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Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Volume 28, Issue 3 (Sep., 1938), 201-231.

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Materials Bearing upon the Geography of the Atlantic Seaboard, 1790 to 1810*

RALPH H. BROWN

RECENT VIEWPOINTS IN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

Within the past quarter-century authorities in historical geography have defined their field in terms which are essentially consistent with modern geographic thought. Professor Barrows in 1922 expressed his views thus: "To me, indeed, historical geography has come to mean simply the geography of the past—human ecology in past terms. Historical geography, the geography of the past, helps to show the significance of past geographic conditions in the interpretation of present geographic conditions. It provides the key to many environmental relationships that have persisted after the occasion for them has passed. It introduces, so to speak, the 'third dimension' into geography."¹ Hettner observes in no uncertain terms that "by historical geography one can mean only the geographical study of past times."²

Roxby's interpretation, though less forthright than the foregoing, nevertheless shows that the discovery of the essential features of the geography of a unit area at a specified time in the past constitutes a worth-while contribution to this borderline field. According to him, "historical geography is essentially human geography in its evolutionary aspects. . . . It has the same aspects and is permeated by the same concepts as human geography. The primary object is not, as has been too often supposed, to explain historical events as determined by geographical conditions; but on the other hand historical geography is far more than history illustrated by a few maps."³

* Summarizing in part a study made possible by grants-in-aid for 1936 and 1937 from the Social Science Research Council and the University of Minnesota. This paper is intended to be preliminary to a monographic treatment of the geography of the Atlantic Seaboard at the opening of the nineteenth century.

¹ Harlan H. Barrows, "Geography as human ecology," *Annals of the Assoc. of Amer. Geogs.*, Vol. 13 (1923) : 11.

² A. Hettner, *Die Geographie, ihre Geschichte, ihre Wesen, und ihre Methoden*, Breslau, 1927, p. 150, and a similar statement at an earlier time in *Geographische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 11 (1905) : 563-564.

³ Percy M. Roxby, "The scope and aims of human geography," *British Assoc. for the Advancement of Science, Section E—Geography*, Bristol (1930) : 14.

In the editorial preface to a recently published book in this field the Barrows definition is, in effect, repeated when it is stated that in performing this type of investigation the geographer "strictly speaking merely carries [his] studies into the past: his subject matter remains the same."⁴

These and many other recent definitions which might be cited emphasize historical geography as an inquiry into and a coherent presentation of the past geography of definable areas. On occasion this type of study has been called a "reconstruction" of the geography at a particular stage in regional occupation. Thus, Robert B. Hall has suggested that reconstructions be made for the Great Lakes area in the course of which "we should attempt to layer occupation on occupation in much the same manner as a geologist studies stratifications, and each of these occupation layers can be correlated, locality by locality."⁵ The study of an antecedent "occupation layer," it may be observed, yields a partially developed cross-sectional view of the regional geography of that period. The preparation of cross sections of various types has long engaged the interest of workers in the social sciences. The taking of a regional cross section at a particular time in the past necessarily involves the interruption of the essentially continuous historic stream. Historians have shown the validity of this by the identification and discussion of "periods" and at least one of them avers that "cross sections of some kind there must be, if we are not to be trapped in a hopeless entanglement of times and places."⁶

In the "sequent occupation" approach to the study of the present landscape, advocated as recently as 1929,⁷ the investigator necessarily conforms to the spirit of the recent definitions, but in this case concern is directed chiefly to those aspects of the past which have "left vestiges and so exist also, in effect, in the present." This type of study which has been, and perhaps in its research aspects must be restricted to the analysis of small areas, has emphasized the recognition of "stage of occupation" which has been defined as "an epoch during which human occupation of an area remains constant in its fundamental aspects."⁸

⁴ E. G. R. Taylor, quoted by H. C. Darby in *An Historical Geography of England before A. D. 1800*, London, 1936, p. vii.

⁵ "Round table on problems in cultural geography," *Annals of the Assoc. of Amer. Geogs.*, Vol. 27 (1937): 168.

⁶ Ephraim Emerton, "The periodization of history," *Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc.*, Vol. 52 (1918-19): 57.

⁷ Derwent Whittlesey, "Sequent occupation," *Annals of the Assoc. of Amer. Geogs.*, Vol. 19 (1929): 162-165.

⁸ Derwent Whittlesey, "Coastland and interior mountain valley," in *New England's Prospect*, Amer. Geog. Soc., N. Y., 1933, footnote, p. 451.

RECENT VIEWPOINTS RARELY DEMONSTRATED IN PUBLISHED STUDIES

Geographers have been slow to accept the challenge which inheres in this acceptable reorientation of the "third dimension" of their field. The list of studies of cisatlantic areas which exemplify, to the satisfaction of geographers and historians, the practical working out of this concept is admittedly unimpressive.

The two factors believed to have been mainly responsible for the dearth of regional studies of the past geography of areas in this country are (1) the actual or assumed want of reliable materials descriptive of early geographical conditions, and (2) the more or less tacit assumption that a study based upon such records as are available necessarily involves a time sequence, thereby greatly complicating the reconstruction with the danger that the end result will be an historical rather than a geographical study.

In contradiction of the second assumption it must be urged that a time sequence is by no means essential in a geographical study of the past. 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 of time and utilizes temporal development only in order to explain the conditions at the time chosen."⁹

The first-named factor, therefore, appears to be the more critical one. Reliable descriptive materials and records customarily employed in geographical work are actually wanting for some past periods and are fragmentary for others; on the other hand contemporary records pertaining to the older settled Atlantic margin during certain stages in its occupancy are to be had in surprising quantity and variety. Reference is made, of course, to periods antedating the commonly accepted beginnings of professional geography.¹⁰

Records made by intelligent people who observed, thought and wrote in the manner traditional with geographers are especially abundant for the Atlantic Seaboard, to use a regional term familiar at least by the middle of the eighteenth century.¹¹ The availability of trustworthy geographical ma-

⁹ *Geographische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 11 (1905) : 556. Abstracted translation authenticated by R. Hartshorne.

¹⁰ For a critical discussion of descriptive works which are associated with the advance of professional geography see W. L. G. Joerg, "The geography of North America; a history of its regional exposition." *Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 26 (1936) : 640-663.

¹¹ This term identified the land area connected with the ocean by navigation. It was used without definition by Thomas Jefferson while Secretary of State in his: "Report to the Congress of the United States of America on the nature and extent of the privileges and restrictions of the commercial intercourse of the United States

materials relating to the seaboard must be the guide to the selection of the period for which a reconstruction of its past geography is made and must also govern the areal limits within which this may be done with confidence.

INADEQUACY OF GEOGRAPHICAL MATERIALS BEFORE THE 1790'S

Certainly a study of the geography of the complex Atlantic seaboard at a past period cannot safely be rested upon a few eye-witness accounts widely separated in time and place, however solidly these might be buttressed with official data and contemporary maps. The recorded observations of individuals, particularly those which were made during the formative stages of settlement, must now be used with caution. Much of this early descriptive literature, as Wroth has pointed out in the instance of Maryland, "was the stuff of dreams and a challenge to the spirit," and until near the 1650's was definitely of a promotional character.¹² The greater part of this curious literature, of which Thomas Glover's "account of Virginia" in 1676 is an excellent example,¹³ is more amenable to use and interpretation by a historian than by a geographer, even in those instances when a geographical exposition was attempted. W. M. Davis has called attention to the "innumerable" seventeenth and eighteenth century "records of colonization along the Atlantic seaboard" which give more detail "on the human side than on the physiographic side, and thus have awaited embodiment either in history, where they have been much used, or in geography, where they have been used less,"¹⁴ but fails to warn that many of these records are not to be relied upon. Not all such accounts were deliberate falsifications; often the writer was simply misinformed or was conveying to others what he thought was true. An eminent historian of the colonial period has pointed out the importance of this material, saying that "whatever a given age or people believe to be true is true for that age and people. Whether what they believed was true according to any particular standard or not, or whether from a modern point of view their belief was wise or prudent, has

with foreign nations." This report was added to Alexander Hamilton's "Report on the American Budget for 1794," printed by J. Durett, London, 1794. In the text Jefferson distinguishes between the "landboard" and the "seaboard." John Pickering's "Memoir on the present state of the English language in the United States [etc]" in *Memoirs of the Amer. Acad. of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 3 (1809-19), contains a contemporary definition of "seaboard" and refers to Jefferson's extraordinary use of "landboard."

