

The Phoenix Indian School Band, 1894–1930

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The Salt River Valley before 1890

The ancient Hohokam Indians inhabited the Salt River Valley, an area that today encompasses the Phoenix, Arizona, metropolitan area, from approximately 300 to 1400 A.D. They were an agricultural people who cultivated crops and lived in close-knit villages. For reasons that remain shrouded in mystery, the Hohokam disappeared from the Salt River Valley and the remainder of Arizona during the fifteenth century, leaving behind an archaeological masterpiece in their brilliant and carefully planned canal and irrigation system.¹

After that, other Native American tribes lived in the surrounding region, but neither they, the subsequent Spanish explorers, nor later American citizens actually settled in the “Valley of the Sun” itself, even after the United States acquired it following the Mexican War (1848). However, shortly after the area became an official United States territory in 1863, the Salt River Valley again became inhabited when the U.S. Army established a camp in 1865 to protect central Arizona mining communities from hostile Indians. Soon thereafter, civilians returned to the area after an absence of several centuries—this time to provide food and other agricultural products to nearby settlements.²

In 1870, local valley citizens voted unofficially to create a new town from the settlement, which had already been dubbed “Phoenix” after the “mythical bird that rose from its own ashes.” It seems that the earliest settlers, led by John W. (Jack) Swilling, were inspired by the ancient Hohokam ruins, especially the canal system, and hoped that a great new civilization would arise on the site of the old.³

When Maricopa County was formed in 1871, Phoenix became the county seat. The city was officially incorporated in 1881. The Arizona portion of the Southern Pacific transcontinental railroad was completed through the nearby settlement of Maricopa in 1879, and eight years later workers completed a thirty-

1. G. Wesley Johnson, Jr., ed., *Phoenix in the Twentieth Century: Essays in Community History* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 7. “Hohokam” is an ancient Pima Indian word meaning “those who disappeared.”

2. Bradford Luckingham, *Phoenix: The History of a Southwestern Metropolis* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 12–17. The area currently called the “Valley of the Sun” is approximately forty miles long and fifteen miles wide, totaling some 450,000 acres. Residents refer to metropolitan Phoenix as “the Valley of the Sun” or simply “the Valley.”

3. *Ibid.*, 15.

mile connecting railroad spur to Phoenix. The nearby city of Mesa, founded by Mormon farmers from Utah, was incorporated in 1883. Phoenix became the capital of the Arizona Territory in 1889.⁴ Improving agriculture and transportation caused the city of Phoenix’s population to increase rapidly during the years 1880–1930 (see Table 1).

Table 1
Phoenix Population Statistics

Date	City of Phoenix	Mexican Americans	Chinese Americans	African Americans
1880	1,708	772	110	5
1890	3,152	—	—	—
1900	5,544	802	91	150
1910	11,134	1,100	110	328
1920	29,053	2,323	130	1,075
1930	48,118	7,293	227	2,366

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1870–1930; and Luckingham, *Minorities In Phoenix*, 2, where there is a similar table.

Cultural Diversity in Early Phoenix

For many, Phoenix, and indeed the entire the Southwest, was a *terra incognita*—something of a fairyland for children and adults. Sunshine, wide-open landscape, and rumors of a dry, healthy climate enticed Anglos to push toward America’s extreme western frontier. These settlers were also drawn to Phoenix and other places in the Southwest by the possibility of creating urban centers. During the city’s early decades, Mexicans and Native Americans moved to Phoenix and stayed, and the families of Chinese railroad workers often settled in the area and opened businesses. However, as time passed they and other ethnic groups came to be outnumbered by the continuing influx of Anglos (see Table 1).⁵

Thus, from the time of the valley’s resettlement in the nineteenth century, its culture, and that of the city of Phoenix itself, has been heavily Anglo, although other ethnic groups have continued to weave diverse threads into the fabric of the predominantly Anglo culture. Hispanics and other ethnic groups continued to gain in numbers throughout the twentieth century. Today, the nation’s sixth largest city boasts a population of more than one million people, with another three million encompassing its metropolitan area (i.e., Maricopa County). However, as in the nineteenth century, this growth has been predominantly Anglo.⁶

4. *Ibid.*, 22, 24, 30.

5. Bradford Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix: A Profile of Mexican American, Chinese American, and African American Communities, 1860–1992* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1994), 2–3.

6. U.S. Census Data, 2001; and Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 2–3.

According to Phoenix historian Bradford Luckingham, discrimination against minority groups began early. He noted that although "overt discrimination" against Jews "was rare," other groups did not fare as well. There were few African Americans in Phoenix early on, but the Mexicans and Chinese suffered to some extent.⁷ Early Phoenix citizens were especially unkind to the local Native Americans, although few actually lived in the city itself. For centuries, the area that now encompasses Phoenix and its surrounding territory had belonged to the Native Americans. Indeed, civilization for native peoples changed radically throughout the western United States after their military defeats in the 1880s. Anglos summarily took away and then settled on sacred Native American soil, while brusquely "resettling" them on reservations. Unfortunately, Native Americans living in the Phoenix area during Arizona's pre-statehood days were subject to many of the same tragedies that befell other native peoples throughout the United States.⁸

