

CHILD ARTISANS OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS:
WOODCARVING AT FORT SHAW INDIAN SCHOOL, 1892-1910

by

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of the requirements for the degree

of

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the generations of American Indian children who survived, endured, resisted, flourished and sometimes perished in the federal/colonial boarding school movement. In particular I would like to acknowledge the lives of ten child artisans: Leatha Alder, Assiniboine-Sioux; B. Alvero, Assiniboine-Sioux; Rose Aubrey, Blackfeet; Mollie Buckle, Assiniboine-Sioux; Carolina Heath, Assiniboine-Sioux; Mary Johnson, Blackfeet; Charley Mitchell, Assiniboine-Sioux; Chester Pepion, Blackfeet; Willie Williamson, Blackfeet and Louisa Wirth, Assiniboine; who created the wood carvings while students at the Fort Shaw Indian School that have so captivated my heart and imagination.

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ABSTRACT

Numerous contract and federal Indian boarding schools operated on the northern plains during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though there were thousands of Indian children who attended schools in Montana, boarding school culture there remains very much shrouded in mystery. This thesis illuminates individual biographies that intersect with manual arts training at the Fort Shaw Indian School that operated from 1892-1910. Thirteen sunken-relief wood carvings were created in this central Montana school, and now reside in the Smithsonian's vast repositories. A closer look at circumstances that led to their manifestation at the off-reservation federal institution reveals a complex public history of race, gender and curriculum. These examples, and others, illustrate the great potential of museum artifacts as informative sources that tether us to a not-so-distant past. This significant material warrants inclusion in the patchwork of memories that inform our understandings of boarding school cultures nationally. Further, the artworks featured in this thesis elucidate the work of child artisans on the northern plains who had previously been all but silenced and help us re-engage with an era that is significant to our shared regional history.

CHAPTER I-INTRODUCTION

Nine year old Louisa Wirth was one of the first students who arrived at Fort Shaw Indian School in central Montana.¹ A fire at the Fort Peck agency school necessitated her transfer to Fort Shaw, far from her home in the northeastern corner of the state. Louisa's older sister, Christine, had been previously recruited to attend the country's premier Indian school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Between the agency school fire and the urging of the Indian Agent, the decision was made to send the three younger girls to the off-reservation boarding school at Fort Shaw. The Wirth sisters joined the inaugural group of students who arrived at the military fort turned new school December of 1892. A child of an Assiniboine mother and a German father, Louisa Wirth navigated two distinct worlds from a very young age.²

Louisa's maternal grandmother Walking Blue Mane, lived with her husband, Got Wolf's Tail in the Teton River Valley in central Montana during the mid-1800s. Got Wolf's Tail was a leader of the Red Bottom band of Assiniboine. Their daughter, Woman Who Kill's Wood, was born during the days of the horse and the buffalo, when the family still camped near the confluence of the Teton and Missouri Rivers.³ Her knowledge base was formed from relationships with her family and Assiniboine clan

¹ The Fort Shaw Indian School operated from 1892-1910 in the Sun River Valley of central Montana.

² Insight about Louisa Wirth's life comes from several sources including the Records of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Field Office Reports, Records of Non-Reservation Schools, Records of Fort Shaw Indian School, Register of Pupils Register of Pupils (hereafter called *Register of Pupils*), 1892-1908, vol. 1, entry 1361, accession number 8NS-075-93-223, record group 75, National Archives, Denver. The author corresponded with Bill Thomas (great-nephew- in-law of Louisa Wirth) who gave access to his unpublished manuscript which features accounts of family history that includes the Wirths, March 2011. See Bill Thomas's "Early Life and Times of the Montana Smith Family," 1995 (hereafter called *Early Life*).

³ Thomas, 9.

whose values and ideals emphasized life ways that allowed survival in the natural world in relative harmony; as was typical of indigenous upbringings.⁴ Treaty negotiations in the 1850s established a great northern reserve for several Indian nations including the Assiniboine (Nakoda), Blackfeet (Pikuni or Piegan), and Gros Ventre (A-a-ninin).⁵ The early and middle parts of the century marked severe devastation from plagues and disease though active trade with Euro-American merchants continued.⁶ With the bison all but annihilated, the family moved northeast near the present day town of Poplar, Montana close to the agency.⁷ Sometime after becoming the wife of an Englishman named Henry Archdale who worked at a trading post on the upper Missouri, Woman That Kills Wood was widowed with two small children. She later married Jacob Wirth, a German immigrant who had arrived in America years earlier and migrated westward. The blue-eyed Wirth became a soldier for his new country in late 1860s and traveled to forts along

⁴ “Native people have always valued education. The educational systems designed to transmit tribal knowledge over the centuries are formally organized, consciously constructed systems that value student initiative and intellectual engagement [...],” K. Tsianina Lomawaima, “American Indian Education: *by* Indians versus *for* Indians” in Philip J Deloria and Neal Salisbury, eds., *A Companion to American Indian History*, (Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 423.

⁵ Though each indigenous nation had and has their own names for themselves that are far more appropriate than the common Euro-American counterparts, the latter are frequently used in this manuscript. I do attempt to reference native nomenclature, though I acknowledge that much additional research is needed in many occasions to do this. For example, the name Assiniboine has French origins meaning “cooks with stones” and was given to them by their Ojibway neighbors. Assiniboine educator Clover Smith states, “[...]we know ourselves as Nakoda- Nakoda people[...].” The Wadopana (canoe paddlers) and Hudasanak (red bottom) bands of Assiniboine are now split between two reservations in Montana, Fort Belknap and Fort Peck. Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) Indian Education for All Teacher Guide, *Tribes of Montana and How They Got Their Names* (Helena: OPI 2009, revised 2010), 15-21; David Miller, et. al., *The History of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, 1800-2000* (Poplar: Fort Peck Community College, 2008), 56. Many other tribal nations participated in treaty making on the Great Plains during the second half of the 19th century that are not included here.

⁶ In 1857 the agent for the Blackfeet estimated that a smallpox epidemic, “...killed 2,000 persons, and of these, 1,200 were Assiniboines,” Miller, 49.

⁷ Thomas traces his ancestry and that of his late wife, who was the great-niece of Louisa Wirth. He includes an excerpt from a letter found in the Fort Peck Archives (published in the “Wotanin Wowapi”) that was addressed to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, J.D.C. Atkins in 1886. Got Wolf’s Tail is quoted as saying, “Sir, [...]I have lived here on the Missouri River with my people more than sixty years[...]I have been chief of these people about forty-five[...]” he further indicates that the band had lived at Wolf Point for eleven years at this time. His letter is signed: “Red Stone, Chief of Wolf,” in Thomas, *Early Life*, 4-9.

the upper Missouri River waterways. Wirth served as an Indian scout and later worked as a baker in Montana Territory.⁸ As his new life in the west unfolded, he married Woman That Kills Wood and they had several children including Lizzie, Louisa and Nettie.⁹ The Wirth children attended Euro-American-administered Indian schools that sought to institute systematic acculturation through education. Shortly before the close of the year in 1892, nearly thirty-five Assiniboine-Sioux children said goodbye to their families and were loaded on a train bound for Great Falls. On a cold December day, Louisa and her sisters were transferred from the train cars and loaded into the first wagonloads of children to arrive at Fort Shaw nearly 400 miles from their homes.¹⁰

Unraveling the Threads

It was not until 1888 that the Fort Peck Reservation was clearly established for the Assiniboine and Sioux (Lakota and Dakota) along Montana's Hi-Line.¹¹ Numerous mission schools operated on the northern plains in addition to the agency schools. Though the school at her home reservation re-opened, Louisa remained at Fort Shaw until

⁸ Thomas states that Wirth enlisted with the 13th Infantry and arrived at the Jefferson Barracks in Missouri January 1, 1866. Like many soldiers after the Civil War ended, Wirth was sent to the Unorganized Territories along the upper Missouri river in 1866. There he was stationed to guard and build forts designed to protect river travelers. He can be linked to several forts including Fort Buford in North Dakota and Fort Union in Montana though he transitions from a government employee to more of an independent contractor; Thomas, *Early Years*, 6, 18-22.

⁹ Jacob Wirth was born in Wuerttemberg, Germany where his father owned a bakery. After immigrating to the United States he joined the army and served as a cook and a baker at Fort Buford, and went on to work as the baker at the Fort Peck Agency School, *Ibid.*, 23-7.

¹⁰ For a more extensive account of the Wirth children's background and arrival at Fort Shaw see Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith's *Full Court Quest: The Girls from Fort Shaw Indian School Basketball Champions of the World* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008). Louisa Wirth was accompanied to Fort Shaw Indian School by her older sister, Lizzie, twelve year old, and her younger sister Nettie, six years old, *Ibid.*, 28.

¹¹ Montana's Hi-Line describes the northern portion of the state where a railroad line runs east to west, OPI, *Montana Tribes Their History and Location*, (Helena: OPI, 2009), 40-42.

after her sixteenth birthday.¹² She advanced through the primary courses, mastering reading, writing and basic arithmetic as her years at Fort Shaw passed. In the two-hundred plus student body at Fort Shaw, Louisa had many friends and interacted with teachers and administrators at the industrial school. As a female student, she likely made countless uniforms, bedding, and other items to meet the schools needs. These were manufactured by hand in the vocational classes for girls at Fort Shaw that included cooking and laundry. Though art was not a course offered at Fort Shaw, industrial training at the school included some forms of drawing during Louisa's tenure there, and these classes were open to both boys and girls.¹³ Officials touted the school as the foremost educational institution for Indian youth available in Montana, and the industrial school earned a positive reputation for its progressive nature. Efforts to include both genders in the manual course work at the school coincide with prevalent national values towards females and industrialization. Scholar Robert Trennert explores the prerogative of the federal schools to "transform female [student's] into a government version of the ideal American woman."¹⁴ The impact of acculturation efforts toward female students is reflected in the physical outcomes of curriculum at Fort Shaw.

Colonel Richard Pratt, the mastermind of the inaugural off-reservation school, Carlisle Industrial Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, famously urged the

¹² *Fort Shaw Register of Pupils*, 43.