¹² Lawrence C. Wroth, "Maryland colonization tracts," in *Herbert Putnam Essays*, N. Y. (1929): 539, 551.

¹³ "An account of Virginia, its scituation, temperature, production, inhabitants [etc.]" Reprint by Horace Hart, Oxford, 31 pp.

¹⁴ "The progress of geography in the United States," *Annals of the Assoc. of Amer. Geogs.*, Vol. 24 (1924): 196.

nothing to do with the case."¹⁵ But to the geographer seeking to penetrate the veneer of beliefs to get at the facts of the geography of a particular time and place, much more than this must be available before a reconstruction will be ventured.

Even in the later colonial period as well as during and immediately after the Revolution much of the descriptive matter, particularly that broadly classified as "travel literature" retains an element of bias not always apparent to the casual reader. Into the writings of patriotic citizens no less than those of foreign visitors crept prejudicial comment. "We have been from the day of our Independence the victims of deliberate falsehood and romantic fancy," wrote Samuel Breck in a reminiscent letter in 1862. "French descriptions are generally decorated with fairyland pictures and the English with expressions of scorn and hatred," not recognizing his own inconsistency in then giving praise to Brissot de Warville's *New Travels* (1788). Brissot's running commentary is scarcely nearer the truth than the *Concise Account* of the illustrious Robert Rogers (1765), a book written, as Kenneth Roberts has shown in his *Northwest Passage*, under conditions not suited to sober scientific work. The unravelling of the fact from the fancy out of which much of this early literature is composed is always a difficult and often a hopeless task.

Of systematic geographic literature before the 1790's there was practically none which might now serve as a framework for organizing the incidental observations recorded at the same time. Two exceptions to this rule may be briefly noted. Thomas Jefferson first published his *Notes on the State of Virginia* in 1784, after which the book went through many editions, receiving more attention, perhaps from its distinguished authorship, than its ill-organized contents really merited. Lewis Evans, possibly the first individual in this country to be known by contemporaries as a geographer, published his *Geographical Essays* in 1755. This work won frequent high praise from W. M. Davis who wrote in one place that the book "is illustrated by a map which, like the text, bears witness to an extraordinary acuteness of observation, and as well to an unusual power of generalization, on the part of the author who must be regarded as an early leader among American geographers."¹⁶ This essay, largely a treatise in physical geography and most remarkable for its treatment of the Appalachians, remained the standard for over half a century, especially through

¹⁵ Charles M. Andrews, "Virginia's place in colonial history," *Virginia Magazine of Biography and History*, Vol. 40 (1932): 225.

¹⁶ "Was Lewis Evans or Benjamin Franklin the first to recognize that our north-east storms come from the southwest?" *Proc. Amer. Phil. Soc.*, Vol. 45 (1906): 129-130.

its reissue and partial revision by Thomas Pownall, a provincial governor of Massachusetts, in 1776. Evans had planned to follow this essay with others which, had they been completed, might have furnished us with an intelligible background for an understanding of the culture during the middle of the eighteenth century. His death at about the age of 56 (uncertain because the date of his birth is not precisely known) prevented the continuation of the series.¹⁷

Official tabulations of data relevant to geographical study—data of population, manufactures, land uses, commerce and the like—do not exist in quantity until toward the end of the eighteenth century. In contrast with the fragmentary character of the descriptions and the meagerness of the statistical sources is the wealth of the cartographic record over the corresponding period. Naturally there was an improvement in the accuracy of the map record, especially evident in the eastern portion of the continental maps. Following the publication of Lewis Evans' map of the Middle British Colonies in 1755, maps showing the Atlantic coastal area increased so rapidly in number and variety that a mere list of titles would run to considerable length. Such a list could be still further extended by including with the large-area maps those showing separate states, property subdivisions, roads, city and town plans and coastal charts. By the opening of the nineteenth century, cartographic resources become more than adequate.

GEOGRAPHIC MATERIALS—1790 TO 1810

The quest for the earliest period for which an authentic regional historical geography of the seaboard area may be prepared reaches a satisfactory stopping point at the opening of the nineteenth century. The year 1800 roughly marks the mid-point of a twenty-year period remarkable for the content and coverage of contemporary geographical material. This material, to be found mainly in books, periodicals and the journals of learned societies, extends to thousands of pages amplified by many maps of great variety—tangible evidence of a widespread interest in things geographical. Few of those who prepared this material claimed to be geographers. Their number includes several "natural scientists" some of whom, as did Benjamin S. Barton and Samuel Williams, held university professorships. In addition there were many men in public life, statesmen like Albert Gallatin and James Madison, who were interested in geographical problems and wrote convincingly regarding them, and appointees to official or semi-official positions whose work, possibly as land surveyors or Indian agents, gave them intimate or specialized knowledge of conditions as they

¹⁷ For a critical appraisal of the work of Lewis Evans see: Lawrence C. Wroth, *An American Bookshelf, 1755*, Univ. of Penn. Press, Phila., 1934.

were and who had a flair for geographical description. The ranks of observers and writers between 1790 and 1810 were swelled by a large group of individuals difficult to classify: clergymen, physicians, foreign visitors and members of the intelligentsia, who informed themselves upon topics usually cognized in a regional study and who felt impelled or possessed the means to make a record of this knowledge. By avocation some of these were geographers or became so for the time being. For the most part they wrote geography without being aware of it—sometimes indeed disclaimed any intention of it—and issued their work under titles which give slight clue to their contents. On rare occasions only did the authors use the word “geography” to identify their work; when they did so it was often with a practical eye to the greater salability of the volume.

This eye-witness material which was recorded but not necessarily pub-



BENJAMIN SMITH BARTON

lished during the twenty-year period indicated constitutes the essential framework for a contemporary regional cross section of the seaboard area. The time limits within which observations have been accepted have been drawn precisely but not arbitrarily. Subsequent to the first decade of the nineteenth century there is a noticeable reduction in the quality of the geographical material, owing in part to the upheaval attending the second war with Britain, in part to dissipation in geographical work consequent upon the territorial expansion of the nation, and in part also to the loss by death or by diversion of interest to other endeavors of those who had contributed to geographical work during the preceding years. Furthermore, it would be inconsistent to extend the period much beyond 1810, since the desire is to gain an essentially contemporaneous view of a particular area at a stated time. It is true that between 1790 and 1810 many changes occurred—McMaster has observed that it was a period “fruitful of all manner of projects for internal improvement”¹⁸—and thus two accounts of the same scene might differ because an actual change had occurred; but the allowed time interval appears sufficiently restricted to ensure a reasonable degree of comparability.

