

The Student Body:
A History of the Stewart Indian School, 1890-1940
by
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ABSTRACT

In 1890, the State of Nevada built the Stewart Indian School on a parcel of land three miles south of Carson City, Nevada, and then sold the campus to the federal government. The Stewart Indian School operated as the only non-reservation Indian boarding school in Nevada until 1980 when the federal government closed the campus. Faced with the challenge of assimilating Native peoples into Anglo society after the conclusion of the Indian wars and the confinement of Indian nations on reservations, the federal government created boarding schools. Policymakers believed that in one generation they could completely eliminate Indian culture by removing children from their homes and educating them in boarding schools.

The history of the Stewart Indian School from 1890 to 1940 is the story of a dynamic and changing institution. Only Washoe, Northern Paiute, and Western Shoshone students attended Stewart for the first decade, but over the next forty years, children from over sixty tribal groups enrolled at the school. They arrived from three dozen reservations and 335 different hometowns across the West. During this period, Stewart evolved from a repressive and exploitive institution, into a school that embodied the reform agenda of the Indian New Deal in the 1930s. This dissertation uses archival and ethnographic material to explain how the federal government's agenda failed. Rather than destroying Native culture, Stewart students and Nevada's Indian communities used the skills taught at the school to their advantage and became tribal leaders during the 1930s.

This dissertation explores the individual and collective bodies of Stewart students. The body is a social construction constantly being fashioned by the intersectional forces

of race, class, and gender. Each chapter explores the different ways the Stewart Indian School and the federal government tried to transform the students' bodies through their physical appearance, the built environment, health education, vocational training, and extracurricular activities such as band and sports.

This dissertation is dedicated to my father who inspired my interest in American Indian history as a child, and who stayed up all night with me on countless occasions to proofread and provide moral support from 700 miles away.

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So many of my family and friends have helped me on this journey and provided invaluable research help. My mother and Kim Jennings both traveled with me to the National Archives in San Bruno to help me pull records and copy material. My father

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

All student labor stopped at the Stewart Indian School in the winter of 1894. Dirty sheets and clothes littered the hallways and piled up in the dormitories. Flies swarmed around unwashed dishes. Like all non-reservation Indian boarding schools, Stewart depended upon student labor to function. When the Washoe, Northern Paiute, and Western Shoshone students refused to do the strenuous, unpaid labor necessary to keep the school running, the campus descended into chaos. The rebellious pupils still attended academic classes, but the staff had their hands full teaching and keeping the school clean on their own. Tension escalated when a carcass of a calf was found hanging from the main gate, and a headless dog was nailed to the cabin door of the truant officer. Forced to negotiate to restore order, School Superintendent William Gibson met with the Washoes, Paiutes, and Western Shoshones whose children attended Stewart.

The Stewart Indian School had opened three years earlier in December of 1890. Throughout this period the students worked long, hard hours doing the washing, cooking, farming, and other manual labor necessary to institutional life, without receiving any compensation or grades for their labor. The Washoes, Shoshones, and Paiutes objected to the exploitation of their children's bodies and insisted that their children be compensated for the work they performed. The school needed to live up to its rhetoric and prepare the youths for trades and grade them on the quality of their work. After three months of talks with the Superintendent, the Indian communities agreed that institutional work would resume, students would be taught a trade or profession, and they would receive grades for the labor. The girls would be graded in hygiene and homemaking. The boys

would be trained in farming, animal husbandry, carpentry, and harness making. All children would keep a share of any money earned through the sale of extra goods.¹

Federal boarding schools were an extension of previous policies of assimilation, which were forcibly enacted on the bodies of the children. Ironically, they were also completely dependent upon the bodies of those children to keep their institutions running. The government had been trying to make workers out of the Indians for decades. However, boarding schools made vocational training a corporal reality for students on a day-to-day basis. Boarding schools were an extension of federal Indian policy with two distinct changes. First, children bore the brunt of the new assault on Indigenous people and their cultures. Second, this focused attack on the children's identities was carried out in carefully crafted and controlled environments in which children were removed from their homes and families.

The federal government built non-reservation boarding schools to Americanize Indian children by removing them from their homes and tribal environment, teaching them to read and write in English, developing skills or a trade for economic support, and instilling a Christian work ethic. As David Wallace Adams describes in his seminal work, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience*, the underlying theory held that "Indian children, once removed from the savage surroundings of the Indian camp and placed in the purified environment of an all-encompassing institution, would slowly learn to look, act, and eventually think like their

¹ Nicholas D. Jackson, "A History of the Stewart Indian School," (M.A. Thesis, University of Nevada Reno, 1969), 40-43.

white counterparts.”² The underlying premise dictated that a military regimen and hard work would teach children the need for order and self-discipline.

Colonel Richard Henry Pratt created the blueprint for the federal boarding school program in 1879, when he opened the Carlisle Indian School in abandoned military barracks in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Pratt believed that removing native children from their “uncivilized” home communities, and placing them in a strictly controlled environment would assimilate them into mainstream society. Pratt’s educational mission began in Fort Marion, Florida, where he supervised Kiowa prisoners from the Red River War. Rather than incarcerate the prisoners he endeavored to teach them the values of white society. Pratt instructed them in English, craftsmanship, soldiering, arts, and labor. Several of the prisoners even volunteered to attend Hampton Institute to further their education. Proud of his achievements, Pratt believed that American Indians could be Americanized in one generation just like European immigrants. Several years later, Pratt opened the Carlisle Indian School.³ Although policy makers modified the formula slightly over the years, Carlisle served as the model for all non-reservation boarding schools.

Pratt placed Indian children in white households during the summer months so they could experience the benefits of Anglo-American culture first hand. The Carlisle Slogan was “To civilize the Indian, get him into civilization. To keep him civilized, let

² David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1926* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 335.

³ Alice Littlefield, “Learning to Labor: Native American Education in the United States, 1880–1930,” in *The Political Economy of North American Indians*, edited by John. H. Moore, [insert page numbers]. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 46. Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1964), 271.

him stay.”⁴ Isolating students from their families and communities provided a key component of the assimilation process. Policy makers agreed that the tribal environment subverted the work they were doing.⁵

Arrival at a boarding school could be a traumatic experience for children. The first step in the assimilation process involved removing all outward signs of tribal identity from the students’ bodies. Children had their hair cut and their clothing and adornment taken from them.^{6,7} Sprayed down and washed in lye to remove any lice, the new pupils dressed in European style uniforms. Luther Standing Bear, one of the first Lakota students at Carlisle Indian School, later wrote of his experience, “The fact is that we were to be transformed, and short hair being the mark of gentility with the white man, he put upon us the mark.”

The second step in the federal government’s plan to divest students of their native identity was to instruct them in the tenants of white civilization.⁸ This effort included English classes and a basic public school education. Vocational training played an important role in the school curriculum. Students spent half of the day in the classroom and the rest of the day doing institutional work and training. The students furnished a large pool of cheap labor. Parents were expressed their concern that students were

⁴ Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 283.

⁵ Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 43.

⁶ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 100.

⁷ Luther Standing Bear, *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933), 189.

⁸ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 100.

overworked. The girls produced all of the clothing for students at the school, worked in the laundry, made the beds, kept the dormitories clean, and served as kitchen and dining room help. The boys made all of the shoes, staffed the bakery, worked in the fields, cared for the live-stock, helped construct new buildings, and kept the grounds manicured.

As the only non-reservation Indian boarding school in Nevada, the Stewart Indian School enrolled children from Washoe, Western Shoshone, and Northern Paiute communities.⁹ The campus is located southwest of Carson City on 240 acres of land in the Carson Valley nestled at the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Stewart is the only federal boarding school that was constructed by a state legislature and then sold to the federal government.¹⁰ It was named for Senator William Stewart who helped secure the funding.¹¹ The first class of thirty-seven students arrived on December 17, 1890. Voluntarily and through coercion they continued to arrive so that by the end of the first school year the student population had increased to 105.¹² Thereafter, student numbers continued to increase, and by the 1930s the school consistently enrolled between 400 and

⁹ The Stewart Indian School has alternately been named the Stewart Institute, the Carson Industrial School, and the Carson Indian Training School. Since the Stewart Indian School is the common nomenclature today it will be used throughout. However the name has not been changed in direct quotations or citations if it is referred to differently.

¹⁰ United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892), 883-885 (hereinafter referred to as *Annual Report*); Jackson, 13.

¹¹ Although the Stewart Indian School was named in honor of Senator Stewart, he actively worked against the Northern Paiute in later years. Senator Stewart pushed for the opening of Indian Country in Nevada beginning in 1892, just a year after the school opened. He applied his considerable political pressure to introduce bills to completely dispose of the Walker River Reservation and to open the lands near Wadsworth on the Pyramid Lake Reservation to white settlement. Martha C. Knack and Omer Call Stewart, *As Long as the River Shall Run: An Ethnohistory of Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1984), 198.

¹² *Annual Report 1891*, 571.

500 students at a time. During the ninety years that Stewart operated, over 30,000 Indian children attended before it closed in 1980.¹³

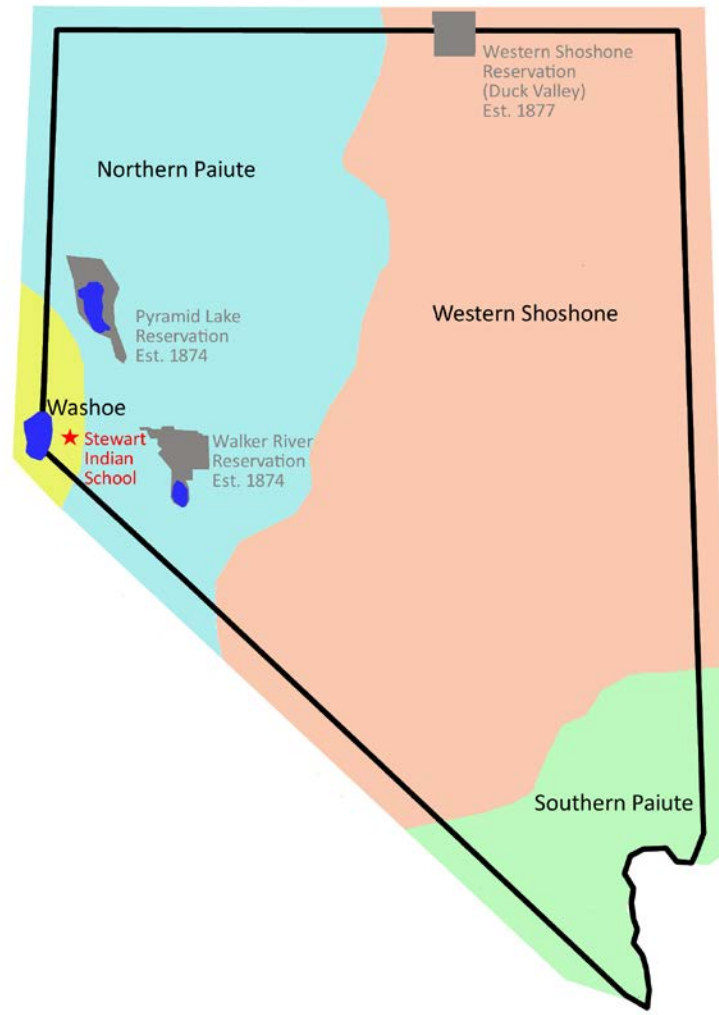


Figure 1. Map of territories of Great Basin tribes and Nevada Indian reservations in 1890.¹⁴

¹³ The Nevada State Museum estimates that 30,000 children attended during the school's operation. The Stewart Indian School was not a flagship boarding school like Carlisle Indian School or Haskell Institute, nor a particularly large school like the Phoenix Indian School or the Chilocco Indian Agricultural School, which both enrolled upwards of 1,000 students per year. Scott Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School 1898-1933* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 14; K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of the Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), xv; Nevada Division of Museums and History, "History," accessed April 25, 2007, <http://dmla.clan.lib.nv.us/docs/museums/cc/Exhibits/stewart/exhibit1/vexmain1.htm>.

¹⁴ Map created by author.

The history of the Stewart Indian School from 1890 to 1940 is the confluence of two stories. The first is the history of a changing and dynamic institution. Stewart evolved from a repressive and exploitive institution to a school that embodied the reform agenda of the Indian New Deal in the 1930s. During the early years from 1890 to the 1920s the Stewart Indian School faithfully followed the assimilationist agenda, but the administration floundered in the first two decades under a succession of eleven short-term superintendents. During this most repressive period, Washoes, Paiutes, and Western Shoshones could be punished for speaking their native languages. Young children were not encouraged to dream about careers as doctors or lawyers, instead the school trained them become part of a subservient working class.

In the 1920s, however, Stewart officials started to relax their programs and allow the children a little more leeway to express themselves through extracurricular activities.¹⁵ Dances and socials allowed boys and girls to interact more intimately. Movies in the auditorium provided weekly entertainment for the students. The 1920s were a much more stable period in Stewart's history. As the table below demonstrates, Stewart had six short term superintendents from 1912 until 1919. When Superintendent Frederick Snyder arrived in 1919 he provided firm leadership during his fifteen year

¹⁵ Scott Riney, "Loosening the Bonds: The Rapid City Indian School in the 1920s," in *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences*, eds. Clifford E. Trafzer et al. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 131-154. Riney makes a similar argument about the curriculum at the Rapid City Indian School in South Dakota. He contends that in the 1920s the school slowly started to resemble public high schools along with all their extracurricular activities.

tenure. Snyder transformed the campus from a failing school to a horticultural and architectural showpiece.¹⁶

Table 1: List of Stewart Superintendents.¹⁷

Superintendent Name	Title	Term
William D. C. Gibson	Superintendent	1890-1894
William M. Moss	Superintendent in Charge	1894-1894
Eugene Mead	Superintendent	1894-1899
James K. Allen	Superintendent	1899-1903
Calvin H. Asbury	Superintendent	1903-1912
Howard Hall	Superintendent in Charge	1912-1912
Frank A. Thackery	Superintendent in Charge	1912-1912
S. A. M. Young	Superintendent	1912-1912
Jesse B. Mortsolf	Superintendent	1912-1915
James B. Royce	Superintendent	1915-1919
Joseph D. Oliver	Superintendent in Charge	1919-1919
Frederick Snyder	Superintendent	1919-1934
R. C. Berskiewicz	Acting Superintendent	1934-1934
Alida Bowler	Superintendent	1934-1939
Don C. Foster	Superintendent	1939-1941

By the 1930s the Stewart Indian School had become a model of progressive education under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, John Collier (1933-1945) crafted the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which gave tribes and communities the ability to form their own tribal governments, encouraged tribal institutions, and reversed long standing policies of land allotment to individual

¹⁶ “Inspection Report of W. W. Coon, Supervisor” November 2, 1926, File “52206-1926,” Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

¹⁷ Table adapted from E. B. Meritt, Assistant Commissioner to James B. Royce, Superintendent Stewart, March 19, 1917, File “22931-1917,” Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

Indians under the Dawes Act of 1887.¹⁸ The political reforms of the mid 1930s are often referred to as the “Indian New Deal.”¹⁹

Collier had been President of the American Indian Defense Association and represented a breed of new reformers who sought to encourage tribal institutions and respected the rights of tribes to make their own decisions. Unlike earlier reformers who had crafted federal policies such as the Dawes Act, the Defense Association did not advocate for the assimilation of individual Indians. Instead the Association stressed tribal sovereignty and the rights of self-determination. Federal policy shifted during the Great Depression to embrace these new Indian advocates, and Roosevelt cemented the new relationship by appointing Collier as the new Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1933.

Collier in turn appointed his colleague from the Indian Defense Association, Alida Cynthia Bowler, superintendent at Stewart on September 1, 1934. Bowler became the first female superintendent in the Indian Service and under her leadership the Stewart Indian School embraced the reform ethos of the Indian New Deal.²⁰ Bowler had a glowing resume in Indian activism and children’s reform. Prior to her appointment, she worked as a secretary for the Sacramento and the Central and Northern California regional branches of the American Indian Defense Association. During that time she

¹⁸ William C. Sturtevant, *Handbook of North American Indians: History of Indian-White Relations*, Vol 4, History of Indian-White Relations, edited by Wilcomb E. Washburn (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 308-310.

¹⁹ Sturtevant, *Handbook of North American Indians*, 308-310.

²⁰ Bowler was only the third woman to be appointed to a high ranking government position during the New Deal. The other two appointments included Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s choice of Frances Perkins as a member of his cabinet and Ruth Bryan Owens as the head of a diplomatic mission. “Third of ‘First’ Women Gets Job Among Indians,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, August 3, 1934; “Woman Big Chief,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 7, 1934.

conducted research among western tribes, worked as a social worker, and published a study of reform institutions for young children. Her work doing juvenile research in earned her a position as Director of the Delinquency Unit of the Children's Bureau. Her study, *Institutional Treatment of Delinquent Boys*, was published in two volumes in 1935 and 1936.²¹

As the head of the Stewart Indian School, Bowler cheered the students on as they learned more about their heritage, studied traditional crafts, and presented their culture to the white public.²² As the Indian Agent for almost the entire state, Bowler worked to empower the tribal councils, fought for their legal rights in the courts, and encouraged the students to get involved in political issues.²³ She did not back down when challenged by

²¹ Born in 1887 in Moro, Illinois, Bowler attended the University of Illinois where she studied and excelled in psychology, earning her master's degree in 1910. After college she worked as a psychologist for the Ohio Bureau of Juvenile Research and taught at Ohio State University. *Institutional Treatment of Delinquent Boys* constituted the first study of child reform institutions in the United States and focused on the physical campuses and statistical data on 751 boys. This full study of the inner workings of reform institutions included their programs, policies, and punishments. Some schools were fenced off to keep the children inside, while others relied on the students and the community to keep the children within the boundaries of the institution. Bowler followed the boys for five years to determine if being detained as a youngster changed the course of the boys' lives. Alida Bowler and Ruth S. Bloodgood, *Institutional Treatment of Delinquent Boys, Part 1 – Treatment Programs of Five State Institutions*, U.S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, Publication Number 228, 1935; Alida Bowler and Ruth S. Bloodgood, *Institutional Treatment of Delinquent Boys, Part 2 – A Study of 751 Boys*, U.S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, Publication Number 230, 1936.

²² In 1936 Bowler helped create the Wai-Pai-Shone Craftsman Cooperative to help native artists, including students, sell their work. The store was located by the dining hall. "Indian Craftsman Program to be Launched in Nevada Soon in Co-operative Plan" *Reno Evening Gazette*, February 17, 1936.

²³ The Indian Office continuously shifted jurisdiction over the reservations and colonies of the state. The Reno Agency was established in 1912 to encompass all non-reservation Indians in the state. However, the Reno Agency was short lived and in April of 1925, the Reno Agency and the Stewart Indian School consolidated into the Carson Agency which had jurisdiction over the Pyramid Lake, Fort McDermitt, and Summit Valley Reservations and the urban Indian populations in Reno and Carson City. Then in 1935, the Walker River Reservation merged with the Carson Agency including Mono and Inyo counties in California. Only Clark County in the southern tip of Nevada remained under separate jurisdiction under the Paiute Agency in Utah. In 1935 the reservations and colonies under the Carson Agency included: Battle Mountain Colony, Bishop Colony, Carson City Colony, Dresslerville Colony, Elko Colony, Fallon Colony, Fort McDermitt Colony, Independence Reservation, Lovelock Colony, Pyramid Lake Reservation, Reno-Sparks Colony, Ruby Valley Colony, Summit Lake Reservation, Walker

Senator Pat McCarran during hearings over a land battle between squatters and the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe. Her outspoken advocacy for the tribe earned the Senator's animosity and he applied political pressure to have her fired from the Indian Service. In December of that year, Collier "promoted" her to a position as Secretary at Large.²⁴ Her departure marked the end of an era at Stewart.

Most boarding school histories fail to explore the dynamic changes of the 1930s. They end or start in 1928 when the Meriam Report changed the direction of Indian Education. The Meriam Report, officially titled the *Problem of Indian Administration*, included a searing condemnation of the Indian Service's failure to fulfill its objectives and criticized the assimilationist agenda of the school system. Most histories of the early years end at this juncture because the fifty years preceding this report were the most repressive and assimilationist. Unfortunately, this often results in a static history of the boarding schools that focuses on the government's attempt to eradicate native culture in one generation.²⁵ While the Stewart Indian School did undergo a progressive transformation, at the end of the day it remained a boarding school. As an agent of the federal assimilationist agenda it caused irreparable harm to native communities.

The Stewart Indian School transformed from a local non-reservation boarding school serving nearby Washoe, Paiute, and Western Shoshone communities to a hub in

River Reservation, Winnemucca Colony, and Yerington Colony. In 1938, the Moapa Reservation in Clark County joined the list and every Indian community in the state of Nevada fell under the Carson Agency.

²⁴ Bowler's dismissal was labeled a promotion to Superintendent-At-Large, but in reality it marked the end of her career. "Promotion given to Miss Alida Bowler," *Reno Evening Gazette*, November 1, 1939.

²⁵ Some examples that focus on this early period include Adams, *Education for Extinction*, Coleman, *American Indian Children at School*, Keller, *Empty Beds*, Trennert, *Forced Assimilation* and Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School*.

the federal Indian education system with students attending from over all over the West. When the school opened, Stewart enrolled Paiutes from the Pyramid Lake and Walker Lake Reservations, Western Shoshones from the Western Shoshone Reservation, and Washoes from the Carson Valley. Thus, the early student population consisted almost entirely of Washoes, Northern Paiutes, and Western Shoshones from the largest reservations. However, by the 1930s the entire landscape of Indian Territory in Nevada had changed dramatically and so had the tribal backgrounds of the student body. Almost half of the state's native population lived off reservation and worked on ranches on the outskirts of towns.

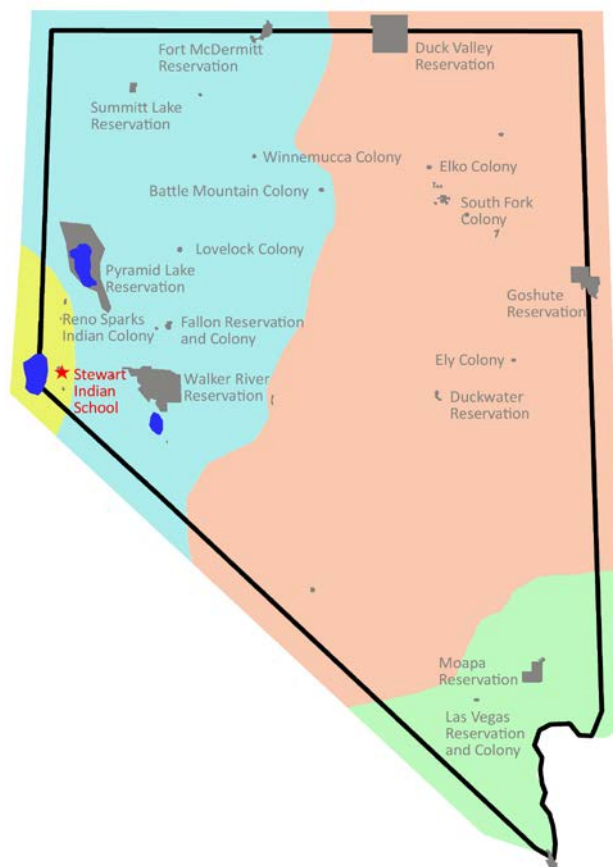


Figure 2. Map of colonies and reservations in Nevada today.²⁶

²⁶ Map created by author. Most of the reservations and colonies are labeled.

To address the off reservation problem, the federal government set aside “colonies” starting in 1917 for Washoes, Western Shoshones, and Northern Paiutes. These colonies were small tracts of land, often just a few miles wide, on the fringes of towns or right in the middle of the urban areas of Reno and Carson City.²⁷ This colony system is unique to Nevada, although the Indian Service created similar small reserves in other states, including what are called “Rancherias” in California. The settlements formalized the living arrangements of Natives in the state and the Indian Office abandoned all hope of centralizing the Native population on the Walker River, Pyramid Lake and Western Shoshone Reservations. However, since these colonies did not have schools of their own, many children attended the Stewart Indian School.²⁸ By the early 1930s Stewart’s students hailed from at least 335 different hometowns, including three dozen reservations across the West, and represented over sixty different tribal groups.²⁹

Interwoven into this history of a changing non-reservation boarding school, is the story of the Indian peoples of Nevada who took the education and skills they obtained at Stewart and transformed them into marks of honor. Boarding schools were designed as

²⁷ The first colonies were set aside for the Washoe in 1917. Over a dozen were established over the next twenty years and concluded with the purchase of the Campbell Ranch for Paiutes living outside of Yerington in 1936. Michael Hittman, *The Yerington Paiute Tribe: A Numa History* (Yerington, NV: Yerington Paiute Tribe, 1984), 33, 41; Matthew Stephen Makley, “‘These will be Strong’: A History of the Washoe People,” Ph.D. Dissertation (Tempe: Arizona State University, 2007), 45, 156-157.

²⁸ Steven J. Crum, *The Road on Which We Came: A History of the Western Shoshone* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 31; Knack and Stewart, *As Long as the River Shall Run*, 51.

²⁹ This expansion is similar to the Rapid City Indian School, another non-reservation boarding school established in 1889 near the Pine Ridge Reservation, which predominately served the Lakota people. Rapid City enrolled roughly 300 students during the 1920s while Stewart enrolled around 400. According to Riney, 234 out of 302 enrolled students at Rapid City in the 1921-22 school year were Lakota, and 90 were from the Pine Ridge Reservation. The school expanded its recruitment in the 1910s into Wyoming, Montana, and South Dakota. Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School*, 15; Author’s database, Individuals Student School Records, 1919-1949.

hotboxes to forge assimilated native children who dressed in European clothing, worked as laborers and servants, abandoned their traditional culture, and returned home to the reservations to teach the values of American citizenship to their unenlightened compatriots. In this way, all federal boarding schools used the same template to create an “Indian school body.” Federal policy makers tried to inscribe Indian children with both physical and behavioral markers that would display the assimilation process. The students and Nevada’s Indian communities adopted many of the practices into their own cultural traditions. Rather than destroying Native culture, the Stewart Indian School students used their new-found skills to their own advantage and, during the Indian New Deal, they became cultural leaders and advocates for native culture.

Paiute athletes like boxer and coach Ned Crutcher, and football star, Walter Johnson, constituted perfect examples of how bodies were marked by a boarding school education and transformed into cultural heroes. From the beginning of the boarding school program, educators used student athletes as poster children for assimilation. On the ball field or gridiron, these students represented the tamed and harnessed Indian body fighting for a touchdown rather than in the Indian Wars. However, Nevada’s Indian Communities saw the young men as icons who demonstrated what Indians could do given the right circumstances.

“The body” is a social construction which is constantly being fashioned and refashioned by social forces such as race, class, and gender. Malleable, it can take different forms at different times, just as an individual’s identity can change in different contexts and places. Race, class, gender, and other social differences are constructed around the identity of the body. Likewise, our intellectual conception about what a body

is (or should be) can be just as powerful as the forces that shape the material body. The contemporary obsession with fit bodies yields just one example of how the mind can shape and influence the physical body. Individuals will go to great lengths trying diets, exercise, steroids, and plastic surgery to achieve idealized standards of beauty. Yet, Botox would undoubtedly seem as strange to a Victorian lady as corsets do to today's modern woman. Consequently, the body is both a physical reality and a social construction.³⁰

Indian bodies were at the heart of the boarding school experiment. In fact, bodies have always been central to federal Indian policy in the United States, although we do not often think of colonialism in those terms. Divesting Indians of their lands, confining them on reservations, and forcing them to conform to American ideals of the yeoman farmer were all meant to control native bodies, reduce military threats, and steal Indigenous property. Indians "roaming" free constituted a threat, but those living on reservations had been contained. Once natives had been confined, the government was confronted with the "Indian Problem" of what to do with the Indian population. Assimilation programs aimed first at reservations and then at school children were the government's attempt to eradicate Native culture.³¹

³⁰ Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-1950* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998), xvii; Linda McDowell, *Gender Identity & Place: Understanding Feminist Geography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 36-39.

³¹ Kelm addresses the central role of Indigenous bodies in the colonization of British Columbia. In *Colonizing Bodies* she shows how sustained contact with Europeans substantially altered the health of the Indigenous population of British Columbia and how contemporary health problems are based in the material condition of wardship. Kelm explores how the Canadian state, the medical profession, and the churches provided the discourses, material conditions, and disciplines of power which created the deplorable state of health conditions in the province. The second half of *Colonizing Bodies* focuses on how native healing practices were not absorbed by European practices but integrated into Indigenous practices. Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*, xvii.

Educators often thought of the assimilation process in bodily terms. As the federal Superintendent of Indian Schools argued in 1885:

These schools strip from the unwashed person of the Indian boy the unwashed blanket, and, after instructing him in what to him are the mysteries of personal cleanliness, clothe him with the clean garment of civilized men and teach him how to wear them. They give him information concerning a bed and teach him how to use it; teach him how to sit on a chair, how to use knife and fork, how to eat at a table, and what to eat. While he is learning these things, he is also learning to read and write, and, at the same time, is being taught how to work, how to earn a living.³²

This quotation emphasizes the connection between physical training and the training of the mind that was central to boarding school philosophy. Educators assumed that once provided the material culture of civilization and trained in its use, Indians would willingly don the garments of civilization. However, the inner transformation was less visible and considerably more problematic. Many children did not internalize the colonizer's clothing. As the survival of the Washoe, Northern Paiute, and Western Shoshones peoples and native peoples across the country demonstrates, forcing people to perform certain tasks, speak a certain language, and dress a certain way, does not necessarily change their hearts.

In this federal attack against the children's bodies, place mattered. Policymakers recognized the connection between the school environment and the assimilation process. In fact, it should be considered the cornerstone of Pratt's original experiment at Carlisle. While advocating for the creation of the school, Pratt wrote, "Now, I do not believe that amongst his people an Indian can be made to feel all the advantages of a civilized life, nor the manhood of supporting himself and of standing out alone and battling for life as

³² *Annual Report* 1885, 111-12.

an American citizen. To accomplish that, his removal and personal isolation is necessary.”³³

A circular sent to Stewart by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1921 explained that place helped shape the student’s experience: “Indian children are very responsive to environmental conditions, and since youthful impressions are potent influences in the formation of habits and character, due attention should be given to those things which inculcate decency, modesty, and refinement. What we wish to appear in the lives of Indian people we must first exemplify in the schools.”³⁴ Thus, the environment had to be tamed just as the Indian body itself needed to be trained and civilized. Indeed, the physical layout of the campus, the architecture, the boundaries and straight lines all conveyed messages about the benefits of civilization.

Architecture and the layout of spaces influence the human experience. Places can encourage certain types of behavior and constrain others. For instance, in a library you are supposed to be quiet and in a sports arena you may yell and cheer. Stewart had areas designated for work, play, education, and sleep. The architecture and layout of the campus facilitated policies and practices which regulated student behavior. Separate dorms and work spaces isolated girls from boys and younger children from teenagers. Six-year-old Daisy Smith, a student from Tonapah, Nevada, rarely interacted with her older siblings even though they all lived on the small campus.³⁵ The physical layout of

³³ Pratt, 266.

³⁴ Dr. Robert Newborne, Report on Carson School, September 27 to October 5, 1922, File “88479-1922,” Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

³⁵ Stewart Indian School Trail Podcasts, Daisy Smith, Podcast #5, accessed July 12, 2011, <http://www.stewartindianschool.com/stewart-podcasts.html>.

the campus and the structure of space within buildings all influenced the student experience at Stewart.

Two approaches have dominated scholarly work on the relationship between the body and society, both of which consider the importance of place. Michael Foucault's work provides the first approach. Foucault formulated the "inscribed body," or the body as acted upon by regimes of disciplinary power.³⁶ In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that disciplinary practices target the body in "a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behavior."³⁷ Consequently, power is an everyday, socialized, and embodied phenomenon. These practices were pioneered in institutions such as prisons, hospitals, and schools and then applied more broadly to society at large. Federal Indian boarding schools provided a fertile environment for such disciplinary practices. On a daily basis, the students performed military boot camp-style drills, underwent physical training as domestics and tradesmen, and attended classes to inculcate the core values of American society. Educators sought to train and subjugate student bodies.³⁸

K. Tsianina Lomawaima utilizes Foucault's disciplinary regime and surveillance to explain student resistance to federal policies at the Chilocco Indian Agricultural School in her article "Domesticity in the Federal Indian Schools: The Power of Authority over Mind and Body." She argues that "In order to mold young people's minds, 19th-century

³⁶ Foucault defines disciplinary methods as "methods, which made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility...." Michael Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1995), 137.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

³⁸ Foucault argues that "The body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body." *Ibid.*, 26.

educators bent first to mold their bodies, according to gender- and race-specific notions of capacities and inclinations,” Chilocco students, like all boarding school students, experienced strict gender segregation, military regimentation, and surveillance. Employing Foucault, Lomawaima asserts that “power does not operate on bodies primarily in repressive, negative ways. Power is strong because it is creative – it ‘produces’ effect, knowledge, habits, discourses.” Educators hoped to produce new Indian bodies that were subservient manual laborers, and the boarding schools were seen as a complete transformative institution in which to do this.³⁹ Lomawaima argues that boys and girls had fundamentally different experiences at boarding schools because of the strict gender separation. Using Foucault’s theory of surveillance, she describes a system where children were regularly watched and expected to conform to Victorian ideas about gender roles and female modesty.

Lomawaima was the first scholar to demonstrate that studying the body in the boarding schools could afford new insights into student resistance to federal objectives. She also challenges Foucault’s conception of disciplinary power, which is so pervasive that it leaves no room for resistance or the possibility of freedom. In “Domesticity in the Federal Indian Schools: The Power of Authority over Mind and Body,” she describes how the students performed subversive acts to undermine the power and authority of school officials. The girls often colluded to outwit the matrons who insisted they wear uncomfortable and unstylish bloomers. As a result, control over wardrobe became a site

³⁹ K. Tsianina Lomawaima, “Domesticity in the Federal Indian Schools: The Power of Authority over Mind and Body,” in *American Ethnologist* 20, no. 2 (1993), 228.

of active resistance for the girls.⁴⁰ These subversive acts allowed the children at Chilocco to craft their own identities in relation to the federal agenda that was forced upon them.⁴¹

The second approach is to consider the body as lived, or in other words, the body as an active agent. The concept of the lived body originated with the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Unlike Foucault's articulation of power as all encompassing, Merleau-Ponty articulates a compelling philosophy of the body as an active body-subject, or as he calls it our way of "being-in-the-world." Through its involvement with the social world, the body-subject learns ways of being by acting and reacting. Merleau-Ponty argues that an individual will rarely alter their most fundamental ways of being because that is how an individual makes sense of his/her world.⁴²

Building on Merleau-Ponty's work, feminist philosopher Marion Iris Young's scholarship illuminates the complex layers of the relationship between body and society. Young argues that "a specific body lives in a specific context...."⁴³ Individuals' bodies are shaped by a variety of intersectional forces including race, socio-economic status, gender, sexuality, and age. Feminist scholars in particular have embraced the lived experience of women as a way to explain the intersectionality of forces of oppression.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Lomawaima, *Prairie Light*, xiv.

⁴¹ Lomawaima, "Domesticity," 227-240.

⁴² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New Jersey: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962); Nick Crossley, "Merleau-Ponty, the Elusive Body and Carnal Sociology," *Body & Society* 1, no. 1 (1995): 56.

⁴³ Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 16.

⁴⁴ In the 1980s during the women's history turn, feminists went to great lengths to prove that women were not their bodies and that biology was not destiny. However, studying the material body lost

The concept of the lived body also resonates well with contemporary Indian history. Boarding school histories emphasize the active role that children took in shaping their own world. Resistance, in its many forms, is a key thread in boarding school histories.⁴⁵ Students displayed a full spectrum of responses to the federal agenda ranging from complete rejection to internalization. In between these two poles, most children practiced subtle forms of resistance such as sneaking away to speak their own language, or slowing down work details. Running away was a key form of resistance at Stewart. During the 1890s, almost one out of every six children ran away or refused to return to school after the summer vacation.⁴⁶ The number of deserters declined over the decades as cars and the telegraph made it much easier for staff to track down and catch runaways. In addition to overt forms of resistance, students also practiced accommodation. This strategy meant that children adopted habits which made sense to their way of being-in-the-world and disregarded aspects of Anglo civilization with little practical purpose.

Both approaches, the inscribed body and the lived body, offer useful lenses for considering federal Indian boarding schools. It is not necessary to choose one over the other.⁴⁷ Students were both acted upon by federal policy and actors who made the

much of its appeal as feminists turned towards gender, rather than sex, to explain systems of oppression and individual gender and sexual expression. However, the feminist turn, also initiated more research across all historical fields in the history of the body.

⁴⁵ Some examples of student responses include Adams, *Education for Extinction*, chapters 7-8, Lomawaima, *Prairie Light*, 123-125, Michael Coleman, *American Indian Children at School, 1850-1930* (Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 1993), chapters 4, 8, and 9.

⁴⁶ Register of Pupils, Box 8, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno. Hereinafter referred to as "Register of Pupils."

⁴⁷ In "Body-Subject/Body-Power: Agency, Inscription and Control in Foucault and Merleau-Ponty," Nick Crossley argues that while Foucault and Merleau-Ponty appear to be contrasting philosophies, they are in fact compatible and complementary. Both philosophers admit that the body is both acted upon and an actor, although each emphasizes one pole. Moreover, a review of the articles in the interdisciplinary

schools their own. Boarding schools, like prisons, maintained strict control over behavior. Federal boarding schools worked hard to transform the habit based actions of the students, but forcing someone into certain modes of behavior does not necessarily change their heart and soul.

Sources

Most primary sources for the Stewart Indian School are located in the National Archives and Records Administration in San Bruno, California, and Washington, DC. Records for the forty-year time period include reports, maps, photographs, correspondence, circulars, record books, attendance logs, and individual student records. For the most part letters and reports sent to the Indian Office are housed in Washington, and return correspondence is housed in San Bruno, along with records like the attendance logs that the Stewart Indian School maintained. Correspondence between Stewart Superintendents and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs constitute the preponderance of primary source material cited in this dissertation. Newspapers and census records offer information about individuals and social happenings at the school. Unfortunately, student voices are not included in many of these record sets. Some letters to the Superintendent from students wishing to attend the school, parents of children, or graduated students do remain in the files, but personal letters from students to their families are not included since it was policy to allow children to keep their own correspondence.

journal, *Body & Society* demonstrates that most scholars rarely choose just one approach in their work. Nick Crossley, "Body-Subject/Body-Power: Agency, Inscription and Control in Foucault and Merleau-Ponty," *Body & Society* 2, no. 2 (1996): 99-116; Arthur W. Frank, "How Images Shape Bodies," *Body & Society* 4, no. 1 (1998), 101.

The Oral History Program at the University of Nevada Reno has conducted dozens of oral histories documenting the lives of Washoes, Western Shoshones and Paiutes in the early 1900s. In addition the Nevada State Museum produced a video and exhibit called “Under One Sky” which includes the stories of many Stewart alumni. These oral histories add native voices to the story of the Stewart Indian School.

I am an active member of the Stewart Advisory Commission which works to protect the history and legacy of the Stewart Indian School. Many alumni have graciously shared their personal stories in informal conversations. Yet most of the prominent alumni have already told their stories to other researchers or film crews and are reluctant to go through the interview process again. Whenever possible, I have used those oral histories to inform my own narrative.

I sent a request to the Nevada Indian Commissioner which facilitates the Stewart Advisory Commission and the Stewart Father’s Day Powwow to send an informational brochure to Stewart alumni explaining my project, welcoming their questions, and inviting any alumni or family members to record a formal oral history. The request was denied for privacy concerns, but I was invited to volunteer at the powwow which I have done for several years. As a non-native researcher I have encountered resistance to conducting formal oral histories, for many valid reasons, and strive to respect the privacy of the tribes and individuals who attended the school.

Chapter Organization

The history of the Stewart Indian School is multilayered, messy, and complicated. Rather than tell one long chronological narrative, this dissertation is organized topically. Each chapter explores a different way of looking at the body. Through that lens, each

chapter also considers the many transformations that occurred at both the school and in Nevada Indian territory from 1890 through 1940.

The first two chapters map the bodies of the students, where they came from, and the institutional setting at Stewart. Using student attendance books, chapter one describes the individual student body. It traces the average age a student arrived at Stewart, their educational backgrounds, and how long he or she stayed. In 1890 Washoes, Northern Paiutes, and Western Shoshones dominated the school population and the majority came from the nearby Washoe communities and the Pyramid Lake, Walker River, and Western Shoshone Reservations. By 1940, Stewart enrolled students from towns and reservation across the Western United States and the student population had grown to roughly five hundred students a year.⁴⁸

In the federal boarding school attack on the children's bodies, place mattered. Removing children to a "civilized" environment was an underlying premise of the whole exercise. Superintendent Frederick Snyder played a central role in carrying out this mission as the architect and visionary of the Stewart campus. Chapter two explores the physical environment at Stewart and how it both embodied and supported the goals and missions of the education program. The campus design made it easier to enforce strict gender and age divides and monitor student behavior.

Chapters three and four consider the impact of federal policy on the health of the students. Building upon the argument expressed in chapter two that the physical environment directly shaped the student bodies at Stewart, chapter three explores how

⁴⁸ Individual Student School Records, 1919-1949, Boxes 1-3, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

widespread scientific and popular assumptions about the inferiority of native bodies influenced the infrastructure built at Stewart and the types of medical services furnished at the school. Scientific discourse of the period labeled Indian bodies as inferior and degenerate. As a result, educators, policymakers, and health professionals assumed that little could be done to prevent the high rates of tuberculosis, trachoma, and other diseases in native communities. Instead they focused on treating the symptoms and ignored the disease loop that was created as sick children were sent to Stewart where they infected other children, who in turn spread the illness to friends and relatives.

On the ground, these debates about the physical inferiority of the Indian bodies, meant little to a sick child. Chapter four explores the children's lived experience of medicine during their time at Stewart including epidemics, accidents, and routine medical examinations. Although tuberculosis and trachoma were the most publicized scourges of the boarding schools, many students contracted infectious diseases such as smallpox, measles, and pneumonia. Students were active participants in their own health care. To encourage student participation in monitoring the health of the student body as a whole, students formed a "Student Republic" program to police unhealthy behaviors. By the 1930s these lessons had been internalized and Indian communities across Nevada began advocating for better health services and care. The children had been enlisted into the front lines of disease control within their own communities.

Physical health was only one component of how a boarding school education shaped student bodies. Chapter five explores the vocational training program at Stewart and the gendered messages implicit in a work program that initially trained boys and girls for menial jobs for jobs as agricultural workers, laborers, domestics, and housewives.

The boarding schools also encouraged masculinity through enlistment in the armed services, and chapter five explores military service and training.

Chapter six considers the collective student body. Indian bodies were put on display at sports events, parades, and concerts. Stewart's superintendents welcomed opportunities to show off the transformed pupils to Nevada's white population. These presentations helped raise money and garnered political support for the institution. These same sports events, concerts, and parades also became a source of pride for Stewart students and their families. Many alumni fondly remember their time as a Stewart Brave. Students and staff embraced the chance to show off the athletic and musical skills learned at Stewart.

Boarding schools as institutions have left deep scars in native communities. Children experienced loneliness, harsh punishments, and strange surroundings, and became disconnected from their tribal heritage. Nevertheless, many alumni had positive experiences at Stewart. Some children spent the bulk of their childhoods living in the dorms and calling the campus home. Students appreciated the vocational training they received and used their skills to found their own businesses or launch political careers.⁴⁹ Others fell in love and married fellow classmates. The thriving alumni community at Stewart attests to the happier times for students who created a home out of an institution. Former students fondly recall their time playing sports as a Stewart Brave, or what

⁴⁹ Dewey Sampson, a Stewart alumni, became the first American Indian legislator in Nevada in 1938. Robert Laxult, "The Melting Pot" in *East of Eden, West of Zion: Essays on Nevada*, ed. Wilbur S. Shepperson (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1989), 40.

instrument they played in the band.⁵⁰ In an article “Beyond Bleakness: The Brighter Side of Indian Boarding School Life,” David Wallace Adams echoes these student’s experiences and contends that children found ways to cope and even enjoy their time away at school through activities like band, sports, drama clubs, and advanced educations.⁵¹ Likewise in “‘We Had a Lot of Fun, but of Course, That Wasn’t the School Part’; Life at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893-1920,” Clyde Ellis reasons that the experiences of students often contradicts the established narrative of misery and oppression. Ellis asks us to reconsider the conventional wisdom that parents and tribes resisted sending their children to school at all costs.⁵²

⁵⁰ Clyde Ellis paints a similar portrait of Rainy Mountain reservation boarding school in his essay about life at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School. Clyde Ellis, “‘We Had a Lot of Fun, but of Course, That Wasn’t the School Part’; Life at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893-1920,” in *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences*, eds. Clifford Trafzer, Jean M. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 65-98.

⁵¹ David Wallace Adams, “Beyond Bleakness: The Brighter Side of Indian Boarding Schools, 1870-1940” in *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences*, eds. Clifford Trafzer, Jean M. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 35-64.

⁵² Ellis, “We Had a Lot of Fun,” 70.

Chapter 2

“I AM WRITING YOU AND LET YOU KNOW THAT LUCY IS COMING HOME”: THE CHANGING STUDENT BODY POPULATION⁵³

In 1890, Richard E. Barrington became the first child enrolled at the Stewart Indian School. His family had heard that a new school for Indian children would be opening, and they walked to Carson City, Nevada, from their home near present-day Truckee, California, to investigate. Ten year old Barrington and several Washoe children were playing by a pond when a wagon approached driven by the new Superintendent of the Stewart Indian School, William D. C. Gibson. The other children scattered, but Barrington hid in the willows. He was caught and taken to the school. Barrington quickly excelled in his studies. A member of the first graduating class of eight students in 1901, he went on to attend Carlisle Indian School.⁵⁴

Thirty-six other Washoe, Paiute, and Shoshone children enrolled at Stewart when it opened on December 17, 1890. Within two weeks, more students had arrived from more remote reservations, and enrollment increased to ninety-one students.⁵⁵ Frank Rivers remembered that when Superintendent Gibson arrived at his Washoe camp, neither he, nor any of his family, spoke English and they had no idea what was going on.

