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Publisher: Routledge

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Journal of Geography

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjog20>

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Published online: 24 Jun 2008.

To cite this article: Roland M. Harper (1916) A Neglected Source of Geographical Information, Journal of Geography, 14:10, 392-394, DOI: [10.1080/00221341608986919](https://doi.org/10.1080/00221341608986919)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00221341608986919>

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A NEGLECTED SOURCE OF GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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FOR years, especially since the invention of the half-tone process about three decades ago, it has been customary for railroads, hotels, land companies, boards of trade, cities, counties, etc., particularly in those parts of the world most frequented by tourists or where the population is increasing fastest, to publish for gratuitous distribution pamphlets and even books describing the resources and attractions of their respective regions. Many of these are beautifully printed, lavishly illustrated, and full of interesting geographical information; but comparatively few of them ever find their way to library shelves, for several reasons.

In the first place, many of them are of such odd sizes or irregular shapes that they are not well adapted to stand on shelves or be filed or bound with pamphlets of the more common sizes. Second, they are distributed so sporadically (few of them being copyrighted and most of them not even advertised) that no one person or institution can hope to have anything like a complete collection; and the fact that they cost nothing also tends to make them unappreciated. Thus they are rarely mentioned in scientific literature, for a conscientious writer hesitates to cite a publication, however trustworthy it may be, which few of his readers can ever see. Third, the difficulty of citation is increased by the fact that most of these pamphlets are anonymous and undated, and thus lack a certain appearance of authenticity that they might otherwise have. Fourth, being intended for the general public, they are necessarily superficial or untechnical in treatment, which may cause them to be looked upon with disfavor by some scientists. Fifth, as the main object of such literature is advertising, it is naturally biased, with a tendency to exaggerate the advantages and minimize or ignore the disadvantages of the regions described. Even the illustrations are not always what they purport to be, unfortunately, for when one community publishes a good farming scene, for instance, others may borrow it later to illustrate their own resources.

Most of the above objections will apply also to newspaper clippings, which are collected by some people, including the writer, and are often worth many times the trouble it takes to cut them out and label them. For the irregular sizes and shapes there seems to be no simple remedy at present, but the other objections can be met more or less successfully.

As far as accessibility is concerned, persons living in the larger cities have a constant source of supply in the ticket offices of the various transportation companies. Dwellers in smaller places are less fortunate, but can get many valuable pamphlets at small expense through advertisements in magazines and newspapers. Expositions and fairs are another happy hunting ground for collectors of free geographical literature. At the two California expositions

last year the writer gathered about thirty pounds of this material, and then had to decline some fine large state handbooks because already overburdened. California of course was better represented there than any other state, most of its counties having pamphlets to distribute. Of the foreign countries Canada and Australia were probably the most liberal in this respect. One of Canada's offerings was a quarto atlas, with separate colored maps of each province and much descriptive matter.

To the prevailing condition of anonymity there are some notable exceptions. Most state handbooks contain the names of one or more persons responsible for their authorship, sometimes including men of more than local reputation; and the same is true of some booklets dealing with smaller areas. For example, one of the California counties had its booklet written and printed by Elbert Hubbard, apparently only a few weeks before his death. And where the date is not given on the title page of a pamphlet it can often be approximated within a year or two by means of statistics given within. If possessors of such pamphlets take the precaution to mark them promptly with the date of accession they will know in after years that they were published between that date and the latest events mentioned in them.

If the treatment is untechnical it is not necessarily inaccurate, and is better adapted than a scientific treatise would be to students of the ages at which geography is commonly studied. As far as accuracy is concerned, the present standard for free geographical literature, with the possible exception of that issued by land companies, is higher than one might suppose without investigation. Many of the statements in these advertising pamphlets relate to facts which there would hardly be any motive for misrepresenting, or which can easily be verified in these days of rapid dissemination of knowledge. Even some state supplements to school geographies published during the present century are more extravagant, and even inaccurate, in describing the advantages of their respective regions, and say less of the disadvantages, than some of the literature here discussed. As regards the pamphlets collected in the West last year, the writer found no serious misstatements in any dealing with regions traversed on the trip. Not only that, but good use was made of several of them, especially during the weeks spent "on the road" without access to libraries, in revising state descriptions for an encyclopaedia then in course of publication.

It may be appropriate to mention briefly some of the choicest bits of free geographical literature acquired in preparation for, or in the course of, a trip to California and return. The Southern Pacific and Western Pacific railroads both issued for the benefit of travelers from the East descriptive folders, telling briefly what was to be seen around and between almost every station on their main lines, as well as such data as distance, altitude, and population. For the traveler who wished to spend all his time between stations in studying the landscape these answered about as well as the much more bulky and expensive transcontinental guide-books published by the U. S. Geological Survey (which came out too late in the summer to be of the greatest service anyway,

and then did not cover either of the two routes named, which in some ways are the most interesting of all). The Southern Pacific also gave out a large folded map of San Francisco, on the back of which was found almost all the information that a stranger could ask for; and there were similar maps of California and Nevada, with good general descriptions of those states. All of these are probably still to be had for the asking, and they should be a valuable aid to the study of geography in our schools.

GEOGRAPHY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

WITH the opening of the academic year 1915-16, geography work has been formally added to the work in geology at the University of Michigan, the name of the department being changed to that of Geology and Geography. Geography has also been made one of the subjects open to election by freshmen in the Department of Literature, Science and the Arts, and continues through the year four times weekly, the work of the first semester being devoted to physiography, and that of the second semester to anthropogeography. The work in physiography is conducted as heretofore by Assistant Professor Irving D. Scott, and the geography work by Carl Ortwin Sauer (Ph.D., University of Chicago). About 150 students have been enrolled in the freshman course, and an elective course in commercial geography given during the present semester has been elected by 115 students, showing plainly the need for such training at the university.

During the summer session of the university there will be included geography work in charge of Dr. Sauer, and in the next academic year in addition to the course in commercial geography, courses in the Geography of North America, and Geographic Influences in American History will be offered.

During the present year the following illustrated lectures by non-resident lecturers were delivered to popular audiences in the new auditorium of the Natural Science Building.

PROGRAM OF LECTURES

- November 11—Miss Dora Keen, *Philadelphia*,
 "The First Ascent of Mount Blackburn"
December 2-3—Dr. Ellsworth Huntingdon, *Milton, Mass.*,
 "Weather, Work and Human Activity"
 "The Ideal Climate and the Distribution of Civilization"
 "The Past Distribution and the Cause of Climatic Changes"
February 24-25—Professor R. H. Whitbeck, *University of Wisconsin*,
 "Some Geographical Influences upon the Trend of Civilization"
 "The Reclamation of Desert Lands"
March 10—Professor Walter S. Tower, *University of Chicago*,
 "Northern Chile and the Nitrate Industry"
 A Journey through Argentina"