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A BRIEF HISTORY OF INDIAN EDUCATION
AT THE FORT SHAW INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL

by

John T. Greer

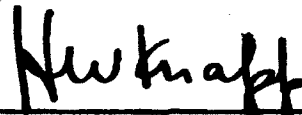
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This is primarily a history of the Indian School at old Fort Shaw, a school which was abandoned by the government in 1910. Fort Shaw was located on the Sun River in north central Montana. From the annual reports of the Secretary of the Interior, we are told the exact location of the Fort Shaw military post.

The Fort Shaw military post, situated in latitude 47° 30' 3", longitude from Greenwich 111° 40', on the right bank of the Sun River, and about fifteen miles from its confluence with the Missouri, embracing about thirty-two square miles, was established in July, 1867. By General Order number sixty-nine, issued September 14, 1869, and Executive Order of January 11, 1870, forty-six square miles or 29,842 acres were set apart as the military reservation.

The post is about 5,000 feet above sea level. The Sun River is a stream of moderate size during the greater part of the year, scarcely more than twenty yards wide, and fordable anywhere except near its mouth. The water is usually clear and of good quality. The valley of the Sun River is fifty miles long, with a variable width of from two to five miles.¹

The fort was named Camp Reynolds when first established on June 30, 1867, but the name was changed to Fort Shaw on July 4, 1867, in memory of Colonel Robert C. Shaw, a former commander of Army posts on the frontier. The camp was about three miles off the Bird Tail stage route between the two

¹Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 1893 (Washington: Government Printing Office 1895), p. 471.

²Plaque on the monument erected on the site of the former fort.

towns as described by Abbott.³ This location of the fort was in the very heart of the Blackfoot country, and was set up to keep the stage route open between Fort Benton and Helena and to protect the settlers from Indian attacks. On January 11, 1870, Fort Shaw was declared a military reservation, and on April 30, 1892, the Fort was relinquished by the Army,⁴ and was turned over to the Department of the Interior.

When Fort Shaw was abandoned as a military post, it was generally understood that the lands of the military reserve were to be open to settlement. The buildings of the fort were to be sold or abandoned. Various bills were introduced in Congress relative to opening the land to settlement but failed to meet the approval of that body. One such bill which failed to pass was Senate Bill number 565, "A Bill to provide for the disposal of the abandoned Fort Shaw Military Reservation in Montana, under the Homestead and Mining Laws, for Agriculture and other purposes."⁵

Since the land was not to be opened to settlement, it was agreed that the land should be used as a site for an Indian training school. The annual reports of the Secretary of the Interior explain this decision:

³Newton Carl Abbott, Montana in the Making, (Billings: Gazette Printing Company, 1951), p. 333.

⁴Plaque on the monument erected on the site of the former fort.

⁵Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 1892 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1893), p. 36.

On March 15, 1892, Special Indian Agent, J. A. Leonard, who had been sent to Fort Shaw to ascertain the practicability of utilizing it for Indian school purposes, recommended that the Department establish an Indian school there. This and a supplementary report were submitted to the Secretary, March 22 and April 13, 1892, with the recommendation that eight sections of the Fort Shaw reservation be set aside for Indian school purposes, and, if it should be found necessary, that the entire length of the irrigating ditch be included within the school reservation, that six more sections be added.⁶

On April 17, 1892, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Thomas J. Morgan, wrote to the Secretary of the Interior about the proposed school:

As soon as it is ascertained what portions of this military reservation are actually needed for the uses of this school, the remainder can then be thrown open to public settlement or otherwise disposed of. The water rights, of course, must go to the school, without them it would be impossible to conduct the school. Senator Power, since this bill was prepared, has spoken to me frequently in reference to transforming this military post into an Indian Industrial School, and has expressed himself as highly pleased with the arrangements made for that purpose.⁷

After the decision had been made to use part of the reservation for an Indian training school, a superintendent was chosen to run the school, and he was given orders to select a portion of the land to be used for this purpose. Again the reports to the Secretary of the Interior describe this selection:

On April 30, 1892, the superintendent of the school, Dr. William H. Winslow, was instructed to select about 10,000 acres to be reserved for school purposes and to

⁶Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Vol. II, 1893, op. cit., p. 472.

⁷Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Vol. II, 1892, op. cit., p. 41.

include the best of the arable land lying contiguous to the buildings, some good pasture and timber land, and the land along which lay the water rights upon which the school must depend for irrigation and domestic water supply.⁸

The heads of the Indian Bureau were informed of the proposed opening of the school and on June 9, 1892, a letter was sent to the Indian Agents in Montana, from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs:

A new Indian Industrial training school has been established at Fort Shaw, Montana, and the Superintendent, Dr. W. H. Winslow, physician and principal teacher at Chiloco, Oklahoma, has been directed to proceed to Fort Shaw and enter upon the duties of his new position. It is the hope of this office to make this a large school, and eventually, one of the most important in the Indian Service. The location is very advantageous because of the facilities for agricultural pursuits and the buildings which are already there. A large number of children are to be transferred from the reservations to the new school. You are directed to cooperate with Superintendent Winslow in his efforts to secure a large enrollment for the new school. Any children transferred to the new school are not to be under twelve to fourteen years of age, and they must have a fair knowledge of English.⁹

The school was established, but still there was not a complete agreement on the size of the lands to be included in the school. After Dr. Winslow had gone to the proposed site, he sent in his report on the site and the desired number of acres to be retained for the school. The annual report of the Secretary of the Interior describes the final solution of the problem:

On August 3, 1892, Dr. Winslow forwarded a plat of 13,119.8 acres, all of which he held to be necessary

⁸Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Vol. II, 1893, op. cit., p. 472.

⁹Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Vol. II, 1892, op. cit., p. 43.

to be retained out of the military reservation. On August 22, 1892, he returned them stating that he was willing to reserve 5,000 acres for the school, provided that amount was necessary for its proper conduct, and directing that the superintendent of the Fort Shaw school select the reduced area and furnish a description thereof.

On January 20, 1893, Superintendent Winslow forwarded a plat of lands selected, containing 4,999.5 acres. The setting apart of this tract was recommended to the Secretary with the further recommendation that the irrigating ditch and water rights connected therewith be retained for the school, also the right to extend said ditch anywhere over the school land. On February 11, 1893, the Secretary of the Interior approved this tract of 4,999.5 acres and set apart the same for the Fort Shaw Indian Industrial school.¹⁰

One of the greatest difficulties in this new school was the transition of the Indian from his nomadic way of life to life on a reservation. The Buffaloes went out of the picture in the period from 1875 to 1880 which meant greater poverty and hardships as opposed to the riches they had enjoyed when the Buffaloes were plentiful. When the Blackfoot were first restricted to reservations, the role of the chief became less important because the Indian Agent would often elevate some other Indian to the post of chief. The system of tribal police broke up the Indians' methods of social control. This resulted in a period of little discipline for the children.

At this late date there will have to remain many gaps in the history of the school because of the lack of permanent sources of information and faulty memories of the "old-timers" who lived and went to school there.

¹⁰Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Vol. II, 1893, op. cit., page 473.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Blackfoot tribe had the greatest representation in the school at Fort Shaw. Since this school was located in Blackfoot territory, their history prior to the establishment of the reservation and school must be part of the history of the school itself. Because the school was a non-reservation school, there were other tribes represented, but fewer in number than the Blackfoot. Among the other tribes represented were the Assiniboin, the Crow, the Yankton Sioux, the Cheyenne, the Flathead, and the Arapaho. At one time there was even an Eskimo boy, Oscar Wascoli, who was sent to Fort Shaw from Wisconsin in an effort to save his life from tuberculosis, but this was in vain, as he died eighteen months later.

The Blackfoot are an important group of three allied Algonquian-speaking Indian tribes of the North American plains. These ~~comprise~~^{are} the Siksika, or North Blackfoot, the Kainah or Bloods, and the Piegan. Although politically independent, these tribes shared the same language and customs.¹ The Blackfoot have a tradition of having come into Montana from the north. They probably lived along the Saskatchewan River. As explained by Abbott, "Their southward movement was at a time before they had horses. This would place it at some time

¹John C. Ewers, "Blackfeet Indians," The Encyclopedia Americana (New York: Rand McNally and Company, 1957), 4, p. 41.

about the middle of the Eighteenth Century."² By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Blackfoot claimed a vast territory, twice the size of New England, extending from the North Saskatchewan River southward to the present Yellowstone Park, and from the Rockies eastward over the plains to the mouth of the Milk River. The Blackfoot were then at the height of their power.³

Settled with the Blackfoot were the Gros-Ventres, cousins of the warlike Arapahoes. They were the terror and scourge of the frontier in early days. Tribal boundaries bothered them very little. Each group had its own favorite hunting ground but together they roved at will all up and down the frontier.

