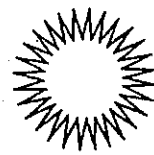


Education for Extinction

AMERICAN INDIANS AND THE
BOARDING SCHOOL EXPERIENCE,
1875-1928

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forcibly removed and sent off to boarding school, sometimes a great distance from the village camp. Finally, the day school held out the possibility that the child might become a daily messenger of civilized ways to his parents. In time, the argument went, parents might come to appreciate the fact that their child was acquiring valuable and useful knowledge from the white schoolteacher, knowledge from which they as well might benefit. What day school advocates hoped for, then, was a reversal of the traditional educational configuration in the parent-child relationship; the Indian parent, it was said, would come to sit at the feet of his wiser offspring.

In spite of these claims, policymakers soon became disenchanted with the day school model because it suffered from one overwhelming defect: by itself, it simply was not an effective instrument of assimilation. The major drawback of the day school concept stemmed from what was thought to be its major asset, namely, its proximity to the tribal community. Efforts to raise up the child during school hours, it was argued, were obliterated at night by the realities of camp life. "It must be manifest to all practical minds," one agent observed in 1878, "that to place these wild children under a teacher's care but four or five hours a day, and permit them to spend the other nineteen in the filth and degradation of the village, makes the attempt to educate and civilize them a mere farce." In 1879, another agent made a special effort to describe the conditions to which his day school students returned at night, an environment in which children "sit in the dirt and live in the dirt in many instances with an apology for clothing; their persons covered with the dust about them and literally plastered upon them." The worst of it was that the natives seemed "content and happy; happy in their degradation and filthiness; seemingly content to remain as they are with little ambition to change for the better." In such an environment, a day school was next to useless.²

The problem was exacerbated when Indian parents were adamantly opposed to all white education whatsoever, a situation that resulted in chronic absenteeism and runaways. Thus, the agent to the Sac and Fox reported in 1882 that the boarding school was having some success.

But in regard to the day school, it has been out of the power of the teacher to do much on account of the parents of the children refusing to let them attend the school. Every effort has been made to induce them but to no purpose; the children run away as soon as the teacher shows them a book. The Indians scare the children by telling them if they attend school they will be taken from their home and made soldiers. The Indians have a prejudice against schools. I have labored hard to do away with it, but it takes a good deal of time to overcome their objection.

CHAPTER TWO

Models

It was one thing to conclude that schools were the solution to the Indian problem and quite another to determine the manner in which Indian children should be schooled. For at least a decade policymakers focused their attention on a single question: how much institutional hegemony was it necessary to establish over the child to accomplish his transformation? Although the issue would never be completely resolved to the satisfaction of all, by the end of the 1880s an answer had emerged. The path to this resolution, or rather compromise, can be traced by analyzing policymakers' successive enthusiasm for three institutions—the reservation day school, the reservation boarding school, and the off-reservation boarding school.

The most elemental approach was the reservation day school. Located on the outskirts of Indian villages, day schools served as the educational outposts of civilization. By the 1860s, forty-eight such schools were in existence. The theory behind this approach was that in the early morning hours children would pour forth from the nearby Indian camp and at day's end return to their homes wiser in the ways of white civilization. The education received was clearly at the primary level. Most attention was given to language instruction, where in the initial stages the teacher was urged to forego the textbook for the slate and the blackboard. Eventually, reading lessons, recitations, writing, and spelling found their way into the schoolroom. In addition to language instruction and a smattering of elementary arithmetic, the day school teacher was also obligated to introduce the child to the concept of industrial training. For boys this usually meant exposing them to the world of hammers and saws and frequently included the opportunity to work in a small garden. For girls it meant working with needles and thimbles and helping in the preparation of noon meals and cleaning. Interspersed with academic and industrial training, the day school curriculum also provided for lighter activities such as singing and calisthenics, the former offering a perfect opportunity to introduce the Christian message in the form of hymns.³

The day school approach offered several distinct advantages. First, it was relatively inexpensive to operate. Second, it seemed to engender the least opposition from parents. As we shall see later, neither tribal elders nor parents looked favorably upon the idea of having young children

An agent to the Sioux came directly to the point: "I regard all expenditures on . . . day schools in this tribe as a waste."³

By the late 1870s most policymakers freely acknowledged that the day school was of limited value as a mechanism for weaning young Indians from their native ways. Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz reported to Congress in 1879, "It is the experience of the department that mere day schools, however well conducted, do not withdraw the children sufficiently from the influences, habits, and traditions of their home life, and produce for this reason but a . . . limited effect."⁴ This problem, the need to insulate the child from tribal influence during the civilization process, contributed to the rise of a second model of Indian schooling, the reservation boarding school.

THE RESERVATION BOARDING SCHOOL 1

By the late 1870s, the reservation boarding school had emerged as the most promising method of educating Indians. Boarding schools were usually located at agency headquarters and were under the direct supervision of the agent. Day-to-day supervision of the school fell to the school superintendent, whose staff included one or more teachers and at least one matron, an industrial teacher, a cook, a seamstress, and a laundress. The curriculum was divided into four primary grades and an equal number of "advanced" grades. Half the school day was devoted to English and basic academic subjects, half to industrial training. In the latter regard, boys worked on the school farm, tried their hand at stock raising—horses, cattle, and sheep—and acquired skills such as blacksmithing, carpentry, and harness-making. Girls, on the other hand, were to be "systematically trained in every branch of housekeeping." As the Indian Office explained, its industrial work schools were expected to be as self-sustaining as possible, "not only because Government resources should be as wisely and carefully utilized as private resources would be, but also because thrift and economy are among the most valuable lessons which can be taught Indians." Again, a dose of moral training rounded out the curriculum.⁵

The chief advantage of the boarding school was that it established greater institutional control over the children's lives, with students being kept in school eight to nine months out of the year. Only during the summer vacation period, and in some instances the Christmas holidays, were students allowed to return to their homes. In any case, sustained confinement was now deemed to be the key element in the civilization process. As the Superintendent of Indian Schools noted in 1885:

These schools strip from the unwashed person of the Indian boy the unwashed blanket, and, after instructing him in what to him are the

mysteries of personal cleanliness, clothe him with the clean garments of civilized men and teach him how to wear them. They give him information concerning a bed and teach him how to use it; teach him how to sit on a chair, how to use knife and fork, how to eat at a table, and what to eat. While he is learning these things, he is also learning to read and write, and, at the same time, is being taught how to work, how to earn a living.⁶

In citing the advantages of the boarding school, observers frequently mentioned a characteristic that was originally ascribed to the day school, the potential for serving as an uplifting influence on parents. Their reasoning went as follows: even though the boarding school removed the child from the camp for extended periods of time, that removal was not absolute; by occasionally visiting the school or by observing his child's progress during the summer months, the parent would hopefully become a friend of the school and the civilization it represented.⁷ Thus, in 1885 the Superintendent of Indian Schools observed, "The reservation boarding school may be made a great civilizer of Indian children, and at the same time be used to reflect some of the light of civilization into the Indian camp."⁸

But such optimism was not universal. Indeed, although some agents and policymakers would continue to sing the praises of the reservation boarding school, this approach, like the day school before it, fell under heavy criticism. And oddly enough, the point of criticism was a familiar one: failure to exert sufficient influence over the children's minds. Even in the more controlled environment of the boarding school, the children still were not sufficiently removed from the degrading influence of tribal life.

The most dramatic manifestation of this was the phenomenon of relapse, the tendency of the children to slough off newly acquired civilized habits in favor of tribal ones. This, of course, had occurred nightly in the case of the day school. Now it occurred during vacation periods, especially in the summer months. Thus, the agent to the Wichita observed in 1879 that it was surprising "how soon they seem to forget all they have been taught, after they return to camp." The report from Osage Agency was much the same, the agent commenting that the children "lose in a few weeks what they will gain in months." Moreover, the parents "are persistent in their claims for their children, and there seems no way at present to avoid the annual vacation." As for the Mescalero Apache, "They go back at once to the savage mode of life, and a few weeks is sufficient to obliterate every vestige, so far as casual observation goes, of the teacher's long and patient labor." Even Christmas vacation could set back the school's work. One school superintendent reported that students left

the school healthy but returned with severe colds and contagious diseases, their bodies covered by "vermin—body lice, head lice, bed bugs." And predictably there was the complaint that children had slipped back into their old habits, with some experiencing the most dramatic form of relapse of all: "Several of our pupils did not return at all during the rest of year."

