes'," in Grass Roots History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1947). Jordan's many

publications included articles and books on folk music and folk medicine. He was also interested in geography and asked Brown to supervise the cartography for his book on the National Road. P. Jordan, The National Road (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1948).

[12]P. Jordan to L. Miles, 5 July 1978, p. 2.

[13]Ibid.

[14]L. Wroth, An American Bookshelf, 1775 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), Ernest Osgood, Day of the Cattleman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1929). Wroth examined the literature of the mid 1700s, by an inspection of the library of James Loveday, an imaginary Philadelphian, and Brown used a similar technique in his Mirror for Americans. Wroth commended Brown on the publication of Mirror, and Brown replied, "As creator of a learned Philadelphian who made important observations in 1775, you pointed the way for handling geographical materials at a later period." As for the second book, Brown wanted to call his text in historical geography, "Days of American Settlement: An Approach to Historical Geography." Brown explained to his editor "To some degree, the title is an adaption of the successful and highly regarded Day of the Cattleman, by Ernest Osgood, who is on the history staff here." Brown to Wroth, 3 June 1943: R. H. Brown to Emerson Brown, 12 January 1947. RHBP.

[15]R. H. Brown, "Fact and Fancy in Early Accounts of Minnesota's Climate," Minnesota History 17 (September 1938): 243-61.

[16]R. H. Brown to G. Wrigley, 14 June 1938. GRF.

[17]R. H. Brown to G. Wrigley, 2 April 1940. GRF.

[18]R. H. Brown to G. Wrigley, 10 July 1939. GRF.

[19]Charles O. Paullin, Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States, ed. John K. Wright (Carnegie Institute of Washington and the American Geographical Society, 1932).

[20]Brown reviewed the atlas in The Journal of Geography 33 (1933): 177-178. He regularly reviewed books for the Journal as well as the Review.

[21]Ibid.

[22]N. Bengtson to R. H. Brown, 31 October 1935. RHBP.

[23]In 1910, Walter Tower suggested historical geography could be defined as "the study of the relations of the earth to the development of human civilizations," in "Scientific Geography: The Relation of its Contents to its subdivision," Bulletin of the American Geographical Society 42 (1910): 828. Four years later, in the Roorbach survey, six

geographers mentioned the importance of studying the "geographical factor in history," G. B. Roorbach, "The Trend of Modern Geography," Bulletin of the American Geographical Society 41 (1914): 813. As the Bengtson letter illustrates, even in the 1930s, some geographers still held this viewpoint on the goals of historical geography.

[24]Ellen Semple, American History and its Geographic Conditions (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903). The book was revised in collaboration with Clarence Jones in 1933. Frederick J. Turner praised some aspects of her book, but mentioned that it was "an introductory treatise upon a subject that must at some time be handled more deeply." F. J. Turner, "Geographical Interpretations of American History," The Journal of Geography 4 (1905): 34-37. Other historians did not agree with her interpretation; see F. J. Turner, "Report on the Conference of the Relations of Geography and History," Annual Report of the American Historical Association 1 (1905): 34-37.

[25]Albert F. Brigham, Geographical Influences in American History (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1903) Brigham had long been interested in the overlap between the two disciplines, and wrote, "No line can be drawn as to the actual division of labor. Either geographer or historian may wander across the boundary according to bent or training . . . a large group of themes is mediate, offering ample room for geographer and historian to enrich each other's labor, A. Brigham, "Notes," The Journal of Geography 8 (1910), p. 212. Turner praised Brigham's book in the review cited in note 2, and added "it admirably supplements and checks the work of Miss Semple."

[26]In his class on "Historical Geography of North America," Brown told his students that historical geography is "a study of the past periods of the United States." He lectured, "It is NOT a study of the history of geography, and it is NOT the study of geographic influences in American history. In this connection see [Semple's] American History and its Geographic Influences and [Brigham's] Geographic Influences in American History."

[27]Harlan Barrows, Lectures on the Historical Geography of the United States, ed., W. Koelsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Printing Department, 1962), p. 6.

[28]J. R. Whitaker to W. Koelsch, 1 January 1968, p. 2; J. R. Whitaker, "Historical Geography in School and College," Peabody Journal of Education 27 (1949-50): 3,4.

[29]Brown wrote to Whittlesey, "I, too, have a very high regard for Barrows' work in that field [historical geography]." R. Brown to D. Whittlesey, 2 April 1936. DWP.

[30]D. Whittlesey to R. Brown 15 February 1936. DWP.

[31]D. Whittlesey to A. Clark, 18 February 1949. DWP.

[32]D. Whittlesey, "Sequent Occupance."

[33]D. Whittlesey to C. Sauer, 3 October 1929. DWP.

[34]Marvin Mikesell, "The Rise and Decline of Sequent Occupance: A Chapter in the History of American Geography," pp. 149-69 in D. Lowenthal and M. Bowden (eds.) Geographies of the Mind (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[35]C. Sauer to D. Whittlesey, 23 March 1929. DWP.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid.

[38]C. Sauer to D. Whittlesey, 25 September 1929. DWP.

[39]James J. Parsons, "The Later Sauer Years," Annals AAG 69 (March 1979): 9.

[40]John Leighly, "Drifting Into Geography in the Twenties," Annals AAG 69 (March 1979): 7; J. Leighly to L. Miles, 26 April 1978, and 24 August 1978.

[41]J. R. Whitaker to W. Koelsch, 2 December 1971, p. 2.

[42]C. Sauer, "Cultural Geography," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, E. Seligman and A. Johnson (eds.) (New York: MacMillan Co., 1931): 623.

[43]R. Brown, "The Treatment of Geographic Knowledge and Understanding in History Courses," The Journal of Geography 47 (March 1948): 104.

[44]R. H. Brown to Emerson Brown, 12 January 1947. RHBP.

[45]W. L. G. Joerg to R. Brown, 31 January 1936. RHBP.

[46]D. Whittlesey to R. H. Brown, 15 February 1936. DWP.

[47]R. Hartshorne to D. Whittlesey, 19 February 1936. DWP.

[48]D. Whittlesey to R. Hartshorne, 28 February 1936. DWP.

[49]J. R. Whitaker to R. Brown, 19 February 1936. RHBP.

[50]R. Brown to D. Whittlesey, 2 April 1936. DWP.

[51]Transcript, Brown Room, p. 3.

[52]John K. Wright, Human Nature in Geography (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 2.

[53]M. J. Bowden, "John Kirtland Wright, 1891-1969," pp. 304-313, in Robert Dickinson, Regional Concept: The Anglo-American Leaders (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976).

[54]John K. Wright, "The Changing Geography of New England," pp. 59-76 in J. K. Wright (ed.) New England's Prospect: 1933 (New York: American Geographical Society, 1933).

[55]Transcript, Brown Room, p. 3.

[56]R. H. Brown to G. Vold, 1 April 1938. RHBP.

[57]R. H. Brown, Mirror, p. ix.

[58]R. H. Brown, "Materials Bearing Upon the Geography of the Atlantic Seaboard, 1790-1810," Annals, AAG 28 (September 1938): 201-31.

[59]R. H. Brown, "Materials," p. 29. Brown mentioned in the citation to the Hettner quote that his translation was "authenticated by R. Hartshorne."

[60]D. Whittlesey to R. Brown, 1 March 1938. DWP.

[61]R. Brown to G. Wrigley, 14 October 1938. GRF.

[62]R. Brown to N. Bengtson, 5 April 1939. RHBP.

[63]R. Brown to W. Miller, 2 February 1939. RHBP.

[64]J. R. Whitaker to R. H. Brown, 22 June 1943; R. H. Brown to J. R. Whitaker, 26 June 1943. RHBP.

[65]R. Brown to W. Miller, 14 March 1940. RHBP.

[66]R. H. Brown, Mirror, p. xxxii.

[67]R. H. Brown to N. Bengtson, 15 April 1939. RHBP.

[68]I was unable to find further correspondence between Brown and Bengtson on the book.

[69]J. R. Whitaker to W. Koelsch, 2 December 1971.

[70]J. K. Wright to R. Brown, 20 October, 1939. RHBP.

[71]Ibid.

[72]R. H. Brown to J. K. Wright, 7 November 1939. RHBP.

[73]R. H. Brown to W. Miller, 14 March 1940. RHBP.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Ibid., p. 2.

[76]R. Brown to W. Miller, 28 February 1939. RHBP.

[77]R. H. Brown to D. Whittlesey, 18 September 1941. DWP.

[78]D. Whittlesey to R. Brown, 22 January 1941. DWP.

[79]R. Brown, "The American Geographies of Jedidiah Morse," Annals AAG 31 (September 1941): 145-217.

[80]G. Trewartha to R. Brown, 12 November 1941; E. Huntington to R. Brown, 8 October 1941; V. Kinietz to R. Brown, 12 November 1941; E. G. Swem to R. Brown, 11 November 1941. RHBP.

[81]The methodological article was "Materials" (cited in note 58). The articles on the history of geography were "Fact and Fancy" (note 15); "The American Geographies" (note 79); R. Brown, "The DeBrahm Charts of the Atlantic Ocean, 1772-1776," The Geographical Review 28 (January 1938): 124-132; R. Brown, "Governor Drayton's Contributions to Geography," South Carolina Historical and Geneological Magazine 39 (April 1938): 68-73; R. Brown, "The First Century of Meteorological Data in America," Monthly Weather Review 68 (April 1940): 130-181; R. Brown, "Early Maps of the United States," The Geographical Review 30 (July 1940): 471-79; R. Brown, "St. George Tucker vs. Jedidiah Morse on the Subject of Williamsburg," William and Mary College Quarterly 20 (October 1940): 487-491.