⁵³ Mrs. John Whiterock to Frederic Snyder, May 22, 1930, File “W,” Box 1, Individual Student School Records, 1919-1949, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

⁵⁴ Superintendent Gibson entered Barrington into the admission book on September 4, 1890 a full three months before classes started. Barrington enrolled under the name Dickey Jack throughout his term at Stewart. At Carlisle he enrolled under Richard E. Barrington but the name “Dickey Jack” appears on his record. He went by Richard Barrington for the rest of his life. Register of Pupils; Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Life Stories of our Native People: Shoshone-Paiute-Washo* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Printing Service, 1974), 1-3; Myra McCue, “Alma Mater of the Wa-Pai-Shone,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, January 17, 1962; *Annual Report* 1901, 545.

⁵⁵ *Annual Report* 1891, 571.

Rivers recalled that “They just came right into our camps and rounded up us kids and took us to school.” The practice of taking children from their homes by buckboard was often referred to as “wagoning.” Many children, such as Harry and Dewey Sampson, were stolen from their families. One day in 1910, Harry Sampson disappeared. Worried, his brother Dewey searched for him, only to find that Harry had been taken by buckboard to Stewart. The Sampson family had not been notified. When Dewey turned up at Stewart to find his brother, school officials enrolled him as well.⁵⁶

Many concerned parents camped out for weeks on a nearby ridge overlooking the school where they could observe their children. They watched as their children had their hair cut, were dressed in uniforms and marched from building to building.⁵⁷ For the federal government, these children were bodies to be stripped of their culture, packed into the schools, and churned back out to the reservations as “civilized” human beings. Yet, the students were more than just a number or a record on a page. Each child had a place, an identity, and a history of his or her own. In order to examine the many layers of meaning of the student body, it is first necessary to get a snapshot of the children’s own physical bodies. Who were these students who were taken to Stewart? Where were they from? How old were they?

From 1890 to 1940, the student population changed in two ways. First, in the 1890s Stewart enrolled only Washoes, Northern Paiutes, and Western Shoshones, but by the 1940s children from at least sixty tribes and three hundred thirty-six home towns had

⁵⁶ Willie Albright, “Infamous Indian School May Re-Open as a Cultural Center,” *Sparks Tribune*, May 18, 2003.

⁵⁷ Ed Vogel, “Historic Indian School falls under scrutiny,” *Elko Daily Free Press* 117, no. 78 (April), 2000.

spent time at the school. Second, the early students came from the Pyramid Lake, Walker River, and Western Shoshone Indian Reservations as well as surrounding Washoe communities. Over the next fifty years, Stewart enrolled students from every nook and cranny of Nevada and many surrounding states. Stewart the only non-reservation school in the state, it offered more advanced grade levels than reservation boarding schools, and state legislation empowered it to compel enrollment.⁵⁸

Two sets of student records survive today in the National Archives in San Bruno, California. They allow for a comparison of enrollment and attendance patterns between the early and later periods of this study.⁵⁹ They also offer fascinating snapshots into the lives of Stewart students. The records capture two periods - from 1890 to 1899 and from 1906 to 1943. Although they contain slightly different information about the students they do show how the student population changed over fifty years.⁶⁰

The first record set is a registry of students from 1890 through 1899. It catalogued each student's enrollment information, which included his or her name, tribal background, hometown, and parents' names. This early registry also included a physical description of the pupil's bodies which included his or her degree of Indian blood, age, height, weight, and lung capacity. The volume also charts who was sent home sick, who

⁵⁸ Loose leaf records of individual students arranged alphabetically. Boxes 1- 3, Individual Student School Records, 1919-1949, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno. Hereinafter referred to as "Individual School Records."

⁵⁹ The National Archives also has one another set of records called "Individual Student Folders, 1928 to 1956" Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno. However, access is restricted due to privacy concerns.

⁶⁰ No boarding school historians have done a statistical comparison from student records. The genre in general is moving away from focusing on federal documents and utilizing oral histories and letters. However, a careful reading of documents created by school officials can reveal children's patterns of behavior and the pattern of coming and going.

could return to their families for vacations, who married, or transferred to another Indian school and who ran away and whether they were found and returned to the school. Thus, these records reveal not only a student's heritage and family ties, but also their physical body and how they chose to assert control over their lives by running away. A complex record of how children chose to exercise control over their own bodies spans the pages of the registry and the notations of the Stewart superintendents reveal the control that they exercised over the students under their care.

The second record set is a collection of student files spanning the years 1906 to 1943, although the bulk of them are from 1917 to 1937. Rather than a bound volume of yearly attendance, these individual student records were created on loose leaf paper and filed alphabetically. It is not a comprehensive record of student enrollment. Agency correspondence indicates that there were students enrolled in the school whose files no longer survive. However, the remaining records provide basic statistics and patterns of enrollment for the 802 students whose files remain.⁶¹ Similar information as in the 1890s registry is included although the cataloging of the pupils' physical bodies is missing.

The preoccupation in the 1890s with the physical dimensions of the students' bodies is intriguing. The log book was government-issue; thus, the federal government determined what statistics were worth recording. Without advanced medical technology or equipment, measuring, weighing, and charting lung capacity provided a baseline for

⁶¹ Each student's information was entered into an Excel spreadsheet to allow the author to trace patterns of enrollment. The information includes the date the child entered the school, age at entry, birthdate, degree of Indian blood, tribe, reservation, religious affiliation, grade entered, last grade finished, and any personal notes that were recorded by teachers and the superintendent. Most personal notes were reports from teachers about whether a student should be passed on to the next grade level and may have included information about desertion, health, marriage, graduation, and quality of schoolwork. All charts and graphs were produced from this spreadsheet.

student's health. Substantial weight loss and diminished lung capacity were often indicators of tuberculosis. Thus, Stewart superintendents William D. C. Gibson (1890-1895), Eugene Mead (1895-1899), and James K. Allen (1899-1904) charted and measured the children as they were admitted. In later years, physicians filled out a separate form for each child rather than logging it in the main register of pupils. Only one or two of these forms remain today.⁶²

The majority of children at Stewart were young, unwillingly taken miles and miles from their homes, and transplanted to another world with little contact with home, family, and culture. School staff watched the children at all times, forced them to drill in military uniforms, eat alien foods, and even pick a new name. Everything about their physical world changed, and yet the students demonstrated a resilience and a desire to maintain their cultural traditions.

Washoes, Western Shoshones, and Northern Paiutes:

“But as you got older you had to pick pine nuts and it got kind of monotonous.” –

Winona James, Washoe student⁶³

Stewart was built for Washoe, Northern Paiute, and Western Shoshone children. These three Great Basin tribes shared very similar lifeways and kinship patterns prior to contact with whites. Traditionally, these semi-nomadic tribes survived by hunting,

⁶² Even as late as 1928, the Meriam Report recommended that “weighing and measuring school children regularly and sending records home to the parents” was one of the most important improvements that could be made regarding health in the Indian education. Lewis Meriam, et al, *The Problem of Indian Administration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1928), 394.

⁶³ Winona James, interview conducted by R.T. King, (Reno: Oral History Program University of Nevada, Reno, 1984), 20.

gathering, and fishing, although Paiutes and Washoes relied more heavily on fishing.⁶⁴

Living in the arid Great Basin, extended nuclear families spread out to take advantage of the region's resources.⁶⁵ Washoe, Western Shoshone and Northern Paiutes did not have a centralized political organization because their life patterns did not necessitate one. However, they did come together for large gatherings, ceremonies, pine nut harvesting, and antelope and rabbit drives.⁶⁶

All three tribes used the seasonal round to utilize natural resources. Pine nuts provided the primary food staple and centerpiece of Great Basin culture. Pinyon trees grow at elevations from 5,000 to 9,000 feet. In the early fall, all three tribes traveled to higher elevations to harvest this precious food. Winona James, a Washoe woman who was born in 1903 and attended Stewart for one year, remembers that her family would camp in the pine nut mountain range every fall. Her family erected temporary shelters made from branches and canvas. Depending on the quantity of pine nuts they needed to harvest the family would stay for a few days or until the snow fell. The adults and older children collected pine cones and dumped them into a circle made of stones. When heated the cones opened up and released the nuts. James recalled that "they would sit there and take the cone in your hand, and then take a stick and hit them on the back and

⁶⁴ Julian H. Steward, "Ethnography of the Owens Valley Paiute," *American Archaeology and Ethnology* 33 (1932-1934): 293.

⁶⁵ Julian H. Steward, *Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups*, Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 120, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1938), 121; Don D. Fowler, "Great Basin Social Organization," in *The Current Status of Anthropological Research in the Great Basin, 1964* (Reno: Desert Research Institute, 1966), 66.

⁶⁶ Steven J. Crum, *The Road on Which We Came: A History of the Western Shoshone* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 8.

get the pine nuts out in a basket.”⁶⁷ The nuts would be ground up into meal which could be used in gruels or as gravy to be mixed with deer meat.⁶⁸ “It was fun when you were young,” James remembered, “you didn’t have to pick pine nuts if you didn’t want to; you could play or do what you wanted to do. But as you got older you had to pick pine nuts and it got kind of monotonous.”⁶⁹

The gold rush followed by the discovery of the Comstock Lode in 1859 brought thousands of miners to Nevada, who erected homesteads and mining claims which devoured much of the timber and resources of the region.⁷⁰ Nevada became a territory in 1861 and a state three years later. By that time, white invaders had successfully pushed Nevada’s Native populations onto smaller and smaller land bases formed around lakes and rivers. Consequently, many Washoes as well as Paiutes and Shoshones, practiced an adaptation strategy of living and working on white ranches. Men worked as cowboys and haycutters, and women worked as domestic servants.⁷¹ While dependent on wage labor, many Natives also hunted and foraged for wild foods on their homelands.⁷²

Despite their similar lifeways, Great Basin tribes had fought over the scarce resources of the desert. Northern Paiute and Western Shoshone considered themselves

⁶⁷ James, Interview, 18-22.

⁶⁸ Crum, *The Road on Which We Came*, 4.

⁶⁹ James, Interview, 20.

⁷⁰ Knack, “Short Resource History”, 49-52.

⁷¹ Crum, *The Road on Which We Came*, 31.

⁷² Knack, “Short Resource History,” 51.

ancestral enemies. In addition, the Northern Paiute often invaded Washoe lands.⁷³ Living at Stewart initially intensified these conflicts because students could not communicate across tribal and linguistic lines. Shoshones and Paiutes could speak in a common sign language, but could not speak with the Washoes who belong to a completely different language group. Washoes could converse somewhat with teachers and administrators but not with students from the other tribes. This resulted in a strange mix of pidgin-English during the first six months that the teachers found almost intolerable. While children clung tightly to their tribal groups they also united against the teachers as a common enemy which helped erase tribal animosity.⁷⁴

When Stewart first opened, Washoe children made up about fifty-eight percent of the students.⁷⁵ In fact, the school was built in large part to address the educational needs of the Washoe who had no reservations or educational facilities. Most Washoe children at Stewart came from the Dresslerville area. Stewart was close enough to some Washoe homes that many of the first students were not required to board at the school and were sent home at night. Ironically, this caused great discontent among the Washoe people because they felt it was unfair that the Shoshone and Paiute children who slept at the school received a free breakfast and dinner unlike Washoe children.⁷⁶

⁷³ Warren L. D’Azevedo, “Washoe” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 11, Great Basin, ed. Warren L. D’Azevedo (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1986), 474; Catherine S. Fowler and Sven Liljeblad, “Northern Paiute” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 11, Great Basin, ed. Warren L. D’Azevedo (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1986), 441.

⁷⁴ Jackson, “History of the Stewart Indian School,” 33-25; Makley, “These Will be Strong,” 45.

⁷⁵ Register of Pupils.

⁷⁶ Jackson, “History of the Stewart Indian School,” 22.



Figure 3. First Graduating Class, 1901. Their motto was “Not at the top but Climbing.” *Left to right:* John Cromwell (Paiute), John P. Jones (Washoe), Harrison Diaz (Paiute), Richard E. Barrington (Washoe), George Minkey (Washoe), Tiffany Bender (Washoe) and John Minkey (Washoe) and Miss Belle Van Voris, principal teacher. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

Before the 1890s, the federal government had mostly ignored the Washoe people. Washoe territory centered around Lake Tahoe and stretched as far north as Susanville, California, and to the south near Markleeville, California. The Washoe lived in the valleys east of the Sierra Nevadas during the winter months. They spent summers camping on the shores of Lake Tahoe by Camp Richardson and Camp Tallac in South Lake Tahoe. As more white residents settled the area and Lake Tahoe became a sightseeing destination, the Washoes tapped into the tourist trade. Usually, the men would sell their day’s catch of fish on the docks while Washoe women made baskets and

other crafts to sell to tourists who took the steamer.⁷⁷ In the fall the Washoe people would travel back down the Sierras and head east to the Pine Nut Mountains for the pine nut harvests.⁷⁸

Around the time Stewart opened, the Washoes began negotiating with the federal government to acquire allotments in the Pine Nut Mountains. The Washoe people consistently demonstrated their commitment to remain in their traditional homelands and not accept allotments on better farming lands.⁷⁹ However, with white farms and towns surrounding them, ranchers grazing sheep and cattle on their lands, and settlers stealing natural resources, these allotments could not support year round habitation. Many Washoe lived and worked on white farms and ranches to survive.

Unlike the Washoe, the Northern Paiutes had two relatively large reservations centered around Pyramid and Walker Lakes. The Paiutes homeland once stretched north to the Blue Mountains of Oregon, west to the eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada, south to Owens Valley, California, and east to the middle reaches of Nevada.⁸⁰ The government set aside the Pyramid Lake Reservation lands in 1859 and officially created the reservation by an executive order in 1874. Another executive order established the Walker Lake Reservation that same year. Originally the Walker Lake Reservation encompassed all of Walker Lake, but in 1906 the federal government opened the main

⁷⁷ Winona James, a Washoe who attended Stewart for one year, remembers spending her summers at Camp Tallac. Her Aunt Maggie and Uncle Milly Merill who raised her, fished and made baskets. Her aunt was one of the only Washoe women who would also accompany her husband out on the lake to fish. James, Interview, 33-36.

⁷⁸ Makley, "These Will be Strong," 2, 26-30, and 37.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 116-119, 131.

⁸⁰ Knack "A Short Resource History," 49.

township of Schurz to white settlement. As a result, the Paiute lost over 268,000 acres from the reservation.⁸¹ Pyramid Lake and Walker Lake are spiritual centers for the Paiute people. Native fisheries at both locations afforded Paiutes a way to feed their families and earn extra money.

Of the three Great Basin Tribes, the Western Shoshones were perhaps the most dispersed and because of their long distance from Stewart they never had as many pupils attend the school as their neighboring tribal groups. Before white contact, Western Shoshone territory covered almost all of eastern Nevada and stretched north to southern Idaho, and south to Death Valley, California. The Shoshone resided in large family groups. The Western Shoshone Reservation, which is now called the Duck Valley Indian Reservation, was established by executive order in 1877. Duck Valley straddles the Nevada and Idaho border. The reservation was expanded in 1886 to allow Northern Paiutes to settle there as well.⁸²

Only about 300 Shoshones lived on the Duck Valley reservation in the 1880s because many refused to move to a reservation. However, they successfully fought the government to keep the Duck Valley reservation when the federal government tried to eliminate it and to remove their people to the Fort Hall Reservation in Idaho.⁸³ Many Shoshones fought to remain on their lands in the Ruby Valley in the heart of central Nevada which had originally been surveyed and promised to them in 1859. Eleven Shoshones had secured allotments in the Ruby Valley under the Dawes Act of 1887. The

⁸¹ Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes*, 131.

⁸² Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 1, 35, and 47; *Annual Report 1907*, 152.

⁸³ Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 44.

government added a one hundred sixty acre reservation in 1912, which constituted a land base in the heart of Shoshone territory.

Despite the establishment of the Pyramid Lake, Walker Lake, and Western Shoshone reservations in the 1880s, almost half of Nevada's Indians lived off reservation. Many, like the Ruby Valley Western Shoshone, refused to move to a reservation away from what they considered their actual homelands. This forced Indian Service officials to acknowledge that they could not centralize the Great Basin peoples. Consequently, they created the colony system in Nevada. It was the government's first real attempt to deliver any kind of services to the non-reservation Indians in the Great Basin and created small reservations on the outskirts of Anglo towns.⁸⁴

The government hired Lorenzo Creel in 1917 to survey the Native people and the landscape in Nevada and make suggestions about where tracts of land could be set aside. Creel purchased several tracts of land for the Washoe people in 1917 in the Carson Valley near Gardnerville which became the modern day Dresslerville Colony. He bought 156 acres in two separate parcels to the west of the Stewart Indian School for \$3,500 which became the Carson and Stewart Indian Colonies. The last purchase of twenty acres on the border between Reno and Spark is now called the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony and has enrolled members from both the Paiute and Washoe tribes.⁸⁵ After 1938, the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California acquired even more small parcels in both states.⁸⁶ The federal government procured small colonies for the Northern Paiutes in

⁸⁴ Ibid., 73-75.

⁸⁵ Makley, "These Will be Strong," 156-157.

⁸⁶ Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada, "Wa She Shu: 'The Washoe People' Past and Present" (Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, 2009), 36-37.

1917 in Lovelock, Fallon, Winnemucca, Summit Lake Reservations, and Yerington.⁸⁷

The Western Shoshones also increased their land base with four new colonies in Battle Mountain, Duckwater, Elko, and Ely.⁸⁸

The Meriam Report concluded that by the late 1920s the Nevada Indian colonies had failed to live up to their original purpose. The government had established the colonies partly because white communities complained about the homeless Indians living on the outskirts of their towns. The land purchased for the colonies was rocky, dry, and unlikely to produce food. In particular the report condemned the Reno-Sparks and Yerington Colonies as industrial sites meant as a home base for urban workers. Other than domestic work for women, men had a hard time finding long term employment within the city boundaries. As a result, the Meriam Report contended drugs and alcohol plagued the community because of the lack of job opportunities.⁸⁹ In the 1930s these colonies organized under the Indian Reorganization Act and as tribal governments they started to address many of problems in their communities and work toward economic self-sufficiency.

The Indian Reorganization Act in Nevada:

“I have been privileged to serve as their adviser and friend.” - Superintendent Bowler

The landscape of Nevada Indian territory changed dramatically with the acquisition of these new land bases throughout the state. In addition, Indian policy radically shifted with the passage of the Wheeler-Howard Bill in 1934. The bill is often

⁸⁷ The Yerington Colony gained even more land in 1936 when the government purchase the Campbell Ranch. Hittman, *Yerington Paiute Tribe*, 33, 41.

⁸⁸ Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 4-46, 72-72.

⁸⁹ Meriam, *Problem of Indian Administration*, 521.

referred to as the Indian Reorganization Act, which focused on improving the economic condition of Indian communities and providing support for tribal governments. The legislation prohibited the further allotment of Indian land, provided ways to increase the Indian land base and conserve native resources, established a revolving credit fund, waived restrictions for Indians who joined the Civil Service, and provided mechanisms for tribal incorporation and organization. The Indian Reorganization Act thus reversed federal policy created through the Dawes Act, which had robbed tribal people of millions of acres of land.⁹⁰

Each tribe had to vote to approve the Act and become an incorporated tribal government. Under the Indian Reorganization Act, many of the colonies decided to incorporate as separate tribal governments. Some colonies, like the Yerington Paiute Tribe, have just one tribal group. Others have Washoe, Northern Paiute, and Western Shoshones enrolled members. By the 1930s, intermarriage and inter-settlement among the Great Basin tribes proved common as evidenced by the creation of tribal councils under the New Deal like the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe, Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe, and the Shoshone Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation. The Reno Sparks Indian Colony is the one reservation in the state that was created for Washoe and Paiutes.

Contemporary economics encouraged Shoshones and Paiutes to intermingle and settle together on reservations in the 1900s. Economics played an important role in this

⁹⁰ Margaret Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977), 41; Cathleen D. Cahill, *Federal Fathers & Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869-1933*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 256.

coming together. The mining economy collapsed in central Nevada in 1918. Many Shoshones could no longer work in the boomtowns in their homeland. In addition, the government carved out 2.1 million acres for the Toiyabe National Forest in the middle of central Nevada in 1907. The government set aside the land as federally owned forest. Shoshones had used the mountain range which stretched from Tonopah on the south and Austin on the north, for hunting, foraging, and grazing their livestock. Many could not afford the grazing permits they needed to continue to use the land. With no jobs available after the mining collapse and the loss of two million acres of land, many Shoshone moved westward and settled at Walker River Reservation or Fallon.

New friendships offered another motivator for Shoshones and Paiutes to put down roots together. Many Paiutes and Shoshones had started alliances working in the mines or in the boomtowns and Paiutes encouraged homeless Shoshones to settle at Walker River. Many Paiutes and Shoshones had formed friendships at Stewart as well. After graduation some students stayed in the immediate area rather than return home. Many students met spouses at Stewart and settled with their new partner's families.⁹¹

Contemporary Nevada Indian Country reflects the changes made under the Indian Reorganization Act. Today there are thirty-two different colonies and reservations in Nevada. Twenty recognized tribes in Nevada have a binding relationship with the United States government through treaties, acts of Congress, or executive orders. There are more land bases than recognized tribes because some tribes like the Washoe Tribe of

⁹¹ Crum, *Road on Which We Came* 65.

Nevada and California have multiple colonies.⁹² There are 35,000 Indians in Nevada and twenty recognized tribes. Almost half of the population lives off reservation in the Las Vegas area.⁹³

Superintendent Bowler oversaw and helped implement the major political changes under the Indian New Deal. As superintendent she also served as the Indian Agent of the Carson and Walker River Indian Agencies. In this capacity she directed Indian affairs for the entire state of Nevada except for southern Clark County.⁹⁴ Bowler firmly supported the political rights of the newly recognized tribal councils. For example, the Pyramid Lake tribe had fought the government for years over several Anglo squatters who refused to abandon their claims to lands within the reservation. Senator Pat McCarran of Nevada attempted to remove the entire Wadsworth township from the reservation and give it to the squatters. Martha Knack writes that McCarran “systematically tried to strip the tribe of their activist agents and their independent attorney.”⁹⁵ When it became clear that the Indian Office would not overrule the squatter’s claims, Bowler encouraged the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribal council newly recognized under the Indian Reorganization Act to take an active interest in how the property was to be disposed and claim all rights to the unsold land.⁹⁶

⁹² Nevada Indian Territory, Indian Territory Brochure, (Accessed September 24, 2013), http://nevadaindianterritory.com/indian_territory_meeting_information.html.

⁹³ Ed Vogel, “Indians Ask for Time before Legislature in Nevada,” *Las Vegas Review*, September 16, 2012.

⁹⁴ “Parcher Named on Indian Staff,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, November 26, 1935.

⁹⁵ Knack and Stewart, *As Long as the River Shall Run*, 256

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 242-243.



Figure 4. Superintendent Bowler consulting with the Pyramid Lake Tribal Council.⁹⁷

Under political pressure from McCarran, Collier transferred Bowler to the position of superintendent at large in December of 1939. This “promotion” removed her from Indian politics in Nevada.⁹⁸ Bowler made a big production of her farewell. She visited every agency before leaving and was given many parting gifts by the communities, including one by Harry Sampson, former student, at the Reno Sparks Indian Colony. In a statement Bowler commented that “We stand proudly on the record of accomplishments hung up by the Nevada Indians during the five years I have been privileged to serve as their adviser and friend. They have tackled their economic and other problems thoughtfully and zealously and seizing the chance offered by the Indian

⁹⁷ “Supt. Bowler listens to Billy Williams, Chairman, Pyramid Lake Tribal Council, tell why they must have land that is in dispute with the Italian squatters,” File “Carson Agency Annual Extension Report, 1937 (1 of 4), Box 1, Extension and Industrial Narrative Reports & Programs of Work 1937-52, Records of the Carson Indian Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

⁹⁸ Omer C. Stewart, “Peyotism in California,” *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 8, no. 2 (1966), 217.

reorganization act, have gone a long way toward independence, self support, and self management.”⁹⁹ In her new position, Bowler traveled to Mexico to study the rural credit system. Frank Parker, the Farmer in Charge acted as the interim Superintendent at Stewart until John Foster could assume the post permanently.¹⁰⁰

Enrolling at Stewart:

“My grandmother didn’t want me to come back to Stewart because she thought I would never, ever go back home again, I guess.” – Winona James, Washoe student¹⁰¹

The addition of these colonies and the incorporation of tribal governments under the Indian Reorganization Act changed enrollment patterns at the Stewart Indian School. There was a dramatic difference between the student population of 1890 and 1940. The first class of students came from the Pyramid Lake, Walker River, and Western Shoshone Reservations and from Washoe communities around the school who had no reservation of their own.

In the 1890s, the first superintendent, William D. C. Gibson, did not have to travel the length and breadth of Nevada to enroll pupils at Stewart. Instead he just rounded up children, like Richard Barrington, who lived in the surrounding areas in Dresslerville, Walker River, Pyramid Lake, and urban areas like Carson City and Reno. Gibson did not have any power to force children to attend Stewart over another school and thus resorted

⁹⁹ “Promotion given to Miss Alida Bowler” *Reno Evening Gazette*, November 1, 1939.

¹⁰⁰ Bowler resigned as superintendent at large in 1942 and took another job, but she did not stay out of the Indian Service for long. In 1948 she rejoined the service at Window Rock, Arizona, working with the Navajo. She retired soon after and in 1951 moved into a house with her sister in Glendale, California. She died in 1969 in Riverside, California “Alida Bowler Assumes Post” *Reno Evening Gazette*, December 6, 1939. Donald L. Parman and Lewis Meriam, “Lewis Meriam’s Letters during the Survey of Indian Affairs 1926-1927 (Part II),” *Arizona and the West* 24 no. 4 (Winter, 1982), 73n.

¹⁰¹ James, Interview, 8.

to direct recruitment.¹⁰² However before assuming control at the new non-reservation boarding school, Gibson served as the Indian Agent at the Pyramid Lake Reservation so he convinced many families there to send their children to the new school. Gibson and his niece, a teacher at Stewart, traveled to Walker River and Pyramid Lake to escort children to Stewart in 1890. Gibson arrived back at the school with dozens of pupils in tow. Students from Western Shoshone arrived by train within the first month of opening.¹⁰³

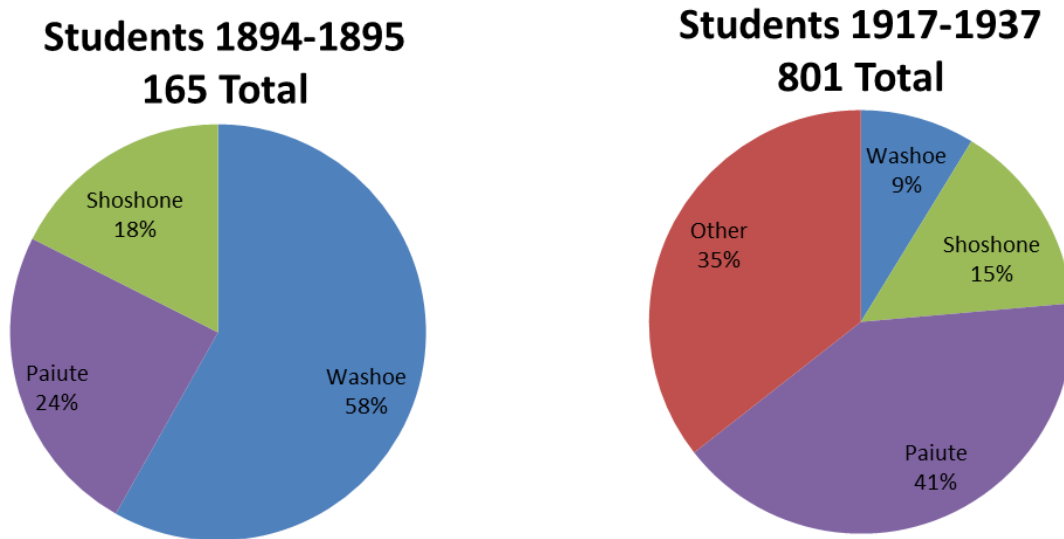


Figure 5. Comparison of students by Tribe.¹⁰⁴

During the 1894 to 1895 school year (the only one in which a distinct record of enrollment was kept) fifty-eight percent of students were Washoes, twenty-four percent

¹⁰² Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 64.

¹⁰³ *Daily Nevada State Journal*, March 26, 1890; "Piutes for the Indian School," *Reno Evening Gazette*, December 22, 1890; "After more Scholars" *Reno Evening Gazette*, December 20, 1890.

¹⁰⁴ Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, Register of Pupils, 1892-1899," Box 8, National Archives, San Bruno; Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, Individual Student School Records, 1919-1949, Boxes 1-3, National Archives, San Bruno.

were Paiutes, and eighteen percent were Shoshones. A fifteen year gap in student enrollment records makes it difficult to trace how this ratio changed. However, compared to the enrollment records from 1917 to 1937 it is clear that the tribal dynamic altered dramatically. Paiutes were now the largest population at the school and students from sixty other tribes attended Stewart.

By 1940 students hailed from over three hundred thirty-six different hometowns across the West. Students attended from Nevada's Indian colonies at Elko, Ely, Fallon, Lovelock, Yerington, Fort McDermitt and from Indian communities such as Bishop, Fort Hall, Hoopa, and Klamath. The school had become an important hub in the federal Indian education system.¹⁰⁵

School officials went to great lengths to recruit students from impoverished families or those who had no immediate family to care for them. Children whose parents were dead or could not provide for them were often sent to Stewart.¹⁰⁶ During the 1890s, about one in six children had at least one parent who had passed away.¹⁰⁷ Letters to the Stewart superintendents from parents or friends often requested admission of students because of poverty or lack of family.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Author's database, Individual Student School Records, 1919-1949, Boxes 1-3, National Archives, San Bruno.

¹⁰⁶ Frank Burns of North Fork, California experienced a similar story. His father was dead, and his mother had a hard time caring for him and his siblings. An agent brought Burns and his brother to Stewart in 1918. Colleen O'Brien, "Stewart School Days; Graduates of the Stewart Indian School recall hardships, friendships, and lessons learned," *Nevada* (Sept/Oct 1990); 35.

¹⁰⁷ Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, Register of Pupils, 1892-1899," Box 8, National Archives, San Bruno.

¹⁰⁸ For some examples see Sam Lyttle to Superintendent Indian School Carson City, Nevada, August 1, 1915, File "Lo-Lu," Box 267, Administrative Files [First Series], 1907-1926, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno; Mrs. J. W. Mallory to James B. Royce, September 27,

Superintendents happily accepted children whose parents wanted or needed them to attend the school. It remained, however, a subjective process for the government to determine whose children needed to be removed from their families and sent to Stewart. Letters to the superintendent often request admission of students because of poverty or lack of resources. However, some parents saw removal of children as a threat, but others worried about students being persuaded to go to Stewart so they could obtain better food, clothing, and housing.

Until Nevada passed its first compulsory education laws in 1913 and 1919 parents and tribes had a tiny bit of negotiating power with the school administrators.¹⁰⁹ However, Indian Agents had many tactics to compel parents to send their children to school. Agents threatened to withhold rations, supplies, railroad passes, and other benefits to force attendance.¹¹⁰ Congress accepted the policy of using any force necessary to compel compliance. Adams argues in *Education for Extinction*, that Congress authorized the Indian Office to “withhold rations, clothing and other annuities from Indian parents or guardians who refused or neglected to send and keep their children of proper school age in some school a reasonable portion of each year.”¹¹¹ This policy forced some parents to great lengths to keep their children out of school. The family of Eunice Silva of Battle Mountain moved constantly around so that Silva would not be

1916, File “Ma,” Box 267, Administrative Files [First Series], 1907-1926, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

¹⁰⁹ “Carson Indian School,” United States Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Superintendents’ Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports from the Field Jurisdictions of the BIA* (Washington: Government Printing Office), 1913, Section III, Schools, [hereinafter referred to as *Narrative and Statistical Report*]; “Carson Indian School,” *Narrative and Statistical Report*, 1920, 1.

¹¹⁰ Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes*, 88.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 63-64; *Annual Report 1891*, 67.

captured and placed in school.¹¹² Winona James spent one year at Stewart, but the following year when Indian Agents came recruiting students her grandmother hid her because her family did not want to part with her again. James recalled that “my grandmother didn’t want me to come back to Stewart because she thought I would never, ever go back home again, I guess. They hid me and they wouldn’t let me come back to Stewart so I never came back.”¹¹³

Some children, however, wanted to go to a non-reservation boarding school. Leagon Rhodes from Lovelock had “made up her mind to attend [Stewart] for a term.” She had no way of getting to the school, so a local man, W. J. Mors, wrote to Superintendent Jesse Mortsolf inquiring if he would pay train fare for Rhodes and several other children. Mortsolf offered to pay the fare for all of the children and for Mors and his wife to escort them to the school.¹¹⁴

Ray Thacker, a Paiute from the Owyhee Shoshone reservation, also saw a Stewart education as an opportunity. Thacker arrived at Stewart in 1921 at the age of seven or eight. He wanted to attend the school because his older brother and many friends were already students there. At the age of eighty, Thacker remembered an afternoon when he and his friends left school to cook hamburger over an open fire. One of the children said he was going to run away because they were starving him. Thacker replied, “Why you

¹¹² Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 68.

¹¹³ James, Interview, 8.

¹¹⁴ W. J. Mors to Superintendent J. B. Mortsolf, August 28, 1914, File “Me,” Box 267, Administrative Files [First Series], 1907-1926, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno, and J.B. Mortsolf to W. J. Mors, August 29, 1914, Ibid.

think your folks send you here? To be a fat Indian with a big belly? Or you come to get fat up here?” and pointed to his head.¹¹⁵

Many Natives were torn over whether to send their children to any type of federal school because they understood and opposed the government assimilation agenda.¹¹⁶ Others advocated for education so that children would be better equipped to function in a white world. Day schools on the reservations supplied only a primary education. To continue their schooling children had to travel hundreds of miles to Stewart. Families insisted that they should be able to choose who was sent to Stewart and who would stay with their families.

Before enrolling at Stewart, most children had received some schooling on the reservation. Day schools, reservation boarding schools, and public schools composed the other tools in the federal school system arsenal and funneled children into non-reservation boarding schools like Stewart.¹¹⁷ By the 1880s Pyramid Lake, Walker River and Duck Valley both had day schools which were like contemporary public schools in which the children returned home at night. Native parents preferred this option to boarding schools because they wanted their children to live at home while attending school. S. S. Sears, the Agent for the Northern Paiute, lamented that parents, “Object to separation from their little ones during the night, and being very indulgent to their children will not bring them to the school at all unless with their consent.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ O’Brien, “Stewart School Days,” 36.

¹¹⁶ Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 68.

¹¹⁷ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 60.

¹¹⁸ *Annual Report* 1890, 149-150.

Many Indian Service officials believed assimilation occurred too slowly at day schools because going home at night negated the positive changes that occurred during the day.¹¹⁹ In addition, day schools only offered primary education. Most government officials favored reservation boarding schools to day schools because they provided a greater degree of control over the students' bodies. Hence, the day schools at Pyramid Lake and Duck Valley became reservation boarding schools in 1883 and 1893 respectively.¹²⁰ Having students live at the school allowed reservation officials more control over the children's routines which they believed would speed up the assimilation process.

Yet even reservation boarding schools did not deliver the degree of acculturation that most white educators wanted. The superintendents at the Pyramid Lake, Duck Valley, and Walker River boarding schools often complained about how much influence parents had over their children. Mothers often visited the campus. The cooks and staff spoke in Native languages, and children ran away for days or nights at a time.¹²¹ The superintendent at Pyramid Lake, Erasmus Van Deerlin, lamented that "the children were allowed to run at large in the village, and were in the habit of running off to the camps for the night soon after supper without any permission and without any reproof."¹²² To put an end to the continual visits from family during the week, Van Deerlin instituted a family activity night every Friday.

¹¹⁹ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 30; *Annual Report* 1892, 53.

¹²⁰ "Nevada Agency," *Annual Report*, 1891, 304.

¹²¹ "Report of Superintendent of Western Shoshone School" *Annual Report* 1891, 305.

¹²² "Report of the Superintendent of Pyramid Lake Boarding School," *Annual Report* 1893, 302.

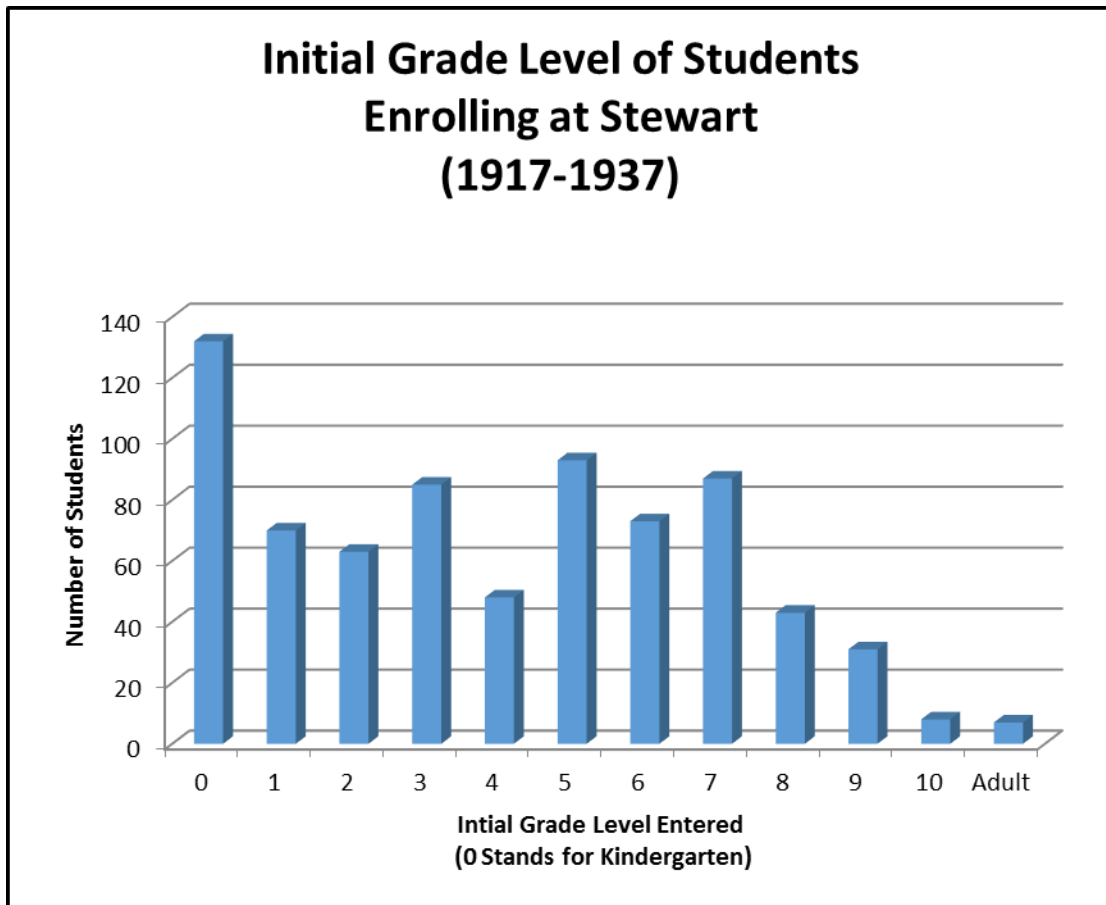


Figure 6. Chart showing the initial grade level of students enrolling at Stewart.¹²³

While many students from the reservations had been exposed to some form of education, many non-reservation Indian children had never attended school. Consequently many children started kindergarten at Stewart as teenagers, as demonstrated in the chart below. Stewart also held three levels of adult classes for teenagers and adults who were just too mature to begin in the regular kindergarten class. Most children first attended Stewart in their early to mid-teens.¹²⁴ Classes went through

¹²³ For all children with a reported initial grade level.

¹²⁴ This age spread is also supported by a letter from the Stewart Superintendent to Sam Lytle which asks if he is aware of any twelve to eighteen year olds who might be eligible for school at Stewart. Superintendent [Jas B. Royce] to Sam Lytle, August 17, 1915, File "Lo-Lu," Box 267, Administrative Files

the eighth grade, which was more advanced than the primary grades offered on reservations. Thus, after completing school on the reservations students were sent to Stewart for advanced educational and vocational training.¹²⁵

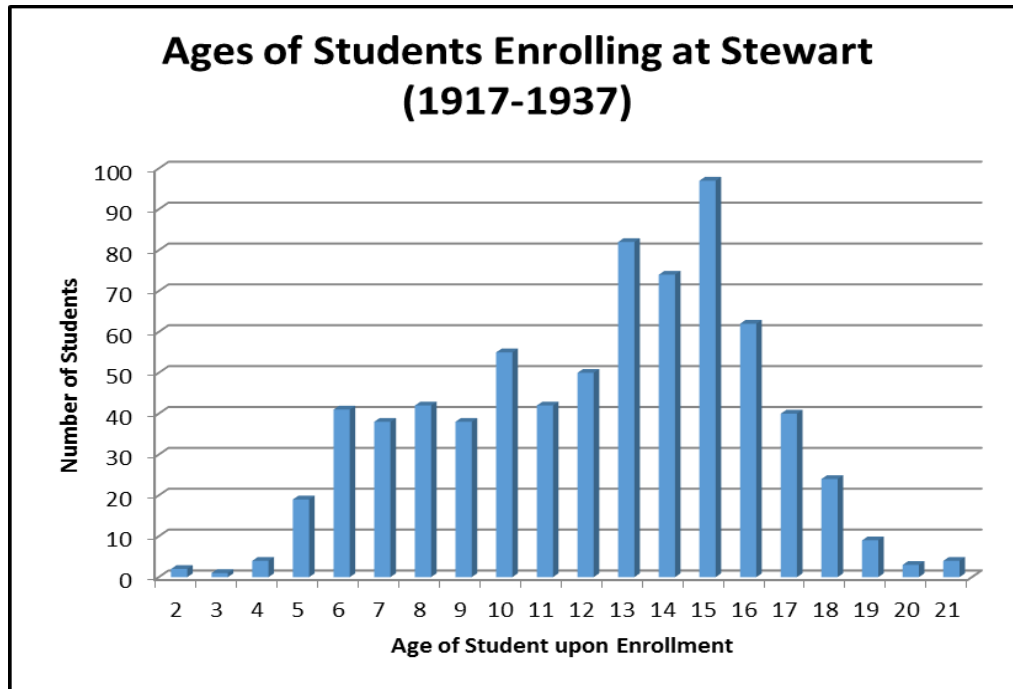


Figure 7. Chart showing the age of students upon enrollment at Stewart.¹²⁶

Starting in the 1910s, the Indian Service started to encourage students to attend public schools whenever possible. In Nevada, this policy made particular sense since so many Washoes, Shoshones, and Paiutes lived in and around white communities and far

[First Series], 1907-1926, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno. Similarly, a 1916 letter relates that the school has more small children than they can accommodate. Clerk in Charge to Captain Pete Mayo, January 10, 1916, File “Ma,” Box 267, Administrative Files [First Series], 1907-1926, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

¹²⁵ Mrs. S. E. Beacham to Mildred Wilder, November 24, 1925, Individual Student Records; “Carson Indian School, Section III-Schools,” *Narrative and Statistical Report*, 1926; Johnson, “Stewart Indian School has Progressed.”

¹²⁶ For all students whose age was recorded in enrollment records. Author’s Database.

away from reservations. However, white Nevadans demonstrated extreme prejudice about having their children educated with Native students. Indian Service employees fought an uphill battle to increase enrollment. Superintendent Calvin H. Asbury said that there were only 200 Indian students across the state enrolled in public schools in 1910.¹²⁷

In Nevada's version of separate but equal, Native children received instruction in isolated classrooms.¹²⁸ Only the Dresslerville public school had integrated classrooms because there were so many Washoe children attended that it could have been considered an Indian school.¹²⁹ White sentiment against having their children educated among Western Shoshone children resulted in the construction of public elementary schools in Elko, Winnemucca, and Battle Mountain exclusively for Shoshone children in the 1920s. All other racial and ethnic groups were allowed in the main school building, only Indians were excluded.¹³⁰ The schools were run by the Nevada state public school system with financial help from the federal government.¹³¹

The poor health of many Indian pupils constituted one of the major impediments to integration. In Wadsworth, Nevada, a white settlement on the southern tip of the Pyramid Lake Reservation, a debate about public health surfaced in the winter of 1924. White squatters claimed the land and fought to open the entire town site to white settlement. The squatters' children and Indian children attended a public school together

¹²⁷ "Education," *Narrative and Statistical Reports* 1910, 1-2.

¹²⁸ "Carson Indian School, Section 3, Schools," *Narrative and Statistical Report*, 1918.

¹²⁹ "Carson Indian Agency, Section III, Schools," *Narrative and Statistical Report*, 1926.

¹³⁰ "Inspection Report of W. W. Coon, Supervisor" November 2, 1926; File "52206-1926," Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

¹³¹ Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 68. *Narrative and Statistical Report* 1918.

in Wadsworth. Reports by the Agent at the Reno Indian Agency explain that the white families allowed Paiute children afflicted with trachoma to attend the public school as long as they underwent treatment. The Agency Doctor at Pyramid Lake, Mr. Carmichal examined and diagnosed the children and then failed to do any follow up consultations. As a result, school officials had expelled the Paiute children which set off a round of letters by both the outraged Paiute camp at Wadsworth and the white community members.

The whites labeled the Indians dirty and diseased. The Indians blamed their agency doctor for inadequate care. The doctor claimed that the situation was being exaggerated because two out of the fourteen students had any signs of trachoma. The two ill students were not “in the secretive stage,” and the doctor did not consider them any danger to the other students. To resolve the controversy, the Agent at the Reno Indian Agency informed the parents of the two sick children that they needed to be sent to Stewart for continued treatment. The parents stanchly refused to have their children sent away. In the end, the day school readmitted the children under Dr. Carmichal’s care.¹³²

By the 1930s some of the barriers that had kept Native children out of public schools had begun to break down, in large part because many children were transferring from Stewart to Carson High School after graduation. These assimilated children made a good name for themselves and played on the baseball and football teams, which changed the perception of Indian students within white communities.¹³³ Traveling sports teams

¹³² “Inspection Report of W. W. Coon, Supervisor” November 2, 1926; File “52206-1926,” Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

¹³³ “Carson Indian School,” *Narrative and Statistical Report*, 1923.

from Stewart and the traveling band also helped encourage a more positive view of Indian students. Bowler believed that having the Stewart school band come to Elko proved the turning point in overcoming the racial prejudice in the area.¹³⁴

Superintendent Bowler's administration worked very hard to overcome racial prejudice in Nevada with the cooperation of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Chauncey W. Smith. She desegregated the schools in Elko in 1935 and Battle Mountain in 1936 and fought particularly hard battles to desegregate in Lovelock, Smith Valley, and Yerington.¹³⁵

Surviving at Stewart:

"We used to run away to Carson City just to run. We'd always get caught by the old theater." - Virigina "Ruby" Carrillo, student¹³⁶

Parents, students, and school staff continually negotiated who had ultimate control over student bodies. In the early years, the school allowed more flexibility because it needed to curry favor with parents and tribes. For the most part, students arrived at school in the fall and went home for the summer at the beginning of July. Many children stayed at Stewart for over a decade. Frank Rivers lived at Stewart for twelve years after being taken there in 1891.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Alida C. Bowler to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 4, 1935, File "25305-1935," Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

¹³⁵ Otis J. Morgan, Educational Field Agent to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 30, 1937, File "34099-1937 Part 1 (1 of 2)," Box 98, Carson 803-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC..