Since the Blackfoot were nomadic pedestrian hunters before the advent of the horse, they had to figure out methods to produce their meat without having to try to chase the animals down. The Blackfoot were successful hunters even before they had horses. This is proved by their folklore which is filled with stories of how they learned the art. The usual manner of hunting buffaloes was by making pens at the edge of a precipice or cutbank and driving the animals over, "sometimes killing them by the hundreds and even thousands."⁴ These traps were called "pishkuns." With the help of their medicine men

²Newton C. Abbott, Montana in the Making (Billings: Gazette Printing Company, 1951), p. 29.

³Ewers, loc. cit.

⁴The Historical Society of Montana, The Blackfoot Indian (Helena: State Publishing Co., 1923), Vol. IX, p. 256.

who possessed "Buffalo stones" and charms of great power the buffaloes were lured to their own destruction. With the aid of much noise and clamor, the beating of drums, and waving of robes, the stupid buffaloes would be stampeded over the cliff. Abbott says, "Great was the feasting and merrymaking on such occasions."⁵ The Blackfoot, of course, hunted other game in the area such as elk, deer, and antelope, but these were hunted by stalking. Buffaloes were, however, their main source of meat as well as clothing and shelter. After the Blackfoot became a mounted tribe, there was much hunting of buffaloes from horses. "The Indians would surround a herd of buffaloes and riding round and round a herd, bunch them up and shoot down the animals one by one," as reported by Wissler.⁶

The implements used for killing buffaloes were not readily displaced by guns. Bows and arrows were used long after guns were common. In fact, pioneers maintain that at close range the rapidity and precision of the bow was only to be excelled by the repeating rifle, a weapon developed in the 1870's. Wissler relates, "Even so, the bow was not entirely discarded until the buffalo became extinct."⁷ The bows used by the Blackfoot were mainly of the sinew-backed type. It is highly probable that sinew backing was brought into the western part of the

⁵Abbott, op. cit., p. 30.

⁶Clark Wissler, North American Indians of the Plains (New York: Lancaster Press, Inc., Lancaster, Pa. 1948), p. 23.

⁷Ibid., p. 25.

Plains through contact with Plateau and Basin tribes. The Blackfoot bow was usually sinew-backed, and the grip wrapped with a thong, probably of buffalo hide; the ends were usually in a membranous case. Lowie noted that "Horn bows, probably always sinew-backed, figured only among the western tribes such as the Blackfoot."⁸ Arrow shafts were proportionate in length to the bows. A shoot of the favored wood was straightened and rounded by passing it through a hole drilled in a piece of horn and by rubbing it between two grooved stones. As Lowie noted, "To increase the accuracy and carriage of the projectile, three feathers were generally attached to the butt end of the common shaft which was usually notched."⁹ The arrows were usually pointed with flint and the shaft was usually of the wild cherry.

One of the most characteristic features of Plains Indian culture was the tipi. Primarily the tipi was a conical tent covered with dressed buffalo skins. The tipi was made, cared for, and set up by the women. Wissler reports "First, a conical framework of long slender poles was erected and the cover raised into place."¹⁰ The lodges were made in the summer, in the months of July and August, when the hide of the buffalo was thickest, and usually, if possible, of the skins of cows, as those of the bulls were found less adapted to the

⁸Robert H. Lowie, Indians of the Plains (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), p. 73.

⁹Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁰Wissler, op. cit., p. 37.

purpose. From six to twelve skins were ordinarily employed, according to the size desired or the wealth of the occupants. As reported in the Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana:

The number seldom exceeded twelve but occasionally reached eighteen and twenty. A twelve-skin lodge was about fifteen feet in diameter and afforded shelter to eight or nine persons. The cover was stretched over from eight to twelve lodge poles, in the larger lodges, from eighteen to twenty, standing in a circle and inclining inward till they joined near the tops at a height of from eight to twelve feet from the ground. The lodge always had but a single entrance closed by a skin stretched on a wooden frame, swinging on a string hung above it. An opening was also left at the top for the escape of the smoke, which could be adjusted according to the direction of the wind, or closed altogether.¹¹

The internal affairs of a Blackfoot camp were managed by means of a soldiers' lodge. This lodge was a sort of a military organization, consisting usually of from twenty to one hundred men, according to the size of the village. The lodge was thoroughly democratic in principle, no member enjoying a greater degree of authority than the rest. The origin of the organization is lost in antiquity, and its existence had the sanction of custom. This was a permanent institution, whose members enjoyed their positions for life or until expelled for worthlessness or bad conduct. When vacancies occurred by death, resignation, or expulsion, the lodge elected new members from among the best and bravest of the band; no worthless man had a chance to receive this

¹¹The Historical Society of Montana, The Blackfoot Indian (Helena: State Publishing Co., 1923), Vol. IX, pp. 258-259.

honor. When a camp was pitched, near the center was found a lodge reserved for the deliberations of the soldiers who met there whenever any matter came up for consideration. At other times, the soldiers lived in their own lodges with their families. The power and authority of the soldiers was great and very rarely anyone thought of resisting. The article from the Historical Society goes on:

An offender was dealt with summarily; for a light offense, he might escape with having his saddle cut up; for a greater, with the destruction of his lodge; but sometimes the penalty of disobedience to the mandates of the lodge was death.¹²

The chief escaped no more than the common citizen; all were answerable to this high tribunal.

The jurisdiction of the lodge extended to every matter of public concern, whether great or small. The lodge prohibited individual hunting except with its sanction; appointed the days for the general hunt of the whole village; quelled affrays, regulated the departure of war parties, and determined the manner and the time of all changes of camp. On the march, the members of the lodge took the lead and determined the route, prevented a separation of force, chose the new camping ground, and assigned to every family a place to pitch its lodge. The chiefs were frequently not members of the lodge, but were treated with deference and often led the lodge in deliberations. As is further explained in the article from the Historical Society:

¹²Ibid., pp. 279-280.

Its decisions were communicated to the village by certain old men, who filled the positions of town-criers, traversing the various avenues of the village proclaiming the edict in a loud voice.¹³

The position of a chief was neither hereditary nor elective, but wholly self-creative. The young man ambitious of this distinction sought to be conspicuous for energy and daring in war, intelligence in council, and liberality in the giving of feasts and the providing of tobacco for the guests of his lodge. The exhibition of these qualities in more than ordinary degree would win him the respect and confidence of one after another of his band, who were ready to follow his guidance and accept his counsel. When this point was reached, he began to have influence and to be regarded as a leader or chief. "The greatness or authority of a chief depended wholly upon his popularity. The number of chiefs, that might be in a band, was dependent simply upon the number who could secure a following."¹⁴ This system did not necessarily array the members of a band into opposing factions, for several chiefs might enjoy the equal consideration of all.

Besides the general respect in which a chief was held, he had his purely personal followers, consisting usually of his relatives and nearer friends. The bands thus constituted often gave themselves distinctive appellations, which continued from generation to generation. According to the Historical Society of Montana:

¹³Ibid., p. 280.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 280-281.

Thus, among the Blackfoot, were the Big Swans, Big Crowfeet, and Big Plumes; among the Piegans, Little Robes, Skunks, and Big Lakes; among the Bloods, the Fish-eaters, Skunks, Quarrelers, Back-fats, and Foxes. Here is to be seen the manner in which the Blackfoot nation became divided into the three recognized tribes. As one of these bands became powerful, it was liable to drop off from the parent tribe as the result of a quarrel, or merely by reason of weight of numbers. In proof of this theory is cited the Little Robe band of Piegans. At the time the whites first became acquainted with the Piegans (1831), though avowedly a part of the Piegan tribe, they lived wholly by themselves, seldom meeting with the remainder of the tribe and showing so marked a line of separation, that by one or two writers they were classed as a separate tribe. Had they not suffered utter extermination a few years later at the hands of the Crows, it is probable that long ere this their tribal independence would have been universally conceded. The Blackfoot have preserved no tradition of their separation into tribes, which, added to their uniformly amicable relations, is strong circumstantial evidence of its having been the result of the quiet working of natural causes, as violent disruption would have been a matter of so much importance as to demand preservation in tradition.¹⁵

The Blackfoot had a system of age societies for training the young Indian. Skill in warfare and hunting, courage in the face of danger and self-reliance were the objectives of this training. Among these societies it was customary to buy the right to a certain set of regalia, dances, and songs, usually linked with privileges of other kinds. The buyers did not join the sellers as members, but displaced them. Professor Lowie tells us:

The sellers, however, remained a fixed group that jointly bought the corresponding emblems and privileges of an older group. This process was repeated at intervals until the original group of boys had reached the highest existing grade.¹⁶

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 281-282.

¹⁶Lowie, op. cit., p. 97.

