

Charles Redway Dryer

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Early in the Spring of 1927 a group of properly dressed people could have been seen visiting a number of viewpoints and park sites in Ft. Wayne. They were not a particularly gay group for these visits were in memory of Charles Redway Dryer, whose funeral had been earlier in the day. This group consisted of his family and one former student.¹ The places visited were those that Dryer enjoyed most around Fort Wayne in the some 30 years he had lived in the city. Only in his native home area of central New York had he spent almost as much time. His third area of occupancy was at Terre Haute from 1893-1913.

The closing scene left little indication of the impact of this man upon the field of geography or the science of geography on the mind of this man. It is the purpose of these comments subsequently to review the contribution of Dr. Dryer to the field.

Charles Dryer was born in 1850 in the Finger Lakes district of New York in the village of Victor. This was and still is considered a scenic landscape, a product of the dissected Allegheny Plateau and subsequent glacial erosion. The area in which he was nurtured was occupied largely by people of English origin of which he was a prototype. Life was rigidly controlled. Education in the classroom was stereotyped in harmony with strict rules of no talking, no playing, no sleeping and in addition no drawing and no map making. However, with an early interest in landscape, maps held a fascination for Dryer and he states a teacher "connived" with him and let him draw maps in his spare moments in school.

Sent off to nearby Hamilton College, he graduated in 1871. Five years later he earned the M.D. degree at the University of Buffalo. From the literature, comments, type of writing, and area of studies; an impression of a rigidity of performance was part and parcel to the completion of this medical work. The work started must be completed and a dedication to that end was inevitable. Personal interest or feelings were of little authority in the work chosen. Interlaced with his work toward the medical degree, he taught school at Phelps Union and Classical School at Phelps, New York.

However, the practice of medicine was not to be long. Schockel claims Dryer was unsuccessful in the profession because of his straightforward treatment of patients. He had no sympathy or time for psychosomatics. Whatever brought his change, he started to teach at Fort Wayne in 1877, a year after receiving the M. D. degree. For several years his teaching was in the high school at Fort Wayne and in the Fort Wayne College of Medicine. His work at the high school was in Science, but his work at the medical school was in chemistry and toxicology. In the decade from graduation in 1876 his interest in land-

¹The author is indebted for the use of many ideas and facts from a former student of Dr. Dryer, namely, Dr. Bernard Schockel. Also another student, Professor Emeritus Raymond J. Reece.

forms increased. He met many of the early geologists and in particular Frank Taylor of the U. S. Geological Survey. His first evidence of skill in physiography was publication in 1886 of a paper on the Wabash Valley in the Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science. Unlike so many of our earlier contributors to our earth science field, he had not come as a converted naturalist. He had only transferred the system of the laboratory to the landscape and evaluated there on. He was impressed with the work of Taylor.² By the time he had arrived to head the Department at the Indiana State Normal, he had published seven or eight papers on geologic features of the state. These papers in substance were on singular features or a group of closely related features that made up a facet of the geologic landscape. His published material was systematic and scientific.

He became acquainted with the staff in geography at Chicago, and had devoted some of his summer time to the Indiana Geological Survey under S. S. Gorby and others. His status was as an assistant in the Survey. He wrote the Pleistocene history of six N. E. Indiana counties.

In addition to the part-time work with the Survey, he also is listed as being a consultant with the Ft. Wayne Electric Company for three years prior to coming to Terre Haute.³ Before his arrival at Terre Haute, then, in the period of 1890-93, he was simultaneously a member of the staff at the Fort Wayne Medical School, a consulting chemist, and an assistant in the Geological Survey. In this same period he is listed as being author of a number of papers.

In the fall of 1893 he joined the staff at Indiana State Normal School as a professor of Geography and Chairman of the Department. For the next eight school years the curriculum offered to the students consisted of physiography, meteorology, and political geography. Although he appears to have been the only instructor in his first year at Normal, thereafter one, two, or three members were associated with him. The source of the associates in his department were generally men not formally trained, but with a good education and an interest in geography. In 1897, as an example, he had added to the Department, Wm. A. McBeth. Professor McBeth was classically trained, but his excellent teaching ability and great interest in geography impressed Dryer. Also at the time, there were relatively few formally trained geographers available. Before the first ten years of his stay at Terre Haute, student assistants were listed as staff personnel. Among these Breeze, Schockel, and Tillman would move on to become better known.

One major break came in the curriculum offerings to students in 1905. For the first time a regional course in Europe appeared and a course in Methods of Teaching Geography.