But the influence of the tribal community on the children was not limited to vacation periods. Some agents complained of the constant efforts of Indian parents to visit their children at school. Although some looked upon such visits as a welcome opportunity for garnering tribal support for the civilization program, others clearly came to view such visits as a positive nuisance and disruptive to the school's smooth operation. The problem was that any contact whatsoever awakened in the children a natural longing for camp life. The situation was particularly troublesome when the school was located at agency headquarters where Indians regularly gathered to draw rations, conduct business, or exchange gossip. Although schools were usually fenced, and the children kept from wandering at random around the school grounds, it is clear from agency reports that school workers were clearly unable to prohibit all communication between the children and the outside world. Thus, the agent to the Ute Indians complained of the fact the children "are so intimately connected with the tribe, even when they are at school, that they know nothing . . . except what their superstitious parents tell them." Similarly, another agent concluded that his boarding school would never be a success while located at the agency "where the children's parents and friends can visit them everyday."

Part of the problem with allowing such interaction, agents discovered, was that parents often took the opportunity to overtly subvert the efforts of the school. The agent at one reservation claimed, "Members of the tribe daily visit the school to its detriment in many ways, notably in retarding English speaking by the pupils, in persuading the children to run away, or to refrain from performing their allotted work, and in giving notice of the time of dances and their whereabouts to the pupils." Dances were a particular problem. "A dance is announced a week in advance, came word from another agency, 'and at once you see the young mind reveling in the thought until study and all thoughts of books are driven out and nothing but Indian remains, and weeks pass before the scholars get back to their regular work.'"

It took very little, it seems, for students to become infected with a prolonged bout of homesickness. For those students who had already internalized the rhythm and pulse of native society, including the tribe's ceremonial calendar, the sight of smoke on the morning horizon or the faint sounds of ceremonial chants at night were sufficient to trigger emotions



Pine Ridge Indian Boarding School, ca. 1891. The proximity of Indian settlements was one of the major arguments against reservation schools. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress)

and longings uniquely Indian. Francis La Flesche, who attended a missionary boarding school in the mid 1860s, would always remember the morning that students watched from a second-story dormitory window as their nearby Omaha relatives broke camp for an extended buffalo hunt. "It was a wonderful sight to us," he later recalled, "the long procession, the winding trail, like a great serpent of varied and brilliant colors. . . . It was nearly noon when the end of the line went out of sight." The sight had a profound impact on the school's operation. "We slowly . . . ate our noonday meal without speaking. There seemed to be a general depression among the remaining pupils at the school. A silence pervaded all the surroundings which made each boy wish to retire from the other and to be alone."

And then there was ration day, those times designated weekly or bi-monthly, when Indians gathered at the agency to receive their allotments of flour, sugar, and coffee. It was on just such occasions that the agent and school superintendent were pestered with requests to visit the children and inspect the school. Moreover, the students' knowledge that friends and relatives were gathered nearby, telling stories and exchanging gossip, also had a detrimental effect on their studies. "This school is unfortunately located," came word from the agent to the Crow. "Being at the agency, the coming of the 'camp' every week for rations has a demoraliz-

ing effect on the pupils, practically undoing in one day all the good of six days' teaching."¹⁵

More than one observer commented on the unhealthy effect of issue served for the boarding school. And their most stinging comments were reserved for the issuance of beef "on the hoof." One of the most vivid descriptions of this affair was written by J. B. Harrison in a report for the Indian Rights Association. Harrison's report illustrates the sorts of scenes that reformers conjured up in their minds when they spoke of the debilitating influence of reservation life.

The gate opens and a gigantic steer leaps out, frightened and wild-eyed. He trots uncertainly down the lane of horsemen. The dogs fly at him, and he sets off in a gallop. Two Indians gallop after him, and everybody looks that way. But by this time another is out, and soon half a dozen are racing away in different directions, each closely followed by two or three mounted Indians. . . . Five or six of the cattle go off together, with a dozen men pressing behind and at the side of the fleeing group. A horseman fires, and steer drops, so suddenly, head first, that he turns a complete somersault, and the pony just behind, unable to stop, repeats the movement, tumbling over the prostrate beast, and dismounts his rider. Some of the cattle are, at first, only slightly wounded, other are cripples so that they cannot run, but several shots are required to dispatch them. Now and then one turns in fury upon his pursuers, and the ponies swerve aside to avoid his charge. . . . The dying animals lie all about the plain. Some struggle long, getting up and falling again, and the Indians wait warily till it seems safe to approach, for a mortally wounded beast will sometimes make a plunge at his tormentor. . . .

As the carcasses all about the plain are opened the work of the Indian women begins. They attend to the "fifth quarter" of the beef, the entrails. They remind me of the witches in "Macbeth." As we drive out homeward, threading our way between the bloody groups around the flayed and dismembered beasts, many Indians are already beginning their feast. They are seated on the ground, eating the raw, blood hot liver. . . . It is a brutal and brutalizing spectacle.¹⁶

What Harrison found remarkable was that on the following day, while visiting the agency boarding school, the principal informed him that he intended to let the students witness the entire spectacle the next time around. The question may be asked, why would schoolchildren be permitted to attend what was an obvious, if pathetic, reenactment of the tribe's more glorious buffalo hunting days? Perhaps it was a reward for good behavior. Perhaps it was a recognition that the day's events made

any efforts at schoolwork sheer pretense, since the children's attention was hopelessly diverted. Or perhaps it was a practical means of discouraging runaways, the recognition that to prohibit students from attending the spectacle was simply inviting trouble. Indeed, at one school we are told that the girls "would run away on the morning of beef issue, and search would invariably find them in a canyon nearby, where the squaws were slaughtering the beeves. There the children satiated themselves on the raw entrails." On such days, the account continues, it was "a common sight to see Indians, young boys and girls, and even babies, in arms, sitting under the shade of the Agent's office, tearing with their teeth, and eating liver and intestines smoking from natural heat." As despicable as agents might find such scenes, it appears that a number of them found it easier to open the school gates to the bloody spectacle. Jim Whitewolf, a Kiowa Apache, recalls in his memoirs, "Friday was ration day, and they always let us go."¹⁷

Reservation officials were beleaguered with problems as they sought to eradicate all attachment to tribal ways. The result was that some agents began to search for ways to further isolate the school from any contamination from Indian life. One solution was to recommend that the school vacation periods be eliminated. "I am satisfied an Indian school should be kept in session the whole year," concluded one agent, "in order that the children may be kept away from the savage influences which they encounter when they return to camp during the annual vacation."¹⁸ Another approach was to move the school away from agency headquarters, where interaction between parents and pupils could be more closely regulated and where agency affairs would be less inclined to spill over into the school.¹⁹ A third strategy, and a less expensive one, was to erect more definable physical barriers between the school and the agency. Thus, one agent proposed, "There should be a board fence 12 feet high, enclosing a space 200 by 300 yards around the school buildings." Similarly, an agent in the Southwest informed Washington that he was having an eight-foot adobe wall built around the school. This, he hoped, would entirely separate the schoolchildren "from all outside influence and contact with the tribe, which is positively necessary in order to teach them morality."²⁰