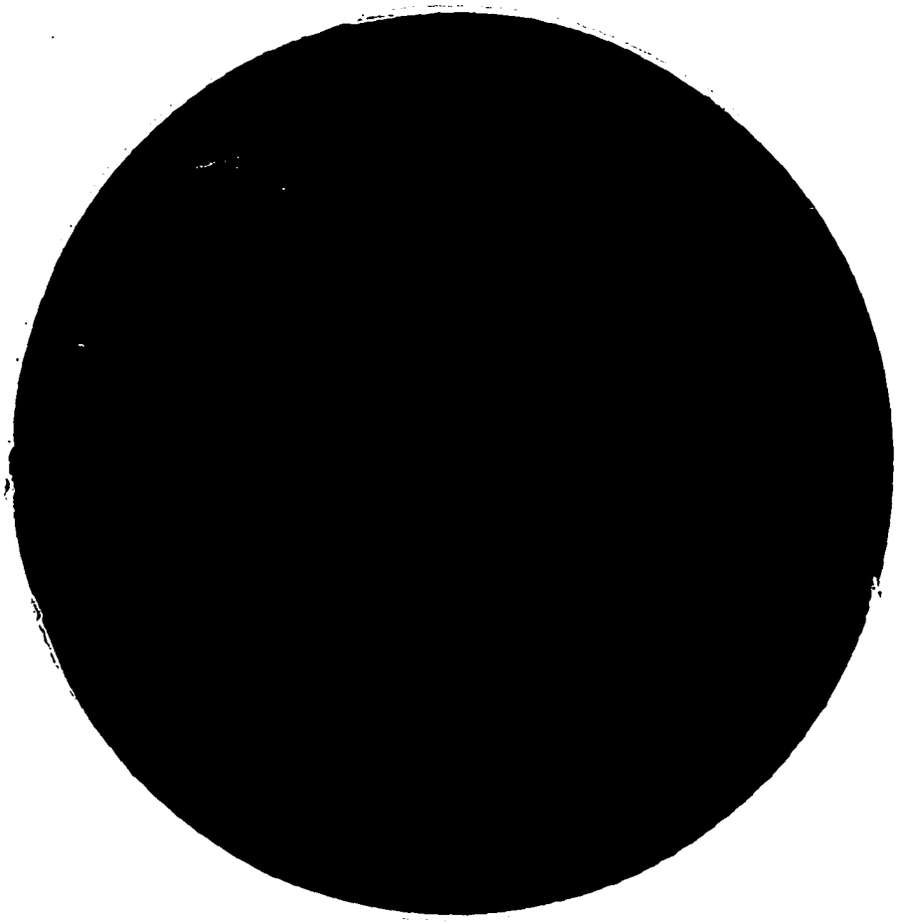
[82]D. Brown to L. Miles, 31 October 1980.

[83]R. Hartshorne, The Nature of Geography (Lancaster, PA: Association of American Geographers, 1939, reprint edition, 1961), pp. 186-87. The book was originally published in two issues of the Annals, AAG, vol. 29, September and October 1939. Hartshorne discussed how he came to write Nature in R. Hartshorne, "Notes Toward a Bibliobiography of The Nature of Geography" Annals AAG 69 (March 1979): 63-76.

"Geography," wrote Hartshorne, in The Nature of Geography, "is therefore true to its name; it studies the world, seeking to describe and to interpret the differences among its different parts, as seen at any one time, commonly the present." (p. 460) Hartshorne viewed historical geography as a combination of the points of view of history and geography, "Time, in itself, is not a factor in geography," Hartshorne explained, "Geography studies the integration of phenomena in areas under the assumption of fixed time. [But this] does not limit geography to the present. [While geography can] refer to a cross section through the present, we may use the term 'historical geography' for an exactly similar cross section through any previous point in time." (p. 184) This was the method for historical geography that Brown outlined in "Materials" and which Hartshorne cited in the book.

[84]In a history of American geography William Pattison viewed Hartshorne's book as having so powerful an impact on geographers, that he termed the years 1940-1955 as "The Hartshorne Years." W. Pattison, "Interlude of Orthodoxy," Chapter 4 in "The Geographers Way," unpublished manuscript.

[85]P. James to R. Brown, 25 September 1941. RHBP.



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[85]P. James to R. Brown, 25 September 1941. RHBP.

CHAPTER VII

MINNEAPOLIS-WASHINGTON TIES

Secretary of the Association

Since the secretary had the major responsibility for running the Association of American Geographers, he was its most important officer. In 1941 Preston James chose Brown to succeed him as secretary, because he trusted Brown to do a conscientious job.[1] Indeed, Brown discharged his duties so well that he was reappointed for the next three years. Brown was highly respected by most of his colleagues and many Association members were pleased with the new appointment. Stanley Dodge wrote to Brown, "So far as I have had comments on your elevation, I find 100% enthusiasm and 100% belief that you will do an excellent job."[2]

The position of secretary, though powerful, was time consuming. Brown was now in charge of all official Association correspondence. He also needed to organize two meetings for each year; the meeting of the councilors and the annual meeting which all members attended. Despite the work involved, the Association had no provision for clerical help for the secretary. Traditionally the departmental secretary at the University where the Association secretary taught, assumed this burden. At Minnesota, however, the secretary was already overworked, and Brown had to do much of the typing himself. The cost of running the Association was another problem. Preston James explained to Brown that he was supposed to receive $250 for printing, stationery, and mailing costs, but

James confessed that he might not be able to give Brown that much. James apologized, "When Frank Williams turned the job over to me he was in debt on his next year's appropriation to the tune of $100. I only received $150 the first year, and have not been able to break even since."[3]

One serious problem Brown faced upon taking office was the increasing dissent among the membership on the matter of the Association's growth. The membership was only 167 in 1941, though the number of geographers in the country had greatly increased during the past decade.[4] Two other organizations filled the needs of some of the nation's geographers. Those with a general interest in geography, exploration, and travel joined the American Geographical Society; and school teachers participated in the activities of the National Council of Geography Teachers.[5] This still left out many geographers with doctorates who wanted to participate in professional activities. Some of the outsiders were too young to have published much. Others, university and college professors, spent their time teaching rather than research. A third group, greatly enlarged during the war, worked for the government. The work of these geographers was, however, often confidential and they were unable to publish. Others had publications, but not in their own names. Many of these geographers were impatient with the Association's slow growth and resented what they viewed as the group's elitist policies.[6] While some members sympathised and wanted a more liberal membership others were adament that membership criteria not be changed. Brown, as official spokesman, had to handle these criticisms and complaints, which increased during the war.

He faced additional stress as the wartime secretary. Twice there was uncertainty as to whether any meetings could be held. In 1942 and 1944 the Director of the Office of Defense Transportation recommended that all scientific societies cancel their annual meetings. Military requirements were more important and the railroads needed to be cleared of excess traffic. These recommendations later became requests and twice Brown went to the trouble of planning annual meetings only to have them cancelled a month before they were to be held. Twice, also, the Council could not meet, and he had to handle the Association's business entirely by mail.[7]

Geographers in the War

With their special skills, geographers had much to contribute to the war effort. Preston James, like many academic geographers, took a leave of absence to work in Washington, D.C. He wrote to Brown in 1941, "There are a great many opportunities opening up . . . for geographic work, and many members of the profession have already been brought to Washington."[8] At the time, there were 40 geographers working in the nation's capital; by 1943 the number had increased to 300.[9] They worked in various capacities, including making detailed regional surveys, preparing handbooks on regions, drawing maps, evaluating cartographic and statistical data, and interpreting aerial photographs.[10] J. R. Whittaker was a specialist in African matters in the military intelligence, Richard Hartshorne was chief of the Office of Strategic Services, and James was chief of the Latin American Section of the Office of Strategic Services. Other Association leaders had to retire from offices because of war duties.

Whittlesey resigned as Annals editor to undertake war related research on Africa and political geography, and Councilor Robert Hall resigned for overseas military duty.

Brown had two Washington job offers, both at a higher pay than his then current salary. In 1942 Sidmon Poole asked Brown to join the military intelligence as a senior geographer, but Brown politely declined the offer. He explained to Poole that he had little first-hand knowledge of foreign areas, and his research was on academic rather than practical matters. He did not see how he could be of service, and told Poole that he was not "a worthy candidate for the position." He added soberly, "I trust this will not reflect a lack of patriotism on my part."[11] A year later, Meredith Burrill asked Brown to take the position of chief of the Research Division, U.S. Board of Geographical Names. Again, Brown declined the position, though this time it was because of extra teaching duties at Minnesota. Brown explained that he would probably not be granted a leave of absence.[12] As Brown saw many of his colleagues temporarily leave the academic world, he felt ambiguous about his role in the nation's defense. "Sometimes I wish I could be off in some part of the world exploring a boundary or advising government regarding a boundary line problems," he reflected, "but mine seems to be the lot of routine passage from one class to another with little credit attached to it either here, or presumably in the hereafter."[13]

Activities at the University of Minnesota

The war interrupted normal academic routines at the University of Minnesota. Hundreds of students, staff, and faculty left the campus to

join the services or work in the war effort, but those who stayed behind also worked toward national defense. University President Walter Coffey proclaimed in a radio broadcast, "When the war was declared I wrote a letter to Governor Stassen . . . I told him that the University of Minnesota stood ready to do everything a university should or could do in contributing to the national defense."[14] One of Coffey's first actions was to form a University Defense Committee, which sponsored a lecture series. University geographers, historians, political scientists, and economists gave talks on the politics, attitudes, motives, and resources of the Allied and Axis powers. Sam Dicken lectured on Japan's raw materials and manufacturing, and Brown spoke on the role of Latin America in the war. Other activities at the university were the establishment of a War Information Center, and a War Reference room in the university library.[15]

Most important was the establishment of the Army Specialized Training Program on campus. When the United States entered the war, the draft age was lowered to 18, and to insure a flow of well trained soldiers, the government established a program for soldiers to be housed and trained on college campuses. They would be on active duty, and would prepare for future duty by learning sciences, mathematics, geography, engineering, and languages.

