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Article Summary: In an effort to assimilate Indian children into white society, non-reservation boarding schools were built. These schools were located far from reservations to reduce contact between the children and their parents and Indian customs. Genoa, Nebraska, was selected as a school site because the government already owned the building previously used for the Pawnee reservation headquarters. Most of the children in the Genoa school made friends, adjusted to harsh conditions, and learned the art of showing a "white" veneer to get through their school years. But they paid a high price for their education in terms of their physical and emotional health. They were separated from their families and there was not enough money to adequately feed, clothe, and educate them. Full assimilation of the Indian children into white society did not occur and the schools began to close in 1901. Genoa school closed in 1934.

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Photographs / Images: Genoa Indian School sewing class; Genoa's youngest female pupils; Genoa dining hall and gymnasium; Genoa Indian School graduates; Genoa employees' cottages

# “THEY GET MILK PRACTICALLY EVERY DAY,” THE GENOA INDIAN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL, 1884-1934

*By Wilma A. Daddario*

In 1879 General Richard Pratt opened the first non-reservation boarding school for Indian children in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, with children from the Rosebud and Pine Ridge reservations in Dakota Territory.<sup>1</sup> Pratt had to begin his school with Sioux children because the commissioner of Indian affairs, Ezra A. Hayt, wanted the children to be hostages for the good behavior of their people led by Spotted Tail and Red Cloud.<sup>2</sup>

Pratt and contemporary humanitarians believed that Indians would be helped most by complete separation from their native culture and assimilation into white society. Abolishing the reservations would solve the conflicts between white settlers and Indians on the frontier as well as civilize and Christianize the Indians. Despite the interaction with diverse cultures among recent immigrants and knowledge of Indian tribal customs, “the white Protestant majority continued to imagine that its values and the nation’s were identical.”<sup>3</sup> General Pratt expressed the sentiment:

[I]n Indian civilization I am a Baptist, because I believe in immersing the Indians in our civilization and when we get them under holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked.<sup>4</sup>

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*Wilma A. Daddario is a graduate student in the history department of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.*

Carlisle School became the pattern for non-reservation boarding schools across the country. Chemawa, Oregon, was the second non-reservation boarding school to be established, opening on February 25, 1880. It was followed by Chilocco in Indian Territory near the Kansas border on January 25, 1884. Genoa Indian Industrial School was the fourth school, opening on February 20, 1884.<sup>5</sup>

All the schools, ideally, were to be located far from reservations to reduce contact between the children and their parents and Indian customs. The education was to be both academic and vocational. Indian children were to learn the same manners, morals, and religion as white children. Boys were to learn a white man’s trade and girls were to learn the proper care of a home. Each student was to spend half a day in academic work and half a day in vocational or industrial training. Students were enrolled for three-year terms. The government paid for transportation to the school and return to the reservation after three years, but the students could not go home in the summer unless their parents came for them or paid for their transportation. Children could not leave school during the year without special permission from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, even if parents requested it. Most schools

did not tolerate any elements of Indian heritage in dress, language, or religion. Children were taught that their native culture was worthless. Severe discipline and arduous manual labor, as well as disease, homesickness, and loneliness were experienced by most children during their years at non-reservation boarding schools.

Originally, the reformers envisioned that the educated young Indians would live in white society, completely integrated in neighborhoods, professions, schools, and churches. However, most of the educated Indian youth returned to the reservation, and many were ostracized because of their new “white ways.” They were then forced to choose between the manner of living they had been taught at school or their traditional Indian culture.<sup>6</sup> The attitude toward Indian education changed to a preference for day schools or reservation boarding schools in the early twentieth century,<sup>7</sup> but once the federal assimilationist policies had been set in motion, the non-reservation boarding schools continued until reforms during the 1930s.

In 1905 non-reservation boarding schools had an enrollment of 9,736 students, reservation boarding schools enrolled 11,402 students, and government day schools, 4,399. Only eighty-four Indian pupils in the U.S. were

Genoa Indian Industrial School



*Genoa Indian School sewing class. (NSHS-G335-39) Photo by Louis R. Bostwick . . . . (below) Genoa's youngest female pupils. (NSHS-G335-80)*



enrolled in district public schools in 1905. Seventy of these were in northeastern Nebraska and fourteen were in Stanley County, South Dakota.<sup>8</sup> By 1926 69,892 Indian children were reported to be in a school of some type. Of this total, 22,099 remained in government boarding schools.<sup>9</sup>

Genoa, Nebraska, in 1884 was a small village located in Nance County in east central Nebraska. The town was selected as a school site because the government already owned the building previously used for the Pawnee reservation headquarters in Genoa before the Pawnee were removed to Indian Territory in 1875. Also, the existing training schools in Pennsylvania and Oregon were becoming crowded, and it was expensive to transport the students so far from their homes in "Indian country" to schools in the eastern or western United States. Hiram Price, commissioner of Indian affairs in 1883, also mentioned the necessity of fulfilling treaty obligations to the Sioux. They, along with several other tribes, had been promised a school for every thirty children of school age.<sup>10</sup> The citizens of Genoa contributed \$500.00 to supplement the government's funds and purchase additional land for the school, which was started in the vacant agency building situated on 320 acres of farmland. The grounds bordered the village on the east side of town with only a three block walk separating students and townspeople. The Union Pacific Railroad crossed the farm several hundred feet in front of the school building.