¹³⁶ Susan Skorupa, "Former Students Remember Old Times, Both Good and Bad," *Reno Gazette Journal*, August 17, 1998.

¹³⁷ Myra McCue, "Alma Mater for the Wa-Pai-Shone," *Reno Evening Gazette*, January 17, 1962.

Superintendent Gibson struggled to gain parental and tribal support for the school. Tribes remained wary of sending their children to Stewart and often exercised their power to withdraw students as they did after an outbreak of the mumps in 1891.¹³⁸ Thus, the administration tried to appease students, parents, and tribes by easily granting leaves of absence for the summer or when requested by the family. Superintendent Gibson also complied with traditional seasonal migration patterns. Children could travel with their families to go gather hops in northern California during the summers. Thus, attendance remained spotty for the first months of the school year. In September of 1894, only thirty-four students, a little over a third of the student body, had returned. School officers then made the rounds of the reservations when the school reopened in the fall. However, if pupils had secured a job the officers did not force them to reenroll at Stewart.¹³⁹

Under the three-year administration of Superintendent Gibson, almost all children had been allowed to return home for the summer. However, when Eugene Mead assumed control of the school in 1894 he abruptly announced that no child could travel home for the summer. Mead reported that “during the first few days after announcing that it was our instructions to retain them through vacation, owing somewhat to their anticipated visits to their homes, but still more to the solicitations of their parents, there was some discontent.” Two children ran away and parents protested enough that Mead resorted to bribing parents to allow their children to remain during the summer break. He offered outdoor sports, picnics, painting, gardening, and paid work for the most

¹³⁸ *Annual Report* 1891, 569.

¹³⁹ *Annual Report* 1894, 390; “Stewart Institute at Carson Opens for New Term Next Week,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, August 29, 1905.

discontented children.¹⁴⁰ With the precedent set, the bulk of the student population remained at the school year round for the next fifty years, although substantial numbers were granted leaves of absence.¹⁴¹



Figure 8. An early photograph of the main school building. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

Stewart staff often allowed parental visitations.¹⁴² Parents frequently dropped in on their children at the school during visiting hours. It is unclear whether the visiting

¹⁴⁰ *Annual Report 1894*, 390; Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 89.

¹⁴¹ Scott Riney describes a similar predicament at the Rapid City Indian School. In 1905, in accordance with Indian Office direction, the superintendent at Rapid City changed the school's policy so that children had to remain there during the summer. The outraged parents mustered the support of their local Indian agent and prosperous men of the town who wrote to Washington DC and requested that the children be allowed thirty day vacations during the summer, or parents would withdraw their students from the school entirely. The request was granted. Riney, *Rapid City*, 132-133.

¹⁴² Adams similarly argues that at some non-reservation boarding schools encouraged vacations and parental visitations. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 58.

hours represented a response to the continual presence of parents at the school during all hours of the day, or a tactic used by the school to persuade parents to send their children to Stewart.¹⁴³ Because of their proximity, Washoe parents certainly had an advantage in spending time with their children.

The life of Ben “Salem” Peters illustrates how children transitioned from home to school and back. One of first students taken from the camps in Washoe Valley along with Richard Barrington, Peters arrived at Stewart at the age of fourteen in December of 1890. Three years later the physician sent him home, presumably with tuberculosis. Peters returned to Stewart ten months later and stayed for an additional two years before going home for the summer. In March of 1898 at the age of twenty-two, Peters went back to Stewart for the third time and stayed for the remainder of the term. During the summer the Superintendent granted him another leave of absence.¹⁴⁴ He never returned to Stewart.

This pattern of coming to school and returning home would be repeated over and over during the 1890s. By the 1920s this pattern had changed. Summer visits evaporated. Instead children went to work on white farms or in white households through the outing programs for the summer.¹⁴⁵ Compulsory education laws had given superintendents more power to force enrollment so parents could not come and take their children home as they had in the 1890s.

¹⁴³ *Annual Report* 1891, 569-570.

¹⁴⁴ Ben Peters, Register of Pupils, 25-26, 227-228.

¹⁴⁵ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 162.

Some savvy parents learned to negotiate the system and ensure they could see their children. The mother of Lucy Whiterock wrote to Superintendent Frederick Snyder in May of 1930. She informed him, "I am writing you and let you know that Lucy is coming home. You keep Lucy there until our money reach afterwards. We want her home this summer. Don't send Lucy any where."¹⁴⁶ Unable to deny their request, Snyder kept Lucy at the school until the money arrived. Notes from her teachers describe Lucy as a quiet girl who tried very hard. She was in the eighth grade, so Lucy could have been sent on the outing program in San Francisco. Her parents wanted to make sure she was not sent to California before their money for her train fare reached Stewart. Lucy's older sister, Nina, had previously graduated from Stewart in 1924 after spending seven years at the school, and perhaps Mrs. Whiterock's concerns stemmed from Nina being sent on the outing program. Whatever the reason, by the time their second daughter had reached the eighth grade, the Whiterock family had learned they had to assert control over their children's lives. They sent the money for train fare and stated in no uncertain terms that their daughter was coming home.¹⁴⁷

Traveling between home and Stewart forced many children to live in contrasting places. Indian Agents complained that children threw off the trappings of civilization when they went home for vacations. Indeed, many students who returned home did abandon the uniform and patterns of behavior that marked them as different among their

¹⁴⁶ Mrs. John Whiterock to Frederic Snyder, May 22, 1930, File "W," Box 1, Individual Student School Records, 1919-1949, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno; Frederic Snyder to Mrs. John Whiterock, May 29, 1930, File "W," Box 1, Individual Student School Records, 1919-1949, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno; Student Records of Lucy and Nina Whiterock, Individual Student School Records, 1919-1949, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

friends and family. A story in the Hawthorn newspaper, the *Hawthorn Bulletin*, in 1891 reveals the complex nature of this transition for Indian students. Hawthorn was a white community on the southeastern edge of the Walker River Reservation. The story is about George Brown, a Paiute student who returned home to the Walker River Reservation for a two month summer vacation. Brown was part of the first class of students at the school. The white paper reported that after six months he was neatly dressed and that his manners had improved greatly. Parodying his words, the newspaper reported that Brown said, “Tomorrow I take off good close and put um in Jim Yerington’s truck. Bimeby [sic] I go back to Carson I put um on again.”¹⁴⁸ There were many practical reasons for Brown to pack away his school clothes, the Matron at Stewart would undoubtedly inspect the clothes upon his return. However, the idea that clothes were a marker of white “civilization” or a garment that could be put on and taken off at will is more intriguing. Brown donned his uniform for another six years although he did run away once during his term there.¹⁴⁹

Students fought to maintain control over their lives and bodies. Running away proved a common practice. For many students, deserting offered the ultimate assertion of personal autonomy. Superintendent Gibson lamented he could not maintain discipline at the school “on account of children running away when too much restricted.”¹⁵⁰ In addition, administrators blamed children for not appreciating the opportunities provided for them. Superintendent James K. Allen (1902-1905) complained “The inherent want of

¹⁴⁸ “Home Again”, *Hawthorne Bulletin*, July 13, 1891.

¹⁴⁹ Register of Pupils, 140, 191.

¹⁵⁰ *Annual Report* 1891, 571.

appreciation of the advantage of an education, together with the fitful mood of the Indians, requires constant and eternal vigilance on the part of the superintendent and the school force to overcome and control the patrons of the school, and often to hold the pupils.”¹⁵¹ Thus, maintaining control over the actual physical body of the students constantly challenged superintendents. During the first ten years of the school’s existence about one out of every six children ran away or refused to return to school after the summer vacation. By the 1930s this statistic had dropped noticeably to a reported one out of forty, perhaps because of the longer distances that students had to travel to get back home.

Running away proved a risky proposition for students. In one case, Snyder Smith, a sixteen-year-old Western Shoshone from the Duck Valley Reservation, ran away from the school after the 4th of July parade in Carson City. He stole two checks from an employee, which he tried unsuccessfully to cash. While on the run, Smith attempted to board a moving train, missed the rung, and had his foot run over. His foot was amputated at a county hospital in Ely and a serious infection set in. The doctor contemplated a second amputation at the knee. Superintendent Ashbury tried to argue that because Smith had deserted Stewart, he was no longer a ward of the school and thus the County should pay for his surgery. After numerous letters, the doctor received payment from the Indian Service. However, in the intervening period, the infection cleared and the boy snuck away from the hospital to parts unknown.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ *Annual Report* 1902, 247.

¹⁵² Calvin H. Ashbury to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 15, 1910, Calvin H. Ashbury to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 17, 1911, and Calvin H. Ashbury to the Commissioner of

Sometimes students did not actually expect to get far. Student Virginia “Ruby” Carrillo remembered, “We used to run away to Carson City just to run. We’d always get caught by the old theater.” For students such as Carrillo, running away could be considered the ultimate assertion of rights over one’s body. Children, parents, and the school all fought to control the lives and bodies of the students. Students made up their own minds about what they would take from their experience at Stewart. Parents who could not financially support their children often wanted them placed at Stewart, while many other parents alternately wanted their children educated in their own communities. The school administration fought to keep the children at school for extended periods to encourage the assimilation process until the 1920s when public schools and reservation day schools became a preferred option. As a result, students, parents, Indian communities, and the federal government all fought over the bodies of students at the Stewart Indian School.

Indian Affairs, December 19, 1911, File “59002-1910,” Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

Chapter 3

“HAVING A BEAUTIFUL CAMPUS TO GREET YOU ON EVERY SIDE, DOES MUCH FOR THE WELFARE OF THE SCHOOL”: CONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING THE STEWART CAMPUS¹⁵³

To visit the superintendent’s office at the Stewart Indian School, students and visitors waited in a small rectangular lobby of the administration building lined with wooden benches. The space itself conveyed the power dynamic between the head of the institution and his guests. The female gatekeepers, a switchboard operator in a small office on the right and a stenographer in a similar office to the left, would open sliding glass windows to talk with visitors and then escort them through the building to the superintendent. Thus, multiple layers of control restricted access to the most important people on campus.¹⁵⁴

The interior of the Administration Building demonstrates a simple way that superintendents conveyed their power at Stewart. Architecture is not neutral. Buildings can communicate symbolic messages, restrain behavior, and reinforce who is in control.¹⁵⁵ The physical campus and architecture of the Stewart Indian School fortified the academic, gender, and vocational lessons of the federal boarding school curriculum. The layout of the campus, the style and design of the buildings, and the usage of spaces stressed the importance of regimentation, strict work patterns, proper gender roles, and

¹⁵³ “Inspection Report of W. W. Coon, Supervisor” October 27, 1926, File “70393-1925,” Box 99, Carson 806-606, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

¹⁵⁴ United States, Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, blueprint entitled “Addition to Office Building” July 21, 1938, Special collection Nevada State Historic Preservation Office.

¹⁵⁵ Diane Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 171.

subservient behavior. Boys and girls were separated into different spaces, boys were allowed significantly more freedom to roam. Moreover, the straight lines of the buildings and walkways and the neatly manicured flowerbeds, demonstrated that everything needed to be tamed and civilized, just as native children needed to be shaped and molded to fit a model of an assimilated Indian.

The Early Campus:

“The building was an architectural monstrosity.” – Indian Service Building Inspector¹⁵⁶

From the beginning, state officials in Nevada had big dreams for an impressive Indian school. The Stewart Indian School was the only non-reservation boarding school in the nation created by an act of the state legislature. Senate Bill Number 33, approved by both houses of the thirteenth Nevada State Legislature on January 25, 1887, appropriated \$10,000 for the purchase of land and the construction of a boarding school. It also created a three person commission to oversee the process. Funding an Indian boarding school seemed an ambitious venture for small Ormsby County, but it solved two problems. First, it addressed the state’s “Indian problem” by assimilating native children. Second, boarding schools pumped money into local economies through supply purchases, employment, and building contracts.¹⁵⁷

The Nevada legislature thus gambled that the Indian Department would reimburse them and assume responsibility for the school. The state purchased a triangle shaped parcel of 240 acres, including two houses and several barns and sheds, three miles south

¹⁵⁶ “The Indian School Building,” *Daily Nevada State Journal*, December 18, 1890.

¹⁵⁷ Jackson, 4; Alice Littlefield, “Learning to Labor: Native American Education in the United States, 1880–1930”, in *The Political Economy of North American Indians*, ed. John H. Moore (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 50.

of Carson City.¹⁵⁸ The legislature contracted for the construction of the necessary buildings, including an impressive Victorian schoolhouse, and then relinquished its rights to the property when the federal government bought the campus in 1890.¹⁵⁹

In these early years the Stewart Indian School stood isolated from settlements and farms in the surrounding area. The snow-capped peaks of the Sierra Nevadas rise to the west and the Pine Nut and Virginia Ranges ring the east side of Eagle Valley. The closest water source is Clear Creek about half a mile from the boundaries of the school. Pine forests climb the mountains just miles away but few trees break up the sagebrush and grasses of the valley floor.¹⁶⁰ Dry grasses whisper when the wind whips across the land. Washoes had used the area for rabbit hunts and often camped along Clear Creek, south of the campus.¹⁶¹ Frank Morgan, a Washoe student, recounted that an Indian agent requested Washoe permission to “build a school in your front yard.”¹⁶²

When the school opened, fences and lines of trees marked its boundaries. The first superintendent, William D. C. Gibson, planted dozens of stately Lombardy poplars still standing guard today like lines of soldiers. The trees served as a wind block, provided shade, and beautified the campus.¹⁶³ In addition, hundreds of feet of fencing

¹⁵⁸ *Annual Report* 1892, 883-885; Jackson, “A History of the Stewart Indian School,” 13.

¹⁵⁹ Jackson, “A History of the Stewart Indian School,” 14.

¹⁶⁰ Eugene M Hattori, “The Archaeology of the Stewart Dump Site,” Submitted to the Carson City Department of Public Works in accordance with the provisions of contract NAS 1013 between the Carson City Department of Public Works and the Nevada State Museum, 1978, 3 and 7.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁶³ “Stewart Indian School to Observe Anniversary; Founded Fifty Years Ago,” *Carson City Chronicle*, April 25, 1941.

surrounded the farms and grazing lands. While both the fences and trees served utilitarian purposes, they also demarcated the school's perimeters, providing a clear boundary between civilized and uncivilized. The campus both safely contained native bodies within its boundaries and kept unwanted Indians away. The divide worked. When the first class of students was brought to Stewart, many concerned parents camped out for weeks on a nearby ridge overlooking the school where they could observe their children.¹⁶⁴



Figure 9. Stewart campus in the early 1890s. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

¹⁶⁴ Ed Vogel, "Historic Indian School Falls under Scrutiny," *Elko Daily Free Press* 117, no. 78 (April 2000).

The massive colonial revival school building constructed by the legislature at the heart of the campus dominated the grounds.¹⁶⁵ The building contained dorms, employee quarters, school rooms, play rooms, kitchen, and dining room. The imposing structure conveyed the grandeur of civilization, to be obtained if the students worked hard. A large lawn, gravel walkways, carriage drive, and shade trees ornamented the front of the building. All visitors and students had to enter through either the front door or the kitchen. Thus, almost all entered through the formal entrance and walked under the arch over the double front gate which read “Indian Industrial School” and “Visiting Day, Wednesday 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.”¹⁶⁶ Stewart did not invite non-assimilated Indians to stay. Parents had to follow strict to maintain contact with their children.¹⁶⁷

The Nevada legislature had not foreseen all of the buildings necessary for an Indian school. Superintendent Gibson quickly built carpenter and blacksmith shops, horse, cow, and calf corrals, a wagon yard, and a laundry facility. These facilities kept the school running and taught the pupils a vocational trade. In addition, a 10,000 gallon forty-six foot water tower rose high above the campus. Under the direction of employees, the pupils painted all of the buildings and dug foundations for new structures. After a few years of training, the children even helped construct new wood frame buildings.¹⁶⁸ Additions to the main school building added more space for dorms but the

¹⁶⁵ Map of the Carson School, attached to a letter from Superintendent Calvin H. Ashbury to the CIA, June 2, 1910, File “27639-2-1910,” Box 101, Carson 820-820, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

¹⁶⁶ *Annual Report* 1891, 571.

¹⁶⁷ *Annual Report* 1891, 569-570; *Annual Report* 1892, 390.

¹⁶⁸ *Annual Report* 1891, 570-571.

school population quickly outgrew the main building. In 1900 a separate dorm was built for the girls.¹⁶⁹

Ten years later, the main building was falling apart. The state legislature had constructed the building on the cheap, and the federal government had been advised of the poor quality but decided to buy the property anyway. The building was so out of plumb that right after it was erected, the inspector called for it to be leveled. According to the *Daily Nevada State Journal*, he wrote to the Indian Department and said that “the building was an architectural monstrosity and suggested that everyone who had anything to do with the drawing up of the plans and specifications be immediately discharged, which was done.”¹⁷⁰ The building endured another decade despite the shoddy construction, a growing student population, and limited resources for upkeep, but it had fallen into complete disrepair by 1912. When he became the new Stewart Superintendent in 1912 S. A. M. Young, wrote, “This building is a disgrace to the Service. I have never seen one in worse condition.” It had rotting flooring, peeling paint, toilets that did not flush, and wooden fire escapes that could no longer hold the weight of a student.¹⁷¹

The whole campus desperately needed help when Superintendent Young arrived in 1912. The buildings and the administration of the school had deteriorated under the management of Superintendent Calvin H. Asbury (1903-1912). Reports indicate that he was a mediocre and corrupt superintendent and S.A.M. Young had to bring the campus

¹⁶⁹ *Annual Report* 1900, 544.

¹⁷⁰ “The Indian School Building,” *Daily Nevada State Journal*, December 18, 1890.

¹⁷¹ Superintendent Sam Young to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 15, 1912, File “Buildings & Cottages Repairs and Improvements,” Box 268, Administrative Files, 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

back from the brink of disaster.¹⁷² Superintendent Asbury was born in Kentucky. His family had a small farm, and as a child he cared for the cows and horses in the mornings before school. In 1892 he received an appointment as a teacher in the Indian Service at Fort Belknap, Montana. He moved frequently within the Service over the next ten years, serving as principal teacher in charge on the Kickapoo reservation in Kansas, and superintendent at the Sac and Fox Reservation in Oklahoma, and the Yakima Reservation in Washington. He settled in Nevada as Superintendent of the Western Shoshone Reservation four years before he transferred to Stewart in June of 1903.

An article in the school newspaper written by Frank Virtue, a teacher at Stewart and the director of the newspaper, described Asbury as “a man of admirable proportions, standing over six feet and weighing over two hundred.” About his marriage, it states that it was not surprising that he earned the “affections of such an estimable woman” as his wife Ida. The newspaper describes them as: “Handsome, jovial, gallant, is he; a gentleman of sterling character, charming, vivacious, debonair, beautiful is she; a lady of transcendent quality.” The Asbury’s had two sons and three daughters.¹⁷³ This vivid description of Asbury was written by one of his coworkers and does not necessarily describe the students’ opinion of him. Nor does the description match his image in reports by Special Investigator William Gill in 1912. Perhaps Asbury was vivacious and charming and a horrible administrator.

¹⁷² Administrative turnover was common in the Indian Service, but Stewart suffered from a high rate for superintendents. Teachers and superintendents often changed appointments by moving up the ladder or laterally to a more desirable location. For example, Sherman Institute in Riverside California had only two Superintendents from 1902 to 1922, and the Rapid City Indian School had eight from 1898 to 1933. Keller, *Empty Beds*, 7; Riney, *Rapid City Indian School*, 23; Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 85.

¹⁷³ Carson Indian School, *New Indian* 1 no. 1, 1903.

Gill wrote his report in May of 1912 shortly after Asbury left his post. Gill had also investigated the campus a year before. He reflected on his previous visit:

It was about a year since my first visit. At that time the children in the dining room had the appearance of being more savage than I had ever been seen human beings, and when I saw the bread and other food on which they were living and the lack of kitchen utensils and other proper means for them to have anything better, I felt that I myself would be savage under these circumstances. The plaster was down and other things were in keeping over the grounds and every where. The teachers and employees were all in misery because of gossip and imagined enmity. Cooperation was a word with no meaning.¹⁷⁴

In his report Gill openly declared Ashbury a horrible superintendent. Although conscientious and one who tried to do right, he remained “in a rut which seemed hopeless.” Gill supported the Indian Service’s decision to transfer Asbury to the position of Special Indian Agent for Nevada’s non-reservation Indians. Under the leadership of a new superintendent, Howard Hall, Gill reported the campus had undergone a “miraculous transformation.”¹⁷⁵

Promoting Asbury may have saved the Stewart Indian School from disaster but it was not necessarily a good decision for Nevada’s Indian population. In 1906, Superintendent Asbury had colluded with white friends to profit from the opening of the Walker River Indian Reservation. Using his position as superintendent and head of the Carson Indian Agency, Asbury had staked out the best land before it opened to the public. He and some of his friends and family gained title to some of the most profitable

¹⁷⁴ “Carson Indian School Report of Supervisor Gill” May 2, 1912, File “45878-1-1912,” Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

¹⁷⁵ “Carson Indian School Report of Supervisor Gill” May 2, 1912, File “45878-1-1912,” Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.; *Annual Report* 1912.

land. A late gold rush in southern Nevada near Tonapa resulted in an overnight mining camp on the east of the reservation. Asbury and his cronies opened up hotels, cafes, and bars to cater to the mining crowds.¹⁷⁶

Boarding schools constantly needed repairs because Congress appropriated very little money to keep them running. Outdated heating and lighting systems meant that children endured cold and dim winters at the school. With school enrollments growing and no funds for new facilities, children were crowded into dorms, sleeping two or three to a bed. Repairs and additions allowed Stewart's buildings to survive far beyond their expiration dates, but upkeep was often the first thing to be neglected. In 1916, all of the small boys and girls, numbering about 125, lived in the old main building.

Superintendent Royce pleaded for additions to the older boys and girls dorms. He wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that "this building is frame and is about 30 years old and should same catch fire at night it would burn very quickly and the chances are that some of the small children would be burned up before we could get them out, although we are taking every precaution against fire."¹⁷⁷

In fact, the original boys dormitory went up in flames in 1935. Just after returning home for the evening, the basketball team saw the fire and bolted into action to contain the fire, but the whipping wind quickly ignited the entire building. In the midst of the destruction, eighteen-year-old student Albert Calvin distinguished himself as a hero. Calvin rushed into the burning building to rescue a small wire haired dog named

¹⁷⁶ Ed Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes: A Tribal History* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Printing Press, 1975), 110-111.

¹⁷⁷ "Amount Desired for Carson School" Report by James B. Royce, undated, File "Miscellaneous," Box 292, Administrative Files [second series], 1914-1924, Records of the Carson Indian School, NARA, San Bruno.

Prince who lived with the dorm advisor. Working on one of the fire hoses, Calvin heard the barking from the small canine who was trapped in a stairwell, jumped a fallen wall, and carried him to safety.¹⁷⁸

The Carson Fire Department arrived, but the campus only had two short hoses and their small streams could not stop the fire. The Minden Fire Department received an alert a few minutes later and showed up with a hose that was long enough to wrap around the building and lift water from a nearby irrigation ditch. Together the two fire departments contained the blaze and prevented all other buildings from being harmed. School officials mounted an investigation into the source because the fire had originated in the attic and there had also been three small fires the previous week, but no one was ever charged with arson. Superintendent Bowler had to send about sixty of the small boys home or to other schools because Stewart had no other available housing.¹⁷⁹

Superintendent Snyder, the Builder:

“Mr. Snyder loved flowers. Wherever there was a space for flowers, there were flowers.” – Hillman Toby, Paiute Student¹⁸⁰

A radical overhaul of the campus began in 1919 with the arrival of Superintendent Frederick Snyder. Today, the stone buildings that survive on the Stewart campus stand as a testament to his vision. When Snyder arrived the buildings were white washed wood. Some trees and bushes adorned the campus, but previous superintendents had not made

¹⁷⁸ “Indian Youth Rescues Dog at Some Peril,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, February 14, 1935.

¹⁷⁹ “Boys’ Dormitory is Completely Destroyed by Blaze” *Reno Evening Gazette*, February 14, 1935; 16.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Hillman Tobey, Nevada State Museum, *Under One Sky*, University of Reno Oral History Project, 2006, Video Recording, 60 min.

campus beautification a priority. Snyder, however, was a builder. He held the position of Superintendent for over fourteen years, and the stone buildings became his legacy.

Born in Albany, New York, to German immigrant parents around 1873, Snyder entered the Indian Service after college, and gained his first appointment as a clerk at a reservation school in Hoopa Valley, California. At Hoopa, he fell in love with Charlotte Brehaut, who worked as a matron. Their relationship took the “desperately popular” Snyder off of the market, and the two married in 1900.¹⁸¹ The couple transferred to the Santa Fe Indian School where Snyder served as an assistant superintendent, and later superintendent, and his wife worked as the head matron. After fifteen years they transferred to Stewart in 1919, bringing with them a two-year-old daughter, Margaret.¹⁸²

Snyder’s inspiration for Stewart’s distinctive architectural style came from a chapel in Arizona which was made out of native colored rock. Using the soft colors of the Nevada stone, Snyder recreated his inspiration over and over on the Stewart campus. Students spent two years collecting the stone from across the state in Snyder's old Ford truck.¹⁸³ Much of the stone came from the Christopher quarry along the Carson River. He recruited Hopi stone masons to erect the new buildings and hired the local contractor firm of James and John Christopher. Students helped with the construction under the guidance of the master masons.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Cathleen D. Cahill, *Federal Fathers & Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869-1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 152.

¹⁸² “Frederic Snyder,” 1920 Census, Ormsby County, Nevada, roll M593_835, page 335B, image 50, Family History Library Film 552334.

¹⁸³ McCue, “Alma Mater.”

¹⁸⁴ Kent L. Seavey, Application for the National Register of Historic Places, Chilocco Indian Agricultural School, January 10, 1982, Item 7, Page 1.



Figure 10: Stonework on the Stewart post office. The distinctive Stewart architectural style has randomly shaped native stones set in dark mortar. Rectangular corner stones on the left are common on the campus buildings. Photograph taken by the author May 21, 2010.

The stonework on the campus consists of randomly shaped stones of brown, red, and green set in dark grout.¹⁸⁵ Almost all of the buildings are single story and symmetrical. Snyder began construction of a new administration building as his first project. The Indian Office supplied designs for a log cabin office, but somehow Snyder convinced the administration to abandon the log cabin design and construct a stone building instead. He fondly referred to the new building as rustic. Snyder received “admiration and favorable comment from tourists and people from the neighboring cities,” about the administration building, which encouraged him to continue his building

¹⁸⁵ Seavey, Application for the National Register, Item 7, Page. 2.

projects.¹⁸⁶ An Indian Office inspector reported that “Supt. Snyder is very proud of this building, which is really more ornate than useful for the purpose for which it was intended.”¹⁸⁷



Figure 11. The band building demonstrates the varied colors of native stone and dark mortar used in Stewart architecture. Photograph taken by the author May 21, 2010.

The National Park Service embraced this style of rustic architecture in the 1920s. Prior architecture styles using stone had emphasized rectangular stones set at regular intervals like bricks; however, rustic architecture embraced the irregularities of nature. National Park architects took great pains to ensure that structures complemented the surrounding environment. The irregular boulders, stone lintels, and flat horizontal shape of the buildings at Stewart mimicked many of the National Park Service structures erected in the late 1920s and early 1930s, although the National Park Service used more

¹⁸⁶ *Annual Report 1923*, 2.

¹⁸⁷ W. W. Coon, Supervisor, to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 28, 1922, File “97392-1922,” Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

exposed wooden beams. Snyder's first comment about the Administration Building being "rustic" suggests his connection to this particular style.¹⁸⁸

A new kitchen and dining room in the same style soon followed. Snyder remarked that the new dining room "presents a very solid and substantial appearance and adds much to the appearance of the school grounds."¹⁸⁹ Conscious of the importance of appearance, Snyder worked hard to establish an architectural identity for the campus. Snyder then focused on the landscaping. He added more shade trees along the major walkways. The students planted extensive flower beds of petunias, asters, marigolds, verbenas, and sweet peas drawing a favorable comment from an inspector in 1925 about "the attention given to beautifying and making the Agency grounds attractive."¹⁹⁰ Maintaining the landscaping required lots of student labor and Snyder lamented how much work it took to keep the lawns and flower beds "fresh and green."¹⁹¹ Snyder had not been the first to use a boarding school campus as a community showpiece. In the mid 1890s Phoenix Indian School Superintendent, Howard Hall, made the campus a community meeting ground. In sharp contrast to the surrounding Arizona desert, the

¹⁸⁸ William C. Tweed, Laura E. Soulliere, and Henry G. Law, "Rustic Architecture: 1916-1942," National Park Service, Western Regional Office, Division of Cultural Resource Management, February 1977, http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/rusticarch/introduction.htm.

¹⁸⁹ *Annual Report* 1923, 2.

¹⁹⁰ McCue, "Alma Mater;" J. G. Perry to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 19, 1925, File "50235-1926," Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

¹⁹¹ *Annual Report* 1924, 4.

Phoenix Indian School had manicured grounds, shaded walks, and fountains and drew many visitors from the community.¹⁹²



Figure 12. Flowers, bushes, and trees lined the pathways of the campus in the 1920s. Tennis courts can be seen on the left and the Superintendent's cottage on the far right.¹⁹³

One report suggested that the Stewart campus was one of the prettiest in the service and “the promotion of health and better mental states, by having a beautiful campus to greet you on every side, does much for the welfare of the school.”¹⁹⁴ Another says, “the grass is beautifully kept. The miles of borders of flowers along walks, driveways, and flower beds... were gorgeous and charming in appearance. All who passed by must involuntarily stop to admire the extensive floral bloom on the Carson

¹⁹² Robert A. Trennert, Jr., *The Phoenix Indian School: Forced Assimilation in Arizona, 1891-1935* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 54.

¹⁹³ “Image 37 - Grounds and Buildings,” File “048 Photographs – Correspondence #1, Box 8, General Files, 1935-43, Records of the Carson Indian Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

¹⁹⁴ “Inspection Report of W. W. Coon, Supervisor” October 27, 1926, File “70393-1925,” Box 99, Carson 806-606, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

school campus surrounded by a desert of sage brush and other desert growths.”¹⁹⁵

However, another inspector took Snyder to task saying that the landscaping was commendable, “but other phases of the work should not be subjected to it. More of his time might be spent on making and providing better conditions for the pupils.”¹⁹⁶



Figure 13. A young girl in the midst of flowers on the Stewart campus in the early 1930s.¹⁹⁷

As a result of Snyder’s efforts, the Stewart grounds acquired a uniform architectural and landscaping style. In effect, Snyder and his predecessors created a

¹⁹⁵ “Inspection Report of W. W. Coon, Supervisor” November 2, 1926, File “52206-1926,” Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

¹⁹⁶ W. W. Coon, Supervisor, to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 28, 1922, File “97392-1922,” Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

¹⁹⁷ “Image 37 - Grounds and Buildings,” File “048 Photographs – Correspondence #1, Box 8, General Files, 1935-43, Records of the Carson Indian Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

campus of straight lines. Columns of Lombardy Poplars stood at regular intervals throughout the grounds. Flowers and bushes lined the walkways and gave the campus a smartly organized appearance.

Snyder created a living legacy at Stewart with his architectural and landscaping finesse. He retired at the end of January in 1934 and relocated his family to Carson City after nineteen years as superintendent. His replacement, Superintendent Bowler, cared little for the extensive landscaping and she tore much of it out. She did, however, continue Snyder's design formula in a flood of new buildings in the late 1930s. The Construction Division of the Department of the Interior took an active role in the design and implementation of the new buildings, staying true to Snyder's vision. Almost all construction halted with the advent of World War II. Today the Stewart campus is on the National Register of Historic Places and has over eighty-three buildings, sixty-three of which pre-date World War II.¹⁹⁸

Living in an Institution:

“'Cause they don't wanna see a man get close to his girl in Stewart.” – Corbett Mack, Paiute Student.¹⁹⁹

Every year, hundreds of students at a time called Stewart home. The campus contained and bounded their lives. As shown on the map below, the entire campus could roughly be divided into three different areas: student living and working areas, employee housing, and the sanatorium. Unless required by medical necessity, staff kept children

¹⁹⁸ Seavey, Application for National Register, Item 7, Page 2, and Item 8, Page 3.

¹⁹⁹ Michael Hittman, *Corbett Mack: The Life of a Northern Paiute* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 73.

away from the sanatorium. Intentionally situated about two miles away from the classrooms and dorms to discourage disease transmission, the sanatorium provided medical care to children and other native Nevadans with tuberculosis and trachoma. A wood framed sanatorium opened in 1916. A cottage for the nurses and small storage sheds surrounded the medical facility. Like many of the other early buildings the sanatorium deteriorated rapidly. The school tore down the building in the 1940s.

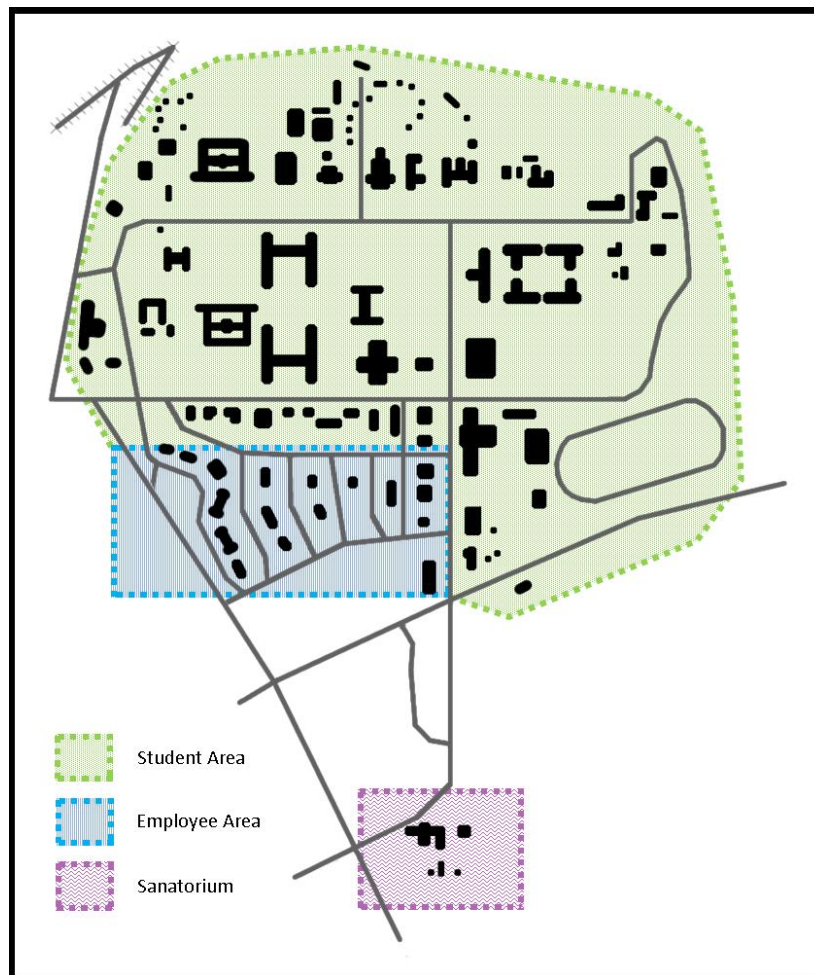


Figure 14. Map of the Stewart Indian School campus in 1940 showing different regions.²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ This map is a combination of the existing buildings, and a plot plan for the water system which was drawn in 1945. It is difficult to trace the history of the building because the identifying numbers changed over the years. The most complete map was drawn for the application for the National Register of

The employee housing area remained off limits to students, unless a student was on a work detail or had permission to visit. Once Snyder began his building campaign in the 1920s, single story stone cottages gradually replaced the wooden employee houses of the early period. Modest affairs, the cottages usually had two or three bedrooms. Staff members with families had a house to themselves, while single workers lived together with coworkers of the same sex.²⁰¹

The students' world occupied the top half of the map. The children rarely left the boundaries of their defined space, while adult employees crossed the boundaries at will. Wa-Pai-Shone, Jacobsen, and Gibson Avenues were the major street arteries for students. Dorms lined each street. Boys and girls had separate buildings and younger and older children were likewise divided into separate buildings.

Architecture also divided the students by age. Teenagers lived in their own dorms, attended advanced classes, and even ate at different times. Daisy Smith remembers that as a young girl of six she never saw her older siblings even though they lived on the same campus. Marching around the school, she would scan the grounds searching for them.²⁰² That a child could attend the same school and rarely have contact with her siblings attests to the many ways that the architecture determined who interacted with whom.

Historic Places in 1985. Although it describes the architecture of all of the buildings, it does not identify the uses of the smaller and outlying buildings. The plot plan is the most accurate representation of what the campus looked like at the end of the period under study. Water System Plot Plan, 1945, Map Collection, State of Nevada, Department of Buildings and Grounds, Stewart Indian School.

²⁰¹ Stewart Indian School Trail Podcasts, Earl T. Laird Jr. "Podcast #18," Accessed July 12, 2011, <http://www.stewartindianschool.com/stewart-podcasts.html>.

²⁰² Stewart Indian School Trail Podcasts, Daisy Smith, Podcast #5," Accessed July 12, 2011, <http://www.stewartindianschool.com/stewart-podcasts.html>.

The spatial organization of the Stewart campus was also deeply gendered. The physical landscape, coupled with day-to-day school policies, kept boys and girls apart. Indoctrinating native children about “proper” gender behavior continued to be a primary cornerstone of a boarding school education. Girls in particular experienced unconcealed attempts to reprogram their cultural understanding of domestic ideals and gender roles. The curriculum at Stewart instructed students that a woman’s place was in the home.



Figure 15. Boys posing on a truck in the 1930s.²⁰³

According to the Victorian ideal of “separate spheres,” males occupied the public sphere and females the private, domestic sphere. This distinction was perhaps more idealized than actually practiced in society at the turn of the century, but the very

²⁰³ File “048 Photographs – Correspondence #1, Box 8, General Files, 1935-43, Records of the Carson Indian Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

architecture of the campus reflects the philosophy that boys and girls should occupy different spaces. Boys and girls lived on opposite sides of the campus, separated by the main school building. As the school infrastructure grew and Snyder replaced most of the decaying wood structure with stone buildings, the gender line of the campus became more noticeable.²⁰⁴

Corbett Mack, a Northern Paiute student who started school at Stewart at about the age of fifteen in about 1905, still remembers his frustration with the strict gender segregation. In his autobiography he recalled that even though boys and girls had classes together and ate in the dining room, they never had a chance to socialize. “Divide you in Stewart,” he continued, “all the time, you know: girls on one line, boys the other... Same way in them dorm, too. Yes, sir... ‘Cause they don’t wanna see a man get close to his girl in Stewart.” Mack remembers that he could never sneak a moment with a girlfriend. Mack recalled. Whenever a matron would see boys and girls talking they would come running and tell them to “Get away!”²⁰⁵

Mack had a girlfriend named Edith Powell, who was from Pitt River. However, he never really got to spend any one-on-one time with her outside of dances. He could not get close to her, so he would have to “send a kiss,” or “write a letter, give it to another girl to give to Edith.” When he saw her on the campus, he had only one option, “I only

²⁰⁴ Map of the Carson School, attached to a letter from Superintendent Calvin H. Ashbury to the CIA, June 2, 1910, File “27639-2-1910,” Box 101, Carson 820-820, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC; Water System Plot Plan, 1945, Map Collection, State of Nevada, Department of Buildings and Grounds, Stewart Indian School.

²⁰⁵ Michael Hittman, *Corbett Mack: The Life of a Northern Paiute* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 73-74.

wave when I see her... Send her kiss by that way, too.”²⁰⁶ The young men did manage to get some time with their love interests during dances and socials. As Mack put it, dances were the “Only time you can hug your girl!”²⁰⁷

Superintendent Snyder grouped all of the girls’ dorms together at the heart of the grounds. The girls’ dorms served as a hub for other buildings such as the laundry, domestic science building, dining room which were also classed as female spaces. Consequently, female students did not have to venture far to perform their scholastic or vocational duties. This configuration is reminiscent of the philosophy of separate spheres. Moreover, at the center of the campus, female students were subject to a higher degree of surveillance and protection. The superintendent’s house and the Administration Building were located right next door to the female living quarters. Thus, metaphorically and literally girls stayed under the watchful eye of the superintendent.

Spaces that can be characterized as male extended out from the female buildings in almost a protective ring. Males were not as confined as their female classmates, and their dorms were spread out rather than clustered together. The fields, corrals, and shops, and athletic fields were scattered around the borders of the campus; thus, as workers and residents boys inhabited the school’s margins. Working in the fields and shops also increased the children’s opportunities to sneak away for unsupervised activities.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Warren L. D’Azevedo, “Appendix 2 - Ethnohistorical Notes on Eagle Valley, Carson City, Nevada,” In “The Archaeology of the Stewart Dump Site” Submitted to the Carson City Department of Public Works in accordance with the provisions of contract NAS 1013 between the Carson City Department of Public Works and the Nevada State Museum, 1978; 72-73.

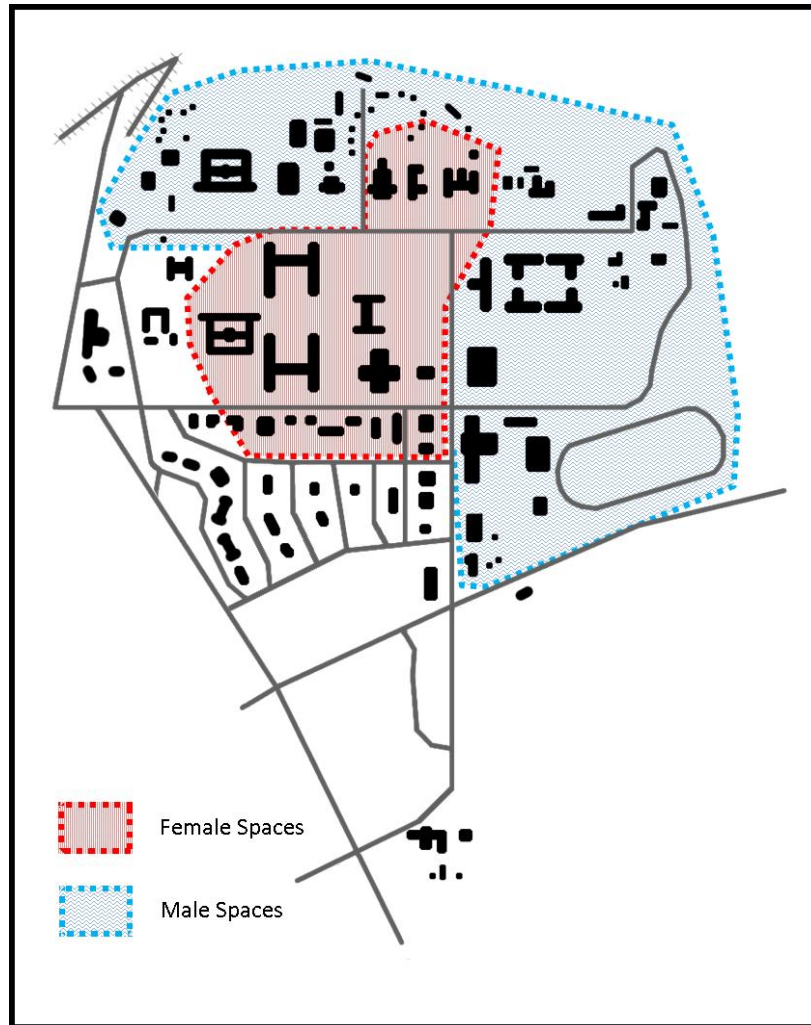


Figure 16. Map of the Stewart Indian School campus in 1940 depicting gendered spaces.²⁰⁹

Day to day activities increased this spatial separation. Boys and girls only socialized with the other sex in classrooms and carefully supervised social activities.²¹⁰

A gender line was even drawn in the auditorium and the dining room. As a result, at pep

²⁰⁹ For the purposes of this map, female spaces included all of the dormitories, kitchen, laundry, hospital, and domestic science buildings. Male spaces include their dormitories, carpentry shops, workshops, mechanic sheds, dairy, farm, and gymnasium.

²¹⁰ Clyde Ellis also argues that the Rainy Mountain Boarding School maintained similar sex and age divisions. Ellis, "We Had A Lot of Fun," 74-74.

rallies, concerts, and holiday celebrations, boys sat on one side of the auditorium and girls sat on the other.²¹¹ Similarly, the sexes occupied opposite sides of the dining room.²¹² All of these rituals were enacted to teach lessons about proper Victorian behavior and to discourage sexual encounters.²¹³

Making the School their Own:

“Not only a home away from home.” – Effie Dressler²¹⁴

Despite the restrictions placed on their behavior, students continually pushed the boundaries of the campus and made spaces their own. The pool is just one example of how spaces can have very different symbolic meanings and uses. Snyder built the Olympic-sized pool in the 1920s for baptisms and swimming lessons, and as a reservoir in case of fire.²¹⁵ The pool ran right up against the main administration building. Local legend has it that Johnny Weissmuller, the Olympic gold medalist who played Tarzan, swam regularly in the pool when he lived in Nevada.²¹⁶ The pool was both the site of solemn ritual and a vivacious center of fun and relaxation for the children. In Figure 17, below, students and staff assemble around Stewart’s swimming pool to watch the baptism

²¹¹ In the 1930s, weekend movies aired in the auditorium. School staff continued to enforce the gender line throughout the period. Stewart Indian School Trail Podcasts, Daisy Smith; J.C. Perry, Medical Director District #5, to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 19, 1926, File “50235-1926,” Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

²¹² L.A. Dorrington, Special Agent, “Inspection Carson Indian School, December 1915, File “8842-1916,” Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

²¹³ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 177.