Thus, Native Americans, among all minority groups, became the target of the most overt discrimination in Phoenix. As more Anglos continued to settle in the region and their wealth saturated the city, poverty became a more serious problem for Native Americans and other racial groups, for whom wealth remained elusive. According to Luckingham, "Anglo residents especially dominated economic, political, and social life in Phoenix. Unlike El Paso, Albuquerque, and Tucson, Phoenix from its founding was run by Anglos for Anglos."⁹

The task of building a great city was not easy and Anglos enlisted the aid of all ethnic groups to create an urban center in Phoenix. For minority groups, the process of generating economic growth may have been exciting, but for many people the result was a loss of political, social, and cultural control. Once Anglos acquired the wealth and power needed to run the city, prejudice, exploitation, segregation, discrimination, and oppression began to occur at alarming levels.¹⁰

Various minority groups fought this prejudice, often with success, but unfortunately this success eluded Native Americans, at least initially. The influence of Anglo culture created an unwelcome atmosphere that extended even to a strong bias against their very presence in the city. The Native American population became a target for discriminatory writing and city ordinances for several decades, beginning in the 1880s. Native Americans exacerbated this strong bias as they "actively challenged the dominance of Anglo-American society."¹¹

7. Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 32–34.

8. Robert E. Trennert, "And the Sword Will Give Way to the Spelling-Book: Establishing the Phoenix Indian School," *Journal of Arizona History* 23 (spring 1982): 35–58.

9. Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 2–3.

10. Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 32–34.

11. Trennert, "And the Sword," 35–58.

Up From the Ashes: 1890–1913

During the period from 1890 to 1913, the Phoenix metropolitan area underwent major changes. A second transcontinental railroad link was completed, and by 1911 the water shortage problem had largely been solved by the completion of the Roosevelt Dam and related water canals and other systems. Agriculture continued to expand, and the area became a center for health-related resorts, which in turn began to lead to an expanded tourist business.¹² Perhaps most important, when Arizona achieved statehood in 1912, Phoenix became the new state capital.

The Phoenix Indian School

After the "Indian Wars" largely ended in the 1880s, Native American tribes were placed on reservations and educated by church groups. The United States Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) soon developed a comprehensive public school system in the hope that educating Native Americans would become one of the BIA's responsibilities. By the late 1890s, the federal government had opened schools on many reservations.¹³

The founding of the Phoenix Indian School, a benchmark in the city's history, was influenced by a number of factors that had deep roots in the government's Indian policy. Among the strongest factors was the Anglo influence on the culture of the city. As this influence increased, so did the push toward "civilizing" or "educating" the Indian in Anglo ways, something that reservation schools were perceived as failing to do because of their close proximity to tribal homes. City leaders wanted Native Americans to fit into Anglo culture and thus to incur the advantages of modern society—a society designed, of course, according to the dictates of Anglos. They also wanted a source of cheap labor for their businesses, primarily agricultural, and they were interested in the estimated \$100,000 in annual federal funds the school would bring to the area. Thus, a group of Phoenix citizens who had dreams of creating a great commercial city, but most likely little real interest in Native American education, played a major role in the founding of the Phoenix Indian School.¹⁴

Original plans called for the new school to be located at Fort McDowell, a U.S. Army cavalry post thirty-two miles east of Phoenix. However, those plans were changed in 1890 when Wellington Rich, the man appointed to be the superintendent of the new Indian School, visited the Fort McDowell location and found it unfit for educational purposes. He implied that the original

12. Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 40–47, 53–55.

13. Trennert, "And the Sword," 35–58.

14. Robert E. Trennert, *The Phoenix Indian School: Forced Assimilation in Arizona, 1891–1935* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 4.

report given to the BIA in support of the Fort McDowell location had been misleading—that the Fort McDowell location was too far from settlements, and that the cost of making “a dreary looking place” (primarily the buildings) suitable for educating Indian students would be too high.¹⁵

As news of Rich’s disappointment hit Phoenix, Anglo boosters eager to create an urban center began plans to entice the BIA to move the school to the city. On December 30, 1890, Rich was given permission to move his staff and school to Phoenix, which would remain the school’s permanent home. Soon thereafter, in September 1891, the Phoenix Indian Industrial School opened its doors. Its purpose was to train Native Americans in industrial and other manual labor, to show them the advantages of a “civilized” and modern society, and to teach them the ways of the white man.¹⁶

The school served forty-one students the first year: thirty-one Pima and ten Maricopa boys. While not necessarily a boarding school, students recruited from different tribes lived in dormitories on the school campus. A portion of the school day was spent learning domestic chores (cooking, cleaning, waiting on tables, washing, and ironing), while the remainder of the day was spent studying rudimentary subjects such as English. Of the forty-one students, thirty-five were placed in the lowest primary grade (equivalent to kindergarten), and the other six in a slightly advanced grade.¹⁷

According to historian Katie Pierson, original plans called for the enrollment of female students as well, but because plans for the school’s location changed so quickly, only male students were enrolled the first year. On May 24, 1891, Superintendent Wellington Rich traveled to the Sacaton (AZ) Reservation to bring back female students for the school. The girls enrolled on June 1, 1891.¹⁸ The first graduation exercises were held in 1901 with three boys and one girl graduating.¹⁹

In addition to the BIA-sponsored Indian School, two other formal school systems were established during the period 1890–1913. Separate elementary schools were built for black and white students, and blacks were provided a special room (later an area) in the white Phoenix Union High School. In essence, then, there were three school systems in Phoenix: one white, one black, and one red.

