

Peaceably if They Will, Forcibly if They Must: The Phoenix Indian School, 1890-1901

Author(s): Robert A. Trennert

Source: *The Journal of Arizona History*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Autumn 1979), pp. 297-322

Published by: Arizona Historical Society

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42678201>

Accessed: 14-08-2018 03:53 UTC

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

*Arizona Historical Society* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Arizona History*

# Peaceably if They Will, Forcibly if They Must

The Phoenix Indian School, 1890–1901

by

*Robert A. Trennert*

ON THE NIGHT OF OCTOBER 12, 1890, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas J. Morgan appeared before a large crowd at Patton's Opera House in Phoenix. Introduced by Governor Nathan O. Murphy, he spoke at length about the fact that the government could no longer move Indians away from the white population and that education was their only hope for the future. Murphy spoke also, addressing the interests of the audience directly when he announced that the government expected to spend up to two million dollars yearly on Indian education and that "a large Indian school" in the vicinity of Phoenix would attract a goodly share of this money.<sup>1</sup>

The city fathers, supported by most of the citizens, did not hesitate to pledge support, especially since Morgan hinted that if the Phoenicians took no action, a school would be started in California. On October 13 another meeting was held at the courthouse, the discussion centering on economic factors. Speakers suggested that a school for 400 children would attract up to \$100,000 per annum in federal money to the Valley. Governor Murphy endorsed the project and proclaimed that it would be worth more to the area than ten universities or capitols. The budgets of Hampton Institute and Carlisle, Indian schools already in operation, were duly noted. Finally a committee of four men was appointed to see if the city could meet Morgan's requirements – the donation of a suitable eighty acre

---

Native Californian Robert A. Trennert received the Ph.D. degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara. After teaching for seven years at Temple University in Philadelphia, he came to Arizona State University where he is an associate professor specializing in frontier and Indian history.

site, located within three and half miles of the city. Phoenix newspapers warmly supported the proposal, realizing that a donation of land would yield substantial returns. One observer called it "A Proposition That Should Be Attended To At Once," and Morgan apparently received verbal assurances of community support before he left town.<sup>2</sup>

During the following month the campaign was continued by Wellington J. Rich, an experienced teacher from Lincoln, Nebraska, who knew nothing about Indians but was Morgan's choice to head the new school, wherever it might be located. While encouraging local citizens to support the project, Rich secured an option to lease the West End Hotel, an unoccupied two-story brick structure located on the corner of 7th Avenue and Washington Street, which could be used for temporary classroom and dormitory space. On December 11 Commissioner Morgan directed him by telegraph to have the city boosters submit a formal proposal to donate at least eighty acres of land for the school.

Rich immediately arranged for a public meeting to be held at the courthouse on December 16. General sentiment was favorable, but some opposition surfaced. A few people believed that the whole thing was some sort of land speculation and that whoever sold the land to the government would make a handsome profit. Charles D. Poston, a former Arizona superintendent of Indian Affairs, seconded the speculation charge. After the meeting he wrote Morgan objecting to the school both because of the possibility of real-estate manipulations and because "one effect on an Indian school there would be to increase the number of Indian drunkards and prostitutes now investing the town by day and night."

Such sentiment, however, was clearly the view of a minority. Boosters reminded citizens that over \$100,000 would be channeled into the community annually. In addition, they pointed to another major benefit. Indian students would provide "cheap and efficient labor" for the agricultural and citrus industries. Only Professor Rich bothered to mention any possible benefits for the Indians. At the conclusion of the meeting, a citizens' committee was formed and within a few days had forwarded a written guarantee to the Indian bureau pledging to furnish as much as \$4000 to procure a suitable site.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Phoenix Indian School*

Commissioner Morgan acted at once. On December 29 he wrote Secretary of the Interior John W. Noble requesting authority to lease the West End Hotel and asking that Congress be encouraged to appropriate \$30,000 for the establishment of an Indian industrial school at Phoenix. He wanted to use \$4,000 of this sum to help Phoenixians purchase a better site. Noble approved the request the following day. Morgan then telegraphed Rich instructions to lease the hotel for \$100 per month. By January, 1891, school headquarters had been established there and the staff was busy preparing for students. On January 20, Wellington Rich received his official appointment as superintendent of the Phoenix Indian Industrial Training School. Simultaneously, the secretary of the interior requested an appropriation of \$69,500 (\$30,000 to establish a permanent site and \$39,500 for student support and staff salaries) for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1891.<sup>4</sup> The Phoenix Indian School thus came into being.

The decision to establish the school reflected a change in American attitudes toward the Indian. As far back as the colonial period, white Americans felt that education would prove the salvation of the red man. In the early nineteenth century the government began to provide limited financial support to Indian schools operated by missionary societies, and this trend continued until after the Civil War. Results, however, were limited because of the active hostility of many tribes and the general belief that the tribesmen could not be assimilated. Then, with the advent of the national reservation system at the close of the Indian wars, new attitudes began to emerge. Reformers, sure of the accomplishments of their own society, launched a crusade to assimilate the native population. Education was the cornerstone of their program. They agreed, generally, that Indian children should be placed in an English-speaking environment that stressed agricultural or industrial training. The result was the development of off-reservation boarding schools<sup>5</sup> for which the prototype was the Carlisle Indian Industrial School founded by Richard Henry Pratt in 1879.

Using military-type discipline, this former Army officer advocated the complete separation of the student from his home environment, the destruction of his Indian culture, and his integration into American society. Pratt's ideas dominated

## THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

the educational plans of the Bureau of Indian Affairs until the concept of reservation schools matured in the early twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> During the 1880s and 1890s some twenty-five Indian industrial schools, from Oregon to Kansas, were created on this model.

The movement gained impetus when Thomas J. Morgan became commissioner of Indian affairs in the summer of 1889. A forceful man with fixed ideas, his admiration for Captain Pratt and his school appeared in his first annual report, where he set down the principles that should guide his administration. Among these were the premise that "the Indians must conform to 'the white man's ways,' peaceably if they will, forcibly if they must." As a means of achieving this goal, he proposed "a comprehensive system of education modeled after the American public-school system, but adapted to the special exigencies of the Indian youth."<sup>7</sup> Not long after assuming office, he began to think about applying these principles to the Indian children of central Arizona. Within a short time the Phoenix Indian School became his special project.