²¹⁴ Quote by Effie Dressler in “Stewart School Days; Graduates of the Stewart Indian School Recall Hardships, Friendships, and Lessons Learned,” *Nevada Magazine* (Sept/Oct 1990): 38.

²¹⁵ The pool was filled in in the late 1930s. The exact date is unknown.

²¹⁶ Larry Hale, Interview conducted by Bonnie Thompson, June 16, 2011, Audio recording and transcription in the possession of Bonnie Thompson, Truckee, California.

of fellow classmates. The newly born Christians emerged from their dunking under the watching eyes of their friends. On another day, Figure 18 shows children's smiling faces as they sun themselves on the warm pavement, or splash around in the cool water.²¹⁷



Figure 17. A baptism in the school pool circa 1920s. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.



Figure 18. Children sunning themselves after a day of swimming.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Myra McCue, "History of the Rock Houses at Stewart and their Builder," *Reno Evening Gazette*, January 27, 1962; O'Brien, "Stewart School Days."

²¹⁸ File "048 Photographs – Correspondence #1, Box 8, General Files, 1935-43, Records of the Carson Indian Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

Frank Morgan attended Stewart from 1899 to 1905. He remembers that the Indian pupils did most of their playing out of sight of the school.²¹⁹ Away from the watchful eyes of school staff the students had liberty to act like children rather than regimented workers. Moreover, physical freedom allowed the children to play out cultural rituals which were forbidden at Stewart. As a boy, Morgan and his friends would sneak away for impromptu rabbit drives. They set bent wire snares along the ranch fences and also shot the rabbits with handmade bows and arrows. Thus, the boys reenacted cultural rituals remembered from childhood. Rabbit hunting was a communal effort among the Washoe. Families would hold a large woven net of plant fibers as people drove the animals into the net to be clubbed or shot with arrows. Individual hunters laid snares on rabbit trails to catch their prey.²²⁰ After catching rabbits, the students built cooking fires out of five gallon coal oil cans, pieces of carbide, and old frying pans. Stolen meat and vegetables from the school, and wild onions supplemented their feast. All of the cooking took place on the south side of Clear Creek so that the fires could not be seen from the school buildings.

Boys also snuck farther away to gather shellfish, which they called “clams,” past the intersection of the Carson River and Clear Creek. The Carson River runs by the ruins of an old bridge and a site of numerous Washoe legends involving confrontations with Northern Paiutes.²²¹ Students gathered at the spot to dig the clams. The boys would

²¹⁹ Morgan was born in 1892 near Verdi Nevada. During his early childhood, he and his mother lived in and around Washoe and Eagle Valleys close to the school. D’Azevedo, “Appendix,” 72-73.

²²⁰ Makley, “These Will be Strong,” 41-42.

²²¹ Hattori, “Archaeology of the Stewart Dump Site,” 72.

roast them right there on the Carson River or take them back to their stomping grounds along Clear Creek to cook them.

North of the school, pupils enjoyed other types of independence. Morgan remembers that he and his friends hid contraband and personal items. Some of the boys went into Carson to get liquor. Morgan recalled that the boys “usually didn’t bring it back to the school, but if they did, they hid in the brush around the dump.” A popular brand at the turn of the century was “Old Crow,” which Morgan saw Mark Twain drinking in Carson City. Morgan and his friends would also steal boxes of grapes, bananas and oranges from the “grub wagon” and spirit them away, devouring their prizes and discarding the evidence in secret. Morgan also recalled playing a messy game called “mud war.” Similar to snowball fights, the boys would build mud forts and throw mud balls. Thus, these spaces outside the physical margins of the campus allowed students to push the boundaries of a federal boarding school education.²²²

On the ground, these streets, buildings, and gender lines were both physical and cultural boundaries that constrained student behavior. Stewart staff did not have the manpower to watch children every hour of the day, nor could they have prevented the entire student body from leaving at once. However, the threat of punishment for running away, coupled with the confines of the campus, provided psychological boundaries. Place is not a static, bounded thing, and it does not have a single, essential identity. Instead, places must be seen as sets of relationships and systems of power. At Stewart,

²²² The location where Morgan and his friends hid their contraband is now referred to as the Stewart Dump Site because of an archeological excavation there in 1978 by the Archaeological Services branch of the Nevada State Museum. Stewart’s trash and historic debris had been deposited between the 1890s and 1930s. D’Azevedo, “Appendix,” 72-73.

the physical campus supported school practices by making it easier to divide and conquer the students. Places are dynamic and constantly being shaped by power and social interactions, just as the body is fluid and constantly being molded by the world around it.²²³ As Washoe student Effie Dressler recalled decades later, Stewart was “not only a home away from home.”²²⁴ The Stewart Indian School must be understood as both home and prison.

²²³ Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 155, 171.

²²⁴ Quote by Effie Dressler in “Stewart School Days; Graduates of the Stewart Indian School Recall Hardships, Friendships, and Lessons Learned,” *Nevada Magazine* (Sept/Oct 1990): 38.

Chapter 4

“IF WE DO NOT HAVE DOCTOR MUCH INDIANS WILL DIE THIS WINTER”: HEALTH POLICY AT STEWART²²⁵

In 1901, the Women’s National Indian Association ran an article in its monthly newsletter, *The Indian’s Friend*, by the Reverend D. A. Sanford entitled “What is Killing Our Indians?” In the article Sanford challenged the Office of Indian Affairs to explain the deplorable state of Indian health. School children contracted tuberculosis at a higher rate than on the reservations, Sanford argued. He continued that both heredity and the institutional environment bred the dread disease: “Tuberculosis has been inherited from past generations. It is in their blood. Nearly all have it in some form. In their wild state, in an active out-of-door life, the disease was in a measure warded off, but under present conditions it develops rapidly.”²²⁶ Sanford concluded that “the vices of civilization tempt [the Indian], and then idleness and vice help to develop the tubercular disease which he has inherited.”²²⁷

Indian school children did suffer from high rates of disease. However, Sanford was mistaken that the “biologically inferior” native body caused high disease rates. Sanford’s theory was rooted in scientific racism, or the belief that biologically different races exist within the human population. Unfortunately, even though germs had been discovered in the late 1800s, scientific racism had unhealthy consequences for Indian

²²⁵ Frederic Snyder to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 3, 1925 and Petition from 26 members of the Fort McDermitt Reservation to Frederic Snyder, October 28, 1925, File “70997-1925,” Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

²²⁶ D.A. Sanford, “What is Killing Our Indians?” *The Indian’s Friend* 24, no. 1 (1901): 10.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

children who attended the Stewart Indian School in Carson City, Nevada. For almost two decades the Indian Office believed that there was little to be done to prevent native children from getting sick.

The Stewart Indian School offers a lens for understanding germ theory implementation in the early 1900s. Indian Service administrators' understandings of health and disease underwent a profound transformation from 1890 to 1940. The lasting impact of scientific racism, the discovery of germs in 1882, and the new field of public health all influenced how school administrators and the Indian Office understood health and disease. The Indian Office's haphazard and inconsistent policies and practices failed to prevent the spread of endemic disease such as tuberculosis and trachoma.

There were roughly three phases of health policy at the Stewart Indian School. The first began when the school opened in 1890 and continued through 1905. Medical officials and the Indian Office largely believed that Indians' "savage" lifestyle and traditional beliefs predisposed them to chronic diseases such as tuberculosis and trachoma. Following this logic, the Indian Office did little to prevent students from contracting these diseases or other illnesses other than isolating contagious students.

The second phase began around 1905 when a nationwide health study confirmed that Indian school children suffered from illness at astronomically high rates. Thus, the Indian Office could no longer ignore student health problems and slowly began to recognize that the institutions themselves spread disease. The Indian Service established annual health reporting and basic education programs for children, and Stewart built a hospital and sanatorium.

By the 1920s tuberculosis and trachoma had become endemic in both boarding schools and native communities. In the third phase, the Indian Office began to address the structural problems of federal relations with American Indians throughout the 1920s and 1930s by embracing the burgeoning public health movement. The influenza pandemic of 1918, the publication of the Meriam Report in 1928, and the new political activism of tribes under the Indian Reorganization Act forced the Indian Office to change its policies. Stewart stepped up its education and prevention programs, and the Indian Office extended social and health services to the reservations and colonies.

The Stewart Indian School could not be considered an innovator of health policy. The Indian Office deemed essential a varied diet, plenty of exercise, and ventilated living quarters for student health. Limited appropriations prevented boarding schools from implementing these standards. Pupils at Stewart often complained about the quality and quantity of food, physical exhaustion from their work regimen, and crowded dormitories where they often slept two to a bed.²²⁸ Throughout the 1920s inspectors reported marked overcrowding in the girls dorms, “it having been necessary to place the beds very close together.”¹ In fact, by 1927 the school population had grown to such an extent that children had to climb over other beds to reach their own.¹ The youngest children lived in large rooms with dozens of beds, but older students lived four to a room for more privacy. The children did their best to make the rooms comfortable and homey, such as

²²⁸ According to a report by H.B. Peairs, Supervisor of Indian Schools, there were 63 small girls occupying 48 beds. “Report of H.B. Peairs, Supervisor of Indian Schools of the Carson Indian School, Stewart, Nevada, December 16, 1914,” File “Reports Miscellaneous,” Box 270, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

in 1901 when several girls pooled their money to buy lace to make curtains for their dorm.¹

Two conflicting scientific movements, scientific racism and germ theory, influenced the three phases of student health policy at Stewart. Both affected the health care provided in government-run boarding schools. Scientific racism and eugenics encouraged physicians and administrators to think of American Indians as a separate race of people.²²⁹ Scientific racism became popular in both science and popular culture at the turn of the century. This emergence had important implications for federal policy toward native health. Because early Indian Commissioners and Indian Service physicians believed that Indians as a race were predisposed to diseases like tuberculosis, smallpox, and trachoma since they suffered from them at high rates they concluded that little could be done to stop the spread of infection. At the same time, physicians and Indian Service employees linked “uncivilized” behavior with disease.²³⁰ This thinking helped justify the removal of children from their families and their placement in the strictly supervised environment of the boarding schools.²³¹ If high disease rates resulted from a combination of native biological inferiority and “uncivilized” behavior, reforming native culture through boarding schools should help stop the spread of disease.

Boarding schools, however, remained inherently unhealthy places, a fact that their tortured logic about Indian health made federal officials slow to appreciate. Some of the

²²⁹ For more information about scientific racism see Joseph L. Graves Jr., *The Emperor's New Clothes: Biological Theory of Race at the Millennium* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

²³⁰ David Jones, *Rationalizing Epidemics: Meanings and Uses of American Indian Mortality Since 1600* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 134-136.

²³¹ Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 288.

early Commissioners of Indian Affairs did not even recognize that boarding schools spread disease. Commissioner William A. Jones did not initially connect the overcrowding of schools and the tuberculosis epidemic during his tenure as commissioner from 1897 to 1904.²³² As late as 1901 Jones kept pressuring agents to increase enrollments.

Scientific racism may have blinded the Indian Office to the dangers of stuffing so many bodies into too small institutions, but germ theory slowly opened people's eyes to the contagious, and invisible, threat of disease. In the 1860s, Louis Pasteur proved that microorganisms were present in the air. In 1882, Robert Koch isolated the bacteria for tuberculosis and proved that germs caused disease. By the mid-1890s laboratory tests had been introduced to detect tuberculosis, cholera, typhoid, and diphtheria. The ability to diagnose organisms responsible for specific infectious diseases meant that doctors began targeting diseases rather than just trying to prevent disease in general. Vaccines and treatments developed for diphtheria, typhoid, and tetanus proved successful and never posed a significant threat at the Stewart Indian School.²³³

²³² Diane T. Putney, "Fighting the Scourge: American Indian Morbidity and Federal Indian Policy 1897-1928" (Ph.D. Diss., Marquette University, 1980), 4.

²³³ Neither superintendents nor doctors reported these diseases in their end of year reports during this period. Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 135-138.

The Early Period:

“The parents of pupils were very timid about sending their children to school on account of our having had the smallpox.” – Superintendent Gibson²³⁴

Before the Stewart hospital opened in 1905, students had limited health care. A contract physician visited three times a week, but did not reside at the school. The matron watched over the sick in the physician’s absence, but although she provided indispensable help nursing ailing students, she had no formal medical training.²³⁵ Moreover, without isolation rooms she could only do so much to care for sick children in the dormitories when epidemics struck.²³⁶

Many Indian communities suffered from endemic tuberculosis and trachoma, and these diseases ran rampant in boarding schools such as Stewart. By 1886, American Indians had the highest death rate from tuberculosis in the world at 9,000 deaths out of every 100,000 - ten times higher than the peak death rate in Europe in the seventeenth century.²³⁷ Tuberculosis is a bacterial infection. It is most often found in the lungs but can infect other parts of the body, leaving gaping sores on the skin. Tuberculosis in the lungs can spread to other people through coughing or laughing. There are two types of the disease. Latent tuberculosis means that the bacteria is present in the body, but the

²³⁴ *Annual Report* 1892, 678.

²³⁵ In the spring of 1902, the matron cared for many children who were recovering from pneumonia. *The Indian Advance* 3, no. 9 (1902): 1.

²³⁶ *Annual Report* 1901, 544.

²³⁷ Thomas M. Daniel, Joseph H. Bates, and Katharine A. Downes, “History of Tuberculosis,” in *Tuberculosis: Pathogenesis, Protection, and Control*, ed. Barry R. Bloom (Washington, DC: American Society for Microbiology, 1994), 15.

patient does not feel sick, and cannot spread the disease to others. Active tuberculosis is highly contagious.²³⁸

Tuberculosis treatment during the early 1900s consisted of isolating patients in sanatoriums where other infections could be controlled. Rest and fresh air for months, or even years, constituted the best treatment available, even if some people went crazy from the enforced inactivity. For the most part, a physician could only prevent the spread of TB to healthy people, until the 1940s when the first drugs were created to cure the disease.²³⁹

Trachoma is a painful infection of the eye which can result in damaged vision or blindness.²⁴⁰ A nationwide survey of Indian communities across the country in 1912 found that 22.7 percent of Indians had trachoma. The rate was even higher in Nevada where twenty-seven percent had the infection. Fifty percent of sufferers nationwide were between the ages of six and twenty and an additional 4.5 percent were under the age of six.²⁴¹ People afflicted with trachoma have granules form on the inside of the eyelid. In more advanced stages, the eyelid begins to turn inward causing the eyelashes and granules to irritate and scratch the cornea. Treatment included scraping the granules from the eyes and flushing them with a solution of boric acid or mercury. Ice compresses

²³⁸ *WebMD*. "Tuberculosis (TB) – Topic Overview," (accessed 27 April, 2007), <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/Tuberculosis-TB-Topic-Overview>

²³⁹ Daniel, et al, 22-23.

²⁴⁰ Todd Benson, "Blinded with Science: American Indians, the Office of Indian Affairs, and the Federal Campaign against Trachoma, 1924-1927," in *Medicine Ways: Disease, Health, and Survival among Native Americans*, eds. Clifford E. Trafzer, and Diane Weiner (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2001), 52.

²⁴¹ Putney, "Fighting the Scourge," 150-151.

would be laid over the eyes for four days as the patient remained in a dark room and had their eyes flushed daily. Treatment continued for up to eighteen months.

Trachoma could cause permanent blindness if left untreated. Elsie Naneo, a sixteen year old Paiute from Fort Bidwell, experienced a very extreme case. Elsie's eyes were scabbed over and covered in pus, leaving her totally blind in both eyes. The doctor could not see her pupils or her iris. With her eyelids closed to guard against the light, her mother led her into the hospital by the hand. A traveling eye specialist, Dr. Hubert Hailman, took an immediate interest in her, and desired to prove that treatment could be achieved without surgery. While at Fort Bidwell, he washed her eyes daily and with the financial help of a philanthropic merchant, supplemented her diet with milk and fresh fruit. As her physical condition improved and daily treatments continued, Elsie regained her sight up to one thousand yards. Dr. Hailman recommended that Elsie travel to Stewart for prolonged treatment. Her parents paid for her journey and Dr. Hailman's nursing assistant traveled with her by train to carry on the daily treatments. Upon his own arrival at Stewart, Hailman consulted with the Nurse, Mrs. Banks and outlined specific instructions for care. Elsie continued to improve and even returned to classwork. As a result, Dr. Hailman asked the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to address a letter of commendation to Nurse Banks for her conscientious care.²⁴²

Tuberculosis and trachoma spread through close contact and sharing of many objects including towels, bedding, school supplies, toothbrushes, and musical

²⁴² Hubert Hailman, Special Physician to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, January 6, 1922, File "12500-1922," Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

instruments.²⁴³ But it took fifteen years after the discovery that a communicable virus caused tuberculosis before the Superintendent of Indian Schools, William Hailmann, supplied regulations on techniques for disinfection to boarding school staffs. Hailmann stipulated that every child should have a single bed, towel, comb, toothbrush, 300 cubic feet of air space, and forty square feet of floor space. In addition, chalkboards, pencils, and textbooks were to be regularly cleaned and fumigated and cuspidors were to be placed where students congregated so that they would not spit on the ground.²⁴⁴

However, even Superintendent Hailmann did not really understand the spread of tuberculosis. Concerned about the dust and dirt in the corners of the room, he ordered that the dormitory beds at the Umatilla boarding school should be grouped so that the heads of the beds came together in a circle at the center of the room. The physician at Umatilla wrote a frantic letter to the Commissioner arguing that it was dangerous to cluster sick and healthy children in such a way. He argued that “a cluster of beds in this decade means a cluster of graves in the next.”²⁴⁵

Public pressure to control disease mounted as reformers realized how many Indian children were infected. Francis Paul Prucha argues in *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* that a strange paradox occurred in the schools, “as more and more Indian children were enrolled in school, where they could be observed and examined, awareness of the prevalence of serious diseases was

²⁴³ H.B. Peairs reported that the textbooks were the filthiest he had ever seen, and that the towels were not sanitary. Trachoma was most easily spread through soiled towels. H.B. Peairs, “Report of H.B. Peairs, Supervisor of Indian Schools of the Carson Indian School, Stewart, Nevada, December 16, 1914,” File “Reports Miscellaneous,” Box 270, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

²⁴⁴ Putney, “Fighting the Scourge,” 6.

²⁴⁵ Quoted in Putney, “Fighting the Scourge,” 8.

immeasurably sharpened.”²⁴⁶ In 1901, twenty-nine Indian agencies and non-reservation boarding schools reported epidemics including smallpox, influenza, whooping cough, and measles.²⁴⁷

Bowing to public pressure, Indian Commissioner William A. Jones ordered Indian service physicians to conduct a health survey of the Indian population and to pay particular attention to boarding schools. In this first study of disease and morbidity in the Indian population in the United States, Jones also instructed physicians to calculate the disease rates of the local white populations for comparison.

The Commissioner seemed to vacillate between blaming Indian bodies, and blaming the schools. In his report of the survey he wrote,

Removal of children from camp life to the school produces serious results in some instances, especially in the so-called latent forms of tuberculosis. Whether this is due to inherent tendencies in the child, or to unsanitary conditions is not made clear by the evidence at hand, but probably both these agencies have an influence.

The report definitively demonstrated that schools contributed to disease transmission, and recognized that when sick children arrived at school they got sicker. As a result of the report’s findings Jones ordered the dismissal of any superintendent who kept their school overcrowded, and forbade non-reservation schools to enroll any student who lacked a medical certificate of health. Jones concluded that “Indian children should be educated, but should not however, be destroyed in the process.”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Prucha, *The Great Father* 288.

²⁴⁷ Putney, “Fighting the Scourge,” 3.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

Indian Service staff received some training through reports or “instruction classes” in the Indian Commissioners Annual Reports. In 1897 a report entitled “Medical and Surgical Nursing” provided detailed instructions about the progression and treatment of many common diseases. However, a section entitled “Practical Teaching of Physiology and Hygiene in the Indian Schools” revealed little real knowledge about germs and what we would consider common sense hygienic practices today. Instead the report focused on how children should not be forced to finish a meal within a given time and encouraged matrons and seamstresses to advise female students about the dangers of tight clothing which could impede circulation and breathing. The report asserted that the “greatest good we can do the Indian is to teach him that the body is ‘the temple of God.’ Teach him to be an honest, industrious, law-abiding, pure, temperate citizen.” Hand washing and bathing did not appear in the section at all.²⁴⁹

A New Hospital and Preventative Education:

“The Government supplies no medical treatment for these Indians outside of the school.”

– Superintendent Calvin Asbury²⁵⁰

The first substantial changes in Indian Office health policy began under Commissioner Francis Ellington Leupp, who took office in 1905. He believed that the education of children would be the most important factor in any kind of Indian assimilation.²⁵¹ Rather than simply dismissing students with tuberculosis, Leupp ordered

²⁴⁹ Cora B. Findlay “The Practical Teaching of Physiology and Hygiene in the Indian Schools,” in *Annual Report 1897*, 469.

²⁵⁰ “Carson Indian School,” *Narrative & Statistical Report 1911*, 5.

²⁵¹ Donald L. Parman, “Francis Ellington Leupp, 1905-1909,” in *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1824-1977*, ed. Robert M. Kvasnicka and Herman J. Viola (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska

that students had to be educated about the disease, methods of care, and how to prevent spreading infection before they were sent home. Whereas commissioners had before played lip service to health reform, Leupp actually furnished direction. For example, previous Commissioners of Indian Affairs had sent circulars telling school superintendents to fumigate the mouthpieces of musical instruments, but in 1908 Leupp supplied instructions and a list of materials needed to carry out the procedure.²⁵²

He also appointed Special Agent Elsie Newton as Supervisor of Schools. She introduced tuberculosis week and tuberculosis month along with a traveling lecture series. Although it is unclear when Stewart began special lectures about tuberculosis and hygiene, by 1917 Special Agent L. A. Dorrington reported the nurse and physician at Stewart had undertaken both classroom instruction and lectures to teach the students about hygiene and sanitation. He recommended the school be supplied with a stereopticon, or magic lantern, so that the students could watch moving slide shows on the subject.

The construction of a hospital in 1905 signaled the largest change in health care at Stewart. The Indian Office reluctantly appropriated money to pay for a full time nurse at the hospital. Miss Barnett, an African American nurse, provided daily care once the hospital opened. In 1916 and 1917 Special Agent L. A. Dorrington conducted inspections of the school and praised Barnett's efficiency and oversight. In his report he wrote, "All have the highest regard and respect for her. No other is more popular. She is

Press, 1979), 224; Francis Ellington Leupp, *The Indian and his Problem* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 115-132.

²⁵² Putney, "Fighting the Scourge," 95-99.

entirely competent and qualified to take charge and handle any trust or duty assigned her.”²⁵³

Stewart’s superintendents constantly pleaded with the Office of Indian Affairs to expand the hospital. The hospital had only a small operating room and no place to isolate contagious cases. An epidemic could quickly overwhelm the small building, which had two wards with six beds each. Superintendent James B. Royce complained that the physician had to treat trachoma patients in the hallway or in the small operating room because patients occupied all of the other beds.²⁵⁴ Such limited spaces were typical of boarding school hospitals. In *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909*, Devon Mihesuah reveals that it was fairly common for sick students to remain in their dormitories because the hospital had no room for them.²⁵⁵ When epidemics broke out the school built “pest houses” or isolated whole dormitories.

Over the years, various superintendents enlarged the hospital. Superintendent Snyder packed the hospital to bursting. He crammed beds close together in the long narrow corridors that were eighteen by thirty-seven feet. Each ward had been built to house seven beds but Superintendent Snyder packed eleven beds into each ward. He

²⁵³ Ibid; L.A. Dorrington, “Inspection Report” 24-29 May, 1917, File “Reports Miscellaneous,” Box 270, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno

²⁵⁴ Superintendent Royce to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 13 September 1916, File “Health Care Bulletins, etc. 1914-1917,” Box 268, Administrative Files 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

²⁵⁵ Devon A. Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 87.

finally secured funding to build isolation wards in 1927.²⁵⁶ Convalescing children had no place to play during the day, so children remained confined to their beds. Medical inspectors recommended building screened-in back porches on each ward so that the children could amuse themselves, but construction costs prevented further additions to the building.²⁵⁷

Things did not always run smoothly at the hospital because in part it remained unclear whether the superintendent or physician had ultimate authority over health matters. In March of 1916 a disagreement erupted between Physician A.R. Warner and Superintendent James B. Royce. Superintendent Royce served from April of 1914 to the spring of 1919, and by all accounts was fairly well liked. He observed that several children with chicken-pox were not being kept in the hospital. Instead they were playing with other children, exposing them to the disease. When Royce questioned Warner, the doctor defended his behavior, arguing that the children had already exposed the school so there was no reason to keep them in the hospital. Warner further added that “if we kept the chicken pox cases at the hospital we would have to keep two in a bed and to this I objected and said I thought some place could be set aside in the dormitory to isolate them, if he still wanted them isolated, although I did not consider even that necessary.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ The hospital building still stands today. It is a mixture of the distinctive native stonework and traditional wood frame construction joined together at strange junctures.

²⁵⁷ Frederick Snyder to the CIA, August 10, 1927, File “33275-1927,” Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC., File “A1A0A-1933,” Box 88, Carson 709, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

²⁵⁸ James B. Royce to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 19 March, 1916, File “Investigative Records of Colonel L.A. Dorrington” Box 270, Administrative Files, 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno; A.R. Warner to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 19 March, 1916, Ibid.

He also accused Royce of keeping a child with tuberculosis enrolled in the school despite medical advice.

In the end, Warner relented and isolated the children, admitting in his statement to the special investigator that “he recognizes Superintendent Royce as his superior officer at the school, and that he is subject to his orders, but that he objects to the manner in which the Superintendent gives orders.”²⁵⁹ This subordination of the physician to the superintendent continued to cause disruptions in many schools through the 1920s.²⁶⁰ Inadequate and poorly trained doctors and nurses were an endemic problem in the Indian Service into the late 1920s. The Indian Office did not generally attract highly skilled physicians because the job paid poorly which resulted in a high turnover rate.²⁶¹ Although in many cases the superintendent may have had a better grasp of what was needed to protect the health of the students, at other times they were unwilling to listen to legitimate concerns from physicians.

The Stewart sanatorium, opened on March 23, 1916, signaled the school’s biggest commitment to treating tuberculosis and preventing its spread to healthy students. For the first few months it could care for only three patients because of limited equipment. The Office of Indian Affairs appropriated only \$10,000 to run the sanatorium and that included food and employee wages. The lack of money even forced Superintendent

²⁵⁹ Statement by Dr. A.R. Warner, Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Meriam, et al, *The Problem of Indian Administration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1928), 231.

²⁶¹ As late as 1927 the turnover rate for doctors was 57 percent and was 122 percent for nurses. *Annual Report*, 1927, 4.

Royce to move the small cook stove intended for the physician's cottage to the sanatorium.²⁶²



Figure 19. The Stewart sanatorium when it opened in 1916.²⁶³

The sanatorium filled up quickly. Envisioning future problems Superintendent Royce submitted plans for an additional building that would contain an office, laboratory, dispensary, waiting room, and most importantly a laundry room. He proposed the additional building because he did not want the sanatorium's laundry to be done in the school's laundry facilities because of the risk of disease to the healthy student body.

²⁶² Superintendent Jas B. Royce to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 23, 1916, File "Sanatorium," Box 270, Administrative Files 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

²⁶³ Photograph of the Stewart Sanatorium, File "108264-1915," Box 89, Carson 709-729, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

Moreover, he argued that parents would not allow him to put their children at such risk.²⁶⁴

As a sanatorium school, Stewart had separate facilities for students with latent and active tuberculosis. Among sanatorium schools, Stewart had the fewest number of beds. Stewart had only twenty-five while the largest, the Phoenix Indian School, had one hundred and twenty. Stewart spent \$1.76 per diem for each patient in 1926 which was quite high compared to expenditures at the other boarding schools but well below the average for white sanatoriums, which averaged \$3.08 per day.²⁶⁵

Stewart received some relief when the Pyramid Lake Reservation converted the old reservation boarding school into a sanatorium in 1926. It had forty beds and Stewart transferred its overflow of patients there. However, Pyramid Lake's isolated location made it an undesirable posting and seven physicians came and went during its first eleven months of operation.²⁶⁶ Still packed to the gills in the sanatorium, the school started constructing sleeping porches off existing dormitories to increase the number of beds for latent tubercular children. The Indian Office often built sleeping porches rather than expanding hospital facilities. For example, Carlisle Indian Industrial School constructed its first sleeping porches in 1909 so that the school could retain students who appeared

²⁶⁴ Superintendent Jas B. Royce to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 23, 1916, File "Sanatorium," Box 270, Administrative Files 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

²⁶⁵ Meriam, *Problem of Indian Administration*, 288 and 300.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 297.

healthy but had tested positive for the tubercle bacilli.²⁶⁷ Stewart built its own sleeping porches in the early 1920s to expand the number of beds for sick children.²⁶⁸

To avoid deaths at the school, the sanatorium also sent home students with advanced tuberculosis as soon as possible.²⁶⁹ The wishes of parents and children certainly played a role in the students' return to their families. Parents wanted to say goodbye to their children before they died. But by sending the children home, the school pushed its responsibility for sickness and the cost of further care onto other Indian Agencies and families themselves. School Superintendent C. H. Asbury lamented, "The Government supplies no medical treatment for these Indians outside of the school. They often call in physicians when sick and they still patronize the native Indian doctor in many cases."²⁷⁰

The death of Dave Rube demonstrates that Stewart and the Indian Office did not recognize their culpability for children getting sick at Stewart. Rube lived at Stewart for two years when his "health failed." Although the correspondence does not identify a specific condition it is probable that Rube contracted tuberculosis. Rube's father requested that his son be sent home so that he did not have to die at the school. When he came back, his father employed a physician to help treat his son but within a year Rube had passed away. His father visited Stewart and requested reimbursement for the cost of the medical treatment since his son had gotten sick at Stewart. Superintendent Asbury

²⁶⁷ Putney, "Fighting the Scourge," 98.

²⁶⁸ *Narrative & Statistical Reports 1920-1925.*

²⁶⁹ *Annual Report 1911*, 4.

²⁷⁰ "Carson Indian School," *Narrative & Statistical Report 1911.*

asked for guidance from the Indian Office about whether he could legitimately refuse the claim. In response, the Indian Office said that because Rube had been taken out of school by his father, the Indian Service could not be held responsible. They also inquired into whether Mr. Rube could afford to shoulder the cost of the treatment, implying that whatever the legitimacy of the claim, what really mattered was whether the father could afford it.²⁷¹

Stewart's superintendents quickly sent home terminally ill students but despite parents' demands they were reluctant to return students who were not in the last stages of the disease. One series of letters between Superintendent Snyder and a Northern Paiute man named Jim Cavanaugh, whose daughter Lena received care at the sanatorium, reveals that the school administration thought that it could provide the best care. Cavanaugh had sent money for his daughter's immediate return, but a month and a half later the administration still would not release her.²⁷²

Sending terminally ill children home increased the fear in many Indian communities of going to the hospital. Members of the Yerington Paiute Tribe remembered that they were afraid of the hospital because no one ever seemed to return alive. Tribal members used the hospital as an absolute last resort. An elder observed "if

²⁷¹ Superintendent Calvin H. Asbury to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 12, 1909, August, 29, 1909, and C.F. Hauke to Calvin H. Asbury, August, 29, 1909, File "Medical Services, Etc.," Box 269, Administrative Files, 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, NARA, San Bruno.

²⁷² Telegram from Jim Cavanaugh to Frederick Snyder, March 20, 1920; Frederick Snyder to Jim Cavanaugh, March 20, 1920; Jim Cavanaugh to Frederick Snyder, April 10, 1920; and Frederick Snyder to Jim Cavanaugh, April 15, 1920, File "Sanatorium," Box 270, Administrative Files 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

we go to the hospital, then we come home in a coffin.”²⁷³ Similarly, a white woman, Harriet M. Gilchrist, from Coarse Gold California, in the Carson Indian Agency’s jurisdiction, wrote to Special Inspector Colonel Dorrington expressing her frustration that the families of two girls in her community would not permit them to go to the Stewart sanatorium for treatment for tuberculosis. She wrote, “Since Jane Lewis died at Stewart, there is a strong feeling on the subject. The thing that seems the worst to them is the fact that if they die they will be buried away from home, that the bodies will not be sent back.”²⁷⁴

Indian parents often had to put their faith in white doctors to cure diseases such as tuberculosis, trachoma, and smallpox, for which native healers had no traditional treatments. As Jean Keller explains, “In these cases, parents had no choice but to trust in white medicine, and when that failed them, their frustration turned to anger and mistrust.”²⁷⁵ A heartbreaking letter from a mother in Gold Creek Nevada to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs expressed her pain and resentment toward the Indian Service after the death of her child. Her son Jimmie passed away after getting sick from walking late at night in the snow and rain from their home to school. She wrote, “He not have to go to school no die.” She spent all of life savings and sold her ranch to save her son, but to no avail. Her letter continued, “Now I got nothing, no boy, no money, no ranch. I feel bad, cry all time, I sick,” She then asked for money to help buy clothes,

²⁷³ Yerington Paiute Tribe, *A Numa History: The Yerington Paiute Tribe* (Yerington Paiute Tribe, 1984) 38.

²⁷⁴ The circumstances surrounding the death of Jane Lewis are unknown. Harriet M. Gilchrist to Colonel Lafayette A. Dorrington, April 16, 1919, File “Influenza Epidemic”, Box 33, Records Related to Agency Health and Social Services, 1910-1923, Records of the Reno Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

²⁷⁵ Keller, Empty Beds, 220.

food, and shelter. There is no record of the response from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.²⁷⁶

A Pandemic and Public Health:

“For the relief of distress and the conservation of health.” – The Snyder Act of 1921²⁷⁷

The Spanish influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 was a turning point in public health policy across the United States. Twenty-four percent of the total Indian population in the United States contracted influenza during the epidemic and two percent died, which made the mortality rate for Indians four times higher than for whites who lived in large cities.²⁷⁸

Influenza proved on a massive scale that germs crossed racial boundaries. In the aftermath of the pandemic, widespread bureaucratic change occurred within the Indian Office, which in turn affected the Stewart Indian School. Although racism still affected public health officials who targeted Indian populations because of deeply held beliefs about cultural superiority, the Office of Indian Affairs could no longer argue that nothing could be done to end the horrible epidemics that swept through native communities.

The influenza pandemic also demonstrated the inability of the Indian Service to handle large outbreaks on its own. Establishing hospital facilities at Stewart and fledgling educational campaigns had helped, but the problem was bigger than just the Stewart Indian School. As a result, the Office of Indian Affairs began to embrace public health techniques and brought in specialists from other fields to assist in their work. The

²⁷⁶ Jennie Owyhee to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, December 20, 1914; File “Owyhee, Jenny,” Box 34, Records Related to Agency Health and Social Services, 1910-1923, Records of the Reno Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno

²⁷⁷ *Snyder Act, Statutes at Large* 42, sec. 1, 208 (1921).

²⁷⁸ Putney, “Fighting the Scourge,” 209.

Snyder Act of 1921 stated that the Indian Office would provide funds “for the relief of distress and the conservation of health.”²⁷⁹ The Snyder Act remains at the heart of the federal government’s responsibility to meet American Indian health needs today.

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Charles Henry Burke (1921-1929) drove much of this change. His policies were still strongly assimilationist, yet the emphasis he placed upon health work can be seen in the structure of his annual reports. He moved the section on health to the very first page of the report. Commissioner Burke also created institutional alliances with the United States Public Health Service and the Red Cross that changed the nature of the Indian Health Service. Commissioner Burke allied the Indian Office with several public health departments and associations. Public health officials complemented doctor care. Doctors treated the sick and public health officials helped with disease prevention and kept statistical records of illness.

In 1922, Commissioner Burke enlisted the help of the Red Cross, which provided three full-time visiting nurses for Indian Service work. The nurses spent time on reservations examining household conditions and provided advice to reservation field matrons.²⁸⁰ Two years later, the Indian Office collaborated with the American Child Health Association to prepare health education material for the boarding schools. Furthermore, in 1926 the Secretary of the Interior asked the Public Health Service to help in further reorganization of the Indian medical service.²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ *Snyder Act, Statues at Large* 42, sec. 1, 208 (1921).

²⁸⁰ *Annual Report* 1922, 8.

²⁸¹ Meriam, *Problem of Indian Administration*, 265; *Annual Report* 1926, 7.

That same year, Commissioner Burke created the office of chief medical inspector to increase supervision and streamline the administration. He also divided Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River into four medical districts, each with its own medical director, and he added epidemiology, trachoma, and tuberculosis specialists to the chief medical inspector's staff in the early 1920s.²⁸² However, the district medical directors could only really function in a supervisory capacity and did not have the time to investigate individual units because each district contained approximately 62,000 Indians spread over large areas.²⁸³ Nevertheless, this reorganization demonstrated that the Office of Indian Affairs recognized the problems with the Indian Health Service and attempted to address them.

At the same time, the discourse surrounding native bodies also changed dramatically. The Indian Office now recognized that poor health was due in large part to poverty and lack of access to resources and not the physical inferiority of Indians. This is reflected in Burke's Annual Report of 1924 in which he wrote:

Under similar conditions of living, it is doubtful whether the Indians would have any more tuberculosis and trachoma than other people, and it is believed that as the industrial conditions improve and when the appropriations for sanitation and medical aid become sufficient to throw around them the same safeguards and give them the same protective attention as given to people in organized communities, preventable diseases will be no more prevalent among Indians than among the white people; for up to a certain limit, public health is purchasable.²⁸⁴

²⁸² Nevada was included in District No. 3 along with Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado Meriam 225-228; *Annual Report* 1926, 1; Lawrence C. Kelly, "Charles Henry Burke, 1921-29," In *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1824-1977*, eds. Robert M. Kvasnicka and Herman J. Viola (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 256.

²⁸³ Meriam, *Problem of Indian Administration*, 227-228.

²⁸⁴ *Annual Report* 1924, 1.

No longer would medical officials or commissioners blame poor health on the native body. Unhealthy behaviors received criticism, but not on the basis of race. The report assumed that Indians could indeed make their own health choices, and it recognized that poverty, not “savagery,” bred disease.

Nevada’s native population did indeed have high rates of tuberculosis, trachoma, and venereal disease. Lacking resources, many families had poor diets, crowded living conditions, and few clothes. These elements increased their susceptibility to chronic and infectious diseases. Indians who lived outside reservation boundaries had more control over their own lives and did not have to submit to the intervention of Indian agents and matrons, but they also had even less access to medical resources. The Stewart administration often complained about “the disinclination and oftentimes direct opposition of some of the Indians to take treatment and submit to the physicians’ instructions.”²⁸⁵ Many natives preferred their own healers to reservation or school doctors. The Indian Office viewed traditional healers as a threat to the new scientific regime that they sought to encourage. Agency physicians often faced pressure from the Indian Service to eliminate the influence of medicine men over tribal communities.²⁸⁶

Native healers operated very differently than white doctors. Their services integrated medicine, psychology, and religion. For example, Paiute healers would ask the spirits to intervene on behalf of the sick patient. An interpreter, who could understand

²⁸⁵ Superintendent Frederick Snyder to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 15, 1928, File “Circulars, Education, Field Agent Duties, Taxes on Ranches, Etc.” Box 3, Records of the Education Division, 1924-1947, Records of the Carson Indian School, NARA, San Bruno.

²⁸⁶ Jones, *Rationalizing Epidemics*, 151-153.

the language of healing, would communicate between the healer and the patient. The patient's family would pay both doctor and interpreter for their services. Paiutes believed that healers could use their powers for good or evil and they held responsible native healers if they lost too many patients. Consequently, healers could be put to death for their failures.²⁸⁷

Shoshone healers could be men or women who had a rich knowledge of plant-based medicine and were respected for their understanding of the spiritual world.²⁸⁸ However, there were many diseases such as cholera, small pox, measles, diphtheria, and tuberculosis which native doctors could do little to treat because they had been introduced through colonization. Patients afflicted with these diseases often patronized a white doctor.²⁸⁹

The Meriam Report marked a turning point in the reevaluation of Indian health policy. Rather than blaming the spiritual practices or bodies of Indian peoples for the high rates of disease, the Indian Service took responsibility for disease in Native communities. The report included a 250 page section discussing how the Indian Office had failed to live up to its promises to provide adequate medical care. Dr. Herbert R. Edwards, the Medical Field Secretary of the National Tuberculosis Association and the Director of the Bureau of Tuberculosis Control, directed the medical survey under the direction of Lewis Meriam.²⁹⁰ Edwards charged that lack of appropriations resulted in

²⁸⁷ Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes*, 94-95.

²⁸⁸ Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 9.

²⁸⁹ Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes*, 94.

²⁹⁰ Meriam, *Problem of Indian Administration*, 82-83.

poor salaries, low standard qualifications for positions in the Indian health service, inadequate facilities, poor equipment, and the absence of any real program of preventive medicine.²⁹¹

The Merriam Report affords an excellent window into how the Indian Office envisioned its new role in health management and education. After the influenza pandemic, the Indian Office had wholeheartedly embraced health education as an important aspect of the civilization process, but it had done a bad job implementing the new policy. The Merriam Report concluded that the primary “function of a sanatorium and a sanatorium school, and to a considerable extent of a hospital, is to demonstrate to the Indian what he must do for himself on leaving the institution and insofar as possible to educate him to a higher standard of personal care.”²⁹² Yet, Edwards argued, health education in the boarding schools had failed because of untrained teachers and because the schools had failed to meet their own standards. For instance, teachers counseled students to drink milk, yet failed to provide it at meals.²⁹³

The Indian Office instructed the Stewart staff to read and comment upon the Merriam Report’s recommendations, which mentioned Stewart several times. The report noted the poor school diet, the overcrowded dormitories, and the dangerous and exploitive institutional labor. During weekly meetings Stewart staff read and discussed the report’s findings and implemented several changes. Stewart staff provided greater quantities of milk and fresh fruit to enrich the children’s diets. To reduce overcrowding

²⁹¹ Ibid., 189-191; Jones, *Rationalizing Epidemics*, 173-174.

²⁹² Merriam, *Problem of Indian Administration*, 190.

²⁹³ Merriam, *Problem of Indian Administration*, 261.

Superintendent Snyder moved thirty beds in the small girls' dormitory to an old sewing room. To prevent soggy and unsanitary mattresses caused by bedwetting, Snyder put in toilets in the boys and girls dormitories so that they could go to the bathroom during the night without having to go outside. Finally, the school installed new safety mechanisms on the laundry equipment, and prohibited children under the age of fourteen from working in the laundry.²⁹⁴

Despite these reforms, disease rates remained steady. In a health inspection report of Stewart in 1935, District Medical Director J. F. Worley reported that tuberculosis and trachoma did not seem to be too prevalent. This assessment is rather frightening because during the school year over 100 students were treated daily for trachoma. If one out of five children had trachoma and yet the disease did “not appear prevalent” then the health of the general Indian population was poor indeed.²⁹⁵

In the 1930s, the school hospital became a hotbed of activity. Over hundred students receiving ongoing trachoma treatment converged on the small building every day. Children lined up inside the building and out the door, packing the already limited space. A health inspector in 1935 recommended Superintendent Bowler install an outside door so that outpatients did not disturb the students occupying the hospital. It is unclear whether the door was ever built.

²⁹⁴ “Inspection Report of the Carson Indian School by E. H. Hammond, Supervisor Indian School, May 8th-May 19th; May 21, 1924,” File “45741-1924,” Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

²⁹⁵ Report by J.F. Worley to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 8, 1935, File “Sanatorium,” Box 270, Administrative Files 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

Three mornings a week, the contract physician made sick calls to the school. Dr. Thom served as physician for Stewart, the colonies at Dresslerville and Reno, and scattered Indians in the area which forced him to divide his time between the Indian Service and his own practice in Carson City. In the view of the district medical inspector, Thom provided “satisfactory service” but the jurisdiction needed a full time physician. The school had only one nurse who cared for more than twenty students daily, and up to forty when contagious outbreaks occurred. In comparison, the sanatorium had three nurses on staff. At the school hospital, Mrs. Houts provided excellent care with the help of one attendant and a cook. A work detail of female students helped staff keep the building clean.²⁹⁶

Demanding Adequate Health Care:

“She didn’t notify us on before hand; & we don’t like the way she have done.” – Petition by the Fort McDermitt Reservation²⁹⁷

As reservations and colonies in Nevada incorporated under the Indian Reorganization Act, the tribal councils started to demand the better health services for their communities. When Indian Service employees acted unprofessionally or disrespected the concerns of their charges, Natives expressed their disapproval. For example at the Fort McDermitt Reservation, community members demanded the dismissal of Field Nurse Margaret Shorn. Community leaders signed a petition to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1933 after Shorn drew blood from all of the children

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Andy Moon, Buckaroo Jack, and Johnny Wasson on behalf of the McDermitt Paiutes to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 1

at the McDermitt boarding school without parental permission. “She didn’t notify us on before hand; & we don’t like the way she have done,” they declared in the petition. The blood test was the last straw in a long line of abuses by Shorn. The petition accused her of rarely visiting, not fulfilling her promises, and lying. They preferred the care of the reservation doctor and the hospital and asked for her transfer.²⁹⁸

Petitions were a common means for Indian communities to demand health care services even before the New Deal. When the contract physician at Fort McDermitt Indian Reservation resigned, the community petitioned for a replacement and got a letter of support from the local Baptist Church. The petition states that “If we do not have doctor much Indians will die this winter. Are you going to get doctor for Indians?” Superintendent Snyder forwarded the petition to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and added his own plea to help solve the desperate health conditions on the reservation. Snyder was of the opinion that “until a resident physician is appointed at McDermitt, there will be all kinds of reports and rumors of dire distress, destitution, sickness, and all manner of evils, existing at Fort McDermitt, which will reach the Office from many different sources.”²⁹⁹

Some tribal councils advocated for improved medical facilities. As newly organized tribal governments the Walker River Paiute Tribe and the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe formally combined their efforts to affect changes to long standing health care

²⁹⁸ Andy Moon, Buckaroo Jack, and Johnny Wasson on behalf of the McDermitt Paiutes to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March, File “70997-1925,” Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

²⁹⁹ Frederic Snyder to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 3, 1925 and Petition from 26 members of the Fort McDermitt Reservation to Frederic Snyder, October 28, 1925, File “70997-1925,” Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

practices that no longer fit the needs of their communities. In the early 1930s the Carson Indian Agency built a new hospital at the Walker River Reservation that served the entire western part of the state after the Sanatorium closed at Stewart. In a joint meeting, the Walker River and Pyramid Lake Tribal Councils met to discuss the inadequate medical care at the hospital and to complain about several deaths they believed should not have occurred. They asked for a new hospital to be built in a more central location in Reno.³⁰⁰

Many Indian families struggled to secure healthcare outside of the reservations and colonies. Medical practitioners and Indian health service officials denied services to non-ward Indians who were not connected to any particular reservation or colony because they did not receive any money for treating them.³⁰¹ In 1939, Mrs. John J. Moore of Elko wrote to the Office of Indian Affairs in Washington pleading for a tonsillectomy for her son. Her son had previously been treated for tuberculosis and after leaving the sanatorium he needed to have his tonsils out. Her husband traced his descent from the Chickasaw Tribe of Oklahoma, but in Nevada the family was denied all care. She wrote, “We have never been wards of the government, and we have at present only received partial assistance.” A round of letters between the Carson Indian Agency and the Indian Office summarily dismissed her claim. This was often the case in Nevada. Sick non-ward Indians went untreated if they could not afford to pay a doctor themselves. Much of

³⁰⁰ Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes*, 155.