Two of the fraternities existed which, though small in numbers and importance, demand notice. The first was the Dog Band, or the Dogs, a military association whose creed was never to flinch in battle. The Dog Band was composed of young men distinguished for courage and ability in war, but its obligations and practices rendered it unpopular and the Band seldom numbered more than fifty members. The Band indulged at intervals in a begging tour of the village, entering at will into any lodge, dashing about on all fours, yelping and capering in an imitation of a dog. The only way to get rid of the Dog was by making the desired gift, but the inmates of the lodge were entitled to treat the Dog as if he were indeed the animal he impersonated, and cuff and kick him to their hearts' content. The old men had an organization known as the Bull Band. The Bulls had no special creed, but were old men of sense and discretion who had ceased to burn with the fire of military ardor but were yet fit for active service when it became needful or desirable. As stated by the Historical Society, "They number seventy or eighty members and are held in considerable repute, and enjoy participation in the councils of the nation."¹⁷

Marriage, among the Blackfoot, was very simple. The brave chose his bride-to-be and sent a friend to her father's house, who then enumerated the gifts to be awarded for the bride. If her parents were amenable to the approach and deemed the gifts sufficient, the girl went to the brave's

¹⁷The Historical Society of Montana, The Blackfoot Indians (Helena: State Publishing Co., 1923), Vol. IX, pp. 284-285.

lodge and the marriage was accomplished. The parents of the bride usually sent presents to her husband, which often exceeded in value the price originally paid for the bride. From the moment of marriage, all direct intercourse between a husband and his wife's relatives or a wife and her husband's relatives was at an end. The husband addressed his wife's family only through her, and she observed the same rule with regard to his. Relatives by marriage sought to avoid meeting each other and would turn out of their paths for that purpose, but when an encounter was unavoidable, they would muffle the face until they had passed one another. We are told in part:

The same rule of etiquette applied to parents who were "mah-oh-tan," that is, who were related by the marriage of their children. Thus the parents of the husband were "mah-oh-tan" to the parents of his wife and vice versa.¹⁸

Divorce was common and rested only upon mutual agreement. In case of separation, the husband was entitled to the return of the gifts he had made before the marriage.

In the mid-nineteenth century the Indians realized they were fighting for their homes and lands, and friction increased between the white settlers and the Indians. George Raymer describes an incident:

In the summer of 1869 four or five wagons of emigrants were attacked near Fort Benton by Indians. Just after this, a brother of Mountain Chief, head of the Piegiens, and a young Indian boy rode into the post with special orders from Major Alexander Culbertson. These innocent men were shot down by excited whites. The Piegiens were thoroughly aroused when they heard of these murders. Mountain Chief realized that he would not be able to

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 273-274.

check his young braves, and so warned the whites and asked them to leave, saying he would not be responsible for what might happen.¹⁹

Among the white settlers was a certain Major Malcolm Clark, a former agent of the American Fur Company, who had retired from its service and settled in the Prickly Pear Valley near Helena. Here he lived with his squaw, who was a daughter of a Piegan chief, and their five children, Helen, Horace, Nathan, Isabelle, and Judith. Because his wife was a Piegan and because of the high esteem in which he was held among the Indians, Major Clark was over-confident of his safety and did not heed Mountain Chief's warning. A cousin to Major Clark's wife, Ne-tus-che-o, took advantage of this feeling among the Indians to take vengeance upon the Clarks for a personal grudge he had been harboring for a couple of years. In the spring of 1867, while visiting at Major Clark's home, Ne-tus-che-o's horses and the horses of Major Clark were stolen. Although some of the Indian's horses were located, they were not restored to him. Ne-tus-che-o felt that Clark was implicated in the robbery in some way, and so he brooded over the loss of his horses which were more precious to him than life. Finally, one night, he left, taking with him a band of Major Clark's horses, among which was a favorite horse of Horace's. When the theft was discovered, Clark and Horace rode in pursuit. When they came to the Indian camp, Ne-tus-che-o rode up on Horace's horse. Horace

¹⁹Robert George Raymer, Montana, the Land and the People (New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1930) Vol. I, p. 285.

was so enraged that he took the pony from the Indian, at the same time lashing Ne-tus-che-o across the face with his riding whip. Ne-tus-che-o never forgave him for this. Because the Indians were so aroused against the Whites, it was easy for Ne-tus-che-o to gather a group of braves to ride to Major Clark's home. They arrived there one night in August of 1869 and Ne-tus-che-o professed friendliness for the Clark's, even kissing Horace. He told them that their horses had been found and were a short distance away. He asked Horace to go with another Indian to bring them in. Raymer states:

This Indian, after they had gone a short distance, shot Horace and left him for dead. Ne-tus-che-o then called Clark out of the house on some pretext and killed him. Horace, who was not fatally wounded, crawled back to the house. The family then barricaded themselves in a room, thinking Ne-tus-che-o would kill them all, but he was finally persuaded to leave.²⁰

This tragedy led to the Piegan War of 1869-1870, for the United States Government demanded the surrender of Ne-tus-che-o. Mountain Chief, the head of a tribe of 1500 Piegans, refused to comply with this demand. Waiting until the winter snows hemmed in the Piegans, Brevet Col. Eugene M. Baker started from Fort Shaw with four troops of cavalry and fifty-five mounted infantry to discipline them. This was on January 19, 1870. Among the soldiers were Horace and Nathan Clark, who had enlisted to avenge their father's death. On the night of January 23, an Indian village was seen which was supposed to be the camp of Mountain Chief. Instead, it was the smallpox

²⁰Ibid., pp. 285-287.

camp of Heavy Runner, a friendly Indian, whose lodges were filled with sick women and children. Heavy Runner, on hearing the troops, advanced to meet them alone and unarmed. He was fired upon while holding in his hands the papers which bespoke his loyalty to the United States Government. After this murder, the drunken officer ordered his men to advance and exterminate the members of the camp. According to official reports, "This brave army slaughtered one hundred and seventy-three sick Indians and left twenty more badly wounded."²¹ Believing that the Piegans had been sufficiently punished, the expedition withdrew and returned to their station. However, when the facts began to leak out, there was a great public clamor in the United States against this barbarous slaughter of sick non-combatants. An official Army investigation followed, but Baker was exonerated by his fellow officers.

The Piegans were forced into a treaty by the Government whereby they were promised \$1,000,000 in return for their lands. Then on July 5, 1873, the President set aside a tract of 17,000,000 acres in the northeastern corner of Montana for the Gros Ventres, Piegans, Bloods, Blackfoot, and River Crows.²² Later the Blackfoot were removed to their own reservation just east of Glacier Park, which was once a part of the reservation.²³

²¹Ibid., p. 287.

²²Ibid., p. 288.

²³Abbott, loc. cit.

CHAPTER III

RELIGIOUS TRAINING

To most people the mention of religion brings to mind notions of God, a supreme overruling and decidedly personal being. Nothing just like this is found among the Indians. Yet, they seem to have formulated rather complex and by comparison, abstract notions of a controlling power or series of powers pervading the universe. Clark Wissler describes it thus: "The Blackfoot resolved the phenomena of the universe into 'powers,' the greatest and most universal of which is natosiwa, or sun power."¹ The sun was, in a way, a personal god having the moon for his wife and the morning star for his son.

When a Blackfoot went out to fast and pray for a revelation, he called upon all the recognized mythical creatures, the heavenly bodies, and all in the earth and in the waters. If this divine element spoke through a hawk, for example, the applicant would then look upon that bird as the localization or medium for it, and for him the great spirit was manifest or resided therein, but, of course, not exclusively. Quite likely he would keep in a bundle the skin or feathers of a hawk, that the divine presence might ever be at hand. As an explanation, Wissler says, "That is why the Blackfoot warriors carried such charms into battle and looked to them for aid."² As Lowie

¹Clark Wissler, North American Indians of the Plains (New York: Lancaster Press, Inc., Lancaster, Pa.) pp. 109-111.

²Ibid., pp. 112-113.

explains it, "For the Blackfoot, this supernaturalism was not the equivalent of church going of a Sunday, but something that profoundly affected his daily life, and offered an explanation of extraordinary occurrences."³

The future life of the Blackfoot, they believed, was to be passed in the Saskatchewan Valley, at a point which they called the Sand Hills. Here all their ancestors were invisible to men but pursued about the same career they did in life. "Their ghosts sometimes visited the living and talked to them in a whistling sound, which was heard in the sighing of the wind the creaking of lodge poles, and the rustling of leaves."⁴

In anthropological literature it is the custom to use the term medicine in a technical sense, meaning anything that manifests the divine element. Clark Wissler tells us:

Among the Blackfoot, the men made extraordinary use of their charms or amulets, which were, after all, little medicine bundles. A man rarely went to war or engaged in any serious undertaking without carrying and appealing to one or more of these small bundles.⁵

Among the Blackfoot, there was a special development of the bundle scheme in that they recognized the transferring of bundles and amulets to the former owner. Wissler declares, "This buying and selling of medicines was so frequent that

³Robert H. Lowie, Indians of the Plains (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954), p. 157.

⁴The Historical Society of Montana, The Blackfoot Indian (Helena: State Publishing Co., 1923), Vol. IX, pp. 265-266.

