

Griffin, Paul F., Young, Robert N., and Chatham, Ronald L.
*Anglo-America : a Regional Geography of the United States
and Canada*. San Francisco, Faeron Publishers, 1962. 552 pages.
Maps, illustrations, bibliography, index.

John M. Crowley

Volume 8, numéro 15, 1963

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/020470ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/020470ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Département de géographie de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0007-9766 (imprimé)

1708-8968 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Crowley, J. M. (1963). Compte rendu de [Griffin, Paul F., Young, Robert N., and Chatham, Ronald L. *Anglo-America : a Regional Geography of the United States and Canada*. San Francisco, Faeron Publishers, 1962. 552 pages. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, index.] *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 8(15), 115–118. <https://doi.org/10.7202/020470ar>

Ajoutons que les *orientations bibliographiques* qui suivent chacun des chapitres ont été, elles aussi, rajeunies. Moins que jamais, bien entendu, ces éléments de bibliographie ne peuvent prétendre donner un tableau complet de la littérature géographique, dont la profusion en U. R. S. S., depuis une dizaine d'années, est impressionnante.

Paru quinze ans après l'œuvre pionnière de Camena d'Almeida (tome V de la *Géographie universelle*, 1932), le livre de Pierre George était, en 1947, un ouvrage fondamental et indispensable. Hors de Russie, il n'est nullement dépassé aujourd'hui et il demeure le meilleur ouvrage de synthèse sur la géographie de l'U. R. S. S.

Henri DORION

GÉOGRAPHIE RÉGIONALE DES ÉTATS-UNIS ET DU CANADA

GRIFFIN, Paul F., YOUNG, Robert N., and CHATHAM, Ronald L. **Anglo-America : a Regional Geography of the United States and Canada.** San Francisco, Faeron Publishers, 1962. 552 pages. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, index.

The most recent of its kind by American authors, this book is organized according to a classic plan. The authors have divided the continent (excluding Mexico) into several large, clearly demarcated regions, and each chapter corresponds to one of these regions. A chapter on Anglo-America as a whole precedes the regional chapters, also in accordance with the classic plan. Thus, this new book is of the type habitually used in the regional courses on Anglo-America at the college and university level ; and, consequently, it potentially has a very large audience.

The basic approach of the book, according to the authors, is physiographic : « The regions used are landform regions, and boundaries between regions are drawn where transitions in landform characteristics are relatively rapid » (p. xxiv). The authors claim that landform regions are the best for studying geography : « An examination of many publications in the field of geography reveals surprising flexibility in the concept of a region. There are climatic regions, economic regions, sociological regions, and the like. To the authors' way of thinking, many of these types of regional divisions involve criteria too subject to variation and change. Consider, for example, the so-called « climatic region. » Variations from year to year in precipitation, temperature, and other elements often greatly enlarge or reduce the area in question. Landform regions do not change perceptibly with the passage of time ; thus they offer the best divisions for studying geography » (p. xxv). The utilization of regions said to be morphologic may appear to defend the fact that the analysis of each region, without exception, commences with a description of « surface features, » but the authors have failed to show us how it is better to study regional geography (in contrast to regional geomorphology) in a physiographic framework.

The book is large and heavy. The quality of the paper is good, the binding solid, the format attractive, and the numerous photographs excellent (even if some of them are situated in the wrong region !). As a further advantage, the statistics cited are from the most recent census. The book introduces the ingenious idea of placing the map of all the regions opposite the table of contents in such a way that one can instantly find the pages of any desired region. Congratulations ! In addition to this map there are two maps at the beginning of each chapter to further show the boundaries of the region. However, the degree to which these maps contradict each other is fantastic. The almost complete lack of other maps (only 18 altogether, some of which are scarcely more than diagrams) seems inexcusable in a work called geographic. Since the voluminous bibliography contains only English titles, it appears that French-Canadian and European geographers have nothing to say about the geography of the United States and Canada or that the authors read only English !

In order to evaluate the authenticity of a new regional textbook, one generally turns to the treatment of a region with which he is rather familiar. In this case I chose the chapter entitled « American Rockies » (pp. 291-308), and I must say that I was astounded by what I found therein. We are told in the opening paragraph that the Cœur d'Alène area is one of the parts of Idaho which is excluded from the Rockies, even though the map directly opposite clearly shows that it is, in

fact, in this region. Furthermore, later in the same chapter one discusses the Cœur d'Alène mining area, and I call attention to the photograph on page 302.

I would point out to the authors that « North, Middle, and South Parks » are not « drained by the Platte, Arkansas, and Colorado Rivers, respectively, » that the San Luis Valley is not bordered by the Park Ranges and is far from being « filled » with alluvial deposits, that they have twice misused the name « Grand River, » that the Clark Fork is a tributary of the Columbia (Pacific drainage) and not of the Yellowstone (Atlantic drainage), that the explanation of the position of the timber line involves much more than simply the air temperature, that incense cedar is not present in the Rocky Mountains, and that Devil's Tower is on the Great Plains at a distance of about 100 miles from the Rockies and not in the Rocky Mountain Region (photograph p. 308). Clearly these are minor mistakes that one could easily correct with a good atlas.