³⁰¹ Alida Bowler to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 22, 1939, File “19505-1936, “Box 88, Carson 709, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

the existing correspondence in the archives is from parents, doctors, and school superintendents trying to get medical care for non-ward patients.³⁰²

The Indian Office did not lag far behind the rest of America in implementing public health policies or understanding disease transmission. Understanding that germs were contagious was one thing, implementing policies to stop the spread of germs was another. At Stewart, and other non-reservation boarding schools, the Indian Office had created the perfect location for the spread of disease. When in conformity to government policy, Stewart sent home very sick children, it effectively spread disease to Indian homes and communities. Stewart was not the sole source of contagion in the State of Nevada, but it did facilitate the spread of tuberculosis and trachoma.

Indian communities in Nevada shouldered much of the blame for high disease rate during the early period because both the public and the Indian Office thought they were predisposed to infectious diseases. By the 1920s the public health movement drew attention to larger social problems caused by the reservation system and provided money to help fund needed improvements. By the 1930s, Indians across the state started to demand adequate health services and oversight of them. After decades of watching their communities and children suffer from tuberculosis and trachoma they wanted solutions.

³⁰² Some examples include Alida Bowler to Mr. J. R. Venning, June 3, 1939 and J.R. Venning to Mrs. John J. Moore, May 6, 1939, File "23511-1939," Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

Chapter 5

“A LARGE NUMBER OF THE PUPILS HAVE BEEN CONFINED IN THE HOSPITAL WITH COLDS AND PNEUMONIA”: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF STUDENT HEALTH³⁰³

The Stewart Indian School became a “School Republic” and the students began their own health policing in 1912, when Howard Hall arrived for a short stay as superintendent and made health education a priority. The federal government brought in Howard Hall, an experienced superintendent who had worked at the Phoenix Indian School from 1893 to 1897 and Sherman Institute from 1902 to 1909, to turn around the failing Stewart Indian School. The school administration embraced the federally recommended school republic program in which the students themselves were responsible for policing the health and the behavior of their fellow students. The school republic program was modeled on a similar initiative at the Tulalip Indian School. In his annual report, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs argued that “By organizing the children in the more characteristic activities of representative government, and by giving them a degree of self-government, this plan brings to each child some sense of public duties and of the form and purposes of the Government of which at some day all Indians will become active citizens.”³⁰⁴

Superintendent Hall divided the student body into four “cities” based on age and gender. Each city had its own City Council, Judicial Court, Chief of Police, and Health Commissioner. Other students became police officers and health inspectors, and each

³⁰³ *The Indian Advance*, 3 no. 8 (1902).

³⁰⁴ Trennert, “From Carlisle to Phoenix, 280.

had a specific duty to carry out each day. One child opened the windows in the classrooms to increase ventilation; another inspected the nails of all students to verify that hands had been washed thoroughly. Any “citizen” of the republic who failed to meet their civic responsibilities was reprimanded and their crime recorded in a log book. After the third offense the pupil was brought in front of the court for judgment by his or her peers.

Students elected older pupils to Stewart’s national government which oversaw the four cities. Several of the national officers served as firemen and social service workers, and together they supervised the buildings, campus, and playgrounds. In this way, students received a real world education in civics and the legislative and judicial process. The program also spoke to the need to have the students invested in their community’s health.³⁰⁵ According to teacher Helen C. Sheahan, the key was that “the pupils themselves need to be interested to improve conditions, to give due attention to their teeth, health, and general appearance.”³⁰⁶ Sheahan supported the program wholeheartedly and encouraged the students to act as health advocates amongst themselves.

Health policing was the heart and soul of the new republic at Stewart. Miss Allie Barnett, the head nurse at the school hospital in 1912 became a spokesperson for the crusade against germs. Nurse Barnett had worked at Stewart since at least 1910 when she was recorded in the federal census as a twenty-nine year old, African American widow living in employee housing. By all accounts Barnett conducted herself with authority and

³⁰⁵ William Gill, Supervisor, to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 2, 1912, File “45878-1-1912,” Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

³⁰⁶ Helen C. Sheahan, “School Republic Suggestions by a Teacher” attached to the report by William Gill, Supervisor to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 2, 1912, File “45878-1-1912,” Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

competency in the hospital, running it in the physician's absence. During an annual inspection, Supervisor Gill commended Barnett saying "though she is a very black negress, every person says of her, 'She is the whitest person on these grounds...'"³⁰⁷

Barnett also instructed girls in the nursing classes. Older female students took turns in the infirmary learning basic nursing skills and cleaning the building.³⁰⁸

Nurse Barnett wrote a letter for distribution to the student body in support of the student health officers, stressing that the "cleanliness of home, clothes, and body is equally as important as cleanliness of surroundings." She referred to germs as "health destroyers" and emphasized that individual cleanliness was key to preventing germs from invading the body. "These little germs enter into our homes by the wind," she explained,

By people coming into our homes who have the germs, by insects, by articles brought into the home containing them, by rats, cats, and dogs. They are brought to our clothing by dust, by the exudates cast off the body, and by keeping our clothes in unclean places. They are brought into our bodies by inhalation and by absorption. By inhalation we breathe the germs into our lungs. If one finds a small place it lodges and begins to develop.³⁰⁹

To prevent against germ invaders, Barnett explained that students need to consume clean food, bathe daily, cut their finger and toenails once a week, brush their teeth twice a day, and wash their faces, necks, and ears thoroughly before entering the classroom. She

³⁰⁷ "Carson Indian School Report of Supervisor Gill" May 2, 1912, File "45878-1-1912," Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

³⁰⁸ Carson Indian School, *Indian Enterprise*, March 1917 1, no. 7, Carson Indian School News Clipping File, Nevada State Historical Society, Reno, Nevada.

³⁰⁹ Allie Barnett, "Let us Help Our Health Officers" attached to the report by William Gill, Supervisor to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 2, 1912; File "45878-1-1912," Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

deemed it critical not to share towels and washcloths because it was the easiest way to spread disease and it “should be an unpardonable crime to use other than one’s own.”³¹⁰

Barnett instructed the pupils to keep all rooms free of dust and debris which harbored tuberculosis germs. When cleaning, students had to sweep towards the center of the room to prevent anyone entering the room from being hit by a cloud of contagious dirt. Small sections of floor should be swept at a time and then washed down with a cloth moistened with carbolic acid. When all else failed, pupils should stay to the center of rooms where less dust could accumulate.

Students seemed to enjoy the novelty of the school republic program and a traveling inspector exclaimed that “the improvements in every direction amounted to miracles.”³¹¹ The Stewart Republic lasted only a brief time, in large part because Superintendent Hall, who spearheaded the experiment, left Stewart after only four months.³¹² The program at Stewart represents one of the first attempts by the Indian Office, and Stewart, to create a school wide program to teach and monitor healthy habits and cleanliness.³¹³

³¹⁰ Allie Barnett, “Let us Help Our Health Officers” attached to the report by William Gill, Supervisor to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 2, 1912, File “45878-1-1912,” Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

³¹¹ Helen C. Sheahan, “School Republic Suggestions by a Teacher” attached to the report by William Gill, Supervisor to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 2, 1912, File “45878-1-1912,” Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

³¹² Hall had been the Superintendent at Sherman Institute from 1902-1909 and several other non-reservation and reservation boarding schools. In *Empty Beds, Indian Health and the Sherman Institute 1902-1922*, Jean A. Keller argues that Hall and his predecessor Frank Conser strictly complied with Indian Office policy regarding health concerns. Keller, *Empty Beds*, 7.

³¹³ *Annual Report* 1911, 30.

All of these efforts enlisted students into the ranks of public health nurses. Students who returned to the reservations and colonies brought their new-found knowledge with them and helped to keep their houses and families as healthy as possible. These practices, coupled with the Indian health activism that occurred during the Indian New Deal, enabled Washoes, Shoshones, and Paiutes to make headway in tackling the endemic health problems in their communities.

The school republic program represented a high point in the school's investment in student health. Student participation in health education waxed and waned at the Stewart Indian School under the supervision of superintendents and nurses who demonstrated varied degrees of interest in student welfare. During the 1890s, the school had four superintendents which made it difficult to establish a comprehensive health program. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 3, the Indian Office did little to prevent illness until 1905, when Commissioner Leupp began trying to prevent rather than simply to treat illnesses in the schools. Through the 1910s and 1920s the Stewart staff actively recruited students in policing the health of the student body and continued to motivate students to keep their bodies and living quarters scrubbed clean. By the 1930s, the language of public health was deeply engrained in the discourse at Stewart, and the school hospital and sanatorium provided exemplary medical care to complement the emphasis on keeping children and their families healthy.

In addition to education, the administration at Stewart employed two main tactics to keep the students healthy: keeping the campus clean and providing a nutritious diet. Yet even though Stewart integrated these preventative and public health campaigns into their curriculum, illnesses and epidemics continued to sweep through the institution.

In addition to exploring student participation in maintaining their own health, this chapter also details the types of illnesses, epidemics, and accidents which affected the students. Death was an all too common experience at the school, and students and staff grieved over the loss of their friends and co-workers.

Food as Preventative Medicine:

“If you didn’t move quick, you didn’t get anything to eat.” – Effie Dressler, Washoe Student³¹⁴

In addition to cleanliness, a healthy diet constituted an important part of insuring that student bodies could ward off infectious diseases. Despite the rhetoric of the Indian Office about the necessity of fresh fruits and vegetables, children at boarding schools survived on a diet high in starch and meat. The Indian Office appropriated very little money for food which forced Stewart staff to supplement the small quantity of produce grown on the campus with cheaper food stuffs like potatoes, bread, and coffee.³¹⁵

The school farm produced a variety of vegetables, including potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, beets, turnips, rutabagas, parsnips, radishes, tomatoes, beans, peas, cucumbers, lettuce, spinach, corn, sweet pumpkins, and squash. Stewart also had a renowned cucumber crop and students feasted on pickles throughout the year. However, the school farm failed to produce a sufficient quantity of food for the entire student body. The growing season is short on the eastern slope of the Sierras. Farmers upstream of the school often appropriated more than their fair share of the water in Clear Creek. The

³¹⁴ Ed Johnson, “Discipline was Strict for Stewart Students,” *Apple Tree*, February, 13, 1977.

³¹⁵ For more information about the poor quality of the boarding school diet and the scarcity of food see Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 32-35.

sandy soil retained little water and irrigation ditches absorbed thirty-five to forty percent of the water before it reached the school. The short growing season and ineffective irrigation system meant that Stewart crops were poor and the school had to spend extra money buying supplies.³¹⁶ The school maintained a dairy and chicken coop that produced milk and eggs. Meat from slaughtered hogs, chickens, and cows also made its way onto the student's plates.³¹⁷

In the early years trying to find foods that the students would eat and enjoy proved to be just as much of a challenge as growing the food. Washoes, Paiutes, and Shoshones all preferred different diets, and none of them enjoyed the standard boarding school fare. Stewed beef was unpalatable to many of the students who preferred deer, wild duck, and other game. To make it more appealing to the students, beef was cut into strips and sun-dried like venison. The school also made other attempts to make their meals familiar to the students by incorporating traditional foods into the menu. Pine nuts were a staple for all three nations. Stewart traded with the neighboring Washoes on a daily basis for gruel-like soup made from pine-nuts. Northern Paiutes also furnished the students with fish from Pyramid Lake.³¹⁸

Washoe student Frank Morgan remembered the "Great Indian School Rabbit Drive" just before Thanksgiving in 1902 or 1903, in which the whole school participated.

³¹⁶ Stewart leased farms in Jacks Valley until 1939 when several farms were purchased. Hale, Interview; J. G. Perry to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 19, 1925, File "50235-1926," Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

³¹⁷ "Inspection Report of W. W. Coon, Supervisor," June 27, 1927, File "33275-1927," Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

³¹⁸ Jackson, "History of the Stewart Indian School," 37; Hattori, "Archaeology of the Stewart Dump Site," 15.

Girls formed one group with young boys and older boys forming two other groups. They formed great circles in the brush to the north of the school and closed in on the rabbits with sticks. With the help of employees who shot the rabbits rather than clubbing them, the students and staff collected over a ton of rabbits. The school feasted on the catch for Thanksgiving and for a long time thereafter. Morgan and his friends even “stole some of the rabbits now and then to cook along Clear Creek.”³¹⁹ As time went by and the students became more accustomed to the traditional boarding school fare, staff placed less emphasis on preparing native foods.



Figure 20. An early photograph of the dining room. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

A memo found among menus from the Walker River Day School in 1928 outlines the principles of a healthy diet as outlined by the Indian Office. The memo explains

³¹⁹ Hattori, “Archaeology of the Stewart Dump Site,” 74.

which foods are good sources of Vitamin A, calcium, iron, Vitamin C, and states that students should be served whole milk and butter on a daily basis for calcium. Fresh fruit or vegetables and whole grain bread should also be served daily. The menu recommended a protein dish such as meat, cheese, beans, or eggs once or twice a week, sweets such as fruit sauce, puddings, or syrup two or three times a week, and cocoa once or twice a week.³²⁰

However, the principles outlined in the memo and the reality of a boarding school diet varied considerably. A typical breakfast included cream potatoes, oatmeal, milk, syrup, bread, and coffee. Lunch consisted of roast beef, mashed potatoes, gravy, and bread. Dinner was often beans, beef stew with potatoes, macaroni, bread, and milk. Students enjoyed dessert frequently, if not daily. Sweets consisted of bread pudding, cake, apple pie, or a serving of fruit such as apples or prunes.³²¹ Students were so starved for fresh produce that they would save their money to buy peaches from a wagon vender who visited from California. Still hungry, many children raided the fields, orchards, and cellars, and caught rabbits to stew.³²²

Undernourishment remained a common complaint at Indian boarding schools between 1890 and 1940. In *Education for Extinction*, David Wallace Adams states that although the circumstances varied from school to school there “is little doubt that great

³²⁰ “Points to consider in judging lunches of day schools” File “Menus Schools,” Box 48, Coded Subject Files, Records of the Walker River Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

³²¹ “Menu, Monday 15th, 1915,” File “Menus,” Box 270, Administrative Files, 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

³²² Carson Indian School, *The Indian Advance* 1, no.1 (1899). Johnson, “Discipline was Strict.”

numbers suffered from undernourishment.”³²³ Schools cut corners whenever possible and rationed food to make the most of their limited budgets. In her dissertation “Fighting the Scourge: American Indian Morbidity and Federal Policy, 1897-1928,” Diane T. Putney argues that undernourishment increased susceptibility to tuberculosis and that had the Indian Department focused on improving rations, rather than prescribing medical treatments, it could have made an important dent in preventing the affliction.³²⁴



Figure 21. The boys in the bakery produce child sized loafs of bread. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

In 1914 several students from the Fort McDermitt Reservation made a formal complaint about the poor quality and scarcity of the food at Stewart while they were

³²³ Scott Riney describes a similar situation at the Rapid City Indian School in 1922. Riney, *Rapid City*, 44-47; Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 115.

³²⁴ Putney, “Fighting the Scourge,” 321-322

home for vacation.³²⁵ As a result, the superintendent at the day school at Fort McDermitt wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs saying that children returning to the reservation from Stewart were claiming that “the bread was sour, old and in many instances mouldy [sic] so that they could not eat it.”³²⁶ School Superintendent Jesse B. Mortsof indignantly replied that the food was always in good condition.³²⁷ In 1918 an inspector also reported that students’ claims about poor food were justified. “The oatmeal,” he reported, “had so much salt in it the pupils could not eat it. The hominy was not properly seasoned. Yesterday at noon the potatoes were sour.”³²⁸

Effie Dressler, a woman of both Washoe and Basque heritage from Topaz, California, remembered that “if you were young and shy... there was never enough food. There would be six at a table. A bowl of beans would be set out, and if you didn’t move quick, you didn’t get anything to eat.”³²⁹ Other children remember raiding surrounding fields and vegetable cellars, and even the Genoa and Carson orchards to supplement their diets. Lack of food combined with tight living quarters, and easily communicable diseases, created an environment ripe for diseases.³³⁰

³²⁵ Riney, *Rapid City*, 47.

³²⁶ E.B. Merrit, to Jesse B. Mortsof, August 25, 1914, File “Health Care Bulletins, etc. 1914-1917,” Box 268, Administrative Files 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

³²⁷ Jesse B. Mortsof to E.B. Merrit, August 29, 1914, File “Health Care Bulletins, etc. 1914-1917,” Box 268, Administrative Files 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

³²⁸ Carson Indian School Annual Report for 1918, File “Relief Washoe Indians,” Box 275, Administrative Files, 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

³²⁹ Johnson, “Discipline Was Strict.”

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

Illnesses and Epidemics:

“Very tenacious and extremely infectious.” - Superintendent Asbury³³¹

Mumps, scabies, impetigo, measles, smallpox, and influenza all reached epidemic proportions at Stewart between 1890 and 1940. An illness becomes an epidemic when it both exceeds what is considered a normal number of cases and stresses the amount of medical resources available. The sheer magnitude of these epidemics struck fear into the children and their parents and reinforced the idea that boarding schools were death traps. For instance, in January of 1891, ninety percent of the students contracted mumps. The school came to an utter standstill. Several students ran away out of fear and some parents came to Stewart to take their children home. The school remained open for the rest of the school term, but after the summer break parents refused to allow their children to return. Superintendent Gibson pleaded with parents to give Stewart a second chance, but the damage had been done and enrollment for the fall was considerably smaller than the previous year.³³²

Scabies and impetigo caused intense discomfort among the students. Scabies is a mite which burrows into the skin and causes severe itching. Impetigo is a bacterial infection of the skin which causes weeping blisters that are easily communicated to others. Both diseases are spread by skin to skin contact and are hard to eradicate. Stewart superintendents called impetigo “stubborn” and a “very loathsome disease, very tenacious and extremely infectious.”³³³ In 1912 thirty-eight students (15%) came down

³³¹ “Carson Indian School, Section II, Health,” *Narrative and Statistical Report* 1914.

³³² *Annual Report* 1891, 571.

³³³ “Carson Indian School, Section II, Health,” *Narrative and Statistical Report* 1914.

with impetigo, but the worst outbreak occurred in 1914. At the peak of the outbreak, the school isolated over seventy infected children, a quarter of all students, in one of the dorms. The skin infection was so persistent that it took almost the whole school year to eliminate it. Indian Services doctors treated scabies with sulfur ointment, and often ordered bedding burned or washed to eliminate the mites or bacteria.³³⁴ Both impetigo and scabies epidemics continued to appear at Stewart because both conditions were prevalent in Nevada's Indian communities. Many students returned after the summer vacation with the agonizing infections.³³⁵

Measles was one of the most common and most feared maladies because it could exacerbate more serious conditions such as pneumonia or tuberculosis. Small outbreaks of measles occurred almost every year, but there are two recorded epidemics of measles. The first occurred during the holiday season in the winter of 1912 with 118 (47%) students falling ill.³³⁶ Twelve years later, measles reappeared and 203 students (48%) contracted the virus in one month. Over a dozen of these students developed pneumonia, ear infections, or other complications after the measles. All recovered except for two young boys who could not overcome the pneumonia and passed away.³³⁷

Pneumonia was the most consistent killer at Stewart. Pneumonia is not actually an infectious or contagious disease. It is a secondary bacterial infection that attacks after

³³⁴ Keller, *Empty Beds*, 142.

³³⁵ "Carson Indian School, Section II, Health," *Narrative and Statistical Report* 1914.

³³⁶ "Carson Indian School, Section II, Health," *Narrative and Statistical Report* 1912.

³³⁷ E. B. Meritt to Frederic Snyder, April 12, 1924, File "27184-1924," Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.; Frederick Snyder to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 23, 1924, File "40604-1924," Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

true infectious diseases such as measles and influenza have weakened a patient's immune system.³³⁸ Pneumonia could be fatal for children recovering from other epidemics and regularly took the lives of children at Stewart. From 1900 to 1925, at least eighteen children died of pneumonia. That is not to say that children could not and did not recover. The student newspaper, the *Indian Advance*, reported in April of 1902 that "A large number of the pupils have been confined in the hospital with colds and pneumonia, but all are now out of danger."³³⁹

From 1890 through 1921 five outbreaks of smallpox at Stewart struck fear into the school population, parents, and the surrounding white community. The first outbreak occurred in the fall of 1891. Students Washoe George and Jewett Adams, seventeen and nineteen years old respectively, contracted the disease. Stewart staff went on high alert. The grounds were quarantined, guards posted, and a yellow flag hung above the main building alerted everyone not to approach the school. Frantic parents tried to visit their children, but the guards kept the parents back.³⁴⁰

Superintendent Gibson recruited a doctor from Reno and the Carson City newspaper characterized him as the "commander-in-chief" of the "smallpox fortress at Carson." An Indian woman named Sallie Jewett, who was possibly related to one of the boys, assisted the doctor during the scare. The boys had to be isolated in one of the dorms because Stewart did not have a hospital. By the end of the first day, Superintendent Gibson had erected a "pesthouse" for the infected boys. He also burned

³³⁸ Keller, *Empty Beds*, 144-145.

³³⁹ *The Indian Advance*, 3 no. 8 (1902).

³⁴⁰ *Daily Nevada State Journal*, August 13, 1891.

the boys' bedding, clothing, and possessions and fumigated the dorm room with sulfur. The scare lasted for twenty-seven days and supplies began to grow thin. The boys recovered, though badly scarred, and no one else came down with the disease. Despite the Gibson's effective management of the smallpox fortress, he reported that, "The parents of pupils were very timid about sending their children to school on account of our having had the smallpox, which made our opening attendance quite small."³⁴¹

Four years later, smallpox once again broke out at Stewart. Twenty-six students contracted the disease, and the physician had to build two outdoor pest houses to stem the contagion. The remaining school population received vaccinations immediately, and a handful of children spent time in the hospital recovering from mild cases of smallpox as a result of the vaccination. Although Stewart had the vaccinations on hand, they had not been used, perhaps because before 1901 federal Indian school policy did not require that every student receive a vaccination upon enrollment. It had been common for reservation Indians to receive vaccinations, but Nevada's migrant Indian population made this effort difficult.³⁴²

The epidemic dragged on for five weeks. Healthy students attempted to run away from the school daily, forcing the superintendent to post armed guards around the

³⁴¹ *Annual Report* 1892, 678; "The Smallpox Fortress at Carson," *Daily Nevada State Journal*, September 6, 1891.

³⁴² It appears that the school did not learn from its mistakes and only narrowly avoided an outbreak in 1912. Superintendent Jessie Mortsof wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that smallpox had broken out in Reno and Carson City during the Christmas holiday and that he feared one of the students would return with the virus. He requested an immediate shipment of 250 vaccine points be sent to the school so he could vaccinate the students. He wrote "I understand that the School has not been generally vaccinated for a number of years, and the advice of our physician is that we make immediate steps to vaccinate them." Jessie Mortsof to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, December 26, 1912, File "Sanatorium," Box 270, Administrative Files 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno; *Annual Report*, 1896, 380; "Smallpox," *Daily Nevada State Journal*, September 18, 1895. See also Keller, Empty Beds, 122-123.

grounds to prevent anyone from leaving the campus.³⁴³ Panic reigned among the white population of Carson City and Reno as well. White households began barring their doors against their Indian domestic servants, fearing contagion from the mere presence of Indian bodies, even servants not connected with the school. The *Reno Evening Gazette* ran an article saying that “though the severing of ties between the housewife and the squaw will be a hardship, the Indian should be kept beyond the city limits until the danger of contagion is past.”³⁴⁴ The Stewart Indian School experienced three more outbreaks of smallpox in 1899, 1904, and 1921. The superintendents and doctors enacted the same quarantine measures during each epidemic, and no children passed away.³⁴⁵ By the turn of the century, the number of smallpox epidemics had decreased worldwide because of vaccinations, so five outbreaks at the school was high. In comparison, smallpox broke out at the Sherman Indian School only once between 1902 and 1922.³⁴⁶

Until the global Spanish influenza pandemic of 1918-1919, influenza did not have the same frightening connotations as smallpox. Mild epidemics of the flu occurred throughout the school’s history. In some cases just a few children contracted the virus, in which case the hospital and medical staff easily controlled its spread. Large epidemics with at least a quarter of the children sick occurred at least four times before 1940.³⁴⁷

³⁴³ “The Smallpox Scare,” *Daily Nevada State Journal*, October 5, 1895; “Forty Years Ago Today,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, October 5, 1935.

³⁴⁴ *Reno Evening Gazette*, September 20, 1895.

³⁴⁵ At least four children contracted small pox in 1899, seven took sick in 1904, and one isolated case appeared in 1921. *Daily Nevada State Journal*, December 23, 1899; Annual Report 1904; Frederick Snyder to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 21, 1921, File “43386-1921,” Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

³⁴⁶ Keller, *Empty Beds*, 122-122.

³⁴⁷ These occurred in 1896, 1922, 1926, and 1928. *Annual Reports* 1896, 1922, 1926, and 1928.

Each episode taxed the capacity of the hospital, and the dorms had to serve as emergency wards to accommodate the number of sick children.³⁴⁸ The flu itself was rarely fatal. However, bouts of flu could exacerbate chronic disease or a secondary infection could set in. For instance, in 1896 a large number of students got influenza. Superintendent Mead reported that “those who had a predisposition to lung weakness rapidly developed consumption, and up to the present time four have died and two more are in a very bad condition, one of whom is in the last stages of the disease.”³⁴⁹

Compared to other Indian communities in Nevada, Stewart suffered a high incidence rate during the Spanish Influenza epidemic but a low death rate. Three waves of influenza swept through Nevada in October 1918, January 1919, and March 1919. Stewart escaped unscathed during the first two outbreaks because the school quarantined itself to prevent anyone carrying the disease from infecting the students. However, on March 14, 1919, Stewart’s luck ran out. A total of 208 out of 285 students came down with influenza. This equaled seventy-three percent of the student body, and made Stewart’s viral infection rate two times higher than the average among Indian populations in the nation. Most students suffered for three to four days before recovering. The height of the epidemic lasted about ten days. Throughout that time healthy students and staff cared for the sick until they too fell ill.

This strain of Spanish Influenza was not particularly deadly, but it was highly contagious. Most deaths occurred because of secondary infections such as pneumonia or

³⁴⁸ Frederick Snyder to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, December 22, 1928, File “00-1928,” Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.; Frederick Snyder to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 2, 1928, File “22700-1928,” Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

³⁴⁹ *Annual Report* 1896, 380.

tuberculosis. At Stewart, five children died along with three staff members.³⁵⁰

Superintendent James B. Royce, his pregnant wife Bonnie, and their daughter fourteen year old daughter Lida also contracted the flu, which developed into pneumonia for all of them. Superintendent Royce passed away on March 22, 1919. Mrs. Royce and Lida recovered for their illness. Mrs. Royce delivered a daughter, Margaret, five months after her husband passed away.³⁵¹ Mrs. Eugenie La Rue, an employee of the school and Matron Preston also died.³⁵²

Among the students, the five deaths equaled a 2.4 percent mortality rate which fell well below the national average of nine percent among Indian populations. A similar pattern occurred at the Sherman Indian School. At Sherman, sixty-five percent of the students fell ill but the school had a mortality rate of 1.5 percent of those infected. Thus, at both Sherman and Stewart high numbers of children fell sick, but few died.³⁵³ These statistics suggest that the virus spread quickly in the institutional setting of the boarding schools but that Stewart provided high quality medical care during the epidemic.

In the wake of Superintendent Royce's death, Special Indian Agent Lafayette A. Dorrington stepped in as temporary head of the Stewart Indian School. The Commissioner tasked him with identifying the number of Spanish Influenza cases and deaths across the state. Dorrington reported that "from the information we have gathered

³⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the students' names were not reported. "Carson Indian School," *Narrative and Statistical Report* 1919, 4.

³⁵¹ Mrs. Royce did not lose the baby and delivered about five months after the death of her husband. "Head of Indian School is dead" *Reno Evening Gazette*, March 24, 1919. .

³⁵² "Another Employee of Indian School Dead," *Reno Evening Gazette*, March 28, 1919.

³⁵³ Keller, *Empty Beds*, 134-135

in regard to the epidemic throughout this jurisdiction it does not appear that the Indians suffered more severely than the white people.”³⁵⁴ He continued in a later report that “strange to say, however, the mortality among the Indians appeared usually to be less than that among the whites, even though the sanitary conditions among the former are less satisfactory and the Indians received less attention.” Dorrington hypothesized that many of the Indians used a preparation of roots and herbs which may have helped fight the illness.

On the reservations, residents had a hard time securing medical help during the epidemic. Most Indian Service doctors worked as contract physicians, which meant that white clients often secured their services before the reservations and colonies. But clearly, without the work of dedicated non-medical Indian Service staff, much higher fatalities would have been reported. The Field Matron at the Reno Sparks Indian Colony, Miss Kennard, provided around-the-clock care to the colony and solicited the help of physicians during the peak of the epidemic. Miss Kennard set up a tent in the Indian settlement where almost every single resident had the flu at one point or another. She reported only four deaths.³⁵⁵

Major outbreaks of illness such as smallpox or influenza received the most press and raised alarms among both the white and Indian communities. But injuries and

³⁵⁴Ely and Austin, Nevada provide examples of the morbidity and mortality rates across the state. Ely had fifteen cases and no deaths were reported out of an Indian population of one hundred twenty-five. In Austin the Indian population was only slightly larger than Ely with one hundred fifty residents, but forty cases were reported and there were twelve deaths including four children. L.A. Dorrington to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in response to Circular 1494, January 29, 1919, File “Influenza Epidemic,” Box 33, Records Related to Agency Health and Social Services, 1910-1923, Records of the Reno Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

accidents also sent children to the hospital for cuts, scrapes, and broken bones. Medical staff did not usually report such minor accidents to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and individual student health records do not survive for Stewart. As a result, the majority of letters and reports about student accidents involved fatal incidents.

Two heart-breaking cases occurred during Snyder's tenure as superintendent. The first serious injury occurred when eleven-year-old Harry Johnny, from the Western Shoshone reservation, smashed his head against a pole during the demolition of one of the cottages. Two days after the accident, the physician operated to remove parts of the damaged skull and Johnny seemed to be recovering, but the next day an infection set in and he did not survive the night.³⁵⁶

The second calamity occurred when Paul Ebe, a fourteen-year-old boy from Oywhewee, and four of his friends climbed a cottonwood tree after dark to harvest cottonwood berries to chew. Superintendent Snyder noted that "the boys have been forbidden to climb into the trees to get the cotton-wood berries," so they chose a tree by the woodpile and out of the line of sight of the school. Ebe climbed out onto one of the branches. His hand brushed the power line and instantly electrocuted him in a flash of white light. His comrades returned to the dorms and did not report the incident until the next morning during roll call. Snyder wrote to Ebe's parents and offered to send the body to wherever they wanted him buried.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ Frederick Snyder to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, December 16, 1924, File "92161-1924," Box 94, Carson 734-770, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

³⁵⁷ Frederick Snyder to B. F. Roth, Superintendent Western Shoshone Agency, May 6, 1925, File "34769-1925," Box 94, Carson 734-770, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

Coping with Death:

*“Her early death was regretted by all.” – Obituary for Zara Winnemucca in the School Newspaper*³⁵⁸

Death from accidents, illness, and epidemics occurred all too frequently at Stewart. Quantifying the number of children who died of disease at Stewart, or at any federal boarding school, can be challenging. Boarding schools routinely dismissed sick students and only reported deaths that occurred on the campus. On an institutional level, superintendents reported deaths of nameless students in their annual reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Even then, no complete record exists and the rates of morbidity and mortality have to be pieced together from reports, letters, death certificates, student records, and grave stones.³⁵⁹

For instance in April and May of 1902, four children were sent home because of their health and two of them passed away. Zara Winnemucca, a Shoshone from Owyhee, had a cold turn into tuberculosis. The doctor decided to send her home to her parents, but the stress of the trip proved too much for her weakened body. She passed away near Elko while on the train home. Staff member Miss Van Voris was with her when she died and continued on with the body to Owyhee. Reporting Winnemucca’s death, the school newspaper stated that “the entire school and employees were grieved at her sickness and death. She was a pleasant amiable girl and her early death was regretted by all.”³⁶⁰

³⁵⁸ *The Indian Advance* 3, no.8 (1902).

³⁵⁹ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 130.

³⁶⁰ *The Indian Advance* 3, no.8 (1902); *The Indian Advance* 3, no.9 (1902).

Staff members often buried children in the school cemetery or sent their bodies home to family members depending on their family's wishes. The Stewart cemetery was just across the street from the main entrance to the school. Many of the graves remain unmarked. Of the marked graves, about half are adults and the others are infants and children.³⁶¹ Alumni or people associated with the school were also buried in the school cemetery.³⁶² One work detail in the carpentry shop made coffins for the school and sanatorium and for those Indians who could not afford them.³⁶³

Friends, family, and staff all attended the funerals of students at Stewart. One former Washoe student, Nap Henry, who lived close by in Genoa asked to be buried at the Stewart cemetery. In July of 1902, the school newspaper reported that Henry was "very low with consumption."³⁶⁴ The next month the paper ran a touching obituary and recounted his burial. One student, under the supervision of staff, constructed Henry's coffin. Staff drove the school's team of horses to Henry's home to carry his remains to the cemetery in the company of his immediate family. Traditional Washoe burial practices included burying all of the deceased's possessions with the body. Henry's family, however, chose to place a bouquet of wild flowers in the grave instead and the

³⁶¹ The cemetery is now known as the Old Stewart Indian Cemetery or the Dat-So-La-Lee Cemetery after the famous Washoe basket maker who is buried there. In 2008, the Nevada Department of Transportation conducted a survey of the cemetery which is now located on Washoe lands as part of a highway project. The Department of Transportation investigated the deaths of those in marked graves and reported their findings on "Find a Grave" which allows you to search their database. "Find A Grave: Old Stewart Indian Cemetery" <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=2246782&CScn=Old+Stewart+Indian+Cemetery> (accessed December 9, 2012).

³⁶² One issue of the Indian Advance provides two examples. Julia Mitchell died at Stewart in January of 1903 and she was buried at the school. Oscar Jackson, who had been away from Stewart for several months before his death was also buried in the cemetery. *The Indian Advance* 5, no. 6 (Feb) 1903.

³⁶³ Stewart Indian School Trail Podcast, Hillman Tobey, Podcast #12 Shops, accessed December 9, 2012, (Carpentry), <http://www.stewartindianschool.com/stewart-podcasts.html>.

³⁶⁴ Carson Indian School, *Indian Advance* 3, no. 11 (1902).

school newspaper proclaimed this to be a “noticeable innovation.” “Nap will be missed,” the editorial continued “not only at his own home and among his white friends at Genoa but also at the school. He was one of the most amiable pupils that has ever attended his school, and long will the memory of Nap be cherished.”³⁶⁵

Staff members also received touching goodbyes in the school newspaper. James E. Vandal, a Sioux Indian who worked as school clerk, received particular mention. The twenty-six year old Vandal had graduated from Haskell Institute and studied law at the State University of Kansas. He practiced law in Oklahoma City until he fell on hard times. He worked at Stewart as a clerk to earn money so that he could set up his own law office. Vandal came down with typho-malarial fever in November of 1902 and survived for twenty-two days before his death. His father arrived at the hospital the day before he passed away and spent his last hours with him. The father took his son’s remains home for burial in South Dakota.³⁶⁶

Superintendents had the unenviable job of writing to parents when their children became sick or died. Rumors passed down the grapevine on the reservation could scare parents into sending telegrams or urgent letters to the Stewart superintendent to verify the status of their child’s health.³⁶⁷ Not all superintendents in the Indian Service immediately notified parents about illness, but it appears that overall the superintendents

³⁶⁵ Carson Indian School, *Indian Advance* 3, no. 12 (1902).

³⁶⁶ Carson Indian School, *Indian Advance* 4, no. 6 (1903)

³⁶⁷ Telegram from Maggie Cline to Superintendent Snyder, February 2, 1920 and Telegram from Superintendent Snyder to Maggie Cline, undated, File “Assorted Correspondence 1919-1923” Box 271, Administrative Files, 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

at Stewart were fairly conscientious. Snyder and Bowler replied promptly to letters from parents.

Jessie B. Mortsolf, superintendent from 1912 to 1915, was particularly bad about writing to families and caused needless anxiety on the reservations. Parents on the Fort McDermitt reservation complained to the superintendent of the Fort McDermitt Indian School that Mortsolf neglected his duty in writing to parents and had even sent children home to McDermitt from Stewart without advance notice. The round of correspondence set off by the complaint revealed that Mortsolf had indeed failed to notify the parents of a child before sending him home. Mortsolf admitted his mistake and also expressed his frustration that the parents' reports were exaggerated. He wrote to the superintendent at Fort McDermitt that "we make an honest endeavor to promptly notify parents in case of serious illness of any of their children, but do not report every trivial case that goes to the hospital, as to do that would cause parents to ask for their children to be sent home upon the slightest pretext."³⁶⁸ It was common practice in the Indian Service to write only in cases of serious illness. In *Boarding School Season: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*, Brenda Child analyzed the letters of parents, students and administrators. She found that parents responded gratefully when promptly informed about their children's health, and that they wrote angry letters when they felt the school was withholding information.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁸ Superintendent Jesse B. Mortsolf to Superintendent Francis A. Swayne, November 14, 1913 File "Assorted Correspondence 1919-1923" Box 271, Administrative Files, 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

³⁶⁹ Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 60-61.

One series of letters surrounding the death of Pedro Cordova reveals that Superintendent Snyder did notify family members of serious illness. In December of 1919, Snyder received a letter from Mrs. Bell Cordova inquiring after the health of her son Pedro. Snyder replied that her son had passed away on October 9 of that year. Pedro had been living at the sanatorium for a long time, and Snyder reported that they had known for months that he “could not live long.” Pedro’s brother Manuel visited him regularly, had attended the funeral, and told Snyder that there were no other family members that needed to be informed of his brother’s death. As a result Snyder had assumed that Manuel kept his parents advised of the situation. Snyder’s letter to Pedro’s parents leaves more questions than answers about why they were not told of their son’s illness, but it does demonstrate that Snyder kept tabs on Pedro, his visitors, and cared about informing the family.³⁷⁰

For parents and communities, any student death was one too many. From 1890 to 1940, student mortality rates did decline at Stewart in large part because of the health education undertaken by staff members. Similarly, the frequency of epidemics decreased through effective nursing techniques and the construction of the hospital and sanatorium to treat and isolate infectious cases. Stewart, like the rest of the federal boarding school system, learned from its early mistakes and began to take an active role in encouraging students to take charge of the health of their own bodies. However, it also had a responsibility to ensure that the children had a chance of fighting off infectious diseases.

³⁷⁰ Mrs. Bell Cordova to Superintendent Frederic Snyder, December 16, 1919, Record Group 75, Records of the Stewart Indian School, Administrative Files, 1909-1923, Box 271, Assorted Correspondence 1919-1923, National Archives, San Bruno.

Chapter 6

“I WAS GIVEN THE NUMBER NINE, AND HAD TO USE THIS NUMBER LIKE IT WAS MY NAME”: VOCATIONAL WORK AND GENDER IDENTITY³⁷¹

For Indian children at a boarding school, white cultural practices could seem like another language. Every culture has rituals and daily practices that ascribe gendered meaning to the physical body. One of the first female students at the Stewart Indian School learned the foreign nature of white female beauty practices first hand. In 1891, a student asked the wife of Superintendent Gibson if she could borrow some of her perfume for a visit into Carson City. Mrs. Gibson acquiesced and handed over her bottle of Jockey Club perfume, assuming the pupil would apply it to her handkerchief. A few minutes later she found “the girl was standing in the middle of the room with her clothes lifted to her armpits and her mother was applying the perfume to her person, spreading it over with a rag.”³⁷² The two had used the entire bottle.

This episode reveals that things Western culture took for granted could be a novelty for Indian students and their families. The girl understood that perfume was something that white women wore on dressy occasions, yet had never seen anyone apply it. Because staff found it comical enough to report the story to the local newspaper, the incident also demonstrates the cultural insensitivity of non-Indian staff, who told the local newspaper about an embarrassing moment for a young woman and her mother. The newspaper ran the article as an example of the backwardness of Indian people, entitled “Smell ‘Um Good.”

³⁷¹ Stewart Indian School Trail Podcast, Smith.

³⁷² “Smell ‘Um Good,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, August 22, 1891.

The boarding school system trained boys and girls to be workers in a wage economy. By the time Stewart opened, a substantial number of Washoes, Western Shoshones, and Northern Paiutes lived off of reservations and were surviving by working as farm or ranch hands and domestics.³⁷³ Stewart trained male and female students to continue in these types of careers. Boys worked as blacksmiths, stone masons, carpenters, harness makers, cobblers, tailors, mechanics, and farmers.³⁷⁴ Male students also maintained herds of cattle and dairy cows, worked in the dining hall and bakery, and helped manicure the school grounds. Female pupils labored in the laundry, kitchens, sewing rooms, and chicken coops, and worked on dorm-cleaning crews. Many teenage girls also learned nursing skills in the hospital and sanatorium.³⁷⁵

Female students received in classroom training and then real life experience working in the outing program, a placement program that put older children to work in white homes or farms. The outing program situated young Indian women in the homes of white families in Reno and Carson City and the Bay Area and exposed them to new opportunities and new challenges. The federal government enlisted the help of white employers to “uplift” and train Indian women, making white homes a “domestic frontier.”³⁷⁶

³⁷³ Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 31; Knack and Stewart, *River Shall Run*, 51.

³⁷⁴ The boys did so much of the manual labor that Superintendent Snyder complained that he did not have the labor to install new toilets during the summer when the older boys were away. Frederic Snyder to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 25, 1923, File “88479-1922,” Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

³⁷⁵ Carson Indian School, *The Indian Advance* 2 no. 7 (1901) and 4 no. 7 (1903); *Annual Report* 1900, 493.

³⁷⁶ Margaret D. Jacobs, “Working on the Domestic Frontier: American Indian Domestic Servants in White Women’s Households in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1920-1940,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 28, nos. 1 & 2 (2007): 166.

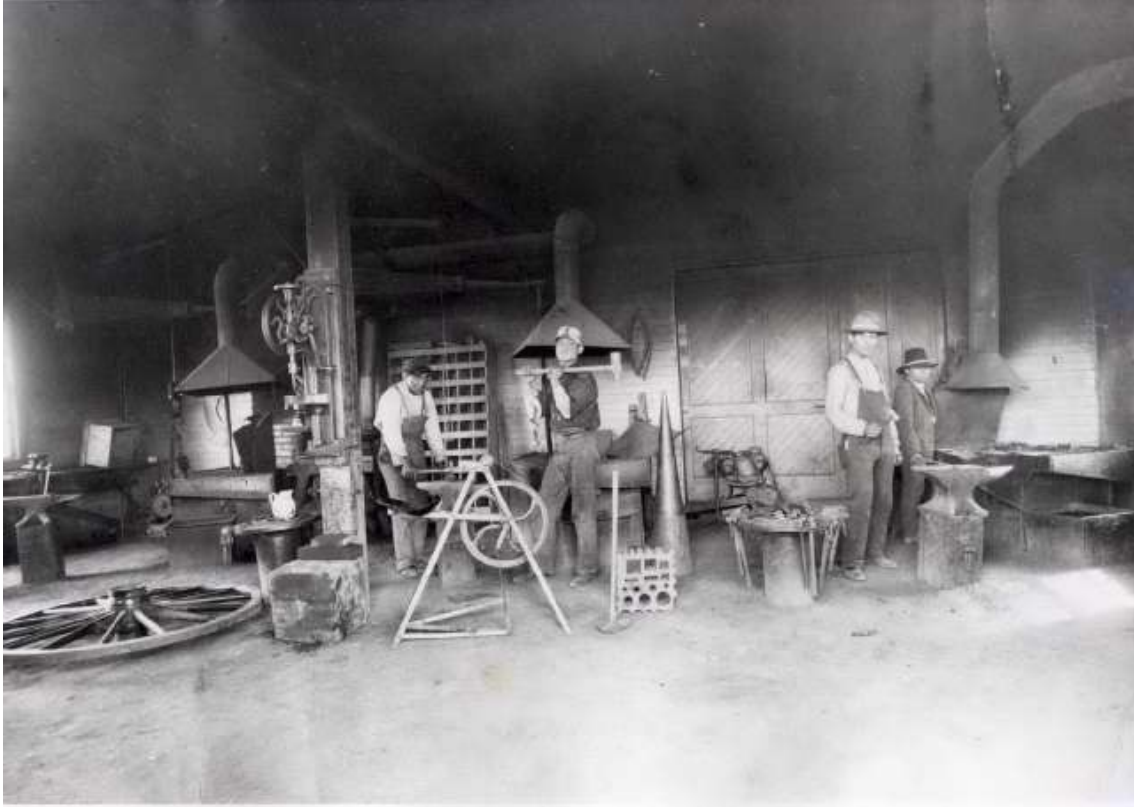


Figure 22. Early photograph of the blacksmith's shop. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

The vocational curriculum taught students about the marginal terms under which they would enter white society. Trained as laborers and servants, the students were not encouraged to dream. Superintendent Allen reported,

They are not taught the “hotel” or “restaurant” style of cooking, with the consequent education and desire to look forward to salaries similar to chefs in such institutions; but by actually themselves preparing, under proper supervision, the meals adapted to the means of an average family of five to seven persons, these girls stand excellent chances to securing places in such families at living wages, and are not constantly looking forward to continued Government support by being placed in salaried positions at the Government school and agencies.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁷ *Annual Report* 1900, 14-15.

