

"And the sword will give way to the spelling-book": Establishing the Phoenix Indian School

Author(s): Robert A. Trennert

Source: *The Journal of Arizona History*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring, 1982), pp. 35-58

Published by: Arizona Historical Society

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41695642>

Accessed: 14-08-2018 03:56 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*

# “And the sword will give way to the spelling-book”

## Establishing the Phoenix Indian School

*by*

*Robert A. Trennert*

AS FAR AS THE REVEREND DANIEL DORCHESTER was concerned, there should not have been a government Indian school in Phoenix. Dorchester, the federal Superintendent of Indian Schools, much preferred Fort McDowell, a military site in the desert some thirty-two miles east of the city. After almost a year of argument and debate in 1890, however, the reverend was overruled by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and the school found a temporary and later permanent home within the city limits. The story of how the budding metropolis was chosen over McDowell, and of how the school developed into a major educational institution is a significant episode in the city's history. It illustrates the importance of a federal facility to the city and says much about pioneer Phoenix boosters and the town's relationship with the local Indian population.

The origins of the Phoenix Indian School lie deep in the history of American Indian policy. Education as a means of assimilating the native population into American society has always been one of the goals of the federal government. But little could be accomplished as long as the tribes actively challenged the dominance of Anglo-American society. As a result, prior to the end of the Indian wars, most efforts to provide education for Indian children were led by various church groups. By the 1880s, however, the tribes had been subdued and placed on reservations. At this point the Bureau of Indian Affairs began to pay more attention to schools.<sup>1</sup>

During the 1880s the government created a comprehensive “public” school system for the Indians, the idea being that their education should eventually become the sole responsibility of the Bureau. Although considerable early emphasis went into reservation schools, the off-reservation boarding school was

looked upon by many government officials as the most desirable form of Indian education. The idea of the non-reservation school, emphasizing manual labor, found its greatest booster in Captain Richard Henry Pratt, who in 1879 opened the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. Captain Pratt's emphasis was one of complete acculturation. As he noted in one of his celebrated speeches, "all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man." The apparent success of this philosophy at Carlisle led the government to launch an expanded program of off-reservation industrial schools. Interior Secretary Carl Schurz explained the effectiveness of these schools in 1881. Reservation schools, he noted, because of their proximity to tribal homes, did not provide a sufficient break with the past. For the Indian to become "civilized," the most efficient method would be to place him in the white man's world where he could see for himself all the advantages of modern society. Once having observed his white brother, the Indian must surely want the same advantages for himself.<sup>2</sup>

Guided by this concept, the number of industrial schools increased rapidly. Congress proved willing to increase appropriations and provide other inducements. In 1882, for example, the legislators authorized the Secretary of the Interior to acquire abandoned military posts and barracks for school purposes. Indian Commissioner Hiram Price was delighted with this particular legislation because it promised to save the government money (ever a concern), while simultaneously permitting the expansion of the school system. He confidently predicted that "the schoolboy will then take the place of the soldier, and the sword will give way to the spelling-book." As schools began to dot the western landscape it became evident that central Arizona, with its large Indian population, needed a training institution. As early as 1883, at the first Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indians it was recommended that one be located in the Gila Valley.<sup>3</sup>

The education of central Arizona's Indian residents became an issue of concern to federal officials as the decade of the 1880s waned. These tribes—the Pima, Papago, and Maricopa—had traditionally been friendly to the United States and seemed especially deserving of help. Although their agents had little good to

*Establishing the Phoenix Indian School*

say about native life, they all advised that the establishment of boarding schools would promote civilization by taking children “away from home influence and put them in charge of interested and competent teachers.” With the expansion of the federal education system, schooling became available to a small number of Arizona Indian children after 1885. A small day school was constructed at Sacaton, and children were also sent to the religious contract school at Tucson, the industrial school at Albuquerque, and even to Hampton Institute in Virginia. Yet none of these schools proved satisfactory: most of the facilities were so far away that parents entered violent objections; the local school at Sacaton was too small and, the Indian agent felt, too close to home, thus allowing students the opportunity to “drop back into their old filthy ways.”<sup>4</sup> To many observers, the establishment of an off-reservation school located close enough to the reservation to appease parents and keep travel expenses to a minimum yet far away enough to negate home influences offered the most desirable solution to this dilemma.

The need for a federal Indian school in central Arizona received a boost when President Benjamin Harrison appointed Thomas J. Morgan Commissioner of Indian Affairs in May, 1889. Morgan had served under Harrison in the 70th Indiana Volunteer Infantry, later organizing and leading Negro troops. When the Civil War ended, he entered Rochester Theological Seminary and was ordained a Baptist minister. Three years later he began a career as an educator, during which he gained attention through his essays and speeches. Morgan would prove to be a major personality in the effort to “Americanize” the Indian according to the protestant reformer spirit of the age. Although he did not believe that off-reservation schools provided the only answer to Indian education, the commissioner was committed to expanding the federal system and placing special emphasis on industrial training. Concurrent with Morgan’s appointment as commissioner, the Reverend Daniel Dorchester, a prominent if somewhat bigoted Methodist minister from Boston, was named Superintendent of Indian Schools, a post directly under Morgan’s supervision. Dorchester, an enthusiastic supporter of industrial education, envisioned his duties as visiting the reservations and advising the commissioner on educational needs. He

## THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

quickly set off on an extended tour of the West.<sup>5</sup> With confidence that his advice would be heeded, Dorchester arrived in Arizona early in 1890.