15. Trennert, “And the Sword,” 35–58. The statement by Rich was later quoted in the *Native American*, 1 July 1916.

16. Trennert, *Phoenix Indian School*, 28.

17. Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 58; and Trennert, *Phoenix Indian School*, 28–29.

18. Katie Pierson, “History of the Phoenix Indian School,” tms (photocopy), p. 10, Hayden Arizona Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

19. *Native American*, 1 July 1916. Other students undoubtedly graduated prior to the first graduation exercises in 1901.

Interestingly, Mexican American students attended the white schools from the beginning. Over the Territorial Governor’s veto, the Territorial Legislature made school segregation legal in 1909, and the new Arizona State Legislature upheld that decision in 1912. Meanwhile, Native Americans were not allowed to vote and were required to remain segregated in theaters and other public places.²⁰

The Phoenix Indian School Band

Although an exact founding date for the Indian School Band could not be determined, its first public appearance may have occurred in the fall of 1894 as part of a winter carnival sponsored by the school.²¹ School officials hoped that this carnival would show the city that providing Indians with an education of enduring worth was a worthwhile investment, and that Indians were being “civilized” in an appropriate manner. While school officials deemed the carnival necessary to the continuing success of the school, it also afforded visitors a unique opportunity to visit the school and experience it first hand. “The school’s manicured grounds, fountains, and shaded walks presented a stark contrast to the surrounding desert and attracted a large number of visitors,” and the charm of the students and the school were also “used to contrast the past with the predicted future.”²²

Only two short years passed before school officials began planning ways to make the school, its students, and its band and choir visible to the public outside of Phoenix. In a letter dated April 3, 1896, to Dr. W. N. Hailman, superintendent of Indian schools, the director of the Phoenix Indian School wrote:

I have the honor to ask if it would be practicable for a limited number of Indian pupils of this school, say 30, including our band and choir, to attend the Institute to be held in San Francisco next August, and expenses paid from “Indian school transportation” funds? If such meets with your favorable consideration, exercises could be prepared and an entertainment given during the institute. The band and choir could furnish the music for the various meetings, and altogether enliven the convention, as well as being a help to these Pima and Maricopa boys and girls from an educational standpoint.²³

20. Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 62–65, 95.

21. Trennert, *Phoenix Indian School*, 79.

22. Trennert, “And the Sword,” 44–55.

23. Harwood Hall, director of the Phoenix Indian School, to W[illiam] N. Hailman, superintendent of Indian Schools, 3 April 1896. Letter included in the “Annual Narrative Report,” Phoenix, 1896; NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, #13097-1896. Robert Trennert Papers, Hayden Arizona Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ. It is unclear whether the “Institute” was a BIA-sponsored event. The founding date and circumstances surrounding the formation of the Phoenix Indian School Choir are also unknown.

It is clear from the director's letter that he viewed this trip as a learning experience for the students and an opportunity to demonstrate to the public the results of educating Indians. Hall furthered his request in another letter to the superintendent approximately two weeks later:

Replying to letter 13097-'96, Supt., dated April 3, 1896, with reference to choir and band of this school attending the Institute at San Francisco the following summer, I have the honor to state that the Southern Pacific has a half second class rate for round trip of \$27.10 for each. Total is \$1263.60. Inasmuch as the expense of transportation for Indian pupils to and from this school since its organization has been practically nothing, in comparison with other non-reservation schools, and viewing this proposed trip from an educational standpoint for the Indian pupil, as well as being a factor in moulding public sentiment in favor of the Indian, it seems to me the above sum can well be spent; and I would respectfully ask that the suggestion be looked upon with favor. All pupils of this school are full-bloods.²⁴

Unfortunately, no evidence was found to indicate whether or not the Indian School Band and Choir performed in San Francisco in August 1896. However, on June 25, 1899, the Indian School Band traveled by train to the Omaha Exposition in Nebraska. Two other bands also performed at the exhibition: Dan Godfrey's British Band from England and the Union Band of Omaha. On the same trip the Phoenix Indian School Band played concerts in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Kansas City, Missouri. Although the band performed every day during the two-month exposition, the students seem to have viewed the exposition tour as a vacation, as evidenced by the following statement by band member Thomas Allison:

When we were on the train [back to Phoenix], we set our faces once more to the beautiful buildings at the exposition and gave three cheers for Omaha. I think we will never forget what a good time we had during our vacation instead of spending it on the reservation.²⁵

By 1900, the Phoenix Indian School served more than 700 male and female students, and the band, under the direction of James Devine, had become an elite group on the campus. Membership was restricted to boys and academic success was required, along with a rigorous regime of ensemble and individual practice. The band had become the most popular activity on campus and the school's

24. Harwood Hall to W. N. Hailman, 16 April 1896. Letter included in the "Annual Narrative Report," Phoenix, 1896; NA, RG 75, BIA, LR, #15086-1896. Robert Trennert Papers.