Exactly when Morgan decided to establish a school for Pima and Maricopa children is unknown. He had undoubtedly been informed by their agents and missionaries that these people needed expanded educational facilities. The city of Phoenix (consisting of some 3000 inhabitants in 1890) had no enumerated Indian residents,<sup>8</sup> but it was located in the center of a vast native population. The recent hostility of many groups, however, led federal officials to direct their strongest educational efforts at those tribes which were traditionally friendly and most likely to cooperate. The Pimas and Maricopas, living on reservations in the Gila and Salt River Valleys of central Arizona, seemed ideally suited for the experiment.

Numbering slightly over 5000, these people were regarded as industrious, intelligent and ready for assimilation. During the early 1880s a boarding school for Pima children was established at the agency town of Sacaton. By 1890 about 250 Pima, Maricopa and Papago children were attending BIA-supported schools at such divergent locations as Sacaton, Tucson and Albuquerque. The results were far from satisfactory. The Sacaton building could accommodate only twenty-five

*The Phoenix Indian School*

pupils and Indian parents complained when their children were sent to schools located far from home. A larger facility might have been constructed at Sacaton, but some officials were concerned that permitting students to remain under the direct influence of their parents might tempt them to “drop back into their old filthy ways” and cast off the lessons of civilization.<sup>9</sup> The solution was to build an industrial boarding school close enough to the reservation to appease parents yet far enough away to provide a break from the home environment.

Morgan’s first idea was to make use of the buildings at Fort McDowell, on the Verde River northeast of Phoenix, which was about to be abandoned. In April, 1890, the War Department agreed to turn the reservation over to the Indian bureau, but a visit to the area in October convinced him that the old post, decayed and isolated, would never do. His on-site inspection, however, demonstrated that the need for a local Indian school was “even more urgent than I had supposed.” The meetings in Phoenix followed and with them the birth of the institution.<sup>10</sup>

At first it existed only in name, having neither students nor a permanent site. Nevertheless the newspapers predicted great results. One article noted that the school might soon grow to 1500 students. With an expanding agricultural economy in the valley, the Indians should “become available as intelligent laborers, either for themselves on their own lands, that will no doubt be divided up among them in severalty at no distant day, or for the white occupants of other parts of this country.” Superintendent Rich resolved the site issue in April, 1891, when he arranged to purchase the Frank C. Hatch ranch located along the Grand Canal three miles north of the city. Through some shrewd negotiations, he managed to purchase 160 acres at a price of \$9000. Because of the expanded acreage, the government agreed to supply two thirds of the purchase price, the remaining \$3000 coming from the local donors. The Hatch ranch seemed ideal, the soil being described as “a fine, rich, sandy loam.” Rich portrayed it as a place well suited for the cultivation of fruits, where students might receive training in the “arts of cultivating, curing, and handling the same. Pupils so trained will readily find remunerative employment in



*A group of new arrivals (probably Apaches) at the Indian School.*

the orchards and vineyards of the Salt River and Gila River valleys." The property was located on the east side of Center Street (Central Avenue) beyond the city boundaries. Although the tract was some distance from town, its isolation would be overcome "by the contemplated street cars on Center Street, with electric lights and other city advances in due season."<sup>11</sup>

Rich moved ahead with plans for the new school. In April he commissioned architect James M. Creighton to design a main school building. In the meantime he hoped to begin classes in the West End Hotel. Because floods had washed out portions of the Phoenix and Maricopa Railroad, however, the supplies and goods sent by the Indian Office did not arrive in Phoenix until the end of June. Faced with the onset of hot weather and the end of the fiscal year, Commissioner Morgan decided not to hold classes until September.<sup>12</sup>

The Phoenix Indian School officially opened its doors on September 3, 1891, at the West End Hotel. To obtain the necessary students, Superintendent Rich met with Pima Agent Cornelius W. Crouse at Sacaton. The two men arbitrarily



*The same students after six months of instruction.*

selected some forty reservation boys and informed their parents that these children would attend school in Phoenix. Crouse believed that Indian parents would accept the situation because of the school's location just a few miles from the reservation. He also expected that when visiting parents saw their children at work, it would inspire them to become more industrious themselves. Thirty-one boys arrived in town on September 3, followed by ten more a week later. The *Phoenix Daily Herald* reported great interest among the Indians, but such apparently was not the case. Evidence indicates that the Pima parents were suspicious and uncooperative, hardly willing to have so many children taken from home.<sup>13</sup>

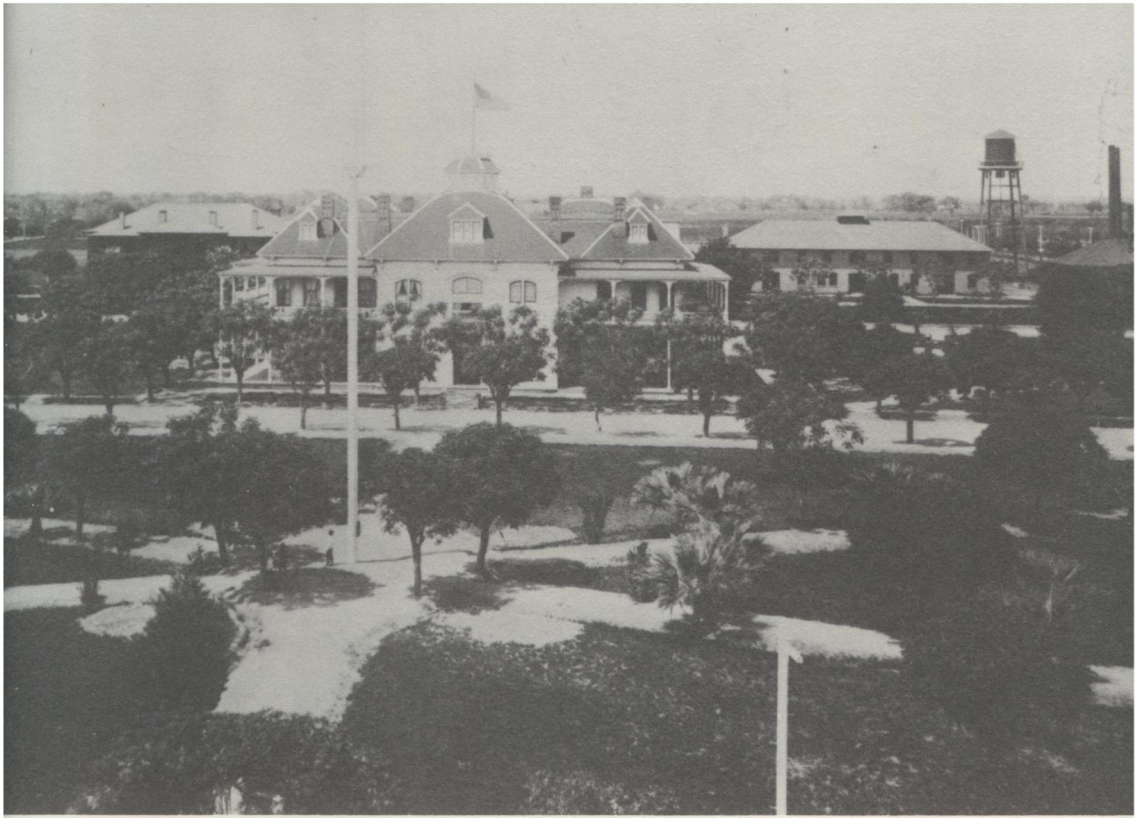
The composition of this first group of "Indian scholars" revealed the essence of the Indian education program. All forty-one students were male, there being no facilities for women at the converted hotel. Rich described the majority as being "raw recruits, who could neither speak or understand English." They ranged from seven to twenty years old, most being between sixteen and eighteen. Despite their age, nearly