Seventy-one children arrived in Genoa on February 20, 1884. All were Sioux from the Rosebud Agency, about 250 miles from Genoa in Dakota Territory. On August 20, 1884, the superintendent, Samuel F. Tappan, reported an enrollment of 129 students, all from Rosebud except for eighteen students from Yankton, also in Dakota Territory. There were eighty-nine boys and forty girls. The students ranged in age from seven to twenty-two years.<sup>11</sup>

All spoke Lakota, which made it more difficult to teach them English than if children from other tribes, who could not understand Lakota, had also been at the school.<sup>12</sup>

Communication was only one of many problems during the first year. The school grounds had no outhouses and no cisterns. All water for cooking, drinking, bathing, and laundry had to be carried from an outside well, bucket by bucket. Water was heated in small boilers on the stoves, and baths taken in wooden washtubs. It required a large work detail just to carry clean water inside and dirty water outside, even without the weekly baths. At last, in 1887, the water problem was partially solved by erecting a windmill and a 300-barrel tank connected to the washrooms and the kitchen. A large cesspool was dug and connected with the building. Bathing in wooden washtubs remained a problem, and Superintendent Horace R. Chase reported: "It may appear an easy task, but the practical work of washing over 170 children with our present arrangements almost discourages the bravest."<sup>13</sup>

Sanitary conditions improved when water was provided by the Genoa Town Company in 1895.<sup>14</sup> The same year, new bathrooms with showers, lavatories, and warm water piped in and connected to sewerage were constructed. All laundry was still done by hand in washtubs.<sup>15</sup> Construction continued as a warehouse, a barn, a steam plant for central heating, a power plant for electric lighting, an expanded sewer system, and a steam laundry plant were all completed by 1900. Appropriations for 1901 included funds for a new school building, hospital, and barn.<sup>16</sup> The grounds were landscaped with trees, fences, walks, and flowerbeds.

Tuberculosis, trachoma, and epidemics of contagious diseases were common at the school from its beginning in 1884 until it closed. Trachoma, a contagious viral disease of the conjunctiva of the eye, was almost epidemic. The low report of 36 trachoma cases, or

24 percent of the students in 1890,<sup>17</sup> contrasts with 84 percent or 127 cases reported in 1888.<sup>18</sup> Physicians' reports in 1912 reported 98 of 332 pupils had trachoma.<sup>19</sup> In 1925, the ratio was 106 of 445 pupils.<sup>20</sup> Mantoux tests for tuberculosis in 1930 showed 71.9 percent of the students had a positive reaction. Homer Davis, the local doctor in Genoa who x-rayed and examined thirty-one children who tested positive for tuberculosis, wrote to the commissioner of Indian affairs asking what to do with the sick children.<sup>21</sup> Nearly a month later, the reply from C. J. Rhoads, commissioner of Indian affairs, arrived. The bureaucracy had no answer:

The question of the proper handling of this situation throughout the Indian Service is being given careful consideration by the Office, and we hope within the next year to arrive at some definite plan relative thereto.<sup>22</sup>

Contagious epidemics spread throughout the school almost every year. There was a chicken pox epidemic in 1884, and in 1887, scarlet fever infected 105 students. There was a mumps epidemic in 1891, but the most serious epidemic was measles, which killed ten children in 1892. At one time, 105 of the students were sick.<sup>23</sup> A total of twenty-three deaths were reported for the ten years, 1884-94, most from tuberculosis and measles. In 1909 special Indian agent Edgar A. Allen reported the deaths of three students from infantile paralysis. The eight-year-old son of Superintendent Sam B. Davis also died, but his four-year-old daughter, although partially paralyzed, recovered.<sup>24</sup>

The U.S. government's allotment for the Genoa Indian Industrial School was \$167.00 per student per year to cover all expenses except for new buildings or major repairs. On September 7, 1916, the government increased the support for non-reservation boarding schools to \$200 per pupil per annum.<sup>25</sup> With this small budget the students had to grow and prepare their own food, raise their own livestock, and build and maintain their own buildings.