25. Thomas Allison, quoted in the *Native American*, 10 March 1900.

greatest public relations asset. The popularity of the band is further evidenced by the fact that seemingly every major event in Phoenix gave the Indian School Band top billing.²⁶ Indeed, Pierson noted that "every time an official from Washington showed up here, the band had to be in uniform, pronto, to play. That happened rather often."²⁷

The band also made a reputation for itself by performing high-quality music. According to the school's newspaper, the *Native American*, "The school band plays music written by the best composers of the day, avoiding the trashy and inconsequential." The city's major newspaper, the *Arizona Republican* (now the *Arizona Republic*), also noted: "It is worthy of comment that the Indian School Band's repertoire consists largely of classical music, it playing very few rag-time and cake walk non-descripts. . . as a result, people will hear music that will claim their attention and admiration."²⁸

The *Native American* reported that the band gave its inaugural Sunday afternoon concert at 3:30 p.m. on March 2, 1901, as part of a series that grew to become a hallmark for the school campus and eventually the city beyond. The program consisted of: "The Flag of Victory" by Von Blon, "Light Cavalry Overture" by Franz Von Suppe, "The Last Chord" by Sullivan (performed by Kay Ethelba, baritone horn soloist), "The Lily of the Nile" by Berliner, "Lucia di Lammermoor" by Donizetti, "Medley Overture, Happy Home" by Chattanooga, and "Dusky Dues" by Schwartz.²⁹

By 1902 the band was under the direction of Carlo Contrado, the Indian School's night watchman. Contrado had served as a bandleader in the navy and was regarded locally as a highly accomplished composer. The band continued to gain in popularity as it began performing outside the city of Phoenix. In September of 1902, it performed a concert at the Pima Indian School in Sacaton, Arizona, that resulted in favorable reports. Later that same month, the band traveled to Yuma, Arizona, where it performed a concert that included "Indian School March," composed by Contrado especially for the concert.³⁰

The Indian School Band quickly established a reputation throughout the Southwest as a unique ensemble. During the summer of 1903, the group took an extended tour of Arizona and California, preceded by a concert for the public in Phoenix. The *Arizona Republican* announced the concert and tour:

26. Trennert, *Phoenix Indian School*, 79.

27. Pierson, "History," 103.

28. *Native American*, 15 December 1900; and *Arizona Republican*, 29 June 1900, reprinted in the *Native American*, 30 June 1900.

29. *Native American*, 2 March 1901. Sunday afternoon concerts were standard practice for many town, industrial, and professional bands of that era.

30. Pierson, "History," 18.

The Phoenix Indian school band of twenty-four pieces, already equipped with a first-class local reputation, as well as having been heard and applauded by some hundreds of thousands of the American people at the Omaha exposition and elsewhere, has completed arrangements for a campaign in California, to be prefaced by a semi-outing tour overland through Arizona. The band boys hope not only to have a pleasurable summer, but at various places they will visit and give concerts they hope to do enough business in the box office to pay their expenses. Monday evening the band, which is under the management of B. B. Custer, the disciplinarian of the school, and the directorship of Professor Carlo Contrado, will leave for San Carlos and Rice Station. From there they will go overland to Fort Apache, Snowflake, and Holbrook, and then to Williams [all in Arizona] by rail, where they will play on July 4, 5, and 6. After that they will go to California for an extended trip. Before leaving they desire to give a concert in Phoenix. They have appeared in the city many times to play special numbers and in street parades, etc., but have never given a regularly arranged concert here. They have decided therefore to give the people a treat Saturday night at 8 o'clock, when they will hold a free open air concert on the city hall plaza, to which everybody is invited.³¹

That particular Indian School Band consisted of the following instrumentation: five clarinets, two saxophones, three trumpets, three alto horns, two baritone horns, four trombones, one euphonium, two tubas, and two percussionists—a total of twenty-four members. The thousands who attended that concert were treated to the following program: "Phoenix Indian School March" by Carlo Contrado, "Zampa" by Herold, "Remembrance of Naples" by Bennett, "Fra Diavolo" by Auber, "Rag Time Melodies" by Mackie, "Nip and Tuck" by Vikoren, "Fall of Santiago" by Dalbey, "Lucia di Lammermoor" by Donizetti, and "Hooligan's New Idea" by DeWitt.³² The *Arizona Republican* published the following review after the concert:

Thousands were in attendance at the Indian School band concert last night. ... The Phoenix Indian school band is not a trumped up aggregation of musicians but is a fine lot of boys who have been educated in music, some of them by years of practice, under competent instructors, and in various excursions they have made about the country they have earned notable and well merited praise.³³

31. *Arizona Republican*, 19 June 1903, reprinted in the *Native American*, 20 June 1903. Apparently, the *Arizona Republican* writer was unaware of, or for some reason discounted, the Indian School Band's Sunday afternoon series that began in 1901 (see note #27 and related text material). The earlier Sunday afternoon series may have served only the Indian School campus.