all the boys were assigned to what would have been equivalent to kindergarten in contemporary American public schools. Bureau schools consisted of eight grades, designated as primary grades one to four and advanced grades one to four. The superintendent assigned thirty-five of the initial group to primary grade one, where the curriculum called for emphasis on learning the English language and mastering the first ten numbers. Students also participated in singing, exercise, and marching. Five other boys (with some prior school experience) were assigned to advanced grade one, which stressed reading, arithmetic, penmanship, and geography. Hugh Patton, a Pima, served as the only teacher.<sup>14</sup> The presence of a single teacher is explained by the fact that classroom studies, although an important part of the program, took a secondary position to other considerations.

Federal guidelines suggested that at least half of the students' time be devoted to industrial work. The bureau wanted Indian pupils taught the skills necessary for them to assimilate into American life at the level they were expected to occupy. This meant that their school life must be regulated and subject to strict discipline. Rich enthusiastically applied these ideas to the first students. Upon entering the school they were given a good scrubbing and a haircut. Their traditional clothing, even if brand new, was discarded, and each received a hat, shirt, pair of pants, shoes, and stockings. The boys were required to do all the necessary domestic chores, including keeping house, cooking, sweeping, waiting on tables, washing and ironing. The day began early in the morning and lasted until 9:00 p.m. (with all aspects of moral and social life well supervised). On Sundays, the pupils were taken to a local Presbyterian church for services and Sunday school, followed by an afternoon of singing and scripture readings.<sup>15</sup> Little wonder some students, who were used to a much different lifestyle, reacted with suspicion.

An important feature of the instructional program was the development of the "outing" system. This policy, which had been part of the federal program for several years and was used at other boarding schools, sent students into the community to work for private employers. Intended to give the children practical lessons in a working environment, the outing



*The “immaculately maintained structures and manicured grounds” flank the girls building at center in this photo taken sometime after 1900. Below, the band and assembled student body. At the end of the mall is the chapel.*



## THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

system also provided a service to the community. Even before school started, local farmers had requested a hundred young Indian students to help during the fruit harvests.<sup>16</sup> Superintendent Rich, of course, could not immediately meet any requests of this nature, but he geared his educational program to prepare Indian youths for entrance into the white working community as soon as possible by stressing the value of manual labor.

The West End Hotel proved unsuitable for school purposes. Its sixteen small rooms were not adapted to classroom use and the cramped living quarters may have added to student discontent. To help Hugh Patton handle the boys, Rich appointed one of the older students, Charles Blackwater, as assistant disciplinarian at a salary of \$80 per year payable in government rations. In spite of the inconveniences, the educational program was pronounced successful and by March, 1892, nine of the boys had advanced to primary grade two. In the meantime, work was progressing at the permanent site. In December, 1891, Edward Sunderland received the contract to construct a large, two-story frame school building designed to accommodate 125 students and built to standard BIA specifications, adding only a ten-foot-wide sleeping porch. Cost of the structure was set at \$18,380 and the contract required completion by June 30, 1892. While carpenters were building the school, Rich put his students to work preparing the site. In March some 450 fruit trees and 120 shade trees were set out. By May 6, 1892, everything was ready and the Phoenix Indian School moved to its permanent location. Superintendent Rich visited the Sacaton boarding school on May 25 to obtain some additional pupils. Eight boys and nineteen girls (the school's first) came to Phoenix on May 31. Rich took great care with these pupils, selecting only "healthy" ones and compiling a history of each student which included his Indian and English name, blood quantum, tribe, band, age, sex, physical condition, and parents' name. At the close of the first term, Rich reported that the school was popular with both the white and Indian communities. He had at that time sixty-nine pupils, several buildings, some livestock, and still only one teacher.<sup>17</sup>

The 1892-93 school year saw a considerable expansion.

### *The Phoenix Indian School*

Receipt of a \$56,500 appropriation permitted the construction of a large two-story addition to the main school building as well as a bakery, barn, and several outbuildings. This expansion permitted the school to increase its enrollment to 120 local students by the end of 1892 (seventy-three boys and forty-seven girls). A school farm was also put into operation. Apparently some valley residents wanted to see an immediate return on their investment and the school was under considerable pressure to begin the outing program. Yet Rich hesitated in sending his students into the community. He believed they should first be taught good work habits. Consequently, the outing system did not begin until the spring of 1893. Most of the boys were then set to work as seasonal labor on private farms or on school construction at a compensation of one dollar per day. Eleven girls were also put to work as domestics with local families. Rich frankly admitted that he could not meet the demand for student labor. "We have been careful to send out only those girls that were sure to do well," he reported, "as we could not afford to have any failures at the beginning of this 'outing' business."<sup>18</sup>

During the remainder of the decade construction and enrollment continued to advance. The Indian bureau and congress were more than willing to provide funds as long as students were plentiful. After 1894, when the school began admitting Papago children, it had an abundance of potential students. The superintendents at Phoenix thus had little trouble in making the school a large, self-contained, model community. In the mid-1890s a second school building, a dining hall and kitchen, a hospital, a laundry, water works, and a general office building were either constructed or planned. By 1897 the plant consisted of twelve major buildings, enabling the school to provide "comfortably" for the 500 Pima, Maricopa, and Papago students. When Superintendent S. M. McCowan penned his annual report on July 30, 1899, he correctly noted that "we are vigorously kicking ourselves free of our swaddling clothes and blooming into masterful manhood." Most of the major improvements were finished by 1899. At that time the institution accommodated over 700 Indian students. Under McCowan's direction (1897-1902) a new school house was constructed, accompanied by a large two-story employees'