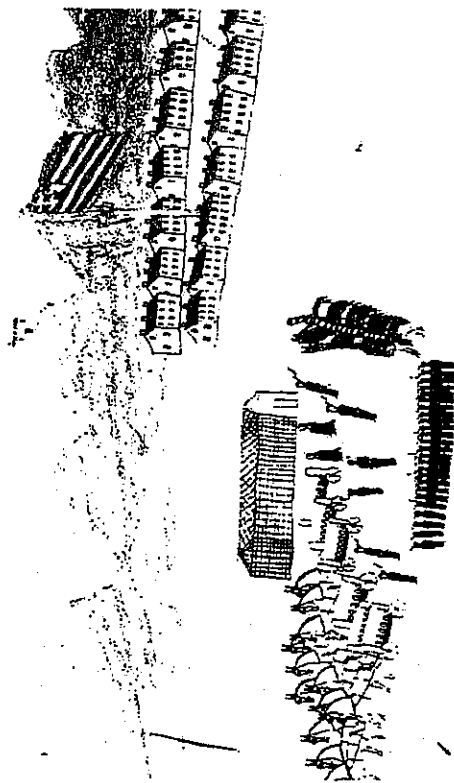
Although such measures would no doubt improve the situation, a growing number of policymakers were reaching the conclusion that the reservation boarding school approach was fundamentally flawed. Relocating school buildings, erecting higher fences, and abolishing vacation would never succeed in entirely eliminating the insidious influences of reservation life. Savagery, it seemed, was in the air. Like a mysterious, invisible vapor, it seeped into the classrooms and dormitories, clouding and intoxicating the minds of the children within. How could even the most dedicated teacher, it was asked, compete with the real and imagined dra-

was unfolding just beyond the school fence and in the surrounding hills? If Indian children were to be thoroughly civilized, it was reasoned, a more radical solution was called for. "On the reservation no school can be conducted as to remove the children from the influence of the idle and vicious who are everywhere present," concluded one agent. "Only by removing them beyond the reach of this influence can they be benefited by the teaching of the schoolmaster."¹⁹ In uttering these words, P. P. Wilcox, the agent to the San Carlos Apache, was offering his support for still a third model of Indian education, the off-reservation boarding school.

SCHOOL FOR TEACHING CIVILIZATION

In a spring day in 1875, before the first rays of the sun had cleared the surrounding hills, Fort Sill, Indian Territory, was already buzzing with activity. When preparations were complete, seventy-two Indian warriors, all in leg irons, shuffled to the awaiting army wagons. Ordered to sit with their backs to the sides of the wagon, a long chain was slipped through each prisoner's legs so that the Indians were shackled both to one another and to the wagon. Meanwhile, a throng of Indians had gathered to witness the departure of the captives, the women succumbing to an eerie wailing as if mourning a beloved one killed on the battlefield. It was a familiar sound to soldiers who had served on the frontier any length of time and it only added to the tension, a tension fed by rumors that a dramatic rescue might be attempted. As it turned out, the plot, if there had ever been one, never materialized. And so, the train of wagons, under heavy military guard, left the fort and passed through the throng without incident, beginning a journey of several days to the railroad, where the Indians were to be boarded on a special train and taken to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.²⁰ Except for Lone Wolf, a Kiowa chief who had once accompanied a delegation to Washington to see the "Great Father," riding in the "iron horse" was an altogether novel and unnerving experience. Lt. Richard Henry Pratt, the officer in charge of the operation, later recalled, "As the train started, the prisoners were at first greatly interested, but as it increased in speed beyond anything they had ever experienced, it was plain that some of them were not a little disturbed, and these at first pulled their blankets over their heads and quit looking out." One prisoner, Bear's Heart, was convinced that Pratt was planning to execute him. As the train rolled along, he later recalled, "all the time I think by and by he will kill me." Upon reaching Leavenworth, Bear's Heart and the other prisoners were again thrown into the guardhouse. What the Indians' long-term fate might be, they could scarcely imagine.²¹

The seventy-two prisoners were a mixed lot, composed of thirty-four



Fort Sill prisoners being loaded into wagons, 1875, as drawn by Bear's Heart. (Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University)

Cheyenne, two Arapaho, twenty-seven Kiowa, nine Comanche, and one Caddo. Although several older Cheyenne and Kiowa chiefs were among the group, most were young warriors in their twenties and mid-thirties. Nearly all were charged by the army with a host of crimes committed during the so-called Red River War of 1874.²² More a series of skirmishes than an outright war, the conflict was precipitated by the refusal of the Southern Plains Indians to accept the terms of recent treaties confining them to reservation life. With the depletion of the southern buffalo herds, the invasion of the white settlers, and the failure of Congress to live up to treaty obligations, Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Comanche warriors struck out in fury, determined to make one last stand against white incursion and to settle some old scores in the process. Cruel and bloody acts of violence followed, many of them directed against the innocent and unsuspecting.²³

Once the offenders were locked up at Fort Sill, the army began the tedious process of gathering evidence and charging the prisoners with their crimes. The final list ranged from theft and rape to murder. The problem was what to do next. Originally, the intent was to try them before a military commission, but this plan ran afoul of a ruling by the attorney general that a military trial would be illegal because a state of war could not technically exist between "a nation and its wards." On the other hand, a civilian trial was out of the question for the simple reason that frontier sentiment against Indians rendered a fair trial impossible. The solution, an

arbitrary one to be sure, was to imprison the group at old Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida. Originally named Castillo de San Marcos, the fortress had been constructed by the Spanish in the late seventeenth century as a bastion against naval attack. Now, its great stone walls would be put to a different use.²¹

While the prisoners were under lock and key at Fort Leavenworth, Pratt received notice that he was to oversee the exile of the Indians to St. Augustine and then supervise their incarceration. The lieutenant was not disappointed at his new assignment. Quite the contrary, he had requested it. Pratt had spent most of his youth in Logansport, Indiana, where life had been pleasant until the age of thirteen when his father's unexpected death suddenly thrust adult responsibilities on young Pratt's shoulders. Forced to leave school to support the family, he worked as a printer's helper, a rail splitter, and a tinsmith. In April 1861, only eight days after the attack on Fort Sumter, Pratt joined an Indiana cavalry unit to fight for the Union. When the war was over he returned to Logansport, married, and went into the hardware business. But the ex-soldier soon discovered that he was temperamentally ill-suited to running a hardware store; he was bored and missed military life. So in March 1867, he joined the regular army and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Tenth United States Cavalry, an all-Negro unit except for the officers, who were white. The Tenth was being sent west to keep the peace and to fight Indians. One of Pratt's first responsibilities was to take charge of a group of Cherokee scouts attached to the unit. This was Pratt's first experience with Indians. He soon learned that the scouts assigned to him were not only experienced soldiers but had acquired a smattering of education in Cherokee schools. Pratt would spend eight years in the West, keeping the peace and fighting Indians. During these years Pratt, like the "humanitarian generals" of his day, came to the conclusion that there was only one way for the Indians to survive the onslaught of progress: they would have to be swallowed up in the rushing tide of American life and institutions. That was the only solution.²²

Transporting the prisoners from Fort Leavenworth to Florida turned out to be no easy matter. First, there was the problem of the large crowds. Before the train pulled into the larger stopovers—St. Louis, Louisville, Nashville, Atlanta, Jacksonville—the press would circulate stories about the route of the train and its unique cargo. The result was clamoring crowds that pressed around the cars hoping to get a glimpse of the "savages" within. And then there were the two casualties. Approaching Nashville, one of the Cheyenne leaders, Lean Bear, produced a small penknife and in an attempt to commit suicide, stabbed himself several times in the chest and neck. Presumed dead, the body was taken off the train for burial at Nashville. (Only later was it learned that he was still very much alive.

Several weeks later, he was sent to St. Augustine.) About the death of another Cheyenne, Gray Beard, there was little doubt. Throughout the ordeal Gray Beard had grown more despondent than the rest, unable to reconcile himself to the confinement and exile in store for him. Somewhere near the Georgia-Florida state line, late at night, Gray Beard managed to slip through one of the windows and jumped from the moving train. The escape was immediately discovered, the train slammed to a halt, and guards were soon picking their way through the surrounding forest with lanterns and rifles. When Gray Beard jumped from behind a palmetto to cross the tracks, he was ordered to stop. He didn't and a guard shot him, the bullet passing through his chest. Still alive but bleeding profusely, he was loaded onto the rear of the last car. His old friend Marimic, a war chief, was brought back to comfort him. As Gray Beard lay dying, the prisoner-train rumbled deeper into Florida. The Indians finally arrived in St. Augustine on May 21, 1875.²³

Pratt's orders were vague; he was instructed to oversee the incarceration of the Indians. Indeed, if he had interpreted his orders narrowly, the Fort Marion affair might have simply become an interesting but minor incident in the story of Indian-white relations. But such was not the case. Shortly after the train's arrival at St. Augustine, Pratt was struck with an idea that would not go away. Entirely free of any direct supervision by superiors, he decided to carry out a bold experiment: he would turn his prison into a school for teaching civilization to the Indians.