⁵Wissler, op. cit., p. 113.

many men, at one time or another, have owned all the types of bundles in the tribe."⁶

One of the most important tribal ceremonies of the Black-foot Indians was the Sun Dance. This dance is still enacted every summer on their reservation. About the last of August each band would go to a suitable locality where poles could be obtained for building the lodge in which the dance was to take place. The poles were cut from twenty-five to thirty feet long and inclined together like the poles of the ordinary lodge, the upper ends being secured to a single upright pole standing in the center of the enclosed space and projecting some three or four feet above the rest. The exterior was then thatched with evergreen boughs so as to exclude the sun, only one opening being left which served as the entrance. The lodge was thus prepared to hold from three to four hundred persons. In the meantime, a feast was prepared, comprising every variety of food that the resources of the band could command. Of this feast all partook for three days, none being excluded but such women as those guilty of lewdness. While the feast was in progress the dance went on within the lodge lasting without intermission for three days and nights. The dancers numbered some half dozen, all men, selected from the entire band. They were stripped naked, and the entire body, including the face, was usually painted with white earth. They stood looking upward at the center pole of the lodge with a fixed gaze, blowing a short

⁶Ibid., p. 118.

whistle held between the teeth, the feet a little apart and immovable, while the body was raised and lowered from the knees up. This was accompanied by a movement of the raised arms, similar to the flapping of a bird's wings, the elbows bent at nearly a right angle. During the entire period of the dance, the performers were allowed only the nourishment they could extract from a pipe; they often fainted from exhaustion and were revived with cold water in order to resume their places in the dance. Naturally, the dancers were completely worn out by the close of the ceremony. As noted by the Historical Society:

The dancers kept time with the beating of a drum accompanied by a monotonous chant, kept up by a group of old men seated nearby on the ground. The drum used was of rawhide stretched over a wooden hoop, similar in shape but somewhat larger than a tambourine. It was beaten with a single stick, the pounding end wrapped with dressed skin or other suitable material.⁷

During the dance, the warriors, who had achieved success in war during the previous year, entered the lodge to count their coups, and anyone desiring to make a sacrifice to the sun did so by hanging this offering upon the center pole. "Coup" has come to be the accepted translation of the Blackfoot "nah-mach-kach," a word difficult to find an exact equivalent for, but being nearly "a trophy taken."⁸ We are told by the Historical Society of Montana:

⁷The Historical Society of Montana, The Blackfoot Indian (Helena: State Publishing Co., 1923), Vol. IX, pp. 266-267.

⁸Ibid., p. 267.

The various exploits of war were denominated coups and reflected honor upon their performers according to a fixed scale of merit. To capture an enemy's arms was a coup of the first class; to touch him alive, of the second; to touch his dead body or secure his scalp, of the third; to make a successful theft of an enemy's horse, of the fourth class. Those who desired the privilege of recounting their coups had to first present a horse to someone at the door of the medicine lodge, an irrevocable gift. Then he might enter the lodge and, in his turn, relate his exploits, illustrating them by gestures indicating the manner of their performance.⁹

The horse stealers, however, were not required to make the gift of a horse at the door, but took with them a bundle of sticks, and, casting one into a fire kept burning in the lodge, said, "At such a time I stole so many horses, at such a place, from certain enemies."¹⁰ Then casting in another stick, he would describe another occasion. Such were the ceremonies accompanying the sun dance, and when they were concluded, all hands broke camp and moved away, leaving the lodge standing with the offerings to the sun still attached to the pole. "These were meant to remain until they were destroyed by the action of the elements, but frequently the medicine lodge was visited by prowling enemies who despoiled it of all its gifts."¹¹

The Piegan sun dance of the year 1832 was witnessed by some of the white employees of Fort McKenzie. Among the gifts sacrificed to the sun was one of those rare freaks of nature,

⁹Ibid., p. 267.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 267.

¹¹Ibid., p. 268.

a white buffalo robe, so rare that they probably do not average more than one to the million. The robe was, therefore, extremely valuable, and the white spectators at the offering resolved in secret that this rare treasure should not be left to share the fate of its companion gifts. They bided their time until the ceremonies were at an end, and, when the assemblage broke up, departed like the rest and headed towards the fort. They traveled slowly, however, and when night came, were at no great distance from the lodge. Going into camp they waited until the night was sufficiently advanced to conceal their movements from any watchful eyes, then rapidly retraced their steps to the lodge. Regaining it they first carefully reconnoitered the ground, and then entering, sought the suspended robe. The pole was loaded with the various gifts, but in vain the eager hands sought the coveted robe. It was gone; someone had been there before them. Greatly crestfallen, the party returned to their camp and continued their journey the next morning. The next time a white buffalo robe was heard of, whether or not it was the same one that had been sacrificed to the sun, was at Fort Union in the same year of 1832. A party of Blackfoot Indians had arrived at the Fort bringing with them a white buffalo robe. Since the robe was for sale, and as the Mandans were desirous of making a sacrifice of unusual costliness, a council was called at once to consider the cost of this robe. It was decided upon, and the sale price consisted of eight horses bearing goods of a value exceeding that of the horses. The robe

was, therefore, soon on exhibition in the lodge of the principal chief of the Mandans. As explained by the Historical Society of Montana:

It cannot be said for certain that these two robes were one and the same, but considering the scarcity of albino buffalo, and the fact that the Blackfoot had both robes, they evidently couldn't see such a costly treasure go to waste.¹²

There are a number of semi-religious festivals or ceremonies in which a large number of individuals participate and which seem to have been handed on from one tribe to another. The best known examples of this is the Omaha or Grass dance which has been reported for the Pawnee, Arapaho, Omaha, Gros Ventre, Dakota, Crow, Assiniboin, and Blackfoot. The various tribes agree in their belief that this dance and its regalia originated with the Pawnee. The Gros Ventre taught it to the Blackfoot about 1883. Clark Wissler describes the dance as follows:

The meetings are held at night in large circular wooden buildings erected for that purpose. Some of the dancers wear large feather bustles, called crow belts, and peculiar roached headdresses of hair. A feast of dog's flesh is served at which many members formally give away property to the poor. They even go so far, now and then, as to put away a wife as the greatest act of self-denial.¹³

The Blackfoot were not converted to Christianity very early in their history, although they had come in contact with the white missionaries of the Churches, especially the Catholic

¹²Ibid., pp. 268-260.

¹³Wissler, op. cit., pp. 127-128.

Church. The sign of the Cross seemed to impress them a great deal, and, according to Palladino, a white man who carried a little cross with him and made the sign of the Cross whenever he met up with a Blackfoot Indian was likely to be safe from molestation from the Indians.¹⁴

It has been reliably stated that:

In 1858, a petition was sent, from the Blackfoot tribes to the Society of Jesus, asking that Black Robes might be sent to teach them. Father Alfred Hoecken and Brother Magri were assigned to this task. They arrived among the Indians in April of 1859, and spent the summer following them from place to place, keeping their eyes open for a convenient site for a Mission. The first spot they chose was on the banks of the Teton River, close to where Cho-teau stands today. The missionaries spent the winter here learning the language of the Indians and teaching the rudiments of Christianity to a few Indian children.¹⁵

The location of this Mission did not seem very desirable so on March 13, 1860, a couple of cabins were constructed on the banks of the Sun River, close to what afterwards became Fort Shaw. This site did not prove satisfactory either, and the new site was chosen along the banks of the Marias, but several chiefs strongly objected to this location. This area had a large number of buffalo and the Indians feared the influx of whites around the Mission would drive away the buffalo. In 1862, a new site was chosen along the Sun River, some six miles from its mouth and along its north bank. The new mission was named St. Peter. This particular location was more perma-

¹⁴L. B. Palladino, Indian and White in the Northwest (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Wickersham Publishing Company, 1922), p. 190.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 194.

ment than the preceding ones, but it lasted only until the spring of 1866.¹⁶ The Mission remained closed until 1874 because of the great unrest of the Indians during that period. The Indians feared the great inpouring of the settlers, but it was during this period they finally signed a treaty with the government.

The fourth and last site of St. Peter's Mission was about two miles east of Bird Tail Rock, near the Mullan Road, from Fort Benton to Helena, and about midway between the Dearborn River and the Sun River. The Bird Tail is a high, isolated, and very steep hill, and the many fragments of rock all about its sides gave it a formidable aspect. As Palladino describes it, "The top appears to be one solid mass of stone, and at its very highest point, there juts out bold against the sky, some seven monoliths of colossal size."¹⁷

This Mission soon became a school for Indian boys, and then years later, they opened a school at the Mission for Indian girls and in 1885, there were a total of 200 children being educated at St. Peter's Mission. At that time the institution had accommodations for about 400 children. Father Palladino tells us, "The buildings were very substantial and extremely firm, being made of stone.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 194-198.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 208.

The school facilities were very complete and up to date in every particular."¹⁸

Up until this time the Protestant missionaries had not been very successful in their attempts to Christianize the Indians. They set up a Mission at Fort Benton, but the undertaking proved a failure. The Indians did not appear to want them at this time, but they were able to come back near the close of the century and accomplish a great deal towards civilizing and helping the Indians towards Christianity. Among these missionaries, perhaps the best known was Reverend W. W. Van Orsdel, better known as Brother Van, who was greatly revered by the Indians and Whites of the area.