¹³ Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896); hereafter referred to as Annual Report, preceded by year.

¹⁴ See Robert Trennert, "Educating Indian Girls at Nonreservation Boarding Schools, 1878-1920," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 3, (July 1982), 271.

establishment of institutions that resembled prison camps and military schools.¹⁵ Pratt vehemently expressed the achievements that could be made with manual and vocational training for Indian students, sentiments that were echoed in similar institutions across the country. One of his infamous slogans called for schools to “kill the Indian, in order to save the man.”¹⁶ The first superintendent of Fort Shaw Indian School, Dr. William Winslow, hailed from the already successful Chilocco Indian Agricultural School in Oklahoma. The large barracks and buildings on the grounds at Fort Shaw would serve the new Indian school well, as would the land around it for instruction in raising cattle and farming. In the second school year’s annual report written in August of 1894, Winslow states, “we have carpenter, blacksmith, tailor and shoe shops[...]a great number are working on the farm...[and] receive instruction in the use of tools and woodworking.”¹⁷ Winslow sought to emulate the Carlisle Industrial School on a regional level. Like Carlisle, Fort Shaw soon boasted manual training for girls and was recognized nationally as a credible industrial training school for Indian children.¹⁸ This type of training was nothing new in the curriculum at Indian schools, though females

¹⁵ See Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classrooms: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904*, Robert M. Utley, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press 1964), 213-14; for comprehensive overviews and Indian responses to US assimilationist policies see Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indian, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, 1989). Hoxie’s book is especially helpful as it provides historical and political context for what was happening at the Fort Shaw Indian School; also see Francis Paul Prucha, *The Churches & the Indian Schools, 1888-1912* (University of Nebraska’s Press, 1979), Prucha’s work coincides with Fort Shaw’s years of operations and covers the work of missionary schools in close proximity to the school.

¹⁶ Richard H. Pratt, “The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites,” *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction*, 1892, 46; and *Proceedings and Addresses of the National Education Association*, (1895, 761-62), in Adams, David Wallace, *Education for Extinction, American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928* (University of Kansas Press, 1995), 52.

¹⁷ 1895 Annual Report, 388.

¹⁸ Guided by social Darwinist ideologies of white racial superiority, “the schools’ vocational training reflected federal intentions to fit Indian people into the lower socio-economic sectors of American society[...].” Margaret Archuleta, Brenda Child and K. Tsianina Lomawaima eds., *Away From Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1879-2000* (Phoenix: Heard Museum, 2000), 34.

were largely excluded up until this time. In a session on industrial training at the 1896 summer institute for Indian school teachers the supervisor of Indian Schools announced, “at Fort Shaw, the girls are taking it as well as the boys.”¹⁹

According to subsequent annual reports, hundreds of students received training in woodwork and carpentry at the school over its eighteen years in operation.²⁰ Courses in the carpentry shop were held twice a week for most students. Winslow later reported, “all lines of industrial work of the girls have been carried on. Some classes in wood carving were organized and very credible work done.”²¹ While we’ll never know what happened to all of the resulting artifacts, some of these students’ work ended up on a shelf in a cabinet at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) in Washington D. C. There, a set of thirteen wood relief carvings made by students at Fort Shaw includes a carving by young Louisa Wirth.²² While many details about Louisa’s time at the school remain unknown, some of her time, at least, was spent crafting a low-relief wood carving on nine-inch by ten-inch wooden plaque.

¹⁹ This comment was made by supervisor of Indian schools Rakestraw in response to a presentation of industrial training in Indian schools, “Report of the Superintendent of Indian Schools,” in 1896 Annual Report, 39.

²⁰ Winslow reports that twenty-five pupils were enrolled in the blacksmithing course, and the usual classes tailoring and shoe making shops offered. Impressively, “one hundred and fifty pupils received training in the carpenter shop in woodwork.” Their work included everything from simple knife work to larger construction by the older students, 1897 Annual Report, 356. This type of instruction is mentioned in several reports.

²¹ 1897 Annual Report, 356.

²² The art works are now housed in the Anthropology Department at NMNH’s vast repositories, The Museum Support Center (MSC), is a storage facility in Suitland, Maryland. The bulk of collections-based research was conducted by the author at MSC July of 2009. While Louisa Wirth’s name appears in many places as Louise, this author uses the first spelling as it appears this way on the wood carving at MSC, NMNH, E379,950-11 (original catalogue card lists the carving as 379950l).

Methodology: The Circulation of Meaning

We quiet the inner voices that mock our free will, comforting ourselves that clocks in their turning kill time. But the past is not dead. It lives in mind, as mind. Our thoughts arise, our words appear, our deeds emerge out of the past. Subtly or obviously, now is made of then. The past tests our uniquely human birthright, lending us the strength to act freely and cajoling us to deny innate potentials and create the future in its image.²³

The wood carvings from Fort Shaw were donated to the Smithsonian in the 1930s, yet are deeply embedded in the federal educational saga that began several decades earlier. This study considers boarding school artifacts as visual narratives or texts that fit into the expanding field of material culture studies. Archival and photographic records combine to re-create aspects of the environment in which the wood carvings were produced, therefore providing context for the contemplating of these distinct three-dimensional data. In his work, *Material Culture*, folklorist Henry Glassie defines a three part process that artifacts such as the woodcarvings go through during their existence: creation, communication, and consumption. The last two stages can become perpetual as, after being collected, an object can be displayed and exchanged an endless number of times.²⁴

Layered meanings associated with manual education at a Northern Plains Indian boarding school provide an intriguing link with the not-so-distant past. After being created at Fort Shaw Indian School, the carvings were acquired by a private collector.

²³ Henry Glassie, "Meaningful Things and Appropriate Myths: The Artifact's Place in American Studies," *Prospects*, 3, (1997), 1.

²⁴ Glassie, *Material Culture*, 48; Suzanne Godby Ingalsbe, "Circulating the Past and Future Through Museum Artifacts" (paper presentation at the meeting for the American Anthropological Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, November 2010).

This individual partook in the second and final of Glassie's stages, communication and consumption. The items remained in the collector's home for almost thirty years before they were placed in a large national repository, where they have since remained in storage.²⁵ If one reformulates the routes and social lives of these artifacts to their current resting place, one must do so chronologically, as Glassie suggests.²⁶ So, the carvings themselves reflect both the assimilation policy of their era, as well as a continuity of native perspective as it is present in design. Like an in-situ exhibit, the carvings can be imagined in their former context during the boarding school era, in that particular social space characterized by ideologies of racial inferiorities and cultural genocide. The makers harnessed whatever information they had at hand, to design and produce these art forms.²⁷ They mastered techniques and skills in order to execute designs with planning and foresight. Their audience consisted of classmates, instructors, parents and fairgoers at local and national exhibitions.²⁸

The cross-cultural exchange of ideas that occurred in American Indian boarding schools, offers complicated and nuanced detail about life in an institution of this type at the turn of the century. Regarding tourist art of the northeast Ruth Phillips explores how

²⁵ The art works are now housed in the Anthropology Department at NMNH's vast repositories, The Museum Support Center (MSC), a storage facility in Suitland, Maryland. The bulk of collections-based research was conducted by the author at MSC July of 2009.

²⁶ Glassie, 49.

²⁷ For more on material culture as a primary source see Henry Glassie, *Meaningful Things and Appropriate Myths: The Artifact's Place in American Studies*, 1-49.

²⁸ Glassie, *Material Culture*, 40; Don Fowler and Nancy J. Parezo, *Anthropology Goes to the Fair: The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 2007), 136, 138; Robert Trennert, "Selling Indian Education at World's Fairs and Expositions, 1893-1904," in *American Indian Quarterly* 11, (1987), 203-22.

art can offer *autoethnographic* perspectives of the *contact zone*.²⁹ Phillips called for a closer analysis of previously ignored souvenir art and Native-made curios stating,

First and last, art historical techniques of analysis break the silence of the objects themselves. Souvenir wares comprise the object record of historical processes by which ideas of cultural difference have been constructed. They illuminate many individual acts of negotiation and cross cultural appropriation that are not recorded in any other place.³⁰

Both Pratt's terminology and Phillips notions about tourist art align well with the art that emerged from Indian schools.³¹ Boarding school material culture contains expressions of the students' own agency in addition to reflections of popular American arts and crafts, as well as social and religious dogma.³²

The theoretical basis for American Indian boarding schools emerged from an environment that sought to re-program native children into a version of their euro-American counterparts. This involved disenfranchising generations of children from the knowledge and culture of their indigenous ancestors as scholars K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty poignantly summarize,

The deeply paternalistic attitudes and oppressive practices of the early 20th century were rooted in the need to domesticate the most dangerous cultural differences—those defining Native peoples—that threatened American identity as a nation divinely ordained to “inherit the earth” from Indigenous nations. The

²⁹ The two terms in italics were coined by linguist Mary Louise Pratt in her examination of European colonization. Their meaning is implicit in Pratt's statement that, “Europe's construction of subordinated others [has] been shaped by those others, by the constructions of themselves and their habits that they presented to the Europeans,” Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6, in Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 16.

³⁰ Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 16.

³¹ Pratt describes auto-ethnographic expressions as those in which, “colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's own terms,” involving “partial collaboration with the conquer,” Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7.