By that time, the Indian Bureau had received permission to establish a training school for the Pimas. The new superintendent was enthusiastic about the plan partly because he was not particularly impressed by what he saw of the Arizona Indians. He admired their strength and ability to survive in the torrid climate but could not say the same of their intellectual capacity. "When we come to mental ability," he said, "we find the Indians of Arizona inferior to all others." With regard to the Pimas, Dorchester even expressed some concern that education would harm them. Because white farmers were depriving the Indians of their water, he feared that civilized farming techniques, once learned by the Indians, would increase their need for irrigation. If Pima water rights could not be protected, then "better leave the Pimas, in blankets and long hair, to subsist on berries, than to educate them and then take away from them their last drop of water."<sup>6</sup>

Still, Dorchester was in Arizona to promote schools, not to discourage them. He first took an interest in Fort McDowell as a result of the activities of post commander Captain J. M. Lee. By 1890, McDowell had outlived its usefulness as an army outpost. In a letter to his superiors in February, 1890, Captain Lee, who had once been in charge of an Indian agency, suggested that the fort might make a fine school when abandoned by the army. With a few minor repairs the buildings could be put in shape to care for 300 children and their teachers. Moreover, the site, located on the Verde River, was touted as being one of the healthiest places in Arizona, in fact a real garden spot. "The only drawback is the heat of summer," he noted, "but Indians who have lived along the Gila and Salt Rivers could not find this objectionable." Lee thus urged the government to take advantage of this great opportunity to educate the Indian children of the region. He did remark, however, that many local citizens were opposed to providing any benefits to the Indian and might be expected to oppose the school because "they want the land for their own advantage."<sup>7</sup>

Captain Lee's suggestions were forwarded to the Indian Bureau which in turn sent the information to the minister in

*Establishing the Phoenix Indian School*

Arizona. Accordingly, Dorchester visited Fort McDowell on March 11-12, 1890. The Superintendent of Indian Schools could hardly have been more impressed as Captain Lee escorted him around the grounds. He found the fort located in the middle of "the most beautiful valley in Arizona," relatively close to transportation, with buildings in fair condition. Situated on 24,750 acres of land, the post would provide plenty of room for farms and gardens. Despite the excessive heat, Dorchester proclaimed the site perfectly healthy (a major consideration since most Indian schools were plagued with disease). At the conclusion of his tour he recommended Fort McDowell to the Indian Bureau. There seemed to be several specific advantages. It already had irrigation works and fields under cultivation, it was located close to but not on any reservation, and it could ultimately attract students from the entire Territory. In addition, it would be better for Indian children to be educated in their accustomed climate, according to the Reverend Dorchester. He closed his report with an appeal for immediate action: "The Indians of Arizona, long under the tutelage of a Mexican civilization, are now exposed to the no less debauching influence of Mormonism. Now is the fitting time for the Government to render them its best service. This golden opportunity should not be allowed to pass unimproved."<sup>8</sup>

Dorchester wrote several more letters to Morgan after completing his visit. "The small politicians of Arizona," he wrote, should not be allowed a say in the selection of the school superintendent, lest they wreck the school. Dorchester believed the average sentiment in Arizona regarding education and morality to be very low, so he nominated several non-Arizonans noted for their educational skills. Meanwhile, the government moved rapidly to complete arrangements for the Indian school. On April 10, 1890, the army issued General Orders No. 43, authorizing the abandonment of Fort McDowell. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs then requested that the buildings be transferred to the Indian Bureau for use as a school under provisions of the Act of 1885. By May 2, 1890, the Secretary of War had approved the request.<sup>9</sup> It seemed certain that within a few months a school would be in operation at the former cavalry post.

Establishment of the institution became even more certain

## THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

with the appointment of a superintendent. Although Morgan did not select any of Dorchester's personal choices, he did give the post to Wellington Rich of Omaha, Nebraska. Rich was a well-known educator who had probably been acquainted with Morgan for some years. In December, 1889, the commissioner had appointed Rich to an administrative position with the Yankton Agency Boarding School in South Dakota. Although happy with his work, Rich apparently wanted more responsibility and better pay. When the McDowell position opened up, therefore, Morgan offered it to his friend, sending along the highly favorable reports of Dorchester and Lee as inducements. After consulting with his wife, Rich accepted the appointment on May 12. He was extremely enthusiastic: "I have become deeply interested in Indian School work," he wrote. "I enjoy the work and desire to continue in it—so long as my labors may prove beneficial to the young people under my tuition and care. . . . I would like to have charge of an establishment in which I might enjoy a larger degree of freedom in the administration of its affairs than I can exercise in an agency school."<sup>10</sup>

Rich began making preparations immediately. When it came to selecting a staff, the new superintendent was guided by Commissioner Morgan's suggestion that great care be taken to assure that teachers have a high degree of moral fitness and a "positive religious character." "You will be called upon," he reminded Rich, "to train pupils who, for the most part, if not positively pagan or heathen, are at least those who have had little or no religious training." Most of the staff was drawn from former colleagues in South Dakota. From the Yankton Agency came matron Bessie M. Johnston and industrial teacher A. G. Matthews. Harry Clark, from the Pine Ridge Agency, secured the position of school clerk. In July, Rich visited Morgan in Washington to discuss further the school and its staffing. Ever aware of political concerns, Morgan expressed the fear that the South Dakota appointments might be viewed as slighting Arizonans, and he suggested that the superintendent might want to add more local residents to his staff. Rich apparently considered the idea but briefly, for by the time he returned to Nebraska, he had decided that the necessary help could not be secured in Arizona and stuck to his original choices.<sup>11</sup> At the end of July,

*Establishing the Phoenix Indian School*

Wellington Rich gathered his people together at Lincoln where they bravely prepared to set off for the Arizona desert.

It took the party almost ten days to reach Phoenix by train. Consequently, a somewhat tired group composed of Professor and Mrs. Rich, Mr. and Mrs. Matthews, Mr. Clark, and Miss Johnston recuperated at the Mills House before continuing on to McDowell. While in Phoenix, a reporter for the *Arizona Republican* interviewed Superintendent Rich. Optimism prevailed. The professor predicted that school would begin in about a month with an enrollment of 100. He foresaw little difficulty in obtaining students since "they can always be seen by their parents." He also talked a bit about his philosophy of education, noting that the Indian could not be quickly civilized. At McDowell, then, the staff would seek to train the Indian youth in "the superior methods of the white man." While not neglecting the English language and simple branches of learning, the main goal was to instruct them in industrial pursuits. He postulated that the school would prove a great success.<sup>12</sup>

The staff arrived at Fort McDowell on August 12, 1890, to discover that not all was in order. Captain Lee had departed a few days before, leaving the post in charge of an inexperienced Lieutenant John A. Baldwin, twelve enlisted men, and the post surgeon. No furnishings, goods, or supplies had been sent in advance and Baldwin had to round up some cook-stoves, cooking utensils, furniture, and bedding for the school officials. Moreover, although the lieutenant knew he was expected to turn the post over to Rich, he had received no orders to do so. All that Rich could do under the circumstances was to make a survey of the facilities. He found the fort in less than perfect condition. "The Post is not in so good condition, nor nearly so attractive a place as I expected to find it," he wrote Morgan on August 15. Some of the buildings were in reasonable shape, but the three largest ones were "quite dilapidated," and had been left full of dirt and rubbish by the departing soldiers. The parade ground looked "very much like a newly formed Missouri River sand bar." With the temperatures ranging between 104 and 110 degrees in the shade, Rich could not have been very happy. Still, his optimism remained as he engaged the services of a carpenter to make some necessary repairs.<sup>13</sup>



## THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

Troubles with the army surfaced immediately. Lieutenant Baldwin finally turned the post buildings over to Rich on September 15. He would not hand over any additional property, however, including stores of hay and barley, a steam boiler, cord wood, and some old army stoves, without an agreement to pay the \$8000 original cost of the items plus transportation. The post surgeon placed similar restrictions on the hospital supplies. Because many of the goods were in poor condition, and were not required by the school, or were priced too high, Rich refused to receive them. As a result, they were then sold at auction by the army. More important, Superintendent Rich began to realize that Fort McDowell was not suited for an Indian school. After a thorough survey of the facilities, he wrote that the Reverend Dorchester's report was completely misleading. Instead of only a few minor repairs being required, Rich estimated "that to make the alterations and repairs necessary to adapt the buildings for school purposes, to protect them from the disintegration action of wind and rain, and to render them fairly comfortable, and decently attractive in appearance, will require the judicious expenditure of fully \$15,000." He found the fort located too far from the nearest railroad station, in the middle of a hostile desert, and completely unfit for an Indian school; the land was not as good as pictured, the heat too intense, and the post buildings ill placed for educational purposes. Moreover, repair rates were as much as fifty percent higher than in Phoenix. All this disagreeable information was communicated to Commissioner Morgan.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, as it became obvious that Fort McDowell was not working out, some Phoenixians began to take an interest in having the school located near their city. Phoenix was dominated at this time by a group of boosters who envisioned a great commercial future for the valley. These ambitious men were primarily involved in real estate promotion, canal building, and financial schemes. They had invested heavily in valley enterprises and were looking for every opportunity to promote Phoenix. They had already advanced several successful projects designed to enhance business prospects: the Territorial Asylum was built in 1886; the railroad line from Maricopa was completed in 1887; and in 1889 local boosters engineered their greatest coup when they secured the Territorial capital. The major personalities be-

*Establishing the Phoenix Indian School*

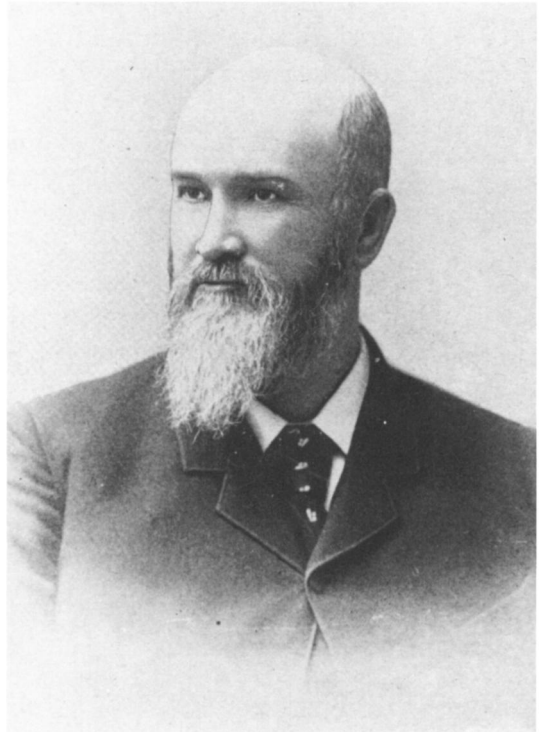
hind the move to add the Indian school to the list of city facilities were two prominent bankers and speculators, Colonel William Christy and William J. Murphy. Although they may have had some remote interest in Indian education, they were more concerned with promoting the development of Phoenix. The two had played a prominent role in moving the capital from Prescott to Phoenix in 1889. In 1890 they were the principal officers of the Arizona Improvement Company, which controlled large sections of land and all the canals north of the Salt River. Christy and Murphy were also active in developing the Valley's first citrus orchards and were well aware that a federal facility could enhance the value of their holdings. A strategically placed Indian school promised to encourage real estate development while students from the school could provide cheap labor for the adjacent orchards through the "outing" system, a federally sanctioned program that sent pupils into the community to work for private employers. With this in mind, these men decided to induce the Indian Bureau to locate its school just northwest of town on a plot of federal land located in Section 36 of Township Two North, Range Two East (this plot is bounded by present-day Encanto Boulevard, 27th Avenue and Grand Avenue). The triangular section was reserved for school purposes and lay adjacent to the Maricopa Canal and the lands of the Arizona Improvement Company.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately for the promoters, the proposed site was occupied by some thirteen families. These people were squatters, although some had lived on the land for ten years. When they received word that their farms might be taken for the school, the settlers immediately petitioned the Indian Bureau. They stated that certain parties had acquired large tracts of land adjacent to Section 36 and were attempting to eject them. Calling themselves "pioneer settlers," the petitioners asked that there be no arbitrary decision regarding the school site.<sup>16</sup>

Town boosters ignored the grumbling settlers when it was announced in early October that Commissioner Morgan would visit the Salt River Valley to survey the school situation for himself. He and his wife arrived in Phoenix on October 9 and were immediately besieged by a citizens' committee composed of Acting Governor Nathan O. Murphy, Colonel Christy, and a half



*Territorial Governor  
Nathan Oaks Murphy.*



*Colonel William Christy,  
Phoenix banker and  
speculator, who was one  
of the first to articulate the  
practical advantages of  
establishing the  
Indian school.*

*Establishing the Phoenix Indian School*

dozen other leading citizens. While the commissioner talked about the benefits of educating Indian children, the Phoenicians went about selling their location. After some discussion, the commissioner indicated that he would look favorably on Phoenix if local residents would donate the land. Governor Murphy then took Morgan on a ride around the city that managed to end at Section 36. Here the visitor was informed that citizens would be willing to donate an eighty-acre parcel of land, but that the only available locations were some distance from the city. Murphy recommended instead that Section 36 be utilized by the government. The squatters were pictured as trespassers who had made few improvements and had been ordered to leave by the Land Office. Morgan accepted this assessment and came away convinced that Section 36 was indeed an excellent location. The *Arizona Republican*, which gave full coverage to the distinguished visitor, reported to its readers on the benefits to be reaped from the school. As much as \$50,000 annually would be added to the local economy by a facility for 200 pupils and "in a few years our lands, now being so extensively planted with fruit trees and vines, would give employment to many of the pupils."<sup>17</sup> Colonel Christy could not have stated his case more succinctly.