Minnesota was one of 200 American universities that signed government contracts to house and train soldiers.[16] Since Hartshorne had left the university, and Davis was busy with administrative matters, Brown and Dicken had to assume the extra assignments. Brown not only taught, but trained other professors to teach geography.[17] The instructors were

provided with standardized texts, but Brown did not like the geography course outlines. He complained that the manuals "lacked imagination," and were "superficial,"[18] and reorganized the courses. He taught the pre-meteorological students map study and analysis, geomorphology, and climatology; and taught the preprofessionals, map study, landforms, and the regional geography of some of the combat zones. Not all the geography instructors changed the course content, and Brown was unhappy with the way regional geography was being taught. "[Students] have been taking up the continents one by one, learning about them such facts as they could compile from the Britannica,"[19] he complained. He compared the geography instruction to some of the other Minnesota ASTP courses. Brown deplored, "In physics they are concerned with the most advanced problems, and in mathematics they are in vector analysis. . . . My temperature . . . shoots up at the contemplation of this contrast in the dignity of geographical study as compared with the others."[20] These classes were a burden on Brown's time; they often met on Saturdays, through the summer, and were not cancelled on holidays. Yet Brown later remarked that the teaching was "an interesting experience," and commended the young soldiers as being "as fine a group of college students as to be found anywhere."[21]

Brown retained his normal teaching load during the war years, this included "Historical Geography of North America," "Climatology," "Latin America," "Human Geography," and sections of "Geography of the World War Theaters."[22] Even with this heavy teaching load, he tried to put much effort into his classes. He had acquired a good reputation among students and would sometimes receive letters expressing appreciation by a

former student.[23] Brown was interested in teaching techniques such as tests, and had published an article urging geographers to make more use of maps and pictures in their examinations.[24] He thought however, that the faculty often overemphasized final examinations, which taught students to study intensively at the last minute, rather than learn the material gradually during the semester. Once, Minnesota officials gave the students a two day study period before finals, and Brown disapproved of this procedure. He wrote to the dean that the practice stressed the importance of examinations. "This procedure is obviously not a preparation for life work in the professions or in business," noted Brown, "wherein it is the day-to-day output that really counts."[25]

Research and Publications

Though Brown's normal routine of summer research was interrupted, he still attempted to pursue his research. He had come across some of Thomas Jefferson's geographical writings during his Atlantic Seaboard research, and again in his research for the Northwest Territory geography. He was interested in Jefferson's views of the Ohio Territory climate which, though untrue, were accepted by contemporary scientists. Brown began work on an article entitled, "The story of a Jefferson Pronouncement." He wrote to Wrigley about the piece: "I hope to show that Mr. Jefferson was human enough to make mistakes, but also, in tribute to him . . . to show how his work was revered by contemporary scientists."[26] Brown did not complete this piece, but soon outlined a research project entitled, "Jefferson's Geographical Performance." He planned to evaluate Jefferson's writings in an essay similar to the Morse study.[27] Brown

applied for and received a grant. He published "Jefferson's Notes on Virginia," but had no more time to continue work on Jefferson.[28]

In 1942, Wright wrote to Brown that the Atlantic Seaboard Study could now be edited and published; three wealthy patrons of the American Geographcial Society had contributed $4,000.[29] Elizabeth Platt, the Society's librarian, edited the book. She was a conscientious and careful editor, and "lived and breathed the book" for months.[30] She wanted to make it an authentic period piece, from the illustrations to the paper and typography. Wrigley was impressed by Platt's devotion to the project, and told Brown, "She ransacked the library for models and covered all phases thoroughly with the printer down to that period for the running heads!"[31]

The book, entitled Mirror for Americans: Likeness of the Eastern Seaboard, 1810 was published in 1943, and Wrigley sent Brown the first copy. "It is a lovely book, the loveliest we have ever published," she exclaimed. "Some of the illustrations are exquisite in reproduction . . . and isn't the jacket jolly and curiosity provoking?"[32] With these compliments, she had sad news to tell. Platt could not see the book because she was in the hospital, about to have an eye operation. Brown immediately assumed that the eye problem was due to overstrain from editing his book, and his pleasure at the complete work was considerably diminished. He felt more saddened and guilty, when he learned that she had died from the operation. He continued to blame himself, though Wrigley and Wright assured him that the editing had nothing to do with the eye problem.[33]

The book was a great success. "I think you have done a perfectly marvellous job," praised Preston James.[34] Wrote Wallace Atwood, "I opened the book at 12 midnight after coming home from the office, and didn't set it down till about 1:30. . . . It is a fascinating book."[35] Brown sent a copy of the book to Lawrence Wroth, whom he thanked for the idea of creating Thomas Keystone. Brown added, "However faulty the final product may be, the writing of it was an interesting experience."[36] Wroth praised the book, as he replied, "We now have two Philadelphians who have attained distinction without having had existence."[37] Reviewers in geography and history journals lauded the work. Roderick Peattie called it "a milestone in American Geographical Literature."[38] A reviewer for the Canadian Geographical Journal pronounced it "thoroughly readable and instructive."[39] Woodrow Borah termed the book "admirable and provocative," in his review in the William and Mary Quarterly.[40] Nelson Russell, in a review for the Mississippi Valley Historical Review, wrote, "This work is an achievement of the first rank; indeed it is a pioneer work in the field of historical geography."[41] Long after it was published, Wrigley remarked to Brown, "It has gotten the most consistently nice reviews of anything we have ever published."[42]

Plans for a Textbook

Brown's next planned book was the historical geography of the Northwest Territory.[43] His extra teaching duties and work as secretary had slowed his normal productive pace, but he planned to complete the research and begin writing after the war was over. As it turned out, he did not write this as a separate book. Shortly after Mirror for Americans was

published, Whitaker, who was the geographical editor for the Harcourt Brace Publishing Company, wrote to Brown. He planned to edit a series of textbooks, and wanted Brown to do one on the historical geography of the United States. "My intense interest in this project," he explained, "is based on my conviction that here is a very great need. The need is all the greater now that Barrows is out of the picture." He added, "The close of the war would be a good time of the appearance of such a book." Whitaker urged Brown to take on this job: "You can write in beautiful prose, your scholarship is above reproach . . . and you can write in a manner acceptable to historians as well as geographers."[44]

Brown had intended to write an historical geography text someday. Indeed, some 16 years earlier he and Whitaker had discussed this; Brown would write it, Whitaker would edit it.[45] Brown did not intend to write a text this soon; and he had already planned as his next book the Northwest Territory geography. Nonetheless, he reflected that this was a good time: a publisher was interested, and Whitaker was ready to edit it. Other books could be written later. Brown agreed to write the text, but before signing a contract, he needed to reach some agreements with the publisher. Brown had specific views on how an historical geography should be written. He told the publisher firmly that he did not view existing texts in historical geography as models. "Any text that I would produce would have to be on a strict regional and time basis," he stressed. "It could not be concerned predominently with 'influences in American history,' or a poor history supported by maps and pictures."[46] Brown and the publisher reached an understanding, and signed a contract in July 1944. Brown wanted to take a leave of absence from teaching for a year

so he could write. He applied for a grant and sabbatical, and received both,[47] but problems in the Association precluded his finishing the job.

Problems in the Association

A serious rift threatened the Association of American Geographers when a group of geographers, impatient with its restrictive membership policy, formed a second professional society. The defecting group grew out of the Young Geographers Society which had been meeting informally since 1936. Many of the younger geographers and government geographers were now concentrated in Washington and during the war they began to meet regularly in Washington, D.C. Attending the 1943 spring meeting were F. Webster McBryde, Head of the Latin American Section in the Military Intelligence Service, and his assistant, George Deasy.

McBryde was about to be elected to membership in the Association but Deasy, whose work was confidential, did not have the qualifying publication record. Deasy keenly felt the need for a professional organization, and he resented being left out of the Association. The current chairman of the Young Geographers Society, Shannon McCune, was retiring, and Deasy urged McBryde to run for the office. McBryde agreed to this, with the understanding that he would remake the group into a national professional geographical society. He won the election, chose Deasy and a few others as councilors, and set about organizing a new society. They changed the name of the group to "The American Society for Geographic Research," and established a Bulletin.[48] The aim of the new society was "to acquire and disseminate new knowledge of the earth's surface and its inhabitants . . . and to encourage . . . the younger geographers of the

Western Hemisphere."[49] Membership was open to those interested in the Society's aims. The 143 charter members included geographers in government, business, and college and university professors.[50]

News of the new society prompted a flurry of letter writing. Though some AAG members supported and even joined the new society, others were unsure of the implications for the Association. Many wrote to Brown asking what the council's stand would be and should they join the new group. Brown responded the council would take up the matter, and he hoped they would handle it well. He was sympathetic, however to the new group's formation, and thought that the Association needed a membership policy change. "Perhaps this is the spark which will ignite the Association into renewed activity" Brown reflected. "I wonder if we have not been resting on our laurels too securely?"[51] He lamented to Whitaker, "We are now paying our debt for neglecting to nominate the rising young men in the center of our profession, while we were pondering upon the qualifications of soil scientists, geologists, and curators of museums. What a situation!"[52] Some Association members also agreed with the new group's aims, and suggested to Brown that they might join the Association as a junior section. J. K. Wright thought that the addition of younger members would strengthen the Association.[53]

While Brown was sympathetic, he was concerned that the younger group posed a threat; he did not think there were enough American geographers to support two professional societies. Brown asked Whitaker if he had any influence over the group's leaders, and if so, would he try to stop the group's growth. Whitaker responded, "To formalize the organization of the Young Geographers would be a tragedy. I shall be happy to

throw whatever influence I have against it."[54] Brown wrote to Whittlesey, Association president: "What is to be done, if anything? We need lots of wisdom."[55] Whittlesey, however, was skeptical of the importance of the new group. "It is largely a Washington outfit," he explained to Brown. "My informants believe the whole organization will disappear after the war. . . . This sort of enthusiasm is characteristic of youth and generally works itself out."[56] Whittlesey was not in favor of changing membership standards, though he did agree the Association should "shake the charge that we are moribund."[57]

At the next council meeting Brown suggested that publication in the Annals be opened to nonmembers, with a member's recommendation letter. The council approved this policy,[58] and Brown hoped this might mollify some of the discontented members. As a second measure to appease the discontented, Whittlesey appointed a membership committee, and urged members to find qualified candidates. Whittlesey decided it would be important for the council to approve many membership candidates, and urged Brown: "Prime sympathetic members of the council to elect every candidate who isn't obviously a mistake. This is the year to be too lenient rather than too stiff."[59] Brown agreed to this, and the council approved 33 out of 53 proposed members.[60]

The 33 candidates were placed on a ballot and sent to the membership. Never before had there been so many candidates, and membership response was varied. Some were glad at the more liberal policy, and others were angry or confused about how to vote. The members also received a letter from Hartshorne, urging them to vote, and explaining the situation with the Washington geographers. Some members would not vote at

all and suggested that the council clarify voting policies. "I am not greatly impressed," wrote one member, "with the statement . . . that these younger Washington geographers are threatening to develop their own organization if not immediately taken into membership in the AAG. That looks like a mild form of blackmail to me."[61]

These palliative measures did not stop the new society from moving full speed ahead. In the fall of 1944 the executive board changed the group's name to "The American Society of Professional Geographers," and wrote a formal Constitution. President McBryde in the Bulletin the new society's expansion and plans: "Professional geographers have long expressed the desire of having such a society to which all are eligible to belong . . . and which will offer specific services to members as well as opportunities for exchange of ideas."[62] He explained that some of the new programs and services would include a membership directory, a job file, theses abstracts, research projects, and presentation of papers at meetings. "Encouragement of research will continue to be an important objective," he stressed, "but no one is to be penalized as to membership status through being unable to engage actively in research at any time."[63] The organization filled a need as attested by membership growth. Nearly 300 geographers had joined by 1945, and in 1948 the rolls listed 1,094 members.[64]