When one is told that the « Continental Divide . . . separates the waters flowing into the Atlantic from those emptying into the Pacific, » he wonders to whom the book is directed. And I understand with difficulty the importance of the « navigational function » of Hungry Horse Reservoir !

The authors state : « Summer grazing takes place largely in the national forests. » Even though this is a widely held misconception, statistics show that it is not the case. Only a rather small percentage of the livestock are permitted in the national forests. That « Most ranchers keep both cattle and sheep » isn't at all true in the Southern Rockies, and I doubt seriously that it is true elsewhere in the Rockies. One mentions that « Normally, sheep outnumber cattle » without noting that one cow equals five sheep. The unsuspecting student would think that sheep are the most important, whereas the opposite is the case. The authors describe the agriculture of the Rockies under the side headings « livestock » and « irrigated farming. » Since the analysis given of the first is a question of livestock ranching and since livestock are scarcely mentioned under the second side heading, the uninformed reader would receive the impression that livestock are unimportant on the irrigated farms, which is far from true. The same erroneous interpretation appears in other chapters on the West. « One can anticipate, however, the use of additional range lands for cattle and sheep . . . » Where is one going to find additional range land ? Practically all of the land in the Rockies is already being used for grazing or cultivation except some areas where forests are too dense and certain parts of the national forests. The current trend indicates that in the future there will be less and less grazing in the national forests, not more.

However, when I turned from this chapter on the Rockies to other parts of the book, I came to the conclusion that the chapter on the Rockies is perhaps one of the poorest chapters of the book. (This perhaps reflects the habit of North American geographers to ignore their mountains and not the personal competence of the authors. European geographers, on the contrary, have studied their mountains very thoroughly.) The other chapters seem better. The one on the Columbia Plateau (which the authors name « Columbia-Snake Plateaus, Plains, and Mountains ») is not bad in spite of a few errors (such as, for example, the suggestion that the Inland Empire, a popular name, is the same thing as the Columbia Plateau). Treatment of the regions west of the Rockies seem in general better than those in the East. This is perhaps related to the fact that two of the three authors are at Oregon College of Education, Monmouth. Nevertheless, some chapters on the East are not without merit. For example, even agricultural specialists would have difficulty to improve the analysis (pp. 239-242) of the factors of an economic and geographic order which explain the positions of the Corn Belt and the Dairy Region.

There is a section on tourism in most of the chapters. The « geography » of tourism in this book is a matter of the listing of the most extraordinary attractions with a description of their grandeur ! It would seem that tourist facilities, distance to the great population centers, and the economic importance of tourism to the region are equally as important in the geography of tourism as natural attractions.

The lack of balance in the treatment of cities is enormous. Only $7\frac{3}{4}$ pages are devoted to the city of New York, the metropolitan region of which today has about 15 million inhabitants. At the same time, the Great Basin, a semi-desert region which includes roughly the state of Nevada and about half of Utah and has less than one million people, merits 22 pages. Montréal is given

$\frac{1}{4}$ page, St. Louis (which has practically the same population), $1\frac{1}{2}$ pages. Denver, with a metropolitan population of nearly a million, receives only 9 lines, less than the authors devote to one such important city as Prince Rupert, British Columbia (population 12,500) ! Yet more serious, the authors cite indiscriminately the population of the municipality or that of the entire agglomeration, without specifying which. For example, a figure of 493,887 is given for Denver and 2,060,103 for St. Louis. Evidently the first is that of the municipality of Denver without suburbs and the second is that for the St. Louis urbanized region. The comparable figure for St. Louis would be about 725,000.

In spite of everything, the reviewer would say that the greatest weakness of the book is not the faults of the type cited above but the lack of the spirit of regional geography, the absence of a regional sense. Their remarks about climatic regions quoted at the outset invite us to imagine that the authors are not aware of the concept of the region. Some of their regions lack the uniformity and the identity demanded by the idea of the region. With regards to their regions which do possess uniformity and individuality, the authors fail to demonstrate the distinctive and uniform character of the region in question.

Perhaps the most astonishing of the regions delimited in the book is the one called the « Northeastern Uplands. » The authors claim that the « Northeastern Uplands » form a separate region « because their landforms are different from their neighbors » (p. 125). This « region » extends from the suburbs of New York to the northern tip of Labrador and includes the island of Newfoundland. The northwestern boundary of this region is a line from Ungava Bay to Mount Tremblant (slightly north of Montréal), more or less. (It is necessary to say « more or less » because the line is different on each of the three maps where it appears ! I find myself incapable of imagining in what manner the landforms on the two sides of this line are different ! And that monster of a triangular region whose three corners are located at Winnipeg, Québec (city), and Del Rio, Texas, respectively (p. 190) ! This « landform region » includes a part of the Laurentian Upland (Canadian Shield), the St. Lawrence Valley, the Interior Lowlands (both glaciated and unglaciated parts), and a small part of the Coastal Plain. If the authors are able to tolerate, on the one hand, such diversity in a single region, why, on the other hand, have they parcelled the Coastal Plain — rather uniform throughout — into four or five regions? A region ought to be not only uniform but also different from its neighbors. Scott County, Kansas, may be uniform, but it is not a region. And how do southeastern California and the southern parts of Arizona and New Mexico have more in common, from the point of view of landforms, with the Colorado Plateau than with the Great Basin? (I would say that the authors do not have the liberty to use for their region which corresponds essentially to the Great Basin the name « Basin and Range Province, » a term already well established by Fenneman, Lobeck, and others for a much larger physiographic region.)