The amount of work done by the

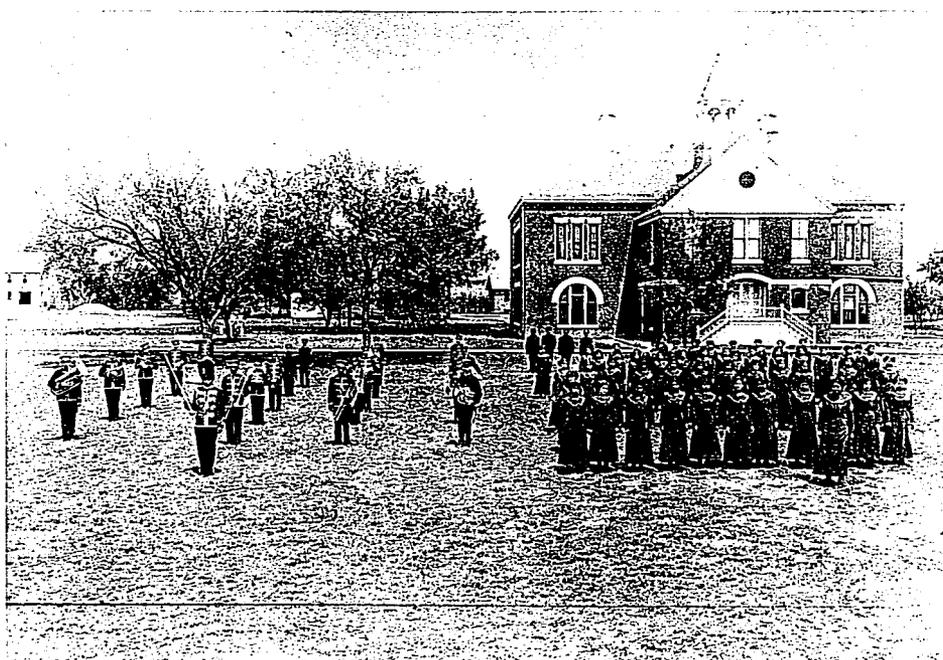
## Genoa Indian Industrial School

boys in the school's first summer of 1884 was incredible. First, the land was cleared of weeds and stubble. Corn was planted on 130 acres and cultivated six times.<sup>26</sup> Forty-five acres were sown to oats, forty acres to hay, and twenty-seven acres in potatoes and garden vegetables. The boys planted 3500 fruit trees, 3500 vines and plants, milked sixteen cows morning and evening, fed fifty-four pigs, and took care of all the horses and mules.<sup>27</sup> The little boys, ages eight to ten, tended the garden.

Along with farming and gardening, the boys gained experience in carpentry and brick masonry. By the summer of 1889 they had built a carpenter shop, a barn, a cowshed, a hogshed, an icehouse, a granary, and a corncrib. The granary and icehouse were built of brick made at the school kiln. Vocational trades for boys interested in blacksmithing, harness making, shoemaking, and printing were only available in town. Boys interested in these occupations, or assigned to these duties, went to the shops in Genoa until the school shops were opened in 1888.

The girls were responsible for meal preparation and cleanup, housekeeping, and sewing. Housework and cooking duties were production labor, not lessons in how to manage a private home as the assimilationists wanted. The girls cooked huge quantities of food instead of planning and preparing family-sized meals. The daily diet was limited, and few fruits and vegetables were served, especially after the summer growing season. A menu reported by Inspector R. L. Spalsburg for November 16, 1921, listed rolled oats, bread, coffee, and syrup for breakfast. Lunch consisted of boiled beef, dumplings, mashed potatoes, gravy, bread, and water. The dinner menu was even less appetizing: beans, rolls, gravy, and bread. Boys drank coffee at dinner, and the girls received milk on that particular day.<sup>28</sup>

Gertrude Parton, the school's seamstress, reported in 1886 that when she arrived in January the children did not have enough clothing. Forty-seven



*Dining hall and gymnasium. (NSHS-G335-18)*

girls worked half days in alternate shifts, and gradually began to accomplish the almost impossible task of outfitting everyone. The girls made all the clothing for themselves and the small boys and mended for the whole school. From January until September nearly 1,000 garments were made. A group of ten to twelve little girls darned stockings and sewed carpets from rags.<sup>29</sup>

Estelle Reel, the superintendent of Indian schools in 1900, believed the girls were the key to the home and would control the future of the next generation:

Educate and civilize the future Indian father in as thorough a manner as you please, but neglect the future Indian mother, and your work will be fruitless.<sup>30</sup>

The Indian girls were to be taught to maintain a proper domestic household with system, orderliness, cleanliness, and "a love for house decorations."<sup>31</sup> Some Indian schools built domestic cottages to provide for practical experience for girls in home situations, and some increased their outing pro-

gram. Genoa did neither of these and was criticized in inspection reports. H. B. Pearis, the inspector in 1913, noted that the students were not receiving good industrial instruction, but were only doing production work, especially the girls.<sup>32</sup> The same year, *The Indian News*, the school newspaper, proudly reported how Miss Kurtz and the girls who had stayed and worked over the summer had canned 400 quarts of strawberries, 1900 quarts of cherries, and gallons of cherry juice. Tomatoes from 7000 plants were picked, canned, pickled, and made into piccalilli and catsup.<sup>33</sup>

The girls must have been skilled in their food processing and cooking because the medical inspector, Dr. Ferdinand Shoemaker, in 1914 praised the clean and excellent condition of the kitchen, and claimed the food served was consistently better than at any of the other schools, noting that "they have butter two times a week, and get milk practically every day."<sup>34</sup>

In the half days between their



*Genoa Indian School graduates. (NSHS-G335-24)*

vocational "training," the children were in the classroom. In 1885 the school was classified into primary, intermediate, and advanced levels. Classification was by capability and class standing rather than by age or size. Primary and intermediate classes studied spelling, reading, arithmetic, and construction of simple English sentences. Advanced students studied grammar, composition, geography, history, and drawing.<sup>35</sup> Evening services were held daily with an hour study hall for older students after the service. On Monday evenings, singing lessons were given. Friday evenings were for socializing in the assembly room or attending presentations of singing, recitations, and compositions.<sup>36</sup>