³² Indian boarding schools were the quintessential *contact zone*, a “[...]space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.” Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 6-8.

moral authority of America's inheritance seemed to require the obliteration of American Indians, if not literally then culturally and linguistically.³³

There was little tolerance for diversity in the federal educational policy and curriculum, though several exceptions exist. Lomawaima notes that the spheres inhabited by native women and children were sometimes deemed culturally innocuous and therefore somewhat safe. Aspects of culture from the domestic arena of women and children were within, "[...] the Victorian wellspring of civilized living, [and] helped define the safety zone."³⁴ While Pueblo pottery and Plains Indian beadwork were considered relatively "safe" pursuits, any association with competitive economics like fishing or buffalo hunting or religion were deemed extremely dangerous and not tolerated.³⁵ The *safety zone* referred to by these scholars is present in the material record at NMNH. The discovery of tiny cradle boards and miniature tipis as well as numerous examples of Navajo loom-work and rug-making coincides with this theory.³⁶ This researcher agrees with Lomawaima and McCarty in that, "the ways in which federal employees parsed safe and dangerous cultural differences along gender lines deserves more scholarly attention," and attempts to supplement this dialogue with materials produced by unlikely individuals on the northern plains.³⁷ The material record indicates that while in the woodshop at Fort Shaw Indian School, female students were using tools that are typically associated with

³³ K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, *To Remain Indian: Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education* (Teachers College Press, New York, 2006), 43.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁵ Lomawaima and McCarty point out that a zero tolerance attitude over the first three decades of the 20th century discouraged American Indian culture and resulted in men being jailed for long hair, not wearing "citizen dress" or refusing to send their children to school, *Ibid.*, 43-4; they continue with an examination of the types of tolerable culture permitted in schools in their third chapter "Women's Art and Children's Songs: Domesticating Indian Culture, 1900-1928," in *To Remain Indian*, 2006, 43-90.

³⁶ Specific examples are discussed in chapter three of this thesis.

³⁷ Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain Indian*, 44.

males. Chisels, planers, gouges and other woodworking tools were employed to make the relief carvings like Louis Wirth's that now resides at the Smithsonian.³⁸

Objects remain long after generations pass and the spoken word disappears: in this case, providing a window into the boarding school milieu. Ojibwa scholar Brenda Child utilized boxes of letters in the National Archives to effectively explore voices of boarding school students and their parents in her groundbreaking study on Flandreau and Haskell Indian schools.³⁹ Likewise, I seek to explore the interactions between children, teachers, and administrators at the Fort Shaw Indian School by considering how objects may serve as *my letters*. The contemplation of three-dimensional artifacts reveals traits that are physically obvious at the surface level, as well as the less obvious meanings engraved in the manufacture and collecting of particular items.⁴⁰ Ultimately, these materials tether us to the past and evoke a subtle continuum.

Objectives

An evolving literature on the American Indian boarding school phenomenon reveals a complex array of federal goals, regional variance and individual experience. The influence of the industrial revolution and the arts and crafts movement (1880-1910) are considered, followed by a closer look at boarding school artifacts within the

³⁸ Of the thirteen woodcarvings considered in this project, at least five (possibly six) were made by female students and four by males, Author visit MSC, July 2009. NMNH, E379,950-0 through E379,950-12 in Accession 150,648.

³⁹ Brenda Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

⁴⁰ The study of material culture is both fluid and interdisciplinary. Scholar N. Mirzoeff states, "Visual culture also assumes that the process and products of culture are studied in relation to multiple contexts such as politics, economics, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age and power relations among others," in Mizoeff, N., "What is Visual Culture?" in N. Mirzoeff, ed., *The Visual Culture Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 1-13.

ethnographic collections of the NMNH. Photographs and archival records expand our understanding of regional practice and variation of educational philosophy behind specific manual training, and the reflexive natures of the materials pondered. Though the vocational training typically offered to female students included cooking, cleaning, sewing and gardening, archival and material culture records reveal changing concepts of what the appropriate gendered training was for Indian students. Several partial biographies intersect in this study and include students, instructors, collectors, curators and even this author. Boarding school manifestations are included in the ongoing and evolving dialogue concerning museum anthropology and American Indian art studies in this thesis. Material culture can illuminate the otherwise silenced experiences of some of the most marginalized characters in the history of the American west: young girls held captive in Indian boarding schools.

CHAPTER II- NAVIGATING THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Introduction

The turn of the 19th century was a devastating time for Indian people as land holdings drastically shrank and tribal sovereignty weakened against the ever expanding United States. The Bureau of Indian Affairs shifted from a place in the United States War Department to the newly created Department of the Interior in 1849. Various religious orders took up the chore to educate and *civilize* American Indians in following decades, desperately trying to appease the government's treaty obligations.⁴¹ In Montana Territory, the French Jesuits were in the company of the Salish and Kootenai simultaneously preaching and operating schools and shortly thereafter were amongst the Blackfeet as well.⁴² The government began operating agency day and boarding schools on the reservations in addition to the federally supported contract schools with various religious orders.⁴³ In 1871, Congress made the first direct appropriation for Indian

⁴¹ In 1819 the United States Congress passed the Indian Civilization Act. The Act authorized \$10,000 for religious orders to assist the government with their massive undertaking of *civilizing* Indian people. Many of the hundreds of treaty agreements had 6-16 clauses promising a schoolhouse and a teacher for education of the Indian's children which missionaries operated with the aid of government contracts.

⁴² The Jesuits arrive in the area in 1840 and established St Mary's Mission to the Salish in the Bitterroot Valley of southwestern Montana. A second mission was established at St Ignatius in the Mission Valley in 1854 among the Kalispel and PendOrille and the Sisters of Providence joined the Jesuits to open a kindergarten. St Peters Mission to the Blackfeet was opened in central Montana in the late 1860s.

⁴³ For example on the Blackfeet reservation alone numerous schools operated simultaneously and have left a complicated history. In 1869 Three Persons Agency opened a school on the Teton River, from the 1870's to the 1900s the Jesuit & Ursuline's operated St. Peters, and in 1896 they opened Holy Family Mission School. By 1889 Carlisle was recruiting students and Fort Shaw enlisted Blackfeet students from 1892-1910. These were followed by the Willow Creek Mission School and in 1904 Cut Bank Boarding School. The Browning Public School did not open until 1905 and over 20 day schools were in existence from 1910-1960 including Heart Butte, Old Agency, Star School and Swims Under School, Darrell Robes Kipp to Adolf Hungry Wolf in *The Blackfoot Papers: Pikuni History and Culture*, Volume One (Canada: Good Medicine Cultural Foundation, 2006), 192.

education, not long after a law was passed to allow for old military complexes to be turned into off-reservation Indian schools. A year later the commissioner of Indian affairs summarized the mission in his categorization of the nearly 300,000 American Indians in the United States (outside of Alaska) by degrees of acculturation as: “Civilized, 97,000; semi-civilized, 125,000; wholly barbarous, 78,000.”⁴⁴ The reservation system had encouraged removal and separation of Native Americans from the burgeoning Euro-American population; sentiments shifted and reformers reasoned that the Indian would soon be extinct if not Americanized. Soon after the establishment of Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania in 1879, off-reservation schools for Indian children opened up in the West (see fig. 1 below).

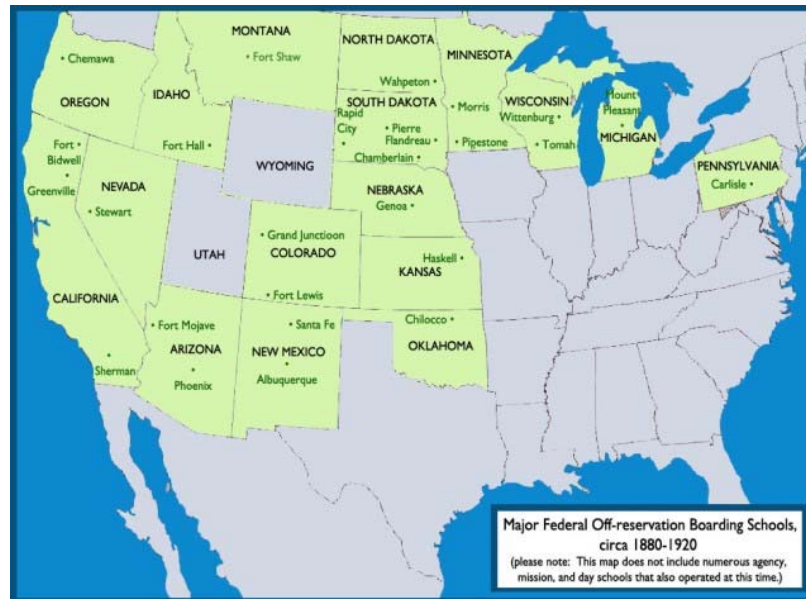


Figure 1: Off-Reservation Boarding School Map. Credit: Kristi Scott and Jennifer Woodcock⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Government Printing Office, 1872: 14, 15, 42 in Henrietta Mann, *Cheyenne-Arapaho Education, 1871-1982*, (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1997), 26.

⁴⁵ Most locations derived from Holly Littlefield’s *Children of the Indian Boarding Schools*. (Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, Inc, 2001).

The Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon commenced in 1880 followed by Haskell in Kansas (1884), Santa Fe in New Mexico (1890), Fort Shaw in Montana (1892), Flandreau in South Dakota (1893) and others.⁴⁶ Authorities had been coercing Indian parents to send their children to schools prior to 1880, but times worsened as attendance changed from voluntary to mandatory, demanding *civilization* or extermination.⁴⁷ Though many schools were located near agencies and on reservations, thousands of children were removed to schools that were far from their cultures and homes.⁴⁸ Off-reservation institutions were the direct outcome of demands by the public for Indian policy reform. Starting in 1883, Indian policy reformers known as the Friends of the Indians met annually at Lake Mohonk, NY to discuss Indian affairs.⁴⁹ The “Friends” advocated for the breaking up of the reservation system and assimilation into mainstream society. Though these religious reformers were sincere in their efforts to help Native Americans, their agendas were opposed to any differences in cultures.

As Native children were indoctrinated with national devotion and Christian faiths, they were socially positioned in the melting pot of American citizenry. Education was viewed as a mechanism to transform the Indian student into a culturally neutral individual. A proper schooling for Indian children included, “instruction in English and suppression of Native languages; conversion to Christianity and the criminalization of

⁴⁶ A list of twenty schools “nonreservation training schools” were operating in the fiscal year ending June 1894, including Fort Shaw. The total capacity for students at these institutions was 4,920 while the average attendance is reported as 3,609, *1895 Annual Report*, 11.

⁴⁷ The mandatory school attendance legislation was passed by Congress in March of 1893.