GEOGRAPHICAL MATERIALS CLASSIFIED

The materials available are classifiable into two broad groups conveniently designated as (a) works of organization and (b) sporadic observations. The former group includes literary efforts of larger scope—larger in respect to areal coverage and range of factual content. In their composition the author attempted to collect, by means of interview and study of published and manuscript records, official data and maps, such material as seemed relevant to a geographical exposition, combining with it the results of his own observation and thought. These literary efforts are, therefore, comparable with our modern text books, especially those which have regional coverage. Characteristically of geographers, perhaps, the authors were not always particular in indicating to the reader which parts of his treatise represented his own work and which that of others. One of the many duties incumbent upon the present-day user of this material is to distinguish between the two. It was quite customary, for example, for writers during this period to borrow without credit from Jefferson's easily accessible *Notes on Virginia* (1784) statements relating to agricultural conditions which were no longer true twenty years later. Even the most ambitious and studious organizer during this period could not possibly have had access to all or even a major part of the available information of the

¹⁸ John B. McMaster: *A History of the People of the United States*, N. Y. (1885): Vol. 2, p. 74.

time. There were no great public libraries; even the private library of the wealthy Washington, well known for his geographical interests, contains but few relevant items.¹⁹ Many of the books issued at this time were in small editions, rare within a few years of their publication. A considerable part of the material remained unpublished for many years; indeed some of it is still in manuscript in libraries, institutions and private collections. Significant examples of sources inaccessible at the time but covering the period are the *Statistical Annals* of Adam Seybert published in 1818 but founded on public documents commencing in 1789, various state papers,²⁰ some journals of official appointees,²¹ and recently published accounts of Spanish East Florida.²² A second duty of the present-day student, therefore, is the discovery of this contemporary material which was unavailable to or overlooked by the organizers, and the utilization of those parts which contribute to an understanding of the geography of that time. Ordinarily, too, the material which the organizers did use requires re-working and re-orientation to bring it into line with present-day standards of scholarship.

Sporadic observations include (a) records of travelers, (b) articles in the journals of learned societies, and (c) contemporary writings in magazines, newspapers and pamphlets. Travel records, usually rendered in the form of a diary in which geographical data are embedded in an ill-assorted miscellany of irrelevant observations, by no means occupy as strategic a place in such a study as one would gather from reference to secondary historical literature in which they have been largely used. Articles in scientific journals, especially when written by authors of the larger works, have particular value. That portion of the writings in popular magazines, weekly newspapers and pamphlets which bears upon contemporary geographical problems runs to enormous proportions. Here people were wont to publish commentaries on agriculture and other industries, soil erosion, the condition of the forest; and to insert tables of weather data and the dates of flowering and fruiting of plants. In such places one finds news items regarding the building of this or that canal, the opening of a turnpike, and the numbers of vessels cleared at certain ports together with their cargoes. This fragmentary or "fugitive" information, by itself of little significance and border-

¹⁹ The greater part of this library is preserved in the Boston Athenaeum.

²⁰ For example, Albert Gallatin's account of fish and whale products and Thomas Jefferson's report on a similar topic, comprising *State Papers 71 and 5, Class 4, Commerce and Navigation*, Washington, 1832.

²¹ For example, Benjamin Hawkins: "A sketch of the Creek Country in the years 1798 and 1799; *Coll. of the Georgia Hist. Soc.*, Vol. 3, Part 1, 1848. His MS of this with a criticism is in the library of the American Philosophical Society.

²² Arthur P. Whitaker, Trans. and ed., *Documents Relating to the Commercial Policy of Spain in the Floridas, with incidental reference to Louisiana*: Florida State Hist. Soc., Deland, 1931.

ing closely upon distinctly historical materials, becomes of geographical value only when collated with all the rest in a balanced treatment. The third duty of the present-day geographer, therefore, is that of filling out the record with such of these details as is compatible with the objects of the whole study.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORKS OF ORGANIZATION

Both major classes of materials are essential to a reconstruction of the geography of the seaboard area at the opening of the nineteenth century. The works of organization are critical for three reasons.

First, they suggest and in part precisely outline the limits of regions which had recognizable character at the time. The welcome result is that the investigator need not resort to an artificial selection of regional boundaries within which to localize his study, or slavishly accept those which have no better basis than a firm rooting in tradition or which are valid only in terms of the present time.

Second, they provide a means by which we may estimate the reliability of observations upon features, especially cultural features, which exist today only in modified form or have vanished altogether. (a) In a work which covers a range of topics, the author reveals his standards of scholarship in his treatment of aspects such as climate upon which we have a direct check. If the author shows diligence and resourcefulness in the acquisition of basic climatic data and demonstrates intelligence in their handling with a reasonable command of the subject matter, we are inclined to accept his other observations with greater confidence. (b) Moreover, these works set up a standard of achievement by which we may appraise the reliability of the sporadic records, many of which were made by individuals upon whose ability to observe geographical phenomena there is no direct evidence. The question in such a case is: Is the observation consistent with that of others whose integrity has been demonstrated? (c) Again, these works were considered important enough to draw published criticism in the review sections of the periodical literature. The nature of the review, at that time usually a full one indeed, gives additional clues to the acceptability of the work, at least in the opinion of well-informed contemporaries. The review takes on added significance when written by an individual known to have been conversant with the subject-matter.

Third, these works indicate to the investigator the sorts of regional problems which need elaboration and suggest effective lines of research.

For one or all of these reasons, parts, and often very small parts, of the following have been found critical.

Group A: Regional or quasi-regional works

C. F. Volney: *Tableau du Climat et du Sol des États Unis d'Amérique*,

Courcier et Dentu, Paris, 1803; two parts in one volume, 532 pages. This also forms Vol. 4 of *Oeuvres de C. F. Volney*, Parmentier, Paris, 1825. There are two English translations: *View of the Climate and Soil of the United States of America*, translator unknown, London, 1804, and *A View of the Soil and Climate* [etc.], translated by Charles B. Brown, Philadelphia, 1804.

John Drayton: *A View of South Carolina as Respects Her Natural and Civil Concerns*, W. P. Young, Charleston, 1802, 252 pages. Translated into German as: *Beschreibung von Sud-Carolina*, Vol. 35 of *Bibliothek der Neuen Reisebeschreibung*, Weimar, 1808. The MS. of the English edition with a preface written in 1821 is deposited in the Charleston Library Society.

Samuel Williams: *The Natural and Civil History of Vermont*, Thomas and Carlisle, Walpole, N. H., 1794.

Benjamin S. Barton: *Fragments of the Natural History of Pennsylvania*, Way and Groff, Philadelphia, 1799.

Samuel L. Mitchill: "A sketch of the mineralogical history of New York," *The Medical Repository*, various numbers: 1797, 1800, 1802.

Joseph Bouchette: *A Topographical Description of Lower Canada, with Remarks upon Upper Canada and on the Relative Connexion of Both Provinces with the United States of America*, London, 1815, 640 pages and appendix.

Group B: Compendiums

Christoph D. Ebeling: *Erdbeschreibung und Geschichte die Vereinten (sic.) Staaten von Nordamerika*, 7 volumes of 6500 pages, published intermittently at Hamburg by Carl Bohn from 1793 to 1816. Title varies.

Joseph Scott: *The United States Gazetteer, Containing an Authentic Description of the Several States of the United States*. . . . Philadelphia, 1795.

W. Winterbotham: *A View of the United States of America and the West Indies*, New York, 1796, 4 volumes. Title varies.

Jedidiah Morse: *The American Geography, or a View of the Present Situation of the United States of America*, Elizabethtown, N. J., 1789 and later revised editions. Title varies.

B. Davies: *A Sketch of the Geography and Present State of the United Territories of North America* [etc.], Philadelphia, 1805.

Tench Coxe: *A View of the United States of America in a series of papers written . . . between the years 1787 and 1794*, Philadelphia, 1794.

THE UTILITY OF THE REGIONAL WORKS ILLUSTRATED BY VOLNEY'S *Tableau* AND DRAYTON'S *View*

The opening chapters of Volney's *Tableau* and Drayton's *View* are significant for all the reasons mentioned and thus will serve to illustrate the utilization of the offerings in this group.