Some Association members continued to view the new society as a threat to their organization. A few even wrote to McBryde, charging that the ASPG was competitive. To these comments, McBryde replied that his group was not competitive, since so few geographers were allowed into the Association. The new geographical society, he maintained, was "the only

professional society now offering full, respectable membership privileges to all professionally qualified geographers."[65]

Dissent among the members continued, as some wanted growth and others did not. One Association member commented, "I can't understand why the Washington geographers 'tear their shirts' to get their boys into the Association before they have met the requirements."[66] In 1944, when the council was to select a new membership slate, Brown knew he would have to tread carefully between those who wanted growth and those who didn't. Fifty-four names were proposed to the council. Brown knew the majority of members would not accept such a large ballot, so he and Whittlesey developed more stringent voting procedures.[67] The council also adapted a new policy, by which government geographers needed three recommendations to qualify for membership, though university geographers needed only two.[68]

The council approved 20 candidates and sent ballots to the members. The sponsors of the rejected 34 were furious and wrote to Brown and to Whittlesey. One member was offended, and pointed out that his candidate had many good publications. These were not all in the geography journals, but the enraged member pointed out to Brown: "You know as well as I do that many items appearing in the geographic journals do not always measure up to the highest of standards."[69] Helen Strong, sponsor of another rejected candidate was also angry. She objected to the new rule of more recommendations for government geographers. She argued, "This is a tacit implication that government geographers are less dependable and of lower professional calibre than those on university faculties."[70] She reminded Whittlesey that productive scholarship was being done both in and out of

the university world, and added, "Either the Association will recognize this . . . or it can take a path which may well prove to be one of progressive dessication."[71]

Shortly thereafter, Brown received another protest--a petition signed by 10 geographers.[72] They urged that the whole ballot be withdrawn until another, "based on standards approved by the membership,"[73] could be presented. They suggested that the Association's Constitution be "thoroughly overhauled.[74] Their final plea was that from the present crisis, "we diligently try to create . . . a single, strong geographic organization which is truly a professional organization for geographers operating along democratic lines."[75]

Brown was disturbed by the many protests over the rejected candidates. He suggested to Whittlesey that they temporarily delay the voting until further discussion was possible. "I am bothered that these men and doubtless others have much on their side," wrote Brown to Whittlesey. "Perhaps we were too hasty and too arbitrary."[76] Whittlesey and Brown wrote to the angry sponsors, and explained that the Association's problems were made worse by the meeting cancellations of the past two years, and that there had been no chance to meet and discuss membership policies.

Brown then took time to study on the situation more thoroughly. He studied the Association's membership records, and he talked with secretaries of other professional organizations. He concluded that the average age of Association members was indeed too high, and that growth in the past decade had been too slow. Brown wrote a memorandum to the council on these problems.[77] He instructed them to vote on 41 members

(the 35 candidates and the six new ones) by a ranking method, and to mail their tabulations back to him. Then he would call for more candidates. Some councilors objected to Brown's voting method, but he stood firm. Arguing that his method was more objective than personal discussion of candidates "around a table," he insisted, "I do want to uphold my suggestion on the acceptance of candidates in rather certain terms."[78]

This was one of Brown's final acts as secretary. The council selected him as the 1946 secretary, but he asked to be relieved of the duty. The job had taken much of his time and energy, and he needed to return to his writing. The council accepted Brown's request, and passed a resolution at the 1945 Association meeting, thanking him for four years of service. "His time and thought have been given without stint," they noted. "Discerning analysis, infinite patience and sympathetic understanding have characterized all his work."[79]

These years put a considerable strain on Brown. The extra teaching duties sapped much of his energy, yet he still made time to pursue his research. The stress of being Association secretary during the time of conflicts was almost too much of an additional burden; he hated controversy, and found it difficult and painful to mediate the problems among the geographers. As the war-years drew to a close, Brown, at age 46, was tired, and his health had suffered.



Fig. 11. The Brown Family outside a neighbor's house, St. Paul, Minnesota, ca. 1944. left to right: Ralph, Eunice, Nancy, Laura, Burton

(courtesy of Burton Brown)

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

[1]P. James to L. Miles, 8 July 1978.

[2]S. Dodge to R. Brown, 5 January 1942. RHBP.

[3]P. James to R. Brown, 25 September 1941. RHBP.

[4]James and Martin, The Association of American Geographers, pp. 83, 90, 97.

[5]The NCGT changed its name to the National Council for Geographic Education in 1956.

[6]Ibid., pp. 83, 90-91.

[7]R. Brown, "The Association of American Geographers, Secretarial Record," January 3, 1942 to February 23, 1943; February 24, to September 16, 1943; September 8, 1944 to August 1, 1945. Archives of the Association of American Geographers. (Hereafter referred to as AAAG.)

[8]James to R. Brown, 25 September 1941. RHBP.

[9]James and Martin, The Association, p. 89.

[10]"Lessons From the War-Time Experience for Improving Graduate Training for Geographic Research," Annals, AAG 36 (1946): 195-213; James and Martin, The Association, pp. 89-90.

[11]S. Poole to R. Brown, 17 June 1942; R. Brown to S. Poole, 3 July 1942. RHBP.

[12]M. Burrill to R. Brown, 7 April 1943; R. Brown to M. Burrill, 17 April 1943. RHBP.

[13]R. Brown to C. Zierer, 22 November 1943. RHBP.

[14]Walter C. Coffey, "Introduction," War Comes to America! 1 (January 1942).

[15]"President's Report, The Bulletin of the University of Minnesota 55 (December, 1942), and 57 (December 1944).

[16]"President's Report, The Bulletin of the University of Minnesota; Discussions of the ASTP programs are in I. Kendal The Impact of the War

Upon American Education (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1948) and in M. Willey, "The College Training Program in the Armed Services, pp. 14-28, and R. Walters, "Facts and Figures of Colleges at War," pp. 13-18, in Annals, American Academy of Political and Social Sciences 231 (1944).

[17]P. James to L. Miles, 8 July 1978.

[18]R. Brown to Howard A. Meyerhoff, 19 December 1943, p. 1. RHBP.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., p. 2.

[21]R. Brown to G. Wrigley, 17 August 1944. RHBP.

[22]University of Minnesota Class Schedule; 1940-41, p. 49; 1941-42, pp. 51-2; 1942-43, pp. 48-49; 1943-44, pp. 49-50.

[23]M. Diehl to R. Brown, 27 December 1934; C. Frolik to R. Brown, 28 January, 1939; A. Lueck to R. Brown, 11 February 1940. RHBP.

[24]R. Brown, "Testing in Geography at the College Level," Journal of Geography 36 (1937): 140-47.

[25]R. Brown to J. Tate, 3 February 1941. RHBP.

[26]R. Brown to G. Wrigley, 6 April, 1943. RHBP.

[27]R. Brown to T. Blegan, 21 May 1943. RHBP.

[28]R. Brown, report of research, n.d., "Jefferson's Geographical Performance." RHBP.

[29]J. Wright to R. Brown, 10 December 1942. GRF. The contributors were: William A. Rockefeller ($2500); George L. Carlisle ($500); and Dr. Richard U. Light ($1,000).

[30]G. Wrigley to R. Brown, 10 July 1943. GRF.

[31]G. Wrigley to R. Brown, 10 July 1943. GRF.

[32]G. Wrigley to R. Brown, 18 May 1943. GRF.

[33]G. Wrigley to E. Brown, 26 May 1943; G. Wrigley to R. Brown, 28 May 1943; J. K. Wright to R. Brown, 29 May 1943. GRF.

[34]P. James to R. Brown, 27 August 1943. RHBP.

[35]W. Atwood to R. Brown, 24 June 1943. RHBP.

[36]R. Brown to L. Wroth, 3 June 1943. RHBP.

[37]L. Wroth to R. Brown, 25 May 1943. RHBP.

[38]Review by Roderick Peattie in The Journal of Geography 43 (1944): 39.

[39]Review in The Canadian Geographic Journal 27 (1943): 15.

[40]Review by Woodrow Borah in The William and Mary Quarterly 3 (April 1946): 293-97.

[41]Review by N. Russell in The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 31 (1944): 118-19.

[42]G. Wrigley to R. Brown, 21 June 1944. RHBP.

[43]He specified this in his grant request for the project.

[44]J. R. Whitaker to R. Brown, 22 June 1943. RHBP; By 1944, Barrows had become a government consultant, and no longer offered advanced historical geography classes.

[45]Ibid., p. 2; J. R. Whitaker to W. Koelsch, 2 December 1971.

[46]R. Brown to J. Reid, 23 July 1943. RHBP.

[47]J. R. Whitaker to R. Brown, 24 July 1944. RHBP.

[48]James and Martin The Association, pp. 92-3.

[49]Bulletin of the American Society for Geographical Research 1 (1943), p. 1.

[50]James and Martin The Association, p. 94.

[51]R. Brown to E. Van Cleef, 3 September 1943. AAAG.

[52]Brown to Whitaker, 26 June 1943. RHBP. Another oft-heard complaint by dissatisfied Association members was that distinguished scholars and scientists in border field were taken into the Association, while many geographers were not put up for candidacy.

[53]James and Martin, The Association, p. 96.

[54]R. Brown to J. R. Whitaker, 26 June 1943; J. R. Whitaker to R. Brown, 2 July 1943. RHBP.

[55]R. Brown to D. Whittlesey, 20 June 1943. DWP.

[56]D. Whittlesey to R. Brown, 26 June 1943, and 25 August 1943. DWP.

[57]D. Whittlesey to R. Brown, 25 August 1943. DWP.

[58]R. Brown, "Council Meeting, 16 September 1943," p. 1. AAAG.

[59]D. Whittlesey to R. Brown, 25 August 1943. DWP.

[60]R. Brown, "Secretarial Record," p. 4.

[61]G. Trewartha to E. Foscue, 9 August 1943. DWP.

[62]"President's Announcement Concerning the Expansion of the Society," Bulletin of the American Society for Professional Geographers 2 (1944).

[63]Ibid.

[64]W. Miller, "A Short History of the American Society for Professional Geographers," The Professional Geographer 2 (January 1950), 29-42.

[65]W. F. McBryde to E. Ackerman, 9 January 1943; and W. F. McBryde to Ackerman, 15 December 1944, and E. Ackerman to W. McBryde, 27 December 1944.

[66]E. Foscue to D. Whittlesey, 16 June 1945. DWP.