But first he took stock of the situation. Security would not be a problem. With the exception of a small side door, the only entrance from the walled fort was through two immense pitch-pine doors that opened to a large drawbridge spread across a moat surrounding that part of the fort not facing the open sea. The design of the fort was simple and functional: a large open court surrounded on all sides by casemates and a small chapel. Although a terreplein, or platform, existed on the upper level of the outer wall, thereby giving one a view of both the open sea and St. Augustine, it could easily be sealed off. The casemates, which would serve as the prisoners' living quarters, were windowless on the outside wall, with only small air vents near the ceiling, while on the inside walls small iron-grated windows permitted a view of the court. Immediately sensing that the damp and poorly ventilated cells would create health problems for Indians used to the open prairie, Pratt ordered that the dirt floors be covered with wooden planks and that beds be constructed. Under heavy guard and still in leg irons, the Indians settled in.²⁴

There were problems almost immediately. The humidity and summer heat began to take effect, and in the first few weeks several of the Indians died. These factors exacted a heavy psychological toll on the prisoners, and most fell into a state of "depression and hopelessness." In response



Group of Indian prisoners at Fort Marion at time of arrival, 1875. (Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University)

Pratt began to make changes. First, the leg irons were removed and the prisoners were allowed to move more freely. Next he arranged to have their long hair cut off and issued them discarded army uniforms. The transition to uniforms didn't go easily. Preferring traditional Indian leggings to the white man's trousers, several prisoners cut off the pant legs at the hip, throwing away the upper half of the trousers. After a stern lecture, the prisoners were not only wearing their uniforms properly but folding their trousers along crease lines and conscientiously polishing their brass buttons and shoes. A particularly risky step on Pratt's part was when he decided that the white guards should be removed and an Indian company be organized to patrol the prison. The plan worked brilliantly. Slowly but deliberately, Fort Marion began to take on all the attributes of a military camp, with smart-looking officers barking out commands and carefully drilled soldiers marching in perfect timing. Meanwhile, Pratt was meeting with the Indians every evening to lecture them on what they must do to survive as a people, that is, embrace the white man's civilization. Indeed, if his prisoners would play the role of obedient children, Pratt was more than willing to play the role of the stern but benevolent father and raise

them up from savagery. Somewhat traumatized by the prison ordeal, some began to listen.²⁸

With obedience came freedom, and prison life gradually became more bearable as Pratt made a concerted effort to introduce the Indians to the world beyond the prison. At first this effort took the form of an occasional camping expedition to a nearby island. On such occasions the prisoners fished, swam, dug for oysters, and competed in foot races on the long stretches of sandy beach. One day Pratt arranged for them to hunt what the Indians called "water buffalo," meaning sharks. At Pratt's urging, a local fisherman devised a method whereby sharks in the harbor were enticed to take chunks of meat dangled on a hook from a rowboat, the baited hooks connected to lines that extended to the beach where the Indians held on for dear life. When a shark took the bait, a tug of war immediately ensued. According to Pratt, "It was a great sport for the twenty or more Indians who whooped and tugged and pulled until the shark surrendered." "Sometimes," he continued, "when they were pulling their hardest the shark would turn suddenly and dash toward shore and the crowd all fall down and before they could get up the shark was going the other way." In the end, they landed five, one weighing almost 1,200 pounds.²⁹

Along with recreation, Pratt made an effort to integrate his prisoners into the social and economic life of St. Augustine. The Indians, although initially feared by some, were an object of great curiosity. Pratt made the most of this fact by inviting citizens to visit the prison, and soon he was issuing passes to selected prisoners to leave the prison. In time, the prisoners, usually in pairs, could be seen walking from shop to shop on the streets of St. Augustine. Blurring the demarcation between the prisoners and the wider community was a conscious reflection of Pratt's belief that in order for his prison-school to be successful, the Indians must understand firsthand the white man's way of living. Also fundamental was a need to instill in the Indians the work ethic—but where to begin? The solution came in the unlikely form of sea beans or seeds, which covered the shores around St. Augustine. Once polished and strung on necklaces, these beans were a major sales item for local curio dealers. Upon learning that dealers were willing to pay ten cents for the polishing of a single bean, Pratt secured a contract for his Indians. Within a few months they had polished 16,000 beans, for an income of \$1,600. Soon the Indians were making canes and bows and arrows, painting scenes of traditional Indian life, and receiving the full sales amount when the items were sold. In the matter of a year or so the Indians were being hired out as laborers—to pick oranges, work as baggage men at the railroad depot, clear land, care for horses, and milk cows for local farmers. To awaken the spirit of economic individualism, Pratt kept individual savings accounts for each

of the prisoners, and the prisoners could use the money they had earned to make an array of purchases in St. Augustine.³⁰

The ultimate success of Pratt's experiment depended upon his ability to teach the Indians the white man's language. What he required were volunteer teachers sympathetic to his aims, and as it turned out, there would be no problems in attracting them. The first to come to his aid, Sarah Mather, was a retired teacher living in St. Augustine. Educated at Mt. Holyoke, and a former director of a girls boarding school, Mather was a teacher of extraordinary ability and zeal. The idea of teaching Pratt's prisoners, strangers to civilization and God, appealed mightily to her Christian and philanthropic sensibilities. With Mather's enlistment to the cause, others followed. In the summer of 1876, Pratt could report to General Sheridan: "I have a two-hour school daily with an average of fifty pupils, divided into four classes, with a good teacher for each. The teachers work from the purest and best motives of Christian charity and, as a consequence, successfully." With four casemates now serving as classrooms, Fort Marion's famed warriors now struggled with the ABC's, and soon, with words and entire sentences.³¹

With words came ideas. When the opportunity afforded itself, Miss Mather and her assistants lectured their pupils on various aspects of the white man's civilization, especially the ideals and values that served the basis for that civilization. In time, the discussion turned to religion. The words "cat" and "dog" gave way to "Bible" and "God," and the stone walls of the prison school were soon resonating with recitations of the Lord's Prayer and the melodies of Christian hymns. All of this reinforced the religious instruction that was already going on, for by now Pratt was regularly holding weekly prayer meetings in the prisons. After gaining the cooperation of local pastors, he began urging the prisoners to attend local church services. The message came from all directions.³²

In the meantime, Episcopal Bishop Henry Benjamin Whipple arrived on the scene. Whipple, a renowned missionary among the Sioux, happened to be wintering in St. Augustine in 1876 and when hearing of Pratt's experiment was immediately drawn to the prison. "I was never more touched than when I entered this school," Whipple would soon write. "Here were men who had committed murder upon helpless women and children sitting like docile children at the feet of women learning to read. Their faces have changed. They have all lost that look of savage hate, and the light of a new life is dawning on their hearts." Over the course of several weeks, Whipple paid regular visits to the prison, preaching simple sermons about the Christian God and his son who died on the cross. The Indians especially liked the Bible stories: "They seemed to hang upon my words as if I were a messenger of life from heaven."³³ Was there a mass conversion to Christianity by the prisoners? Probably

not, but some of the Indians appear to have discarded their native beliefs for the so-called "Jesus book." The testament of Soaring Eagle, a twenty-six-year-old Cheyenne warrior, certainly has the ring of authenticity:

It is good to go to church. When I was at my home, I did not know about church. When I was at my home, I did not wear good clothes. My hair was long. I know now to spell and read a little, and will know more. When I go home, I hope to sit down and sing God's hymns. . . . At home, I did not know who Jesus was, I loved to hunt, shoot, and sleep on Sundays like other days, but the Bible God's book has told me it was wrong. I now look up to Jesus who has been so good to me and pray to him to forgive all my past sins and make me his child.³⁴

To all who visited the fort, it appeared that Pratt, the stern Christian soldier, had wrought a near miracle. The Indians had arrived as savages; now they were decent Christian men walking the path of civilization. Slowly, the word spread through philanthropic circles. Among those who assisted in the process was Harriet Beecher Stowe, then a resident of St. Augustine. Visiting the prison in April 1877 and astonished by Pratt's success, Stowe drew upon her old abolitionist fervor and described in two articles for *The Christian Crisis* what she had seen. She had heard stories, she wrote, about how the Indians had arrived, looking like bloodthirsty warriors. Thus, upon entering the prison she was immediately struck by the altered appearance of the prisoners: "We found now no savages." Sitting in on a classroom, she observed, "there were among these pupils seated, docile and eager, with books in hand, men who had seen the foremost in battle and bloodshed. Now there was plainly to be seen among them the eager joy which comes from the use of a new set of faculties." Stowe lavished praise on the Indians' neatness, discipline, and industriousness. The most moving scene was a prayer meeting when the prisoners were led in mournful, wailing prayer by old Chief Manimic, a virtual "cry unto God." Was there not an immense lesson in all of this?