The academic requirements changed as administrations and philosophies changed in Washington. A course of study and rules for the schools presented in 1890 emphasized traditional academic coursework

including physiology, geography, and civil government. This was revised in 1900 by a renewed emphasis on industrial and vocational training. Reading, writing, and arithmetic were considered essential but "mere book knowledge" was not considered necessary for Indian children.<sup>37</sup> The 1900 theory was interdependence and correlation between the industrial and literary departments, with the primary importance on the industrial. However, each new program continued to emphasize vocational education instead of academic. Genoa offered eight grades of instruction until 1916, when a new course of study expanded the program to ten grades. After 1920 the primary students, grades one through three, were required to spend all day in the classroom. In 1926 a policy of grading was established throughout the Indian Service that set up six grades for elementary, three years for junior high, and three years for senior

high studies. However, Genoa was not permitted to add grade eleven until 1929, or grade twelve until 1930. Also in 1926 the Bureau of Indian Affairs emphasized that while students above grade three were only to be in the academic classroom one-half day, they were to spend one-fourth day in vocational instruction, and only required to spend one-fourth day in their institutional work or production duties for school maintenance.<sup>38</sup>

In 1932 grades one through three were dropped from Genoa's program. Indian families and reservation personnel protested because in many cases, long distances to the local public schools and lack of transportation and warm clothes meant that many children would not be able to attend school for much of the year. In September 1932 Genoa's superintendent, Herman Bogard, requested \$108 for tuition from the Bureau of Indian Affairs so that two orphans in the primary grades

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could live at the Indian school and attend public school in Genoa. W. Carson Ryan, Jr., director of education for the bureau, replied that surely the school could come up with \$108 to avoid displacing the two youngsters.<sup>39</sup> However, there was no extra \$108 in the budget, and Bogard was instructed to write to various reservations to find a place for the children. Finally in December, Commissioner C. J. Rhoads instructed Bogard that if Bogard would complete the paperwork, \$27 would be provided to send the children to the Rosebud reservation.<sup>40</sup>

A number of different tribes were represented among the students at the school each year. In 1889 enrollment was 175. Sioux children predominated with 101 students, but northeastern Nebraska reservations, about 120 miles from Genoa, were represented with twenty-one. Omaha, twenty-one Winnebago, and two Ponca children. Other tribes represented were the Arapaho with sixteen students, the Arikara with twelve students, and the Flathead with two students.<sup>41</sup> Throughout the school's history the students were predominantly Sioux, Omaha, Winnebago, Ponca, and in 1931, Pottawatomie. Eleven other tribes in 1931 sent a total of ninety-five students to the school.<sup>42</sup>

Grace Stenberg Parsons lived at the school, where her father was the blacksmith, from 1907 to 1916. She described the arrival of the little children, five years of age and up, who came in "scared, dirty, and buggy."<sup>43</sup> "The clip-pers were waiting, all heads were shingled, they were bathed with carbolic soap from head to toe."<sup>44</sup> Long hair on small children, aside from any cultural significance, required cleaning and combing. School personnel were not able to spend this time on grooming the children.

Parsons sympathetically described how the children were lined up at bedtime in their long white nightshirts to repeat a short prayer. Some then fell asleep quickly, but others sobbed until they were exhausted. Little girls were comforted by the older girls, but the lit-

tle boys "had only their matron and she was a busy person for she had many boys and many duties."<sup>45</sup>

As Parsons indicates there was much regimentation at the Genoa school. Reveille was at 6:00 A.M., whistles announced meals and classes throughout the day, and taps sounded at 9:00 P.M.<sup>46</sup> The students were formed into regiments for marching and divided into companies, each with its captain and lieutenants. The students marched everywhere, and practiced drilling on the parade ground or in the gymnasium. At dress parades, the company with the best marching performance was awarded the flag. Company E, which was composed of the smallest children, always received the most applause, but was never awarded the flag.<sup>47</sup> The Genoa school was even criticized by the government inspector in 1911 for not marching in accordance with the latest U.S. Infantry Drill Regulations.<sup>48</sup>

Recruitment of students was a constant struggle for school administrators particularly in the early years. The allotment of \$167.00 to \$200.00 per student had to cover fixed operating expenses as well as the pupils' expenses. In 1901 Superintendent W. H. Winslow reported that expenses were higher than the school's anticipated income, and he had to "rustle" for fifty more students.<sup>49</sup> Also, the work in cooking, cleaning, farming, harvesting, and repair around the school could not be hired with the limited funds, so more students were needed as a work force. Superintendents wanted the students to be sent directly from agency schools so the industrial schools would receive older, more capable students already trained in elementary English. The agency schools, naturally, did not want to send their brightest and best pupils to another school. Superintendent Horace R. Chase complained that he felt humiliated to go to the Indian camps "and try to overcome the ignorant prejudices of the Indians and induce them to accept the blessings of an education."<sup>50</sup>