32. *Native American*, 20 June 1903.

33. *Arizona Republican*, 22 June 1903, reprinted in the *Native American*, 27 June 1903.

The band presented another free concert for the people of Phoenix on April 15, 1904, at Eastlake Park. The *Native American* commented: "The band is one of the institutions of which Phoenix is proud, and in fact everybody is proud of it who has heard it and has an interest in the education of the Indian, or a half an ear for music."³⁴ As the year continued, the band's momentum of popularity increased. In May the band participated in the Phoenix "Decoration Day" (Memorial Day) events, where it played for the memorial service as well as a ball game held that evening. The students also began preparing for another extended tour of California.

Unfortunately, during the preparation for that tour, Carlo Contrado died. Subsequently the U.S. Civil Service Commission announced a national search to replace him. Among the requirements for the position were: "male, at least 20 years of age, and thoroughly competent musician and capable of leading and instructing brass bands." The salary was listed at \$750 per annum.³⁵

Before the band departed for its eleven-week California tour in the summer of 1904, the new director, C. H. Schaffner, created a slogan for the group: "Forward to Perfection."³⁶ After a concert in Phoenix, the band departed for Chutes Park in Los Angeles, where the students and their performances were so popular that the band's stay was extended. They were also offered an invitation to perform at Chutes Park for three months the following summer. Although the school declined that offer, stating that such a lengthy engagement would interfere with other plans for the band, officials did agree on a four-week engagement. During its most extensive tour to date, the *Native American* opined that the band was "covering itself with glory and making a splendid reputation," and that "we look forward to acknowledging no superior to our Indian School Band."³⁷

The band then left Los Angeles for a one-week engagement in Stockton, California. The *Stockton Independent* ran the following review on August 30, 1904:

The crack band from the Indian School at Phoenix arrived in this city yesterday and will render concerts every evening this week at Stockton Hot Mineral Baths. There are twenty-five pieces in the unique organization and a high grade of music is played by the talented performers from the Indian School. A large crowd was attracted to the baths last night by the concert

34. *Native American*, 16 April 1904.

35. Quoted in the *Native American*, 27 August 1904.

36. *Native American*, 3 September 1904. There is no biographical data available on C. H. Schaffner; however, the *Native American* called him "the peer of all band masters on this coast."

37. *Native American*, 29 May 1904.

and everyone who went was delighted. Immense crowds will probably be the rule all week as it is certainly a treat to listen to the numbers by this great organization.³⁸

While in Stockton, the band was offered an invitation to travel to San Francisco. The offer was turned down due to a prior commitment in Prescott, Arizona, where they were scheduled to perform for the Arizona National Guard. Following the stay in Prescott, the band toured some Indian reservations, playing first in Gallup, New Mexico, and then in three Arizona "Indian" towns: Fort Defiance, Ganado, and Keams Canyon. After these relatively brief appearances, the band played for the mission and day schools of the historic Navajo Reservation settlements of Polacca (First Mesa), Toreva (Second Mesa), and Oraibi (Third Mesa). The band then returned to California, where band members lined up at the Canyon Diablo train station and played for the transcontinental train as it stopped on its way east. The school newspaper reported that, "the train official, knowing that the novel sight of an Indian band would please the passengers, made a short stop while the boys played for them and the tourists snapped their Kodaks."³⁹

Upon their return to Phoenix, some of the band members left the school to return to their reservations, leaving the Indian School Band with only sixteen members. Schaffner reorganized the band by starting a second (feeder) ensemble to develop players who could help complete the instrumentation for the top ensemble. The *Native American* characterized Schaffner as "a very conscientious and thorough director, as the improvement of the band, both as individual players and as a whole, bears witness."⁴⁰

By 1906, the Indian School Band was under the direction of P. A. Venne. During his ten-year tenure the band remained one of the most sought-after entertainment and civic groups in the city of Phoenix. Band members enjoyed and promoted the unique offerings of their ensemble by giving regular Sunday afternoon concerts at the Oval, "a space behind the [Indian School] Administration Building, where a bandstand to accommodate the musicians had been built in front of the flagpole. Double rows of stately palm trees converged at the bandstand, while rows of chairs on the grass in front provided seating for the guests."⁴¹

38. Stockton (California) *Independent*, 30, August 1904, reprinted in the *Native American*, 3 September 1904.

39. *Native American*, 1 October 1904.

40. *Native American*, 29 October 1904.

41. Dorothy R. Parker, *Phoenix Indian School: The Second Half-Century* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1996), 7.