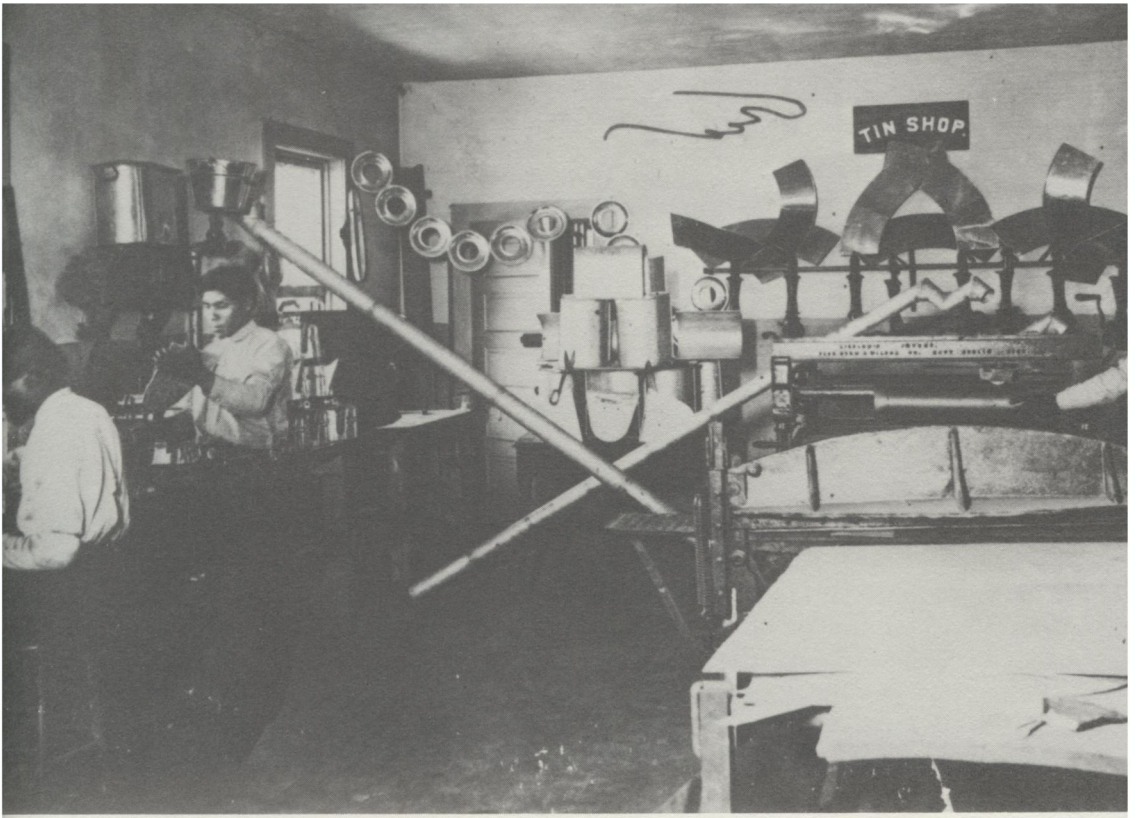
## THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

building and a massive shop building containing enough room to teach six different trades. The resultant school was indeed impressive, with immaculately maintained structures, manicured grounds, and a large professional staff. At the end of the decade, *The Arizona Gazette* proclaimed it "the largest Indian school in the United States with the exception of Carlisle, and here hundreds of Indian boys and girls were annually transferred from the native condition of indolence and uselessness into civilized and useful members of society."<sup>19</sup>

As the Indian school matured, it established a unique relationship with the city of Phoenix. Being a self-contained entity located away from the downtown area, the institution participated in the community only to the extent permitted by white residents. Generally speaking, local citizens did not want Indians in Phoenix. Beginning in the late 1880s, various municipal ordinances had restricted Indian access to the city to daylight hours for all but the few permanent employees of white businessmen. During the 1890s, most Indians were permitted in town only on business and violators of the law were severely punished by local authorities. The bias against Indians was so strong, in fact, that the census of 1900 lists only three native residents.<sup>20</sup> With an established opposition to permitting "wild" reservation Indians in the city, Phoenixians wanted assurances that Indian students would be well supervised and pose no threat of remaining in town or becoming a public nuisance.

The most popular aspect of the school for Phoenix residents proved to be the outing system, which became operational in 1893. School Superintendent Harwood Hall noted in 1894 the primary reasons for community enthusiasm: "The hiring of Indian youth is not looked upon by the people of this valley from a philanthropic standpoint. It is simply a matter of business. . . ." Indian students provided valley residents with inexpensive labor. The various school superintendents clearly recognized the great store of good will they received by supplying student workers and they made sure the practice continued. In any given year one to two hundred students participated in the program. Boys for the most part were used as common laborers and field hands, although some who had received training in a special skill might be utilized as carpen-





*In the "tin shop" Indian boys practice one of a dozen manual trades that were taught. The students below are at work in the chicken yard – one component of the "self-contained model community."*



ters and bricklayers. Only on rare occasions did white laborers object to the system. In one instance, when a contractor decided to use a few Indian students to help construct one of the school buildings, however, his white workers walked off the job in protest. Female students invariably served as domestics. Demand for young women trained in household duties always exceeded supply. Indian girls were extremely reliable, closely supervised, and inexpensive. Depending on the circumstances, these servants were either paid a small wage or simply provided with room and board. Those who earned money had funds supervised by a school matron and were encouraged to open a savings account. Any student found to have violated regulations could expect a quick removal from the system.<sup>21</sup> Under such circumstances, it is little wonder that Phoenicians were pleased with the school.