[67]R. Brown to D. Whittlesey, 16 July 1944; D. Whittlesey to R. Brown, 24 July 1944. DWP.

[68]The document, entitled, "Report of the Bases of Membership Committee to the AAG," was sent by Whittlesey to the members in October 1944.

[69]E. Van Cleef to R. Brown, p. 2, 14 November 1944. DWP.

[70]Helen M. Strong to D. Whittlesey, 21 November 1944, p. 1. DWP.

[71]Ibid., p. 2.

[72]This petition, sent to Brown and dated 6 January 1944, was signed by John Rose, Helen Strong, Sidman Poole, Joseph Russell, F. W. McBryde, John Q. Adams, O. P. Starky, Robert Stone, C. MacFadden and W. Van Royen.

[73]Ibid., p. 1.

[74]Ibid., p. 2.

[75]Ibid., p. 3. Van Royen opposed the suggestion that one society be formed.

[76]R. Brown to D. Whittlesey, 16 November 1944. DWP.

[77]Memo from R. Brown to the Council, 10 May 1945. AAAG.

[78]R. Brown to R. Platt, 21 May 1945. AAAG.

[79]Resolution passed at the 1945 AAG meeting at Knoxville, Tennessee, 29 December 1945. AAAG.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST MINNESOTA YEARS

Completing the Text

In the spring of 1945, Brown sent part of his historical geography manuscript to Whitaker. His editor praised, "I am tremendously pleased with this . . . and am now doubly certain that a great book is forthcoming."[1] As Brown completed each section, he sent it to Whitaker, who helped shape it into the text. Brown felt fortunate to have his friend as his editor, and wrote of Whitaker: "His handiwork appears on every page."[2]

Whitaker knew that the text would be a pioneer work, and would probably have the typical weaknesses of such a volume; it would no doubt have a few minor errors and be out of perspective in places. He reflected, "Someone with much less courage and creative ability can round off the corners and fill in the little gaps."[3] Convinced of the importance of the book, Whitaker devoted much time and effort to editing it. He advised Brown on the writing and gave valuable suggestions on maps, graphs, and tables for the text. He was keenly aware of the needs of the students and teachers who would use the book, and reminded Brown that many of them would have little background in geography. He advised, "The more fully you can keep in mind that a large part of your student

body . . . is interested primarily in the joys, and hopes, and achievements of humanity, the more closely you are bound to come to their needs."[4]

Whitaker knew Brown was modest about his abilities, and encouraged his friend during the writing. "You are breaking new ground,"[5] he commented, after reading the first part. "I am confident you are making the major contribution of your professional lifetime."[6] Brown occasionally became discouraged, and once he asked Whitaker if the publishing company might have preferred a Semple-Brigham type of book. Whitaker assured him, "I know positively that we do not want that type of book . . . you need have no concern on that score."[7] At times Brown's desires and those of the publisher did not coincide. When Brown wanted lengthy notes and an extensive bibliography, and the publisher wanted this part kept brief, Whitaker was able to arrange a compromise. He was also aware of his friend's perfectionism, and Brown often expressed concern about mistakes that might appear in the text. Whitaker reassured Brown" "Only a man of courage can enter into the gates of textbook writers! . . . If your book is perfect, how can we justify a revision?"[8] Later he added, "You will have me as someone to pass the buck to when errors are discovered."[9]

Brown completed the initial draft by spring 1946, and revised it during that summer. In preparation for selling the text, editor Emerson Brown of Harcourt Brace asked Brown for information. He wrote: "We would like to know, for example, just what historical geography is. This may sound like a silly question, but this is our first experience in selling a historical geography."[10] He added that the "last definitive" historical geography text was Ellen Semple's, and he wanted to know how Brown's

book would break new ground.[11]

Brown's book was very different from Semple's. He and Whitaker had agreed beforehand that it was not to be a book on the geographical influences in history. Brown insisted, "A volume of a different type from these [kinds of books] would be necessary if we are to win the respect, and the patronage of the historians."[12] Nor did Brown visualize the format of Mirror for Americans as suitable for a text.[13]

The text's organization took much thought. Brown reflected: "A study of the past geography of the United States is wide ranging in time, space, and subject matter."[14] The book emphasized settlement in parts of the United States. He wanted it titled, "Days of American Settlement: An Approach to Historical Geography," and explained: "the plural 'Days' suggests a number of periods, thus permitting the selection of various periods and regions, as has been done."[15] The book's sources were primary materials, such as travel diaries. letters, maps, travel accounts. He also used published geographies and histories, those written in the past, and the contemporary.

He organized the book into six sections. The first was on colonization of the New World, and Brown discussed English, French, and Spanish activities. Brown set the style of the book in the first chapter, "Early Geography: Fact and Fancy." Here he discussed early geographical writings, and how they influenced settlement. He pointed out that many of these writings were an inaccurate portrayal of the New World, and that "Men at all times have been influenced quite as much by beliefs as by facts."[16] The type and variety of geographical writings, and how they affected settlement, was a theme carried throughout the book.

The remaining five sections were organized regionally. The second section, on the Atlantic Seaboard, was a distillation of Mirror for Americans. The next three concerned the Old Northwest, the New Northwest, and the Great Plains, and the final section was entitled, "From the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Coast, to 1870." The coverage of the nation was uneven; Brown's selection of regions and eras was based on the research he had done up to that point.[17]

Brown was frustrated when he read the galley proofs, since the copy editor had made many minor changes. Most disturbing to Brown was his term "occupance," which in each case had been changed to "occupancy." Capitalizations were also a problem. Brown explained, "I want to have the reader place himself in the position of the reader of an earlier day."[18] Thus, he capitalized "Low Country," "Middle Country," "Upper Country," and "Region of the Sea Sand," as those were regions of an earlier day. The editor, however, corrected these back to modern usage. The galley proof stage was not the time to make extensive corrections, and Ralph and Eunice and the Harcourt Brace staff were all quite annoyed. Compromises were made and by February of 1947, the galley proofs had been read. Emerson Brown told Brown that the book would be out by the spring--but then there were additional problems. He explained to Brown that because of a national paper shortage, his company did not have enough suitable stock for the text. Brown did not mind the delay and replied, "It rather adds to my confidence in Harcourt Brace to know that they will not turn out a book until the right kind of stock is available."[19]

Postwar Geography

While Brown was writing his text, the nation's attention was on the war, anticipating its end. In preparation for the postwar world, educational leaders began to discuss new directions and needs. Like other social scientists, geographers were concerned about how their discipline would fare in postwar college curriculum. In 1944, Brown attended a conference with other geographers.[20] They discussed the work and contributions of geographers during the war, and outlined needed changes in geographic education. Most agreed that geographers had indeed contributed much to the nation's defense, and that in the next era there would be more employment opportunities for trained geographers. They predicted a new interest in area studies, and suggested that regional geography would continue to be important. They also noted a trend toward specialization in many fields. Geographers should follow suit, and students should be given more training in the systematic branches of geography.[21]

Geographer Edward Ackerman addressed geographic specialization in a 1945 Annals articles.[22] While acknowledging that work in the war had given geography additional prestige, he saw weaknesses in geographic education. "Our experience during the war has proven that we have little competence in topical and systematic geography," he complained. "Many of our graduates know a little about a lot."[23] Society's current problems were too intricate, argued Ackerman, and one regional specialist could not hope to understand the complexity of a region. The post war trend would be towards cooperative research, and a number of people, each trained in a systematic branch, collectively studying the region.

He concluded that the most effective way to study a region was "by systematic dissection and analysis, rather than by the mosiac descriptive method."[24] Ackerman's article portended a change away from regional interpretation and description and toward changes and patterns in regions.[25]

Another postwar change was the increase in college enrollment, as thousands of war veterans returned to school on the GI Bill. By 1946, college enrollment was more than twice that of the late 1930s.[26] Geography was a subject in demand, partly because there was interest in foreign areas, and partly because of the wartime Army Specialized Training Program geography classes. In many colleges geography had been taught for the first time, and as administrators realized geography's value, they added it to their curriculum. Geography teachers were needed to meet this demand, and by 1947, there had never been so many geographers teaching at American colleges and universities.[27]

The University of Minnesota

Geography enrollment increased at the University of Minnesota, and Davis added John Weaver to the staff and hired a few graduate students as instructors. He also allowed in more graduate students than he had previously, and some of the faculty now offered graduate geography seminars. Davis added more regional classes. Brown now taught "Africa" as well as "South America." John Weaver taught "North America," "Australia," and "Geography of the Polar Areas." Davis offered a course on Asia, and Dicken, on Europe.[28]

Among the postwar graduate students was Warren Kress, whose studies at Minnesota had been interrupted by the war. Returning to Minnesota after being in the service, Kress completed his B.A. in international relations, and began geography graduate work. He was an instructor as well as a student. Kress took Weaver's agricultural geography and urban geography seminars and a number of courses from Brown. Another graduate student was Frank Seawall, whose undergraduate degree was in Economics. By 1947, four or five graduate students were working toward advanced degrees, and graduate geography at Minnesota had "come of age."[29] The students admired the new professor, John Weaver. Recalled Kress: "We found him to be an excellent teacher and a very personable young gentleman, quite different from the rather austere Darrell Davis, and the rather reserved Ralph Brown."[30] Seawall thought Weaver was "tops,"--"He was able, articulate, organized . . . he had a good mind, and a subtle sense of humor."[31] Weaver occasionally invited his seminar students and their wives to his home, and the students appreciated this chance to mix informally.

The students also respected Brown. Sewall recalled Brown's seminar on geographical literature, which he found "well done."[32] Kress characterized Brown as "a careful, well organized teacher. . . . He was not without a certain dry humor, and was not afraid to express an opinion even i [it] was at odds with general geographic doctrine."[33] Kress also remembered Brown's conscientious class preparation, for courses in his specialty and others. Brown had not worked closely with students, since during the depression and the war; there were few graduate students at Minnesota, and none had chosen historical geography as a specialty.