Apparently, few Phoenix parades or celebrations took place without the Indian School Band. Pierson points out that the band played for the Phoenix Auto Show, the Shriner and Elks parades, as well as at a barbecue to dedicate the opening of a sugar beet factory in nearby Glendale, Arizona, and the National Convention of the Elks in Los Angeles.⁴² The band also traveled with the Phoenix Elks to Atlantic City, New Jersey, where it presented a concert at the grand lodge of the Elks. The *Arizona Gazette* pointed out that: "The Indian School Band will be on the train to show the effete East that not all the good Indians have passed away, and that the money spent in their education has brought good results."⁴³

High levels of musicianship were considered characteristic of the Indian School Band. It was an honor to be a member, so the students worked hard, practiced diligently, and dedicated themselves to quality performances. During a concert at the Mesa Opera House on March 20, 1908, Ernest Rodriguez, a ten-year-old member of the band, played a cornet solo entitled "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree." A reviewer for the *Mesa Free Press* stated: "In short, the entire program was good, affording a rare musical and literary treat. The concert was an eloquent answer to the question frequently asked: 'Why educate the Indian?'"⁴⁴

One of the biggest events in Arizona history was the dedication of the Roosevelt Dam in 1911. The Indian School Band entertained visitors to the dam, and played "Hail to the Chief" for President Theodore Roosevelt during his visit to dedicate the dam named in his honor.⁴⁵

Perhaps the most exciting event for the band was its participation in the Arizona Statehood ceremonies on Valentine's Day of 1912. The band's importance to the city and the new state could not have been more evident at the time, as pointed out in the following historical account:

The Indian School Band led the procession in a parade down Washington Street to the capitol. They were followed by the National Guard Companies A and B, the Normal Cadets, Indian Cadets, pupils of the Indian School, public school children, St. Mary's School children, Spanish and Civil War veterans, Pioneer band, fire department, labor organization and fraternal orders.⁴⁶

The band also furnished music for the reception later that evening, held at the Adams Hotel.

42. Pierson, "History," 44.

43. *Arizona Gazette*, 7 April 1911, reprinted in the *Native American*, 8 April 1911.

44. *Mesa Free Press*, 3 April 1908, reprinted in the *Native American*, 4 April 1908.

45. Earl A. Zarbin, *Roosevelt Dam: A History to 1911* (Phoenix, AZ: Salt River Project, Central Arizona Museum, 1984), 243.

46. Pierson, "History," 67.

Archival material suggests that the band was among the most popular activities at the Indian School. Other activities also prospered, including an orchestra, a thirty-member choir, and a debate club, "all of which entertained the public."⁴⁷ Football and baseball clubs were also established during the 1890s, and girls' sports, which began after the turn of the century, played an important role in the life of the school. Another popular student activity was the school newspaper, the *Native American*, which was first published in January 1901.⁴⁸ Finally, Indian School students traveled frequently to fairs and expositions with the mission of educating the public about the kind of Native American education that was occurring in Phoenix. These activities were the brainchild of school officials, who hoped they would benefit the students and show the public that establishing the Indian School was worth the effort.

Major City Status: 1914–1930

During the period 1914–1930, a main transcontinental railroad was completed through Phoenix, adding to its two existing links and spurs to the north and west. Skyscrapers formed a city skyline, and paved roads were completed—first between Phoenix and San Diego, and then to Los Angeles. Another important milestone was the opening of the Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport in 1929.⁴⁹

The city's population grew from 11,134 in 1910, to 29,053 in 1920, and to 48,118 in 1930, while Maricopa County had become home to more than 150,000 people in the same period. Mexican Americans constituted just over 15 percent of the Phoenix population in 1930, and African Americans just under 5 percent. A black high school opened in 1926. Although the *Native American* population in the city remained exceedingly small, the Phoenix Indian School, which drew students from the nearby reservations, boasted an enrollment of almost 1,000 students in 1929.⁵⁰

The Indian School Band

Although Phoenix was growing rapidly, the years 1913–1916 saw a reduction in the number of the band's civic and commercial engagements. The weekly concerts continued for a time, but eventually were scheduled bimonthly

47. Trennert, *Phoenix Indian School*, 79.

48. *Ibid.*, 82. The *Native American* was first published on 13 January 1900 in four pages. During the course of its existence, it grew from four to an average of twenty pages per issue. The printing was done by fourteen apprentices, divided into two divisions, and supervised by an instructor of printing who prepared the copy and supervised the mechanical end of the publication. *Native American*, 1 July 1916.

49. Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 82–84.

50. *Ibid.*, 94–95, 99, *passim*.

and then monthly.⁵¹ During 1916, however, the band again began accepting civic engagements, though not as many as in the past and without the extended tours of past years. For example, in October 1916 the band played for a Republican Party rally and Columbus Day exercises in Phoenix, followed by an engagement at nearby Gila (River) Crossing for an annual celebration at St. John's Mission.⁵²

The band also was busy during the month of June 1917, playing for a Catholic Church social, again at St. John's Mission, and for a Fourth of July celebration in Mesa. They also gave a concert at the Elks Theatre and played two benefit concerts for the Red Cross Society during that same month. On June 9, 1917, the *Native American* reported:

The Indian School Band is busy doing their little bit these days. They are in demand on all occasions, and from school duties on down the line to charities and patriotic duty, wherever help of their kind is needed—they are on the job with the principal part of the program of the occasion. Could any of the older Indians recall days gone by, they would no doubt have every Indian school full of their children, once they saw and heard the Phoenix Indian School Band give a concert.⁵³