With a favorable impression of Phoenix in mind, Morgan proceeded to Fort McDowell. It took him only a short time to confer with Superintendent Rich and decide to abandon the McDowell site "and the bats, skunks, rattlesnakes & Gila Monsters, scorpions, centipedes, & other uncomfortable creatures with which this place abounds." Officially Morgan decided against the location because of its distance from Phoenix and railroad connections, the dilapidated condition of the buildings, the heat, and its position far from the civilizing influences of modern society. Having thus decided that Fort McDowell would be impractical, Commissioner Morgan faced the task of making arrangements in Phoenix. To that end, he and Superintendent Rich returned to town on October 12, and with the help of Governor Murphy, called a town meeting at Patton's Opera House.<sup>18</sup>

On the night of October 12, Morgan presented his talk on Indian education before what was described as being "as large an audience as ever greeted a lecturer in Phoenix." During the introduction, Governor Murphy noted that while most Arizonans

still preferred the removal of all Indians, the government was committed to “educating and elevating” them within the Territory. Morgan then delivered a lengthy talk on the benefits of Indian education. Using the theme that it’s “Cheaper to Educate Indians Than to Kill Them,” he spelled out the government’s program of industrial schools. Uneducated native children were pictured as obstacles to progress, while those with training would become producers and wage earners contributing to the general prosperity. The government thus saved money while the community prospered. As he explained to the Phoenixians, “education is a cheap method of converting aliens, enemies, savages, into citizens, friends, and honorable intelligent men and women.”<sup>19</sup>

General Morgan could not remain in Phoenix long enough to complete arrangements for the school. Before he departed, however, he penned a long letter of instruction to Assistant Commissioner R. V. Belt. He described Phoenix as an admirable location. He was particularly impressed with the leading citizens, saying they “showed a very lively interest in the school and are very anxious to have it located there.” Morgan also was impressed with the school site he had visited and asked that the Secretary of the Interior authorize the use of this land for school purposes. In the meantime, he suggested that the Bureau rent the unoccupied two-story West End Hotel (located at the corner of Seventh Avenue and Washington Street) for use as a temporary school. All local arrangements would be left to Superintendent Rich who “has already secured the confidence and respect of the best elements of the community.”<sup>20</sup> The decision in favor of Phoenix had thus been made. Fort McDowell would be left to the rattlesnakes and the scorpions.

Morgan and Rich hoped to open their school immediately, but such was not to be the case. For a moment everything seemed to go well. On October 14, all the Phoenix papers (and one from Tucson) endorsed the institution. The *Daily Herald*, whose publisher N. A. Morford had been a member of the citizens committee to greet Morgan, was especially enthusiastic. His paper pointed out, as did the others, the monetary benefits to be derived from the school. Using a quote from Governor Murphy, the *Herald* reminded its readers that “from a pecuniary

*Establishing the Phoenix Indian School*

standpoint . . . it would be worth to this valley what ten Capitols, Universities or Normal Schools would be." The day after the commissioner left town, Superintendent Rich reported that every influential man in town endorsed the project and an eighty-acre site would be offered if the school section could not be obtained. Everyone obviously preferred to use Section 36. Governor Murphy wrote the Secretary of the Interior urging him to set the parcel aside. William J. Murphy, who took Rich on a tour of the city, promised his help in securing the school. Rich then contacted the owner of the West End Hotel who indicated that the building and adjacent adobe structures could be rented for \$100 per month.<sup>21</sup> Pleased with these developments, Rich returned to Fort McDowell to await the secretary's decision.

Soon after Morgan's visit the squatters on Section 36, having received no response to their petition, wrote directly to President Harrison. Stating that an "outrage" was about to take place, they asked that they not be dispossessed. Their improvements, including a school house, were noted, but the main thrust of the argument was that Colonel Christy and William J. Murphy, "parties who have already acquired title to more of the Public Lands than was ever intended by all the acts of Congress," were out to evict them. The letter closed with a reminder that the good of the Indians had nothing to do with the sudden interest of leading Phoenicians in an Indian School. A statement from the Reverend Dorchester bolstered the opinion of the settlers. Incensed that Fort McDowell had been rejected, the Superintendent of Indian Schools wrote a bitter letter to the Bureau on October 28, 1890, refuting point by point Morgan's argument for abandoning McDowell. He stated that the fort was no more remote from civilization than most other Indian schools, that roads to the place were reasonable, and that the buildings were useable. Although conditions at the location might be more uncomfortable than in Phoenix, this too was seen as typifying such institutions. Dorchester believed that landgrabbers wanted to get Fort McDowell. He closed his letter on the same note as the squatters, that Morgan was acquiescing to Governor Murphy and the prominent citizens of Phoenix.<sup>22</sup>

Interior Secretary John W. Noble studied both sides of the controversy before handing down his decision on November 29,

1890. His ruling refused to authorize the use of Section 36 for a school. In regard to the West End Hotel, the secretary consulted with the assistant attorney general before agreeing that he could authorize the rental. Noble believed, however, that there should be given cogent reasons why Fort McDowell was refused. He did not feel that Phoenix provided a proper environment for Indian education. On these grounds, he informed the commissioner that "I am not . . . disposed to approve of the expenditure, although I may have the power."<sup>23</sup> For the moment, it seemed as if there would no Indian school in Phoenix.