When the Blackfoot were forced into a reservation sixty miles from the St. Peter's Mission and their spiritual care entrusted by the Government to Protestants, St. Peter's was threatened with disaster. Raymer explains, "It survived this blow, but was doomed when the Government abated its contracts for the education of Indian children."¹⁹

After the Blackfoot were moved to the reservation, there was no school for the children to attend, and, with the breakdown in tribal customs, resulted in little or no training for their future life. From the annual reports of the Secretary of the Interior, we are informed that a day school was opened

¹⁸Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁹Robert George Raymer, Montana, The Land and the People (New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1930) Vol. I, p. 140.

at the Blackfoot Agency in the fall of 1872:

It was with the greatest of difficulty that any of the children could be induced to attend school regularly. At the first opening of the school-house, the room was crowded, but, just as soon as the curiosity of the children had been satisfied, they would leave.²⁰

A later report to the Secretary of the Interior explains:

Many of the Piegan parents are willing and anxious to have their children taught; still no great progress can be made in educating their children unless a home can be provided for them. They must be removed from life in the lodge. Children living in lodges are compelled to go to the hunt when their parents do, and, as a consequence, nearly all those enrolled as scholars are roaming over the prairie fully half of the year.²¹

Finally we are told of the opening of a boarding school on the reservation. In the annual report of the Secretary of the Interior, this is duly noted:

In October, 1885, arrangements were perfected for the opening of a boarding school. A number of the children were sent to St. Ignatius and St. Peter's Mission. The boarding school will afford the Indian children the practical training they need so much.²²

All of these facets of cultural and historical background had to be taken into account when their schools were set up. Part of their education was the attempt to Christianize them as well as educate them in the ways of the white man. The mission schools had worked towards this goal, and the government schools attempted to carry it on, but the Blackfoot gave up their cultural beliefs slowly and reluctantly.

²⁰Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Indian Affairs, Vol. I, 1873 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1874), p. 621.

²¹Report Vol. I, 1874, p. 567.

²²Report Vol. II, 1885, p. 343.

CHAPTER IV

INDIAN SCHOOLS

A complete change took place in the Indian situation as the boundaries of the Union widened and reached from coast to coast. The mass of the Indian population was now located west of the Mississippi River. The tribes stationed on detached reservations had been brought under government control by military force and land manipulation that favored white settlement. Since white settlement made further large scale removal of the tribes impossible and no land remained free from white encroachment, a new and definite land policy emerged in the detached Indian reservation system.

Schools were maintained chiefly by missionary funds and by tribal funds accruing from government land purchases. Two unique features were entrenched, the boarding school and student labor, each of which had been indispensable from the earliest days because of the unsettled Indian mode of life and the ruggedness of the ever-receding frontier. Adams cites the following figures:

In 1825 there were twenty-seven schools and a thousand students, and in 1868 each of the figures had been quadrupled. But the gains were insufficient in view of the vast acquisition of new territory, and the consequent doubling of the Indian population.¹

Adams also points out Mission schools continued to be in the majority for a number of years pending the government's

¹Evelyn C. Adams, American Indian Education (New York: King's Crown Press, 1946), pp. 45-46.

development of its own school system, and during this period they were generously subsidized.² In regards to this, Palladino says, "At St. Peter's Mission in 1885, one hundred ninety out of two hundred Indian children were provided for by the Indian Department at the monthly rate of \$9.00 per pupil."³

The government tried to control interdenominational competition by assigning a specific reservation or area to a certain group. Concerning this problem, Commissioner Edwin T. Smith expressed the opinion in 1873 that the government's authority was limited to extending to one religious organization the privilege of nominating an agent and through him, the appointment of the employees of the designated agency.⁴ This was an administrative procedure only, and the co-operation of the denominations in teaching various faiths to the Indians was a question to be decided by the organizations themselves. But the strife did not abate, and, in order to keep peace among the religious societies, a ruling was finally adopted forbidding religious intrusion after a field had been definitely assigned to a particular denomination. Problems of this kind decreased as government schools increased in number.

The language controversy was disinterred from its colonial tomb. Some of the religious organizations supported

²Ibid., p. 50.

³L. B. Palladino, Indian and White in the Northwest (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Wickersham Publishing Company, 1922), p. 226.

⁴Adams, op. cit., p. 50

the bilingual policy in opposition to the government, which required all instruction to be in English. We are told by Adams:

In 1879 two missionary societies were threatened with the withdrawal of Federal aid unless they complied with government regulations. The use of the Bible in the Indian tongue was approved after 1888 in those schools in which religious organizations assisted.⁵

These mission schools were called contract schools as they were subsidized to serve during the time when the government was not prepared to take over the responsibility of education, which it had assumed. As explained by Adams:

Many years passed between 1870, when the first annual appropriation was made for Indian education, and the first time when the government had adequate personnel, administrative service, and buildings of its own for Indian schools.⁶

Adoption of the most suitable type of school became a major issue. The government preferred the industrial boarding school located among the tribes, the reservation boarding school. Training of the youth was the immediate aim. The adjustment of the adult was considered a temporary problem. It was thought that four or five years of boarding school experience with its rigid discipline would eradicate the young Indian's disorderly habits. As stated by Adams, "The preference for the boarding school was supplemented by the denunciation of the day school."⁷

⁵Ibid., p. 51.

⁶Ibid., p. 57.

⁷Ibid., p. 51.

The Indian day school was repudiated because of failure of Indians to attend except on the days that rations were given out. According to Palladino:

Day schools are certainly better by far than boarding schools for youth who are born in a civilization and who, together with the training of the school room, enjoy the still greater blessing of home and family education. But ever granted that they could attend it on other than ration days, of what practical use for their education can a day school be for wild Indian children who have no real home, and who are destitute of family training? Nay, whose home, or whatever you may please to call it, is but a complex of uncivilizing elements, parents, associations, and all? How can you civilize these savage beings, except you withdraw them from the blighting influences that encompass them on every side?⁸

In 1885, John H. Oberly, Superintendent of Indian Schools, discussed the advisability of adopting uniform textbooks and uniform teaching methods. We are informed by Adams:

He advocated the boarding school because it accommodated the majority of Indian children and made it possible to take them away from the Indian camps while they were young and susceptible to training.⁹

The first step toward the improvement of the school personnel by the use of the merit system of appointment was taken by Superintendent Oberly. Again, according to Adams:

In 1885 he prepared a statistical card requiring the applicant for appointment in Indian schools to state that he was a graduate of an educational institution, held a teacher's certificate, or had received other formal training of a similar nature.¹⁰

The Codification of Rules for Indian Schools appearing in 1890 dealt with the aims and administration of schools, and the

⁸Palladino, op. cit., pp. 114-115.

⁹Adams, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 54.

appointment, removal, promotion, and duties of personnel. A course of study and a list of textbooks were appended. Enrollment was limited to those Indians between the ages of five and eighteen whose families lived on reservations. Attendance was compulsory, and the agent was responsible for keeping the schools filled, by persuasion if possible, by withholding the rations or annuities from parents, and by other means if it was necessary. Disciplinary measures were severe. Pupils over twelve years of age who were guilty of extreme misbehavior might either receive corporal punishment or be imprisoned in the guard house. Adams continues, "Unusual, cruel, or degrading punishment was prohibited. However, the schools jails were not abolished until 1927."¹¹

Personnel was improved in 1892 by the adoption of the merit system of appointment and educational leave with pay. Up until that time the majority of school officials and the teachers had been appointed for political or personal reasons. The first Civil Service Classification included physicians, school superintendents, assistant superintendents, teachers, and matrons. Adams tells us, "In 1896, all employees of Indian agencies and all school employees except agents, day laborers generally, and the personnel of the Civilized tribes were included."¹²

¹¹Ibid., pp. 55-56.

¹²Ibid., p. 56.

A sincere effort was made to develop the type of school that would destroy tribal ways and train the individual Indian to earn his living like a white man.

Slight reference was made to the unpopular government day school. The choice lay between the two types of boarding schools, the reservation and the non-reservation. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Thomas J. Morgan, preferred the non-reservation boarding school because it removed the students entirely from their native environment. It was thought, fallaciously, that the educated children would then return to the reservations and educate their parents in the white man's way of life.

The Superintendent of Indian Schools, Daniel Dorchester, defended reservation boarding schools on the ground that they protected the youth from the detrimental influence of his home surroundings, and at the same time it did away with the difficulties in adjustment so frequently experienced by those students returning from distant schools. Adams has more to relate on this subject:

He maintained that the reservation school benefitted the older Indians too, who learned "only by littles and slowly." He insisted upon building "more at a base and less at the apex," and held that training a few children in distant schools and returning them to the reservation was something like trying to "fill the bottomless pit with shavings."¹³

By 1885, the boarding school had reached the crest of its popularity. Although it began to wane in favor and the bitterest criticism was directed against it, it continued to

¹³Ibid., pp. 56-57.

stand out preeminently in the Federal Indian school system until 1930. Within four years after the first non-reservation boarding school had been opened, it was considered by some officials to be as ineffective in its training as the reservation boarding school, and by others to be even more ineffective. The boarding school had purposely removed the Indian from his native surroundings, and the non-reservation boarding school had increased the distance. The Indian environment had been eliminated as a positive factor in education, and adult training had suffered proportionately. Schools were soon to be regimented, and student labor was to emerge as a problem.