Recruiting conflicts continued until 1894 when the commissioner of Indian affairs, Daniel M. Browning, asked Congress to enact legislation providing that no Indian child could be sent from any reservation to a school outside the state or territory where the reservation was located without the voluntary consent of the child's father or mother or next of kin. As part of the Indian Appropriation Act in 1894, Congress made it illegal for any agent or employee of the government to withhold rations as a means of influencing parents to grant consent for their children's attendance in out-of-state schools.<sup>51</sup> By the late 1920s and early 1930s, Genoa had more students wishing to attend than the school's capacity of 500. Poor economic conditions both on and off the reservations prompted many Indian parents to send their children away to school strictly for financial reasons.<sup>52</sup>

Thomas Morgan, William A. Jones, Francis E. Leupp, and other commissioners of the Bureau of Indian Affairs encouraged the outing system for students as General Pratt had organized it at Carlisle. Indian students were to live and work in the homes of white families, where they would learn white manners and how to fit into white society.<sup>53</sup> Genoa's efforts in the outing system were not successful. In May 1891 Henry T. Oxnard, owner of the Oxnard Beet Sugar Company in Grand Island, wrote the commissioner of Indian affairs requesting permission to employ Indian boys for "thinning out" his sugar beet plants, a job requiring four to six weeks.<sup>54</sup> Oxnard was told this was not a standard outing plan, but if the Genoa superintendent felt it was beneficial to the school, and the students did not object, then the department would approve.<sup>55</sup>

On June 5, 1891, Superintendent W. B. Backus notified Thomas J. Morgan, commissioner of Indian affairs, that the workingmen of the area had passed a resolution opposing the use of Indian labor. The Farmers Alliance and the Knights of Labor, strong around Grand

Island, were opposed to the Indian boys working in the beet fields, and he would rather not send the boys to Grand Island because he felt there would be trouble.<sup>56</sup> Morgan was furious, accusing Nebraskans of being unappreciative of the school, of trying to deprive Indians of a chance to work in a state that was once their homeland, and he pointed out how the idleness of the Indians had been a menace to the peace the past winter at Wounded Knee. He threatened to transfer the students to Carlisle. If Nebraskans continued to show hostility toward the school, Commissioner Morgan believed the school should be discontinued and moved to a place "where the sentiment of the people is more friendly."<sup>57</sup>

After the Oxnard incident, boys helping the local farmers over summer vacation, and girls working as clerks in Genoa stores, or in local homes during the summer were the only other "outings." Students who wished to earn extra money often remained all summer at the school, farming, gardening, and canning. At a 1929 Senate hearing Mrs. Julia Carroll, a short-term employee at Genoa in 1923, reported that Superintendent Sam B. Davis forced boys from the school to work on his two farms located near the school. Davis admitted owning two farms, but said that he hired Indian students only on holidays or vacations if they wished to earn extra money.<sup>58</sup>

Homesickness and rebellion were reasons for some students to run away from school. The first year, 1884, Superintendent Samuel F. Tappan reported three runaway students between February and August.<sup>59</sup> In 1899 Superintendent J. E. Ross reported that there were very few cases of desertion in the past year. According to Ross, the runaways were the younger pupils who were homesick, and did not appreciate the educational opportunity presented to them. The older children who ran away Ross deemed unworthy of "further consideration" and did not attempt to bring them

back.<sup>60</sup> Extreme measures were taken by Superintendent W. H. Winslow in 1906. The school disciplinarian tied two captured runaway boys to a buggy axle, and a third boy was tied around the waist and driven ahead of the team of horses. Witnesses from a neighboring town reported this directly to the commissioner of Indian affairs; the disciplinarian admitted the facts and was discharged.<sup>61</sup>

There were other runaway situations that involved unusual circumstances. In 1911 Superintendent Davis brought Allan Trotterchaud back to school from Wyoming. Allan had run away over a year earlier. His parents placed advertisements to find him, and he was finally located.<sup>62</sup> In 1914 three boys ran away to Rulo, Nebraska. The father of one of the boys called the school to see if there was a reward!<sup>63</sup> Tragedies sometimes happened when the children left school. In 1921 Clarence White was killed when he fell or was pushed from a moving freight train near Fremont, Nebraska.<sup>64</sup> Irvin Young, twelve, ran away in 1919. His parents looked for him, the school looked for him, other reservations were asked to watch for him, but he was never found.<sup>65</sup> Because permission to leave school was often denied, even after a parent or relative's request, many children ran away just to go home, to visit relatives and friends, or to seek adventure. In 1928 several girls hitchhiked to Columbus, Fremont, and Omaha. They were found in Omaha, expelled from school, and returned to their reservation. Continued rebellion by other girls at Genoa caused the Winnebago reservation superintendent to complain to the commissioner that Superintendent Davis had returned twelve runaway girls to the reservation in eight weeks.<sup>66</sup> The Bureau of Indian Affairs wired Davis that he was not to dismiss any more girls without prior approval. An extensive investigation followed in an attempt to resolve the breakdown in morale and discipline, especially among the girls.<sup>67</sup>