In both treatments a regional portrayal was attempted and brought to partial completion; each records or rather compresses into a small space the

results of much preliminary work—a fact not apparent to the casual reader; and the issuance of both volumes aroused an unusual amount of discussion and criticism. The chief point to be established here in brief compass is that some of the conclusions of these observers may be relied upon, especially in the parts where such conclusions were generalized into a regional scheme. To the extent to which generalization followed a mature consideration of the basic data, the identified regions provide a valid starting point for a reconstructional study.

During his three years of preparatory work in this country between 1795 and 1798, Volney himself was the subject of much comment: his



CONSTANTIN FRANÇOIS CHASSEBOEUF VOLNEY

arrival raised hopes that at long last there had appeared on the scene a man capable of preparing a reliable "picture" of eastern United States. A Charleston news-magazine announcing the arrival of "the celebrated Mr.

Volney" in New York City on his way to Philadelphia, prophesied optimistically that "a man of his discerning eye will observe many new and curious facts in this western hemisphere; and his reputation in Europe is capable of dissipating many prejudices respecting America which have been propagated in that quarter . . . by less discerning and less candid travelers."²³ But later, before his return to France to enter political life, the opinion was nearly unanimous that he was a man more to be admired at a distance than to be liked at close hand. An acquaintance recalls him as "a man of proud spirit and sour temper" and that in Philadelphia he "used to say, with his accustomed vanity, that such men as Talleyrand furnished the outlines of a work which authors, by profession like himself, put into suitable style."²⁴ In similar vein another refers to an encounter in Baltimore, concluding that "though gratified with the unexpected intercourse with so distinguished a man, I cannot say that Monsieur Volney pleased me much. He was cold and satirical."²⁵

Volney was one of the few foreign visitors who came to the States at this period with the definite purpose in mind of publishing a description of this country, and almost the only one who, in final composition, avoided the diary style of writing. Thus, he is unfairly classed with the "travelers" because he was much more than this; nor is he grouped with entire propriety with the early geologists as Merrill has done²⁶—it is demonstrable that he followed the geographical method in preliminary investigation and final writing. The latter is made obvious by his volume, the former is in part indicated by Mitchill who states that Volney was "chiefly employed in gathering information by conversations with intelligent men and by journies through the several states and territories, concerning the actual condition of the country."²⁷ As an interviewer he was handicapped by a personal vanity and aloofness which many disliked; others denounced him as an atheist. Above all, he had won a reputation for radical political beliefs, even though afterwards he became a member of the French conservative senate. He was often called, opprobriously, a "free thinker." As a result many doors were closed to him: it is recorded that Washington's letter of introduction to likely consultees was at best a grudging one. Apparently, however, he

²³ *South Carolina Weekly Museum*, Vol. 1 (1797): 643.

²⁴ Samuel Breck, "Recollections of my acquaintance and association with deceased members of the American Philosophical Society," 1862, MS American Philosophical Society.

²⁵ Thomas Twining, *Travels in America One Hundred Years Ago: Notes and Reminiscences of Thomas Twining*, N. Y., 1893, p. 122.

²⁶ George P. Merrill, *The First Hundred Years of American Geology*, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1924.

²⁷ [Samuel L. Mitchill], Review of the *Tableau* in *The Medical Repository*, Vol. 2, Second Hexade (1805): 173.

was endowed with some modesty for he wrote to a friend that "il me semble impossible d'avoir une idée nette de ce grand pays à mois trois ans, surtout pour un français."²⁸ A. Von Humboldt is one of the many to assure us that Volney was an able observer.²⁹

It was Volney's belief that, at the conclusion of his study, he was in a position to "distribute with sufficient certainty" the major regions and provinces of the inhabited area. This he abruptly does in the opening pages: that is to say his major conclusions, somewhat in the tradition of geography, are stated at the outset with few preliminaries and a minimum of supporting data. His regions are of various sorts, some based on physiography (regions of internal structure) and others on climate and vegetation. Finally he groups all regions into three great provinces (countries) of which his Atlantic Country appears broadly analogous with the contemporary concept of the seaboard. This "Atlantic Country," he observes, is notable for its diversity of surface, climate and vegetation; nevertheless it is broadly unified by association with the ocean and by a more mature stage of development than contiguous areas inland. To use his own words, it represents the "seat of the nation and the residence of the largest portion of the population." The inland limits thus set up or hinted at relate to major changes in the natural environment and in part to cultural differences, occasionally to both.

The limits of all these smaller and larger units are not shown precisely on a map, although hand colored maps in rare volumes³⁰ outline the extent of some regions, and boundary lines are elsewhere partially drawn. From the context, cartographic expression can be given with some confidence to those regions not fully outlined, especially by extending the seaboard limits into Lower Canada and Spanish East Florida. Much depends, therefore, on the degree of reliance which may be placed upon Volney's competence as an observer. Following are some of the many avenues taken in appraising his credibility.

First of all, of course, is his three years of observation in this country and an earlier experience in similar work elsewhere. Twining, who acted as Volney's assistant for a time, wrote that "he examined things as we went about very minutely." Second, the limits given natural regions agree, even in certain details, with modern concepts. Thus, his treatment of climate, which occupies the greater part of the book, furnishes an indirect means

²⁸ Quoted by Frank Monaghan in: "French travelers in the United States, 1765 to 1931," *Bull. of the New York Public Library*, Vol. 36 (1932): 166.

²⁹ In: "Some particulars relating to a terrible hurricane," *The Medical Repository*, Vol. 2, Second Hexade (1805): 354.

³⁰ The copy possessed by the New York Public Library contains a regional map in color.

of testing his scholarship and skill in observing and interpreting geographical phenomena. An investigation has shown that Volney placed much dependence upon climatic and phenological records in his endeavor to "put into suitable form" this aspect of the geography of eastern North America. Specific reference is occasionally made in the *Tableau* to climatic summaries; at other points one may only infer other sources upon which he based conclusions. Special pains were consequently taken, in this appraisal of Volney's integrity, to investigate the sources which he actually and presumably used. This special inquiry revealed an altogether surprising coverage of weather records many of which compare favorably in accuracy with the official data since amassed at or near the same places.³¹ The different climatic records available to Volney and his contemporaries were not always directly comparable: some observers measured only rainfall, others only temperature. The latter element was especially favored because the observed temperature contrasts of the Atlantic seaboard and Europe's west coast inspired those interested in climatic phenomena to discover the facts. Favorite hours for recording temperatures were sunrise, two P. M., and sunset. Dr. E. A. Holyoke of Salem managed somehow in the midst of a busy medical practice to "read the thermometer" nine times a day for a quarter-century and, less frequently, for another fifty years. The localities where some of the more reliable and significant data were recorded and the names of the observers are shown in Fig. 1.³²

Not content with meteorological records, Volney consulted with many presumed authorities: this we learn from statements made by Von Humboldt and letters from Jefferson to Volney.³³ Evidence that some of Vol-

³¹ This conclusion was reached independently of similar conclusions by Willis I. Milham writing in *Monthly Weather Rev.*, Vol. 52 (1924): 503-570 and by J. B. Kincer in *Ibid.*, Vol. 61 (1933): 251-259 and *Nebr. Crop Growers Ass'n Bull.* 1937.

³² This material was brought down, for the purposes of the entire study, to 1810; thus some of it was not available to Volney. To avoid misunderstanding, it is necessary to state that the list of summaries does not pretend to completeness, but is rather a list selected for reliability and areal coverage. Not included are a few known summaries for places beyond the seaboard (Natchez, Miss., 1799-1803, Cincinnati, 1806-1813) and many within the seaboard (for example, the Charles Peirce data for Philadelphia starting with 1790 and for Andover, Mass., 1798-1808). The Holyoke summary for Salem appears to be the longest, most elaborate record made by one individual in this country, exceeding in completeness if not also in length the three "longest" records suggested by previous writers—the H. D. Garvey record for North Lewisburg, Ohio, the Jesse C. Green record for West Chester, Pa., and the Peirce record referred to above. The selected climatic records were found in various sources and places, especially in the early *Memoirs* of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the *Transactions* of the Royal Irish Academy, in popular magazines, notably the *Columbian*, and in manuscript in the Harvard College Library, the American Philosophical Society and private collections.