Dr. William N. Hailmann, an eminent educator, was appointed Superintendent of Indian Schools (1893-1897) on the recommendation of William T. Harris, United States Commissioner of Education. Adams advises us that:

Dr. Hailmann was of the opinion that the Indian school should be displaced gradually by the public school, and he set out to eradicate outmoded teaching methods and introduce current ones. His attempt to revise the drastic methods of enforcing attendance resulted in such a falling off in enrollment that agents were again directed to fill the schools, and as previously, those runaway students who were harbored by their parents or guardians were arrested and returned. He succeeded in prohibiting corporal punishment on the ground that the school was a formative and not a penal institution.¹⁴

In his effort to modify student labor, Dr. Hailmann pointed out that the training of students, and not financial profit, was the objective of the work performed in the dairies, kitchens, and shops, and on the farms, and in the gardens. At

¹⁴Ibid., p. 61

the same time he insisted that the management of work projects should aim toward the best possible production. According to Adams, "In short, he wanted student participation to simulate vocational training while production turn out should be comparable to that of efficient workmen."¹⁵

When Dr. Hailmann went out of office, there were eleven fewer boarding schools and twenty-four additional day schools, and Indian enrollment in public schools had become a definite policy.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 61.

CHAPTER V

THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL AT FORT SHAW

On April 30, 1892, Dr. W. H. Winslow was appointed the Superintendent of the Indian school at Fort Shaw. He was instructed to proceed from Chiloco, Oklahoma, to Fort Shaw and make the necessary arrangements for opening the school at the earliest practicable date. The annual report to the Secretary of the Interior explains:

His first duties were to contact the agents at various surrounding reservations and make arrangements for pupils to be sent to the new school. He also had to secure a teaching force and make sure the buildings were equipped for school and for living. The proposed capacity of the school at Fort Shaw was two hundred fifty children.¹

A list of the first employees at Fort Shaw include, according to the annual report to the Secretary of the Interior:

Dr. Winslow; E. L. Parker, assistant superintendent and disciplinarian; J. H. Pleas, manual training teacher; Ida M. Roberts and Lawrence W. Parker, teachers; Belle Roberts, matron; M. J. Pleas, clerk and assistant matron; Byron E. White, carpenter; Clara C. Blanchard, cook; Olive B. White, seamstress; Etta C. Taylor, laundress; and Alice O. Johnson, nurse.²

An interesting sidelight concerning these employees is the fact that the carpenter received two hundred dollars more per year than the teachers; and the matron, cook, and nurse received the same salary. One year later this list of the

¹Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 1892 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1893), p. 48.

²Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 1893 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), p. 571.

employees had grown with the addition of three new teachers, a shoemaker, a tailor, a blacksmith, another assistant matron, and eleven Indian assistants.

Superintendent Winslow found that there were twenty-five buildings altogether on the grounds of the former military post. A letter from S. E. Slater to F. T. Palmer, Chief of the Education Division tells of the condition of the buildings:

Fifteen of the buildings were of adobe, two of stone, and eight were of frame construction. The main building was a one story adobe building thirty-three feet wide by eighty-three feet long. It had a "T," the dining room, twenty-eight feet by sixty feet, and an ell, the kitchen, twenty feet by twenty-eight feet. The main building and fourteen others were described as being in fair condition, eight in poor condition, and two in very poor condition.³

The school was opened on December 27, 1892, with fifty-two students in attendance. The faculty lived in the old officers' quarters, while the children lived in the old barracks which had been turned into a dormitory and had a matron in charge. Before the end of the school term there were one hundred seventy-six Indian children in attendance.

Dr. Winslow was a stern disciplinarian and very methodical. Consequently, he had the school running according to strict rules and regulations. He was vested with absolute control of the school by the Indian department.

From the beginning, the pupils were told that all conversation was to be in English. Under this system, the young ones, especially, acquired the language very quickly. "The

³United States Congress, House Executive Documents, Fort Shaw Military Reservation, Vo. 29, 1894-1895 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), p. 4.

pupils were graded on a basis of age and proficiency."⁴ However, in the beginning the grading did not follow the normal eight grades pattern as too many of the children were beginners in school. "At that time, three years of instruction comprised the course with the school year beginning in September and ending in June."⁵ During the summer vacation, the pupils securing permission were allowed to return to their respective reservations.

F. T. Palmer, Chief of the Education Division, made a report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on January 5, 1895:

For the school year ending June 30, 1893, there were one hundred seventy-six Indian children enrolled, with an average attendance of one hundred thirty-six. In 1894 there were two hundred thirty-one enrolled, with an average attendance of two hundred sixteen. The cost per capita for the year 1894 was approximately \$200, exclusive of stock cattle and repairs to the grounds and buildings. The estimate for the year 1895 was two hundred fifty pupils at \$167 per capita. "The school farm is well situated for cultivation, for irrigation, and for stock raising, which should be the principal industry. By increasing the capacity to two hundred fifty, the cost per capita is materially reduced, and by working the farm and raising stock, this school should soon be on a self-supporting basis. There would be no trouble at all in filling the school to its capacity, as there are many Indians on the surrounding reservations, without proper school facilities."⁶

The cost during the school year 1894-1895 was about \$40,000, of which \$35,000 was for general expenses and the remainder for needed improvements. The main feature was the

⁵Ibid.

⁶Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Indian Affairs, Vol. II, 1895-96 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896) p. 179.

building of a waterworks and sewer system for the school. There was also an expenditure for stock cattle. "It was the expectation that, within three years, the school would be able to furnish all its meat supplies."⁷

In 1894, a hospital was built at the school site. This was very badly needed as the enrollment at the school had now reached the three hundred mark, and the Indian children were still very susceptible to the white man's diseases. Tuberculosis was one of the diseases to which they were especially susceptible.

In August of 1898, Dr. Winslow resigned as superintendent of the school. "He was succeeded by Mr. F. C. Campbell, who had formerly been in the government employ at the Fort Peck Indian School."⁸

"During the summer of 1900, the school began erecting a building twenty feet wide by forty-six feet long, with an engine room twelve feet wide by sixteen feet long."⁹ This building was to be occupied by a new steam laundry. Prior to the erection and use of this building, the laundry was done by hand by the Indian girls under the supervision of the laundress.

Late in 1900, there was much agitation at the school, in the surrounding territory, and even in Congress, for the acquisition of new dormitories and the purchase of an electric power

⁷Great Falls Weekly Tribune, Vol. Xi, No. 10, July 19, 1895.

⁸Great Falls Daily Tribune, July 15, 1900, p. 3.

⁹Great Falls Daily Tribune, June 28, 1900, p. 4.

plant for the school. However, there was already much talk against the non-reservation school and these items were never secured for the school.

"In 1902, the government consented to improve the conditions in the manual training shops, and much new machinery was ordered for the shops."¹⁰ The same year Senator Clark introduced a bill in Congress which would have appropriated \$80,000 for the erection of new buildings at the school. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs was in favor of this appropriation, but the aforementioned apathy towards the non-reservation schools caused this bill to be defeated.

In the late fall of 1906, work was started on windmills to be erected at the school. "These mills are to be over the new government wells, which have just been dug, for use in pumping water for domestic purposes and for use in case of a fire."¹¹ A water line was laid to the various buildings and there were fire hydrants along the streets for use in case of fire and for irrigation of the lawns and flower gardens.

In the fall of 1908, Mr. F. C. Campbell resigned as superintendent of the school at Fort Shaw to become a special Indian Agent. According to the Great Falls Tribune of October 25, 1908:

¹⁰Great Falls Daily Tribune, February 15, 1902, p. 1.

¹¹Great Falls Evening Leader, Vol. XVII, 18, No. 95, October 23, 1900, p. 4.

John B. Brown, Superintendent of the training school at Morris, Minnesota, succeeds F. C. Campbell at Fort Shaw. Mr. Brown held the position of superintendent at Morris for seven years prior to reporting to Fort Shaw. Mr. Brown is considered one of the best educators in the Indian Service, and left an excellent reputation at each of his former stations.¹²

By this time many of the Indian boys and girls, who had graduated from the school, returned to work as assistants in the shops and in the dormitories. Dorothy Baldwin relates, "At one time, Charles C. Yellow Robe was assistant superintendent."¹³ Mr. Ed Gobert, of Browning, Montana, went to the school as a pupil in 1893. After graduation from the school, he remained as assistant disciplinarian to Mr. Young. He was married at the school and remained there until 1906.¹⁴ Two more former students who were married there were Joe and Lucy McKnight, both from Browning, Montana. After graduation he worked as an assistant carpenter, and she worked as an assistant matron.¹⁵

On March 18, 1910, Senator Dixon came out strongly for the abolishment of the non-reservation schools, charging that the superintendents went out of their way to get pupils for their schools, which he maintained were no better than the reservation schools.¹⁶

¹²Great Falls Daily Tribune, Oct. 25, 1908, p. 4.