Thus, the very curriculum discouraged students from pursuing advanced careers. A higher education was also deemed impractical. Much of the early curriculum came from the Uniform Course of Study, published in 1901 under the direction of Estelle Reel, the first female superintendent of Indian schools. Reel served from 1898 until 1910. During her time as superintendent she traveled across the country, investigated two hundred and fifty schools, created summer teaching institutes, and succeeded in having Indian educators recognized by the National Education Association.³⁷⁸ Lomawaima argues that during Reel's tenure the "Indian Office's education division was professionalized, and national Indian policy turned from conquest and relocation to bureaucratic control."³⁷⁹ Reel believed that Indian children had very limited abilities. Unlike Pratt, who had always believed that Indian people could eventually be equals with white Americans, Reel gave little credence to the idea that American Indian people had a need for advanced education.³⁸⁰

In 1901, Reel sought to standardize the curriculum in Indian schools across the country. The new guidelines encouraged learning by doing and favored the practical over the intellectual. Rather than teaching children about chemistry, Reel suggested that educators focus on practical learning such as the anatomy of a horse's foot which would be beneficial knowledge on the reservation. Reel pushed for every bit of the school material to be related to vocational trades. She concluded that educators should not

³⁷⁸ Jon Reyher and Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 96.

³⁷⁹ K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of the Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 6.

³⁸⁰ Reyher and Eder, *American Indian Education*, 100.

encourage some of the more refined cultural practices such as art or music. What good would hours of practice on a piano do for a young Indian girl who would in all likelihood never own one?³⁸¹

Federal boarding schools attempted to create a new class of subservient laborers. Alice Littlefield argues that “proletarianization” rather than “assimilation” better characterizes the federal boarding school mission. Federal boarding schools brought Indian children into the wage labor economy. Children were trained to work for others, rather than for themselves. The Merriam Report criticized many of these tasks as unskilled drudgery which had little to no educational value on the job market.³⁸²

While Stewart placed the young women directly in the heart of urban communities, it trained many young men to return to ranching and cattle management on the reservations. By the 1930s, the largest reservation in the state, at Western Shoshone and Pyramid Lake, had moved away from agriculture and adopted livestock grazing as the dominant economic activity. Under the Indian Reorganization Act, many of the newly incorporated tribal government sought out new training from the federal government to enhance their ranching programs.

³⁸¹ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 154.

³⁸² Littlefield, “Learning to Labor,” 55-57.

Living by the Bell:

“You can tell you went to Stewart because you have little black knees.” - Virginia

*“Ruby” Carrillo, student*³⁸³

Students spent much of their day doing vocational work. Believing that American Indians would abandon their traditional identities and become fully assimilated, federal policymakers considered vocational training to be “schooling for survival.”³⁸⁴

Commissioner Thomas Jefferson Morgan wrote in 1892 that, “We must either fight Indians, feed them, or else educate them. To fight them is cruel, to feed them is wasteful, while to educate them is humane, economic, and Christian.”³⁸⁵

At Stewart children spent half the day in the classroom and half the day performing manual labor. On a daily basis, the boys in the bakery whipped up over one hundred fifty loaves of bread. In a year, male students cobbled together one hundred thirty pairs of new shoes and repaired another three hundred.³⁸⁶ Female students worked just as hard, washing about two thousand articles of clothing a week and sewing more than two hundred dresses, sheets, pillowcases, and curtains throughout the year. These numbers represent just a fraction of the work students performed at Stewart and demonstrate that much of the work kept the institution running. Virginia “Ruby” Carrillo

³⁸³ Skorupa, “Former Students.”

³⁸⁴ Riney, *Rapid City*, 76.

³⁸⁵ Quoted in Littlefield, “Learning to Labor,” 49.

³⁸⁶ *Annual Report* 1901, 545.

recalls scrubbing the floor so much that family members teased each other that “you can tell you went to Stewart because you have little black knees.”³⁸⁷



Figure 23. Early photograph of Stewart girls learning to sew. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

The quantity of goods produced constituted a matter of pride for school administrators and students alike. Stewart’s superintendents consistently bragged about the number of articles produced in their annual reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and the school newspaper routinely boasted about the quantity of goods manufactured by student work details.³⁸⁸ Teachers displayed examples of the girls’

³⁸⁷ Skorupa, “Former Students.”

³⁸⁸ Some examples include: *Annual Report* 1896, 380; *Annual Report* 1901, 545; and *Annual Report* 1922, 2.

needlework, crochet, knitting, and drawing for visitors to demonstrate the excellent work a properly trained Indian could produce.³⁸⁹ At a certain point this labor became drudgery, however, and perhaps the students only sense of pride resided in the sheer quantity of goods produced.³⁹⁰ Even federal policy makers had a hard time justifying the repetitive and dead-end chores taught in their education programs.³⁹¹

Unlike other schools, Stewart never operated an extensive agricultural program because of lack of water and poor quality land. Stewart had 686 acres of farm land in addition to the two hundred-forty acre campus, but only forty acres were under cultivation in 1914, although that had expanded to one hundred acres by 1925.³⁹² Another one hundred-sixty acre farm several miles away in Jacks Valley produced much of the vegetables and grains needed to feed the campus and the livestock.³⁹³ By comparison, Chilocco Indian Agricultural School had an 8,640 acre school reserve and individual senior students each received a sixty to seventy acre plot to practice farm management.³⁹⁴

³⁸⁹ *Annual Report* 1896, 380.

³⁹⁰ How much input the students had in the school newspaper is questionable. There is no shortage of boilerplate articles, but there are also sections recounting the goings on at the school. Reading through it you get a sense that students and staff all contributed.

³⁹¹ Adams questions the usefulness of this labor in *Education for Extinction*. He asks, “How many pillowcases did a girl have to make to become proficient at making pillowcases?” He also argues that children complained about being assigned to chores long after their usefulness had ceased. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 150-152.

³⁹² “Carson Indian School, Section I, Law and Order,” *Narrative and Statistical Report* 1914, 2.

³⁹³ Stewart leased farms in Jacks Valley until 1939 when several farms were purchased. Hale, Interview; J. G. Perry to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 19, 1925, File “50235-1926,” Box 92, Carson 730-737, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

³⁹⁴ Seavey, Application for National Register, 9.

Stewart Superintendent James K. Allen argued that farming was impractical in Nevada. Agricultural training, he wrote, “is not best in a locality where every foot of land has been secured by white settlers and every inch of water for irrigating already appropriated.” He continued, “In this section not one Indian in a hundred is able to obtain even a small parcel of land for a garden and secure ‘water rights’ with it.”³⁹⁵ Instead most male Stewart students could expect a career working with livestock on ranches. The vast majority of students came from rural communities and their families lived and worked on white ranches. Recognizing the limits of the environment, administrators at Stewart focused on construction and other trades. At the end of the 1930s, the school administration turned to a livestock and range training program. Training the students for future careers as laborers and domestic servants took priority over academic work.³⁹⁶

However, many students found vocational training useful for their lives. After graduation, many students found employment in trades they had learned while at Stewart. Bodie Graham, graduated with the first class of students in 1900 and he became a successful farmer and turkey raiser in Fallon.³⁹⁷ He later went on to become the secretary of the Fallon Tribal Business Council in 1936.³⁹⁸ Hillman Tobey who now

³⁹⁵ *Annual Report 1899*, 407.

³⁹⁶ In 1900, Superintendent James K. Allen reported, “Between the two I deem industrial training of far more importance to Indian children than literary work.” *Annual Report 1900*; 493. This is consistent with larger policy initiatives. Adams states that industrial training started to take precedence over academic work in the late 1890s. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 153.

³⁹⁷ Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 65; “Carson Indian School Observes Anniversary,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, April 28, 1941.

³⁹⁸ Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 165.

lives at the Reno Sparks Indian Colony, worked in the carpentry shop at Stewart and became a union carpenter.³⁹⁹



Figure 24. Early photograph of Stewart boys tending the crops on the campus farm. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

John Henry Dressler, first Chairman of the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, used the vocational skills he learned at Stewart immediately upon graduation. Dressler worked for the Roads Department at Pyramid Lake as a mechanic until moving to Reno and working for the railroad and the steelworkers union. He started a Boy Scout troop at the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony. In addition to his position as the Chairman of the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, he served on many other boards and commissions. In 1970 the University of Nevada declared him as a “Distinguished Nevadan” for his

³⁹⁹ Stewart Indian School Trail Podcast, Tobey.

achievements.⁴⁰⁰ While these individuals stood out among their classmates, many alumni today proudly mention skills they learned at Stewart and argue that the curriculum was practical for their lives.⁴⁰¹

Military Service:

“We had roll calls for every occasion.” – Hillman Tobey, Paiute Student⁴⁰²

Strict control and regimentation were also part of the daily lives of students at the Stewart Indian School, as at all non-reservation boarding schools. Adams argues that Washington policy makers’ perception of the “wildness” of Indian children provided the basis for creating a military system. In their view, Indian parents did not offer enough structure or discipline. Thus, orienting children to western “clocktime” and the constant chiming of the bells and horns would help children master their bodies and their worlds. Boarding schools, consequently, structured their environment and routines to help tame the “savage” within.⁴⁰³ By taming the Indian body they would tame the soul.

Students marched everywhere. The marching and military routine left a strong impression upon Stewart students. Seventy years after attending Stewart, a Washoe woman named Winona James vividly recalled that, “They got you up at 5:00 in the morning and put your uniform on, and you had to go out in the cold and drill before breakfast and then you’d come back to the dorm and change your clothes and get ready

⁴⁰⁰ Dressler is a very distinguished Native Nevadan. He started a boy scouts troop at the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony and was very active in the steelworkers union. In addition to his position as the Chairman of the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada he served on many other boards and commissions. In 1970 the University of Nevada cited him as a “Distinguished Nevadan” for his achievements. Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Life Stories*, 10-11.

⁴⁰¹ Personal conversations with Alumni at the Stewart Indian School Powwow, 2011.

⁴⁰² Albright, “Infamous Indian School.”

⁴⁰³ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 119.

for school.”⁴⁰⁴ Hillman Tobey, the oldest living alumni who now resides in the Reno Sparks Indian Colony, recalled the incessant marching and the military routine. “Back then” he recalls,

We had to wear uniforms and everything was very structured, like the military. I remember having to march in a line to the dining hall and to our classrooms. Before we could march to the dining hall our hands were inspected. If they weren’t clean we would have to go back in and wash again.⁴⁰⁵

The military nature of the drilling stood out for Daisy Smith, who arrived in 1939 from Tonopah. She remembered “I was given the number nine, and had to use this number like it was my name. We would have to line up by numbers and march to the dining room, to the dorms, and to the school buildings. We had to march everywhere.”⁴⁰⁶ This schedule was intended to teach the students rigid control over their bodies, punctuality, and obedience to authority.⁴⁰⁷

The bell and bugle punctuated the students’ day, which began at 6:00 a.m. Tobey recalled that “One of the things we had to do was wake up to bugle calls, and we had rolls calls for every occasion.”⁴⁰⁸ After roll call and breakfast the pupils headed out to either morning classes or vocational work. Pupils spent half of the day learning English, math, geography, history, and other basic academic subjects. Cooking, laundering, blacksmithing and other trades dominated the remainder of the day. Your work detail

⁴⁰⁴ James, Interview, 29.

⁴⁰⁵ Stewart Indian School Trail Podcast, Tobey.

⁴⁰⁶ Stewart Indian School Trail Podcast, Smith.

⁴⁰⁷ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 117-120.

⁴⁰⁸ Albright, “Native American School.”

determined whether you worked in the morning or the afternoon. For example, boys working in the dairy or bakery maintained early work hours. At 4:30 p.m. the drudgery ended and the students were allowed to be children, playing group games and sports, or just spending time with friends.⁴⁰⁹ After dinner the children crammed back into the dorms for indoor activities before lights out at 9:00 p.m.⁴¹⁰ Lights out was strictly enforced and according to Helena Jones Melendez, “If they heard any talking they’d get you out of bed and make you sit in the hall.”⁴¹¹

In addition to training boys to be workers, boarding schools encouraged young Indian men to be soldiers. All students drilled in marching and basic military procedures so it is not surprising that many students served in both world wars. Hillman Tobey, the oldest living alumni who attended Stewart from 1926 to 1937, remembers that the military regime served native soldiers well because they already knew how to drill. The students had “roll calls for every occasion,” and each student had a uniform for Sunday drills.⁴¹² Young Indian servicemen quickly mastered different commands and may therefore have had an advantage over many non-Indians.⁴¹³

Robert Trennert relates in *The Phoenix Indian School: Forced Assimilation in Arizona, 1891-1935*, that children eventually took great pride in their marching skills.

⁴⁰⁹ Annual Calendar, United States Indian School, Stewart, Nevada, School Year 1922-1923, File “97392-1922,” Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ “Helen Jones Melendez,” Stewart Father’s Day Powwow Committee, Flyer for the Stewart Fathers’ Day Powwow June 18-20, 2010; 13-14.

⁴¹² Nevada State Museum, *Under One Sky*.

⁴¹³ Russell Lawrence Barsh, “American Indians in the Great War,” *Ethnohistory* 38 (Summer 1991), 279.

Being a member of the marching band or drill team carried prestige.⁴¹⁴ Corbett Douglas Mack, a Paiute student in 1917 remembered the militaristic education at Stewart fondly: “Gee, we sure have a good time up there too. Line up a lot you know. Just like that’s in the Army... Line you up and march you down to the Dinin’ Room. Sit down. Somebody, taps that bell. Hands off the table. Second bell, march you out again.”⁴¹⁵

Marching did more than move children from one activity to another. Drilling also served a symbolic purpose. On Sundays, the entire student body lined up in uniform and marched in review under the watchful eye of the superintendent and other officials. Later in the day, marching parades took place.⁴¹⁶ The superintendent became an officer inspecting his troops, and the children were reduced to numbered bodies.

The strict regimentation helped to keep the children organized and prepared young men for military service.⁴¹⁷ Keeping order at the school was paramount for school administrators, and in 1913 Superintendent Mortsolf requested additional funding for military equipment because, “Our discipline among the boys depends largely upon the manner in which we keep up their military organization.”⁴¹⁸ Early on, Superintendent Gibson appointed sergeants from the student body to maintain order and minimize truancy.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁴ Trennert, *Phoenix Indian School*, 116.

⁴¹⁵ Quoted in Nevada Indian Commission, “Stewart Indian School: A Story of the Peoples’ Enduring Strength and Spirit,” undated.

⁴¹⁶ Johnson, “Discipline was Strict”.

⁴¹⁷ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 21-24.

⁴¹⁸ *Annual Report* 1913, 5.

⁴¹⁹ *Annual Report* 1892, 678.

In addition to the daily drills, the boarding school curriculum taught a sense of Americanism and civic pride. Federal curriculum integrated patriotism into lessons from the very beginning. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morgan wrote in 1891 that, “the Indian pupils are taught that they are Americans, that the Government is their friend, that the flag is their friend, that one great duty resting on them is loyalty to the Government, and thus the foundation is laid for perpetual peace between the Indian tribes in this country and the white people.”⁴²⁰ Consequently, during both world wars military recruiters targeted this fertile ground for new enlistees.

Boarding school classrooms emptied quickly once the war effort began. Some of the largest non-reservation boarding schools sent hundreds of students to the front lines. Two hundred and five Carlisle students donned uniforms, as did one hundred pupils from Chilocco Indian Agricultural School, and forty Hampton Institute men.⁴²¹ Superintendent Royce reported that twelve of Stewart’s “best boys” enlisted in the army. Certainly, this represents a much lower rate of enlistment than other boarding schools. However, in comparison, twelve is not as low a number as it might initially seem, since Stewart had an average enrollment of 283 students making it a third the size of these larger schools. The graduating class of 1918 had only seven male and female students. Thus, the eligible pool of male students was not very big. Of the twelve servicemen, two graduated in 1918 and the remaining ten came from lower grades.⁴²² The Stewart students served together in the 283d Aero Squadron based in San Diego. Like the

⁴²⁰ *Annual Report* 1891, 69.

⁴²¹ Thomas A. Britten, *American Indians in World War I* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 66.

⁴²² “Carson Indian School, Section III, Schools,” *Narrative and Statistical Report* 1918.

Stewart servicemen, six volunteers from the Pierre Indian School served together in a field artillery battery.⁴²³

One third of all adult Indian men served in the armed services during World War I. Over seventeen thousand registered for the draft and 6,509 of those were inducted. That number does not include male Indians who volunteered. All told, about twenty to thirty percent of adult Indian males served. This demonstrates a high level of commitment to the war effort in comparison to the fifteen percent of non-Indian countrymen who entered the service during World War I. Participation in the armed forces varied greatly in Indian country during World War I. For instance only one percent of Navajo and Pueblo men served, which stands in sharp contrast with the thirty-nine percent participation rate among the Osage and fifty-four percent among the Quapaw.

Choosing to enlist proved a difficult decision for many Indian men most of whom were not even considered citizens of the United States. On May 18, 1917, Congress passed the Selective Service Act which mandated that all men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-one register for the draft. This included all Indian men, unless they could prove non-citizenship status. The federal government gave Indian Agents the undesirable task of registering reservation residents for the draft.

Under the Dawes Act of 1887 all Indians receiving allotments became citizens. Few native people in Nevada owned land allotments and, as a result, the vast majority did not have United States citizenship. As non-citizens Indian men could claim deferments, but in practice drawing the line between citizen and non-citizen could be very

⁴²³ Barsh, *Indians in the Great War*, 282.

complicated. Initially, the Indian Office tried to avoid controversy by encouraging Indians to defer their service. However, as the war dragged on and more servicemen were needed, Indian Agents started to encourage Indian men to waive their deferment.⁴²⁴



Figure 25. Stewart boys in uniform holding scrolls and flags. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

Thomas Brittan argues in *American Indians in World War I: At War and at Home* that enlisting did not constitute selling out. Indians saw their inclusion in the war effort as further evidence that the United States needed to fulfill its promises to Indians. How could the United States fight for democracy a continent away and still refuse citizenship

⁴²⁴ Barsh, *Indians in the Great War*, 277-281.

to the native citizens within its boundaries? The American government had spent the last fifty years indoctrinating Indian peoples with a sense of patriotism. Enlisting could be seen as both an affirmation of that patriotism and a continuation of their own cultural traditions.⁴²⁵

For the non-Indian public, Indians fighting overseas helped soothe some of the open wounds caused by the Indian wars because now they served a united cause. The press highlighted the achievements and contributions of native servicemen. This coverage helped validate the Allied goals because victory seemed assured if Indians could put aside their grievances to fight alongside white servicemen in name of democracy. However, this coverage also reinforced the stereotype that all Indians just liked to fight.

To honor the service of Native men during the war, Congress granted citizenship to all honorably discharged Indian veterans in 1919. Five years later in 1924, Congress passed the Snyder Act, which bestowed blanket citizenship to any American Indian not already designated a citizen. World War I thus proved a turning point in the battle for Indigenous citizenship. Indian service in the war provided a compelling argument for equal services for Indian country.⁴²⁶

Many Native communities in Nevada believed that their service in the war meant they had earned many of the privileges ascribed to white society. For example, during the Fifth Inter-Tribal Conference of Council Representatives of the Carson Jurisdiction in

⁴²⁵ Britten, *Indians in World War I*, 68.

⁴²⁶ Paul C. Rosier, *Serving their Country: American Indian Politics and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 47-49; Barsh, "Indians in the Great War," 280-281, 295.

November of 1940, Willie Smokey, the Vice-Chairman of the Washoe Tribal Council, argued that Washoes had earned equality during World War I and deserved a public school that went to eighth grade rather than just sixth. He spoke out, “I remember during war times our Indians and men, if they were good enough to go to war and fight for right of country and fought side by side with citizens of this country shed blood in battle, we were good enough to be taken in. I think my boys got a right to eight grades in public school here.”⁴²⁷

In addition to sending young men to the front lines, the Stewart Indian School supported the war effort in other ways as well. Superintendent Royce jumped at the opportunity to have the students participate in public displays of patriotism. Right after the US declared war on Germany in April 1917, cities across the country held loyalty parades to show their support. Carson City held its Loyalty Day extravaganza on May 7, 1917, and Stewart students were featured front and center. Over 3,000 men, women, and children lined Carson Street to watch an extravagant showing of military support. The *Nevada Daily Appeal* reported, “The Indian band presented a splendid appearance, marched like well drilled soldiers and added much to the life of the occasion. The two companies of cadets armed with rifles, displayed wonderful discipline for they marched with an exactness that would have been a credit to any of Uncle Sam’s infantry.”⁴²⁸

The students also took part in national “Tag Your Shovel Day” on January 30, 1918. Children placed paper tags on shovels to encourage citizens to save a shovel full of

⁴²⁷ Minutes of the Fifth Inter-Tribal Conference of Council Representatives, File “Minutes, Fifth Inter-Tribal Conference of Council Representatives, Carson Jurisdiction, Nov 1940,” Box 6, Records of the Carson Indian School, Records of the Education Division (School Principal), 1924-47, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

⁴²⁸ “Loyalty Parade Grand Success,” *Carson City Daily Appeal*, May 7, 1917.

coal every day. A parade of young school children, headed by the Stewart school band and cadets marched down Carson Street. A number of Indian women and their children also accompanied the parade and their presence was noted by the newspaper for the patriotism. The column finished their march at the residence of Governor Boyle who had his own shovel tagged in a photo op with the Fuel Administration.⁴²⁹

Despite Stewart's public shows of enthusiasm for the war effort, Nevada's Indian reservations and colonies had mixed feelings about involvement in World War I. The argument that young men should not serve in their colonial government resonated in many Indian communities, who believed that the United States had failed to live up to its treaty obligations. For example, members of the Navajo and Ute tribal nations performed a war dance and threatened to burn down the town of Ignacio, Colorado, if recruiters continued to enroll members.⁴³⁰ One of the most notorious incidents of anti-war organizing occurred on the Goshute Reservation on the border between Nevada and Utah. During the summer of 1917, hostilities boiled to the surface, as the Goshute community complained about their corrupt superintendent, Amos Frank. According to their complaint, Frank allowed whites to trespass on reservation lands with impunity, instituted discriminatory hiring practices, failed to enforce laws, and tried illegally to register them for the draft. Frustrated with the Indian Office, residents of the reservation refused to register for the draft because they were not citizens and the government had not honored the terms of the Goshute Treaty of 1863.

⁴²⁹ "Tag your Shovel Day Well Observed," *Nevada State Journal*, January 30, 1918.

⁴³⁰ Barsh, "Indians in the Great War," 281.

The Indian Office sent Inspector Lafayette Dorrington to the reservation twice to investigate, but instead of addressing the tribe's concerns about Superintendent Frank, Inspector Dorrington concentrated on the Indian's resistance to military service. In February of 1918, he received reports that the anti-draft sentiment was spreading to nearby reservations including the Western Shoshone reservation. In response Dorrington marshalled a strike force, and raided the Goshute reservation in a house-to-house search. The officers rounded up every adult man and held them under guard. Seven tribal members were arrested; three for draft evasion and four for encouraging the reservation to evade the Selective Service Act. After a three-week confinement, Dorrington released the prisoners after they promised to obey the wishes of Superintendent Frank. The federal government later admitted that the arrested men were not citizens in 1917 and 1918 and could not be forced to register for the draft.

The public overreacted to the news of the arrests on the Goshute Reservation. War-time fear mongering and propaganda convinced many Nevadans that the Shoshone had sent secret representatives to the surrounding reservations to incite a full Shoshone uprising. Some reports even said that the Germans had infiltrated the reservation and were spreading anti-war propaganda. The reports of an uprising were unfounded, but resistance to the draft and participation in the war effort did continue on other reservations in the state.⁴³¹

In February of 1918 two Shoshone representatives from the Fort Hall Reservation in Idaho, visited the Western Shoshone Reservation to beg the men not to enlist. They believed that the draft would kill even more Indians by putting young Native men on the

⁴³¹ Britten, *Indians in World War I*, 68; Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 71.

front lines. The representatives received some support but most tribal members remained neutral.⁴³² This discontent seems to have filtered down to the students at Stewart. No Stewart students from the Western Shoshone, Fallon, or Goshute reservations served in the war.⁴³³ Some adult Shoshones did enlist including at least one lone member of the Western Shoshone Reservation, Gus Garity. Two non-reservation Western Shoshone men also served: Doc Bird of Wells and Frank Rogers of Round Mountain.⁴³⁴

Stewart continued to train boys for a career in the military after World War I ended. When the United States entered World War II after Pearl Harbor, Stewart Indian School classrooms emptied yet again. In 1942, twenty-three members of the football team enlisted in military service together.⁴³⁵ Sports proffered an easy transition into the military for many students. The different branches of the armed services had sports teams which allowed students like Ned Crutcher, distinguished Stewart boxer and later coach at the school, to make names for themselves as both servicemen and athletes. Crutcher joined the Marines in 1941 and served in the Second Division, which was sent to Guadalcanal in Papua New Guinea. At Guadalcanal, Crutcher's division ultimately triumphed after bitter fighting against Japanese troops. Crutcher earned the rank of sergeant during the conflict. He later continued his boxing career in the Marines.⁴³⁶

⁴³² Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 57.

⁴³³ Britten, *Indians in World War I*, 66.

⁴³⁴ Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 57 and 72.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 121; Ed Johnson, "Stewart Indian School has Progressed," *Apple Tree*, March 13, 1977.

⁴³⁶ Crutcher's boxing career is explained in more detail in chapter 6. Andrew McGregor, "Amateur Boxing and Assimilation at the Stewart Indian School, Carson City, Nevada 1935-1948," in *Native American Identity in Sports: Creating and Preserving a Culture*, ed., Frank A. Salamone (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2013), 54.

Other Stewart athletes also enlisted in World War II, including Stressler O'Daye, Walter Johnson, and Lester Reymus. Reymus, a distinguished Paiute boxer, was cited for bravery during WWII when he rescued a pilot from a burning P-30 at Spartansburg, South Carolina. His hands were badly burned, but he went on to win several boxing matches while in the service.⁴³⁷

Western Shoshone opposition to military service persisted during the second world war. In October of 1940 some Western Shoshone leaders drafted a resolution stating that they did not support the war in Europe, but if the war spilled over onto American soil and the United States was invaded, the Shoshone would willingly join the ranks of soldiers. Crum argues in *The Road on Which We Came* that, “it must be emphasized, however, that they did not exactly want to defend white Americans – they were much more concerned about protecting ‘native land, America’ or Newe Sokopia (Indian Land).”⁴³⁸ The anti-war Shoshones sent some delegates to Salt Lake City to meet with the Utah governor and representatives from the *Salt Lake Tribune* and forward the resolution to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.⁴³⁹

Not all Shoshones shared this viewpoint. Dozens registered for the draft and fought and died overseas. Moreover, the Shoshones’ persistent anti-war sentiments do not invalidate the contributions of the soldiers who served in both wars. Nevada tribes continue to take pride in the servicemen of their reservations and colonies. For instance, twenty men and women from the Walker River Paiute Tribe served in World War II. A

⁴³⁷ Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes*, 180.

⁴³⁸ Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 120.

⁴³⁹ Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 120-121.

plaque with the names of the enlisted men hung on the wall of the Sub Agency and six women embroidered the names of the men on a tapestry that hung on the wall.⁴⁴⁰ This plaque demonstrates the respect that the Walker River Paiute Tribe held for the men and women who served their country.

Domestic or Wife:

“They do every bit of their work as though they were living on the reservation.” - Article in the school newspaper the Desert Redman⁴⁴¹

While Stewart trained young men for the military, the school furnished only two career choices to female students during the early years – domestic servant or housewife. Vocational training for females included all of the important homemaking skills that a housewife and mother should know. According to Superintendent of Education Reel girls needed to learn more about cooking than ancient history. Vocational training, she argued, made the girls, “realize that culture can be obtained as well through the knowledge of how to make a pumpkin pie as it can by studying Greek mythology.”⁴⁴² Indeed, students were given little time to ponder ancient mythology because institutional duties kept them occupied for so much of the day.

The domestic cottage, or practice cottage as it was sometimes called, represented one way educators prepared girls for wage work. Older girls lived in the cottage for rotating periods of time to mimic nuclear family life. The domestic cottage provided

⁴⁴⁰ Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes*, 147-149

⁴⁴¹ Stewart Indian School, “The Desert Redman” 1, no. 1 (October 1936), File “‘The Desert Redman,’ 1936, 1938,” Box 60, Decimal Subject Files, 1925-1950, Records of the Carson Indian Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

⁴⁴² *Annual Report* 1908, 133

simulated real world domestic training for pupils before they began the outing program and secured jobs in white homes.⁴⁴³

Reel first came across the idea for a practice cottage in 1906 on a trip to the Tuskegee Institute. The school had a cottage to train African American women to be maids. Reel immediately worked the idea into her reform of the Indian education system. Progressive educators, like Reel, believed that children learned by doing. To make domestic training more interesting and to encourage Indian girls to continue the habits of civilized living that they learned at school, educators encouraged boarding schools to build their own cottages.⁴⁴⁴

H.B. Peairs, the Supervisor of Schools, similarly proposed domestic cottages as a more supervised alternative to the outing program and a way to prepare girls for outing work. Peairs, wanted all schools to “establish cottage-homes embodying facilities for teaching the various crafts of house-keeping, including cooking, laundering, dairying, sewing etc., and to afford alternate squads of girls the opportunity to learn and practice the same while serving a period of instruction under the same roof with those vocations; that is, as a small family engaged in the usual occupations common to the whites.”⁴⁴⁵ In *They Called it Prairie Light*, Lomawaima says that the Chilocco alumni she interviewed

⁴⁴³ Child, *Boarding School Blues*, 80-81.

⁴⁴⁴ Lomawaima, *Prairie Light*, 88.

⁴⁴⁵ Second Assistant Commissioner to Superintendent C. H. Ashbury, January 26, 1911, File “Domestic Science Building 1910-1913,” Box 269, Administrative Files, 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

“welcomed the practice cottages’ six-week fantasy of family home life, a respite from institutional dormitories.”⁴⁴⁶

Indian girls thus lived for a short period of time in a house constructed to simulate an average white home. The sheer necessity of such a cottage suggests that the federal government’s awareness that simply teaching girls domestic arts could not really prepare them for working as a servant or caring for their own houses. “Home” appeared a necessary element completely lacking in the boarding schools. Thus, administrators hoped to recreate a homelike environment for the girls but they used a temporary cottage for this transition on their way to the real goal of living and working as a servant for a white family.

Stewart had two different iterations of the practice cottage. Superintendent Calvin Ashbury built the first domestic cottage at Stewart in 1911. Ashbury designed the building as a home for the domestic science teacher and as a place for her to provide lessons to the students during the day. No students actually lived in the earliest version of the cottage. The white washed wood frame building had a dining room, kitchen, and pantry where the girls would receive instruction in cooking and serving meals. Laundry could be done in a small room on the first floor. In the second floor sewing room the girls were taught advanced cutting and fitting of garments. Students and employees could socialize in the sitting room and on a shaded porch that stayed cool on hot desert afternoons.⁴⁴⁷ Over the years, a flock of chickens and a small garden plot were added to the cottage.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁶ Lomawaima, *Prairie Light*, 88-89.

⁴⁴⁷ Superintendent Calvin H. Ashbury to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 5, 1910 and Second Assistant Commissioner Hauke to Superintendent Calvin H. Ashbury, February 21, 1911, File

The house proved too small for the number of older girls in the domestic science program. No more than four girls could work in the kitchen at once without bumping elbows. To remedy the problem, one inspector suggested that the partitions be torn down to “accommodate 16 girls, working in family groups of four.”⁴⁴⁹ Remodeling of the home occurred the following year after the inspector’s recommendation. Superintendent Snyder had three more cooking units installed to accommodate twelve girls. When they were not cooking, the students tackled their classwork in the living room.⁴⁵⁰

Superintendent Bowler directed the construction of the first stone domestic cottage soon after she arrived at Stewart. During the 1934-1935 school year, male students constructed a new model Indian home that could in theory be built on a reservation. The boys built the cottage behind the old practice cottage building. This marked a new change in domestic training that coincided with the changes brought about by the Indian Reorganization Act. Rather than having the girls live in a replica of a white home where they might work as domestics, Bowler built a model Indian home that would be much more practical for students starting their own households. The school newspaper

“Domestic Science Building 1910-1913,” Box 269, Administrative Files, 1909-1923, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

⁴⁴⁸ “Inspection report of Miss Edna Groves, Supervisor of Home Economics”, January 20-25th, 1925, File “17494-1925,” Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

⁴⁴⁹ W. W. Coon, Supervisor, to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 28, 1922, File “97392-1922,” Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

⁴⁵⁰ “Inspection report of Miss Edna Groves, Supervisor of Home Economics”, January 3-10, 1923; File “19856-1923,” Box 99, Carson 806-806, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

reported that “The house was planned as a model to show the Indians of Nevada just what could be done at a very reasonable cost.”⁴⁵¹

In 1936, twelve girls in the eleventh and twelfth grade moved into the cottage, under the direction of Miss Barnett. The daily routine more closely mimicked what the girls could expect as a housewives in Indian country. The school newspaper reported:

They do every bit of their work as though they were living on the reservation. They carry fuel and water. They use kerosene lamps for lighting. They learn to cook well balanced inexpensive meals on a coal stove. They will do their washings and make their clothing right in the cottage. Later two or three small children will be cared for by the girls in the cottage. This will make it seem like a real home.⁴⁵²

After spending her allotted time working in the practice cottage that semester, student Elizabeth Jackson reported in the school newspaper that “We are sorry that the time is ended. We made hand towels, tea towels, and recipe boxes. We will take them home when we go.”⁴⁵³ The head of the domestic science department helped the girls build the recipe boxes and then encouraged them to paint and decorate them with Indian design work. Jackson appreciated her time in the cottage because it provided a break from the daily routine of washing sheets, scrubbing dorm floors, or cooking for hundreds of children. Rather than keeping an institution running, the girls in the domestic cottage practiced running a home.

⁴⁵¹ Stewart Indian School, “The Desert Redman” 1, no. 1 (October 1936), File “The Desert Redman,” 1936, 1938,” Box 60, Decimal Subject Files, 1925-1950, Records of the Carson Indian Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

In addition to learning how to be a good housekeeper, a female student at Stewart could also expect intensive training in how to be a good mother. Those who desired more advanced training could take classes in nursing and work at the hospital. Nursing became a more and more dominant professional training program at Stewart. In the 1930s, the school partnered with the Junior Red Cross, Carson City Chapter for educational training opportunities. All nursing students learned the intricacies of baby care and birthing. Superintendent Royce deemed these lessons necessary because “almost all of them will become mothers.” The nurses and physicians gave talks about modern medical techniques to care for children and focused on hygiene and methods for preventing the spread of contagious diseases. Occasionally, the girls had hands-on training as well. Babies were fairly common on campus whether they were born in the hospital to employees or Indians who sought medical care there. Sometimes the school found employees to help care for orphaned children or those who had been removed from their families by the Indian Office.⁴⁵⁴

By the 1930s Indian students starting moving on to different types of careers than had been available at the turn of the century. Out of thirty graduates of the class of 1936, the school newspaper reported that two married, seven went on to further schooling, seven stayed to work at Stewart, four worked in white urban areas, four returned to the reservations to work, and six students could not be located. One third of all graduates in

⁴⁵⁴ One such case occurred in 1916 when a mother could not care for her five children. She asked to have them enrolled at Stewart, but Superintendent Royce declined, saying that they were too young. He sent the oldest three to the Greenville Indian School in California, the second youngest to the sanatorium, and the baby stayed at Stewart. He agreed to allow the baby to stay in the care of the matron and the older girls. James B. Royce to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, December 6, 1916; DC 130; James B. Royce to Miss Virginia Licking, October 16th, 1916, File “Le-Li,” Box 267, Administrative Files [first series] 1907-1926, NARA, San Bruno.

1936 entered the Indian Service. In her study of employees in the federal Indian education system, Cathleen Cahill shows that the Indian Service had a long history of employing Indian school graduates. Many worked at non-reservation schools like Stewart as full or temporary employees and others returned home to take jobs. Richard Barrington, one of the first graduates and later band teacher and clerk at Stewart, is just one example of a Stewart student who found employment through the service. 1936 graduate, Myrtle Shaw returned home to work at the Nixon Day School on the Pyramid Lake Reservation and John Henry also worked as a mechanic at the Nixon agency at Pyramid Lake Reservation after matriculating.⁴⁵⁵

An Indian Service job was very lucrative and the single most important source of jobs for Indians in the white collar job market. Moreover, it allowed graduates to remain on the reservations. Cahill argues that “their efforts to stay in their communities, or at least among other Native people, was in and of itself an important form of resistance to assimilation, and it worked to foil the government’s agenda of breaking up tribal relations.”⁴⁵⁶ On the reservation, a returned tribal member could be both an officer of the government, an advocate for tribal rights, and a mediator.

Stewart graduates who continued their educations entered trade schools or colleges. Students from the 1936 class entered college at San Jose State College in California, teacher training and auto shop at the University of Nevada Reno, electrical engineering at an Oakland Trade School, civil engineering at the University of New

⁴⁵⁵ Stewart Indian School, “The Desert Redman” 1, no. 1, (October 1936), File “‘The Desert Redman’, 1936, 1938,” Box 60, Decimal Subject Files, 1925-1950, Records of the Carson Indian Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

⁴⁵⁶ Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers*, 261.

Mexico, nursing in Lawton, Oklahoma, and cosmetology in Riverside, California. The Indian Reorganization Act appropriated \$175,000 for educational loans for Indian students. Of this graduating class, eight applied for, and received, loans to continue their education.

The Outing Program:

“I feel that there is a great work to be done in Nevada for these Indian women.” –

*Commissioner Cato Sells*⁴⁵⁷

Learning these new vocational skills did little good for the children if they could not find jobs after finishing their education. The outing program emerged as the quintessential boarding school experience. The outing program placed older boarding school students into the homes and on the farms of white families to immerse them in civilized society. Living in white homes would inspire the students to learn the English language, internalize the lessons of industrialism and absorb the civilized habits of domesticity. Colonel Pratt had implemented a similar program in St. Augustine, Florida, while he watched over the Kiowa prisoners from the Red River wars. The prisoners became integrated into the economic life of the city by selling articles to tourists and working on local farms. By working their way into more skilled trades, and higher pay, Indian workers would come to appreciate the value of hardwork and financial prudence. Pratt believed this integration had been the key to his success in Saint Augustine. As a result, he introduced a similar program, which became known as the outing program, during the first year of Carlisle’s operation. Pratt distributed eighteen students around the

⁴⁵⁷ Cited in Jacobs, “Working on the Domestic Frontier,” 176.

Pennsylvania countryside that first summer of 1879.⁴⁵⁸ Outing became the capstone of a Carlisle education, and by the turn of the century over nine hundred students from Carlisle had worked as farm hands and domestics in the northwest.⁴⁵⁹

As each new non-reservation boarding school opened in the west it replicated Pratt's original program to some degree. Unlike the relatively isolated schools in the East, many of the new schools were very close to urban population centers so, as a result, outing students at western boarding schools became a source of cheap labor for white employers. Using the Phoenix Indian School as an example, Robert Trennert argues that, "what had been created as an apprentice device to incorporate Indian children into American society became a child labor system intended primarily for the benefit of the non-Indian community."⁴⁶⁰ Rather than the program that Pratt started, which was mostly for male students on farms, the majority of jobs in urban settings went to young women.

Duties for the girls who worked as domestics included basic cleaning, child care, cooking and serving, ironing, and answering the phone and doorbell. The working situation seemed little different than that for domestic servants of any nationality. Boss and worker fought over pay, the types of work performed, and the servant's personal life.⁴⁶¹ However, unlike other domestics, girls in the outing program did not control their wages. Employers sent half of the student's paycheck to their school to be maintained in

⁴⁵⁸ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 54 and 155.

⁴⁵⁹ Robert A. Trennert "From Carlisle to Phoenix: The Rise and Fall of the Outing System, 1878-1930," *Pacific Historical Review* 52 no. 3 (1983): 275.

⁴⁶⁰ Trennert, "Carlisle to Phoenix," 277.

⁴⁶¹ Jacobs, "Working on the Domestic Frontier," 179.

an account for them. This account supposedly helped them to save money. Wages ranged from fifteen to forty dollars a month depending on the type of work performed.⁴⁶²

Stewart had a very limited outing program by 1900 with only a handful of students working in local households in the community.⁴⁶³ Superintendent Moftself expressed disappointment at the treatment the girls received in Nevada. The homes did not provide the moralizing and uplifting experience that he had envisioned. The employers, he argues, “did not show any interest at all in the personal welfare of the pupil in their care, permitting them to go out evenings unaccompanied making it possible for the girls to choose company and places of amusement that could not fail to injure their morals.”⁴⁶⁴ In 1913, he sent twenty-five girls to Berkeley and Oakland, under the supervision of an outing matron, to work for the “best” homes with “elevating influences.”⁴⁶⁵ From that point on, the Stewart Indian School administered a two prong outing program with girls working around Carson City and in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Working conditions improved in Nevada for the outing students. In 1919, Superintendent Snyder reported that “the outing system is changing the attitude of the whites. They are glad to have the boys and girls work on farms and in families, and almost universally they find them very satisfactory help.”⁴⁶⁶ Feeling more confident about the quality of the homes in Nevada, Snyder placed more and more girls in Nevada

⁴⁶² “Carson Indian School, Section III, Schools,” *Narrative and Statistical Report* 1919.

⁴⁶³ Trennert, “Carlisle to Phoenix,” 283.

⁴⁶⁴ “Carson Indian School, Section III, Schools,” *Narrative and Statistical Report*, 1912.

⁴⁶⁵ Makley, “These Will be Strong,” 174-175.

⁴⁶⁶ “Carson Indian School, Section III, Schools,” *Narrative and Statistical Report* 1919.

homes rather than sending them to the Bay Area. Twenty-five young women worked in homes near the Stewart Indian School in 1919. This pleased Nevada's Indian communities who did not appreciate having the girls sent so far away from home. Superintendent Snyder wrote in a letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that only "tact and persuasion" kept the Bay Area location operating.⁴⁶⁷

The wife of Superintendent James B. Royce, served as outing matron at the Stewart Indian School and later as the supervisor of the San Francisco Bay Area program. Bonnie Royce worked as a matron and teacher at the school during her husband's tenure from 1915 to 1919. Commissioner Sells wrote upon Royce's appointment as Outing Matron, "I feel that there is a great work to be done in Nevada for these Indian women, and from the experience that Mrs. Royce has had in Indian work believe that she will be able to give the girls the motherly advice and encouragement which will prove an uplift to those placed in her care."⁴⁶⁸ Royce sincerely cared about the girls at Stewart. A traveling inspector commented that her "interest in the girls is so profound and genuine."⁴⁶⁹

After Superintendent Royce, died during the flu pandemic in 1919, the pregnant Bonnie Royce continued to work at Stewart and giving birth to their fourth child about five months after her husband's death. On top of her recent tragedy, the baby contracted infantile paralysis, commonly known as polio today, and needed constant care to help

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Cited in Jacobs, "Working on the Domestic Frontier," 176.

⁴⁶⁹ L.A. Dorrington, Special Agent, "Inspection Carson Indian School, December 1915," File "8842-1916," Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

him move around. Royce persevered on with her duties, causing an inspector who visited the campus in May of 1920 to write that, “In spite of the great sorrow in the loss of her husband she has thrown herself into her work with excellent spirit, prompted as she has been by her great interest in the Indian girls.” When, the memory of her husband’s death proved too much for her, Royce requested a transfer away from Stewart to Oakland.⁴⁷⁰ The Indian Office granted her request, placing her in charge of the outing program in the Bay Area with girls from Stewart, Sherman Institute in Riverside, California and Chemawa Boarding School in Salem, Oregon. Royce served as outing matron until the early 1930s.⁴⁷¹

As outing matron, Royce displayed considerable maternalism with the Oakland outing students, taking upon herself to monitor the girls’ free time.⁴⁷² She wanted them to “make something of themselves,” but the girls often disagreed about her vision for their future. To steer their romantic trysts into successful marriages, Royce set up socials and parties with eligible young men. Many young women rebelled against the surveillance of both their employers and their outing matron.⁴⁷³

In “Working on the Domestic Frontier: American Indian Domestic Servants in White Women’s Households in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1920–1940,” Margaret Jacobs analyzes the experiences of outing students from the Stewart Indian School who

⁴⁷⁰ Report of Training and Activities of Girls, Elsie E. Newton, Supervisor, May 15, 1920; File “36064-1932,” Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC; “Bonnie V. Royce,” 1920 Census, Carson, Ormsby, Nevada, roll T625_1004, page 1A, enumeration District 68, Image, 998.

⁴⁷¹ Jacobs, “Working on the Domestic Frontier,” 173-174.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 182.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 183-185.

worked in white households in the San Francisco Bay area under Royce. White households, she argues, were a site of domestic colonization in which white women sought to “uplift” the female servants in their care. Despite the surveillance, many girls looked forward to working away from home. Jacobs concludes that the girls did not work as domestics for their entire lives. Instead, they worked for a short period as “a part of a patchwork of economic strategies and perhaps as a youthful adventure – before returning to their reservations and rancherias.”⁴⁷⁴

Girls joined outing programs for various reasons including to earn extra money. Some sent their wages home to their families, while others dreamed of saving money for a higher education. Others enjoyed the social activities of the cities and the companionship of their fellow working friends. Finding love or a marriage partner also occupied much of the girls’ free time.⁴⁷⁵ Discarding the Victorian sexual standards taught at the boarding schools, outing students often embraced new sexual freedoms and leisure activities that working in the city allowed.