Kress, however, wanted to do research in this field, and Davis assigned Brown as his advisor. Kress began to develop a good relationship with Brown, and was looking forward to the publication of his advisor's text. Another Minnesota student who planned to work with Brown was Fred Lukermann. His first geography class was Brown's "Historical Geography of North America," and he was impressed with the lectures. "There was no sign saying scholar," he recalled, "it was integral in every sentence."[34] Lukermann viewed Brown as "A very quiet man, a very gentle man. He smiled teasingly at you at the end of classes, exams, or conversations. In between he gently prodded, pulled, projected you along, and really was an intellectual guide."[35]

In addition to his Minnesota students, Brown encouraged other beginning geographers. He was "patient and responsive" to Herman Friis, and helpful and encouraging to Leslie Hewes. He offered to read and analyze David Lantis' dissertation. Lantis was a Ph.D. student in geography at Ohio State, and Brown had known his father in Colorado.[36] Brown also befriended Hildegard Binder Johnson, whose husband was on the Minnesota faculty. Johnson's doctorate, from the University of Berlin, was in history and geography, and she planned to pursue work in historical geography. She admired Brown's writing style--she had read everything he wrote. The two had lengthy discussions about geography, and Brown encouraged her in her endeavors. She later became a prominent historical geographer, and she attributes her success, in part, to Brown's encouragement and friendship.[37]

Annals Editor

In addition to his teaching load, Brown took on another duty in 1947. The Association's council had selected him as Annals editor. Some wanted him for the position long before this. In 1942, Whittlesey resigned as editor and suggested to James that Brown be his replacement, adding "but you have got him working as secretary, and we wouldn't wish both jobs on our worst enemy would we?"[38] Four years later the council chose Brown because he had an excellent command of English, wrote well, and was a conscientious worker.[39] Brown accepted the position with pleasure and decided to improve the appearance of the journal. He informed Chauncy Harris, the new Association Secretary: "You may look for a changed Annals . . . who knows, perhaps we can make people want to contribute to the Annals and read it, once it has been received in the mails!"[40] Brown consulted Harris about changes, as he respected the new young secretary, whom he had helped select. Harris, in turn, respected and admired Brown. Upon Brown's new appointment, Harris wrote, "It will be a great pleasure to work with you."[41] Brown also solicited advice from Gladys Wrigley. "You seem to have a genius for operating the complicated machinery involved in publication of the Review,"[42] he complimented her. She replied that she would be glad to help, and she immediately had the Review's printer critique the Annals cover and format for Brown. The council enlarged the Annals budget, and Brown hired Eunice as his assistant.

Brown set about to improve the journal energetically. He thought it was time for a fresh Annals appearance and commented to Harris: "The

Association has taken so many beatings because of its tradition-bound attitude, that we might learn some lessons before it is too late."[43] He decided to add a "Department of Reviews and Abstracts." "It will take a little extra time," he wrote to Harris, "but I think it will enliven interest in the journal."[44] These reviews would be on monographs, articles in foreign journals, and other studies that members might not ordinarily see. He would not, however, include writings of Association members, so that "A proper degree of objectivity can be fostered."[45] He also changed the cover design, made improvements in the inside covers, and enlarged the journal's size.[46]

People liked the new look. Whittlesey liked the new review section, dubbing it "creative." He told Brown that he had always been afraid to add such a section, for fear he would not be able to keep it up. "Your performance to date is admirable,"[47] he praised. Wrigley also liked the changes. She complemented: "The new Annals has arrived and most attractive it looks. I specially like the front cover. Congratulations!"[48]

Brown soon discovered an editor's problems. The press that printed the journal was unusually slow, especially in sending out back issues, and made a number of mistakes in the address labels. Another headache was the contributors who did not get the promised material to Brown in time. Brown solicited Wrigley's advice. She cautioned him to keep extra material on hand, and explained: "There are ways . . . of coaxing, cajoling, browbeating, railroading contributors, but the main thing is to make them realize that you will not wait . . . positively!"[49] She told him how she saw that an issue would get out on time: "I bully everyone

from the president (Dr. Light) to the post office. It is well to anticipate other sources of delay--strikes, embargos, hurricanes, floods. . . .!"[50] As a new editor, Brown needed time to learn the job, and he was pleased to have the responsibility. The difficulties with the printer, however, upset him. Brown was not a forceful person, and he found it painful to admonish the printer. Moreover, since the press was in Pennsylvania, all dealings had to be done through correspondence, which was time consuming. The mistakes, delays and errors--all part of an editor's job to correct--burdened Brown and lessened his satisfaction as an editor.

More Research

As 1947 drew to a close, Brown had three more projects in mind. He intended to write companion books to Mirror for Americans.[51] Another plan was to return to his High Plains irrigation studies. Brown wrote, in a grant proposal, that the role of irrigation is greatly misunderstood, and more objective studies of the effects of irrigation are needed. The impending Missouri Valley Conservancy Project, which included plans for more irrigation projects, had caused an outpouring of newspaper and magazine articles on irrigation. These "popular" writings contained "more than the usual mixture of fancy with fact," deplored Brown.[52] He proposed to study new and abandoned irrigation projects. His methods would include library research; he would study maps and records in government agencies. He also planned to return to field work, and listed Nebraska, Wyoming, and North Dakota, as places where he would investigate irrigation projects. A third plan was to write a text on climate, to

be published by Harcourt Brace. Brown had taught climatology for years, and he deplored the lack of a suitable text. Existing texts, he believed, were too technical. In a review of a recently published climatology text, he commented: "If text book writers are correct in interpreting climatology as this, and nothing more, then the subject apparently belongs in the offerings of institutes of technology."[53] Brown, James Reid of Harcourt Brace, and Whitaker had corresponded about the proposed text, and all agreed that Brown should write a text on climate and man, a volume that would contribute to human geography.[54]

Late that year, Darrell Davis, anticipating retirement, was trying to decide whom he should select as his replacement. Davis respected Brown, and thought he would do a good job, but Jan Broek, a geographer who had worked with Sauer at Berkeley, was another possibility. Davis telephoned Sauer for advice. Sauer recommended: "Offer it to Brown first, then to Broek, although I would be a little pleased if Brown would not take it because I think he has so much work to do that we need."[55] The Minnesota dean offered the chairmanship to Brown, but Brown politely declined it. "I really felt that someone interested in such matters should take over," Brown confided to Whittlesey. Whittlesey responded, "I am pleased that the offer was made to you and that you have the unique distinction of being a scholar who knows what his proper place is."[56]

Historical Geography of the United States

In January, 1948, Brown's text, entitled Historical Geography of The United States was being printed, the correct paper having been obtained. Brown received his copies early in February. He examined the

book carefully and was dismayed to find a number of typographical errors and an inaccurate map citation.[57] Already upset and depressed about the mistakes, the next day he received a letter from the president of the press that published the Annals, wherein a reorganization of the company was announced. Brown was angry with the publisher because the December Annals was not yet printed, and he ennumerated his complaints in a long angry reply. "I wish to make it clear that I shall expect a complete change in the handling of the Annals," he insisted. "Unless certain definite corrections are assured . . . I shall recommend to the council that new arrangements be made."[58]

Brown was not to receive the printer's apologetic reply, nor was he to read the favorable reviews of his text. That weekend, depressed and upset over the recent events, he felt sick, but could not be examined because his doctor was out of town. On Monday, returning home from the gas station, Brown drove his car into the garage and, while still sitting behind the wheel, he died, apparently of a heart attack.[59] The Saint Paul Press reported that the death was caused by carbon monoxide poisoning, and it stated that the Ramsey County Coroner had ruled the death as accidental.[60] Despite this report, a rumor began to circulate among the university faculty that Brown had taken his own life.[61] This rumor, which distressed those close to Brown, spread in the geographic community. Hartshorne wrote to Harris about the rumor, stating that he and John Weaver agreed that there was no truth to it, and that, "The press [should have] added that there was no smell of gas and that the ignition key was turned off."[62] Still, the rumor persisted and Weaver asked the university officials to investigate the death.

The university officials, however, found no grounds for the rumor. They reported: "All of the official documents use the phrase 'accidental death' or 'death due to natural causes.'"[63] Some months later, Whittlesey wrote to Whitaker. "For my own piece of mind," he inquired, "Will you tell me if Ralph Brown died of a heart attack or committed suicide?"[64] Whitaker replied that he did not know but "He was not the kind of person to quit, no matter how hard the going."[65]

Brown was deeply mourned by friends and colleagues. Whittlesey wrote to Eunice, "To [my] personal loss is added the geographers' loss. . . . We have lost our brightest luminary in the world of geographic literature. What he wrote was literature in the sense that no other American geographer has ever achieved."[66] An eloquent memorial to Brown was offered at the next Association meeting:[67]

> Pioneer of historical geography; patient steward in the life of the Association; champion of high scholarship--we salute your successes, celebrate your accomplishments, and rejoice that you have been included in our fellowship.

Brown left the legacy of his textbook, Historical Geography of the United States. Reviewers highly acclaimed the text, though their praise was tempered with minor criticisms. Whittlesey called it "a freshly conceived geography of the peopling of a continent."[68] Lawrence Gipson noted an attraction of the book, "and one that makes absorbing reading, is the re-creation . . . of the geographical settings of the past."[69] Elmer Ekblaw praised it as "a standard for superior work in the field of geography."[70] A reviewer for the New York Times wrote: "Professor Brown's interest and enthusiams for his subject holds the attention of the lay reader as well as of the scholar."[71] The text received the Chicago

Geographical Society's William S. Monroe award as the best geographical publication of 1948.[72] And in 1954, it received another honor--Columbia University's Loubat prize, as the second most outstanding publication in the humanities during the past five years.[73]

Nearly a decade later, the memory of Ralph Brown as a scholar was honored; the geography faculty at the University of Minnesota dedicated their seminar room in his name.[74]

NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

[1]J. R. Whitaker to R. Brown, 2 April 1945, p. . RHBP

[2]R. H. Brown, Historical Geography of the United States (Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1948), v.

[3]J. R. Whitaker to D. Whittlesey, 11 March 1948, p. 2. DWP.

[4]J. R. Whitaker to R. Brown, 4 September 1945, p. 2. RHBP.

[5]J. R. Whitaker to R. Brown, 27 July 1947, p. 1. RHBP.

[6]Ibid., p. 2.

[7]Ibid., p. 1.

[8]J. R. Whitaker to R. Brown, 25 September 1947, RHBP.

[9]Ibid.

[10]E. Brown to R. Brown, 26 September 1946. RHBP.

[11]Ibid.

[12]E. Brown to J. R. Whitaker, 26 June 1943. RHBP.

[13]Brown wrote to James Reid, editor at Harcourt Brace: "It is not suggested, of course, that one sees in the Mirror for Americans, the shape of a text book to come, for I scarcely need point out that this is not a text." R. Brown to J. Reid, 23 July 1943. RHBP.

[14]R. Brown, Historical Geography, p. 533.

[15]R. Brown to E. Brown, 12 January 1947. RHBP.

[16]Ibid., p. 3.