The other economic benefit of the school came with the ever-increasing federal expenditures. Although many class supplies came from outside vendors, the school purchased some goods locally, maintained a large payroll, and used Phoenix contractors for all construction. For these reasons alone, some residents continually advocated enlarging the institution. Of course, such demands were accompanied by statements of concern for Indian welfare. One newspaper believed the institution should double its enrollment because the present facility handled only "a pitiable fraction of the total youth in primitive ignorance, superstition and incompetency for the civilized life that has surrounded them." In another instance, the same paper advocated an increased appropriation for the school with the reminder that "the friend who secures such recognition of the Indian needs here will not lack support when Salt River valley voters go to the ballot box." Once established, federal expenditures proved such a boost to the local economy that citizens became dependent on their continuation.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to purely economic reasons for supporting the school, Phoenicians also focused on it as a source of community pride. The school in turn gave back to the city an incredible amount of free entertainment – a highly valuable commodity that helped relieve the boredom of isolated Phoenix residents. Soon after the opening, officials began inviting the public to

*The Phoenix Indian School*

attend a variety of functions. The memorial exercises at the end of the school year quickly became an annual social affair. The 1894 program reportedly attracted a thousand visitors. Guests were treated to a tour of the buildings and a program of musical selections provided by a group of "neatly attired" Indian boys and girls. The audience thoroughly appreciated the show and emerged convinced the school was "accomplishing a great and good work." A year later Superintendent Hall initiated the practice of inviting many citizens to the annual Christmas exercises. From then on, entertainment programs designed to foster community good will and illustrate educational achievements became a regular feature of the program. A typical example during this period included songs by the chorus, an address by one of the more fluent pupils, several costumed skits, an "American Flag" exercise by recent arrivals, and precision military drills. Although the activities usually avoided the promotion of any traditional Indian cultural heritage, on at least one occasion students were permitted to present an Apache war dance. This particular entertainment was designed for a group of legislators and undoubtedly served to remind them of the great progress being made.<sup>23</sup>

The athletic program provided additional community ties. By mid-decade boys' football and baseball teams were well established. They played a variety of local clubs, including Phoenix High School and Tempe Normal. The Indian boys also made several road trips, going as far as Prescott and Bisbee, and the football team even visited schools in Southern California. Although the caliber of the competition was perhaps not too high, there proved to be considerable local interest. Fans liked to wish the athletes well by recalling their Indian heritage. "It is hoped the Indian school footballists will return with a number of scalps dangling from their belts," wrote one newspaper. School officials, while encouraging the athletic program, strictly regulated the boys' conduct. In this way, they could be pleased when the team "won universal commendation for strict adherence to rules and gentlemanly behavior," even at the expense of being mauled by some of their less "gentlemanly" opposition. Games were often subject to unusual disruptions. In one case a baseball game had to be called when



## THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

several of the Indian players were injured in practice and in another instance the game ended early when all the balls were hit into an adjacent lagoon.<sup>24</sup> Women's sports, later an important activity, did not begin until after the turn of the century.

The promotion of tourism, beginning to assume importance in the valley, also capitalized on the school. City fathers staged a variety of carnivals, parades and fairs designed to attract visitors. Indian students proved to be a big asset to these events. The annual winter carnival, for instance, always concluded with a grand parade featuring a frontier theme. Because these parades tended to have a larger number of "wild Indians" in war paint and traditional dress, the school students were used to contrast the past with the predicted future. Under such circumstances, school officials happily provided organizers with the school band, marching battalions of boys and girls, a drum corps, and student floats. It was not difficult for spectators who had just witnessed a realistic battle between Pima and Apache warriors to be pleasantly impressed by the students. In this manner, visitors who came to see a representation of frontier history, not only received a thrilling show, but they could be assured by the disciplined and neat Indian boys and girls that the "Indian problem" was in the process of elimination.<sup>25</sup>

In many respects the most popular feature of the school was its band. Organized about 1894 to encourage musical training, it was highly appreciated and much in demand. The young musicians performed at all principal school functions in addition to traveling extensively throughout the Southwest. Every major event in Phoenix, from the annual carnival to special exhibitions, gave the Indian band prominent billing. Its forty musicians regularly spent their summers and holidays playing for audiences at fairs and celebrations, and whatever fees the organization commanded went into the school general fund. Officials were especially proud of the band and lost no opportunity to emphasize its great benefit. Superintendent McCowan frequently quoted statements of community appreciation, specifically pointing out to his superiors how pleased citizens were to see this visible sign of "improvement" in the Indian race. He also selected favorable statements from the band members to

*The Phoenix Indian School*

*The Indian baseball team was a popular part of an athletic program that stressed gentlemanly behavior. Below, the girls' basketball team converges on a rebound.*



support his contention that the Indians themselves recognized the great value they were receiving from the educational experience.<sup>26</sup>

From the community viewpoint, then, the Indian school represented a noble and valuable experiment that served the city well without being a nuisance. From the student perspective, it may have been somewhat less favorably regarded. Most of the children had been taken from a totally different environment. Traditional Pima, Maricopa, and Papago life styles contrasted markedly with the school routine. In the Indian society, children were instructed in an informal manner, often receiving their directions from a kindly grandparent or other close relative. There was little formal training, no corporal punishment, and a considerable amount of play mixed with learning. The children essentially lived in an unregimented atmosphere and spent much of their time developing skills that would prove useful in their society. Emotionally, they were hardly prepared for what awaited them at the white man's school.<sup>27</sup>

The life style stressed strict discipline and hard work. As Superintendent McCowan stated in 1898: "We pride ourselves on being a working school. No child is permitted to work as he pleases. 'Putting in time' is not sufficient. The child is taught how to do a thing, when to do it, and to do it whether he wants to or not." School officials strongly believed that if Indian children were going to assimilate into American society they must adopt the American work ethic. A system of rigid controls over every aspect of their life seemed the best way to produce the desired results. Accordingly, a code of conduct regulated every activity, and fixed punishments were meted out for all infractions. In this manner it was expected that the Indian youth could be molded into a good and productive citizen. Put another way, as McCowan proclaimed: "Indolence is the cankerworm of progress, so our pupils are taught to kill the worm."<sup>28</sup> For the Indian student, unaccustomed to a strict regimen, being subjected to such a philosophy caused both stress and resentment.