Boarding school meant hard work,

discipline, regimentation, and homesickness, but also provided occasional entertainment, new experiences, and friends. As early as 1903, local high schools challenged the Genoa students in debate.<sup>68</sup> Tennis tournaments, dances, trips to the circus, and a moving picture machine were part of the extracurricular events held in 1907, along with boys and girls basketball, football, baseball, and ice skating. Often the Genoa school was able to defeat its public school opponents in sports. In January 1919 the school newspaper reported on a basketball game with Genoa High School. "The palefaces played a good game but they were no match for our boys, the score being 49 - 18."<sup>69</sup> As an intramural activity in 1913, the students formed a "Winnebago" basketball team to play the other students on the "All Nations" team.<sup>70</sup> Boys went duck and rabbit hunting, activities the Indian Affairs inspectors surely would have disapproved.<sup>71</sup> Sidney Byrd, a former student at Genoa, recalled that the cooks would prepare rabbits shot by the students if the game was cleaned and labeled with the hunter's name.<sup>72</sup>

By the 1930s activities described in the school newspaper were similar to those in Nebraska's public high schools. A sophomore class party and a banquet for the seniors given by the juniors were reported in April 1931.<sup>73</sup> A source of pride for the Genoa school between 1900 and 1919 was its band, invited to play at many fairs and special occasions across the state. In 1911 the band welcomed William Jennings Bryan to Genoa.<sup>74</sup> It represented the school at the Nebraska State Fair in 1914, serving as the reception band for "Omaha Day."<sup>75</sup>

The school's second area of pride was championship, purebred livestock. Superintendent Davis and the school farmer, John Haldiman, began a program of breeding purebred Percheron horses, Duroc hogs, and Holstein cattle after 1907. The animals won championship awards at the Nebraska State Fair, the Kansas State Fair and

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numerous stock shows. The top stockmen's publications and the University of Nebraska Agriculture Department sent representatives to Genoa for advice. Davis shipped some of the cattle to western reservations in 1913 to improve breeding programs.<sup>76</sup> The sale of this purebred stock added, on an average, \$8,000 to \$10,000 per year to the school's financial resources.

A major change in the school, and in the lives of the students, came in 1917 when the U.S. entered World War I. By October of 1917, seventy-four pupils had enlisted. The students who were still at school had to work hard to fill in for the older boys. Printing the newsletter was turned over to three of the young boys, including fourteen-year-old Logan Fontenelle.<sup>77</sup> The boys who enlisted wrote back to their friends and teachers at school describing their encounters with European cultures. Three Genoa students died in the war. John Washakie, grandson of the famous Chief Washakie of the Shoshoni reservation, died of pneumonia. Silas Kitto and Horace Barse were killed in action.<sup>78</sup>

Graduates of the school formed a "Returned Students" association and former students tried to come back for reunions at graduation time or write each year. Subscriptions to the school newspaper helped them keep in touch with classmates. Many had returned to the reservations after graduation, and reported that they were farming, ranching, or operating small businesses. Some of the graduates went on to business training schools, or to Indian schools like Haskell in Kansas that offered a high school diploma rather than the ten-grade program that Genoa offered until 1929. In 1910 Gertrude Provost attended nurses training in Philadelphia. Ada Trudell went to nurses training in Chicago in 1914. Other graduates found jobs teaching in schools in the Indian Service, playing semi-professional baseball for the Indian League, and working at the industrial trades they had studied. A few went on to higher education. A 1910

graduate went to the University of Nebraska, the class of 1911 sent Victoria Tyndall to York College, and graduates from other years attended the North Dakota State School of Science and Montana State University. Aurelia Dupris received a scholarship to attend Doane College in 1932. She was the only Indian then attending Doane. Angeline Whitefish and Grace Robert, two of her classmates, went to Hastings College that year.<sup>79</sup>

The school superintendents and all Indian school employees were political appointees when Genoa Indian Industrial School opened in 1884. No standard qualifications for employment were required. Civil Service examinations and registers of eligible candidates for positions in the Indian Service began in 1891, but specialized training and college degrees were not required for school personnel until 1928.<sup>80</sup>

Personnel problems existed at the Genoa school throughout its history. Superintendent Horace R. Chase was suspended for financial irregularities in 1889. The claims against the Indian school during the Chase superinten-

dency still totaled \$8,000 in 1896 and required the passage of a special appropriations bill to clear the accounts.<sup>81</sup> Chase's successor, W. B. Backus, was also found to have a shortage in his accounts of \$25,000. The local newspaper, however, reported that the department merely had a problem with their "redtapeism" and that everything would be easily corrected.<sup>82</sup>

Backus left the school in 1893 but problems continued. No mention of the school's activities appeared in the 1894 official report prepared by the commissioner, and the new superintendent, James E. S. Bell, served less than a year. Bell's replacement, J. E. Ross, in his 1895 report indicated controversy at the school, and expressed his appreciation for fire protection from the city of Genoa! For several weeks in December 1895 *The Genoa Leader* carried this message from Superintendent Ross:

Warning - The people of Genoa and vicinity are hereby warned against purchasing any articles from the Indian pupils without they show written permit from the superintendent properly signed and stamped.<sup>83</sup>

Sam B. Davis was appointed

*Employees' cottages. (NSHS-G335-7)*



superintendent of the school in 1907 and stayed until the end of the school year in 1931. Throughout his long tenure Davis maintained his belief that assimilation was the goal of Indian education. His letters to parents were often condescending, paternalistic, and moralistic in tone. At times he would explain to the Bureau of Indian Affairs that he would not let a child go home, even after a family's request, because he felt the parent, stepparent, or other relative was not acting in the child's best interests. Davis was married to an Indian woman, Florence Wells, who was a teacher in the Indian Service before and after their marriage. She taught at Genoa before she transferred to Oregon, where she and Sam Davis worked together at the Warm Springs School in the late 1890s. Their move to Genoa in 1907 was a homecoming for Mrs. Davis. Several of her former colleagues were still on the staff when she returned.