⁴⁸ “Indian boarding schools were key components in the process of cultural genocide against Native cultures, and were designed to physically, ideologically, and emotionally remove Indian children from their families, homes and tribal affiliations,” Archuleta, Child and Lomawaima, *Away From Home*, 19.

⁴⁹ Adams in 1988 wrote of the theory behind assimilation and its resonance in “Fundamental Considerations: The Deep Meaning of Native American Schooling, 1880-1900,” *Harvard Review*, vol. 58, no. 1, (1988), 1-28.

Native religions; an emphasis on manual labor [...] rather than academic training [...].”⁵⁰ Educations were meant to serve Native Americans in a practical manner in the work force and duly kept the schools in business.⁵¹ It was not long before Superintendent of Indian Schools criticized conditions at Chilocco School in Indian Territory, Oklahoma, observing that instead of being instructed in the pursuits of farming, male students were being, “[...] used simply as laborers.”⁵² The school was the handiwork of the first Superintendent of Indian Schools, Major James A. Haworth, and was already setting a foreboding mark of inadequacy and abuse.

The pathetic state of affairs that would evolve in the Indian school system continued for almost three decades into the next century.⁵³ Generations of stolen children were intended to create a gap in Indian culture that would all but eradicate it. Instead, they paved a unique path to re-enforced ethnic identities and cultural resilience that continues today. Moments of clarity presented in mediums such as material culture give access to moments in time through the blurred past. These glimpses meet a need for a place to begin, or provide a portal into the past, so that we may re-connect with an era of American history that warrants both national and local, recognition and reconciliation.

⁵⁰ Lomawaima, *American Indian Education: by Indians versus for Indians*, 422.

⁵¹ Vocational training often included harness and shoe making, blacksmithing, agriculture and animal husbandry for boys and domestic chores including laundry, sewing, cooking and cleaning were typical amongst the vocations taught to girls. An astounding investment of child labor kept the schools economically viable with the practice of these trades, see Archuleta, Child and Lomawaima, *Away From Home*, 30-37; for more on the nature and philosophy of industrial training see Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 149-154.

⁵² “Bad For Indian Children: Reforms Needed in Frontier School,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1885, according to this article featuring the statements of John H. Oberly superintendent for the 1885-1886 school-year.

⁵³ The Institute for Government Research published the Merriam Report in 1928 and harshly criticized both the reservation system and the boarding schools. Lewis Merriam, *The Problem of Indian Administration* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1928).

Boarding School Literature

There is a mountain of material available to the reader on the American Indian boarding school phenomena. Scholars have written about personal experiences, biographies of students, teachers and administrators, policy overviews, regional schools, boarding school photographs, and other topics concerning this *defining experience* for American Indian people.⁵⁴ The most comprehensive of these is the Heard Museum's exhibition, *Remembering Our Indian School Days: The Boarding School Experience*, that utilizes material culture from schools, as well as other media, to present a holistic view of what life at boarding schools was like. Perceptive boarding school accounts have recognized what were likely unintended results of the boarding school plight, the strengthening of ethnic identities and the formation of pan-Indian groups.⁵⁵ In recent

⁵⁴Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1928); Ibid., *My Indian Boyhood* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 193); Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985); D'Arcy McNickle, *The Surrounded*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press: 1936); Basil Johnston, *Indian School Days* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989); Francis LeFleshe, *The Middle Five: Indian School Boys of the Omaha Tribe*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1900); Esther Burnet Horne and Sally McBeth, *Essie's Story: The Life and Legacy of a Shoshone Teacher* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Devon A. Mihesuah, *Cultivating the Rosebuds: The Education of Women at the Cherokee Female Seminary, 1851-1909* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Robert Trennart, *The Phoenix Indian School: forced assimilation in Arizona, 1891-1935*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Clyde Ellis, *To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893-1920* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996); Henrietta Mann, *Cheyenne-Arapaho Education, 1871-1982* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1997); Scott Riney, *The Rapid City Indian School, 1898-1933* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); M. Vuckovic, *Voices from Haskell: Indian Students Between Two Worlds, 1884-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008); and this is just a sampling of the biographies, auto-biographies and studies on particular schools, there are many additional useful texts . For more on how the boarding school phenomenon has become a *defining experience* for American Indian people see K. Tsainia Lomawaima , "Estelle Reel, Superintendent of Indian Schools, 1898-1910: Politics, Curriculum, and Land," in the *Journal of American Indian Education*, vol. 35, no. 3, (May 1996), 1-2.

⁵⁵ A distinctive collective Indian identity was fostered in the schools as well as strengthening of individual tribal affinities, see Archuleta, Child and Lomawaima, *Away From Home*, 19. Lomawaima states, "For many students, a pan-tribal "Indian" identity also evolved in opposition to school authority," T. Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), xiii. "The boarding school is interpreted to be a complex cultural symbol and symbolic process which promotes and expresses a dynamic ethnic identity," Sally McBeth, *Ethnic Identity*

years, scholars have tapped into novel resources to explore these and other issues in the schools.

Reflections of former students' diverse experiences marked the height of boarding school literature in the last two decades of the twenty-first century. Sally McBeth's, *Ethnic Identity and the Boarding School Experience of West-Central Oklahoma American Indians* and K. Tsianina Lomawaima's, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*, include first-hand accounts through oral histories and have greatly advanced boarding school studies.⁵⁶ Lomawaima vies, "Native Americans who attended boarding schools are living archives, storehouses of memory and experience," and that by looking at experiences of children and young adults at Chilocco we can further explore, "ethnicity in the modern nation state and resistance to forced acculturation."⁵⁷ The use of oral history as primary sources goes back centuries in time and informs our views of personal experiences and social histories and should not be marginalized.⁵⁸

Lomawaima contends,

and the Boarding School Experience of West-Central Oklahoma American Indians (Washington D. C.: University Press of America, 1983), 2.

⁵⁶ McBeth, 1983 and Lomawaima, 1994; also see C. Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Tillacum Library, 1988), for the Canadian counterpart to this good work.

⁵⁷ "Personal narratives provide the concrete details of how children, separated from home, viewed and used the markers of identity inherited from home and learned at the school-tribal back-ground, language, degree of blood, physical appearance- to delineate peer groups (gangs among boys) and forge bonds that have survived over decades and generations," Lomawaima, *Prairie Light*, xiii.

⁵⁸ Julie Cruikshank states, "Oral transmission of stories is a panhuman activity, probably the oldest form of history making, and in many parts of the world has a continuing role in the production and reproduction of history." She contends that oral histories are often marginalized by privileged methods such as written, in "Oral History, Narrative Strategies, and Native American Historiography: Perspectives from the Yukon Territory, Canada" in Nancy Shoemaker, ed., *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 4-24.

Methodological boundaries have been expanded in Indian educational history... Interdisciplinary exchanges within American Indian studies, the cross-fertilization of historic and anthropological approaches within ethno history, and the introduction and resurrection of Indian voices, perspectives, and interpretations have all enriched the study of Indian education.⁵⁹

Methodologically there are many approaches that can be utilized to examine the complex processes embedded in the boarding school phenomenon.

Locally, dialogues about Catholic missionary schools have emerged over the decades. The most informative of these concerns St. Ignatius Mission in the Flathead Valley, St. Mary's in the Bitterroot Valley and St. Peter's Mission near present day Cascade, Montana.⁶⁰ The Jesuit's effort at St. Peter's Mission highlights a specific genre of Indian education locally that has been explored by several scholars.⁶¹ A focus on the Ursuline Sister's school for girls that also operated at St. Peter's expands on the activities at this mission greatly. The Ursuline Sisters are among the early religious orders linked with the Indian educational movement in Montana years prior to the establishment of the Fort Shaw Indian School. Ursuline Sister Genevieve McBride expanded on this work in the 1970s with her book, *The Bird Tail*.⁶² In 1996 Sister Irene Mahoney published *Lady*

⁵⁹ Lomawaima, *American Indian Education: by Indians versus for Indians*, 435.

⁶⁰ Lawrence Palladino, *Indian and White in the Northwest* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1894); Wilfred Schoenberg, *Jesuits in Montana, 1840-1960* (Portland: The Oregon-Jesuit, 1960); Lucille Evans, *St. Mary's in the Rocky Mountains* (Stevensville: Montana Creative Consultants, 1976); Francis Prucha, "Two Roads to Conversion: Protestant and Catholic Missionaries in the Pacific Northwest," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* (Seattle: The Washington State Historical Society, 1988).

⁶¹ A large collection of Jesuit materials is housed at the catholic archives at Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA where Schoenberg, a Jesuit priest himself, researched primary materials for "Historic St. Peter's Mission," *Montana the Magazine of Western History* 11, no 1 (Winter 1961), 68-85.

⁶² Genevieve McBride, O.S.U., *The Bird Tail* (New York: Vantage Press, 1974); Clotilde McBride, *Ursulines of the West* (Mt. Angel: Mt. Angel Press, 1936), 29-58.

Blackrobes that outlines the Ursulines history in the state of Montana with archival documentation created and collected by the Montana Ursuline Sisters.⁶³

Renewed attention towards the famous Fort Shaw Indian School girls' basketball team has culminated in a recent film that has been well received.⁶⁴ Combining archival resources and family histories gleaned from interviews with Fort Shaw descendents, the fascinating story of the girls champion basketball team and their trip to the Saint Louis World's Fair in 1904 has unfolded. Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith's book, *Full-Court Quest: The Girls from Fort Shaw Indian School: Basketball Champions of the World*, took over a decade to research and includes the work of students from the Sun River Valley who were working on an oral history project for the region.⁶⁵ Numerous interviews, phone conversations, email correspondence and letters from descendents are combined with meticulous archival research and a good understanding of Montana history in this exceptional account. Peavy and Smith's research is particularly meaningful and inspiring as it is anchored in personal communication, which lends contemporary perspectives to the outcomes and memories surrounding colonial educations of indigenous Montanans. As broad as this and related works are, there is a need to expand the dialogue even further to include considerations of art and craft work

⁶³ Irene Mahoney, O.S.U., *Lady Blackrobes: Missionaries in the Heart of Indian Country* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2006).