Examples of this educational atmosphere can be seen in the routine established for the school's boys and girls. The young men were organized into military companies as soon as

*The Phoenix Indian School*

they entered school. They wore uniforms and performed military drills to instill the concept of discipline. Strict obedience was heavily emphasized. The boys marched to class, to meals, and to recreation. Most of their skill training centered on the manual arts. By 1900 the school taught Indian boys over a dozen trades ranging from blacksmithing and bricklaying to carpentry and printing. If this strong emphasis on labor might be viewed by some Indian students as a violation of their rights or an insult to their cultural mores, it failed to disturb school personnel. As one superintendent remarked: "The only right belonging to the Indian is the right to make a man of himself."<sup>29</sup>

Female students also wore a uniform – a functional blue dress – and were subject to a strict military discipline. The young women were taught to behave like proper "American homemakers." Since the girls were not expected to rise above the level of a housewife, domestic sciences received considerable attention. The school did everything possible to create its version of a typical home environment. Girls were responsible for cleaning their dormitory rooms, cooking, sewing, washing and serving food. All aspects of their social life were closely supervised by a matron who lived with the students and instructed them in the proper female behavior. Many of the young women proved to be quite skilled and their domestic crafts (needlepoint and embroidery) were displayed at locations ranging from the local fairs to the Buffalo Exposition of 1901. School administrators were firmly convinced that their program was producing the desired results. Superintendent Hall wrote in 1894 that "from slouchy, dissatisfied girls, this year has produced neat, ladylike, agreeable young ladies, who are proud of exhibiting their achievements." Another official noted with great pleasure that Indian girls found "a genuine liking for cooking and humble household work."<sup>30</sup> No contradicting comments from the pupils, unfortunately, have survived.

Because school reports (which regularly quoted student praise of their education) omitted any adverse comment, the extent of student discontent was often hidden. The runaway problem, however, provided some indication of the pressure placed on Indian children. In the early days, most students





*The 1903 drill team strikes a solemn pose. A group of women students (below) photographed after their transformation from "slouchy, dissatisfied girls."*



*The Phoenix Indian School*

came from homes close enough to Phoenix to find a place of refuge should the routine become unbearable. The school was beset with runaways almost from the start. By the beginning of the twentieth century, with an enrollment of over 700, officials regularly contended with ten to twenty runaways a month. Most of these truants were apprehended and returned to school by a corps of men assigned to this specific duty. In some cases parents voluntarily returned their own children, but this seems to have been an exception. The runaway rate at Phoenix might have been even higher except for the institution's excellent health record. Unlike the case of many other BIA schools, students and parents did not feel that attending this facility was tantamount to contracting some terminal disease.<sup>31</sup>

The primary emphasis on work inevitably meant that academic training suffered. The failure of the scholastic program to produce dramatic results can be seen from the fact that the school did not produce a graduating class until 1901. At that time, four pupils were given diplomas for having completed the full academic curriculum, while eleven more were graduated in domestic sciences. One reason for such small concern about the academic program is evident from the statements of school officials. In evaluating the first four "literary" graduates, McCowan estimated that only one had "ability above average and ambition enough to become more than an ordinary breadwinner." Academic achievements were consequently viewed as a supplement to the industrial training and students were not really expected to complete the full eight-year course. Even in 1899, when the school had over 700 students, there were only seven full-time "literary" teachers.<sup>32</sup>

By far the most perplexing question regarding the educational experience at the Phoenix Indian School is how much of an impact it made on the lives of its students. In the first decade over a thousand Indian children attended the institution, yet there is little indication of how, if at all, they used their education. Undoubtedly, the vast majority returned to reservation homes and resumed a traditional life, little influenced by their years in Phoenix and certainly not assimilated into American society. Some took better advantage of their training. A small number of students are known to have obtained employment

## THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

with the Indian bureau as teachers or staff personnel. Others were hired as menial labor at Indian schools, hospitals, and agencies. A few went into business. One enterprising former pupil returned to Sacaton, built a house and store and became a successful merchant. In 1905 the school held a reunion, inviting back several former students. Although these people confined most of their remarks to their school days, it was evident from their comments that while they had secured a variety of employment situations which could be attributed to their education, none of their positions had enabled them to leave the reservation environment. One was currently an industrial teacher at the Puyallup Indian School in Washington, while others held such Bureau positions as tribal policeman, school seamstress, assistant reservation engineer (mechanic), assistant school disciplinarian, and agency interpreter.<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps the most significant change in school policy during the first decade came in 1898 when Superintendent S. M. McCowan decided to broaden the student base by bringing in children from distant reservations. McCowan frankly held the local Pima and Papago in low regard, once remarking that "these pupils are usually small and are absolutely ignorant and inexperienced." He planned to improve the school by bringing in advanced pupils from other locations in order to better utilize the "splendid opportunities in the way of trades and 'outing.'" Consequently, McCowan began recruiting students from throughout the West. Indian children were imported from California and Oregon, as well as from the Hopi, Navajo, and Apache reservations of Arizona in increasing numbers after 1898. This new group, who usually had some previous educational training, gave the school the multi-tribal composition it has since maintained. The transition at first, however, did not go well. Local students had come to regard the school as their own and they resented the "foreign intrusion." Some Pima pupils even ran away rather than associate with strangers. The strong sense of pride that developed in Indian parents and students for "their" school was one of the more positive reactions to the educational experience, although officials failed to capitalize on it.<sup>34</sup>

### *The Phoenix Indian School*

In April, 1901, the Phoenix Indian School celebrated its tenth anniversary and graduated its first class. On May 7th, President William McKinley paid it a visit and offered his congratulations on the success of this center of Indian education. By this time there was little doubt in anyone's mind that the school was one of the major Indian educational facilities in the nation.<sup>35</sup> Its first decade had produced great and permanent developments in the Indian educational system of Arizona. Before 1890, the territory had no major center for such education. By 1900, Indian students from all over Arizona, instead of being drawn to Carlisle or Hampton, increasingly looked to Phoenix for a significant portion of their schooling. The institution had proved its worth to the community of Phoenix and would continue to serve as a source of pride as well as economic enrichment.

It is more difficult to state with certainty that the school met the real educational needs of the student in its first decade of existence. For them education meant forced removal from home, loss of freedom, and entrance into an alien world.

It could not have been otherwise. School administrators in that era were ethnocentric and idealistic in their approach to Indian education. They would need many more years of change and development before they could regard the Indian student as a unique individual instead of an item in human form to be injected into the mold of a stereotyped white working-class American.

#### NOTES

The author wishes to express his thanks to the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Phoenix History Project, and Arizona State University for their support of this study.

<sup>1</sup>Wellington Rich to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 5, 1891, in *Annual Report, Commissioner of Indian Affairs (CIA)*, 1891 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), pp. 555–557; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, October 13, 1890.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, October 14, 1890; *Arizona Daily Citizen*, October 14, 1890; Geoffrey Mawn, "Phoenix, Arizona: Central City of the Southwest, 1870–1920" (PhD Dissertation, Arizona State University, 1979).