Neither Phoenix boosters nor the commissioner were ready to give in. Morgan went directly to Secretary Noble to present his case. After some discussion, Noble finally agreed to let the commissioner follow his own judgment on the matter. Since Section 36 could not be utilized, however, Morgan was required to secure a donation of land from Phoenix citizens. Consequently, on December 11, Morgan instructed Rich to proceed to Phoenix and secure a written pledge of no less than eighty acres. After meeting with a group of boosters, the superintendent decided to hold a public meeting at the Court House on Tuesday evening, December 16.<sup>24</sup>

The Court House meeting produced some unexpected fireworks. Standing before a large crowd, Professor Rich again explained the benefits of a school. In a few years, he said, the school could be expected to spend as much as \$125,000 yearly. Moreover, its establishment would provide "cheap and efficient" labor for the production of fruit and cotton. Rich implored local businessmen to take advantage of this opportunity and subtly hinted that if no guarantee was forthcoming a school would be established elsewhere. Controversy arose when some members of the audience began to question whose land would be purchased. Several speculators apparently wanted to make the sale profitable, and this touched off some feuding. The *Herald* was so worried about this divisiveness that it reminded the principals that "the advantages of the school near this city will indeed be many and far reaching, and our citizens cannot afford to let the thing go somewhere else simply because one man's land or another's is not bought for the purpose of the school." Ultimately a committee was selected to secure pledges for purchas-

*Establishing the Phoenix Indian School*

ing an unspecified plot of land. At the same time the audience signed a document pledging to furnish the government title to eighty acres at a cost not to exceed \$4000.<sup>25</sup>

Rich examined two tracts of land following the public meeting. One was located some three miles north of town, the other about a mile southwest of the city limits. Both were agricultural plots complete with water rights. Although both were acceptable, Rich hoped that the competition between real-estate men might produce an even more desirable location. The superintendent also found that the West End Hotel was still available. As soon as this information was forwarded to Commissioner Morgan, the Indian Bureau took steps to establish the school. On December 29, 1890, Morgan asked the Secretary of the Interior to authorize the hotel rental and to request a congressional appropriation of \$30,000 to open an industrial training school at Phoenix. Before Secretary Noble would approve the request, however, he asked Morgan to comment on an angry letter just received from Arizona. Written by Charles D. Poston, a Phoenix resident, the letter objected to the establishment of a school. Poston characterized the entire plan as real-estate speculation and charged that a school would "increase the number of Indian drunkards and prostitutes now infesting the town by day and night." Morgan countered by stating that while a school would undoubtedly increase surrounding property values, this was all to the good because it assured business support for the undertaking. The commissioner brushed off the charge of immorality by stating that all past experience with Indian schools showed just the reverse. His arguments were convincing, and Secretary Noble authorized renting the hotel on December 30, 1890. He also promised to seek an appropriation from Congress.<sup>26</sup>

Things moved rapidly once the new school was authorized. On the last day of 1890 Superintendent Rich received instructions to move his headquarters to Phoenix. He and his staff jumped at the chance to leave Fort McDowell. "We will all be glad to get away from this isolated, dreary place," he wrote on departure, "and will enter upon our work at Phoenix with enthusiasm and confidence." Rich leased the West End Hotel as soon as he reached town. Within a few days he had taken up residence there and was busily ordering goods and supplies. On January 20,



## THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

1891, Wellington Rich received official appointment as superintendent of the Phoenix Indian Industrial Training School.<sup>27</sup>

The most pressing matter remained the selection of a permanent site. As it developed, the question of using Section 36 was far from dead. This became evident when the Indian Bureau began to prepare its legislative budget request for the 1892 fiscal year. The request of \$69,500 for the Phoenix school included \$30,000 to construct a permanent facility. As much as \$4000 of this sum was to be available to supplement the local donation so that a larger piece of land might be purchased. Commissioner Morgan, however, still wanted to use Section 36. On January 26, he wired Superintendent Rich to see if the squatters might be persuaded to vacate the land if compensated for their improvements. When Rich and Colonel Christy met the settlers, they found them ready to sell for the "unreasonable" price of \$14,000. Such terms were totally unsatisfactory, so Rich recommended the purchase of an alternate location. Because local citizens were finding it difficult to raise the necessary \$4000, Rich also recommended that the government contribute to the purchase price. Morgan agreed, and the final budget request contained an understanding that a 160-acre site would be acquired with government aid.<sup>28</sup> The commissioner, however, still had hopes for Section 36.

Meanwhile, Rich proceeded on the assumption that classes would soon commence. In January, he requested permission to take fifty Indian boys from the Pima reservation, including ten or fifteen of the best scholars from the Sacaton school. At the same time he hired Hugh Patton to teach "academic" subjects. Patton was an educated Pima Indian who had been teaching at Sacaton. Although Patton's English was not the best, Rich believed that hiring an Indian teacher would make the task of handling the students much easier. Patton received a salary of \$720 per year. By February, Rich was prepared to begin classes as soon as the needed supplies arrived.<sup>29</sup>

The superintendent's plans were dramatically revised in early March. The devastating floods of 1891 washed out the railroad bridges between Phoenix and Maricopa, leaving the supplies stranded at Maricopa Station. After several unsuccessful efforts to have the goods forwarded by freight teams, Rich decided to postpone the opening of his school until the fall term.

In the meantime he continued to make improvements to the hotel. (The floods provided Rich with some satisfaction, however. Fort McDowell was severely damaged by the Verde River, enabling the superintendent to write Commissioner Morgan praising the fortunate decision to move to Phoenix.<sup>30</sup>)

The school site question was finally resolved in April, 1891. In one last attempt to acquire Section 36, Morgan sought to have Congress pass a law setting aside half (160 acres) of the section. When the effort failed in early March, Morgan conceded defeat and devoted his full energy to purchasing another site. By this time he had been authorized to spend up to \$6000. On Superintendent Rich's recommendation, the government then entered into negotiation for 160 acres of improved land owned by Frank C. Hatch. Located east of Center Street just south of Grand Canal, the site was described as being of the finest quality with a "fine, rich, sandy loam to a depth of twenty feet at least." The sale price was \$9000, of which \$6000 would be provided by the government. Local citizens were quite pleased with the purchase, especially since they saved themselves \$1000. The only drawback was that the school would be located three miles north of town, but a proposed streetcar line promised to end quickly any isolation.<sup>31</sup>

As soon as the question of site was resolved, Superintendent Rich began planning his school. In May, he employed architect J. M. Creighton to prepare plans for a school building. These drawings were promptly forwarded to the Indian Bureau for approval. Rich decided on the construction of a large frame building with good ventilation and lighting. Because of the warm climate, ample sleeping porches were included. Although the building was initially intended to house male students, the administrator's office and classrooms, it was designed with a view toward eventually converting it into a girls dormitory accommodating 200 pupils. Commissioner Morgan approved these plans without objection. There was, however, one final problem. The government could not take possession of the Hatch ranch until August, 1891, making it necessary to start classes in the converted hotel.<sup>32</sup>

