I. GEOGRAPHY: THE FIRST ONE HUNDRED YEARS

Founding of Bluemont College

The origins of Kansas State University begin with Bluemont College. Bluemont College was established in 1858 under the patronage of the Methodist Episcopal Church on 100 acres of high ground approximately three miles north and west of the fairgrounds (present day City Park) in Manhattan, Kansas. A three-story building of white limestone was built to accommodate a large chapel, classrooms, offices, and a library containing some 3000 volumes. When the building had been completed and furnished, the church gave it to the State of Kansas in return for a federal land grant of 90,000 acres. This transfer of the college occurred in 1863, less than three years after Kansas became a state. It was the first state college in Kansas as well as the first land grant college in the nation.

The college comprised the Departments of Science and Literature, Mechanical Arts, Agriculture, and Military Tactics. The first academic year was 1863-1864; and the catalog listed six faculty members, including the Reverend Joseph Denison, President. About 100 students were enrolled. The school year was based on three terms of fourteen weeks each, beginning September 1 and ending in June. Time required for the collegiate degree was four years preceded by a preparatory year, and all students were required to pass an entrance examination before admittance to the preparatory courses.

In 1875 the college moved to new buildings that had been erected on the present university campus. The old building that had earlier been Bluemont College deteriorated and was removed. The original location was subsequently occupied by a component of the University’s Animal Sciences and Industry Department known as KABSU (Kansas Artificial Breeding Service Unit), and is now the site of Central National Bank and Founders Hill apartments.

Geography at Kansas State Agricultural College in the Early Years

From the time of the establishment of Kansas State Agricultural College in 1863 until 1880, geography was one of the most commonly listed subjects in the college catalog. In 1863 geography was required. Geography was offered in the first term and Ancient Geography in the second and third terms. Physical Geography was taught the first term of the senior year. The second annual catalog (for the academic year 1864-65)
listed geography as a required course in both the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Classics. Under Agriculture were Modern Geography in the first term of the preparatory year, Ancient Geography in the third term of the preparatory year, and Physical Geography the first term of the freshman year. The fourth (1868-69) and the fifth (1869) catalogs listed a course entitled Geography for both the first and second terms of the preparatory year. For the academic year 1870-71 the college catalog listed Physical Geography as a requirement in the second term of the freshman year for four different departments. The 1871-72 catalog listed Physical Geography in the third term of the preparatory year, and the same course was included for freshmen and sophomores in the Agriculture Department.

The catalogs for the period 1874-1877 showed changes reflecting the new women’s movement on the academic scene in Kansas. Lengthy discussion involved equal rights for women, and the departments for instruction showed three curricula: Farmers, Mechanics, and Women. The college catalog for 1874 listed Physical Geography as a requirement during the first term of the sixth year under the Women’s Course of Instruction, and in 1875-76 required Physical Geography during the spring term for the fourth year.

The number of faculty members at Kansas State Agricultural College had grown to twelve by 1877. J. Everett Platt, Professor of Music, was identified as the principal of the Preparatory Department, and a notation in the Kansas State Faculty Records for 1873 indicated that Professors Mudge and Platt were appointed to select a tutor to teach geography. Mrs. Jennie Platt, wife of J. Everett Platt, was chosen. Mrs. Platt apparently taught during some, if not all, the years between 1863 and 1877. Benjamin F. Mudge, Professor of Natural Science and Mathematics and a member of the Kansas State faculty from 1866 to 1874, was listed in the 1871-72 catalog as instructor of Physical Geography. Geography was not mentioned in the curriculum of any college catalog for the years 1880 through 1890, but the catalog for the 1891-92 academic year called for Physical Geography in the spring term of the freshman year. Geography did not appear in any catalog for the years of 1893 through the remainder of the nineteenth century or during the first decade of the twentieth century.
Geography: The First Half of the Twentieth Century

In 1918-19 a course entitled Economic Geography was listed along with various courses in economics under the Department of Economics and Sociology. The instructor was shown as Jules Ernest Kammeyer, Professor of Economics. Although this same course was listed in the catalog for the years of 1919 through 1921, a notation indicated that it was not being taught during these years. The course description was lengthy. Identical descriptions appeared in catalogs from 1922 through 1925, and Thomas Joel Anderson, Jr., Professor of Economics, was named as instructor. For the academic year 1926-27 this course apparently was changed to two semester hours. Economic Geography continued to be taught by the Department of Economics and Sociology until 1932. Other teachers for the course during these years were Leo Spurrier, Professor of Economics, and Adrian A. Holtz, Professor of Sociology.