<sup>3</sup>Rich to Commissioner, August 5, 1891, in *Annual Report, CIA*, 1891, p. 557; Morgan to Secretary of the Interior, December 29, 1890, National Archives, Record Group 75,



## THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, Education Division, vol. 28; Morgan to Secretary of the Interior, December 29, 1890, National Archives, Record Group (RG) 48, Letters Received (LR) Indian Division; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, December 15, 17, 1890; *Arizona Daily Gazette*, December 17, 1890. Economic motivation for the establishment of Indian schools in white communities was a common phenomenon. Like Phoenix, the citizens of Albuquerque donated land and welcomed government spending. See also Lilie McKinney, "History of the Albuquerque Indian School," *New Mexico Historical Review*, vol. 20 (April, 1945), pp. 109–138; Margaret Connel Szasz, *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1923*, 2nd ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977), pp. 30–32.

<sup>4</sup>Morgan to Secretary of the Interior, December 29, 1890, National Archives, RG 48, Indian Division; Noble to Morgan, December 30, 1890, National Archives, RG 75, Authorities; "Letter . . . submitting an estimate of an appropriation for an Indian school at or near Phoenix," House Ex. Doc., no. 218, 51 Cong., 1 Sess.; Rich to Commissioner, August 5, 1891, in *Annual Report*, CIA, 1891, p. 557.

<sup>5</sup>Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, pp. 8–10; Loring B. Priest, *Uncle Sam's Stepchildren: The Reformation of United States Indian Policy, 1865–1887*, reprint ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), pp. 132–154; Francis P. Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865–1900* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), pp. 265–283; Francis P. Prucha, ed., *Americanizing the American Indian: Writings of the "Friends of the Indian," 1880–1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 260–271. Pratt's singleminded ideas on Indian education predominated until the mid-1890s. After that time, increasing attention began to focus on reservation schools and eventually many of his ideas were rejected.

<sup>6</sup>Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, p. 10; McKinney, "History of the Albuquerque Indian School," pp. 109–138. Among the major Indian boarding schools founded during this era were Chamawa (1880), Albuquerque (1884), Haskell (1884), and Santa Fe (1890).

<sup>7</sup>Prucha, *Americanizing the American Indian*, pp. 74–76; *Annual Report*, CIA, 1889 (Washington: GPO, 1889), pp. 3–4, 93–104, 111–114.

<sup>8</sup>11th U.S. Census, 1890, *Publications of the Bureau of the Census*, National Archives and Records Service, Record Group 29, Microcopy T-825, Roll 25, p. 451, shows that in 1890 Phoenix had a population of 3152. No "civilized" or taxable Indians were reported living in the city.

<sup>9</sup>Roswell G. Wheeler to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 1, 1882, in *Annual Report*, CIA, 1882 (Washington: GPO, 1882), p. 8; A. H. Jackson to Commissioner, August 14, 1884, in *Annual Report*, CIA, 1884 (Washington: GPO, 1884), pp. 5–7; Cornelius W. Crouse to Commissioner, August 18, 1890, in *Annual Report*, CIA, 1890 (Washington: GPO, 1890), p. 5; Report on Indian Schools *Annual Report*, CIA, 1890, pp. 324–329. The Rev. C. H. Cook helped the Presbyterians open a mission school in 1887, but this facility was also limited in scope. See Minnie A. Cook, *Apostel to the Pima* (Tiburon, California: n.p., 1976), pp. 164–165. Morgan to Secretary of the Interior, December 29, 1890, National Archives, RG 48, LR, Indian Division, 9440–1890.

<sup>10</sup>Rich to Commissioner, August 5, 1891, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1891, p. 555; James M. Barney, "Phoenix Citizens Helped Buy Land for Indian School Here," undated clipping from the *Arizona Gazette*, Barney Papers, Box 4, Folder 22, Arizona Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University.

<sup>11</sup>Rich to Commissioner, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1891, pp. 557–558; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, January 9, February 4, April 13, 1891.

<sup>12</sup>Rich to Commissioner, August 5, 1891, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1891, p. 558.

<sup>13</sup>Crouse to Commissioner, September 30, 1891, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1891, pp. 214–215; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, September 3, 1891. In 1893 Rich wrote in his annual report that there had been much Indian prejudice against the school. See Rich to Commissioner, July, 1893, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1893 (Washington: GPO, 1893), p. 403. The *Herald* report of Indian enthusiasm apparently related to local Indians: "Before Super-

### *The Phoenix Indian School*

intendent Rich secured a location here, the squaws took little or no interest in their appearance. They wore into town only such clothing as the municipal ordinances absolutely required. Now, very many of the girls are clad after the manner of their white sisters."

<sup>14</sup>Rich to Commissioner, September 10, 1892, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1892 (Washington: GPO, 1892), vol. 1, p. 654; Quarterly Report of Indian Schools, Phoenix, September 30, 1891, and Classification of Pupils, September 30, 1891, National Archives, Federal Records Center (FRC), Laguna Niguel, California, Records of the Phoenix Area Office, Box 239; Rules for Indian Schools, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1890, pp. clvi-clx. A breakdown of the first students shows that thirty-one were Pima and ten Maricopa.

<sup>15</sup>Rich to Commissioner, September 10, 1892, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1892, vol. 1, pp. 654–655; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, September 7, 1891; Rules for Indian Schools, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1890, pp. cl-cliii.

<sup>16</sup>Crouse to Commissioner, September 30, 1891, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1891, p. 214; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, September 3, 1891; Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis*, pp. 277–278. McKinney, "History of Albuquerque Indian School," pp. 131–132, notes a similar reliance on the "outing system." Indian students at Albuquerque were sent to work on the railroads or in sugar beet fields.

<sup>17</sup>Quarterly Report of Indian Schools, Phoenix, December 31, 1891, Statement of Classification of Pupils, March 31, 1892, Descriptive Statement of Pupils Transferred to Phoenix Indian School, May 31, 1892, National Archives, FRC, Records of the Phoenix Area Office, Box 239; Rich to Commissioner, September 10, 1892, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1892, vol. 1, pp. 654–656; List of School Employees, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1892, vol. 2, p. 838; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, April 29, 1892.

<sup>18</sup>Rich to Commissioner, July, 1893, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1893, pp. 403–404; List of School Employees, *ibid.*, p. 529; Quarterly Report of Indian Schools, Phoenix, December 31, 1892, and Statement of Classification of Pupils, December 31, 1892, National Archives, FRC, Records of the Phoenix Area Office, Box 239; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, April 15, 1892, January 24, 1893.