Is not here an opening for Christian enterprise? We have tried fighting and killing the Indians, and gained little by it. We have tried feeding them as paupers in their savage state, and the result has been dishonest contractors, and invitation and provocation to war. Suppose we try education? . . . Might not the money now constantly spent on armies, forts, and frontiers be better invested in educating young men who shall return and teach their people to live like civilized beings?³⁵

As visitors came and went, Pratt struggled with his superiors over the

question of the prisoners' fate. From the very beginning he had divided the Indians into two groups: the older ones, who were generally charged with more serious offenses and, by virtue of age, were less amenable to schooling, and the younger ones, who were making more rapid progress and repeatedly expressed a desire to learn more of civilized ways. As early as June 1875, Pratt recommended that some of the more notorious prisoners be transferred to a penitentiary where they could be taught a trade. The request was denied. In March 1876 he proposed that some of the brighter and younger Indians be sent to an agricultural or trade school to continue their education. Again the request was denied. A year later, Pratt again expressed the view that no further purpose could be served by imprisoning the older Indians and they should be released. As for the younger prisoners, he was still recommending further education.³⁶

In the spring of 1878, Pratt received word that the prisoners could be released and that neither the Indian Office nor the army had any opposition to the younger prisoners receiving further education. Earlier on, Pratt had asked the younger men how many wanted to remain in the East for further education. Twenty-two had stepped forward. Now, with the government having removed all objections, two problems still needed to be solved. The first was that of financing the Indians' education. As it turned out, this was to be the least of Pratt's worries. One by one, individuals who had witnessed firsthand the Indians' progress stepped forward to assume the financial burden, in some instances volunteering to sponsor the entire education of one or more students. What Pratt could not get in the form of larger gifts he received in the form of small donations collected at benefits in St. Augustine. The second problem proved to be more difficult: finding an institution that would accept twenty-two Indians. Pratt appealed to several state agricultural colleges, but all were hesitant to take in the former warriors. Indeed, for a while it appeared that further schooling was out of the question. Although four were to be taken in by an Episcopal clergyman in New York, and another by Dr. and Mrs. Horace Curuthers of Tarrytown, for the remaining seventeen, prospects appeared bleak. Finally, word came from Hampton, Virginia, that Samuel Chapman Armstrong, founder and principal of Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute, would take the seventeen Indians.³⁷

Armstrong's unique background explains his decision. Born in 1839 on the island of Maui, he spent the first twenty years of his life in the Sandwich Islands under the tutelage and influence of his New England-bred father, Richard Armstrong, who labored as a missionary to the dark-skinned native islanders. In 1860, the younger Armstrong left Hawaii to attend Williams College. Graduating from Williams in 1862, he was immediately swept up in the storm of the Civil War and joined the Union cause as an abolitionist. Following the war, Armstrong learned that a normal school was to be estab-

lished for blacks at Hampton, partly funded by the American Missionary Association (AMA), and he immediately volunteered to assume the principalship. In April 1868, Hampton Institute opened its doors with fifteen students. In two years, partly because of Armstrong's remarkable skill for fund-raising, Hampton was largely independent of AMA support and fully under Armstrong's control. Charismatic and strong-willed, Armstrong shaped the Hampton program along lines that were fully consistent with his conception of black educational needs in the postbellum South. According to Armstrong, blacks had emerged from slavery culturally and morally inferior to whites and only under the benevolent tutelage of whites could they hope to make genuine racial progress. The solution lay in a Hampton-style education, an education that combined cultural uplift with moral and manual training, or as Armstrong was fond of saying, an education that encompassed "the head, the heart, and the hand."³⁸

It is plainly evident that Armstrong's invitation to Pratt's Indians was in keeping with his previous work.³⁹ And it is also clear that he was more than a little nervous about his decision. Several teachers and trustees were openly skeptical about extending the school's work to Indians, and there also was the problem of getting black students to accept them. One evening when students were assembled for prayer, Armstrong announced that the Indians were coming. After a persuasive appeal for acceptance and understanding, which ended with the words, "Freely ye have received, freely give," he asked for seventeen volunteers who would each take charge of one of the Indians. Although the students had responded favorably to the general idea of inviting the Indians, the request for volunteers met with strong silence. Exasperated, Armstrong pressed on. "Why is this? Is no one here man enough to do for another race what has so freely been done for his?" At this point the truth came out. Rising, one student responded: "We want to but we're scared—we're afraid they might scalp us." To this, Armstrong explained, there was nothing to fear, and after another appeal he finally got what he wanted. One by one, they stood up: "I'll take one, General." In the end, all seventeen were accounted for.⁴⁰

In spite of Armstrong's public assurances that the Indians were now tame, he was privately worried. "There might be some difficulty in case of bad Indians," he wrote to Pratt in late January. "We send negroes home as a severe punishment; what would be done with an objectionable Indian?" By March, however, he was making light of the situation. In a letter to Robert C. Ogden, a prominent Hampton trustee, he observed that although the Indians were once "terrible cutthroats," they were now "said to be tamed." And then in a crude attempt at humor he added, "Now and then they will try to scalp a dinky but their war hatchets won't make much impression on hlm."⁴¹ In any case, the Indians were coming.

Meanwhile, the Fort Marion prisoners were preparing for their departure. The older prisoners, it was decided, would accompany the latter group as far as Hampton and then leave for the West. Pratt, it was agreed, would help the seventeen students get settled in their new home. For Tsait-Kope-ta, one of the five who would be going to New York, leaving Pratt was not easy. One of Pratt's prize Kiowa pupils, he had come to look upon Pratt as a father, almost a savior. Before leaving for the north, he wrote the captain a letter.

A long time I have not written to you. Now I want to tell you something. I cannot speak good yet. I can read some and understand a good deal, but I cannot talk much. White man's talk is very hard. I try, maybe in a few years I can talk good. Long time ago when you first began to teach us, you showed us a card and asked us what that was. It was A.B.C., but I did not know anything about it. I only laughed in my heart. By and by I think yes! He wants to show us the road. . . . You talked a good deal. I could not listen good nor understand. In one year I heard a little, and something I began to know of what you said. Again in one more year I understood a heap. Again in one more year I knew almost all your talk. And now I can write a letter like a white man, and when I open a book I can read a good deal of it. I am surprised and glad. I think, once it was not so—once all of us Indians knew nothing. Now I am a white man—I think. Now I know that good white men live a good life—no steal, no lie, no hurt anything—no kill, kind to all. By and by I hope I will be the same.

It had been a long, difficult journey, the young Kiowa continued.

I am very happy now—very glad, some of my friends, old men and young are going home. Capt. Pratt may be you glad—I don't know. I think so. Maybe I shall go to school—I shall not forget you—I love you Capt. Pratt. I shall keep you—always I am glad to think of you. You have done so much for me. You have given me everything—clothes, pants, coat . . . all. You have talked to me just the same as to a child and told me what to do and I have done it just the same as one of your little girls would. Capt. Pratt you have planted seed just as men do corn, or potatoes or anything, among us young men, and maybe it will be just the same with us as the seed—some will turn out good, and other, good for nothing.