¹³Dorothy Baldwin, "History of Fort Shaw" (Manuscript, 1932), p. 10.

¹⁴Interview with Mr. Ed Gobert, Browning, Montana.

¹⁵Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Joe McKnight, Browning.

¹⁶Great Falls Daily Tribune, March 19, 1910, p. 4.

"On April 17, 1910, the Indian school at Fort Shaw was abandoned by the government, and the lands surrounding that historic spot have been deeded to the State."¹⁷ These lands were to be used by the State as an agricultural station.

All of the pupils who had been in attendance at the school were transferred to the different Indian agencies of the state to finish their education among their own people. "Many of the teachers have also been transferred to the different Indian agencies."¹⁸

The old school grounds and buildings were soon put to use by the United States Bureau of Reclamation, and the land, formerly used by the school, was opened for settlement under the new irrigation project. "In 1926, the buildings and the school sites were transferred by the government to School District No. 82 at Fort Shaw."¹⁹

¹⁷Great Falls Daily Tribune, April 18, 1910, p. 4.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Baldwin, op. cit., p. 11.

CHAPTER VI

CURRICULAR AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

After the school had been in operation for a short while, the grading system was changed to the system employed in the public schools. According to Mr. Baldwin, "By the close of the century, the school was using the same course of study employed in the elementary schools of the State."¹

Part of each day was set aside for mental training and part of it for manual training. The girls went to their regular classes in the morning, and the afternoon was spent in manual training. They were taught how to sew, to make all their own clothes, launder, and perform general household duties. The girls who showed a special aptness for art were given lessons in wood carving and embroidery. The boys went to class in the afternoon, and their forenoons were assigned to the learning of different trades. Some were taught carpentry; some, the shoemaker's trade; some, the tailor's trade; and some were assigned to blacksmithing. All boys large enough were expected to work on the school farm.

The boys who took up carpentering had to put their knowledge to practical use by repairing buildings and fences on the grounds. As described in the Helena Weekly Herald, "The apprentice blacksmiths shod the horses used on the farm, repaired the

¹Interview with Reverend L. E. Baldwin, Fort Shaw, Montana, former teacher at the Fort Shaw School.

wagons and other farm implements."² Those in the tailor shop made all the suits and coats worn by the boys. The tailors made uniforms for the band, also. In the shoe shop, all the repairing for the school was done, and great deal of new work was turned out. As related by the Great Falls Tribune, "During the school year of 1894-1895, over five hundred suits were turned out by the tailor shop."³ This was in addition to the band uniforms aforementioned.

The greatest drawback to the pupils was that the first two years of their school life were spent mainly in acquiring the English language and acquiring the white man's way of living. There was a natural reluctance to use any but their native tongue, and the Great Falls Tribune explains, "Their studies and mode of living were seriously interfered with by their annual vacation, when they are allowed to return to their homes."⁴

On the farm the boys were taught the science of careful clean farming. In the dairy department, the boys were taught to milk and take care of the livestock, while the girls were instructed in the care of the milk and the making of butter.

In 1895, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs reported on the plan instituted at the Fort Shaw Indian school and recommended that this plan be used, in modification, at the

²Helena Weekly Herald, Vol. XXX, No. 28, May 28, 1896.

³Great Falls Weekly Tribune, Vol. XI, July 19, 1895, p. 2.

⁴Great Falls Daily Tribune, May 26, 1901, Cover Page.

various Indian schools throughout the country. This is the plan followed, as reported by Dr. Winslow:

Aside from teaching how to do things, we aim to secure definite discipline of mind and body in teaching the various branches of industrial work. Pupils are not kept at piece work. They start at the beginning.

We have found language and drawing lessons very good means of connecting the work of the schoolrooms and shops. For this purpose a school vocabulary has been made out. Words of common use and those used on the farm, in the shops, and other departments are selected. Teachers in schoolrooms use these words in language exercises, spelling, making sentences, and reading. Pupils use the same words in their work with tools and in the various processes of industrial work.

Drawing is taught in the schoolrooms and the principles applied in the shops. A study of lines, planes, and solids has been taken up in regular order. The same things are reviewed and reproduced in materials in the shops, more particularly in the carpenter and blacksmith shops.

Work in wood and iron has been done almost entirely from models. Our intention is to have pupils make drawings from models in the schoolrooms and make the models from these drawings. Conventional designs can be reproduced in needlework, fancy designs, and patterns. Wood working will also claim attention this year. In wood work, pupils should learn the growth, structure, and the kinds of wood. In iron work he should learn how iron is obtained, the different kinds of iron, properties of steel, etc. Those working in cloth should learn the different kinds of material in cloth, how it is made, etc. Those working in leather should learn how it is obtained and about the manufacture of different kinds of leather.

Courses of work are made out by the different industrial workers, not to be slavishly followed, but for the purpose of better organizing the work. These courses of work are not intended to include all that is done, but, simply to indicate the main features and general plan.⁵

In the year of 1896, fifty acres of oats were seeded, thirty-five acres of alfalfa, fifteen acres of garden truck,

⁵Report of the Secretary of the Interior, Indian Affairs Vol. II, 1895-96 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896), pp. 345-346.

and ten acres of potatoes. "Enough hay was cut on the bottom lands to feed and winter the livestock. This stock consisted of one hundred seventy-five head of cattle and twenty-five horses."⁶

The Indians' handiwork was often on display because of the interest in their progress and a natural desire to compare their work with that of the white children of the comparable ages. The exhibit made by the Indians at the Great Falls Fair in 1895 elicited much praise as described by the Great Falls Tribune:

The exhibit is unique in many respects. It is a display of the handiwork of the pupils, showing their attainments in industrial education as well as their proficiency in the ordinary branches of school-education. The industrial portion of the school training is represented by numerous dresses, wrappers, underclothing, rugs, and embroidery made by the girls and tailor-made suits and shoes made by the boys. The writing of some of the girls, who have been only from three to five years in the school, is certainly remarkable and will challenge favorable comparison with the work of the public schools in the same branch.⁷

Again in 1897, the Indians' exhibits at the Fair were well regarded even though their exhibits had twice been culled to send an exhibit to the Tennessee Exposition and one to a government inspector. The Great Falls Tribune says in part:

In the intermediate grades the pupils, last year, read "The Courtship of Miles Standish," and there are several paraphrases of the poem, in language that is pure and forceful. There is a large exhibit of the fancy work of the girls of the school, comprising doilies, pillows,

⁶Helena Weekly Herald, Vol. XXX, No. 28, May 28, 1896.

⁷Great Falls Weekly Tribune, Vol. XI, No. 21, October 4, 1895, p. 8.

sheets, center-pieces, crocheting, and other fine work, some of the best done by an Indian girl only ten years of age.

Another exhibit is the wood carving done by both the Indian boys and girls on hard and soft wood. In the collection, which is the work of pupils of all ages, the work ranges from the carving of simple angles to perfect representations of flowers. The carpentry is represented by small items and photographs of large buildings constructed by the boys. There is a collection of chains, bolts, and other products of the blacksmith shop, made by boys of the school.⁸

When school closed in the spring, there was often a display of the children's handiwork.

Neatly and carefully written papers from the different grades were on exhibition, and they showed definitely that the Indian is capable of making great strides in mental progress. The board and paper drawings would compare favorably with the same grades in any school, while the work done in the various departments of the manual training school equals the work done in any of the industrial schools throughout the country.⁹

In addition to learning scholastically and industrially, the children had to be taught how to live as the white man does. In the dormitories, they were taught to live and eat in a decorous manner. The old mess hall of the fort became the dining hall of the school. The Great Falls Tribune article continues:

To it, three times a day, a bugle calls the Indian children, who march thither with military precision. In this room there are thirty tables, each seating ten children. The tables are presided over, at the head, by a girl who pours the tea or coffee, and, at the foot, by a boy who serves the meal. Here the Indian takes his first lesson in civilization by learning to use his fork and a napkin.¹⁰

⁸Great Falls Daily Tribune, October 6, 1897, p. 4.

⁹Great Falls Daily Tribune, May 20, 1900, p. 3.

¹⁰Ibid.

By 1900, the school had become a more advanced institution for the Indians. As proof, this article is cited:

Many of the children, attending the school, have been in other schools on their respective reservations. The Fort Shaw school is well equipped with shops and the industrial features that many of the reservation's schools lack.¹¹

In 1902, many of the older pupils who were ambitious for more learning than could be secured at Fort Shaw were preparing to enter higher institutions such as Carlisle, and according to the Great Falls Tribune, "Some were to be enrolled in the State University and State Agricultural College."¹²

In extra-curricular activities, the children had two main activities to enter. The Great Falls Tribune describes one activity:

The school had a senior band composed of about twenty brass instruments, besides drums, a junior band, a glee club, an orchestra composed of eight pieces; two violins, a bass viol, two clarinets, a trombone, and two cornets and a mandolin club for girls, which had ten pieces, six mandolins, two guitars, a violin, and one cello.¹³

These organizations were in much demand for parades, the fairs, and for between-halves entertainment during basketball games and football games.