³³ Letter, Jefferson to Volney, January 8, 1797, in *Volney et l'Amérique*, Gilbert Chinard, The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1923, pp. 59-62.

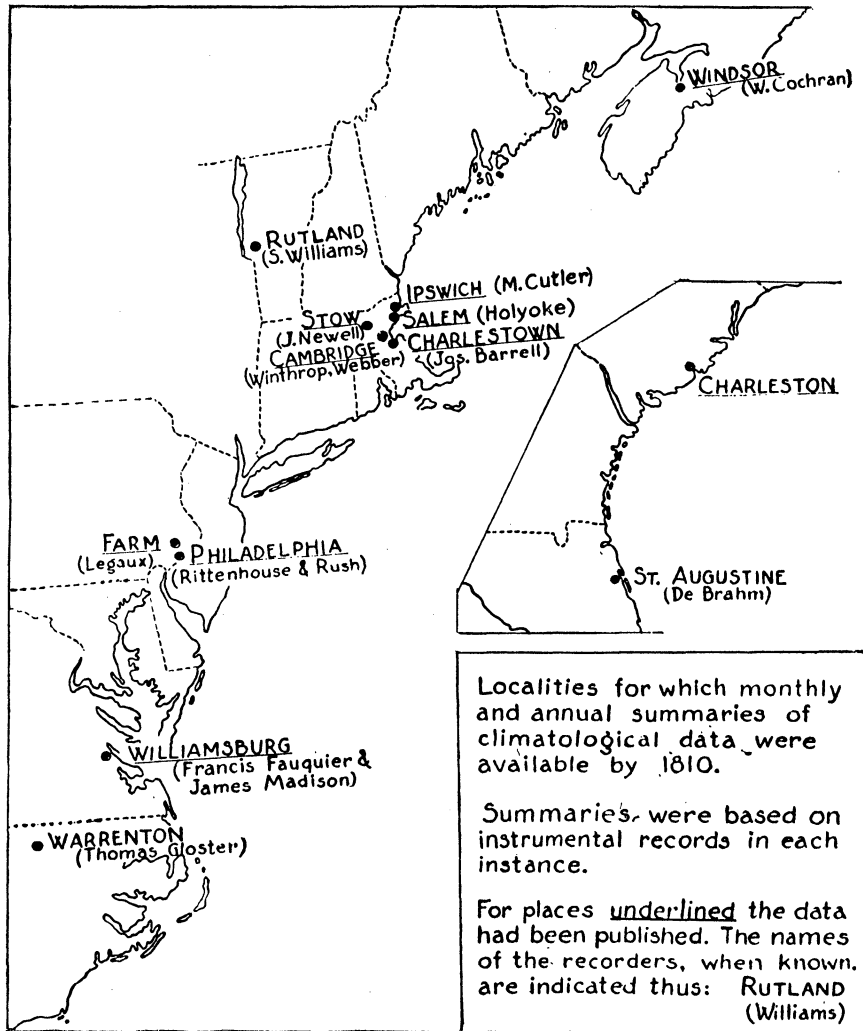


FIG. 1.—Stations of Early Instrumental Weather Records.

ney's generalizations from this varied source material were not very far from absolute truth is found in his classification of climatic areas. For example, his dividing line between two major coastal climates has essentially the position of Thornthwaite's BB'-BC' boundary.³⁴ According to him "the parallel of the Potomac . . . forms a distinguishing line. The

³⁴ C. W. Thornthwaite, "The climates of North America according to a new classification," *Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 21 (1931): 633-655, and map.



EDWARD AUGUSTUS HOLYOKE

dominion of snow is bounded here. . . ." This conclusion seems to have been based in part upon data of snowfall and in part upon the observed contrast in the numbers of sleighs north and south of this "line."

Volney states that "after laying a suitable foundation in an examination of climate and soils [land surface]," he proposed "to consider the numbers of the people, their diffusion over the surface of their territory, their distribution into classes" and many other matters. But on his return to France, preoccupation with political affairs, he writes, "will not permit me to complete the whole." Instead he offers that part which may be detached "without injury or mutilation, from the whole performance." In these words he explains the fragmentary nature of his *Tableau* which forms a partial foundation to a regional study but one upon which the author erected no superstructure. Even this fragment, he hopes, will "cast some new light upon many subjects that have been hitherto wholly overlooked."



JOHN DRAYTON

John Drayton wrote in a decorous preface to his manuscript of the *View of South Carolina* twenty years after its publication that "The work was composed written & printed during the years 1800, 1801 and 1802 by myself while I held the reins of Government of South Carolina, . . . with the view of communicating for public use the knowledge I had obtained from the enquiry of some years—laborious searches into books—and sources of information presented to me, during the performance of my Executive duties. I had no intention of producing a book on geography or of entering into special statistical accounts other than what it suited me to give—; but I merely proposed to write about such things as I believed myself justified in doing: not only from my own personal knowledge but from good Authority; and that in the mode and manner most convenient to



SAMUEL LATHAM MITCHILL

temporary reviews which, except in one instance,³⁶ were favorable. The review written by Samuel L. Mitchill, one of the “geographical” natural scientists of the time, implies that the regions outlined were in more or less common acceptance and that Drayton was not particularly original in putting them on a map.³⁷

The other works in Group A were subjected to a similar scrutiny and validation but economy of space forbids an equally full treatment of them.³⁸

³⁶ *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review*, Vol. 3 (1806): 205–210. The author of this review is unknown and probably had no real knowledge of the subject matter. This reviewer was most concerned with the “inelegant title” of the book.

³⁷ *The Medical Repository*, Vol. 3, Second Hexade (1806): 399–402.

³⁸ Bouchette’s *Topographical Description of Lower Canada* in some respects outranks the others. It is recognizable as the work of a competent scientist, one who was for a time surveyor-general of Lower Canada. Only one unfavorable comment was discovered, in *Sketches of Lower Canada*, App. II, by Joseph Sansom,