Regarding the monthly concerts, the *Native American* pointed out that the Indian School Band "was not only enjoyed by the campus and east[ern] farm pupils and teachers, but also the city of Phoenix and other surrounding villages furnished their quota of visitors ... in all we had an exceptionally fine concert and a large audience, which is always the case when these concerts are given."⁵⁴

By many accounts, the band was the most outstanding and unique feature of the Indian School. The *Native American* described "automobiles lined up all along the streets and through the campus" for the band's monthly concerts.⁵⁵ The newspaper regularly reported on students from the band performing at churches throughout the city and being called upon to play solos and otherwise provide music when the entire band was not needed.⁵⁶

The popularity of the band was overwhelming. On the national holiday of November 11, 1921, the band marched in Armistice Day parades in Phoenix and Mesa, and then returned to Phoenix to participate in the Shriners' Parade.

51. Pierson, "History," 76.

52. *Native American*, 14 October 1916 and 1 July 1916.

53. *Native American*, 9 June 1917.

54. *Native American*, 6 May 1917.

55. *Native American*, 9 June 1917.

56. *Native American*, 1901–1930, *passim*.

Also that year, the students played for a Chinese celebration in Phoenix as well as a Salvation Army Drive.⁵⁷ By 1923, the Indian School Band was receiving so many invitations and requests to perform that, again, it began turning some down. However, in the years following, the band performed several times for Carl Hayden, the well-known Arizona congressman.⁵⁸

During 1929, the band received an invitation from the Arizona Industrial Congress and the State Highway Commission to play for the dedication of a new steel bridge over the Colorado River near historic Lee's Ferry in northern Arizona. The band accepted the invitation and turned the trip into a ten-day tour of Arizona's reservations. The students performed on both days of the dedication event. Despite the bridge's location—150 miles from the nearest railway station and seventy miles from the nearest post office—the dedication attracted a crowd of 5,000. Among those attending were the governors of four states and officials of the Mormon Church, whose pioneers had crossed the original bridge some fifty years earlier.⁵⁹

The band also received an invitation to play for the March 4, 1930, dedication of the massive Coolidge Dam, located on Colorado River on the Arizona-Utah border. President and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge, who were present for the dedication, "complimented the band on its fine music and gentlemanly conduct."⁶⁰

After the Coolidge Dam dedication, the band played fewer commercial engagements, and instead concentrated on hometown events. A radio broadcast of the band's April 9, 1930, concert received rave reviews and letters from the Albuquerque Indian School, the Sherman Indian Institute in California, and Burton L. Smith, the superintendent of Indian affairs, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. They also reduced the number of concerts at the Oval during the school year. During 1930, they gave only four concerts: the Easter concert on April 30, the third annual Karl L. King Concert and the Popular Concert in May, and their Annual Concert in June.⁶¹

Perhaps the highlight of the first thirty years of the twentieth century for the band was a concert given on April 7, 1929. The Phoenix Indian School Band was augmented by former musicians from other Indian school bands that had been inspired by the Phoenix band, as well as some Native American members of the Arizona National Guard's 158th Infantry Band. The *Native American* reported: "We believe that this massed band is the only full blood [Native

57. *Native American*, 26 March and 4 June 1921.

58. *Native American*, 1923–1930.

59. *Native American*, 7 September 1929.

60. *Native American*, 8 March 1930.

61. *Native American*, 19 April 1930.

American] organization ever to play together in the United States." The massed band numbered seventy members and included representatives from the following tribes: Apache, Hopi, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Papago, Pima, Pueblo, Seneca, Sioux, and Yuma. One of the largest crowds to attend a concert at the Oval enjoyed a program that included: "Chicago Tribune March" by Chambers, "Poet and Peasant Overture" by von Suppe, "Moonlight on the Nile" by King, "Atlantis: Suite in Four Parts" by Safranek, "American Patrol" (march) by Meacham, "Teddy: Trombone Novelty by Fillmore, "The Death of Custer" by Johnson, and "Stars and Stripes Forever" by Sousa.⁶²

At a Century's End

During its almost one-hundred-year history the Phoenix Indian School, which began with a heavy emphasis on vocational training, followed a path not unlike many other American high schools. Eventually it received full accreditation, and was admitted to the Arizona Interscholastic Association in 1956.

During the 1980s, however, the school began to fall on hard times. The Reagan Administration cut funding for Native American education, which weakened the Phoenix Indian School's staff and administration. A continuing turnover of staff and counselors led to a decline in the number of students. A report in the *Arizona Republic* during the mid-1980s claimed that 256 students out of 700 were expelled for vandalism, substance abuse, violence, missing classes, or anti-social behavior. One-fourth of the students were considered substance abusers, primarily of alcohol.⁶³

As the city of Phoenix expanded, the Indian School campus, once miles from downtown Phoenix, was absorbed into the city limits. Subsequently, the federal government sold the northwest corner of the campus to the city for the construction of high-rise office buildings. Beginning in 1982, the city began proposing that the school should close and the property be given to the city of Phoenix. Finally, Congress passed the Arizona-Idaho Conservation Act of 1988, which was signed by President Reagan. The bill contained the following provisions: when the Indian School closed its doors, 68 percent of the school's property would be developed by the Barron-Collier Corporation, with the city retaining a significant voice in aesthetic control; 18 percent would go to the city of Phoenix for an urban park; 10 percent would go to the Veterans Administration for hospital expansion; and the remaining 4 percent would revert to the State of Arizona.⁶⁴ On May 24, 1990, the Phoenix Indian School

62. *Native American*, 20 April 1929.