The college catalog for the academic year 1934-35 listed a course entitled Principles of Geography along with geology courses in the Department of Zoology. This was a physical geography course and it continued to be taught each academic year under that title, until it was changed to Introductory Physical Geography in 1958. Principles of Geography were taught by geologists Arthur B. Sperry, who had training in geography at the University of Chicago, and Frank Byrne. Dr. Joseph R. Chelikowsky, a geologist, was appointed to the Department of Zoology in 1937. Chelikowsky, a graduate of Cornell University, also had taken courses in geography. He along with Professors Sperry and Byrne taught multiple sections of Principles of Geography. The first professional geographer to be appointed at Kansas State College was Karl Stacey, hired by the Department of Zoology for the academic year 1943-44 to teach Principles of Geography and a new course entitled Political Geography.

In 1943 an Army Specialized Training Program (A.S.T.P.) was established at Kansas State. The Army sent 400 soldiers to college classes in June, and by September the number had increased to 650. Geography was one of three subjects from Arts and Sciences included in this program. In February 1943, Army Air Corps trainees also entered this program. In all, 1,973 Air Corps men received training that included a geography course before the program ended in May 1944. Professors Stacey, Chelikowsky, Sperry, and Byrne taught multiple sections of the geography course.
Stacey joined the army in 1944 and spent most of the next two years as an officer in Europe. He was reappointed to the newly created Department of Geology in February 1947. The Department of Geology had been founded in 1946 with Professor Sperry as head. At the same time, geology was authorized to administer two new four credit hour general studies courses entitled Man’s Physical World I and II. Soon after the end of World War II student enrollment at Kansas State increased dramatically.

Margaret H. Smith and Sarah C. Larson were appointed as geography instructors in the Department of Geology in 1946, and Huber Self was appointed instructor in 1947, making four professional geographers in the department. Karl Stacey, Sarah Larson, and Huber Self were the first three geographers to complete their careers at K-State, and are considered pioneers. See Plate 1.

Although the Principles of Geography course was expanded to several sections to accommodate increased enrollment, usually each of the geographers was assigned one or two additional geography courses. The remainder of the teaching load of fifteen to eighteen semester hours was devoted to teaching recitation sections of both Man’s Physical World I and II. Two new courses, Geography of the Western Hemisphere (211) and Geography of the Eastern Hemisphere (212) first appeared in the college catalog for the academic year 1947-1948.

In the 1951-52 catalog, the word “Geography” first appeared with “Geology” in the department title. That catalog also first listed geography courses under the separate heading “Geography”. Professor Arthur B. Sperry continued as head of the department, until his medical retirement in 1955, when Dr. Joseph R. Chelikowsky became head of the Department of Geology and Geography.

For the period 1946 to 1956, four geographers were employed at Kansas State. Political Geography, Geography of the Western Hemisphere, and Geography of the Eastern Hemisphere were strengthened and reworked and given higher numbers in 1952 to allow both graduate and undergraduate credit. Two new courses, Geography of Kansas (220) and Cartography (280), to be taught by Professor Self, were added in 1954. All geography courses taught at Kansas State from 1863 through Spring 2007 are listed in Appendix A.
GEOGRAPHY PIONEERS

KARL STACEY

SARAH LARSON

HUBER SELF

Plate 1
Establishment of a Bachelors Degree in Geography

By the early 1950s seventeen semester hours were offered in geography courses, and the possibility of a major was discussed. Preceding the degree in geography, in 1954 a geography program was incorporated into the newly established curriculum in Secondary Education. This program, oriented toward the physical sciences, first appeared in the college catalog for 1955-56 as a Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary Education that included the seventeen hours then offered in geography. It was oriented toward the physical sciences.