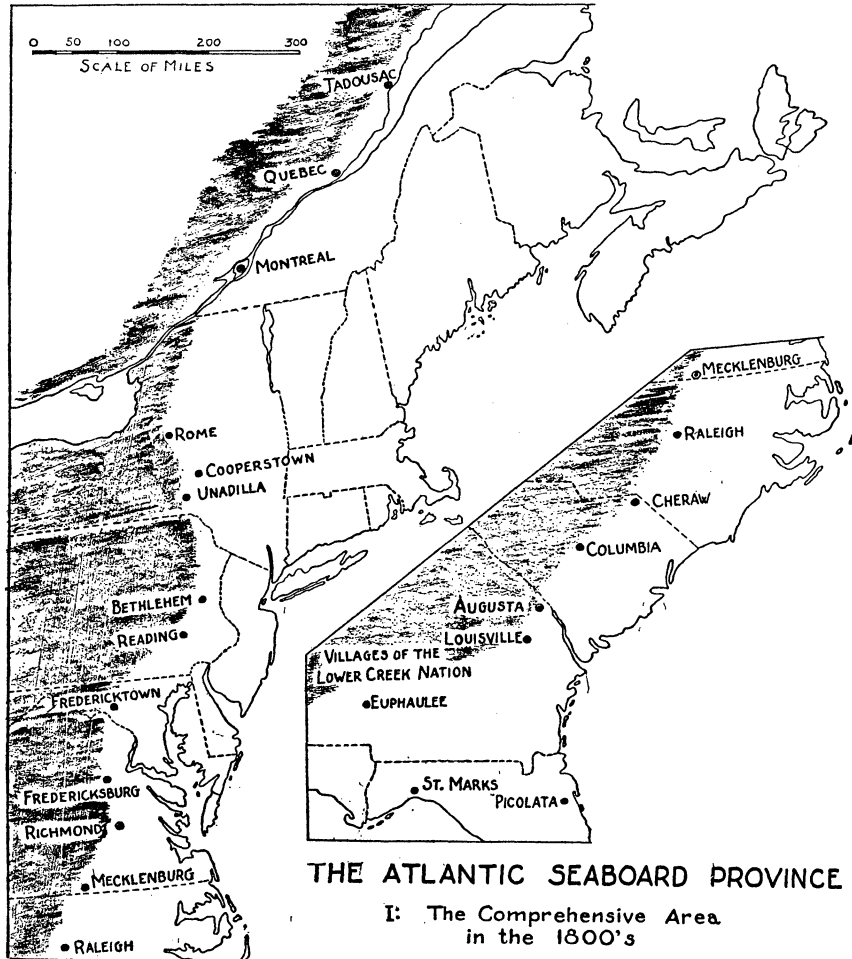


FIG. 3.—The Atlantic Seaboard, Map I

and even here the critic acknowledges that as a topographical survey it is "not without the merits of accuracy and minuteness." The title of Williams' book, *The Natural and Civil History of Vermont*, scarcely does justice to its areal coverage. Considerably less significant are Dr. Barton's *Fragments* and Dr. Mitchill's *Sketch*. Both men exerted more influence in geographical work as critics and teachers than as authors. Barton, of the University of Pennsylvania, for a time edited the *Journal of the Philadelphia Medical Society* and Mitchill edited the *Medical Repository*. The pages of both journals were utilized for many other purposes than the spreading of medical knowledge. For a sketch of Barton one may consult *The Port Folio*, 4th. Ser., Vol. 1 (1816): 273-287. Mitchill's most recent biography is: *A Scientist in the Early Republic: Samuel Latham Mitchill, 1764-1831*, by Courtney R. Hall who pictures his subject as intellectually superior, in many respects, to Benjamin Franklin.

The outline of the comprehensive seaboard province in Figure 3 seems to be a faithful rendering of the collective judgment of this group together with much supplementary data properly grouped with the sporadic observations. "Comprehensive" is meant to suggest that within the limits shown there are many areas with whose geography a reconstruction at the opening of the nineteenth century has no concern.

GROUP B: THE COMPENDIOUS TREATMENTS

The compendiums of this period are chiefly significant in that they show by their very bulk and numbers the existence of material suitable for compilation under the heading of geography. They are, without exception, sources of minor significance: most of the pertinent material they contain is better derived from the originals. For example, the statistics which form so much of their bulk—data of population, commerce and manufactures—are used unskilfully and are often rendered inaccurately. The occasional maps they contain are execrable. The better parts of the volumes are directly traceable, in most instances, to the works of Group A. In his compilation, the author was prone to borrow without credit from other works and slightly to re-word the observations thus secured, with the result that unless one is familiar with related literature, he must agree with Dryer that the gazetteers of this period "are a wonder and a puzzle to the present day student."³⁹ The compilers, not recognizing regions, used states or other large political subdivisions as units of organization. To extract that part of the material which positively relates to the seaboard area is almost impossible.

The most scholarly compendium is the ponderous work of Ebeling. Each volume is a veritable state encyclopedia issued successively over a quarter-century, and much of the bulk is pure history. Not a single map is included in the copies inspected, but Lawrence Martin of the Library of Congress advances the information that D. F. Sotzmann compiled an accompanying map series bound in a folio atlas entitled "Erste bis dritte (letzte) Sammlung von Landkarten für Schulen" (1796). Ebeling admitted that his was "a bold undertaking for a foreigner, but a necessary one considering the great desire of my countrymen for being acquainted with your happy Country."⁴⁰

³⁹ Charles R. Dryer, "A century of geographic education in the United States," *Annals of the Assoc. of Amer. Geogs.*, Vol. 14 (1924): 117.

⁴⁰ "Letter to Noah Webster, May 1, 1795," MS. Harvard College Library. This letter was written on the occasion of Ebeling sending the second volume "of my description of America" to Mr. Webster whom he regarded as an able critic. The enormous mass of material, said to have numbered several thousand items, from which Ebeling prepared his compilation was presented to the Harvard College Library by Israel Thorndike.

Little space need be given the Morse "geographies" which increased in bulk and diminished in quality over a number of years. In appreciation of the Reverend Morse it may be said, however, that he performed services seldom attributed to him. He generously supplied Ebeling with some of the material which comprised the latter's library. Having won a reputation as an authority on geographical matters, many people wrote to Morse propounding questions which he might be presumed to answer. Frequently Morse transmitted the questions to individuals better informed on the subject than he. The answer sometimes took the form of a published letter or essay, thereby adding to the descriptive resources of the period. Many citizens aroused by the errors in his books sought to offer corrections by means of published letters and pamphlets. We owe many a detailed description, as that of Williamsburg, Va., in 1795,⁴¹ to attempts on the part of informed readers to set the record straight.

The compilations reached an all-time low with the appearance of a work by James Mease, but fortunately this production was not called a geography.⁴² Its first hundred pages are pirated from Volney and most of the rest is pieced together from the works in Group A.

No modern geographer has condemned these works in more suitable terms than those employed by critical readers at the time. According to one, the compilations "are little more than medleys of politics, history and arts . . . arranged in the order in which the territories stand on the map."⁴³ Deploing the numbers of mediocre gazetteers another reviewer observed that "if the value of geography should be estimated by the cultivation it has received, it would take no very high rank among the sciences. . . . It has been deserted by the man of genius, philosophy and taste, as a pursuit where no laurels are to be gathered or such only as are short in their duration and fading in their verdure."⁴⁴ This reviewer and probably nearly everyone at the time failed to realize that worthwhile geographic work was being issued under other titles by people who did not style themselves as geographers.

SPORADIC OBSERVATIONS

The sporadic observations supply essential details omitted from or presented sketchily or unsatisfactorily in the regional works of organization.

⁴¹ [St. George Tucker], "A letter to the Rev. Jedidiah Morse, A.M., author of the American Universal Geography," Richmond, Va., 1795.

⁴² *A Geological Account of the United States* [etc.], Phila., 1807.

⁴³ In review of Scott's gazetteer, *American Review and Literary Journal*, Vol. 1 (1801) : 288.

⁴⁴ In review of Pinkerton's geography in *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review*, Vol. 2 (1805) : 251-257.

They run to such great length that unless the present day geographer subordinates them to their proper position *as* details, they are likely to hinder his "seeing the woods for the trees."

In the rough classification presented above (p. 208), these observations are ranked in descending order of significance in so far as a preliminary outline of the seaboard province in the 1800's is concerned. Those of the third group, contemporary writings in magazines and newspapers, are distinctly ampliative of the character of a region once its main features are roughed out. Productions in the second group (publications by learned societies), which are of a more formal nature and deal for the most part with commonplaces, fill many gaps deliberately or unwittingly left open by the organizers. Into this group fall any number of detailed descriptions or "circumstantial accounts" of cities, towns and agricultural areas.⁴⁵ Frequently such material is useful for reasons other than those which inspired the preparation of it. This is illustrated by the many seaport town descriptions growing out of the "yellow fever" epidemics which worked havoc from Charleston to New Haven during the 1790's. Interest in a branch of investigation then called "medical topography" brought forth a large number of descriptions photographic in their realism, in which special attention is paid to the extent of forest, swamp and improved land. In such a case one overlooks the obsolete medical theory which precludes the description.⁴⁶

Travel records which have passed the test of authenticity⁴⁷ have been used mainly for the purpose of fixing or validating the limits of regional units at the particular place where the route of travel crossed the boundaries indicated by the authors of the larger works. In the extent between New England and the southern coastal plain the organizers are vague as to the limits of the older settled seaboard area. Particular attention, therefore,

⁴⁵ The early *Collections* of the Massachusetts Historical Society contain numerous descriptions, for example: "A description of Duke's County" (1807), "A topographical description of Truro" (1794), ". . . of Raynham" (1793), "of . . . Sandwich, Falmouth [etc.]" (1802).