<sup>19</sup>D. M. Browning to Secretary of the Interior, March 16, 1894, in "Letter transmitting estimate from the Secretary of the Interior of appropriations for the Indian school at Phoenix, Arizona, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1895," House Ex. Doc. no. 163, 53 Cong., 1 Sess.; S. M. McCowan to Commissioner, July 15, 1897, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1897 (Washington: GPO, 1897), p. 344; McCowan to Commissioner, July 30, 1898, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1898 (Washington: GPO, 1898), pp. 352–354; McCowan to Commissioner, July 31, 1899, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1899 (Washington: GPO, 1899) pp. 384–385; *The Daily Enterprise*, June 8, 1899; *The Arizona Graphic*, vol. 1 (September 30, 1899), p. 3.

<sup>20</sup>James M. Barney, "Famous Indian Ordinance," *The Sheriff*, vol. 13 (June, 1954), p. 77; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, September 3, 1891, May 24, 1892, November 5, 1892; *The Arizona Republican*, November 24, 1897; 12th U.S. Census, 1900, *Publications of the Bureau of the Census* (Washington: U.S. Census Office, 1901), vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 609; *The Arizona Graphic*, vol. 1 (September 30, 1899) p. 3.

<sup>21</sup>Hall to Commissioner, August 10, 1894, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1894 (Washington: GPO, 1895), pp. 369–371; Hall to Commissioner, September 1, 1896, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1898, pp. 352–354; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, June 18, 1896; *Phoenix Daily Enterprise*, July 6, 1898.

<sup>22</sup>*Phoenix Daily Herald*, October 2, 1891, November 28, 1898. Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, pp. 30–32, notes that when the Indian bureau finally began to abandon the off-reservation boarding schools in the 1930s, it met stiff resistance from local congressmen who did not want to lose this source of revenue.

<sup>23</sup>*Phoenix Daily Herald*, June 1, 1893, June 8, 1894, December 23, 26, 1895, June 9, 11, 1896; *The Daily Enterprise*, March 9, 11, 1899; Hall to Commissioner, September 1, 1896, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1896, pp. 364–366.

## THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

<sup>24</sup>Hall to Commissioner, September 1, 1896, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1896, pp. 364–366; *The Native American*, vol. 5 (March 12, 1904). There are numerous reports of sports activities in both the *Herald* and *Enterprise* after 1896.

<sup>25</sup>*Phoenix Daily Herald*, February 18, 19, 20, 1896, February 22, 1898, November 29, December 1, 1900; Hall to Commissioner, September 1, 1896, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1896, pp. 364–366.

<sup>26</sup>McCowan to Commissioner, July 30, 1898, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1898 p. 354; McCowan to Commissioner, July 31, 1899, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1899, pp. 384–385.

<sup>27</sup>Anna Moore Shaw, *A Pima Past* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), pp. 108, 132–134; Frank Russell, *The Pima Indians*, reprint with introduction by Bernard L. Fontana (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975), pp. 190–192.

<sup>28</sup>Rich to Commissioner, July 1893, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1893, pp. 403–404; Hall to Commissioner, August 10, 1894, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1894, pp. 369–371; McCowan to Commissioner, July 30, 1898, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1898, pp. 352–354.

<sup>29</sup>Hall to Commissioner, August 10, 1894, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1894, pp. 369–371; McCowan to Commissioner, July 31, 1899, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1900 (Washington: GPO, 1900), pp. 477–478; *The Arizona Graphic*, vol. 1 (September 30, 1899), p. 3.

<sup>30</sup>*The Arizona Gazette*, “Railroad Edition,” March 12, 1895; Hall to Commissioner, August 10, 1894, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1894, pp. 369–371; McCowan to Commissioner, July 14, 1900, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1900, pp. 477–478; McCowan to Commissioner, July 3, 1901, *Annual Report*, CIA 1901 (Washington: GPO, 1902), pp. 523–525.

<sup>31</sup>Comments about runaways appeared occasionally in the superintendents’ reports (particularly 1894 and 1898). The Quarterly Statements of Arrivals and Departures of December 1901 and June 1902, National Archives, FRC, Records of the Phoenix Area Office, Box 239, give a more detailed report on runaways. Howard Sanderson, a Pima, who once worked for the school tracking down runaways, noted in *The Native American*, vol. 6 (May 27, 1905) that many parents chose to hide their children. For remarks on the health record, see Rich to Commissioner, July 1893, *Annual Report*, CIA, pp. 403–404; McCowan to Commissioner, July 30, 1898, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1898, pp. 352–354; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, January 24, 1894.

<sup>32</sup>For statements regarding the “literary” program, see McCowan’s letters to the annual reports for 1899–1901. The 1899 list of school employees, in *Annual Report*, CIA, 1899, pp. 641–642, shows that Phoenix employed a total staff of sixty, seven of whom were teachers and two were assistant teachers.

<sup>33</sup>*The Native American*, vol. 5 (November 5, 1904), vol. 6 (May 20, 27, 1905). After 1901 a few graduates went on to training at Hampton Institute. See, pupils sent to Hampton, September 22, 1904, National Archives, FRC, Records of the Phoenix Area Office, Box 239.

<sup>34</sup>McCowan to Commissioner, July 30, 1898, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1898, pp. 352–354; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, November 10, 1898; Descriptions of students sent to Phoenix Indian School from Fort Apache, San Xavier, Klamath, San Carlos, Moqui, Fort Yuma, Hoopa Valley (ca. 1902), in National Archives, FRC, Records of the Phoenix Area Office, Box 239. Transfer to off-reservation schools was an approved policy, see Educational Circular no. 48, February 13, 1901, printed in *The Native American*, vol. 2 (March 2, 1901). Szasz, *Education and the American Indian*, pp. 165–166, notes that local pride was common at Indian schools and most tribes resented outsiders.

<sup>35</sup>McCowan to Commissioner, July 3, 1901, *Annual Report*, CIA, 1901, pp. 523–525. Although statistics on the school are incomplete for 1901, there are detailed descriptions of it in 1903. See *Statistics on Indian Tribes, Agencies, and Schools*, 1903 (Washington: GPO, 1903), pp. 155–156; Statistics for the Phoenix Indian Industrial School, 1903, National Archives, FRC, Records of the Phoenix Area Office, Box 239.

CREDITS: All illustrations are from the collections of the Arizona Historical Foundation, Tempe.