As the fall approached, Rich hurried to open. In July he received permission to enroll fifty Pima boys. The Pima agent, C. M. Crouse, reluctantly cooperated with the superintendent,

realizing that the loss of students would cripple his small school at Sacaton. Despite such problems, the Phoenix Indian School opened its doors on September 3, 1891. The week previous Rich visited Sacaton to select the students and forward them to Phoenix by train. While at the agency, he met with village leaders in an attempt to interest them in education. Although there is no record of the Indian reaction, there was no trouble in selecting the initial class, which consisted of thirty-one Pima and ten Maricopa boys. Most were "large boys or full-grown young men." They were described as "raw recruits," the majority neither speaking nor understanding English.<sup>33</sup>

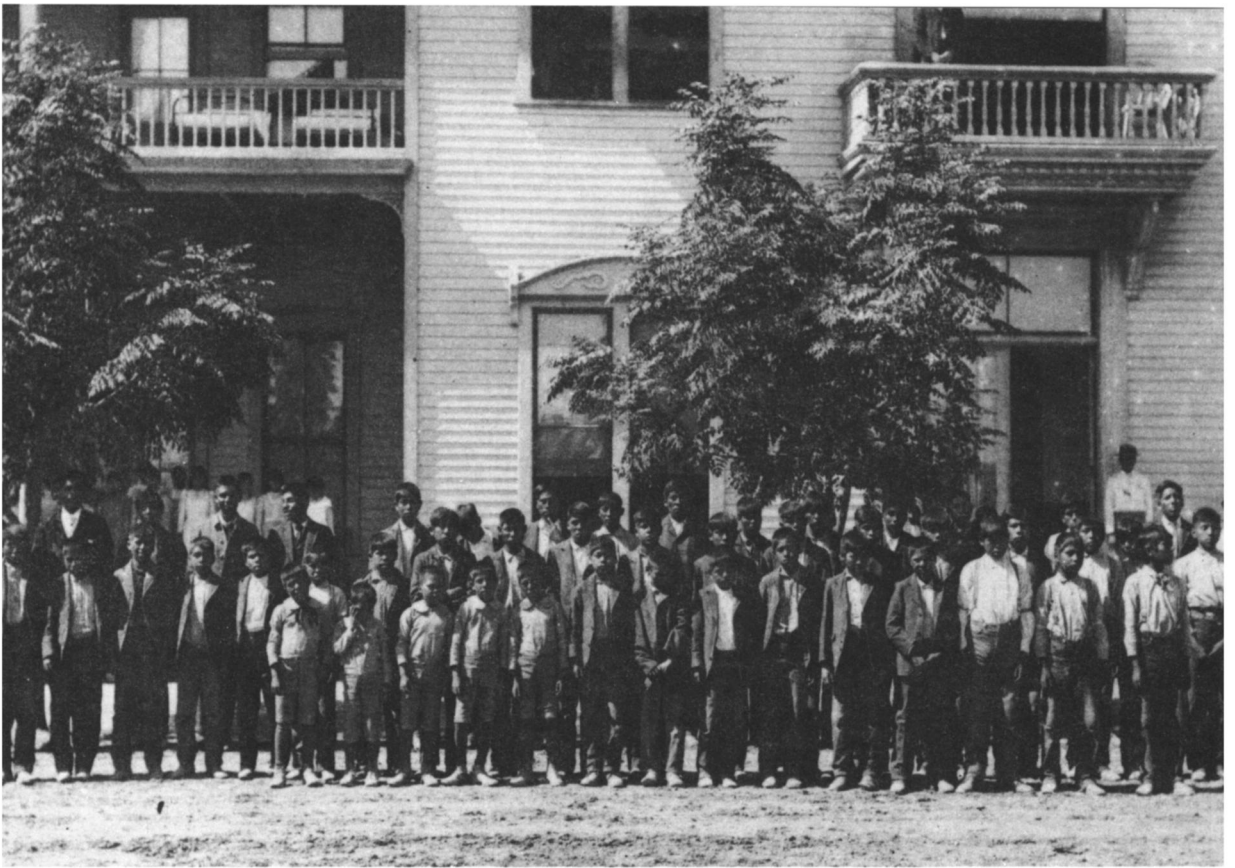
Phoenix residents were delighted with the opening of the new school. Newspaper reporters flooded the hotel to observe Indian education in action. Although mildly interested in what the boys were learning, the papers were more interested in the benefits to the city. As one paper remarked, the school promised to "use an element about the valley that heretofore civilization had no use for." The *Daily Herald* noticed that since the opening of the school, Indian girls who "wore into town only such clothing as the municipal ordinances absolutely require," were now dressing after the manner of white girls. Another indication of local interest was the immediate request by local fruitmen for 100 pupils to be used during the upcoming harvest.<sup>34</sup>

School operations at the West End Hotel were never very successful. The building was not well adapted to educational purposes. Conditions proved extremely crowded and uncomfortable. Still, the work went on. Each student was initially given a bath, a haircut, and a new suit of clothes. Because there were no girls in the institution the boys were assigned work "that would properly belong to the girls." This meant that they kept house and did all domestic chores, including cooking, waiting on tables, washing, and ironing. Half the day was spent working and the other half studying. Hugh Patton taught classes, and with the help of students Charles Blackwater and Oldham Easchief, maintained discipline and operated the farm. On Sundays, the boys attended the Presbyterian Sabbath School and church services in town where they were taught by prominent church members.<sup>35</sup>

*Establishing the Phoenix Indian School*

Superintendent Rich spent most of his time during the winter of 1891-1892 working on the new facility, planning it by himself with an eye for utility as well as beauty. Even before construction began on the first building his thoughts turned to future development. Hospital and dormitory structures were slated for 1893. "I found it necessary virtually to plan the important buildings," he wrote, "decide of what material they would be composed, determine their form and size, their internal arrangement and style of finish." His meticulous work became evident in December, 1891, when Edwin Sunderland was awarded a government contract of \$18,380 to construct the main building. Local wags described it as the "cheapest public building in Arizona." School officials and pupils helped prepare the site as the building was being constructed. In March, 1892, for example, students planted 450 fruit trees and 120 shade trees. In late February, Reverend Dorchester had an opportunity to visit the new school. Although once opposed to the Phoenix site, Dorchester was now full of praise. He was exceedingly pleased with the new building, noting that "I cannot recall a single building in the Indian School Service, which for excellence of arrangement, quality of lumber, faithful workmanship, and architectural attractiveness, is its equal." Dorchester also noted the scope of Superintendent Rich's planning, predicting that Phoenix would be the site of a great Indian school, "a grand project for the education and civilization of the 35,000 Indians of this territory, heretofore sadly neglected."<sup>36</sup>