⁴⁶ For example, "A report . . . on the medical topography of Savannah and vicinity," *The Medical Repository*, Vol. 4, Second Hexade (1807) : 352-363.

⁴⁷ Some travel records of this period were found to be wholly or partly imaginary. Pure fabrications include, *An Excursion to North America*, by Priscilla Wakefield, London, 1810, and Bulow's travels as published in *The Port Folio* from May 8, 1802 to Jan. 29, 1803. A contemporary of Thomas Ashe who wrote *Travels in America* [etc.], termed this a "miserable compilation" from earlier sources. (*Monthly Anthology and Boston Review*, Vol. 6 (1809) : 149.) Doubt arises that Viscount de Chateaubriand personally beheld in the 1790's some of the areas described in his *Travels in America and Italy*, Vol. 1, London, 1828. These are examples of literary efforts of people who have been aptly called "sedentary travelers."

was paid to the observations made on transects east and west across Pennsylvania and New York.

Transects of New York and Pennsylvania during this period include:

- Timothy Bigelow: *Journal of a Tour to Niagara Falls in the Year 1805*. Boston, 1876.
- John Taylor: "Journal of Rev. John Taylor's missionary tour through the Mohawk and Black River countries in 1802," in *Doc. Hist. of New York*, Vol. 3, 1850, pp. 671-696.
- John Maud: *Visit to the Falls of Niagara in 1800*. London, 1826.
- Washington Irving: *Journal, 1803*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1934.
- Duke de la Rochefaucault Liancourt: *Travels through the United States of North America in the Years 1795, 1796 and 1797*, London, 1799.
- Theophile Cazenove: *Cazenove Journal, 1799*, Haverford College Studies No. 13, 1922.
- Antoine F. Saugrain: "Diary of a Journey from the Falls of the Ohio to Philadelphia . . . 1788." Trans. by C. F. Bliss, 1875. MS. Boston Public Library.
- Thomas Chapman: "Journal of a journey through the United States, 1795-1796," *The Historical Magazine*, Vol. 15 (1869): 357-368.
- François André Michaux: *Travels to the West of the Alleghany Mountains [etc.]*, 1802, London, 1805.
- Isaac Weld, Jr.: *Travels through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada . . . 1795, 1796, 1797*, London, 1799.

The transect records provided by these first-hand observers are acceptable for the restricted purpose at hand mainly for two reasons.

In the first place, their routes may be precisely outlined on a large-scale map. This is a preliminary step which the investigator must take since the majority of travelers, even the more reliable, provided no route map of their own making. Necessarily the geographer will refuse to accept observations which cannot be tied to a particular place.

In the second place, the observers in this list, in their comparatively slow passage through the central area, made detailed notes on material landscape features, including the number of farms per mile, the kinds of crops raised, the proportion of cleared to forest land, the presence or absence of stumps in cleared land, the character of the road, the size of villages and towns, and the relative stage of settlement. The notes independently made by Bigelow, Taylor and Maud in their journeys through the Mohawk Valley during a five year period are in essential agreement, so nearly alike, in fact, as almost to suggest that they traded ideas. That being improbable in this case, it is to be inferred that no reasonable doubt could exist as to the location of the transition zone between the older and newly settled land in this lowland. This was at Rome. All agreed that west of Rome lay a new, raw land, rapidly emerging from the wilderness but still sparsely peopled. Land

speculation was rife in the "Genesee Country" and in the "Military Tract." In the latter, twenty-five townships had been surveyed on the new rectangular plan and land was selling at from three to six dollars per acre. The journal of Washington Irving, then an impressionable youth, confirms the more prosaic notes of the other travelers—he was glad to return to civilization after a few weeks of roughing it in the wilds of western New York.⁴⁸

This illustrates the principal use to which other travel records not listed here have been put. Travelers' observations, moreover, often furnish intimate sidelights on the geography of areas they saw. It seems probable that the observations of foreign travelers on the material objects of the landscape are more to be relied upon than their comments on social, political and religious matters with which their volumes are partly filled. Few of them had any prior acquaintance with the regions through which they were to pass and published their accounts from notes taken *en route* without later revision in the light of other literature descriptive of the same areas. This makes their accounts all the more valuable: they offer views independent of the more formal presentation. They often dwelt upon details omitted from the works of others—crop types, village architecture, street patterns of towns and cities, methods of conveyance and road conditions. Philadelphia was the favorite gathering place and point of departure for the foreign travelers.

A plotting of the routes of the travelers fails to confirm the conclusion of a writer who, in reference to the English travelers, states that they were likely to follow the same routes.⁴⁹ That they did not do so more often is perhaps to be regretted. The investigator wishes for more cases like the Mohawk Valley which was seen by many travelers at about the same time, thus giving some assurance that out of the varied commentary a reasonably truthful picture will emerge. One also wishes for more travelers as methodical as Liancourt who, if we take him at his word, rode with notebook open and pencil poised ready to jot down significant points at the moment of observation.

CARTOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

Many maps prepared by a group independent of the writers are contemporary with this period.

⁴⁸ In 1798 the city of Buffalo consisted of five dwellings, one tavern and one store, all constructed of logs. The mail to Buffalo, first received in 1803 by horseback, continued to be thus carried once every two weeks until 1806 when a weekly route was established. *Doc. Hist. of New York*, Vol. 3, p. 726.

⁴⁹ Jane L. Messick, *The English Travellers in America, 1785 to 1835*, Columbia Univ. Press, 1922.

Perhaps the distinguishing feature of the maps is the cartographic break with the past which they represent. The maps of larger significance were made by map-makers, not by map-copiers. Consequently there is a minimum of carry-over from post-Revolutionary maps to those prepared or published at the opening of the next century.

Map-making during this period is linked with certain individuals who compiled much new data, some of which they themselves secured. Associated with the coastal charts, especially of New England, is the name of Nathaniel Bowditch. Maps of larger coverage and more general character were prepared by A. Arrowsmith who issued frequent revisions as new data came to light. A new departure is represented by the large-scale post road map of Abraham Bradley available in some collections of rare maps. The cartographic record of Lower Canada at this time was in the competent



JOSEPH BOUCHETTE

hands of Samuel Holland and Joseph Bouchette. The Holland map, for example, carries the boundaries of the seigniories as they were at the close of the eighteenth century.