Sometime Capt. Pratt I hope you will write to me. Your friend.

Tsait-Kope-ta⁴⁶

On April 13, 1878, sixty-two Indians descended on the campus of

Hampton. Within a few weeks, the *Southern Workman* observed, "The experiment is an experiment, and all that can be claimed at this early stage is that it is working smoothly so far."⁴⁵ Smoothly, indeed. Armstrong was so impressed with the Indians that he was soon entertaining suggestions that Hampton expand its Indian enrollment.⁴⁶ When Congress appropriated funds for the purpose of educating Indian children in "special schools," the prospect was all the more attractive. In August, Armstrong received word from Washington that Hampton could enroll fifty more Indians—this time girls as well as boys—and that Pratt could stay on to oversee the project. By the end of August, Pratt was canvassing Indian agencies for students in the Dakotas and Nebraska. Meanwhile, Armstrong was making preparations for his burgeoning Indian program; a new building, the Wigwam, was being constructed for the boys, and material was being purchased for uniforms.⁴⁷

It was at this point that Armstrong and Pratt came up with an ingenious public relations scheme that both would utilize in the coming years with the utmost effect—the use of photographs to illustrate the conditions of Indians both "before" and "after" their institutionalization. Thus, on the eve of Pratt's departure for Nebraska, Armstrong wrote him: "We wish a variety of photographs of the Indians. Be sure and have them bring their wild barbarous things. This will show whence we started." Armstrong advised Pratt that if he liked, he could have the photographs taken in the West whereupon Hampton would purchase the negatives, but one way or another, the students must be photographed in their native state. Pratt, who had already seen the publicly value of photographs while at St. Augustine, understood perfectly. From the West he wired Armstrong that the photographs would have to be taken at Hampton. "The argument will be all the better. 'Condition on arrival at Hampton.'"⁴⁸ In the fall of 1878, Pratt returned to Hampton with his quota of Indians—Sioux, Gros Ventre, Mandan, and Arikara. Photographs were immediately taken.

Meanwhile, Pratt was restless. His growing uneasiness stemmed in part from the fact that whereas in St. Augustine he had answered only to himself, at Hampton he was merely an assistant to Armstrong. The two men apparently got along well together, but Pratt was not temperamentally suited to being second in command. Also, he and Armstrong had slightly divergent views on how the education of the Indians ought to proceed. Although they were in agreement in the main—that the path to Indian civilization was through a combination of academic and industrial training—there were differences. "I told the General," Pratt recalls in his memoirs, "my dissatisfaction with systems to educate the Negro and Indian in exclusively race schools and especially with educating the two races together." At Hampton, Pratt had concluded, the Indians would be largely isolated from the surrounding white community, thus eliminating one of

the factors that had been so crucial to his success at St. Augustine. Pratt was also convinced that Indians would suffer from their association with blacks, not because blacks would prove a degrading influence, but simply because white prejudice against blacks would inevitably spill over toward Indians. For these reasons, Pratt would rather go back to his regiment than remain at Hampton.⁴⁷

About this time Pratt noted in a newspaper that Congress had recently passed an army appropriation bill providing for "the detail of an army officer not above the rank of captain with reference to Indian Education," an obvious reference to his work at Hampton. With Armstrong's blessing, he left for Washington to lobby for his own school. After a round of meetings with the secretary of interior, the commissioner of Indian affairs, the secretary of war, and several influential congressmen, Pratt was authorized to recruit 125 students for a new Indian school. As for the school's location, he was invited to inspect some unused military barracks at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Pratt investigated the site and concluded that with a few changes, they would do just fine.⁴⁸

Pratt immediately set about the business of recruiting a small staff. Once again, Miss Mather, now back in St. Augustine, agreed to join him and oversee the Indian girls. Pratt, who possessed a talent for surrounding himself with dedicated and efficient teachers, soon had the required staff. By September 1879, he and Mather were searching for students in the Dakotas, concentrating their attention on the Sioux at the Pine Ridge and Rosebud agencies. Pratt had wanted to return to Indian Territory where he was known among the Indians, but Commissioner Ezra Hayt insisted that he take a number of recruits from the Sioux to whom the Indian Office wanted to introduce the "school idea." At Rosebud, Pratt had a particularly difficult time convincing the Sioux chiefs to turn over their children. But the strong-willed Pratt was relentless, hammering away over and over again at the idea that the Indians' only defense against the white man was to learn his language and ways. Finally, Chiefs Spotted Tail, White Thunder, Milk, and Two Strike agreed to hand over a number of children. At Pine Ridge, it went a little easier, and altogether, Pratt left Sioux country with sixty boys and twenty-four girls. A return trip to Indian Territory, where Pratt had sent two Hampton boys as advance agents, resulted in additional recruits, thirty-eight boys and fourteen girls. Meanwhile, Pratt had arranged for eleven of his original prisoner-students from Ft. Marion to be sent up from Hampton. On November 1, 1879, Carlisle Indian School officially opened.⁴⁹

In a repetition of what had occurred at St. Augustine and Hampton, a parade of visitors descended on the campus to witness the miracle that Pratt was performing. As Pratt's photographs so dramatically illustrated, the Indians had arrived in a pitifully heathen state, clad in filthy blankets

and moccasins, their bodies and long hair ornamented with all variety of shabby trinkets. As reported by the *New York Daily Tribune*, the new recruits were as foreign "to the ways of civilization as so many freshly captured wolves."⁵⁰ But as they marched and drilled in their new uniforms, as they stumbled over the rocky paths of the printed page, as they mastered the new weapons required for the struggle ahead of them—the hammer, saw, and carpenter's plane—they seemed to have about them the semblance of civilized men and women. Indeed, after just three and a half months of Carlisle's existence, a visiting delegation composed of Commissioner Schurz and members of the House Committee on Indian Affairs and the Board of Indian Commissioners concluded that the change wrought in the Indians was nothing less than "astounding."⁵¹

How did the students feel about the ordeal they were undergoing? On October 6, 1880, one year to the day that the contingent of Sioux had arrived from Rosebud and Pine Ridge, Pratt brought the school together for an anniversary ceremony. In his usual straightforward manner, he asked students the question: Should the work at Carlisle be carried forward? According to one account, "Every hand went up in favor of continuing it, and some of the boys even stood up and held up both hands." One of the teachers then read a poem she had composed especially for the occasion, putting into rhyme what she presumed the Indians were feeling but could not express in their new language. "Anniversary Day, 1880" asked the question:

Are we the same boys
Who, with trinkets and toys,
Moccasins, blankets, and paint,
And a costume most quaint,
On the 6th of October,
The long journey over,
Came to this friendly roof,
One year ago?

The answer:

Yes, we are the very same
Who to these good Barracks came,
Where kindly friends a welcome gave us,
Did all they could to teach, and save us,
From idle habits, and bad ways.
And carry us safely through the maze
Of reading, writing, and of talking

And even have improved our walking;
 This we learn at dress-parade,
 Where, like soldiers, we are made
 To face, and march, and counter-march,
 While the Band under the arch
 Of the stand . . .
 With their bugles and coronets, cymbals and drum,
 Play old "A.B.C."—then with double-quick run
 To our quarters we go,
 And you hardly would know
 We're the very same boys,
 Who, on the 6th of October,
 The long journey over,
 Came to this friendly roof,
 One year ago.³²

PRATT'S VISION

In establishing Carlisle, Pratt created the prototype for yet a third approach to Indian schooling, the off-reservation boarding school. As the tenacious and outspoken headmaster of Carlisle for the next twenty-five years, he would remain the single most important figure on the Indian educational scene. For that reason, his views demand further exploration, and in doing so, it is important to remember the singularity of conviction with which they were advanced. Indeed, Pratt's uncompromising nature and his tendency to adhere to absolutes were central to his being. Having fought and lived among Indians and having engineered the St. Augustine experiment, Pratt was fully convinced that he understood Indians and their needs better than most, and he had nothing but disdain for those who criticized his methods. This single-mindedness, coupled with a tendency to vent his spleen against those who saw matters differently, would in time produce two altogether contradictory assessments of his character. Some clearly regarded him as a righteous warrior on behalf of Indian welfare; others would come to see him as a bellicose and arrogant zealot. He had a particular talent for ranking his superiors. Eventually, they tired of him and he was dismissed. In the meantime, he was a formidable campaigner for his ideas.³³