As the building neared completion in the spring of 1892, the superintendent turned his attention to securing more students. In particular, he wanted to enroll Indian girls because he wanted them to relieve the boys of their domestic chores so they might work on the farm. As far as he was concerned, a woman's place was in the dining room, kitchen, and laundry. Rich thus asked permission to return to Sacaton as soon as the new building was ready and select some twenty-five young women. When the structure was completed in late April, the original students were moved to the new facility. On May 25, Rich traveled to Sacaton to pick out seventeen girls and nine more boys for the school, bringing the attendance to sixty-nine by the end of the



*A mid-1890s class of Pima students before the main building of the school.  
Below, student quarters as they appeared in the 1890s.*



*Establishing the Phoenix Indian School*

term. The large number of students proved too much for Hugh Patton, but since no funds were available to hire another teacher, Charles Blackwater, an Indian student, acted as assistant teacher. When the school adjourned for the summer in June, it had one large permanent building, a stable, sheds and outbuildings, a herd of cows, horses, hogs, and chickens, and nearly seventy students.<sup>37</sup>

The Phoenix Indian Industrial Training School was destined to have a great future. Although founded in controversy, once established it flourished and served both the white and Indian communities. During the decade of the 1890s, Superintendent Rich and his two successors continued to develop the physical plant and by 1900, with an enrollment of 700 pupils, the school was a self-contained educational community complete with handsome buildings and beautiful grounds. After 1917 when the Carlisle school closed, the Phoenix institution became the nation's largest off-reservation boarding school. Thousands of Indian students have attended the Phoenix Indian School down through the years and the facility remains open today despite the closing of most similar institutions. Many contemporary Indian leaders in Arizona are Phoenix graduates. Residents of the Valley, too, have received great benefit from the facility. Significant federal funds have been channelled into the community, large numbers of native boys and girls worked in town under the "outing" program, and the student's musical, theatrical, and sporting groups provided local residents with hours of free entertainment. The school indeed has enjoyed a long and distinguished life.<sup>38</sup>

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformer and the Indian, 1865–1900* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), pp. 292–293; Arrell M. Gibson, *The American Indian: Prehistory to the Present* (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1980), pp. 431–432.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Paul Prucha, *The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888–1912* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), pp. 1–9; Speech of R. H. Pratt to Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Corrections, Denver, Colorado, 1892, quoted in Prucha, ed., *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings of the "Friends of the Indians," 1880–1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 260–261; Carl Schurz, "Present Aspects of the Indian Problem," *North American Review*, Vol. 133 (July, 1881), p. 13.

## THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

<sup>3</sup>*U.S. Stats.*, Vol. 22, p. 181, Chapter 363; *Annual Report, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1883* (Washington: GPO, 1883), p. xxxviii; *Address to the Public of the Lake Mohonk Conference . . . October 1883* (Philadelphia: The Indian Rights Association, 1883), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Roswell G. Wheeler, Indian Agent, to Commissioner, August 26, 1881, in *Annual Report, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1881* (Washington: GPO, 1881), p. 5; Wheeler to Commissioner, August 14, 1882, in *Annual Report, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1882* (Washington: GPO, 1882), p. 3; see also Robert A. Trennert, "Peaceably if They Will, Forcibly if They Must": The Phoenix Indian School, 1890–1901," *Journal of Arizona History*, Vol. 20 (Autumn, 1979), pp. 300–301.

<sup>5</sup>Francis Paul Prucha, "Thomas Jefferson Morgan," in Robert M. Kvasnicka and Herman J. Viola, eds., *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1824–1977* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), pp. 193–203; "Daniel Dorchester," in Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), Vol. 5, pp. 375–376; Report of the Superintendent of Indian Schools, in *Annual Report, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1890* (Washington: GPO, 1890), pp. 246–247.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 247–248.

<sup>7</sup>J. M. Lee, Commanding Officer, Fort McDowell, to Assistant Adjutant General, February 1, 1890, National Archives, Record Group 75, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Letters Received (hereafter NA, RG 75, BIA, LR), No. 17975–1890; Bill Reed, "The Last Bugle Call: A History of Fort McDowell, Arizona Territory, 1865–1890" (unpublished manuscript, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University Library), pp. 175–177.

<sup>8</sup>Dorchester to Commissioner, March 20, 1890, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 9762–1890. Dorchester was noted for his bigoted approach to religion and education. See his book *Romanism versus the Public School System* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1888), and Prucha, *Churches and Indian Schools*, pp. 2–8.

<sup>9</sup>Dorchester to Commissioner (2 letters), March 25, 1890, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 9762–1890, enclosures 3 and 5; Redfield Proctor, Secretary of War, to Secretary of the Interior, May 2, 1890, *ibid.*, No. 13762–1890; Reed, "History of Fort McDowell," p. 176.

<sup>10</sup>Wellington Rich to Morgan, May 7 and 12, 1890, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 14799–1890 and No. 15223–1890. There is very little information on Rich's background; for what there is, see the entry under "Edson P. Rich" in *Omaha: The Gate City and Douglas County, Nebraska* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1917), Vol. 2, pp. 791–792.

<sup>11</sup>Morgan to Rich, May 21, 1890, NA, RG 75, BIA, Letters Sent; Rich to Morgan, June 23, July 30, 1890, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 19509–1890 and No. 23619–1890.

<sup>12</sup>*The Arizona Republican*, August 12, 1890.

<sup>13</sup>Rich to Morgan, August 15, 1890, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 26284–1890; Rich to Commissioner, August 5, 1891, in *Annual Report, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1891* (Washington: GPO, 1891), p. 555.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 555–556; Rich to Morgan, September 15, 1890, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 29491–1890.

<sup>15</sup>For background on local boosters, see Richard E. Lynch, *Winfield Scott: A Biography of Scottsdale's Founder* (Scottsdale, Arizona: City of Scottsdale, 1978), pp. 106–107; Margaret Finnerty, "Arizona's Capital: The Politics of Relocation" (unpublished manuscript in author's possession); *The Arizona Republican*, October 10, 1890.

<sup>16</sup>Petition by citizens of Phoenix, October 2, 1890, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 35662–1890; and Orlando Allen to Benjamin Harrison, October 29, 1890, *ibid.*, No. 36104–1890.