⁶⁴See Montana Public Broadcasting System's (PBS) documentary, *Playing for the World: The 1904 Fort Shaw Indian Girls Basketball Team* and OPI's 2010 curriculum based on this film for Indian Education for All programming in public schools. The DVD study guide was written by retired educator Dorthea M. Susag of Fort Shaw High School who initiated the Montana Heritage Project. See lesson plan via web link: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/Pdf/IndianEd/Search/PlayingfortheWorld.pdf>

⁶⁵Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith, *Full-Court Quest: The Girls from Fort Shaw Indian School: Basketball Champions of the World* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); the authors utilized interviews with Fort Shaw Indian School descendents that were initiated by Susag's students.

created by children in schools on the northern plains. These alternative sources, including artifacts, illuminate responses to curriculum including resistance, individuality, creativity and acculturation.

Art & Industry in Indian Schools

Many corresponding factors led to the record of material culture left behind from the Indian boarding school phenomenon. When the nation's first off-reservation schools opened, the industrial revolution (1820-1870) had greatly increased the demand for laborers and factory workers. A movement to establish manual training in the public schools system spawned in part from an exhibition at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia featuring the Russian Institute for Manual Training. The Russian System advocated mechanical instruction that prepared children for industrial factory work. This compartmentalized approach focused on one or two learned skills, and gave way to educational pedagogies that favored the development of the "entire child" that were prevalent in parts of Europe. Technical training and vocational preparation became quite popular across the country, and would linger as a main focus into the beginning of the next century, becoming a perverse trademark of the Indian schools.⁶⁶ Training in the manual arts was duly employed in the institutions; one of the lesser known of these is educational sloyd.

⁶⁶“Public schools which offered technical training tripled in the years 1890-1898,” Winona Garmhausen, *History of Indian Arts Education in Santa Fe 1890-1962* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 1988), 20.

Educational Sloyd

Sloyd could be described as a series of manual exercises conducted with wood or other materials that were designed to engage the entire child's psyche. This varied from the fashioning of small figures and shapes like triangles and squares, to joining corners, lathe work and larger construction. The term sloyd itself simply means handcraft. Though sloyd had its start in northern European countries like Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Norway; where in many places it was obligatory, it spread across the rest of Europe and into America. The system was popularized in Europe by Otto Salomon, who operated a famous sloyd training school in Sweden beginning seven years before Carlisle opened.⁶⁷ The general purpose of sloyd training was to encourage the development and progression of manual skills simultaneously with the intellectual capacity of the student. American reformists embraced the philosophies behind this form of manual training. Sloyd was soon after brought from Naas, Sweden to Boston, MA where many U.S. teachers were trained in the art and skills of educational sloyd, including those from Indian schools.

The practice was applied at Carlisle where a sloyd department operated under the direction of a Miss Jenny Ericson, a progressive position for a female teacher. Ericson was instructing in what were considered the *minor* manual arts, an acceptable craft as

⁶⁷ To learn more about the life of Otto Salomon (1849-1907) and his school that began in 1872 see Hans Thorbjornsson, "Otto Salomon," *Prospects: the Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, vol. XXIV, no. 3/4, (1994), 471-485; Doug Stowe, "Educational Sloyd: The Early Roots of Manual Training," *Woodwork Magazine*, (August 2004) 66-71. Additionally, an extensive report on sloyd can be found in an 1896 circular included in the Annual report of the Superintendent of Indian Schools (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1896), 35.

women moved from the cult of domesticity into the public sphere.⁶⁸ In her presentation at the Indian school teacher training institute in 1894 titled, “Manual Education as an Educational Factor,” Ericson contends that additional sloyd departments were needed nationally and further delineated Americanized sloyd defining the correct translation of the Icelandic term as being “[...] synonymous with manual training as distinguished from industrial or technical training.”⁶⁹ Though there are several mediums that can be used to teach sloyd, including paper, clay, metal and others, wood was the preferred material. The aptitude and precision achievable in wood sloyd enabled the practice to serve its highest purpose:

Sloyd has for its aim indirectly to prepare the child for life by training the hand as a servant of the brain. It develops self-reliance and independence; trains the child to habits of neatness, cleanliness, and order; it teaches habits of industry and perseverance, develops the physical powers, and trains the eye to the sense of form and the hand to general dexterity.⁷⁰

In her presentation, Ericson included several patterns for sloyd that she credits with being easy to understand and arranged in the, “most excellent systematic order.”⁷¹ Regarding instructors, Ericson stresses the importance to watching over the student and encouraging them to do their very best but in no way formatting or overly influencing the students’ project. She extols that “the gospel for every sloyd teacher” should be to, “never touch

⁶⁸ The impacts of acculturation efforts and the “prevalent national images regarding both Indians and women” is discussed by Trennert, *Educating Indian Girls at Nonreservation Boarding Schools*, 218-231.

⁶⁹ Ericson calls on the virtues of manual work of this type as noted by philosophers John Locke, Rousseau and Uno Cygnoeus, who collaborated with Salomon to develop sloyd for the US school system. Ericson also notes the appointment of manual training in the kindergarten system as founded by Friedrich Froebel, *1896, Annual Report*, 35-8.

⁷⁰ Annual report of the Superintendent of Indian Schools (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1896), 36-7.

⁷¹ Ericson credits the patterns with being developed in 1890 by a Finnish woman in Chicago, *Ibid.* 36.

the pupils' work.”⁷² That same year at the Haskell Institute in Kansas, E. C. Thayer spoke of the organic connection between sloyd and academic training in Indian schools. Sloyd continued to gain acceptance in the Indian schools, with an emphasis above all for course work that would, “teach the Indian how to work and a desire to work.”⁷³ Ericson was asked to continue with her presentation of sloyd the following summer at the Indian school teacher trainings.⁷⁴ Emphasizing the valuable relations between manual and academic training, these sentiments may have been applied to education at Fort Shaw. In several successive annual reports from the school, educational sloyd in the carpenters shop is a featured course of study.

Although few accounts exist that describe the process of woodcarving in the boarding school setting, there are photographs that give life and identity to this art. Carlisle students appear engaged with their projects while standing at benches in a sloyd workshop, circa 1900 (see fig. 2 below). The individual girls and boys wear aprons over their uniforms and hold hammers, planers, saws and other woodworking tools.

⁷² Ibid., 37.

⁷³ E. C. Thayer, Haskell Institute, presentation at the summer institute for Indian schools, Ibid., 84.

⁷⁴ Ibid.



Figure 2: “Sloyd Shop at Carlisle Indian School, Pennsylvania,” Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, photograph identification number: 280058

The mixed gender of the students is progressive and a female adult, presumably the instructor, stands in the background. To her right is a blackboard where “Sloyd” is centrally written in large letters and various designs, including a six pointed star, are featured. The woman in the picture may be Jenny Ericson or perhaps her replacement in 1902, Miss Anna Stewart.⁷⁵ Subtle information on agency, aptitude, and execution are transferred through close analysis. The example of the star on the blackboard more closely resembles the Start of David than the eight pointed star carved by Louisa Wirth. Wirth’s star is more similar to the design featured on traditional indigenous star-quilts

⁷⁵ When Jennie Ericson left Carlisle to teach at the new industrial school in San Juan, Puerto Rico, her position was filled by Miss Anna Stewart who reported on the sloyd shop at Carlisle in *Manual Training Magazine*, Volume III, Charles A Bennett ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1901-1902), 247.

and is perfectly proportioned on her wood carving.⁷⁶ This may have been achieved with careful measuring of mathematical increments; much like artifacts, visual culture communicates in ways that other sources cannot.⁷⁷

Fine Art & Native Industries

Parallel with sloyd education, famed English architect William Morris (1834-1896) encouraged the production of fine arts and crafts in the late 1800s; though this was in opposition to mass production brought about by the growth in industry. The arts and crafts movement (1880-1910), advocated simple forms and traditional crafts and was headed by Morris. Favoring the use of natural materials and hand-hewn manufacture embodied by high quality craftsmanship, the movement idealized decorative and applied arts.⁷⁸ This is particularly inscribed in Indian boarding school artifacts where in addition to pursuits in classic European arts like painting and sculpting, native industries were gaining appreciation. The functional purpose of traditional native aesthetics and designs were no longer seen as a terminal impediment by Morris's American constituents in the

⁷⁶ Ethnologist Christian Feest notes that regionally, “the predominant use of the star quilt or *sunburst* design may be best understood as a direct continuum of one of the earlier symbolic hide painting traditions,” C. Feest, “Native North American Art” (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 151-152, in Beatrice Medicine’s, *Learning to be an Anthropologist and Remaining Native* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2001), 167- 171.

⁷⁷ Blackfeet artist David Dragonfly commented on the mastery of mathematical concepts needed to accomplish the eight-pointed-star design, personal communication to author in Shelby, Montana, January 2010. Subsequent research has revealed that practical applications of mathematical concepts were conveyed through geometric designs including the star which can be applied to units of measure, algebra and geometry.

⁷⁸ William Morris’s Arts and Crafts Movement may have influenced the encouragement of native industries in Indian schools. The Movement was a direct reaction against machine designs of industrial revolution and gaudy Victorian décor and Morris argued for a revival of applied arts believing that fine crafts could be considered art, Susan Meyen, *More Than Curiosities: A Grassroots History of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board and Its Precursors, 1920-1942* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001), xii-xiii.

southwest, where many collectors acknowledged them to be rightfully fine arts.⁷⁹ In 1890 the Hampton Normal Institute in Virginia taught traditional beadwork, pottery and weaving as vocational courses.⁸⁰ Native curios and souvenirs had been marketed successfully since the 1700s in the northeast, often featuring a hybrid of aesthetic preferences resulting from interaction between female missionaries and native women.⁸¹ Designs similar to the morning star in Louisa Wirth's carving were incorporated by both groups.⁸² Sharing similarities with the tourist market, contemporary native industries were gaining attention in the schools.