One of the most famous musicians to come out of the school was a Sioux Indian from the Poplar reservation. According to the Great Falls Tribune:

The Fort Shaw band has a new member, in the person of Robert Bruce from Poplar. Two years ago he went to

¹¹Great Falls Daily Tribune, June 2, 1900, p. 3.

¹²Great Falls Daily Tribune, March 13, 1902, p. 8.

¹³Great Falls Daily Tribune, March 16, 1902, p. 7.

Carlisle and it was found, he had no equal, in brass, in a band of sixty young Indians from all over the United States, and today he is the finest Indian baritone player in the world.¹⁴

Bruce later entered Sousa's band and played the baritone horn for many years in this famous band.

The athletic ability of the Indian boys was shown in their games with the white boys of the State. The Indian boys more than held their own in football, basketball and track in competition with high school boys. They didn't fare so well against the State Agricultural College and the State University, although they played well against the two college teams, but they did defeat some of the smaller colleges in football and basketball.

The Indian girls at Fort Shaw became the most famous for their ability on the basketball floor. In 1902, a girls' team was started at Fort Shaw with seven team members. These girls played together for the next three years. In their first year of play, they won nine games and lost two. The two games they lost were to the Helena High School and Butte Parochial School. They avenged these losses later in the year and never again were defeated while they played together as a team. In the early fall of 1904, the team was sent to the St. Louis Exposition. "On September 4, 1904, the Fort Shaw girls defeated the champions of Missouri, the St. Louis High School by a score of twenty-

¹⁴Great Falls Daily Tribune, June 27, 1900, p. 7.

four to two."¹⁵ According to the Great Falls Tribune:

The girls won the second and final game from the St. Louis Alumni team by a score of seventeen to six. They now hold the undisputed title of world's champions, having defeated every team that showed any class.¹⁶

Their final year as a team was spent mostly in exhibition games around the State and on the various reservations. They went to the Portland Exposition in the fall of 1905 and completed their record of winning by taking the Championship of the Pacific Northwest. They defeated the Chemawa Indian team from Chemawa, Oregon, for their final championship. After their return to the school the team was disbanded, and girls' basketball was soon dropped from the list of activities.

The religious training of the Indians was not neglected as they were visited regularly by the Catholic priests and Protestant ministers. Reverend Baldwin says in part:

They would come on Saturday afternoon and have classes for the children with a general assembly on Sunday evening for the children of both Catholic and Protestant faith.¹⁷

The children loved to sing in these evening meetings and, according to Mrs. Des Rosier, when "Brother Van" came around, the favorite song was, "Throw Out the Lifeline."¹⁸

¹⁵Great Falls Daily Tribune, September 4, 1904, p. 4.

¹⁶Great Falls Daily Tribune, October 12, 1904, p. 4.

¹⁷Interview with Rev. L. E. Baldwin, former teacher at the school.

¹⁸Interview with Mrs. LeRoy Des Rosier, daughter of F. C. Campbell.

CHAPTER VII

INDIAN EDUCATION TODAY

The record was drab at the end of a half century of full government responsibility in Indian Affairs. Most of the Indians had been kept peaceful, many of them had been kept idle, and too many students had been kept ignorant of techniques that would have made them vocationally adept. Large amounts of government money had been spent for schools that were lost in their own machinery. Adams says of the Indian schools:

Student labor in its institutional setting comprised the washing of tons of dishes, the making of acres of beds, the laundering of mountains of clothing, the cleaning of huge dormitories, and many other regimented duties on a wholesale scale equally remote from the student's miserable home on a barren reservation, which he presumably was being taught to improve.¹

Indian education closely trailed the development of the public school system with slight relationship to Indian needs. The difficulty lay in slavish imitation of the white school. The empty, expensive, time consuming education program for the Indian did not bring to him economic betterment, nor did it destroy his native way of life as it had intended, because his school followed a sterile path and made only slight contact with his tribal experience and his actual reservation surroundings. The total Indian situation grew progressively worse because of the staggering loss of land and the inefficiency of

¹Evelyn C. Adams, American Indian Education (New York: King's Crown Press, 1946), p. 64.

education. "But the government, no longer heedless, was now on the eve of a reorganization of Indian Affairs."²

The perpetual reorientation of education, although a piecemeal procedure and at times a delaying one, has produced not only worthwhile but also permanent results. All the former types of schools have been retained, but they have been modified. Indians attend non-reservations boarding schools, reservation boarding schools, and day schools that are maintained by the government, mission schools and public schools with or without Federal or tribal aid, and state and private institutions of higher learning with full or partial aid from Federal or tribal funds. The present classification of boarding and day schools, indicate extension of grades and improvement in standards.

Adams says in part:

In 1943, there were two hundred and sixty-five government schools with an enrollment of thirty-four thousand; Indian public school enrollment exceeded that figure, and more than twelve thousand eligible Indian children were not in any school. There were eighteen non-reservation boarding schools, thirty-one reservation boarding schools, and two hundred and sixteen day schools. Elementary grades were offered in two hundred and fifty-eight schools and partial or full high school work in sixty-three. From 1933 to 1943, there was a loss of sixteen boarding schools and a gain of eighty-four day schools, making a total gain of sixty-eight schools. Enrollment had shifted from three-fourths in boarding schools in 1933 to two-thirds in day schools in 1943.³

The non-reservation boarding school can no longer be criticized for taking the Indian away from his people since about half

²Ibid., p. 65.

³Ibid., p. 80.

are now located in Indian communities such as the old Cut Bank Boarding School near Browning and not one of them is any great distance from Indian environment. Although the general lack of school facilities and the absence of home care for many children still make it necessary to include elementary grades, several of these schools now offer full or a partial high school work. A distinct vocational emphasis is given the course of study, and technical and commercial training program prepares students for employment away from reservations.

There is no indication, at present, that the boarding school can be wholly eliminated, nor is it desirable to do so as long as certain conditions in reservation life prevail. On the other hand, it has been well demonstrated that instruction can be adapted to meet changing needs, and this type of school can be altered for the better in other ways, and other methods. According to Evelyn C. Adams:

Institutional labor still exists, but not as the serious problem it once was. Some of the work is performed by unskilled labor, and some of it has been converted into profitable cooperative enterprise with instructional significance. The maladjustments of the student placed in schools at a distance from his people has disappeared. All the schools are in or near an Indian environment, and instruction is designed to give the student a better understanding of his surroundings.⁴

The traditional course of study has been transformed and vitalized by relating it to the Indians' interests and aptitudes, and aligning it with local and national economy. In elementary schools, academic courses with a prevocational

⁴Ibid., p. 81.

slant pertain to projects close at hand. For example, students may learn in late autumn and winter about harvesting crops, storing vegetables, or curing meat; and in spring, about gardening, pottery, or prairie dogs. A few secondary schools offer college preparatory work, but most of them train the students vocationally. Non-reservation schools provide industrial training, and reservation schools offer courses chiefly in agriculture, land use, and stock raising. Nearly all the latter are equipped with land for teaching purposes, and also with shop facilities to train students, particularly in the repair and maintenance of farm machinery.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Blackfoot were one of the last great Indian tribes to be conquered in the drive of the white settler to the west coast. They were a strong tribe, well organized and with a great territory claimed as their own. They were greatly feared by the other tribes because of their fierceness and were also feared by the settlers who first came to this territory.

After they were driven to their reservations, the government tried to civilize them by teaching them how to live as the white men live. There was a great deal of argument at that time over which type of school was best fitted to teach the Indian. There were many advocates of the reservation boarding school and of the non-reservation boarding schools, but few considered the day school a fit school for educating the Indian. The government relied on the mission school for years, but there was a great controversy over them because of the belief that the government was fostering religion in the schools.

The school at Fort Shaw was one of the non-reservation type and was set up mainly because the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at that time was a believer in the non-reservation boarding school. It was believed that the Indian children could learn the ways of civilized people and then take this knowledge back to the tribes to civilize them. There was little thought given to the fact that the Indian children

were brought up to respect their elders and their teachings, and that the Indian adults, even as the white people, would pay little attention to the children in their roles as the teachers.

The school set-up at Fort Shaw was of the industrial training type, to teach the Indians new trades to replace the nomadic life of hunting and fighting. The Indians were quick to learn those trades and were especially adept along artistic lines, as indicated by their exhibits at the various fairs and around the country.

Because more settlers were coming into the State and desired more land, and also because of the growing lack of faith in the non-reservation boarding school, the school at Fort Shaw was doomed. The growing trend was towards integration with the public schools and keeping the Indian children with their parents at home. The non-reservation schools played their part in the development of the western territory and were still necessary in parts of the area.

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