<sup>17</sup>Morgan to R. V. Belt, October 13, 1890, *ibid.*, No. 32499–1890; *The Arizona Republican*, October 10, 1890.

<sup>18</sup>Morgan to Belt, October 13, 1890, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 32499–1890; *The Arizona Republican*, October 12, 1890; Rich to Commissioner, August 5, 1891, in *Annual Report, CIA, 1891*, p. 557.

### *Establishing the Phoenix Indian School*

- <sup>19</sup>*The Arizona Republican*, October 13, 1890; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, October 13, 1890.
- <sup>20</sup>Rich to Morgan (telegram), October 13, 1890, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 31687–1890; Morgan to Belt, October 12, 13, 1890, *ibid.*, No. 32299–1890.
- <sup>21</sup>*The Arizona Republican*, October 14, 1890; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, October 14, 1890; *Arizona Daily Citizen* (Tucson), October, 14, 1890; Rich to Morgan, October 14, 1890, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 32751–1890.
- <sup>22</sup>Orlando Allen to Benjamin Harrison, October 29, 1890, *ibid.*, No. 36104–1890; and Dorchester to Belt, October 28, 1890, *ibid.*, No. 37084–1890, encl. No. 3.
- <sup>23</sup>John W. Noble to Commissioner, November 29, 1890, *ibid.*, No. 37084–1890.
- <sup>24</sup>Rich to Morgan, December 18, 1890, *ibid.*, No. 39956–1890; Morgan to Secretary of the Interior, December 29, 1890, NA, Record Group 48, Records of the Secretary of the Interior, Indian Division, No. 9440–1890; Rich to Commissioner, August 5, 1891, in *Annual Report, CIA, 1891*, p. 557; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, December 15, 1890.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, December 17, 1890; *Arizona Daily Gazette*, December 17, 1890; Petition of citizens of Phoenix, December 16, 1890, enclosed in Rich to Morgan, December 18, 1890, NA, RG, 75, BIA, LR, No. 39956–1890.
- <sup>26</sup>Rich to Morgan, December 18, 1890, *ibid.*, No. 39956–1890; Morgan to Secretary, December 29, 1890, NA, RG 48, SI, Indian Division No. 9440–1890; Morgan to Secretary, December 29, 1890, NA, RG 75, BIA, LS, Education No. 40185–1890; Noble to Commissioner, December 30, 1890, NA, RG 75, BIA, Authority No. 25378–1890.
- <sup>27</sup>Rich to Commissioner, August 5, 1891, in *Annual Report, CIA, 1891*, p. 557; Rich to Morgan, January 1, 1891, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 1069-1891; Nobel to Commissioner, February 19, 1891, *ibid.*, No. 6632–1891; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, January 9, 1891.
- <sup>28</sup>“Letter . . . submitting an estimate of an appropriation for an Indian school at or near Phoenix,” 51 Cong., 1 Sess., House Ex. Doc. No. 218 (1891); Memorial of Jerry Millay and others, January 9, 1891, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 1871–1891; Rich to Morgan, February 4, 1891, *ibid.*, No. 5521–1891; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, February 4, 1891.
- <sup>29</sup>Rich to Morgan, January 16, February 26, 1891, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 2809–1891 and No. 9092–1891; Hugh Patton to Commissioner, January, 1891, *ibid.*, No. 3035–1891; *Annual Report, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1892* (Washington: GPO, 1892), II, p. 838. Patton is mentioned frequently in Anna Moore Shaw, *A Pima Past* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975).
- <sup>30</sup>Rich to Morgan, March 19, 20, 24, 1891, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 11056–1891, No. 10649–1891, and No. 12286–1891; Rich to Commissioner, August 5, 1891, in *Annual Report, CIA, 1891*, pp. 557–558.
- <sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 558; Rich to Morgan, March 19, 1891, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 11506–1891; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, April 3, 1891.
- <sup>32</sup>Rich to Morgan, May 12, 1891, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 18387–1891; Rich to Commissioner, August 5, 1891, in *Annual Report, CIA, 1891*, p. 558; Rich to Commissioner, September 10, 1892, in *Annual Report, CIA, 1892*, pp. 654–655.
- <sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 654; Rich to Morgan, July 13, 1891, January 14, 1892, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 24915–1891 and No. 2785–1892; Crouse to Commissioner, August 5, 1891, *ibid.*, No. 29462–1891; Quarterly Report of Indian Schools, Phoenix, September 30, 1891, National Archives, Federal Records Center, Laguna Niguel, Phoenix Area Office, Agency Box 239.
- <sup>34</sup>*Phoenix Daily Herald*, September 3, 7, 1891.
- <sup>35</sup>Rich to Commissioner, September 10, 1892, in *Annual Report, CIA, 1892*, pp. 654–655; Quarterly Report of Indian Schools, Phoenix, December 31, 1891, NA, FRC, Phoenix Area Office, Agency Box 239; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, September 7, 1891; David S. Keck to Morgan, April 7, 1892, NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 13592–1892.



## THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

<sup>36</sup>Rich to Morgan, October 9, 1891, *ibid.*, No. 37314–1891; Dorchester to Morgan, March 1, 1892, *ibid.*, No. 8883–1892; Rich to Commissioner, September 10, 1892, in *Annual Reports, CIA, 1892*, pp. 654–655.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*; Rich to Morgan, April 23, 30, 1892, NA RG 75, BIA, LR, No. 15867–1892 and No. 16754–1892; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, April 29, 1892; Descriptive Statement of Pupils Transferred to Phoenix Indian School, May 31, 1892, NA, FRC, Phoenix Area Office, Agency Box 239.

<sup>38</sup>As of this writing, the future of the Phoenix Indian School stands in some doubt. On March 22, 1982, the Bureau of Indian Affairs announced that it has proposed closing the school at the end of the 1984–85 year. Some tribal leaders have objected to the closing and presumably the matter will drag on for some time until a final decision is reached.

---

Robert A. Trennert is a professor of Indian history at Arizona State University and is currently writing a history of the Phoenix Indian School. He wishes to acknowledge the support of the faculty grant-in-aid program at ASU and student Roxie McLeod for making this paper possible.

CREDITS — the photo on page 44, top, is from the collections of the Arizona Historical Society, Tucson; on page 44, bottom, reproduced from *A Historical and Biographical Record of the Territory of Arizona* (Chicago: McFarland & Poole, 1896), page 25; on page 54 from the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (copies at the Arizona Historical Society, Tucson).