Influence of Indian Educators and The Safety Zone

None of the schools had fine arts departments early on, and any form of drawing included in the curriculum was a facet of manual training. Carlisle was one of the few government schools to include arts training, but it did so for commercial intentions and in a European fashion.⁸³ By 1889 a progressive Indian Commissioner, Thomas J. Morgan (1889-1893) was in office and developed the first standard curriculum for Indian schools. Morgan's plan for Indian education emulated the public school system and included various types of manual training.⁸⁴ His first superintendent of Indian schools was a Dr.

⁷⁹ Kenneth R. Trapp, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life* (New York: The Oakland Museum and Abbeville Press, 1993), 18, 23, 66, 83, in Meyn, *More than Curiosities*, xii, xvii.

⁸⁰ Robert Schrader notes these efforts to promote Indian arts and crafts during the industrial period may also be responsible for native industries sustainability and survival, R. Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board: An Aspect of the New Deal Indian Policy* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 3-5.

⁸¹ Phillips, *Trading Identities*, 155-196.

⁸² Medicine, *Learning to be an Anthropologist and Remaining Native*, 167-171.

⁸³ Winona Gramonson, *History of Indian Arts Education in Santa Fe 1890-1962*, (Albuquerque: Sunstone Press, 1988), 19-20.

⁸⁴ Gramonson, *History of Indian Arts Education in Santa Fe 1890-1962*, 19-20.

Daniel Dorchester, and by 1898 the first female to hold this position, Estelle Reel, was in place. Reel had direct impact on curriculum taught in Indian Schools when she further developed Morgan's ideas concerning a Uniform Course of Study (UCS). Estelle Reel's UCS perpetuated the native arts and crafts movement with her encouragement of "native industries" and emphasized manual training that included basic industrial and domestic educations. Reel's ideas were embedded in the racist ideology of her time and believed that Indian children were destined to work in "fields, farms, shops and homes of white America."⁸⁵ Commissioner of Indian Affairs Francis Leupp spoke in favor of fostering native industries and arts in 1905 and several schools saw an opportunity to develop Indian students' commercial interest through arts and crafts.⁸⁶ Reel remained in her position until 1910, the year that Fort Shaw closed.

Commissioner Leupp established an art department at Carlisle under the direction of Winnebago artist, Angel DeCora. DeCora brought great advancements in the federal system for her encouragement and appreciation of native aesthetics. Her goal as an instructor was to "to train and develop the decorative instinct of the Indians to modern methods, and to apply it to up-to-date furnishings."⁸⁷ Teaching Native American art at Carlisle Indian School for almost a decade, DeCora continued to encourage native

⁸⁵ For a good overview of Reel's tenure see John Reyhner and Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 96-99. Estelle Reel's UCS encouraged native arts and cottage industries, see Archuleta, Child and Lomawaima, *Away From Home*, 31; for more on Reel's beliefs and ideology see Lomiwaima, *Estelle Reel, Superintendent of Indian Schools*, 6; For more see Estelle Reel, *Uniform Course of Study for the Indian Schools of the United States* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1900).

⁸⁶ Commissioner of Indian Affairs Francis E. Leupp's (1905-1909) time in office overlaps with the receding years of Fort Shaw Indian School.

⁸⁷ "Carlisle and those few government schools which included arts in their curriculum did so in a strictly European context and with a commercial interest," Gramonson, *History of Indian Arts Education in Santa Fe 1890-1962*, 18.

expression throughout her tenure, and contended that Indian students were making more than mere “curiosities for cabinets and museums.”⁸⁸ Certainly the influences of both administrators like Reel and individual teachers like DeCora and Ericson in classrooms are present in the material culture associated with schools. In the Trout Gallery in Philadelphia there are examples of oil and watercolor paintings produced by students at the Carlisle Indian School that are strictly European in nature.⁸⁹ While Pratt had offered courses in classic arts prior to Angel DeCora’s tenure, she specifically encouraged the use of indigenous designs and colors.⁹⁰

Lomawaima introduces the notion of the “safety zone” in her insightful collaboration resulting in a comprehensive study of the Indian boarding school trend and its implications.⁹¹ While some administrators and policies interpreted native expression as dangerous others saw it as useful.⁹² Oscillating perspectives on Indian art has become apparent in museum collections that are associated with Indian schools.⁹³ The variations

⁸⁸ Angel DeCora, “Native Indian Art,” *National Education Association of the United States Journal of Proceedings and Address of the Forty-fifth Annual Meeting* (July 1907): 1007. Angel DeCora, “Indians to Foster their Native Art” *The Indian Craftsman 1* (April 1909): 20, in Meyn., *More than Curiosities*, pxiii, xvii.

⁸⁹ Fraust, Molly et al. exhibition catalogue, *Visualizing a Mission: Artifacts and Imagery of the Carlisle Indian School 1879-1918* (Carlisle: Trout Gallery, Dickenson College, 2004).

⁹⁰ Sarah McAnulty, “Angel DeCora: American Artist and Educator.” *Nebraska History*, vol. 57, no. 2 (Summer 1976), 143-199.

⁹¹ Superintendent of Indian schools, Leupp, encouraged “culturally innocuous” expressions of ethnic identity including that of Native American art and music that did not clash with the “new social order,” Lomawaima, *American Indian Education: by Indians versus for Indians*, 429.

⁹² Estelle Reel’s efforts to instigate native crafts taught by indigenous artisans was short lived as “instruction by native women[...] inevitably brought girls into contact with the kind of tribal woman whose authority and respectability the schools were trying to undermine, that part of Reel’s plan did not survive her retirement,” Lomawaima, *Estelle Reel, Superintendent of Indian Schools*, 19.

⁹³ The Herd Museum in Phoenix, Arizona has a permanent exhibition, *Remembering Our Indian School Days: The Boarding School Experience*, that Archuleta, Child and Lomawaima, *Away From Home, 2000* is based on. Included in the exhibition and subsequent publication is a student-made table from the Hampton Museum in Hampton, Virginia. It was made about 1895 and “is an example of the beautiful and functional craftsmanship developed at early schools,” *Ibid.*, *Away From Home*, 34; in chapter three of this thesis I discuss weavings, carvings and beadwork that feature Native design and form.

in tolerance concerning native aesthetics have taken on two polar views. Educators like Pratt sought to stamp out everything indigenous by removing children from their cultures, placing them in white homes in summer “outing programs,” changing them physically (clothes, hair) and mentally (language, religion, socially), sparing nothing. Regardless, the hands of children away from home at boarding school crafted many of projects involving native industries, employing sometimes familiar colors and designs. Artifacts and archival sources from schools duly reflect distinctive instruction and the changing federal policy.

Collecting and Displaying Indian Schools & Students

Arts, crafts and utilitarian objects from 19th century Indian schools were collected and exhibited after production in classrooms and workshops. Boarding school officials showcased their students’ and schools’ accomplishments at local and national fairs.⁹⁴ The Americanization of Indian youth was often contrasted with archaic representations of pre-contact and reservation life in exhibits at the famous World’s Fairs.⁹⁵ When planning the model Indian school that would be constructed in Chicago 1893, Commissioner Morgan declared that the exhibition would, “[...] exemplify all that Indians are doing [...]” and offer a “[...] presentation of the educational work now in progress.”⁹⁶ Native industries were also sometimes featured, and visitors sometimes purchased native arts and crafts

⁹⁴Trennert, “Selling Indian Education at World’s Fairs and Expositions, 1893-1904,” 203-22.

⁹⁵ There were Indian exhibits in the 1876 Philadelphia World’s Fair (Centennial), 1893 Chicago World’s Fair (Columbian), 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair (Louisiana Purchase), 1906 Portland World’s Fair (Lewis and Clark), etc. When referring to the Indian Exhibit at the Columbian Exposition and the work of the Indian schools The Commissioner of Indian Affairs states, “This picture of Indian citizen in embryo ought to be offset by another view of the Indian as he appeared when America was discovered [...]” Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Press, 1892), 61.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 1892 Annual Report, 61; Archuleta, Child and Lomawaima, *Away From Home*, 30-37.

produced by students as souvenirs. While students from the schools were paraded as specimens for the general public in the larger venues, exhibition life duly provided an opportunity for travel and new experiences.⁹⁷ This elaborate production differs from the way that missionaries had earlier marketed Indian crafts simply as curios at tourist localities. This was done as a means to raise money for their on-going causes, civilization and conversion of Native Americans, and often resulted in materials featuring hybrid designs and forms. The commercialization of this material was one of the outcomes of missionary encouragement of native arts and industries.⁹⁸

In the National Museum of Natural History's anthropology collections there are hundreds of thousands of examples of material culture collected during the last half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. American Indian art and cultural heritage is among these collections structured from colonial desires and has roused much scholarly interest and debate. Many artifacts at NMNH were originally collected for exhibitions like the world's fairs and ended up after the fact in museum holdings.⁹⁹ In addition to exhibitions and the tourist trade, salvage ethnography was rapidly consuming ethnic arts across Indian country. Anything and everything associated with Native America culture was being collected, including that originating in Indian schools. Examples include both traditional and non arts and crafts, ranging from finely constructed furniture and classic European paintings, to woven baskets and earthenware pottery. Examining tangible

⁹⁷ For more on the Fort Shaw girls basketball team's experiences at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair see Peavy and Smith, *Full Court Quest*, 2008.

⁹⁸ Phillips, *Trading Identities*.

⁹⁹ "A complex accession of objects from the US Department of the Interior Exhibit at the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago World's Fair) of 1893[...]" were transferred to the National Museum in February of 1894, NMNH Department of Anthropology Accession Record: 027833. "[...] the San Juan School Agency exhibited at the Santa Fe Indian Fair in 1923," NMNH Department of Anthropology Accession Record: E358131, Author visit MSC, July 2009.

sources from boarding school settings allows us to re-engage and re-imagine aspects of American social and cultural history in a new and exciting way.¹⁰⁰ Artifacts help contextualize in a novel way, the combinations of ideas and beliefs that were effecting the production of art in Indian schools.