Two factors may have been the cause of the curriculum changes. For several years after joining the staff at Normal, Dryer, to satisfy his needs and interests and perhaps as half defender and half missionary, wrote and prepared publications representing outlines of his

²He apparently also knew Frank Leverett and in 1908 Leverett spent several days with Dryer on the campus at Terre Haute.

³The information is conflicting. Some sources state he served as a chemist for the company. He probably was a full time employee since he no longer taught in the high school.

program, as for example the *Lessons In Physical Geography or Syllabi of Geography*. Also as vice-president of the Indiana College Association in 1897, he presented a paper, later published, entitled *Geography as a University Study*.

A second major situation developed during the academic year 1904-05 when he served as visiting staff member at Oxford under the influence of MacKinder and Herbertson.

Although MacKinder may now be the more famous of the two, Herbertson impressed Dryer most. Regionalism as proposed by Herbertson and perhaps the "humanization" of geography appeared reasonable to Dryer. At least, from 1905 on, many courses were added and in 1910 course offerings were about doubled. Geology was installed as a course but also was World Geography. Geography of North America, Economic Geography, and Social and Historical Geography. Enrollment jumped considerably as this distinguished scholar, who had lectured at Oxford, was sought out by students.

A turning point in type of publications also appeared. They involved studies of:

1. A Western New York Farm 1911
2. Glacial Economics and Sociology 1911
3. Maumee—Wabash Waterway 1919
4. Economic Region of U. S.—1915
5. Genetic Geography—1920

A high school text published in 1911 was quite successful. Good reviews occurred and to a man, sixty-one at the time, a good financial reward appeared.

In 1913, he resigned his position at Normal to return to Ft. Wayne and to writing additional texts. Major contribution to the profession of geography appeared in the presidential address of the Association of American Geographers (Genetic Geography) for 1919. This certainly pleaded for order in geographic thinking; and for an ecological approach to geography. In 1924, he prepared "A Century of Geographic Education in the United States."

He prepared two additional manuscripts for texts. One was on North America and the other on Indiana. World War I seriously interrupted plans, subsequent modifications, interruptions, and death finally left these manuscripts behind.

At a time when seventy was the respectable retirement age, Dryer had retired at sixty-three. To many it seemed premature and a surprise. Schockel gives these reasons for retirement.

1. Terre Haute, rowdy, vigorous, dirty, smelly never appealed to Dryer or his wife.
2. Generally felt students were not of quality.
3. Felt income from publications would support him.

Dryer the Man

Dryer married in 1874 a girl of English ancestry. They had four children, one boy and three girls. The best known was the oldest, who

became a commercial chemist in Cleveland. Mrs. Dryer, no doubt, had considerable influence on the professional life. Home was the proper, mannerly, orderly place. Dryer was dressed in the style of the times and the proper clothes for Sunday were also his clothes for every other day and including field work.

Schockel particularly, and Reece remark on the scholarly qualities of the man combined with his classical education. He could with ease teach Latin, Chemistry, Geography, and English. Reece particularly comments on the ability of Dryer to discuss Shakespeare. Schockel states most students held him in varying degrees of awe, fear, reverence, and amazement. His teaching demanded preparation by students before class time. Questions would pass from student to student around the classroom. A correct answer brought praise or encouragement. A wrong answer brought the blunt answer "You're wrong." Classes were formal and rigid.

Some of the teaching systems were continental in character. Under Dryer's influence great relief models were acquired. His favorite technique was to assign students to study them until about any question Dryer asked about the region represented by the model would be answered.

Field work was important. Dryer never owned a car. Transportation was by Interurban for several miles away and then great hikes. Often a month's field trip with six or eight students. A bicycle was another transportation device.

Contemporaries were Davis, Johnson, Ridgey, Buzzard Tower, Salisbury, Barrow, Atwood and others.

The Conclusion

Studies such as these reflect a number of adverse conditions including:

1. Interpretation of the memory of students.
2. The lack of material preserved about the individual by institution or family.
3. The lack of the individual recognizing their importance and thus fail to keep a journal.

In trying to equate these the author believes that Dryer:

1. Increased his own personal happiness by studying geography.
2. For twenty years vastly improved the stature of geography at Indiana Normal.
3. Made fundamental contributions to geographic information for Indiana.
4. Made national contributions through publication.
5. Materially and educationally contributed to the Association of of American Geography by repeated publications and serving as President in 1919.

In Dryer, for the age and time, Indiana Normal had one of the great geographers of the day. His work and contacts reveal that stature.⁴

⁴A short bibliography of his published materials may be found in the Necrology report of the Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science, Vol. 37, 1927, pp. 33-34.