At the Senate hearings convened in 1929 to survey the conditions of the Indians in the United States, Davis was accused of physically abusing the students at Genoa and appropriating government supplies and equipment for use on his own farms. Conflict of interest questions were also raised because Davis farmed a section of land while serving as superintendent of the school. Davis denied all charges, and no action was taken against him.<sup>84</sup> He retired in the summer of 1931.

His replacement, Herman Bogard, was a native of Michigan, and in the last year of his Ph.D. studies. Bogard was superintendent for the last two years the school was fully operational, 1931-33, and for 1933-34, when Genoa's student population dropped to only sixty or seventy students who could not be placed in their own homes, with relatives, or in other schools. Bogard's strength was in operations and building maintenance, not in handling either children or adults, according to his supervisor, W. Carson Ryan, Jr. Ryan admitted, however, that Bogard did face hostility from some of the Genoa

townspeople who were resentful of Davis's replacement.<sup>85</sup>

The news that the Genoa Indian School would suspend operations for the 1933-34 school year, except for the few children requiring institutional care, came from John Collier, commissioner of Indian affairs, in the spring of 1933. Four other non-reservation boarding schools that closed at the same time were Salem School in Oregon, Rapid City School in South Dakota, Mount Pleasant School in Michigan, and Hayward School in Wisconsin. Eventually, twenty non-reservation boarding schools would be closed under Collier's direction.

The Genoa community protested the closing at once. Nebraska Representative Edgar Howard received letters and telegrams from the Genoa churches, the Commercial Club, and numerous businessmen. Petitions were also sent from Macy, Nebraska, to protest the school's closing, and Nebraska Senators Norris and Thompson fought to keep Genoa open. Former Superintendent Davis protested closing the school at Washington hearings in June 1933.<sup>86</sup> Some Genoa residents wrote letters asking for Davis to return as superintendent, believing that would somehow allow the school to stay open.

The school closed on March 1, 1934, in spite of the protests. The educational policy of the Bureau of Indian Affairs under John Collier's direction favored the replacement of boarding schools with day schools and the alteration of curriculum to deal with rural conditions on the reservations. The reservation day schools were also intended to serve as community centers, where children and adults could learn as well as participate in native cultural activities.

The Genoa Indian Industrial School never received the wide recognition and early reformers' praises that Carlisle received, and never established a reputation for academic excellence as did Haskell School in Kansas. Conditions at Genoa varied depending on

the school's staff and the policies of the federal government. At times the Genoa school became so dependent on the students' manual labor that it often neglected its primary goal of assimilation. The conversion of Indian children into "white" workers, farmers, and homemakers became secondary to the production work necessary to keep the school itself operating.

Most of the children attending the school made friends, adjusted to the harsh conditions, and learned the art of showing a "white" veneer to get through their school years. But they paid a high price for their education in terms of their physical and emotional health. They were separated from their families, and even though the financial cost of operating the school was high, there was not enough money provided to adequately feed, clothe, and educate them. A government report prepared in 1928 suggested that the per annum allocation per student should have been nearer \$700 instead of only \$200:

Boarding schools that are operated on a per capita cost for all purposes of something over two hundred dollars a year and feed their children from eleven to eighteen cents worth of food a day may fairly be said to be operated below any reasonable standard of health and decency.<sup>87</sup>

In 1901, thirty-three years before the majority of the non-reservation boarding schools began to close, Commissioner W. A. Jones contended that if the same effort and money were expended on the reservation, it would be more beneficial to the Indian tribes.<sup>88</sup> For example, Genoa cost the government \$60,412.84 in 1907, \$90,663.00 in 1931, and \$140,600.00 in 1932. The dollars that were spent for fifty years of building and maintaining the school at Genoa would have been better spent to provide educational, medical, and social services on the Nebraska and South Dakota reservations where most of the school children had their homes. Full assimilation of the Indian children into white society did not occur as General Pratt and other late nineteenth century reformers had hoped, and cultural

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pluralism became the accepted practice under John Collier and the Indian New Deal.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Richard H. Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom, Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904*, ed. Robt. M. Utley (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebr. Press, 1987), 220.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1800-1920* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebr. Press, 1984), 12.

<sup>4</sup>Pratt, *Battlefield*, 335.

<sup>5</sup>Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1903), 17.

<sup>6</sup>Margaret Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian; The Road to Self-Determination, 1928-1973* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), 11.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>8</sup>*Annual Report, Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 41-47. Hereafter CIA.

<sup>9</sup>Lewis Meriam, Technical Director, *The Problem of Indian Administration* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1971), 402.