¹⁰⁰ Regarding the scholastic endeavors analyzing the development of American Indian art forms intended solely for the Euro-American consumer, “This work has focused on issues of innovation, continuity and adaptation, historical development, cultural brokerage, cross-cultural aesthetic translations, gender or sexual divisions of labor, miniaturization, stylistic simplification and formalization, stylistic development, and marketing, including the role of Euro-American middlemen/women and patrons.” Nancy J. Parezo, “Indigenous Art: Creating Value and Sharing Beauty,” in Philip J Deloria and Neal Salisbury, eds., *A Companion to American Indian History* (Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 223.

CHAPTER III- FRAYED CHORDS: NMNH BOARDING SCHOOL ARTIFACTS

Boarding School Ephemera & Collectors

As a result of intense collecting of Indian art and artifacts, large museums like the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. were established.¹⁰¹ It is within these walls that a connection to the boarding schools was sought and a framework questioned. Records from the National Museum identify at least thirty-nine items associated with Captain Richard Pratt, including an elk tooth dress he purchased on the museum's behalf in 1888 from a student at Carlisle. In the accession files, a letter from Pratt is addressed to the head of the Museum, Spencer Baird. He discusses Baird's earlier request for "a few Indian dresses," and Pratt states "No pupils having native suits have arrived since, but I have found a girls' suit in the hands of Rosa White Thunder who came two years ago."¹⁰² The dress and accompanying belt are the only two artifacts in NMNH museum collections that are directly associated with both Pratt, and the Carlisle Industrial School.¹⁰³ As Pratt acquired the expensive Sioux dress and accoutrements himself for the National Museum, he surely recognized both the beauty and the value of the traditional dress. On the contrary, a set of horse tack from an agency school clearly feature Euro-American aesthetics (see fig. 3 below).

¹⁰¹Barbara Hail and Shepard Kerch, eds., *Collecting Native America: 1870-1960*, (Washington D. C.: Smithsonian Press Institution, 1999); Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner, eds., *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

¹⁰² As stated in the letter, the dress is ornamented with about 400 elk teeth and was purchased from Rosa WhiteThunder, the daughter of a Sioux chief for forty dollars, ten less than she initially requested. Author visit MSC, July 2009, NMNH 015995.

¹⁰³ NMNH E76240(0-1) which once included the dress, a belt with brass tacks, a set of shell earrings, and a necklace., now only the belt and dress can be located in collections. These items are stated as having collected from the "Indian Industrial School, Carlisle, PA."



Figure 3: Horse Tack from the Yakama Indian Agency School, NMNH E23,880.
Photo Credit: Kristi D. Scott, July 2009.

The pair of beautifully imprinted saddle fenders in NMNH collections features designs that mirrors one and other perfectly. Though the craftsmanship is exquisite, no artisan's name is associated with it, just the initials of the proud Indian agent.¹⁰⁴ The pictorial designs carved in relief onto the thick leather horse tack emulate European, not native design. According to scholar Steven Grafe, they were intended to display progressive work of students at the Yakama Agency in opposition to reservation art.¹⁰⁵ They share aspects of the low-relief technique that the wood carvers from Fort Shaw also employed. And like the carvings from Fort Shaw whose original catalogue card states, "*completely acculturated work*," the goal of art and industry is in these instances is readily apparent.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ NMNH E237880 Catalog card indicates that in 1876 this specimen was collected and donated by James H. Wilbur, Fort Simcoe/Yakima Indian Agent, Author visit MSC, July 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Steven L. Grafe examined the horse tack in his dissertation, *The Origins of Floral-design Beadwork in the Southern Columbia River Plateau*, (P.h.D. dissertation, University of New Mexico 1999), 116-126.

¹⁰⁶ Mr. H. W. Krieger, curator of ethnology at the National Museum presumably approved the text on the card catalogue reading "fully assimilated work" when he accessioned the wood blocks in the 1930s, Author visit to MSC, Suitland, MD July 2009, NMNH E379,950. It is noteworthy that though Krieger made or approved this statement, geometric and abstract floral designs are not unusual in Indian beadwork

Conversely, this researcher discovered many artifacts whose form, color and design resemble indigenous traditions at NMNH.¹⁰⁷ Native aesthetics permeate the boarding school collections at NMNH in more than just the form of classic nostalgic items, but in modern adaptations of the conventional and expected. Beadwork samples, miniature cradleboards and dolls, model bow and arrow sets, tipis and canoes, as well as numerous examples of finished and unfinished loom work line the shelves at the Museum.¹⁰⁸ Several examples of loom work were donated with other from the Haworth College Indian School in Kansas according to accession records.¹⁰⁹ These may have been collected from the Haskell Indian College in Kansas or from the Chilocco Industrial Indian School in Oklahoma that was founded by Major Haworth. Haworth like Pratt, would have had plenty of opportunities to collect Indian materials.¹¹⁰ In addition to these examples crocheted leggings from the San Jose Agency School, a knit sock from a

by the turn of the century, nor was carving a completely new art form for Northern Plains people who had been sculpting stone pipe bowls and fashioning implements of cottonwood for many generations prior.

¹⁰⁷ Several examples in Pratt's collections include arrowheads, saddle bags, cradles and other items featuring indigenous designs that he may or may not have acquired from a school setting. Further, several examples associated with the Haworth Indian School in Kansas are housed at MSC. Included in this accession 27833 are a bow and quiver case E168427, a headdress E168425, leggings E168422, two dolls E168401-2, a tiny doll cradle E168416 and several other Native items. Author visit MSC, July 2009.

¹⁰⁸ A survey of catalogue records at NMNH and a subsequent review of the material, revealed that the associations between boarding schools and NMNH artifacts is not well researched or documented. For this study, I consider those artifacts donated by Pratt (even when not directly associated with Carlisle -which most are not), the artifacts from Haworth Indian School (37 items) and A. C. Hawley's collection which includes several dolls, weavings, beaded bags and the wood carvings from Fort Shaw Indian School; Author visit MSC, July 2009.

¹⁰⁹ There are over thirty items associated with "Indian School, Haworth, Col., Kansas," author visit MSC, July 2009. This is confusing as the Haskell Institute operated in Kansas while in 1882 Major Haworth founded Chilocco Indian Agricultural School in Oklahoma, see Lomawaima page 1, 9-10. This example demonstrates why extensive further research is needed.

¹¹⁰ Concerning native arts and industries at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair (also known as the Louisiana Purchase Exposition), superintendent of the Indian exhibit McGee suggests, "an Indian School should educate Indians while preserving aspects of Native cultures, especially their art," in Fowler and Parezo, *Anthropology Goes to the Fair*, 136.

missionary school in Maui and similar textiles made by Tulalip Reservation pupils are present in NMNH collections.¹¹¹

A.C. Hawley's collections are of particular interest as they include the wood carvings from Fort Shaw Indian School. Research has revealed that Hawley's career with the Indian Office took him to a agency school in Arizona at one time. Though it is uncertain if he amassed items from schools aside from the wood carvings several examples of native industries exist in his collections. Four miniature looms in the collection featuring partial weavings and one is accompanied by a weaving comb (see fig. 4 below). This illustrates aspects of the processes required for the making of these curios.¹¹² Though these examples differ greatly from the strictly Euro-American crafts and designs that one might expect, further inquiry reveal important components about the potential origin of objects like these.

¹¹¹ E358131-0, E131004-0, E3647-0, author visit MSC, July 2009.

¹¹² NMNH: E379889-0 through E379893-0 is completed weavings of miniature Navajo blankets, while E379894-0 through E379897-0 is partial weaving collected by Hawley as souvenirs. No location is given, and all are listed as Navajo. Exhibitions like those at the 1904 World's Fair in St Louis featured demonstrations of loom work like the Santa Fe Indian School students, "who wove blankets in a modern style." Ibid., 142.



Figure 4: Curio loom with unfinished weaving and comb, Navajo, NMNH E379,897 and Figure 5: Miniature doll and cradle board, Apache, NMNH E379,908. Photo credits: Kristi D. Scott, July 2009.

A search of Anthropology collection records at NMNH reveal that the A.C. Hawley collection comprises ninety-six items. This is the most significant boarding school collection at NMNH and includes a diverse array of objects. Among the detailed inventory of Hawley's artifacts are Apache, Hopi, Pima, Acoma, and Pueblo Indian basketry, weaving and earthenware from the Southwest. Included in these materials are several examples of Navajo loom-work; a native industry practiced in many boarding schools.¹¹³ Two toy cradle boards (see fig. 5 above), a woven beadwork panel and a beaded bandolier bag make-up Hawley's Ojibwa/Chippewa contributions and a classic model birch bark canoe and a small box, both with porcupine quill work, hail from the Iroquois of Montagnais, Quebec. At least eighteen items are attributed as Sioux, ranging

¹¹³ Though there are no records to indicate the specific source community the looms and partial weavings were collected from, the mid-process artifact reflects the desire to capture a moment of production or instruction. The author's assessment reflects NMNH collections viewed as a whole and the artifacts possibly associated with educational institutions of this nature combined with geographical proximity to Indian boarding schools. MSC, Suitland, MD July 2009

from a several beaded pipe bags and inlayed stone pipes to an iconic feathered headdress. A ceremonial piece from the Osage, several shell necklaces from “*California Indians*,” and a set of Nez Perce bow and arrows further diversify Hawley’s collection.¹¹⁴ Of particular intrigue are several items with the cultural designation of simply “Plains,” including “*one lot of woodblocks with designs in relief, made by school children at Indian Agency School.*”¹¹⁵

Boarding School Paths

Alfred Clark Hawley (1838-1911) was born in an era of changing Indian policy and his life shares similarities with that of the infamous Richard Pratt (1840-1924). The two army-generals-turned-civil servants, worked during a time engulfed in assimilation-minded goals and policy toward Indian people. Among Hawley’s greatest accomplishments are a noteworthy compilation of Indian artifacts that now reside in the Smithsonian’s anthropology collections. By retracing the artifacts’ courses, we traverse decades of American social history that includes the establishment of the Fort Shaw Indian School in central Montana. A review of the material demonstrates a clear path from the Smithsonian’s anthropology collections to this school on the northern plains.