Above all, the authors have not expressed what characterizes each region — what are its capital traits and how it is different from neighboring regions. How can one understand the South without talking about its history and its social problems, Québec without mentioning the ethnic character of the French Canadians (even though the Eskimos merit almost a page !) or the Great Plains without emphasizing the problem of droughts? The contrasts between the diverse regions of Anglo-America are in reality striking. But Mr. Griffin and his colleagues proceed from one region to the next without causing the reader to be struck by these differences. One wonders whether, for the authors, regions are nothing more than a convenient way to tabulate information and to divide the book into chapters.

In conclusion, the present writer must frankly say that he fears this book can be a dangerous instrument in the hands of professors and students who are not well acquainted with the geography of Anglo-America. Such persons would not be aware of the numerous errors and mistaken interpretations which are sprinkled through the volume. Is this distorted image of Anglo-America the one we wish to impress upon the minds of the current generation of students? The writer is distressed, therefore, by the long list of colleges and universities which adopted this text almost immediately after its publication, and he wonders if this list does not identify a certain category of geography departments ! For his part, the author feels that some of the texts published before 1955 remain more acceptable even though they are now considerably out of date.

At this writing we are still waiting, therefore, for a good, up-to-date textbook on the geography of Anglo-America.

John M. CROWLEY

WHITE, C. Langdon, FOSCUE, Edwin J., and McKNIGHT, Tom L. **Regional Geography of Anglo-America.** 3rd edition. Englewood Cliffs (N. J.), Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964. 524 pages, maps, illus., chapter bibliographies, appendices, index.

A new edition, the third, of *Regional Geography of Anglo-America*, with the addition of Tom L. McKnight of U. C. L. A. to the authorship, is to be put on the market by Prentice-Hall in January, 1964. Since this book is widely used as a textbook for regional courses on Anglo-America in colleges and universities, this bringing up to date is most welcome. The second edition appeared 10 years ago.

The format and cover of the book have of course been modernized. The cover is now pastel. A colored map of the regions treated has been added inside the front cover. The form of the title page, chapter headings, and subtitles has been completely changed. This has involved a considerable wastage of space, such as the beginning of sections near the bottom of a nearly blank page and the duplication of photos at the outset of each chapter. The result is nevertheless pleasant. Many new photos have been used.

The basic structure of the book, as well as the greater part of the text material, remains unchanged. The volume commences, as before, with an introductory chapter entitled « Anglo-America and Its Regions, » followed by a chapter each on « The City and Industrial Geography » and « The American Manufacturing Region. » Each of the remaining chapters treats one of the 16 regions into which the continent plus Hawaii has been divided. The regions are unchanged from the previous edition, except that a chapter has been added on the Hawaiian Islands. True, Hawaii became a state since the publication of the previous edition, but it can scarcely be justified as a part of *Anglo-America* ! The new edition, as did the preceding one, concludes with useful appendices on « The Physical Background of Anglo-America » and « Occupance and Land Use in Anglo-America. » The map changes in these appendices are to be complimented.

The principal weaknesses of the book remain. The first of these is the treatment of cities. In *Regional Geography of Anglo-America* cities are treated in the chapter on city and industrial geography (a condensed version of a general urban geography) and in lists of cities along with their populations at the end of each chapter. Aside from this, they are merely mentioned as points of reference or as being important in some particular industry, such as manufacturing or tourism. Since most Anglo-Americans live in cities, surely our important urban agglomerations deserve more attention than that !

The second principal shortcoming is the handling of manufacturing. The chapter on the American manufacturing belt is in itself quite acceptable. The problem is that the manufacturing belt, or region, is dissected by several of the regions treated in subsequent chapters. In these chapters, manufacturing is so ignored that the reader is not struck by its importance in the region in question. An excellent example is the chapter on « The Atlantic Coastal Plain and the Piedmont, » which includes the southwestern half of Megalopolis. If the American manufacturing « region » is a *region*, it merits being treated as such, not being parcelled into four or five other regions.

The third major drawback of the book is the super-orthodox and unimaginative order of presentation within the regional chapters. Almost all of the chapters commence with the physical setting followed by settlement and so on. The one happy exception is the chapter on « The Subtropical Pacific Coast » (most of California), which begins with « Water : Great Problem of the Region » followed by « Population : Sensational Regional Growth. » Unfortunately, the treatment of each of the subdivisions of this region (Southern California, the Central Valley, and so on) commences with « the natural environment. » In short, the book does not make exciting reading and does not treat first things first.

The reviewer must frankly state that the treatment of the distinctive ethnic character of French Canada (pp. 74-75) and of the role of Québec in the formation of the Dominion of Canada