By the 1920s many boarding schools repackaged their outing programs because they could no longer pretend that the outing program was educational. It had become a work program, and Stewart was one among many schools that officially opened up their outing program to all Indian members of the community who wished to work in white society.⁴⁷⁶ This change correlated with a shift in school policy which forbade female outing students to work during the school year to encourage them to focus on their

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 167.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 179; Robert A. Trennert, “Victorian Morality and the Supervision of Indian Women Working in Phoenix, 1906-1930,” *Journal of Social History* 2, no. 1 (1988): 121

⁴⁷⁶ Trennert, “From Carlisle to Phoenix,” 289-290.

education. As a result, many year round positions suddenly opened up for alumni and young women straight from the reservations and colonies.⁴⁷⁷

The Meriam Report concluded that the outing system had outlived its usefulness as a training tool. As boarding schools moved toward cultural pluralism and placed less emphasis on domestic service, outing programs seemed more oppressive than helpful. They kept the labor market filled with low-paid workers who could not really hope to advance in American society.⁴⁷⁸ The Meriam Report denounced training students solely for domestic and day labor. These types of positions, while not inherently objectionable, did not provide stepping stones to better jobs. The report urged the schools to train students for more skilled occupations such as nursing, teaching, and clerical work.⁴⁷⁹ Many schools had already begun these programs, but the Meriam Report cautioned that without federal funding they would not be competitive enough to allow the girls any real chance of entering technical school or college.⁴⁸⁰

The outing program continued at Stewart despite the objections outlined in the Meriam Report, although the school did shift its focus away from domestic training to preparing girls for careers in nursing and clerical work. Many of the domestics in the Reno and Carson City area worked through the Carson Indian Agency instead of the outing program. In 1931 Minnie B. Holcomb, the field matron at the Reno Sparks Indian

⁴⁷⁷ Trennert, "Victorian Morality," 118.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 124.

⁴⁷⁹ Meriam Report, *Problem of Indian Administration*, 523.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 551.

Colony, reported that there were thirty-seven women and twenty-two girls from the colony working in town.

By the 1940s many Indian women worked entirely outside of the supervision of the Carson Indian Agency. Mary E. Joaquin, a social worker for the Reno Indian Agency, wrote a memorandum to Superintendent Don Foster, who had replaced Bowler, asking for some kind of supervision of Indian domestic workers in Reno. She wrote:

It seems that the most common problem that all these people meet is that there is no place where the Indian girl can go to on her day offs. Consequently, she wanders off toward Lake Street and frequently meets some undesirable Indian man, Mexican or negro or white, and the result may be returning home in a drunken state or not returning at all. Sometimes the girl lands in jail. The above is a very common occurrence.⁴⁸¹

Joaquin had taken some initiative and contacted the local YWCA to see if they would start a girl reserve group among the domestics so they would have some place to go during their free time. The YWCA and the girls' employers expressed interest in such a program if it would help prevent the late night escapades.

Joaquin's memo addresses one of the greatest problems of the domestic training and outing programs. The schools prepared students to live and work in an institution. In the Meriam Report an unnamed girl is quoted with regard to the difficult transition from institution to working life.

At school a girl does everything to the sound of a bell. You eat by a bell; you study by a bell; you work by a bell; you go to bed and you get up in the morning when you hear the bell. Then the girl goes to the city to work,

⁴⁸¹ Memo regarding exercising some supervision of Indian domestic help working in Reno by Mary E. Joaquin to Don C. Foster, January 25, 1941, File "901 placement correspondence, 1941-1946," Box 6, Records of the Education Division (School Principal), 1924-47, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

and she goes out in the evening; and at ten o' clock when it's time for her to go home the bell doesn't ring," leaving her on her own and without anyone to make sure she is protected from temptation.⁴⁸²

Changing Economies and Changing Lifeways:

"A Numu (Paiute) rabbit boss could hardly lead a rabbit drive when jackrabbits were being poisoned...." – Yerington Paiute Tribal History⁴⁸³

Changing reservation economies and the increasing number of men and women working for wages shifted gender dynamics within the household. For instance, for generations, Northern Paiutes had worked according to a seasonal rhythm based on the harvest of traditional foods. As the Paiute people adjusted to the new wage economy, they initially continued their seasonal patterns. Most wage work for men occurred between May and September during the harvest season.⁴⁸⁴ When planting and harvest time arrived, men and occasionally women, traveled off the reservation returning home in the winter. Paiute men grubbed sagebrush to clear land for agriculture and dug and cleaned irrigation ditches to bring water to fields of alfalfa and wheat. White ranchers also hired Paiute men as ranch hands to drive cattle to and from summer pastures and tend to them. Cutting wood for firewood or fence posts provided another avenue for wage work.

⁴⁸² Meriam, *Problem of Indian Administration*, 577-578.

⁴⁸³ Yerington Paiute Tribe, *A Numa History: The Yerington Paiute Tribe* (Yerington Paiute Tribe, 1984), 22.

⁴⁸⁴ The same pattern of male wage work also occurred on the Western Shoshone reservation. By the 1920s, three-fourths of male heads of household on the Western Shoshone reservation were employed as seasonal laborers. Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 54.

Innovations in agriculture increased opportunities for year-round employment for men. One such innovation occurred in the Yerington area with the introduction of crop row farming by Swiss Italian immigrants. The Swiss Italian farmers grew potatoes, onions, and garlic which created winter jobs of sorting, grading, storing, and shipping produce. Year-round wage labor posed its own set of challenges for both Indian males and their communities. As individuals, Paiutes had to decide whether to travel to the pinion pine mountains to harvest pine nuts in October like their ancestors or forego the ceremonies and harvest potatoes for a wage. Similar quandaries occurred in the spring when the trout spawned. Every spring, the Paiutes held fandangos to celebrate the trout running up river from Walker Lake.⁴⁸⁵



Figure 26. Superintendent Bowler talking with the Fallon Tribal Council.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁵ Yerington Paiute Tribe, *A Numa History*, 21-22.

⁴⁸⁶ “Superintendent Bowler listens to Chairman Willie Steve of Fallon Council outline new irrigation plans,” File “Carson Agency Annual Extension Report, 1937 (1 of 4), Box 1, Extension and Industrial Narrative Reports & Programs of Work 1937-52, Records of the Carson Indian Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

Cultivation of farms and ranch lands also disrupted traditional hunting practices. As the Yerington Paiute Tribe recounts in *A Numu History*, “A Numu (Paiute) rabbit boss could hardly lead a rabbit drive when jackrabbits were being poisoned by Taivo (white) ranchers as ‘pests’ and barbed wire fences were in the path of their drives.”⁴⁸⁷ The growing importance of the wage economy to Indian life, and the increasing number of farms and ranches throughout the Nevada countryside challenged traditional cultural and subsistence practices.

While the men labored mostly in the fields, Paiute women toiled in white households or in local businesses. They secured wages working in gardens, cooking, bottling and canning food, washing clothes, tending to children, and keeping house. As white settlements grew, Paiute women found work in newly established hotels or stores as well. For example, Paiute women from the Yerington area washed linen and towels, and changed the sheets at Fred Brook’s Yerington Hotel around World War I.

This gendered employment was new to the Paiute. Traditionally men and women had performed most work together with a few exceptions like antelope hunting. Now women and men not only did different work, but women worked for wages year round, while men labored more seasonally. Consequently, women became important wage earners for families, and men and women were often separated for longer periods of time.⁴⁸⁸

The switch from agriculture to ranching on the Walker River and Western Shoshone Reservations from the late 1800s to the 1940s demonstrates many of the

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid, 22.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

economic changes in Nevada's Indian country. In the 1880s and 1890s the residents of the Walker River Reservation tried to make a living by raising chickens and horses, and growing some produce. Alfalfa, clover, wheat, and barley grew well, and reservation residents sold their crops at market. In addition, the Walker River Agent leased part of the land to white ranchers who grazed their cows on the land and provided a meager income to the tribe. As a result many of the men worked off of the reservation in Mason Valley, Bodie, California, Hawthore, Dayton, and Virginia City. They assisted farmers, worked in the mines, or cut and hauled wood.⁴⁸⁹

By the 1930s, Walker River residents had moved away from farming, and, rather than leasing land to white ranchers, they began their own livestock husbandry programs to help relieve the poverty caused by the Depression. The Walker River Agency created a cattle association later called the Walker River Indian Livestock Corporative Association. By 1944 there were 1,641 head of livestock grazing on the reservation.⁴⁹⁰ A similar pattern emerged on the Western Shoshone Reservation. The Shoshone had tried to cultivate crops on the reservation in the 1880s and 1890s. Crum argues in *The Road in Which We Came: A History of the Western Shoshone*, that they accepted the government agenda to turn them into farmers, "not because they favored assimilation, but because their native food sources had been severely reduced."⁴⁹¹ They saw farming as a way to supplement their diets. Some families succeeded with small subsistence gardens which included lettuce, cabbage, radishes, onions, and beets.

⁴⁸⁹ Johnson, "Walker River Paiutes," 100.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid, 150.

⁴⁹¹ Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 53.

Outside of these family gardens, the agriculture effort failed. The reservation land could not sustain intensive farming. Most of the Western Shoshone reservation is mountainous with some valley land at an altitude of 5,500 feet. What land could be cultivated was subject to a very short growing season with early frosts. Water for irrigation proved a problem as well. The Owyhee River, the primary source of water for the reservation, ran dry in June. The reservation was much better suited to cattle grazing than intensive agriculture, but the Indian Office took a long time to accept the viability of livestock grazing for Indian people because of its association with nomadism, which was considered an undesirable characteristic of Indian societies.

When the Indian Office did accept ranching at Western Shoshone it initially leased the land to nearby white cattle owners. The proceeds from the leasing allowed the reservation residents to purchase their own cattle. The cattle herd increased from 150 in 1900 to 2,591 in 1917 and remained relatively stable. The reservation could only sustain a limited number of cattle because access to water constrained the quantity of hay that could be grown to sustain a herd. In 1937 the completed Wild Horse Dam allowed water storage throughout the year and doubled the amount of hay that could be grown which resulted in a similar doubling of the herd.⁴⁹²

This switch to a livestock economy occurred during the Indian New Deal. Superintendent Bowler worked to encourage industry on the reservations and colonies and provide skills that the Washoes, Shoshones, and Paiutes wanted for their community. The 1930s saw an influx of jobs and training on the reservations through programs like

⁴⁹² The Wild Horse Dam was built through the combined effort of the Public Works Administration and the Indian Division of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 53 and 88.

the CCC-Indian Division and the Works Project Administration. During the Great Depression, government programs such as the Indian Division of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) provided many more jobs on the reservations. The CCC was a New Deal program to help alleviate the poverty of the Great Depression through conservation related projects. The Indian Office administered a separate division called the Indian Division which employed young men on tribal lands.

Any Indian man over the age of seventeen could enroll in the CCC-Indian Division and go to work on his own reservations. For example, young men worked to improve cattle ranges by improving irrigation systems, controlling erosion caused by water and wind, controlling invasive animals and crops, and building roads, bridges, culverts, cattle guards, and irrigation structures. Young men needed, and learned, new skills for these programs, and the CCC-Indian Division encouraged them to supplement their education through correspondence courses in carpentry, printing, electrical installation, plumbing, blue print reading, auto mechanics, electric and acetylene welding, blacksmithing, truck and cat driving, surveying, forestry, agriculture, animal husbandry, range management, typing, bookkeeping, radio operation, cooking, and first aid.⁴⁹³

Most children now attended public schools or reservation day schools rather than going to Stewart for advanced vocational training; consequently, the Paiute, Washoe, and Shoshone all wanted better educational training for children and adults on their reservations. In response, Bowler instituted massive extension programs on the

⁴⁹³ Crum, *The Road on Which We Came*, 86; Charles A. Green “The Work of Civilian Conservation Corps – Indian Division Carson Indian Agency,” File “Minutes, Fifth Inter-Tribal Conference of Council Representatives, Carson Jurisdiction, Nov 1940,” Box 6, Records of the Carson Indian School, Records of the Education Division (School Principal), 1924-47, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

reservations under the Carson Indian Agency which included the northern part of the state.⁴⁹⁴ Extension programs targeted adults and provided education and real life training in agriculture, livestock raising and home economics. Carson had one male extension agent, a female home economics agent, and six farm agents who traveled non-stop to both reservations and colonies and sometimes individual homes. Teaching programs consisted of demonstrations, advising Indian communities on their economic programs, and helping individuals with loan payments. The subject of the programs ranged from making curtains and articles to sell to conducting large livestock auctions.⁴⁹⁵

The Indian Office may have told students at the turn of the century not to dream of a future career as a teacher, nurse, legislator, or farm manager, but by the 1930s many students had moved on to these more advanced careers. Under Bowler's administration many former students helped their home communities adjust to the economic and political changes of the Indian Reorganization Act. Rather than destroying Native culture, the Stewart Indian School had fostered individuals who helped their people retain their values and sense of identity in a changing world.

⁴⁹⁴The Indian Office continuously shifted jurisdiction over the reservations and colonies of the state. In the 1930s the northern part of the state including Western Shoshone fell under the Carson Indian Agency. The Washoe and Western Shoshones who lived in the central and southern parts of the state along with the Washoe and the Walker River Reservation fell under the Walker River Agency. Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 59.

⁴⁹⁵R.F. Coulter "Extension Work in Carson Indian Agency," File "Minutes, Fifth Inter-Tribal Conference of Council Representatives, Carson Jurisdiction, Nov 1940," Box 6, Records of the Carson Indian School, Records of the Education Division (School Principal), 1924-47, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

Chapter 7

“TO ADVERTISE THE SCHOOL”: BAND, PARADES, AND SPORTS⁴⁹⁶

The Stewart Indian School marched in its first parade in Carson City on Memorial Day 1893 to honor and decorate the gravesites of fallen soldiers. School staff escorted 101 students to the center of town to line up for the procession. Girls sported new dresses and hats, and boys wore freshly pressed uniforms. Superintendent Gibson reported to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, “They presented a fine appearance and were complimented by all that witnessed their parade for their orderly conduct while in line.” The column marched through town to the Masonic and Odd Fellow’s cemeteries to decorate the graves. At the cemetery the pupils sang two songs for which, “they received marked notice... the children were as well pleased with the part they took as were the citizens in witnessing their actions.”⁴⁹⁷ For many years thereafter, Stewart students proudly marched in the Memorial Day procession. In 1895, Superintendent Mead also noted that he “frequently overheard people remark that the pupils from the Indian school were one of the main features of the occasion and kindred remarks.”⁴⁹⁸

Superintendent Mead concluded that without a marching band Stewart missed a wonderful opportunity to impress the community. Parades cost little and furnished entertainment and advertisements for the school. He further reasoned that musical instruments would “make the school that much more attractive and homelike.”⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁶ Frederick Snyder to Earl T. Laird Sr., Stewart Indian School Trail Podcast, Laird, #15.

⁴⁹⁷ *Annual Report* 1893, 426.

⁴⁹⁸ *Annual Report* 1895, 379-381.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Consequently, he asked the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for musical instruments. His plea worked and the following school year the administration marshaled enough instruments to start a band. The Carson and Virginia Militia loaned the pupils some of the necessary instruments and the Indian Service provided the rest. The following year, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs also approved funds for band uniforms which delighted the students who enjoyed showing them off in marching drills.

In the 1890s the Stewart Indian School displayed their new school band and sports teams to the public to illustrate the civilization process. Stewart students marched with their brass instruments throughout Carson City to exhibit their disciplined bodies and musical skills as part of a public relations campaign. Sporting events demonstrated the harnessed power of the educated Indian body as male athletes competed against college and professional teams in Nevada and California. When they implemented these extracurricular programs, federal educators did not anticipate that sports and band would become fundamental components of a boarding school identity for Indian students. The children, their families, and their communities, transformed athletics events and musical exhibitions into venues for expressing Native culture and to this day take pride in the achievements of Stewart students.

In his article “History of the Body Reconsidered,” Roy Porter argues that “bodies are simultaneously objects for the external gaze, facing the outside world, and also subjective, integral to the internal self.”⁵⁰⁰ This dichotomy between the outside observer and the internal sense of self is particularly noticeable in the presentation of Stewart

⁵⁰⁰ Roy Porter, “History of the Body Reconsidered” in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 242.

students to the non-Indian community in Nevada. Student bodies were put on display for white audiences to demonstrate the success of assimilation policies. At the same time those bodies also stood as symbols of pride and accomplishment to Nevada's Indian communities. Prominent Indian athletes proved that Indian bodies were not undeveloped and physically inferior as many top scientists and policy makers contended. Indeed sporting events established the biological strength of Native peoples against white teams and reinforced Indians' pride in their natural abilities and cultural heritage. Coupled with other public events such as concerts, parades, and traditional dancing, students from the Stewart Indian School stood on the front lines of an expanding frontier in the public sphere.

Parades:

"They are a nice looking lot of boys, neatly uniformed in grey and under the most thorough discipline." – Nevada Daily State Journal⁵⁰¹

The Indian Office recognized early on that good press and visibility helped create popular support for Indian education. Robert A. Trennert, Jr., argues in his article, "Selling Indian Education at World's Fairs and Expositions, 1893-1904," that from 1893 to 1904 the Indian Office launched a systematic campaign to convince the American public that Indian assimilation worked. With limited economic resources, the Indian Office decided to highlight its best success story, the federal education system, at highly visible events such as World's Fairs and Expositions. Indian Commissioner Morgan launched this public relations campaign at the Columbian Exposition in 1893. Morgan wanted visitors to compare traditional Indian culture and the progress made in the Indian

⁵⁰¹ "The Indian School Band," *Daily Nevada State Journal*, September 22, 1897.

schools. He designed a working school room for the Columbian Exposition. Children from Albuquerque, Haskell, Genoa, and Chilocco spent weeks in the display school house. Another exhibit featured Indian performers in a pseudo Wild West show for contrast. The school exhibit did not garner much popular attention, but the Wild West display drew thousands of fairgoers.

Despite Commissioner Morgan's best efforts to highlight the accomplishments of Indian education, traditional performances by tribal groups consistently drew more crowds than the school room exhibits at World's Fairs and Exhibitions. The Indian Office learned from its mistakes and in future Fairs incorporated more dynamic displays including Indian school bands.⁵⁰² The American public remained fascinated with displays of traditional culture. The Stewart administration slowly learned this lesson as well. In combination with the celebration of Indian culture under the Indian New Deal in the 1930s, Stewart continued its tradition of musical exhibition. However, under Bowler's tutelage, the school began to showcase traditional Indian songs, dances, and crafts.

Almost all federal boarding schools formed their own bands. Bands served as good public relations for the Indian Service. They helped convince the general public that federal assimilation programs worked, and that schools like Stewart were a good investment in the future of American Indians. Watching neatly dressed Indian children playing familiar songs on familiar instruments provided visual evidence of the changes wrought by a white education. Band concerts helped turn Indian "others" into something

⁵⁰² Robert A. Trennert Jr., "Selling Indian Education at World's Fairs and Expositions, 1893-1904," *American Indian Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (Summer 1987): 203-220.

familiar. A spectator watching the Phoenix Indian School band concert in 1911 commented that “the concert was an eloquent answer to the question frequently asked: ‘Why educate the Indian?’”⁵⁰³

In addition to serving as public relations tools, bands also encouraged “safer” musical traditions than the types of music played on the reservations. Policy makers had scorned and prohibited Native songs and dancing since before the turn of the century. The Indian Office worked hard to suppress the Sun Dance and the Ghost Dance, particularly in Nevada. As part of this larger goal of eradicating traditional dances, educators believed that replacing hand drums with snare drums would also replace Native cultural practices with civilized ones.

Boarding school students quickly learned to play these new instruments, but rather than superseding traditional music, the new musicians integrated classical compositions with traditional Indian culture. In fact, many Indian musicians were popular expressly for their exotic appeal. Since the late 1800s musical presentations across the county had popularized a romanticized ideal of the noble savage and the Indian maiden through songs such as “Hiawatha’s Love Melody” and “Indian Love Call.” Composers combined melodies from Indian songs with orchestras, singers, or marching bands. This combination made a foreign musical tradition into something easily

⁵⁰³ Quoted in Greg Handel and Jere Humphreys, “The Phoenix Indian School Band, 1894-1930,” *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 26, no. 2 (2005): 55.

consumable by the American public and more palatable for the Indian Office to use in the boarding school classroom.⁵⁰⁴

The first Stewart band of twenty-one boys assembled in 1896 under the instruction of Edwin Schanadore, an Oneida employed as a disciplinarian at the school. Superintendent Eugene Mead introduced this extracurricular activity to create further public relations opportunities and to inspire student interest in the school. The ploy worked. Joining the band became so popular that children stopped running away and students strove to earn a place in the group. Superintendent Mead expressed his delight in the new program in his annual report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. “Such was the effect on the general moral tone and the contentment of our pupils that we have not a single runaway recorded for the year.”⁵⁰⁵

In a show of both enthusiasm for the new music program and an expression of their Native culture, students carried out clandestine night dances. Pupils snuck out of their dorms and slunk away to the music room to steal drums. The sound of music and dancing students reverberated throughout the campus until the wee hours of the night, but the drums reappeared in the band room in the morning. Teacher Frank Lobdell remembered that faculty looked the other way and chose to view the events as a sign of student exuberance rather than student rebellion.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴ Rayna Green and John Troutman, “By the Waters of the Minnehaha”: Music and Dance, Pageants and Princesses” in *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1879-2000*, eds. Margaret L. Archuleta, Brenda J. Child, and K. Tsianina Lomawaima (Heard Museum, 2000), 67-69.

⁵⁰⁵ *Annual Report 1897*, 358-359.

⁵⁰⁶ Jackson, “History of the Stewart Indian School,” 55.

The Stewart band marched out for their first big performance in the Memorial Day parade in Carson City in 1897, four years after they first marched without instruments. Between four and five hundred Indians thronged the streets to watch the children lead the entire parade to the cemetery. Superintendent Mead reported that the band "...has done more to create a favorable impression among the people here in behalf of our pupils than any other feature of our school. People have frequently remarked to me that they were surprised at the showing these Indian boys have made and that they had no idea that they had the ability to accomplish such results."⁵⁰⁷ After the parade, Indian children and families applied to Stewart in droves. Since the school was already packed to maximum capacity, Mead had to decline most of the applicants.

The young musicians made several more appearances that year, and their deportment continued to elicit positive comments from the white community. The *Daily Nevada State Journal* recorded that "They are a nice looking lot of boys, neatly uniformed in grey and under the most thorough discipline. They played at the track yesterday afternoon and attracted marked attention both in appearance and the rendition of the music they played."⁵⁰⁸ The white community in Carson City expressed their approval and even began to express pride in the accomplishments of the Stewart Indian School.

Indian School bands played at a variety of community venues, including rodeos, political rallies, sports games, concerts, parades, graduation ceremonies, burials, and

⁵⁰⁷ *Annual Report 1897*, 358-359.

⁵⁰⁸ "The Indian School Band," *Daily Nevada State Journal*, September 22, 1897.

clubs meetings.⁵⁰⁹ In addition to these settings, Stewart's pupils even performed at two movie premiers in Reno.⁵¹⁰ Once they gained some notoriety, Indian school bands commonly traveled for weeks at a time on regional or national tours, and Stewart was no exception. Stewart musicians made several tours in southern California in the early 1900s, as did the band from the Phoenix Indian School. The school in Phoenix had double the student population and a much larger band, but played at similar functions and completed similar tours as Stewart.⁵¹¹

Stewart alumni today take pride in the school's longstanding tradition of marching in the parades celebrating Nevada Day which were initially called Admission Day until 1933 when the State Legislature officially renamed the state holiday. The Stewart Indian School had a float or marching entry every year until the school closed and alumni continue the Nevada Day Parade tradition to the present day.⁵¹² The Nevada Indian Commission and the Stewart Advisory Board provided three floats for the 2012 Nevada Day festivities.

Parades and festivities in Carson City yielded fun times for students. In 1904 the children ogled side shows and took turn after turn on the carousel during the Fourth of July celebrations. The children had so much fun that the student newspaper playfully

⁵⁰⁹ The Phoenix Indian School band performed at similar civic engagements including Presidential rallies, Columbus Day activities. The band marched in parades for national holidays, grand openings, and dedication ceremonies. At one point, the Phoenix Indian School even hosted weekly concerts and cars would be lined up to attend. The Phoenix band received and accepted an invitation to play for the dedication of a new steel bridge over the Colorado River. Greg Handel and Jere Humphreys, "The Phoenix Indian School Band, 1894-1930," *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 26, no. 2 (2005): 158.

⁵¹⁰ Johnson, "Stewart Indian School."

⁵¹¹ The Phoenix band even traveled to Atlantic City as the guests of the Phoenix lodge of Elks to play a concert at the grand lodge of the Elks. Handel and Humphreys, 153-155.

⁵¹² Johnson, "Stewart Indian School;" Vogel, "Historic Indian School."

requested that Superintendent Asbury purchase a merry-go-round for the school to help with recruitment. Several student athletes competed in the track and field competitions and took first place in the one mile, half mile, 100 yards, 220 yards, 440 yards, and 220 yard hurdles. Stewart represented itself proudly in the parade with a float drawn by four white horses symbolizing the main industries at the school. The float took third place to the disappointment of the students and the crowd. The school newspaper commented that “we are better satisfied to have the judgment of the leading people in our favor and third prize than to have had first and not deserved it.”⁵¹³



Figure 27. Stewart Indian School band marching in the Nevada Day parade circa, 1945-1949. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

Stewart stole the spotlight on several other occasions. In 1924, the Stewart band catapulted itself into the Nevada headlines during a political rally for Presidential

⁵¹³ Carson Indian School, *New Indian* 1, no. 9 (1904): 3.

nominee John Davis and his Vice Presidential running mate Charles W. Bryan, the younger brother of the famed orator and statesman William Jennings Bryan. Huge crowds turned out in Carson City to see William Jennings Bryan campaign for his brother and the Democratic Party. The Stewart band borrowed and decorated a truck from the Department of Prisons. The *Reno Evening Gazette* reported that the “truck was gaily decorated for the occasion and emblazoned thereon in vivid paint was the inscription “We are for Davis and Bryan.”⁵¹⁴ The band, in their festooned truck, had the honor of greeting Bryan as he arrived in Carson. The Democratic Party paid the students for their performance.

The band’s participation in this event is noteworthy for two reasons. First, the band had attained enough notoriety that the Democratic Party in Nevada sought out their services and honored them by putting them at the head of the parade. Second, the Stewart band stole the show. The *Reno Gazette* only reported on the Stewart float. Apparently, no other floats made an impression upon the author because after describing the Stewart entry, the article continues, “The truck was not the only state vehicle in the procession. There were others.”⁵¹⁵ The “others,” however, did not receive any mention.

The Stewart Band:

“*They went everywhere.*” – *Earl T. Laird Jr.*⁵¹⁶

From a twenty-one piece brass band, the Stewart music program grew significantly over the years. Stewart expanded its musical offerings to include an

⁵¹⁴ “Bryan’s Visit Awakens Interest in National Campaign in Nevada,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, September 27, 1924.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁶ Stewart Indian School Trail Podcast, Laird, #15.

orchestra, mandolin club, choir, and a girl's double quartette which provided more opportunities to the female sex. The orchestra and choir included girls from the beginning, but in the 1890s the brass marching band was a male domain. Although it is unknown exactly when integration occurred, girls did play in the brass band by the 1930s.⁵¹⁷ Other boarding schools offered similar clubs with gendered options. Each grade starting from the sixth grade had its own band, and by 1938 the senior band had fifty-four, and the junior band forty, members.⁵¹⁸ That meant that the senior band alone had grown to one and a half times the size of the original school band.

Joining any of the musical clubs or activities at Stewart required a serious time commitment as demonstrated in the weekly schedule for meetings in 1917 below:

Monday:

6:30-7:30 pm- Mandolin Club practice in Chapel under direction of Miss Pendergast
7:30-8:30 pm- Band practice in Band Hall under direction of Mr. Barrington

Tuesday:

6:30-7:30 pm- Choir Practice in the Chapel under direction of Miss Pendergast
7:30-9:00 pm- Band plays at Y.M.C.A. meeting

Wednesday:

7:30-8:30 pm- Orchestra practice in the Chapel under direction of Mr. Barrington

Thursday:

7:00-8:30 pm- Orchestra practice if called by special announcement

Friday:

7:30-9:00 pm- Band practices and plays at large pupils' socials.

Saturday:

⁵¹⁷ Nevada Indian Commission. *Stewart Visions* (Spring 2007). Nevada Indian Commission.

⁵¹⁸ The Phoenix Indian School had very similar musical offerings. Annual Report 1917; Stewart Indian School Train Podcast, Laird, Podcast #15; "Musical Program Set Thursday at Stewart" *Reno Evening Gazette*, May 24, 1928; Handel and Humphreys, "Phoenix Indian School Band," 156.

Special arrangements to be made for Mandolin Club practice during the day in the girls' dorm.

7:30-8:30 pm- Orchestra practice in the Chapel every other week under direction of Mr. Barrington.

Sunday:

9:30 am- Band plays for dress parade and review

7:30-8:30 pm- Choir sings in the Chapel for Sunday evening services. Band, orchestra, and mandolin club serve as alternates.

Although practices and concerts ate into student's free time, being a band member conferred social caché. Musicians were very popular among the student population.

Occasionally, they even got to organize and sponsor dances. In March of 1917, the band hosted a school dance in the assembly hall on a Saturday night. Two of the most accomplished players, Harry Sampson and Louis Bagley, served as the musical director and floor manager respectively. The dance went long into the night, and students feasted on coffee, sandwiches, salad, pickles, cake, and ice cream.⁵¹⁹

Music performances were not always scripted. Some celebrations engendered impromptu expressions of joy, music, and dance. The graduation ceremony for the class of 1903, for example, kicked off a night of raucous singing and dancing. The graduates included Jack Mahone, Jefferson Davis, Lizzie Dutch, Emma McGeary, Pansy Henry, Agnes Cleveland, and Emma Bobshaw.⁵²⁰ Jack Mahone, wrote an article in the school newspaper commemorating the night. The graduates "did lift up their voices and make a great noise of 'yells' and with much singing, did amuse a great multitude of people." The

⁵¹⁹ "Social Events," *Indian Enterprise* (March 1917): 13; Jesse B. Mortsolf to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, December 18, 1912, File "130707-1912," Box 101, Carson 810-820, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

⁵²⁰ "Class Prophecy" *New Indian* 1, no. 9 (1904): 3; Jesse B. Mortsolf to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, December 18, 1912, File "130707-1912," Box 101, Carson 810-820, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

students continued to “make merry with music and with dances, until a late hour” when the entire party moved back to the Stewart school grounds and continued their revelry. The graduating students received presents and fellow classmates and teacher prophesized about their promising futures.

Stewart matriculated many notable musicians. Richard Barrington played during his career at Stewart and then returned to the school to teach classes of budding musicians. Barrington was the first student enrolled at Stewart in 1890 at the age of ten, and numbered among the first graduating class in 1901. Before graduating from Stewart, Barrington spent two years at Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania playing in the famous Indian band which toured the United States.⁵²¹ At Carlisle he was friends with the most famous American Indian athlete of all time, Jim Thorpe.⁵²²

Following the tradition set by Commissioner Morgan a decade before, Barrington formed a group of twenty Native musicians, including Stewart students and staff, to play at the San Francisco World’s Fair in 1915. Although many of its members came from Stewart, the group did not officially represent the school. One of the main attractions at the Fair was an imitation mining camp called the Forty-Niner Camp. The Stewart band played at the camp for a year, earning the name the “Forty-Niner Camp Band.” Barrington also formed other bands in San Francisco to rather wide acclaim.⁵²³

After the World’s Fair, Barrington worked for a short while at the Sherman Indian School before returning to his Alma Mater in February of 1917 as Bandmaster, Property

⁵²¹ “University Honors Distinguished Nevadans,” *Nevada State Journal*, May 24, 1964.

⁵²² Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Life Stories*, 1.

⁵²³ Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Life Stories*, 2.

Clerk, and Instructor in the shoe and harness making department at Stewart. The student newspaper, the *Indian Enterprise*, excitedly reported Barrington's arrival and hoped that his tutelage would catapult them into stardom. The article states, "We have excellent band material here and aim to equal the Carson City Band in due course of time, at present conceded to be the best concert band in the state."⁵²⁴ Barrington brought his wife, Jessie, and their twelve year old son, Lloyd, with him to Stewart. His wife worked as matron for the large boys.⁵²⁵ A report on the teaching abilities of the employees described Barrington as "interested, faithful, and quite efficient."⁵²⁶

In 1920, after three years at Stewart, Barrington transferred to Pueblo Bonito, New Mexico. Disillusioned with the politics of the Indian Service, he quit and returned home to Nevada to work in the lumber industry. He owned and operated lumber mills in Quincy and Sierraville. His son, Lloyd, was the first Indian graduate of the University of Nevada in 1927 and went on to attend Lincoln Law School in San Francisco. Barrington was passionate about securing rights for American Indians. He helped form in 1915 what would become California Indians Incorporated. His son served as president for fifteen years. Father and son played influential roles in the California Indian Land Claim Suit and the Washoe Land Suit. He testified at the Washoe Land Claim Hearing. The

⁵²⁴ "Campus Chronicle," *Indian Enterprise* (March 1917): 10.

⁵²⁵ Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, 1; Report of Training and Activities of Girls, Elsie E. Newton, Supervisor, May 15, 1920, File "36064-1932," Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

⁵²⁶ H. B. Peairs, "Report of H. B. Peairs, Supervisor of Schools, on the Carson Indian School, Carson, Nevada, May 2nd and 3rd, 1916," File "58340-1916," Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

University of Nevada Reno awarded him an honorary degree as a Distinguished Nevadan in 1964.⁵²⁷

Another distinguished Stewart musician, Dewey Sampson, accompanied Barrington to the World's Fair, where he played the trumpet, saxophone, and trombone. Afterwards Sampson returned to Stewart to continue his athletic career, and worked on the school printing press. He then attended the boarding school at Chemawa for a short time, continuing his academic career at Reno High School and the University of Nevada, Reno. After graduating, Sampson worked construction and became a semi-pro basketball player. His brother, Harry Sampson, founded the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony and also played the clarinet. Dewey was elected to the Nevada State Legislature as a representative of Washoe County and served one term from 1938-1940 in a district with a predominantly non-Indian population. An advocate for Indian rights and self-determination, Sampson worked to eliminate anti-Indian laws in the state.⁵²⁸

Although the band had already earned many accolades and produced notable musicians during its first thirty years, it picked up more speed in the 1930s. Unlike the band at the Phoenix Indian School which played with less and less frequently during the 1930s and dissolved by 1940, the Stewart band continued to make headlines until it disbanded in 1980. The new band teacher, Earl T. Laird, who arrived from Pennsylvania

⁵²⁷ Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Life Stories*, 2-3; "University Honors Distinguished Nevadans" *Nevada State Journal*, May 24, 1964.

⁵²⁸ Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Life Stories*, 35-36; James W. Hulse, *Forty Years in the Wilderness: Impressions of Nevada 1940-1980* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1986) 95; Nevada Riches: the Land and People of the Silver State, "Dewey Sampson," Cooperative Libraries Automated Network, Accessed January 12, 2013, <http://www.clan.lib.nv.us/content.asp?id=563>;

with his wife Fieatta and their six children in 1930 inspired much of this success. He worked as band instructor for almost forty years and retired in 1969.

Earl T. Laird Jr., the son of the legendary band director, remembered that upon his father's arrival at Stewart, Superintendent Snyder told him that the band would "participate in every function there was to advertise the school." Laird fulfilled Snyder's wish. The band "went everywhere," according to Laird Jr.⁵²⁹ They performed at rodeos, parades, graduation ceremonies, concerts, and athletic events. Under Laird's direction they even took third place in a national music competition in Long Beach, California. Laird Jr. went on to become a musician himself and played the trumpet for the Carson High School and Stewart marching bands. After graduation, Laird Jr. played the clarinet in the Carson City band in the 1940s.⁵³⁰

Laird Sr. faced several challenges in developing Stewart's band. When Superintendent Bowler arrived in 1934, he enlisted her help in acquiring more instruments, compositions, and literature. Drums were in short supply and Laird requested snare drums and slings to carry them. Bowler asked the Indian Office if they had any leftover equipment from closed schools that could be sent to Stewart to supplement their stock. In addition, Laird desired text books about the history of music and instruction guides to help prepare the students for more advanced study. He consulted with members of the University of Nevada, Reno's music division to compile a

⁵²⁹ Stewart Indian School Trail Podcast, Laird, #15.

⁵³⁰ Obituary for Earl T. Laird, Jr. *Nevada Appeal*, January 7, 2009; "Carson Bandmen Resume Practice as Unit Grows," *Reno Evening Gazette*, January 12, 1946.

list of likely books, which Bowler forwarded on to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.⁵³¹

The Stewart band remains a source of pride for Stewart pupils. After graduation, many student musicians continued their musical careers. Indian communities across the state took up Stewart's musical tradition and made it their own. For example, Dewey Sampson helped sponsor a Nevada Indian Band. Former students, Robert Cromwell of Schurz and Hastings Pancho of Pyramid Lake served as conductor and assistant leader of the band, respectively. Players joined from the Pyramid Lake and Walker River reservations and from Reno, Carson City, and Gardnerville. They performed at the Reno rodeo and other venues that the Stewart band frequented. Sampson worked to raise money to bring the band to the San Francisco for an exposition that celebrated Nevada Day. The Reno City Council contributed almost half of the money needed so that the band could travel to the exposition.⁵³²

The Indian New Deal:

*"To revive the ancient and natural arts of the Indian" – Alida Bowler, Superintendent.*⁵³³

The Stewart band was only one avenue for showing off Stewart students. Superintendent Bowler supported the arts and encouraged opportunities for Indian nations to present their culture to white spectators. Indians playing Indian for non-

⁵³¹ Alida C. Bowler to Mr. A. C. Monahan, Acting Director of Education, February 2, 1935, File "7241-1935, Box 101, Carson 810-820, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

⁵³² "Indian Band Organized Here," *Reno Evening Gazette*, July 30, 1940; "Nevada Program at S.F. Fair is Arranged for August Fifth and Large Attendance Sought," *Reno Evening Gazette*, July 21, 1939; "Council Session Considers Many Matters," *Reno Evening Gazette*, August 1, 1940.

⁵³³ "Fire Boys Hosts at Party at Stewart," *Reno Evening Gazette*, March 14, 1935.

Indians became a lucrative business in the 1930s.⁵³⁴ Many students found that playing up their “Indianness” through song, dancing, or arts and crafts provided a viable economic future. Bowler nurtured these talents at Stewart and encouraged students to proudly express their Indian culture. The success of these programs demonstrated that Indian identity could be as economically profitable as working as a domestic or ranch hand.⁵³⁵

Bowler often manufactured events to highlight Stewart student’s achievements and provide venues for interaction with white community members. One such event occurred in 1935 after the small boys dorm caught on fire.⁵³⁶ To thank the fire fighters who fought the blaze, Stewart held a large banquet for the men. According to a newspaper report of the dinner, the tables were decorated elaborately with “miniature lighted wigwams and figures of picturesque Indians were painted on the place cards. A dinner menu was at each guest’s place written in the Indian language.”⁵³⁷ In addition to the decorations, the guests were treated to a musical program which concluded with ceremonial dancers performing a war dance. Bowler spoke during the feast and said that “not only are the instructors trying to make the Indian school into a high class educational and agricultural institution but that they are also trying to revive the ancient and natural

⁵³⁴ For more information about how non-American Indians have played Indian to develop their own national and personal identities see Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁵³⁵ Green and Troutman, “Waters of the Minnehaha,” 74.

⁵³⁶ The building sustained significant damage and the school did not have enough space to house all of the boys until it could be repaired. Larry Hale, former groundskeeper at Stewart, recalled that his father John Hale lived in the building at the time of the fire. The Indian Office brought in buses and sent him and several other students off to a school in Fort Hall, Idaho for a year until the dorm was ready for student habitation. Hale, Interview with author..

⁵³⁷ A wigwam or wickiup is a traditional Indian dwelling in Nevada. The term wigwam is more common in the northeast, whereas wickiup is used more widely in the west.

arts of the Indian.”⁵³⁸ There were many ways that Bowler could have thanked the firemen for their service. She chose, however, a very public and educational venue to both publicize traditional Native culture and highlight the work of the Stewart Indian School. With newspaper coverage, the event reached even more people than the dining room could hold.

Bowler also resuscitated traditional dancing at the school in public presentations. The Indian Office had taken a strong stance against traditional dancing for decades. However, in the 1930s they reversed their policy in an effort to encourage and support Indian culture. Bowler took it one step further. Always the publicist, she arranged for a group of older students to perform at a folk dancing festival at the University of Nevada, Reno in 1934. Dressed in war paint, war bonnets, and breech-cloths, the boys performed traditional war dances. The girls dyed their own fabrics and created contemporary Indian costumes and stole the show with their performance. War bonnets are not traditional attire for Great Basin peoples. However by the 1930s, Stewart had a very diverse student population. Northern Paiutes outnumbered other tribal nations, but it could not be said that one nation dominated at Stewart. Many cultural events, such as dancing started to acquire a more pan-Indian identity.

Days before the festival the performers held a dress rehearsal in front of the assembled Stewart students. During the intermission and at the end, the student body swarmed down to the auditorium floor and joined in impromptu round dancing. Bowler was so moved by the enthusiasm that she wrote, “This would seem to indicate that they are really hungry for this kind of social dancing and I hope that we can give them more

⁵³⁸ “Fire Boys Hosts at Party at Stewart,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, March 14, 1935.

and more of it.”⁵³⁹ She continued to support traditional dancing and also clubs which encouraged Indian identity.



Figure 28. Girls dressed as Stewart Corn Maidens. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

Indian clubs constituted another outgrowth of the Indian New Deal in boarding schools. Indian clubs formed nationwide at boarding schools, and students began to perform the dances and songs of other tribal cultures. In turn, students brought these new songs and dances back with them to the reservations and to venues outside of Indian country. By embracing and promoting Indian identity, boarding schools also helped foster a pan-Indian identity.⁵⁴⁰ The graduation ceremony in 1936 both reflected the backgrounds of the changing student population and this cross cultural absorption by

⁵³⁹ Alida Bowler, Superintendent to Dr. Carson Ryan, Jr. Director of Education, December 18, 1934; File “64221-1934,” Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

⁵⁴⁰ Green and Troutman, “Waters of the Minnehaha,” 77-78.

students at the school. Pupils performed traditional songs and dances from Paiute, Shoshone, Bannock, Tenino and Wasco cultures. Paiutes and Shoshone students performed the Owl Dance and Bannock students joined them for the Hoop Dance. In the middle of the performance there were three series of tableaux, some of which were called the Drum Maker, the Basket Weaver, the Wickiup, and the Pinenut Harvest. Tableaux are “living pictures” that capture a moment in time without acting of movement. While descriptions of the scenes do not remain, the names imply that the scenes represented aspects of Indian culture in the Great Basin.

Bowler worked to expand the performance opportunities for Washoes, Paiutes, and Western Shoshones outside of the school as well. The Pyramid Lake Women’s Club sent a delegation of performers to the community park in South Lake Tahoe in 1938 for a pageant about the history of the Great Basin peoples and their arts and crafts. Lena Phoenix, a Paiute woman, ran the Pyramid Lake Women’s Club and served on the Board of Directors of the Wa-Pai-Shone Craftsman Association.⁵⁴¹ The admissions proceeds funded the Wa-Pai-Shone craftsman who sold their goods at the Stewart Indian School and at Bijou Park in South Lake Tahoe. The pageant, entitled “A Desert Flower,” included the story of Paiute Chief Winnemucca and traditional songs and dances.

The pageant came to fruition because of the active women’s club at Pyramid Lake. Bowler reported in the *Reno Evening Gazette* that the event was the first time a demonstration by Native peoples had occurred at the lake on this scale. She continued,

⁵⁴¹ E.V. Hudson, Report on the Pyramid Lake Women’s Club included in the Extension & Industry Report of the Carson Indian Agency, 1939, File “Extension & Industry Report/ Carson Indian Agency, 1939, 2/3,” Box 1, Extension & Industrial Narrative Reports & Programs of Work 1937-52, Records of the Carson Indian Agency, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

“those interested in the authentic Indian music and rhythmic expression believe that the Indians have much of value to contribute to American culture and that such programs as this might well be the beginning of an annual event that would in effect be a native folk theater movement.”⁵⁴² It is unclear whether the pageants continued to be performed. Bowler left Stewart a year later, and the tribes lost one of their staunchest advocates for such performances.

Indian communities transformed this type of pageantry into cultural traditions such as Indian Princess pageants which continue on reservations and at powwows today. The annual Stewart Indian School Father’s Day Powwow still honors a Princess every year. The princess tradition encouraged traditional culture in a way that was reminiscent of the Indian clubs and dancing performances in the boarding schools. Indian princesses made their own regalia which continued traditional knowledge including beadwork, leatherwork, and silverwork. While the princess tradition fosters a stereotypical image of Indian women, it also provides honor and acknowledgement for young Native women who perpetuate their traditional culture and are role models for the younger generations.⁵⁴³

History of sports in boarding schools:

“To show what an Indian can do.” – Boxer at Santa Fe Indian School⁵⁴⁴

Physical education served as a core component in the federal Indian boarding school program from its earliest days. Educators hoped that by encouraging physical

⁵⁴² “Indians to Give Pageant at Tahoe” *Reno Evening Gazette*, July 21, 1938, 16.

⁵⁴³ Green and Troutman, “Waters of the Minnehaha,” 82-83.

⁵⁴⁴ John Bloom “Show What an Indian Can Do,” in *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1879-2000*, eds. Margaret L. Archuleta, Brenda J. Child, and K. Tsianina Lomawaima (Heard Museum, 2000), 108.

fitness through calisthenics and group sports, students would also learn moral and intellectual lessons. Educators believed that sports would foster a belief in fair play and physical restraint, just as educators expected students to learn about the value of hard work, personal property, and homeownership through vocational training. Progressive reformers suggested that physical activities taught valuable lessons and could help refine moral character as well as promote physical health.⁵⁴⁵

Federal boarding schools used sports such as football, basketball, baseball, and boxing to assimilate their students. Athletes and successful teams visibly demonstrated racial transformation to white spectators. John Bloom argues in *To Show what an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools* that sports “publicly demonstrated controlled violence and physical competition, rationally coordinated bodily movement, and a corporate hierarchy of human organization.”⁵⁴⁶ The intense, yet controlled, emotions evoked by sporting events helped establish how well the boarding schools had “tamed” the wild Indians that had walked through their doors.