Pratt liked Indians, but he had little use for Indian cultures. Believing that Indian ways were in every way inferior to those of whites, he never questioned the proposition that civilization must eventually triumph over savagery, but this did not require the extinction of the race. As he once pointed out, his position differed slightly from the popular slogan in the



Richard Henry Pratt, superintendent of Carlisle Indian School, with three students, ca. 1880. (Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution)

West that held that the "only good Indian is a dead one." Instead, Pratt subscribed to the principle, "Kill the Indian in him and save the man." The solution to the Indian problem lay in the rapid assimilation of the race into American life. As to how this might be done, he was certain he had discovered the means—schools. But it was not schools per se that mattered; only off-reservation schools located in civilized communities were capable of accomplishing the task ahead. Schools on the reservation, at least by themselves, could never succeed.⁵⁴

The basis for the Indian's inferiority, therefore, was cultural, not racial. Pratt was adamant on this point. The difference between a savage and a civilized man could be explained by environment.

It is a great mistake to think that the Indian is born an inevitable savage. He is born a blank, like the rest of us. Left in the surroundings of savagery, he grows to possess a savage language, superstition, and life. We, left in the surroundings of civilization, grow to possess a civilized language, life, and purpose. Transfer the infant white to the savage surroundings, he will grow to possess a savage language, superstition and habit. Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit.⁵⁵

Environment was everything. On one occasion, Pratt illustrated this point by telling the story of one of Carlisle's first recruits, a sixteen-year-old "light-complexioned" boy collected at Rosebud Agency. "He came in blanket, leggings and moccasins," Pratt recalled. "His hair was long and matted. He was as dirty and as much covered with vermin as any in the party. He spoke no word of English, but could speak the Sioux language with as much fluency as the others." The boy's parents, he explained, were both white. While crossing the plains, the party had been attacked by the Sioux. The father was killed, and the pregnant mother was taken captive and had eventually married among the Sioux. Meanwhile the baby was raised as a "white Indian." But when he came to Carlisle he was Sioux through and through. In fact, Pratt explained, the boy's teachers found that, although possessing a good mind, "he learned English with less readiness and made slower progress than many of the Indian boys who came with the same party and under like circumstances." This was just one illustration of a larger truth, Pratt told his audience. "There is no restless clog placed upon us by birth. We are not born with language, nor are we born with ideas of either civilization or savagery." The white child was potentially a savage, just as the Indian child was potentially civilized.⁵⁶

Given the importance of environment, Pratt was unbending in his criticism of all those forces that perpetuated tribal cohesion and identity. The

heart of the problem was the so-called Indian system. With its herding and massing of Indians on reservations, with its endless gifts of food and clothing, with its paternalistic governance of all things having to do with Indians, the Indian system only served to prolong the tribal relation. "We make our greatest mistake in feeding our civilization to the Indians instead of feeding the Indians to our civilization," he observed. The present reservation system worked at "colonizing" Indians, whereas Carlisle worked at "individualizing" them. Again, the answer to the question of how to solve the Indian problem lay in immersing the Indians into the mainstream of American life. "The boy learns to swim by going into the water; the Indian will become civilized by mixing with civilization."⁵⁷

Given his assimilationist stance, one might expect to find Pratt an ardent supporter of land allotment. Although endorsing it as one mechanism for undermining tribalism, he was disturbed by the tendency of some to view it as an all-encompassing solution to the Indian problem. Pratt was skeptical of the Dawes Act for two reasons. First, he was adamant on the point that education should proceed land allotment and citizenship, not follow it. Second, Pratt was convinced that allotment, although it might succeed at breaking up reservations as political entities, would continue to perpetuate Indian communities. The allottee was "still chained to the locality and neighborhood in which the commune before prevailed, and for that very reason the influence of the commune and the old system will continue."⁵⁸ As for Pratt's solution to the land issue: "I would blow the reservations to pieces. I would not give Indians an acre of land. When he strikes bottom, he will get up."⁵⁹

It was precisely because Pratt favored the rapid and absolute assimilation of the Indians that he was so critical of reservation schools. Reservation schools, he maintained, were still Indian schools, surrounded and ultimately engulfed by the conditions of reservation life. The reservation school said to the Indian child: "You are Indians, and must remain Indians. You are not of the nation, and cannot become of the nation. We do not want you to become of the nation." It said this not so much in words as in practice. In the reservation school, civilization could only be presented to the children as a theoretical concept; they could not experience it firsthand. In such schools, Pratt argued, Indian children could never be prepared for competition with "the more skillful, aggressive, and productive race"—the white man. If Indian children were to be assimilated, they must be gotten into the "swim of American citizenship. They must feel the touch of it day after day, until they become saturated with the spirit of it, and thus become equal to it."⁶⁰

This was what Carlisle proposed to do, remove children from the isolating, tribalizing influence of the reservation and immerse them in a totally civilized environment. The question arises here: Wasn't Carlisle, by virtue

of the fact that it was an exclusively Indian school, also segregating Indian youth from the "experience" of civilization? Not so, claimed Pratt. The ultimate rationale for the off-reservation school lay in its capacity to integrate students into the civilized community beyond the school's walls through the so-called outing system. The idea for the outing system had come from Pratt's experience in St. Augustine with integrating his prisoners into the economic life of the city. Pratt had long ago concluded that this aspect of the St. Augustine system had been vital to his success. During the first year of Carlisle's operation, Pratt initiated the idea anew, the first summer distributing eighteen students among Pennsylvania farm families. In a few years, the outing experience had become a central component in the school's program. Living among white families, Pratt asserted, the Indian student rapidly mastered the English language, internalized the habits of industriousness, and generally speaking, acquired the everyday habits of civilized living. Although at first student outings were only for the duration of the summer, Pratt was soon placing students for a year at a time, thus enabling them to attend the public schools in their families' respective communities.⁶¹ Indeed, public schools were the ideal. But Pratt cautioned that it would be a waste of time to educate Indians in Indian public schools in the West. Again, this would only result in more segregation. The ideal solution—Pratt's fantasy—was to scatter the entire population of Indian children across the nation, with some 70,000 white families each taking in one Indian child.⁶² That, of course, would be the ultimate outing system, the ultimate solution to the dilemma of how to assimilate Indians. But as things stood, the off-reservation boarding school offered the most effective alternative.

Was Pratt opposed to all reservation schools? Not really. As a practical matter he came to accept the fact that the reservation boarding school would always constitute an element in the emerging Indian school system. The important thing was not to overestimate their capacity to assimilate. At Lake Mohonk he told his audience that the reservation boarding school was like a "hot-bed." "It may give the seeds a start," he said, "but it cannot grow cabbages."⁶³ Pratt conceived of Indian schooling as an open-ended affair. And although he would have preferred that all Indian children experience civilization firsthand, he recognized that many would not. The important thing was not to place any limitations on Indian students' aspirations.

I believe in Indian schools at the agencies. I believe in mission schools at the agencies. But I believe in them only as the merest stepping-stones, the small beginnings that will start to a reaching after better things. We must have schools away from the Indian reservations, plenty of them; but these should be only tentative, additional

stepping-stones, higher in the scale than the agency schools, but still far below the top. Our Indian children must be educated into the capacity and the courage to go out from these school[s], from *all these schools* into our schools and into our life."⁶⁴

The Carlisle slogan would always be: "To civilize the Indian, get him into civilization. To keep him civilized, let him stay."⁶⁵

Meanwhile, the savage in the Indian must be obliterated. Pratt never forgot that in his crusade to assimilate Indians, he was waging a kind of war. In April 1880, when Pratt's request that another officer from his regiment be detailed to Carlisle to assist him in his work received a negative response from General William T. Sherman with the comment that army officers better served their country in their regiments, a furious Pratt protested directly to President Rutherford B. Hayes: "*I am at this time, 'fighting' a greater number of 'the enemies of civilization,' than the whole of my regiment put together, and I know further that I am fighting them with a thousand times more hopes of success.*" He continued:

Here a Lieutenant struggles to evolve order out of the chaos of fourteen different Indian languages! Civilization out of savagery! Industry and thrift out of laziness! Education out of ignorance! Cleanliness out of filth! And is forced to educate the courage of his own instructors to the work, and see that all the interests of his Govt. and the Indian as well are properly protected and served.⁶⁶

War was indeed hell.