Huber Self advocated a bachelor’s degree in geography at Kansas State and used every opportunity to gain acceptance for the program. Two important individuals supported his efforts. First, Dr. Chelikowsky, the new head of the Department of Geology and Geography, was sympathetic and enthusiastically worked toward this goal. Second, Dr. John Weaver, a professional geographer who had been chairman of the Department of Geography at the University of Minnesota became Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in early 1955. He encouraged a major in geography at Kansas State. A degree program was approved in late 1955. The courses, Geography of the Western Hemisphere and Geography of the Eastern Hemisphere were dropped and six new courses were added: Economic Geography (215), Geography of Anglo-America (735), Geography of Latin America (740), Geography of Western Europe (745), Geography of the Soviet Union (750), and Problems in Geography (798).

Dean John Weaver found that curricula throughout the entire College of Arts and Sciences had not kept pace with the academic changes occurring in higher educational institutions throughout the nation. In 1956 he formed several committees and encouraged modernizing the curricula throughout the Arts and Sciences College. Huber Self was appointed to represent geography on the Social Science Committee. In close consultation with Dr. Chelikowsky, Self advocated that students in all social sciences should be required to take at least one course in each of the social science areas. This proposal along with several other changes in the curriculum was adopted. College catalogs from 1958 through 1970 required that all students in economics, history, government, psychology, and sociology take at least one course in geography. At the same time, all geography majors were to take at least one course in all other social science areas. As
a result enrollment in geography greatly increased, and several students changed their
major to geography or obtained a dual major in geography and other social sciences.

In the 1956-57 catalog the first bachelor of science degree in geography under the
social science curriculum was listed. This new program required 24 hours in geography
as well as other courses in the social science curriculum. In 1957, Kansas State
approved a geography bachelor of science degree in the physical sciences curriculum
and a bachelor of science degree in biogeography. The two majors first appeared in
the catalogs covering the period 1958-60. The bachelor of science degree program for
geographers in the secondary education curriculum lost its physical science orientation
and was placed under the social science curriculum. The degrees for geographers under
the physical science curriculum and in biogeography were never popular with students
majoring in geography, and it is unlikely that any degree was given in either.

The first official graduates in geography were in 1959 when seven students
received degrees in the newly named Kansas State University (KSU). Actually,
two students earned degrees in geography before 1959. Mrs. Nadine (Oltjen) Burns
completed a double major in secondary education and geography in 1957, and James
E. Bowe completed a dual major in the general social science area and in geography in
1958. At that time the school granted the bachelor’s degree in only one of the dual major
areas; for Mrs. Burns Secondary Education and for Mr. Bowe General Social Science.
However, the Department of Geography recognizes Mrs. Burns as the first person to
major in geography at Kansas State and Mr. Bowe the second.

The Masters Degree in Geography

As Head of the Department of Geology and Geography, Dr. Chelikowsky
proposed a Master of Science degree program in geography at Kansas State in 1958. It
was approved in 1959. Dr. Karl Stacey helped to formalize the masters degree program,
first listed in the catalog for 1960-61/1961-62. Graduate degrees were granted in 1961 to
Jack E. Harding and Han Sik Lee. The first Masters thesis in geography titled “Petroleum
Production and Population Change in North Central Kansas” was defended in 1961. Jack
E. Harding wrote it with Dr. Karl Stacey as the major professor.

Several new courses in geography were approved between 1957 and 1965 for
graduate credit in order to accommodate the new graduate program. New courses
included: Climatology (710), Geography of East Asia (755), Seminar in Geography (790), Advanced Economic Geography (756), Urban Geography (775), Comprehensive Geography (701), Geography of Transportation (776), Conservation of Mineral and Water Resources (650), Seminar in Regional Geography (786), Seminar in Cultural-Economic Geography (787), History and Philosophy of Geography (789), and Research in Geography (995).