The success of Carlisle’s athletic program cemented the role of sports as a fundamental part of the boarding school curriculum. Sporting events drew large crowds of spectators, and stirred the national imagination. From the 1890s through the 1910s Carlisle competed against national teams, won nationwide acclaim, and produced world renowned athletes such as Jim Thorpe. Studying Pratt’s writings, John Bloom reveals that Pratt believed that football turned Carlisle’s boys into men. Pratt thought football

⁵⁴⁵ John Bloom, *To Show What an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 35.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

one of the most manly sports available for adolescents and that it transformed the boys at his school into moral and abstemious individuals who would succeed in life. Football also taught good sportsmanship which Pratt considered a necessary value for Indian students.

When Carlisle closed in 1918, Haskell Institute took up the Carlisle legacy and dominated the sports arena in the 1920s. The football team garnered such popular acclaim that in 1926, a new 10,500 stadium was built at Haskell through the massive fundraising efforts of tribal nations across the country. More than seventy tribes gathered at the dedication of the stadium and hosted a large powwow. The dedication of the stadium is one example of the Indian community's investment in sporting events and its pride in high profile athletes.⁵⁴⁷

Much to the displeasure of many students and Indian communities, the Indian Office moved away from high profile sporting events in the 1930s. Collier advocated a curriculum based on intramural rather than interscholastic competitions which allowed more students to participate. High profile boarding schools spent significant time and money recruiting players, and Collier wanted the school system to focus more on education.⁵⁴⁸ The Indian Office tried to deemphasize the importance of football at boarding schools. As a result, games across the country declined. However, the sport remained very popular at Stewart the 1930s and high profile games continued, although they became more exhibition and community competitions. As a replacement for

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid, 2-4, 37.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid, 50 and 57; Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 132.

gridiron games, boxing came to dominate the sports arena at most boarding schools in the late 1930s. Stewart had a top rated team and produced many famous boxers who competed against other Indian schools, local colleges, high schools, and amateur boxing clubs.

Boarding school teams were composed of players from many different Indian nations and fostered a pan-Indian identity that emerged in the 1930s in combination with Indian clubs, dancing, and the arts. Athletes such as Jim Thorpe and Lewis Tewanima became heroes for many young students, and sports became a tradition for many families of boarding school students. Bloom recounts that competing against and beating white teams fostered a sense of racial pride among boarding school students. Bloom draws his title from an oral history with a boxer from the Santa Fe Indian School who articulated a deep sense of Indian identity in the ring. As Bloom quotes the boxer, “If there’s any race that’s speaking different languages, outside of you, well you got the pride to demonstrate that you going to be in there fighting... with all that you have. Because you’re an Indian, well, you going to show what an Indian can do.”⁵⁴⁹ As this student expressed, Indian athletes represented not only their school, but their race as a whole.

The Stewart Braves:

“We met the redskins and got their scalps” – Reno Evening Gazette

Stewart formed its first boy’s football, baseball, and track and field teams at the turn of the century. The players competed under the name of the Stewart Braves, playing non-Indian teams in the vicinity. One of the earliest rivalries sprang up with Carson

⁵⁴⁹ John Bloom, “To Show What an Indian Can Do,” 108.

⁵⁴⁹ *Annual Report 1897*, 358-359.

High School. The school newspaper happily reported that Stewart boys had won the most points during a track and field competition in 1902 against their arch rivals.⁵⁵⁰ Gaining more and more notoriety and experience in all sports, the Braves by 1905 were competing against college teams including the University of Nevada, Reno. Stewart enrolled many young adults, a common practice among boarding schools since many Indian pupils did not have the same access as white pupils to an early childhood education.⁵⁵¹ Older male students made the Braves competitive on the college and professional level. Huge crowds of white and Indian spectators attended the games.⁵⁵²

The Braves traveled all over the state tussling with high schools, local club teams, reservation teams, professional paid players, and university athletes, and Stewart hosted many white teams who wrote and asked the team for a game. Superintendents at Stewart worked hard to facilitate games and offered both money for transportation and gracious hospitality. For example, when Stewart had the home field advantage during a football game against the Reno High School team in October of 1915, the boarding school paid for the train fare of the Reno players. Once the team arrived, girls in the Stewart domestic science program cooked lunch for the players and served it in the dining room. In this instance, Reno beat the Braves thirteen to six, although Stewart would conquer them the following year. After the game, Stewart staff members drove the Reno team to Carson City so that they could take the 6:30 train back to Reno that night.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵⁰ *Indian Advance* 3 no. 9 (1902).

⁵⁵¹ Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 132.

⁵⁵² "Indians to Meet Second Eleven" *Reno Evening Gazette*, November 9, 1905; 3.

⁵⁵³ Jas B Royce to Principal Glenn Allen, October 15, 1915, 17A; "Stewart Indians Play High School" *Reno Evening Gazette*, October 9, 1915, 3.

Even though many Stewart students stepped up to bat, tied on their track shoes, and dribbled down the court, it was football and boxing that captured the hearts and imagination of the school. In 1916, the football team beat everyone to become Nevada State Champions although Stewart did not actually play the championship game. That year, Stewart defeated Nevada's second team, 12-0 and Reno High school, 20-0. The Carson City *Daily Appeal* declared the Braves the Nevada state football champion "on account of the University team refusing to play the Indians, claiming their season had ended." Sam McClain, the school disciplinarian from the Sioux nation, coached the team to victory.⁵⁵⁴

In *Education for Extinction*, David Wallace Adams argues that "Indian-white football constituted a dramatic reenactment of frontier conflict."⁵⁵⁵ Indian peoples brought the war to their oppressors on the gridiron and appreciated that on the field they were evenly matched against white teams. At the turn of the century, newspaper accounts almost universally emphasized the racial identity of the Braves and played up traditional racial stereotypes. For example, reporting on a football game in 1903 against Reno high School, the *Reno Evening Gazette* said that "the boys from Reno expect a hard game but hope to defeat the husky red men."⁵⁵⁶ Fear that the Stewart Braves would play too rough even forced the superintendent to issue a press release stating that "no roughing

⁵⁵⁴ Johnson, "Discipline was Strict."

⁵⁵⁵ Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 187.

⁵⁵⁶ "On the Gridiron," *Reno Evening Gazette*, October 29, 1903.

it on the part of the Indians will be allowed and that parents need have no fear of any of the R.H.S. [Reno High School] boys getting hurt in the game.”⁵⁵⁷

A year later the same newspaper reported that the University of Nevada, Reno football team “met the redskins and got their scalps; score 12 to 4.”⁵⁵⁸ Another particularly egregious comment appeared in the January 28, 1932, issue of the *Nevada State Journal* about a basketball game between Reno High and Stewart. The article reads that “Reno high school will send two squads of basketeers against the Stewart Bucks tomorrow night when the Huskies A and B teams will invade the Indians’ teepees to attempt to capture the prize of the season, the conference leadership.”⁵⁵⁹ These descriptions followed stereotypical and often demeaning Indian tropes, ironically highlighting the challenge that Stewart athletes posed in the arena to white competitors. Stewart itself embraced the nomenclature and the Indian warrior tradition by naming school teams the Stewart Braves. On the field, Indian identity appeared to be an asset rather than a liability. To an even greater extent than Indian performers and artists, Native athletes gained notoriety because of their identity. African Americans and Hispanics athletes tried to pass themselves off as Indian to play professional sports so they did not have to play on segregated teams.

Football continued as an important school event throughout the 1930s even though many other boarding schools gradually phased out the sport. Rather than competing against college teams, the Braves played in a football conference with the

⁵⁵⁷ “To Play the Redskins,” *Daily Nevada State Journal*, October 28, 1903.

⁵⁵⁸ “Varsity Won,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, May 7, 1904.

⁵⁵⁹ “Senior, Junior Hi Activities,” *Nevada State Journal*, January 28, 1932.

surrounding cities of Reno, Sparks, Carson City, Fallon, Lovelock, Gardnerville, and Yerrington.⁵⁶⁰ As the enrollment age of Stewart students declined, the school could no longer compete on the college level, but it still sought out competitive games. The Braves even earned the distinction of a visit from Jim Thorpe in March of 1939. He regaled crowds in Ely, Reno, Sparks, and Winnemucca with the highlights of his career and he made a special visit to Stewart where he ran the football team through some drills and taught them some plays.⁵⁶¹

Superintendent Bowler worked to continue Stewart's sporting legacy in any way possible. She organized tournaments and high profile games with other Indian Schools and exhibition games between Indian teams from colonies and reservations. In essence, the Stewart campus evolved into a meeting place for Indian teams across the state. The sports arena also provided a space for students and their families to socialize, enjoy meals, and spend quality time together watching the Braves compete against Indian and white teams alike.

One of the largest sporting events occurred on Thanksgiving in 1934 very soon after Bowler arrived at Stewart. Two thousand fans turned out for a game between Stewart and the Sherman Indian School. The morning began with an exhibition game between Stewart employees and the Dresslerville Indian team. The main event between Sherman and Stewart kicked off at 2:30 in the afternoon. The Stewart Braves held Sherman at bay with no points scored until the fourth quarter when the Sherman team scored two touchdowns and ended the game thirteen to zero. A turkey dinner and a

⁵⁶⁰ "Western Zone Basketball Tourney," *Reno Evening Gazette*, March 2, 1939.

⁵⁶¹ "Nevada Sports," *Reno Evening Gazette*, March 15, 1939.

dance sponsored by the boys and girls student councils concluded the festivities. Thirty graduates from Haskell, who were employed in California and Nevada, traveled to the campus for an impromptu reunion at the feast and the game.⁵⁶²

While football games received the most press and spectators, Stewart had very successful baseball and basketball teams as well. The Stewart Braves often played against Reno's professional baseball team the Overlands. In 1903, the Overlands walloped the Braves soundly in a game with a final score of eight to one. As the school newspaper reported, "We are beat, and there is no getting out of it, but there is the consolation that we are the second best team in the state, and that is a good deal as the only team that can claim to have beaten us is the Overlands, a professional team, some of the players having played on Sacramento and San Francisco teams in the Pacific Coast League."⁵⁶³ All-Indian professional teams often recruited on campus and even placed ads in the school newspaper. These teams promised skilled ballplayers a chance for steady work, good pay, and a chance to number themselves among the best players from the Indian education system from Carlisle to Haskell.⁵⁶⁴

Another popular sport, basketball, started around 1910 under Coach James Oliver, a Fond Dulac Chippewa, who had earned great acclaim playing football at Haskell Institute. Like the football team, the basketball team played high school teams around the state. Stewart won several state championships in the 1910s. Dewey Sampson, a star player on the basketball team, went on to play semi-professionally. In later years, the

⁵⁶² "Thanksgiving Day Program Set at Stewart," *Reno Evening Gazette*, November 26, 1934; "Sherman Eleven Beats Stewart in Fast Game," *Reno Evening Gazette*, November 30, 1934.

⁵⁶³ "Base Ball at the Carnival," *New Indian* 1, no. 9 (1904).

⁵⁶⁴ Trennert, *The Phoenix Indian School*, 131; Carson Indian School, *New Indian* 1, no. 9 (1904).

team competed in the state championship in 1938 and 1939, and won the title in 1966, beating Moapa Valley 62 to 59.⁵⁶⁵ In 1938, Superintendent Bowler constructed a new stone gymnasium for basketball and boxing competitions. The two-story building had lots of windows to let in the light. Spectators packed onto the bleachers on the second floor. Kids hung over the balconies, their deafening cheers echoing throughout the building.⁵⁶⁶



Figure 29. Photograph of the Stewart basketball team circa 1920s with Coach James Oliver. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

Basketball was one sport that Stewart girls also got to play competitively.

Educators encouraged girls to play on swing sets, adorn maypoles, and play games that

⁵⁶⁵ Johnson, “Stewart Indian School; Albright, “Native American School.”

⁵⁶⁶ Stewart Indian School Trail Podcasts, Robey Willis, Podcast #11-Old Gym & Athletic Fields, Accessed February 2, 2013, <http://stewartindianschool.com/stewart-podcasts.html>.

fostered cooperation rather than channeling raw aggression through football and boxing. Federal curriculum stressed drills and exercises for female students rather than contact sports. Girls joined basketball and tennis teams throughout the boarding school system but played under rules designed specifically for female teams to promote feminine qualities.⁵⁶⁷

Some female teams earned notoriety in the federal education system. The girls' basketball team at the Fort Shaw Indian Boarding School won a championship title at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. Following a similar model from the 1893 World's Fair, the Fort Shaw girls participated in the Model Indian School exhibit but they also played in twice weekly exhibition games and performed music. In "World Champions: The 1904 Girls' Basketball Team from Fort Shaw Indian Boarding School," Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith argue that like male athletes, the girls were eager participants in the "government's game of 'show and tell.'"⁵⁶⁸ The Fort Shaw girls earned unusual acclaim, in large part because of the novelty of the team. They played to sell-out crowds and then provided entertainment after the games with programs that included music, recitations, dance, and calisthenics.⁵⁶⁹

The Stewart girls' basketball team never competed on such a public stage. The girls played intermural sports, but their events did not receive heavy press coverage in the local newspapers as did their male compatriots. A few ambitious girls played baseball

⁵⁶⁷ Bloom, 36 and 87; Robert A. Trennert, Jr., *The Phoenix Indian School: Forced Assimilation in Arizona, 1891-1935* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 128-129.

⁵⁶⁸ Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith, "World Champions: The 1904 Girls' Basketball Team from Fort Shaw Indian Boarding School" in *Native Athletes in Sport and Society*, ed. C. Richard King (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 43.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

regularly during their free time, but in 1920 a visiting school inspector reported that female sport activities were lacking at Stewart in comparison to other boarding schools. The girls, she wrote, needed more “time for directed, vigorous sports.”⁵⁷⁰ During their hour of free time a day, the majority of female pupils sat and crocheted or walked around the campus.



Figure 30. Stewart tennis team made up of both boys and girls. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

Photographs in the collection of the Nevada State Museum in Carson City show that Stewart girls also played baseball and tennis. Dressed in long culottes, rather than dresses, the girls were photographed during what appear to be physical education classes.

⁵⁷⁰ Report of Training and Activities of Girls, Elsie E. Newton, Supervisor, May 15, 1920, File “36064-1932,” Box 100, Carson 806-810, Central Classified Files, 1907-1939, RG 75, NARA, Washington, DC.

No spectators ring the courts and only a few girls are present. An intriguing 1910 photograph of the Stewart tennis team, Figure 30, shows that Stewart had at least one coed team. It is unclear why boys and girls were allowed to play together. Tennis is not a contact sport and was considered at the time to be more genteel. As a result, tennis may have been deemed an appropriate opportunity for men and women to socialize by school staff. The tennis courts were located outside of the girls' dormitories. The girls may not have been allowed to participate in unrefined sports events, but that did not preclude them from cheering on their male counterparts in the most un-genteel sport, boxing.

Boxing:

“Chew it till the juice is gone and spit out the meat.” – Ned Crutcher, Stewart boxer.

High profile amateur boxing teams at boarding schools seem an unlikely development given the Indian Office's insistence on the civilizing nature of sports. The media often condemned boxing as an expression of uncivilized aggression. However, the Indian Service made a distinction between amateur boxing and the more violent professional prizefighting and bare-knuckled fights which were not allowed. Amateur boxing, the Indian Service argued, emphasized precision, agility and conditioning instead of brute force and was used by the military to harness the strength of its soldiers.

Stewart had a distinguished boxing program from 1935 to 1948 and won ten Nevada Golden Glove team titles. Many young men fought bravely for the school and won national acclaim. The Stewart boxing program started under the direction of William “Abe” Abraham, a Pyramid Lake Paiute, and graduate of Stewart. Abraham was a role model to many students. Fighter Ned Crutcher fondly remembered “Abe” as his mentor and the “single biggest influence” in his life at Stewart. In an interview at the age

of seventy-one, Crutcher said that Abe was “like a dad to me.” He recounted one of his favorite stories about Abraham:

Once when we were boxing down at the Golden Gloves tournament in San Francisco, Ralph Sam and I sneaked off and had banana splits and milkshakes. When we weighed in, I was about two pounds overweight and old Abe was furious. He marched us down to the Bay City Grill. He ordered sirloin steaks. He said to me, ‘Chew it till the juice is gone and spit out the meat.’... I wanted to swallow that steak, it was so good. But Abe was teaching me a lesson. I needed the nourishment from the juices for my fight, but I couldn’t have the satisfaction of enjoying the steak itself.⁵⁷¹

Abraham’s trainee, Ned Crutcher, remains one of the most distinguished Nevadan boxers and Stewart alumni. Crutcher began his academic career at Stewart in 1924 at the age of five. His mother died when he was an infant, and his grandparents cared for him on the McDermitt Indian Reservation. When his grandmother passed away, he was sent to Stewart. When he arrived he spoke only Paiute and some Shoshone, but he recounted at the age of seventy-one that “You learned quick... the idea was, you were not to speak your language. I got caught. I got punished for it.”⁵⁷² Crutcher excelled in the boxing ring. In 1939 and 1940 he trampled his competition at Nevada matches and acquired fans on all the reservations. Crutcher competed in the 1939 Senior Golden Gloves competition in San Francisco along with fellow classmate Lawrence Ray. Unfortunately, neither boy won his match to advance to the finals.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷¹ O’Brien, “Stewart School Days.”

⁵⁷² Frank Burns of North Fork, California relates a similar story. His father was dead, and his mother had a hard time caring for her children, as a result, an Agent from Stewart picked Burns and his brother to Stewart in 1918. Ibid.

⁵⁷³ “Stewart Fighters lose Golden Glove Matches in Senior Divisions,” *Nevada State Journal*, December 6, 1939.

Crutcher joined the Marines in 1941 right of out Stewart. He distinguished himself while stationed in Guadalcanal in the Pacific in the Second Division and was part of the invasion of the Islands. His valor in the conflict earned him the rank of sergeant. He continued his boxing career in the Marines, winning the Wellington, New Zealand Cup in 1943. Soon after his victory, Crutcher was named the captain of the Marine's boxing team, an appointment that earned him a feature story in *Ring Magazine*.



Figure 31. Boxing team with Coach Ned Crutcher. *Top row:* Clifton Smith, Paul Williams, Periel Ellis, Raymond Smith, Ralph Brown. *Bottom row:* Francis Allen, Leslie Eben, Charlie Sanches, Glenn Thompson, unknown. Courtesy Nevada State Museum, Carson City.

He returned to the United States for medical treatment for malaria and minor wounds in 1944. Once he recovered, he departed for Stewart to work as the boxing coach. Within a few years, Crutcher was ranked as the top boxing coach in Nevada and

the Nevada AAU Commissioner appointed him coach of the statewide senior team.⁵⁷⁴ In addition to his coaching, Crutcher continued his distinguished career as a boxer. He was a national-class welterweight boxer and beat Ezzard Charles the heavyweight champion in 1949.

In addition to Crutcher, several other Stewart boxers including Streesler O'Daye and Gardner Allen won regional and national titles. O'Daye, a Paiute member of the Pyramid Lake Reservation, was born in 1919. He attended school in Nixon, Nevada before transferring to Stewart in 1935. An all-around athlete, he won accolades in football, basketball, and baseball, but he proved the most formidable competitor in the ring. In the Rocky Mountain Golden Gloves Championship he set a new world record of twelve seconds for the fastest knock-out. According to the *Nevada State Journal* in 1940, Stressler O'Daye, was "an Indian lad whom many fans believe to be the hardest hitting amateur boxer in the world."⁵⁷⁵ It took him two seconds to knock out his opponent and ten seconds for the official to finish the count. Like Crutcher, O'Daye joined the military during World War II and earned the rank of sergeant. He continued his sports career even after his military career came to a close.

The 1940 Golden Glove competition in the El Patio Ballroom in San Francisco provides an example of how Stewart Braves had broken into the amateur boxing league. Stewart boxers Gardner Allen, Mickey Raye, Theodore Pete, Spud Lewis, Roland Spencer, Streesler O'Daye, Cliff Albers, Vernon McLaughlin, and Ned Crutcher faced off against fighters from Nevada, California, Idaho, Utah, Nebraska, Colorado, Oregon

⁵⁷⁴ McGregor, "Amateur Boxing," 54.

⁵⁷⁵ Quoted in Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Life Stories*, 30.

and Wyoming. In addition to the Stewart Braves many other amateur Indian boxers from Pyramid Lake and Walker River made strong showings. In the most publicized title fight, Gardner Allen, a 225 pound Paiute from Fallon fighting for Stewart, defended his crown as heavyweight champion. Allen was the only champion in the entire competition who successfully defended his title.

As this Golden Glove championship demonstrates, by 1940 Stewart boxers had earned their place in athletics on the west coast. That year an issue of the *Nevada State Journal* commented that “a sports page would not be complete without some story of the goings, comings, and results of Indian school boxers. The Indian lads are hardly home from one major tournament or boxing show but they must take off again in quest of further honors.” Stewart went on to win three straight team championships in boxing.⁵⁷⁶

By the time the United States entered World War II, boxing programs at boarding schools and colleges had come under attack because of the violence and serious injuries inflicted upon fighters. Commissioner John Collier had merely tolerated boxing during the Indian New Deal. In 1948 the Indian Office issued a statement which discouraged but did not forbid boxing at Indian Schools.⁵⁷⁷ Stewart disbanded the professional boxing program that year, but boxing matches continued for decades. In 1974, Stewart administrators built a modern athletic center on the grounds and nicknamed it Moccasin Square Gardens.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁶ “Stewart Boxers in New Tourney at Oakland, Cal.,” *Nevada State Journal*, April 16, 1940.

⁵⁷⁷ McGregor, “Amateur Boxing,” 48-50.

⁵⁷⁸ Johnson, “Stewart Indian School.”

Sports such as boxing provided high-profile careers for Indian students. Athletes got to travel the country and compete on a national stage and were school heroes. As Andrew McGregor argues in, “Amateur Boxing and Assimilation at the Stewart Indian School, Carson City, Nevada 1935-1948,” boxers at Stewart served as mediators to the white community and boxing gained many fighters acceptance in local and regional communities. Prizefighting also helped athletes establish themselves in the military during World War II, as the careers of Crutcher and O’Daye demonstrate. Athletic ability gave soldiers elevated social status.

Athletics also afforded a pathway to greater educational opportunities for some students. Walter Johnson, a Paiute football star, obtained a college education as a result of his athletic prowess. Johnson, a member of the Walker River Paiute Tribe, lived in Benton before traveling to Stewart by buckboard in 1914. He played football, basketball, and track and set state records in the shot-put and javelin. At the time, Stewart only went up to the ninth grade, so in 1928 he enrolled at Haskell Institute to play football and complete his high school education. He continued his education at Bacone Junior College and then earned a Bachelor’s Degree from University of Redlands in 1936. Johnson played football throughout his college years, earning many honors including most valuable player of the football team at Redlands, and honorable mention as a fullback on the 1931 All-American Football Team. He also played for the West team in the 1931 annual East-West Shriner All-Star Football game, a post college season game that pits the best players from the east and west coast against each other. Johnson is often considered one of the outstanding all-around athletes of Nevada. In honor of his achievements, the National American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame inducted him on

December 2, 1973. As of 2013, he is the only Paiute Indian to have received a Hall of Fame award. Johnson also served as a sergeant in the Army Air Corp during World War II in Africa and Europe. After his service, he worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a coach, teacher, and counselor.⁵⁷⁹

Stars such as Johnson provided a model for Indian students to follow into college and the military. The career of Stewart athletic director Albert Hawley demonstrated that working in the Indian Service could also provide a route to success. Hawley directed the entire athletic division at Stewart starting in 1936. Hawley, a member of the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine nations, attended Haskell Institute in the late 1920s and played center on the football team from 1925 through 1927 and was elected team captain. The Indian Service recognized his years of dedicated service with a Department of the Interior Distinguished Service Award in 1966 for his work as athlete, coach, and athletic director. Hawley was inducted into the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame in 1973.⁵⁸⁰

Stewart students had many athletic role models, and they proved themselves worthy competitors. Washoes, Paiutes, and Western Shoshones in Nevada embraced football, basketball, track, baseball, and boxing and made the sports culturally relevant to their own cultures. In “Asserting Native American Agency in an Assimilationist Institution,” Stacy Sewell argues that the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone “transformed the meaning of basketball to suit their cultural needs, rendering it a new

⁵⁷⁹ Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, *Life Stories*, 23- 24; Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes*, 179-180.

⁵⁸⁰ McGregor, “Amateur Boxing,” 68; American Indian Hall of Fame, “Albert Hawley,” accessed January 26, 2013, <http://americanindianathleticalloffame.com/alberthawley.php>.

method of expressing Native identity and resistance, both on and off the court.”⁵⁸¹

Rather than an indicator of assimilation, these tribal nations have made it a culturally relevant institution.⁵⁸²

Something similar happened with Indigenous nations in Nevada. Shoshones quickly adopted baseball at large gatherings called fandangos which could draw 300 to 500 people. By the 1890s, fandangos often featured round dances, songs, handgames, sports events, political discussions, and feasting. Traditional games of chance and physical skill had always been popular among Paiutes, Washoes, and Western Shoshones. Different tribal groups or reservation teams from different areas would play each other.⁵⁸³ Some of the most popular physical contests in the Great Basin included women’s double ball or shinny, or men’s hoop and pole, foot races, horse races, arrow shoots, and a game similar to soccer. Women often played a game with willow poles and a braided rag. A goal tender guarded a circle drawn on the ground on each end of the field and the women would use the willow poles to maneuver the braided rag into the circle.⁵⁸⁴

Reservations and colonies also formed their own athletic clubs. Walker River Reservation started the Schurz Athletic Club in January of 1934. They had enough players to form two baseball teams called the Outlaws who even played the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Hawthorne Marine baseball teams. The rat-a-tat of punching

⁵⁸¹ Stacy Sewell, “Asserting Native American Agency in an Assimilationist Institution,” in *Native American Identity in Sports: Creating and Preserving a Culture*, ed. Frank A. Salamone (Lanahm, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2013), 29.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 29-40.

⁵⁸³ Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 60.

⁵⁸⁴ Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes*, 169-172, Fowler and Liljeblad, “Northern Paiute,” 453-454.

bags could be heard on the reservations as well. Amateur fighters on the Pyramid Lake Reservation starting training for the Golden Glove competitions in 1940 after watching the success of Stewart teams.⁵⁸⁵

Sports and music continue as living traditions among Nevada's Indian peoples today. The Indian Office's campaign to use sports and band as public relations tools paid off for students of the Stewart Indian School, in ways unforeseeable by the Indian Office. From the first parade through 1940, Stewart seamlessly integrated itself into the culture of Nevada's parades and athletic competitions. Students and their families cheered on their shining stars who competed on the equal playing field of the gridiron or boxing ring. Alumni today proudly talk about their times on teams or playing instruments. Rather than a racial "other" on display, the Stewart Braves became the team to beat.

⁵⁸⁵ "Indians at Schurz Start Training," *Nevada State Journal*, April 19, 1940; "Indians at Nixon Start Drills for Reno Tournament," *Nevada State Journal*, May 1, 1940; Johnson, *Walker River Paiutes*, 173.

Chapter 8

“I FELL IN LOVE WITH THAT SCHOOL”: CONCLUSION

Today the Stewart Indian School campus is slowly falling apart. But at one time, hundreds of children played on the grassy lawns, adored or suffered their teachers, fell in love, pursued their dreams, and played music long into the night. Although not the case for all students, the school represented a sanctuary rather than a prison. Viola Allen Ridley, a Washoe student who graduated in 1946 fondly remembers, “I fell in love with that school. I wanted to be with my own people, and I felt at home there. When I went back as a counselor, I was very happy.” Those kids, Ridley continued, “felt secure at Stewart. They were happy, and they didn’t want to leave when it came time to go. Neither did I.”⁵⁸⁶ As Lomawaima writes in *They Called it Prairie Light*, “the view of boarding-school life constructed from [alumni’s] words portrays how an institution founded to transform Indian youth was paradoxically given life by the very people whose tribal identities it was committed to erase.”⁵⁸⁷ Just as the children at Chilocco made the campus their own, so did the students at the Stewart Indian School.

The Stewart campus is embedded in the Stewart Indian Community which abuts the western side of the Stewart grounds. Washoe families live next to houses in the old employee quarter of the school campus. The Stewart Community Baptist Church still holds services in the old chapel. This absorption into an Indian community makes the

⁵⁸⁶ Quoted in Nevada Indian Commission, “Stewart Indian School: A Story of the Peoples’ Enduring Strength and Spirit,” Nevada Indian Commission, undated.

⁵⁸⁷ Coleman comes to the same conclusions in *American Indian Children in School, 1850-1930*. He argues that the new social and new Indian history reveals that American Indians demonstrated amazing resilience in the face of imposing government oppression. Both school children and administrators adapted to each other. Federal education was not a one-way street. Coleman, *American Indian Children*, 195-196; Lomawaima, *Prairie Light*, xv.

old campus unique among surviving boarding schools in the nation. For example, the campus of the Chilocco Indian School stands isolated from Native communities around it and remains a testament to a bygone age in which the federal government removed children completely from their homes. The Stewart Indian School is enmeshed in a community. It is next door to Native families who are raising their children with both modern and traditional values. This physical closeness also is witness to how Nevada Indian communities in the State of Nevada incorporated the Stewart Indian School into their territory.

Early policymakers believed that they could transform the bodies, hearts, and souls of Indian children. By 1900, they had started to realize that their plan was not working as expected. As Saint Paul Superintendent of Schools S. L. Heeter prophetically argued, “you cannot transform your Indian by the wave of the hand into something other than an Indian. You cannot... crop his hair, give him a modern bath, and make him anything more than a little cleaner Indian.”⁵⁸⁸ But transformation had been the goal of the Indian Service since the opening of Carlisle. Transforming the body should have transformed the soul. Placing Indian children in the outing program in white homes should have fully indoctrinated them in white culture. But these plans had not worked, and Progressives struggled to find a new solution for the Indian problem. Policy-makers closed many boarding schools at the turn of the century, and they modified their approach at those that remained open. The curriculum standardized in Estelle Reel’s Uniform Course of Study in 1901 attempted to mold Indian bodies into a subservient working class rather than creating carbon copies of white Americans.

⁵⁸⁸ Quoted in Ellis, “We Had a Lot of Fun,” 150-151.

By the 1920s, policymakers, politicians, and the general public began again to question why the Indian problem seemed to be getting worse, not better. Business as usual had created systemic poverty and inequality for Native peoples on reservations. Reports began to show that Indians lived in poverty and had high rates of disease, not because they were biologically or culturally inferior but because of racism and economic inequality. Federal policy had failed to live up to its goals. At this juncture, the Merriam Report condemned federal policy for creating these inequalities and making Indians wards of the government.

During the 1920s and 30s, Stewart followed a similar trajectory to other boarding schools by expanding its extracurricular activities and adding high school grades.⁵⁸⁹ In “Loosening the Bonds: The Rapid City Indian School in the 1920s” Scott Riney argues that in the 1920s following critiques of the boarding school system and the release of the Merriam Report, the Rapid City Indian School became a public high school and its extracurricular activities closely mirrored those of white high schools in the nation. Students participated in sports and band, watched movies, enjoyed socials and dances, and joined the YMCA. Stewart students enjoyed the expanded leisure activities.

By adding the additional high schools grades, Stewart initiated a new educational mission. Stewart provided a high school education and continued intensive vocational training to meet the expressed needs of Native communities. This type of hands-on training could not be found in public white high schools and benefited members of Native communities who needed to find jobs off reservations. Public schools or reservation day schools provided a better venue for the children in those early crucial years. Stewart

⁵⁸⁹ Johnson, “Stewart Indian School.”

would be a school of last resort for young children who were orphaned, in need of assistance, or had gotten in trouble.⁵⁹⁰

The Stewart Indian School went through a nearly forty year process of trial and error before Nevada's Indian peoples began to view it as an institution that could help the younger generations to succeed. Not until the 1930s under the educational policy shift in the Indian New Deal did the school began to respond directly to the needs of the population it served. Rather than teaching three hundred children to become shoe makers as it did in the 1890s, Stewart began to teach job skills that made sense for ranch life on the reservations. This shift was further encouraged by returning students who used their new skills to the advantage of their communities. Richard Barrington helped the Washoe with their land claims against the government.⁵⁹¹ Bodie Graham served on the Fallon Tribal Business Council.⁵⁹² Dewey Sampson was elected as the first American Indian legislator in the state. Together, he and his brother Harry Sampson were instrumental in the founding of the Reno Spark Indian Colony. Their classmate, Jack Mahone, also served on the tribal council at the Reno Sparks Indian Colony.⁵⁹³ These remarkable students became leaders, started new colonies, served in the legislature, and brought home advanced knowledge about agriculture, and ranching.

⁵⁹⁰ Jackson, "History of the Stewart Indian School," 99.

⁵⁹¹ Makely, "These Will be Strong," 224.

⁵⁹² Crum, *Road on Which We Came*, 165.

⁵⁹³ Ralph M. Gelvin, Superintendent Carson Indian School to William E. Dial, June 26, 1945, File '064 Councils, and Acts, Minutes, and Resolutions of – General Info. 1939-1945," Box 6, Records of the Education Division (School Principal), 1924-47, Records of the Carson Indian School, RG 75, NARA, San Bruno.

The story of the Stewart Indian School does not end in 1940. Significant changes occurred at Stewart, in the federal boarding school system, and in Indian communities across the country after 1940. When the Indian Service fired Superintendent Bowler at the end of 1939, Nevada's Indian communities lost their most outspoken white advocate. However, the legacy she put in place continued after her departure. Stewart continued to be supportive of Indian culture and grew into an institution that Indian children wanted to attend.

After World War II, the Indian Service underwent a major policy reversal, with the arrival of what is called the Termination Era. In response to the policy shift, assimilationist education once again assumed that Indian children would be absorbed into white culture. Indian education began training students for jobs in urban areas so that they could ultimately leave their reservations.⁵⁹⁴ Stewart was also swept up in the wave of new education policy. In 1947 the federal government selected Stewart as one of seven boarding schools to participate in the Navajo Special Education Program to provide additional educational opportunities to Navajo students. About 13,000 Navajo children had no access to government schools. Their vast reservation did not have enough schools and many children lived too far away from them for daily busing to be a good option. World War II had convinced many tribes, particularly the Navajo, that education was absolutely imperative for their survival. The Navajo people, who had stayed relatively isolated prior to World War II, demanded that their children receive the education promised them in their 1868 Treaty. Returning veterans had learned the importance of a

⁵⁹⁴ Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 106-107.

bi-lingual education on the front lines, and many communities saw the infrastructure improvements made by the Indian CCC and WPA during the Depression.⁵⁹⁵

In 1948, Stewart opened its doors to 148 children from the Navajo Nation. Over the next decade Navajo children accounted for over two-thirds of the Stewart population which had reached almost 600. The Navajo Special Education Program consisted of a five year intensive program which taught basic academic skills, including two years of specialized vocational training in a profession of the student's choice. With little previous access to mainstream schooling, many of the children had to start from scratch, and communication caused many initial difficulties. Pupils who could translate between English and Navajo occasionally had to interpret entire lessons for the new students.⁵⁹⁶

Ten years after the start of the Navajo Special Education Program, Stewart began accepting Hopi and Apache students as well. This enrollment pattern lasted for four years until 1962, when newly constructed schools in Arizona and New Mexico enabled more students to be educated in their home states. Because of the influx of students from the southwest from 1947 to 1962, Stewart has a strong alumni community in the Southwest. When Stewart found its classrooms empty after the end of the Navajo Special Program when the Navajo, Hopi, and Apache students stopped coming to Nevada, the administration returned to its earlier mission of educating children who were orphaned, in need of assistance, had no other educational options, or had gotten in trouble.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 114-116.

⁵⁹⁶ Jackson, "History of the Stewart Indian School," 88-90.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 96-99.

Many Southern Paiute children also attended from the Las Vegas area. The Southern Paiutes now live in the area stretching from Salt Lake City, Utah, through the southern part of the state and along a strip on the northern part of Arizona and into Nevada through Moapa and part of Las Vegas. In 1873 the federal government set aside 39,000 square miles for tribal lands although the government reduced that to a meager 1,000 acres two years later in 1875. The Moapa Band of Paiutes live within the boundaries of the State of Nevada in Clark County just north of Las Vegas. While they may be located in Nevada, jurisdiction over the Southern Paiutes fell under the Utah Indian Agency in Salt Lake City until the 1940s. In 1941, the Moapa Band of Paiutes created a constitution and bylaws under the Indian Reorganization Act and created a Business Council as a governing body for the tribe.⁵⁹⁸ Moapa children started to attend Stewart in the 1940s. Today, alumni from the Moapa reservation are staunch advocates for the school and participate in helping the school raise money and support for renovation and the cultural museum.

By the 1960s, the school had eliminated elementary grades and become an Indian high school rather than a vocational training center.⁵⁹⁹ This corresponded with waves of Indian activism, including the American Indian Movement and self-determination. Moving away from assimilation and termination once again, Indian peoples across the country demanded their rights to have a real say in their children's education. Congress and Indian leaders pushed the Indian Service to adopt an educational structure responsive

⁵⁹⁸ Moapa Paiutes, "Tribal History," (Accessed September 11, 2013), http://www.moapapaiutes.com/tribal_history.htm; Martha C. Knack, *Life is with People: Household Organization of the Contemporary Southern Paiute Indians* (Socorro, NM: Ballena Press, 1980), 12-13.

⁵⁹⁹ McCue, "Alma Mater."

to the needs of individual communities and run by Indians themselves. In 1966, President Johnson appointed the first Indian, Robert Lafollette Bennett (Oneida) to serve as the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. This major milestone set a precedent and thereafter the commissioner has been of Indian heritage.⁶⁰⁰

In her dissertation, “‘The little skingin that could’: An Autobiographical, Affirmative look at Native American Off-Reservation Boarding Schools between 1970 and 1980,” Roberta Whitlock Baeta (Salt River Pima/Maricopa) recounts her experiences as a student at the Stewart Indian School from 1970 to 1980.⁶⁰¹ Baeta attests that in 1972 when she went to Stewart the school had one of the best elective vocational programs in the country, which included auto body shop, agriculture, house painting, food service, heavy equipment operations, nursing and college preparatory classes. Extracurricular activities included speech competition, fashion design, field trips, photography, drama, voice, and public speaking.

Baeta also investigated the experiences of her fellow alumni through oral histories and a twenty-one question survey. One hundred percent of the participants in her survey claimed to have enjoyed their time at Stewart and all of them declared that they would have chosen a boarding school over a public school. Off reservation boarding schools, she argues, “came to be seen no longer as institutions of oppression, but as places where tribalness, Native culture, and Indian solidarity could be strengthened.”⁶⁰²

⁶⁰⁰ Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, 141-145.

⁶⁰¹ Baeta, “The little skingin that could,” 117-169.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, 151, 226-228, 234.

Baeta furnishes anonymous comments from her surveys that demonstrate that living alumni (who chose to participate in the survey) enjoyed their time at Stewart. Her survey included alumni who graduated as early as the 1940s through 1980. Asked to provide their favorite memory of the Stewart Indian School, the majority of survey participants mentioned sports, band, and lasting friendships. For example, a male student graduate from 1941 stated that “I enjoyed every moment and loved every moment I spent at Stewart. Vacations I spent working at the school. Friends made were long lasting.” A female student who graduated in 1951 similarly wrote, “I had many wonderful memories at good ole SIS and met a lot of students from different states. I felt we were just a big family. I worked in the bakery, laundry, hospital, and dining room. I played and marched/Stewart band and we all loved our band director Earl T. Laird who we all called Earl T.”

Even bad memories appear to have been eclipsed by the positives of their entire experience. A female graduate from 1944, replied that “For speaking my language (Paiute) I was physically beaten, speaking to two girls from Pyramid Lake. I was jerked around by my hair several times for getting caught speaking Paiute. I kept quiet until I learned English and haven’t stopped talking since. Good memories. Graduated from here in 1944.”⁶⁰³ These comments also reveal that students saw Stewart as more than just an institution. As one female Apache student who attended in the sixties and seventies stated, “Stewart was my home.” Overall, the students enjoyed living among their Native peers and being in an environment which supported their tribal identity.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰³ Ibid, 100.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid, 101.

Stewart closed in 1980 after ninety years of operation. The official reason given was earthquake concerns. However, the understanding has always been that the Bureau of Indian Affairs used the earthquake excuse as a convenient way of closing the institution. The closure occurred the same year that Chilocco Indian Agricultural School in Oklahoma and Inter-mountain Indian School in Brigham City, Utah, shut their doors. Thus, Stewart was part of larger cuts to non-reservation boarding schools. Today only Chemawa in Salem, Oregon, Riverside Indian School in Anadarko, Oklahoma, Sherman Indian High School in Riverside, California, and Hampton Indian School remain open.⁶⁰⁵



Figure 32: Stewart Dairy in 2010. Photograph taken by the author, May 21, 2010

After the Bureau of Indian Affairs closed the school in 1980, Nevada tribes fought to have the property conveyed into Washoe ownership. The Stewart Indian Colony

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid, 20.

borders the Stewart campus so the Intertribal Council of Nevada decided that the Washoe would be the logical choice for taking over the property. In addition, the property also included 3,000 acres of ranchland in Jacks Valley situated close to the Dresslerville Colony. The Washoe viewed the Jacks Valley and the Stewart campus as part of their traditional homelands.

Not everyone wanted to turn over the property to the Washoe. State Senator Joe Neal introduced a bill which would have conveyed the land to Nevada tribes. In response, State Senator Floyd Lamb put forth a bill for the land to be conveyed to the state for use as a rehabilitation or correctional facility. After lots of infighting, neither bill passed. Nevada Governor Robert List and Secretary of the Interior, James Watt, came to an insider agreement that the land would be conveyed to the State. The Intertribal Council of Nevada filed a complaint in Reno federal district court but their complaint was denied. On July 21, 1982, the state acquired fifty acres of the main campus through a quit claim deed.

The Washoes did not lose out completely in the compromise. The Washoes acquired the 3,000 acres of ranchland near Dresslerville. In addition, the quit claim deed that conveyed the school campus to the State of Nevada included a provision that “The State of Nevada wishing to perpetuate the 90 years history of the Stewart Indian School will reserve Building 1 and Building 3 to house and display the crafts, artifacts and the memorability relation to the Stewart Indian School.” If the State of Nevada fails to fulfill this requirement the title will be forfeit and the land revert back to the federal government. As part of that obligation, the Nevada Indian Commission, has its offices in the house that Superintendent Snyder built for himself and his wife in the 1920s. Several

other state agencies including the Nevada Department of Corrections, and the Division of Forestry have offices in a variety of the old stone buildings as well.⁶⁰⁶



Figure 33. The Stewart carpentry shop in 2010. Photograph taken by the author, May 21, 2010.

Today Stewart has a flourishing alumni community. Many former students stayed in the Reno and Carson City area and live today on the reservations and colonies of the state. Many return every year to the campus for the Stewart Father's Day Powwow to reconnect with old comrades. The powwow is held by the Nevada Indian Commission to raise money for the construction of a permanent cultural museum in the former administration building. The endeavor slowed during the economic downturn in 2008, yet advocates continue to raise money to see the dream come to fruition.

⁶⁰⁶ Memo "Stewart Indian School" Elwood Mose, State of Nevada Indian Commission, May 22, 1986. Clipping File, Nevada Historical Society.

Once complete, the cultural center will tell the story of Stewart's students through the display of uniforms, band instruments, athletic trophies and awards and other memorabilia. The Nevada Indian Commission also envisions an archive and oral history collection to help preserve the records and personal narratives of the people who called the school home. Ultimately, the Indian Commission's dream is to rehabilitate and restore several of the buildings to make the school a destination and living history teaching tool for visitors. Guests could stay in one of the dorms, eat in the dining hall, and perhaps watch a movie in the auditorium.⁶⁰⁷

The Stewart Indian School did not succeed in assimilating the Native children of Nevada. In his article on the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, Clyde Ellis concludes that federal boarding schools "simultaneously failed and succeeded." He continues that, "they failed inasmuch as they did not destroy Kiowa identity or culture. Cutting children's hair, dressing them in new clothing, and teaching them to farm, bake, or sew did not necessarily transform identity."⁶⁰⁸ However, they also succeeded because they taught vocational and life experience skills that provided tools for survival. The same can be said of the Stewart Indian School. Students never abandoned their cultural heritage. Instead they took the useful tools provided to them and ignored what did not work for them.

Federal boarding schools did do significant harm to Native communities. Generations of children grew up in institutions, removed from their families, and without

⁶⁰⁷ Nevada Indian Commission, "White Paper: Stewart Indian School Legacy Endangered," Stewart Indian School Memorandum: CallforAssistanceLetter.pdf, accessed August 30, 2013, <http://www.stewartindianschool.com/images/events/CallForAssistanceLetter.pdf>.

⁶⁰⁸ Ellis, "We Had a Lot of Fun," 65- 95, 91.

real life lessons about parenting and family. Reports of extreme physical abuse or sexual abuse have surfaced in many schools across the country and particularly in Canada in the residential schools. Stewart appears to have been very lucky on that count. While many students hated their time at the school, the patterns of abuse exhibited at other schools have yet to be exposed in Nevada. Alumni associated with the school today note with pride that none of that happened at Stewart.

Overall, most alumni express their appreciation for their time at Stewart.

Lomawaima argues in *They Called It Prairie Light* that “the fact that many alumni value their experience at Chilocco does not mean they fully endorse its education policy and practice.” This positive opinion does not constitute success. Rather, she continues, “it endorses the strengths and resources that students brought to, discovered at, and created within Chilocco, through their own ingenuity and through cooperation with and reliance on each other.”⁶⁰⁹ Each person made of the situation what they would and it is a testament to both the individual students and their cultural heritage that tribes survived such a brutal attack on their culture.

The same can be said of Stewart. Children did not passively absorb the lessons of assimilation. They were both acted upon and actors in their own story. Nor does the failure of some students to adopt or flourish in a federal boarding school make them failures themselves. They lived in an institution away from family support systems, in a world that taught them that their culture was backwards. Sometimes they ran away or worked to get expelled. But for all of them, Stewart was home.

⁶⁰⁹ Lomawaima, *Prairie Light*, 164.

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APPENDIX A
IRB EXEMPTION

To: Susan Gray
COOR

for **From:** Mark Roosa, Chair *SM*
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 06/16/2010

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 06/16/2010

IRB Protocol #: 1006005231

Study Title: Stewart Indian School Oral Histories

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.