Nevertheless, with all their variety the maps do not show some distributions now considered fundamental in a regional study. For example, there is no detailed population distribution map except a few fragmentary manuscript maps covering minute areas. It appears that those interested in population problems expended their energies in estimating the probable future population rather than in leaving an authentic record of the distribution as it was.⁵⁰

Partially filling this gap are population density distribution maps prepared by modern scholars from official enumerations, of which the earliest for the United States was that of 1790, but these maps are of a generalized character.⁵¹ Even if a detailed population map of the United States por-

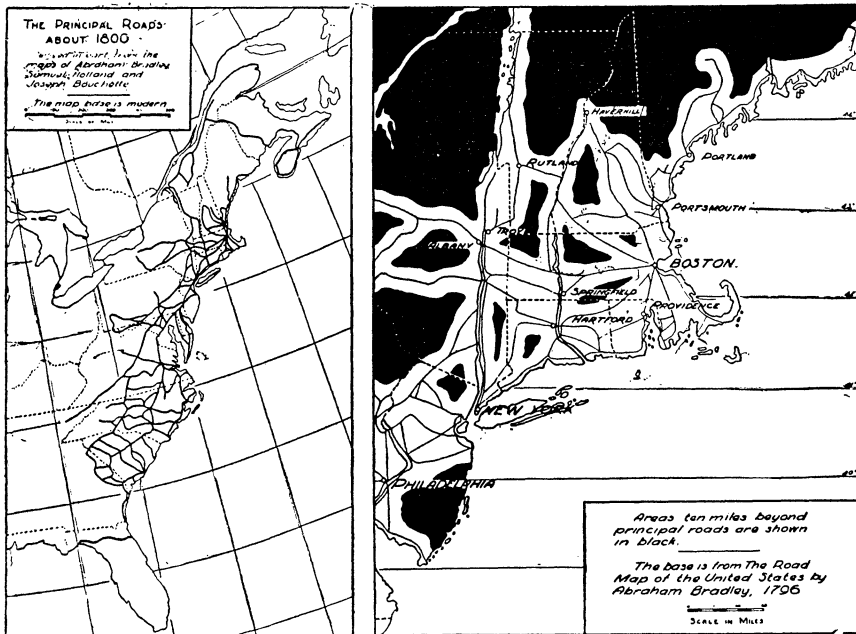


FIG. 4.—Roads.

⁵⁰ These speculations provided a favorite theme for discussion in popular magazines as: *The Weekly Magazine of Original Essays*, *The Monthly Magazine and American Review* and *The American Museum*.

⁵¹ The best series is in the *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States*, Charles O. Paullin and John K. Wright, Carnegie Inst. of Wash. and Amer. Geogr. Soc. of N. Y. 1932.

tion of the seaboard area be within the limits of achievement, such does not appear to be the case for maritime Canada and Spanish East Florida. A Canadian writer has pointed out that although the first enumeration of modern times was the Census of New France in 1666, "Canada was slow to create a permanent organization to deal with the mass of facts collected. A permanent Census and Statistics Office was created only in 1905."⁵² There are, of course, estimates of total population for the bordering areas. Arthur P. Whitaker has estimated the population of East Florida in 1800 to have been 4445, of whom 2300 were slaves. Burpee's *Atlas*⁵³ contains maps showing areas of early settlement but the period the maps are intended to represent is not made clear.

An acceptable substitute for a detailed population map for the whole area is developed by applying Professor Mark Jefferson's technique,⁵⁴ well known to geographers, to a number of maps showing roads as of the opening of the nineteenth century. Figure 4 shows a composite road map on a modern base and also a portion of the Bradley post road map treated in Jefferson's way. This technique has been applied to the entire Bradley map together with many additional data. Figure 5 shows the final result, with the delineation of the "effective area." This brings into relief, by exclusion of large "insular"—mainly mountainous and rugged—areas, those parts of the comprehensive seaboard province upon which a geographical study at the opening of the nineteenth century properly centers.

CONCLUSIONS

Geographical materials recorded during the closing years of the eighteenth century and the opening years of the next provide a foundation for a regional reconstruction of the Atlantic seaboard. They can be most effectively used by a present-day student trained in the handling of geographical materials and reasonably familiar with the objectives of modern geographical research. Before these materials could be utilized they had to be discovered. The process of discovery required special research methods predicated on two assumptions: that a multiplicity of contemporary evidence was necessary, and that a large share of the descriptive record of any period is not entitled geography. The discovery process required the spreading of a net fine enough in mesh to catch the greater part of the presumably significant material. "Significant" was in this case defined to mean all manner of geographical observations and incidental data which

⁵² G. E. Jackson, "Statistics in Canada," *Canadian Hist. Rev.*, Vol. 2 (1921): 217.

⁵³ Lawrence J. Burpee, *An Historical Atlas of Canada*, Toronto, 1927.

⁵⁴ First published in "The civilizing rails," *Econ. Geogr.* Vol. 4 (1928): 277-231.

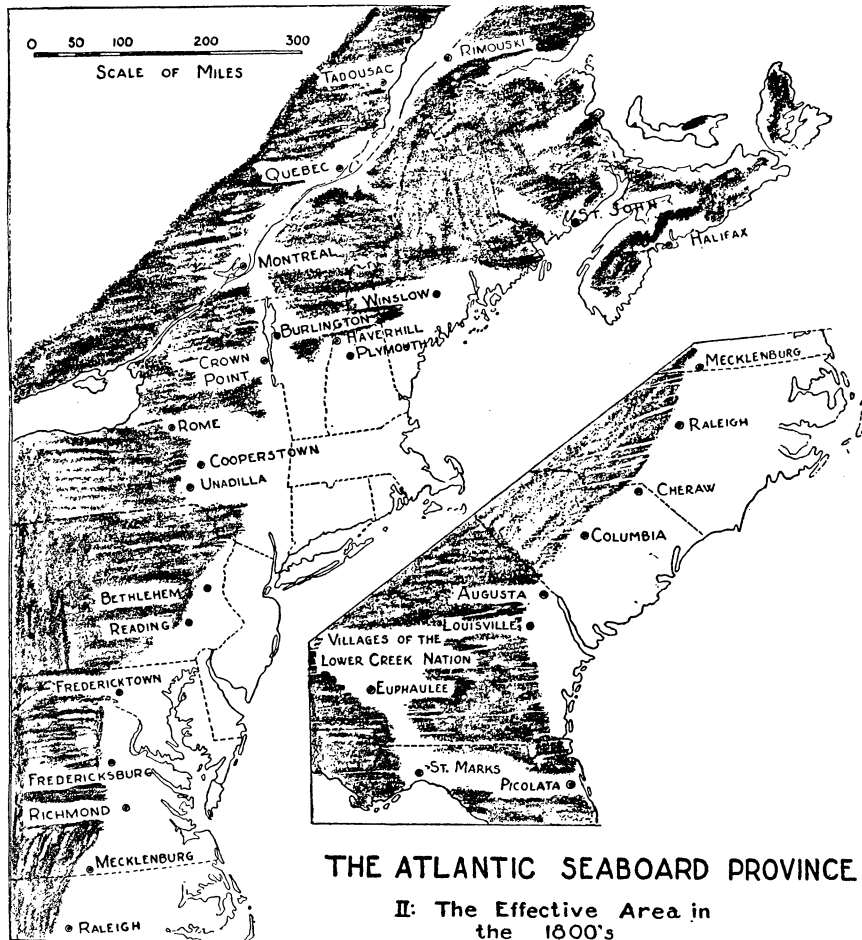


FIG. 5.—The Atlantic Seaboard, Map II.

bore upon the seaboard area at the time, not merely that part of the sum total which could be directly used in a presentation. Consequently, the assemblage included much material—climatic data and descriptions of soil types, for example—rendered obsolescent by the progress of systematic science. Such observations were found to have value as criteria by which the authenticity of the rest could be measured. Once assembled, the materials furnished their own guides as to utilization. Attempt has been made to show how a small part of this material has been used in a research problem designed to fall within the definition of historical geography. The results could not have been predicted before all the material was in hand.

Apparently, the best way for geographers to understand the seaboard area at the opening of the nineteenth century is by consulting those who attempted to describe it at the time. The record they made seems reasonably complete and intelligible.

The portraits appearing in this article are a few of a series of pen-and-ink sketches prepared by Eunice R. Brown from copies of engravings and lithoprints.

*University of Minnesota,
March, 1938.*