[17]Brown explained in the text's preface: "Regions are considered at the earliest period for which there is adequate source material . . . the availability of such material has mainly perscribed the space and time limits of this regional study." By "adequate materials," Brown meant enough contemporary writings to be able to portray a complete regional past geography. More clues to his choice of regions and eras can be seen

in his lecture notes for his historical geography class. His lectures on the Northwest Territory were for the period 1820-1830, since "that was a period for which there were a great many geographical accounts." He also told his class that he would have little discussion of the south: "I have attempted to learn as much as I can about the South, but still felt shaky about attempting a reconstruction study. . . . There is so much bias in the accounts." Although these were from his 1940 lectures and were thus based on his research at that time, they nevertheless help explain his reasoning for the selection of regions and eras.

[18]R. Brown to E. Brown, pp. 1, 2, 3; 24 January 1947. RHBP.

[19]R. Brown to E. Brown, 20 March 1947. RHBP.

[20]The report of the conference was published in the Annals two years later: "Lessons of the War-time Experience for Improving Graduate Training for Geographic Research," Annals, AAG 36 (1946): 195-214.

[21]Ibid., p. 213.

[22]Edward Ackerman, "Geographic Training, War-Time Research, and Immediate Professional Objectives," Annals, AAG 35 (1945): 121-143.

[23]Ibid., p. 141.

[24]Ibid., pp. 129-30.

[25]Ackerman was careful to not seem antagonistic to Hartshorne's Nature, which shows the extent of the acceptance of the book. He pointed out that his views were not opposed to Hartshorne's and quoted Hartshorne on systematic geography.

[26]In 1938 there were 1,351,000 students enrolled for degree credit at institutions of higher learning. The figure was 1,494,000 in 1941; and by 1946 it had jumped to 2,078,000. Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Part 2 (Washington, D.C., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975): p. 383, Series H 700-715.

[27]This trend is discussed in George F. Deasy, "War-Time Changes in Occupations of Geographers," The Professional Geographer 7 (1948): 33-41.

[28]Class Schedule, College of Science, Literature and the Arts, University of Minnesota, 1946-47.

[29]W. Kress to L. Miles, 5 September 1980, p. 3.

[30]Ibid.

[31]F. Seawall, "Ralph Brown."

[32]Ibid.

[33]Kress to Miles, p. 1.

[34]Transcript, Brown Room, p. 2.

[35]Interview with Fred Lukermann for film, "Geographers on Film," 17 March 1971. Transcript provided by M. W. Dow.

[36]H. Friis to L. Miles, 14 July 1978; L. Hewes to L. Miles, 30 September 1980.

[37]Interview with H. B. Johnson, Hyatt Regency Hotel, New Orleans, May 1978.

[38]D. Whittlesey to P. James, 15 September 1942. DWP.

[39]P. James to L. Miles, 8 August 1978.

[40]R. Brown to C. Harris, 7 January 1947. AAAG.

[41]Harris to R. Brown, 4 January 1947, p. 2. AAAG.

[42]R. Brown to G. Wrigley, 10 January 1948. GRF.

[43]R. Brown to C. Harris, 12 January 1947. AAAG.

[44]R. Brown to C. Harris, 17 January 1947. AAAG.

[45]R. Brown to G. Wrigley, 27 January 1947. GRF.

[46]R. Brown to D. Whittlesey, 19 March 1947. DWP.

[47]D. Whittlesey to R. Brown, 26 June 1947. DWP.

[48]G. Wrigley to R. Brown, 15 April 1947. GRF.

[49]G. Wrigley to R. Brown, 15 January 1948. GRF.

[50]Ibid., p. 2.

[51]This plan was made public in a forward to an article on Texas Cattle Trails. The journal editor wrote that Brown's Mirror, "is the first in a series of historical geographical studies of the United States. The middle section will be covered in a companion volume." R. Brown, "Texas Cattle Trails," Texas Geographical Magazine (1946): 1-6.

[52]R. Brown, "Types Studies of High Plains Irrigation," 18 May 1947. RHBP.

[53]R. Brown, review of G. J. Brand's Meteorology, in The Journal of Geography 44 (1945), p. 342.

[54]No contract had yet been signed, but Whitaker wrote to Brown that he was pleased with the tentative arrangements. J. R. Whitaker to R. Brown 30 January 1948. RHBP

[55]Transcript of a telephone conversation between D. Davis and C. Sauer, n.d., RHBP

[56]R. Brown to D. Whittlesey, 11 January 1948; D. Whittlesey to R. Brown, 16 January 1948. DWP.

[57]Eunice Brown to D. Whittlesey, 17 February 1948. DWP.

[58]R. Brown to W. L. Connor, 18 February 1948. RHBP. Eunice Brown indicated the extent of Brown's unhappiness of the situation to Whittlesey: "I know he also enjoyed handling the papers for the Annals, but the annoyances, large and small that arose in dealing with the printers were truly too hard for such a gentle perfectionist as he was." E. Brown to D. Whittlesey, 2 May 1948. DWP.

[59]C. Harris to J. R. Whitaker, 29 February 1948. AAAG.

[60]Obituary in St. Paul Pioneer Press, Tuesday, 24 February, 1948, p. 5. RHBP

[61]P. Jordan to L. Miles, 13 July 1978; P. James to L. Miles, 8 July 1978; R. Shove to L. Miles, 19 May 1980; W. Koelsch to E. Krabisch, 11 January, 1974.

[62]R. Hartshorne to C. Harris, n.d. AAAG.

[63]J. Weaver to C. Harris, 10 April 1948; J. Weaver to C. Harris, 20 April, 1948. AAAG.

[64]D. Whittlesey to J. R. Whitaker, 18 May 1948. DWP.

[65]J. R. Whitaker to D. Whittlesey, 31 May 1948. DWP.

[66]D. Whittlesey to Eunice Brown, 20 April 1948. DWP.

[67]This was the last part of a memorial written by R. Hartshorne, S. Dicken, and J. Weaver, and read at the December 1948 AAG meeting.

[68]Review by Whittlesey in American Historical Review 54 (1948): 146-7.

[69]Review by L. Gipson in The Geographical Review 38 (1948): 508-9.

[70]Review by E. Ekblaw in Economic Geography 24 (1948) n.p.

[71]Review by Clair McGlinche, The New York Times Book Review, Sunday, 22 August 1948, p. 21.

[72]T. Blegan to J. Morrill, 3 January 1950. UMA.

[73]R. Harpers to Eunice Brown, 30 April 1953. UMA.

[74]The Ralph Hall Brown Room is Room 423 Social Science Tower, West Bank campus, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. It was dedicated on 3 May 1963.

CHAPTER IX

AMERICA'S HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHER

Ralph Brown had no student disciples, but he was respected for the quality of his scholarship, his steady output of publications, and his dedicated service to the Association of American Geographers. He will be remembered as a major twentieth century geographer.[1]

Gifted with intelligence, creativity, and ambition, he developed excellent working habits. He planned and organized his work carefully, was meticulous and thorough in research, and took pains to polish his writing. He was fortunate to have the services of his wife, Eunice, whose editing improved his publications, and whose artistic sketches and diagrams enhanced his books. A soft spoken, courteous, and tolerant man, Brown held firm opinions but never forced them on others. As a leader of the professional association during a time of widespread dissent, he listened to all sides of the controversy. Brown was not without faults. As a perfectionist, he wasted time and energy worrying. He was often moody and discouraged, and his extreme modesty occasionally irritated friends and colleagues.

Brown lived an active and full life, one that was satisfying in many respects. He enjoyed his chosen profession. His rural New England roots gave him a love for the outdoors and an appreciation for field work. He liked solving problems and finding facts; he termed his archival

research "sleuthing."[2] Brown spent most of his professional life writing, an activity he found difficult but gratifying. His life had painful aspects as well. At the University of Minnesota he was unhappy under Darrell Davis' authoritarian regime,[3] but he received no other job offers. As a solitary worker in American historical geography--as he conceived it, he often found the work difficult and frustrating. He lived through two world wars and the depression, and suffered the personal tragedy of his first child's death.

Brown began geography graduate work in the early 1920s when social science methods were changing. Many scientists and scholars wanted to find more facts and statistics before developing theories and making generalizations. Recently acquired facts, data, and statistics showed previously held theories about society and culture to be invalid. Some geographers rejected their discipline's original goal of finding the principle underlying the relationship between the environment and people. Sauer wrote, "A science can hardly be committed in advance to a particular theory, but must rest, rather on a distinctive field of inquiry that is independent of the affirmation or negation of theories."[4] To his geographical colleagues he suggested, "A great amount of precise systematic and analytical work needs to be done before the time is ripe for brilliant conclusions."[5]

Brown followed these new viewpoints with interest, and wrote in a graduate school paper, "Generalizations should only be pronounced when the full extent of their circumscription is recognized."[6] Like many other geographers, he viewed field work as the best way to obtain accurate geographical information. He insisted, "We want . . . our

[geographical] tenets backed up by facts and we also want examples from as many places of the world as possible."[7] Brown was concerned, too, that geography be accurately written and based upon correct data. He frequently evaluated the "trustworthiness" of his sources. When he began work in historical geography, he specified the need for accurate sources, and he studied only those regions for which such data were available.

Another trend in Brown's time was the development of human geography. Davis, founder of American professional geography in the early 1900s, named two branches of the discipline: physiography, and ontography--which he defined as the relationships between people and their environment. Most early professional geographers, trained as geologists, specialized in physiography. By the 1920s, the discipline was becoming a social science, and workers were developing the human side of the field. Brown believed the study of people made geography interesting, and thus he taught and wrote on the human aspects. In his early career he stressed how people adjusted to their environment. Later he addressed the issue of how people's beliefs and ideas influenced their activities.

One of Brown's major goals was to describe and interpret past American regions, and he spent his mature years on this task. Another goal was to distinguish between "fact and fancy" in geographical writings, and to show how beliefs about the land, though often false, influence America's settlement. Brown also strove to teach a geography that would stimulate and interest his students, and to write geography that the general public would appreciate and enjoy.

When Brown decided to pursue historical geography in the 1930s, few other American geographers claimed this as a specialty. Indeed, most social scientists of that era were more interested in the present than the past. Some earlier American geographers wrote books blending history and geography, but Brown viewed these works as history, not geography. He defined historical geography as the regional geography of the past. This approach was not original. Some English historical geographers were also reconstructing past landscapes, and like Brown, some defined the field as the regional geography of the past.[8] Brown was the first, however, to reconstruct American past regions by using contemporary, eyewitness documents.