THE RISE OF OFF-RESERVATION SCHOOLS

Reports of Pratt's and Armstrong's successes at civilizing Indians were welcome news to policymakers. Indeed, Carlisle was scarcely under way when Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz announced that another off-reservation school would soon open, this time in the far west—Oregon.⁶⁷ Others were to follow. Meanwhile, support for Pratt's ideas also came from agents in the field. Having observed firsthand the detrimental influence of reservation life on agency schools, a number had come to the same conclusion as Pratt: Indian children would have to be removed from the reservation environment altogether if they were going to be effectively assimilated. Thus, in 1881, after an agent at Crow Creek Agency confessed that his boarding school had produced meager results and the day schools had proven to be a "total failure," he added, "The only practical educational measure thus far adopted for Indian children is the estab-

lishment of the schools at Carlisle and Hampton."⁶⁸ Although such commitment were common, it should be noted that agents were not of one mind on the question. Early on, especially after the first trickle of students began to return from distant schools, a number of agents expressed grave concerns over the wisdom and practicality of educating students so far away from their homes. But initially there was sufficient support at the agency level to reinforce policymakers' early enthusiasm for off-reservation schools.⁶⁹

Reform organizations also lent support. In fact, for several years, philanthropists looked upon Pratt as a sort of Moses for the Indians. He had demonstrated what Christian reformers so passionately believed: the Indians' deficiencies were to be explained by environment, not race, and education was the path to their transformation and citizenship. Because of Pratt, Herbert Welsh proclaimed at Mohonk, "We need no longer ask the question, Can the Indian be civilized?" As for Merrill Gates, he had seen the photographs.

The years of contact with ideas and with civilized men and Christian women so transform them that their faces shine with a wholly new light, for they have indeed "communed with God." They came children; they return young men and young women; yet they look younger in the face than when they came to us. The prematurely aged look of hopeless heathenism has given way to that dew of eternal youth which makes the difference between the savage and the man who lives in the thoughts of an eternal future.⁷⁰

The Christian reformers were an important factor in the expansion of the Carlisle idea. As a group, however, they were less adamant on the point of whether all children should have an off-reservation experience. It was a generalized faith in education, rather than a commitment to any one institutional form, that shaped most philanthropic thinking. Still, most were convinced that the day school by itself could never make over the Indian children and that some form of boarding school experience was necessary. Meanwhile, they perceived the off-reservation school as playing a central part in the assimilation effort.

In 1884, four more off-reservation schools were opened at Chilocco, Oklahoma; Genoa, Nebraska; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Lawrence, Kansas. By 1902, the number of such schools had risen to a high of twenty-five (see Table 2.1). What is noteworthy about this list is that all schools subsequent to Carlisle were built in the West. Pratt had called for locating off-reservation schools in fully civilized white communities, locations where Indian students might observe civilization in its most advanced state, where white prejudice against Indians was almost nonexistent.

Table 2.1. Location and Opening Date for Off-Reservation Boarding Schools

Location of School	Date of Opening
Carlisle, Pennsylvania	1879
Chenawa, Oregon (Salem)	1880
Chilocco, Oklahoma	1884
Genoa, Nebraska	1884
Albuquerque, New Mexico	1884
Lawrence, Kansas	1884
Grand Junction, Colorado	1884
Santa Fe, New Mexico	1886
Fort Mojave, Arizona	1890
Carson, Nevada	1890
Pierre, South Dakota	1890
Phoenix, Arizona	1891
Fort Lewis, Colorado	1891
Fort Shaw, Montana	1892
Flandreau, South Dakota	1892
Pipestone, Minnesota	1893
Mount Pleasant, Michigan	1893
Tomah, Wisconsin	1893
Wittenberg, Wisconsin	1893
Greenville, California	1895
Morris, Minnesota	1895
Chamberlain, South Dakota	1897
Fort Bidwell, California	1898
Rapid City, South Dakota	1898
Riverside, California	1898
	1902

Source: Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1905, 41.

Note: The school at Riverside, California, was a replacement for a boarding school at Perris, California, which was opened in 1893.

tent, and where the psychological pull of reservation life on students would be minimized. Policymakers saw matters differently.

Several factors explain this development. First, there was the issue of expense; the costs involved in transporting thousands of Indian children over such long distances were perceived to be prohibitive.⁷¹ Second, many policymakers took exception to the idea that the Indian children should be totally cut off from all association with their geographical and familial origins. Supporters of this position were in a sense arguing for the best of both worlds; Indian children should be schooled at a distance from the reservation, but not so far away that they would lose all understanding and appreciation for the conditions to which they must someday return. Thus, the school superintendent at Albuquerque declared in 1885 his preference for off-reservation schools, where "the parents may often visit their children, and thus grow accustomed to their improvement, and

Table 2.2. Indian Schools and Average Attendance, 1877-1900

	Boarding Schools		Day Schools		Total	
	Number	Attendance	Number	Attendance	Number	Attendance
1877	48		102		150	3,598
1880	60		109		169	4,651
1885	114	6,201	86	1,942	200	8,143
1890	140	9,865	106	2,367	246	12,232
1895	157	15,061	125	3,127	282	18,188
1900	153	17,708	154	3,860	307	21,568

Source: Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1909, 89.

so that the children may spend each year a long vacation at their homes."²² Although such proposals were never universally adopted, the fact remains that in some off-reservation schools, parental visitations and student vacations, if not encouraged, were at least permitted. Finally, there were political motivations for establishing such schools in the West. The fact was not lost on boosters of growing frontier communities that establishing a sizable federal institution in the nearby vicinity could have a beneficial impact on the local economy. A large Indian school would be a source of employment for local residents, would purchase many supplies on the open market, and through the school's outing plan might supply a cheap source of labor for local farmers, ranchers, and businessmen. Thus, when the *Arizona Republican* in 1890 calculated the advantages of establishing an off-reservation school in Phoenix, it noted that such an institution would add an additional \$50,000 annually to the city's economy and that "in a few years our lands, now being so extensively planted with fruit trees and vines, would give employment to many of the pupils."²³ Politics, as well as philanthropy, contributed to the rise and location of off-reservation schools.

Although policymakers differed on such matters as how far and for how long the Indian children should be removed from their native environment, by the mid-1880s they were clearly committed to the idea that some sort of boarding school experience was essential (see Table 2.2). Attendance figures are revealing in this regard. Although attendance at day schools grew slightly through the 1880s and 1890s, boarding school attendance rose at an enormous rate. By 1900, of the 21,568 students in school, nearly 18,000 were attending either an off-reservation or reservation boarding school. And although not shown here, it is also noteworthy that as Congress continued to build off-reservation schools through the 1890s, a continually greater proportion of boarding school attendance can be attributed to off-reservation schools. By 1900, over a third of

boarding school students were in such schools. Once more, this percentage would continue to rise, until by the late 1920s, nearly half of boarding school enrollments were in off-reservation schools.²⁴ The figures on attendance are all the more striking when considering the fact that by the 1890s most of those attending day schools and many of those attending reservation boarding schools would eventually graduate to the next level of schooling. Thus, a high percentage of Indian children in the late nineteenth century were destined to have a boarding school experience.

Slowly at first, and then with ever-increasing momentum, the idea was gaining force that Indian children needed to be removed from their tribal homes for the assimilationist promise of education to be realized. Only by attending boarding school, policymakers were now convinced, could savage institutions, outlooks, and sympathies be rendered extinct. Only by attending boarding school could Indian youth, stripped bare of their tribal heritage, take to heart the inspiring lessons of white civilization. The educational solution to the Indian problem truly appeared to be at hand.