63. Parker, *Phoenix Indian School*, 57.

64. *Ibid.*, 63.

graduated nineteen seniors. They, along with forty-one other students, were the last to walk the campus of the Phoenix Indian School.⁶⁵

During the early decades of the city and of the Phoenix Indian School, the Indian School Band emerged as an intriguing and popular phenomenon. The band achieved a great deal of fame in the city of Phoenix, playing for visiting dignitaries and other important city and state events. Luckingham points out that "no parade or celebration in the city was complete without the appearance of the Phoenix Indian School Band." He goes on to state that, "the well-dressed, well-disciplined Indian band contrasted nicely life in 'new Arizona' with the 'Indian problem' of recent history."⁶⁶

During its first several decades, the Phoenix Indian School Band was very popular among the residents of Phoenix and beyond, and provided countless hours of free entertainment and service for them. Hazen and Hazen state that the Phoenix Indian School Band was "one of the earliest bands in the state of Arizona."⁶⁷ Setting aside the fact that Arizona was not yet a state in the 1890s, and that there were several U.S. Army cavalry bands and mining camp show bands prior to the 1890s, this statement is probably true for school bands. Luckingham noted that the Indian School Band played for "the big event of the year," which was the annual Thanksgiving football game between the Phoenix Union High School and the Phoenix Indian School. He stated that "the Indians' team is formidable, its brass band at least as loud as the pale-faced band, and everybody turns out for the game."⁶⁸

Parker indicated that the role of the band diminished during the 1930s, and the group completely disappeared during the 1940s. In 1950, Miss Rosemary Davey obtained new instruments and resurrected the band, this time including girls. Under her direction the band marched in the Rose Bowl Parade, the first Native American school band to ever do so, and one of only five bands invited that particular year. The band marched in the Rose Bowl Parade again in 1963, this time on national television. In July of 1983, sixty band members and their director, Miss Ileana McElwee, flew to Washington, D.C., where they marched behind President Reagan in the Fourth of July parade wearing feathered headbands, Navajo-style velveteen shirts, white or blue trousers, concho belts, and moccasins.⁶⁹

65. Ibid., 1.

66. Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 58-59.

67. Margaret Hindle Hazen and Robert Hazen, *The Music Men: An Illustrated History of Brass Bands in America 1800-1920* (Washington, DC: The Smithsonian Institution, 1987), 54.

68. Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 95.

69. Parker, *Phoenix Indian School*, 41, 51.

From civic events to factory dedications, the Phoenix Indian School Band was sought after second to none. The band's influence and popularity reached beyond Phoenix through its extended tours of California, the trip to the National Elks Convention, two presidential performances, and radio broadcasts to Native American schools throughout the Southwest. In particular, for some forty years beginning soon after the founding of the Phoenix Indian School and continuing until about 1930, the Indian School Band was one of Phoenix's unique and most memorable features.

Appendix

Instrumentation of the Phoenix Indian School Band Around 1900

Oscar Norton, drum major	Mariano Candelaria, bassoon
William Peters, piccolo and flute	Andres Moya, solo B ^b cornet
Cleodo Gonzales, oboe	Grover Cleveland, solo B ^b cornet
Juan Zamora, solo B ^b clarinet	Elmer Sundust, first B ^b cornet
Kisto Lotta, first B ^b clarinet	Alex Lewis, second B ^b cornet
Nat White, first B ^b clarinet	Albert Bread, first horn
Ernest Chusay, second B ^b clarinet	Nelson Miles, second horn
Lonnie Jackson, second B ^b clarinet	Jose Pablo, third alto
Edward Manonka, second B ^b clarinet	Sam Oetama, fourth alto
Calino Smith, second B ^b clarinet	Kay Ethelba, euphonium
Jack Sands, second B ^b clarinet	Robert Lewis, first trombone
James P. Hammond, second B ^b clarinet	Juan Andon, second trombone
George Wison, second B ^b clarinet	Lancisco Hill, E ^b tuba
Roh McCowan, solo E ^b clarinet	Jose O. Montano, second tuba
Cyriaco Ardia, second E ^b clarinet	Joseph Milda, B ^{bb} bass
E. Henry Carrell, alto clarinet	Alfred Scott, string bass
Harris George, soprano saxophone	Ambrosio Lusardi, string bass
Francis Clark, alto saxophone	Jose Makil, snare drum and traps
Thomas Johns, tenor saxophone	Josiah Allen, bass drum
Thomas Allison, baritone saxophone	

Source: *Native American*, 17 February 1900.