Brown's writings did not initiate a school of historical geography; none wanted to continue the specific work he began. This was due in part to Brown's teaching style. A low-keyed lecturer, he did not pose questions to stimulate students, nor did he urge that they continue his research. Moreover, Brown taught few advanced students because graduate work at Minnesota was beginning when he died. Later historical geographers found his works restrictive. Andrew Clark wrote, "It must be underlined that there . . . [are many] . . . other means for the reconstruction of the geographical past."[9] Clark and others made greater use of field work in historical geography than had Brown. Donald Meinig recalled, "I found his [Brown's] works too static, cross-sectional, and limited in topics to serve as a model for what I wanted to do."[10]

After Brown died, geographers developed new approaches and methods. Some were less interested in the character of regions, and turned to specialize in the discipline's systematic fields. Historical geographers in

the 1950s, under the leadership of Andrew Clark, viewed the field as the study of changing geographical conditions, as well as past geography.[11] Recent trends in historical geography include the study of urban areas; of regions outside the United States; the use of graphics, models, and statistics; and studies at a variety of scales.

Brown's books are unique. He was the first and only person to write a text on the historical geography of the United States, and it served college classes during the 1950s and '60s. Only one other person attempted to write a book similar to Mirror for Americans.[12] The importance of Brown's work lies in his use of contemporary, primary sources, a technique which later historical geographers followed. Merrens wrote that Brown was the first American geographer to make extensive use of the contemporary, documentary record.[13] In a similar vein, McManis cited Brown's most important contribution as "his demonstration that students of the geographical past must have expertise equally as historian and geographer."[14]

Another value of Brown's books was his emphasis on people's beliefs and thoughts about their land. Koelsch cited Brown's books as "an important antecedent to the perceptual approach in historical geography."[15] Meinig recalled that in the 1950s and '60s, when the behavioral approach was in vogue, historical geographers were already familiar with this theme from Brown's works. Meinig used Brown's theme of perception of the past in his doctoral dissertation, which later was reworked as The Great Columbia Plain.[16]

Two distinguished geographers viewed Brown's writings as the beginning of modern American historical geography. In 1954, Clark termed

Brown's books "a monument to . . . the coming of age of historical geography."[17] More recently, Meinig called them "the first substantial modern products of [the] field."[18]

NOTES TO CHAPTER IX

[1]Robert Dickinson cited Brown as one of the "outstanding leaders" of the third generation of American geographers, in R. Dickinson, Regional Concept: The Anglo-American Leaders, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976. (He defined the third generation as the geographers who were active in the 1930s, and were the senior geographers after World War II.)

[2]Brown frequently used this term in his letters to Gladys Wrigley.

[3]R. Hartshorne to L. Miles, 11 December 1981.

[4]C. Sauer, "The Survey Method," Annals, AAG 14 (1924): 18.

[5]Ibid.

[6]R. Brown, "A Regional Study of Trinidad," graduate seminar paper, University of Wisconsin, 1923. RHBP.

[7]R. Brown, "The Development of Field Work in Geography," seminar paper, University of Wisconsin, 1923, p. 8. RHBP.

[8]What is Historical Geography?" Geography 17 (1932): 39-45.

[9]Andrew Clark, "Ralph Hall Brown's Contribution to Historical Geography," Die Erde 5 (1952-53): 148-52. (R. Vicero translation, p. 5.)

[10]D. Meinig to L. Miles, 12 February 1979.

[11]A. Clark, "Historical Geography, in American Geography: Inventory and Prospect, ed. P. James and C. Jones (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press for the Association of American Geographers, 1954), p. 71.

[12]Eric Ross, Beyond the River and the Bay (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

[13]R. Merrens, "Praxis and Theory in the Writing of American Historical Geography," Journal of Historical Geography 4 (1978): 278.

[14]D. McManis, "A Prism to the Past: The Historical Geography of Ralph Hall Brown," Social Science History 3 (1978): 72.

[15]W. Koelsch, "Brown, Ralph Hall," Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement 4, 1946-50 (1974): 113.

[16]D. Meinig to L. Miles, 13 February 1979; D. Meinig, The Great Columbia Plain: A Historical Geography 1805-1910, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965.

[17]A. Clark, "Historical Geography," p. 83.

[18]D. W. Meinig, "The Continuous Shaping of America: A Prospectus for Geographers and Historians," The American Historical Review 83 (1978): 1187.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAAG: Archives, Association of American Geographers, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.[1]

CUA: Clark University Archives, Worcester, Massachusetts.

DWP: Derwent Whittlesey Papers, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

GRF: Geographical Review File, American Geographical Society Archives, New York City, NY.

RHBP: Ralph Hall Brown Papers, Department of Geography, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

UMA: University of Minnesota Archives, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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[1]The National Archives plans to deaccess this collection. Its new location will be at the American Philosophical Society Headquarters, in Philadelphia.

PUBLICATIONS OF RALPH HALL BROWN

"Philadelphia." The Journal of Geography 21 (1922): 214-18.

"A 'Blue Ridge' in New England." American Journal of Science 6 (1923): 15-21.

"A Method of Teaching Regional Geography." The Journal of Geography (1927): 270-76.

"Monte Vista: Sixty Years of a Colorado Community." Geographical Review 19 (1928): 567-78.

"Geography of a Portion of the San Luis Valley." Scientific Monthly (1928): 482-501.

"Colorado Mountain Passes." Colorado Magazine 6 (1929): 227-37.

"The Mountain Passes of Colorado." University of Colorado Studies 18 (1930): 29-42.

"The Mountain Communities of the Boulder Region, Colorado." The Journal of Geography 29 (1930): 271-87.

"Trans-Montain Routes of Colorado." Economic Geography 7 (1931): 422-25.

"Belle Fourche Valleys and Uplands." Annals of the Association of American Geographers 2 (1933): 127-56.

"Irrigation in a Dry-farming Region: The Greenfields Division of the Sun River Project, Montana." Geographical Review 24 (1934): 596-604.

"A Map Sequence of the Belle Fourche Irrigation Project," The Journal of Geography 34 (1935): 109-19.

"On the Merits of Regional Diagrams in Field Reports." Annals, AAG 25 (1935): 75-83.

"Fact and Fancy in Early Accounts of Minnesota's Climate." Minnesota History 17 (1936): 243-61.

"A Southwestern Oasis: The Roswell Region, New Mexico." Geographical Review 26 (1936): 610-19.

"Utilization and Conservation of Our Arid and Semiarid Lands." In Our Natural Resources and Their Conservation, pp. 115-46. Edited by J. R. Whitaker and A. E. Parkins. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1936. Also pp. 107-138 in the 1939 edition.

"Testing in Geography at College Level." The Journal of Geography 36 (1937): 140-48.

"The DeBrahm Charts of the Atlantic Ocean, 1772-1776." Geographical Review 28 (1938): 12-32.

"Governor Drayton's Contribution to Geography." South Caroline Historical and Genealogical Magazine 39 (1938): 68-72.

"Materials Bearing Upon the Geography of the Atlantic Seaboard, 1790 to 1810." Annals, AAG 28 (1938): 201-30.

"Early Maps of the United States: The Ebeling-Sotzmann Map of the Northern Seaboard States." Geographical Review 30 (1940): 471-79.

"The First Century of Meteorological Data in America." Monthly Weather Review 8 (1940): 130-33.

"St. George Tucker Versus Jedidiah Morse on the Subject of Williamsburg." William and Mary Quarterly (1940): 487-91.

"The American Geographies of Jedidiah Morse." Annals, AAG 31 (1941): 145-217.

Mirror For Americans: Likeness of the American Seaboard, 1810. American Geographical Society Publication 27. New York: American Geographical Society, 1943.

"Jefferson's Notes on Virginia." Geographical Review 33 (1943): 467-73.

"Texas Cattle Trails." Texas Geographic Magazine 10 (1946): 1-6.

Historical Geography of the United States. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1948.

Posthumous Publications

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This study is based on archival sources, Ralph Brown's publications, and writings of American geographers from the 1920s through the 1940s. Other sources are correspondence with people who knew Brown and members of the Brown family, and published and unpublished writings.

Archival Sources

The Ralph Brown Papers are in the geography department at the University of Minnesota where he taught from 1929 until his death in 1948. This collection is unorganized and has not been used before. The papers include graduate school seminar papers, his revised doctoral dissertation, early drafts of books and papers concerning employment data, job offers, and miscellaneous correspondence with other geographers.

The Geographical Review file is from the Archives of the American Geographical Society and contains the correspondence between Brown and Gladys Wrigley, then editor of the Geographical Review, a journal to which Brown frequently contributed. The letters date from the early 1920s until Brown's death.

Brown's secretarial papers are from the archives of the Association of the American Geographers. They are the official records of Brown's term as association secretary and cover the years 1942 through 1945. They give a glimpse into the internal workings and problems of the association at this time.

The Derwent Whittlesey Collection is in the Harvard University Archives. Whittlesey (1890-1956) was a geography professor at Harvard and was active in the AAG. He was also editor of the Annals. This file contains correspondence between Brown and Whittlesey regarding the status of geography and problems of the association during the war years.

The Clark University archives contain the letters regarding Brown's application to the graduate school of Geography, and the letters on his manuscript submitted to Economic Geography.

From the University of Minnesota archives, I obtained college catalogues, and information on the establishment of the geography department.

Contemporary Correspondence

I have corresponded with a number of people who knew Brown as a colleague, student, friend, and teacher and with members of the Brown family. Also helpful was William Koelsch's file of correspondence on Brown, which he kindly shared with me.

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VITAE

LINDA J. MILES

Education

University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma
Ph.D. in geography, May 1982
dissertation: "Ralph Hall Brown: Gentlescholar of Historical Geography"

Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan
M.A. in geography, June 1976
thesis: "Canton Township: A Study in Urbanization"

B.A. in geography, June 1968

University Teaching Experience

University of Oklahoma, Department of Geography
Graduate Teaching Assistant 1976-78

Wayne State University, Department of Geography
Graduate Teaching Assistant 1971-72

Experience in Applied Geography

University of Oklahoma, Western History Collections
Graduate Research Assistant, Photographic Archives 1980-82

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Detroit, Michigan
Regional Planner, Land Use Division 1973-76

Allied Supermarkets, Inc., Detroit, Michigan
Cartographer, Site Location Research Division 1972-73

Publication

"Southern Boundary of Oklahoma," in John W. Morris, ed., Boundaries of Oklahoma," vol. XIV, The Oklahoma Series (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1980), pp. 27-44.