

Milestones

Department of Geography

University of Colorado, Boulder

Incomplete Draft, A. David Hill, 3/26/05

- 1925:** Harold Hoffmeister appointed instructor in the Department of Geology where he, along with Prof. Philip Worcester, taught geography courses as part of the geology curriculum. Worcester considered himself a physical geographer in the physiographic tradition of Wallace Atwood.
- 1926:** Hoffmeister entered graduate school in geography at the University of Chicago, where his dissertation supervisor was Harlan Barrows.
- 1937:** Hoffmeister was appointed CU's first Assistant Professor of Geography (became a Full Professor in 1943).
- 1938:** Hoffmeister was awarded Ph.D. in Geography from University of Chicago
- 1946:** Tim Kelly (Ph.D. in geography, University of Washington) joined the faculty as the second geographer within the joint Department of Geography and Geology.
- 1948:** John Loeffler (Ph.D. in Geography, University of Washington) joined geography faculty.
- 1951:** Tim Kelley developed the interdisciplinary major in "Conservation Education," which required a set of geography, biology, journalism, and communication courses. Kelley's contacts with conservation agencies and schools helped majors in the program find employment after graduation.
- 1952:** Albert Smith (MA in Geography from CU and Ph.D. from University Washington). joined faculty in July.
- 1957:** Geography broke away from Geology to form the Division of Geography, Dept. of Geography and Geology, with Albert Smith as Chair from 1955-1957. Geography was granted full departmental status beginning in summer 1957. Geography remained in same building as geology faculty, but as an autonomous dept.. While Geology elected to retain a Head of Department (Warren O. Thompson), geographers chose to operate with a rotating chairmanship. First Geography chair was Albert Smith, who served from 1957-1960, and then for subsequent terms, the last being from 1967-1971.
- 1959:** The two depts. outgrew the Geology Building, so the Geography Dept. moved out of Geology and into Guggenheim, the former Law School building.
- 1961:** Hoffmeister awarded the Robert L. Stearns medal for Extraordinary Service to CU.
- 1962:** Geography Dept. permitted to grant Ph.D. degree in Geography
- 1965:** Hoffmeister retired. The first and only Festschrift Tribute Publication granted at CU consisted of a resume of his career at CU and 7 research papers written by former students. (Edited by MacPhail or Vermeer?)
- 1967:** Jack Ives arrived to direct INSTAAR. Nel Caine also came in 1967; Roger Barry joined them in Geography and INSTAAR a year later.
- 1968:** First CU Ph.D. in geography awarded to Ian Campbell, who accepted an appointment in 1967 to the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.
- 1972:** The major in Conservation Education was replaced with the more heavily science-based major in Environmental Conservation. Initiated by Gilbert White and Ken Erickson, the interdisciplinary EC major focused on both physical and social components and allowed students to concentrate on tracks in either component. EC was managed by the Geography Department with the cooperation of departments across the campus.
- 1981:** Internship Program set up by Ken Erickson and initially operated as Independent Study until officially approved as a course in 1982. Students matched up to work under supervision in local private and public firms and agencies as well to meet in class for academic credit under faculty supervision. This "practical" education prompted an annual "Career Night," which brings together students and "practitioners" to discuss job opportunities for geographers.
- 1983:** Computer cartography owes its development to Alan MacEachren, Michael Hodgson, Ken Erickson, and GIS to Don MacPhail (early using satellite photos). MacEachren offered computer cartography in the early 80's and Hodgson added GIS as a course, revamping Guggenheim Room 201 from lecture hall to grad GIS lab, and taught Cart II as computer cartography. Erickson shifted Intro. Cart to fully Computer Cart in 1991, thus ending over four decades of pen/ink Cartography, but keeping the map projection emphasis in Intro. Cart.
- 1983:** John Loeffler and Al Smith retired. To honor Loeffler, the Department established the Loeffler Seminar Room in a newly decorated room on the main Guggenheim lobby, and for Smith, an undergraduate scholarship was established in his name.
- 1987:** College of Arts and Science established new entrance requirements, called "Minimum Academic Preparation Standards" (MAPS), which included one year of world history or geography. Students admitted without high school geography were required to take a geography course at CU.
- 1992:** Erickson and Hodgson won a large NSF grant to allow full updating of the Cart/GIS facility (stations, software, remodeling). Jim Robb (CU BA in Geography) was added as staff cartographer and director of the facility, named the Ken Erickson Spatial Data Analysis Lab when Erickson retired in 1996.
- 1993:** Veblen and Travis steered a shift away from the major in Environmental Conservation, led by Geography, to a separate program in Environmental Studies, which moved the degree program away from social/cultural requirements to physical science. The Geography Dept., under strain of numbers, voted to approve this shift, gave up administration to Geology, and the physical removal to a separate campus site. This effectively ended Geography's 40-year direction of the major.
- 1997:** "CU tops in geography," was the headline of a newspaper article based on a Michigan State study published in *The Professional Geographer* of the productivity of U.S. geography departments. It read:
- "In a national survey measuring teaching and research productivity, the geography department at the University of Colorado at Boulder came in first. CU's geography department ranked first in teaching productivity, third in book authorship, third in journal publications and fourth in doctoral graduates employed in academia. The department was the only one to rank among the top five institutions in all four categories. The survey, conducted by Michigan State University, compared 28 departments that grant doctoral degrees in geography. The Boulder department has 19 professors, 185 undergraduate majors and 85 graduate students. About 3,500 non-majors take geography classes each year."*
- 2005:** Dept. held "Alumni Evening 2005" a first-ever occasion intended to bring together geography alumni, students, and faculty.

Please send any comments, suggestions, additions, and corrections to A. David Hill (adh@colorado.edu).