<sup>10</sup>*Annual Report, CIA*, 1883, xxxix.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 1884, 207.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 209.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 1887, 245.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 1895, 378.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 379.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 1900, 492.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 1890, 500.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 1888, 263.

<sup>19</sup>W. G. Harrison, M.D. to Jos. A. Murphy, M.D., Medical Supervisor, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Mar. 1, 1912, #27897, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives. (Microfilm copy at Nebraska State Historical Society).

<sup>20</sup>L. L. Culp, M.D. to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Apr. 24, 1924, RG 75, #31763.

<sup>21</sup>Homer Davis, M.D. to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Dec. 10, 1930, RG 75, #65318; Febr. 2, 1931, RG 75, #13498.

<sup>22</sup>Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Sam B. Davis, Mar. 7, 1931, RG 75, #13498.

<sup>23</sup>*Annual Report, CIA*, 1892, 677.

<sup>24</sup>Edgar A. Allen to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Dec. 2, 1909, RG 75, #97458.

<sup>25</sup>*Annual Report, CIA*, 1917, 11.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 1884, 208.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>R. L. Spalsburg, Supervisor to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Dec. 7, 1921, RG 75, #98535.

<sup>29</sup>*Annual Report, CIA*, 1886, 13.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 1900, 433.

<sup>31</sup>Josephine E. Richards, "The Training of Indian Girls as the Uplifter of the Home," *National Education Association Journal of Proceedings and Addresses*, (1900): 705.

<sup>32</sup>H. B. Pearis to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Jan. 24, 1913, RG 75, #24634.

<sup>33</sup>*Indian News* 16, no. 1 (Sept. 1913):8.

<sup>34</sup>Ferdinand Shoemaker, M.D. to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Mar. 14, 1914, RG 75, #30171.

<sup>35</sup>*Annual Report, CIA*, 1885, 227.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 1886, 13.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 1900, 431.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 1926, 7.

<sup>39</sup>W. Carson Ryan, Jr., to Herman Bogard, Sept. 22, 1932, RG 75, #45004.

<sup>40</sup>Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Herman Bogard, Dec. 5, 1932, RG 75, #54996.

<sup>41</sup>*Annual Report, CIA*, 1889, 359.

<sup>42</sup>*Indian News*, 2, no. 4 (Dec. 1931):9. Suspended between June 1920 and Sept. 30, 1930. Resumed with new volume numbering.

<sup>43</sup>MS 1298, Grace Stenberg Parsons Collection: Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Sam B. Davis, Mar. 26, 1911, RG 75, #28921.

<sup>49</sup>*Annual Report, CIA*, 1901, 544.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 1888, 266.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 1894, 6.

<sup>52</sup>Sam B. Davis to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Sept. 16, 1926, RG 75, #43130.

<sup>53</sup>*Annual Report, CIA*, 1894, 344.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 1891, 151.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 152.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 153.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 155.

<sup>58</sup>Congress, Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of the Conditions of the Indians in the United States*, 70th Congress, Second Session, Febr. 4, 1929, 1601.

<sup>59</sup>*Annual Report, CIA*, 1884, 207.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 1899, 405.

<sup>61</sup>*Genoa (Nebr.) Times*, Jan. 4, 1907.

<sup>62</sup>*Indian News*, 13, no. 9 (May-June 1911):11.

<sup>63</sup>Sam B. Davis to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Nov. 3, 1914, RG 75, #118985.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., Sept. 15, 1921, RG 75, #74664.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., Mar. 7, 1921, RG 75, #18849.

<sup>66</sup>C. M. Ziebach to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Nov. 25, 1929, RG 75, #57131.

<sup>67</sup>Peyton Carter, District Supervisor, to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Dec. 2, 1929, RG 75, #53948.

<sup>68</sup>*Indian News*, 5, no. 8 (Apr. 1903):13.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 20, no. 6 (Jan. 1919):6.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 16, no. 1 (Sept. 1913):7.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 17, no. 2 (Oct. 1914):12.

<sup>72</sup>Sidney Byrd, "Rabbit Runners and Indian Boarding Schools," Part I, *Genoa Leader-Times*, Mar. 28, 1991.

<sup>73</sup>*Indian News*, 1, no. 8 (Apr. 30, 1931):5.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 14, no. 2 (Oct. 1911):7.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 16, no. 1 (Sept. 1913):11.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>*Indian News*, 19, no. 1, 2 (Oct. 1917):11.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 20, no. 8 (Apr. 1919):10.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 3, no. 1 (Sept. 1932):2.

<sup>80</sup>*Annual Report, CIA*, 1930, 8.

<sup>81</sup>*Genoa Leader*, June 12, 1896.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., June 19, 1896.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., Dec. 27, 1895.

<sup>84</sup>Congress, Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of the Conditions of the Indians in the United States*, 71st Congress, First Session, July 11, 1929, 2191.

<sup>85</sup>Memorandum by W. Carson Ryan, Jr., Director of Education, Apr. 16, 1934, RG 75.

<sup>86</sup>*The Columbus (Nebr.) Daily Telegram*, June 2, 1933.

<sup>87</sup>Meriam Report, 348.

<sup>88</sup>*Annual Report, CIA*, 1901, 3.