Alfred Clarke Hawley was nearly ten years old when the United States National Museum was established in Washington D. C. (later the Smithsonian). Young Hawley grew up in the Old Northwest, a place where Indian curios had been marketed for some

¹¹⁴ See catalogue numbers 379,889-964, see also accession record 150648, December 14, 1938, and 151727, March 1939, courtesy of NMNH. Catalogue # 379624 “Oriole nest used in Osage ceremony” NMNH Accession records 150648

¹¹⁵ Other objects attributed to Indian schools in this accession include, one wooden spoon and one model book carved in wood (E379921 and E379922). All artifacts considered in this section are part of NMNH Accession Record 150,648, author visit MSU, July 2009.

time.¹¹⁶ The states that bordered the Great Lakes were the traditional home of numerous tribal nations including the Chippewa, Kickapoo, Menominee, Iroquois, Potawatomi and Sioux.¹¹⁷ As the demographics in the region changed to reflect the influx of euro-Americans, entrepreneurs established businesses in the frontier lands.¹¹⁸ Following in the footsteps of relatives before him young Hawley went into business; before later serving in the Union Army for most of the Civil War (1861-1865).¹¹⁹ Perhaps it is here that Hawley acquired Menominee, Iroquois and Ojibwa articles for his collection.

Though most Native Americans had been pushed out of the Old Northwest by this time, turbulence was sure to be of great concern for Hawley who was soon to take on the official appointment of United States Marshal of North Dakota. Hawley did not hold the position long, and in 1874 it is noted that the President sent nominations to the Senate including, “AC Hawley, to be Register of the Land Office at La Mesilla, New Mexico.”¹²⁰ The Red River Wars involving the Comanche, Kiowa and Apache ignited on the southern plains in 1874 and were followed by, in 1876, the Battle of the Little Bighorn in neighboring eastern Montana. One outcome of this chaos was the detainment

¹¹⁶ Missionaries had been staging exhibitions of converts’ arts and crafts as early as the 1820s in the Great Lakes region. For more on this see Ruth Phillip’s *Trading Identities*, 174-182.

¹¹⁷ Hawley was born in Ohio, which did not become a state until the year of the Louisiana Purchase, 1803.

¹¹⁸ In the 1860s trading posts along the upper Missouri River flourished, including the operation of Hubbell and Hawley. Alpheus Fenn Hawley of Jamestown, NY, arrived in Mankato, MN years before to start the business with a partner, James B. Hubbell according to Barton Barbour in *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 276; Hubbell and A. F. Hawley are noted as being licensed Winnebago traders, Anonymous, *Mankato, Its First Fifty Years*, (Mankato: Mankato Press, 1903), 238-241.

¹¹⁹ Timeline based on events listed in Alfred Clark Hawley’s obituary, “Alfred C. Hawley Dead,” *Washington Post*, (January 9th, 1911), 2.

¹²⁰“AC Hawley, to be Register of the Land Office at La Mesilla, New Mexico,” *New York Times* (May 2, 1874) article accessed on the internet, January 2010:
<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=FB0B15F73C5F1A7493C0A9178ED85F408784F9#>

of a large group of Apache and Sioux war prisoners who were sent to the Florida coast where they would be held at Fort Marion in St. Augustine. Richard Pratt was appointed to oversee the prisoners and took on the task of educating them in various ways.¹²¹ He administered lined paper and colored pencils to the prisoners who in turn created what has become known as ledger art.¹²² Drawings sometimes featured historic events from indigenous viewpoints and pictographic accounts of the prisoners' lives. The ledger books were purchased and collected by non-natives "[...] who might help the cause of Native assimilation, especially through education in off reservation boarding schools."¹²³ This educational experiment would have lasting affects for generations of Indian children. Pratt believed that Indian people needed to be removed from their cultures in order to change them effectively and this ideology was administered in educations of Indian children nationally at Carlisle.

During the last quarter of the 20th century the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) centralized, modifying the completely isolated reservation and Indian agent system. The passing of the General Allotment Act in 1887 had further prompted the need for Special Indian Agents to act as intermediaries between the federal and field offices.¹²⁴ Hawley, like Pratt and many other Civil War veterans, joined the Indian Office. In 1883 the

¹²¹ After the Battle of the Little Bighorn, June of 1876 when General Custer and his troops were annihilated by the Northern Cheyenne and Sioux warriors and the capture in 1877 of Chief Joseph's Nez Perce, Indian prisoners were taken away from their reservations to Ft Marion, Florida where Colonel Richard Pratt was in charge of the men. After a successful educational experiment with the prisoners, Pratt commissioned the federal government to open Carlisle three years later. In 1878-9 the Northern Cheyenne flee to Montana.

¹²² For more on ledger art from Ft. Marion see Joyce Szabo, *Art From Fort Marion: The Silberman Collection* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 2007).

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹²⁴ The General Allotment Act, also referred to as the Dawes Act, was passed by Congress in 1887 to break up Indian land holdings and prepare individuals for citizenship. This would be accomplished through private landownership and assimilation tactics, including industrial schooling.

positions of supervisor of Indian schools, special Indian agent and inspector were established.¹²⁵ Though Hawley had apparently worked his way up to an “*executive position in the old Pensions Office,*” a year before his 60th birthday, the adventurous Hawley gives up his office job to claim one of five well paid positions as a special Indian agent.¹²⁶ Hawley was west of the Rocky Mountains during his first year, serving as the special agent at the Yakima Reservation, Washington State.¹²⁷ On his transcontinental journey to eastern Washington or perhaps on his way back, Hawley may have been a passenger on the newly finished Great Northern Railroad that traversed across the state of Montana on its way from Saint Paul, Minnesota to Seattle, Washington.

Hawley’s exact whereabouts while over the decade he worked for the Indian Office are often difficult to pinpoint. Around the turn of the century, Hawley’s job responsibilities took him from Montana to Oklahoma, or vice versa, where he was divvying up allotments on Kiowa and Comanche lands. Special Indian agents AC Hawley and EB Reynolds worked with inspector CF Nelson to institute allotment on the reservation with a December deadline.¹²⁸ Hawley headed west to Arizona where he

¹²⁵ In 1879 Congress provided funding for a Supervisor of Indian Schools, Special Agents and Inspectors were detailed to check on administration in the field and report directly to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Special Indian Agent’s duties included conducting special business transactions, investigating special matters, addressing land allotting issues, and if necessary, taking charge of a reservation. The position is somewhat similar to those of other inspectors, and included a hefty salary of \$2000 annually for these administrative responsibilities.

¹²⁶ In 1887 Hawley was appointed to an elevated position in the pension’s office as per his widow’s obituary in *The Washington Post*, 1940, 24. Hawley’s appointment as Special Indian Agent was acknowledged in the *New York Times* May 30, 1897 article accessed via the internet, January 2010: <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F6061EFB3D5C12738DDDA90B94DD405B8785F0D3>

¹²⁷ According to the 1897 the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Hawley is listed as a Special Indian Agent in Yakima, Washington, as per personal correspondence by author via email with Barbara Larsen, National Archives at Kansas City, March 17th, 2011.

¹²⁸ Special Indian Agent Hawley was sent to investigate an incident on the Tongue River Reservation in Montana for the Northern Cheyenne. In the report Hawley supports Stouche’s [Northern Cheyenne Indian Agent] suggestions for boundary clarification (Hawley to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 15th,

visited Fort Defiance at the Navajo agency. Perhaps it is here that he collected some of the Navajo weavings and partial loom work.¹²⁹ One of three BIA officials that visited Fort Defiance that year, he is noted as giving the agency employees “good advice and instruction in regard to our duties.”¹³⁰ Hawley is identified again in a report for the Klamath Agency near the southern Cascade Mountains in Oregon dated September 24, 1900.¹³¹ Coincidentally, in Hawley’s collection now at the Smithsonian, there is a “twined basket, Klamath.”¹³² Hawley continued to travel the West on official business and interacted with many people, both native and non-native, along the way and according to at least one Indian agent, Hawley was a decent diplomat.¹³³ The Umatilla Boarding school received a visit from Gen. A. C. Hawley and a Mr. Frank M. Conser during the 1899-1900 school-years. The superintendent of the school expressed gratitude for this occasion and remarked that “The helpful suggestions and reports made by these

1897, Tongue River Reservation, Consolidated File 45572) in Hamlin Garland’s, *Hamlin Garland’s Observations on the American Indian, 1895-1905*, edited by Lonnie E. Underhill and Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. (Phoenix: University of Arizona Press, 1976), 156. Hawley is directly linked with enforcing allotment procedures in Oklahoma on Kiowa, Comanche and Apache lands after the Indian Office approved that agents should assign allotments to those Indians who did not willingly come forward and choose their acreage within thirty days of the mandate, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior, 1898, 54-55.

¹²⁹ There are nine textiles of this nature in Hawley’s collection at NMNH. Author visit MSC and review of NMNH catalogue numbers E379889-E379897, July 2009. There is also a photograph at NAA that came into the collection with Hawley’s wares. It features a Euro-American male (maybe Hawley himself) above a small waterfall holding a fishing pole. On the back it says “Navajo- Arizona” in cursive pencil. NAA: SPC02279400.

¹³⁰ “During the year we have been favored with a visit from General Hawley, special agent.” It is assumed by the author that Hawley visited Fort Defiance sometime between January 1900 and the time the report was written Aug 20, 1900. This report from agent G. W. Hayzlett is dated August 20, 1900 in the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 193.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 358.

¹³² Catalogue number NMNH 379935, author visit MSC, July 2009 .

¹³³ Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 363-365. See Charles Wilkins annual report as US Indian agent at the Umatilla Agency, (which included members of the Cayuse, Wallawalla and Umatilla tribes,) dated August 3, 1900. Wilkens notes that AC Hawley, Special Indian Agent visited the Klamath agency and attended to matters at the reserve “in their minutest details,” and extends that Hawley’s success in “explaining” matters at two councils he held with the Indians was very marked, *Ibid.*, 365.

gentlemen have been of great value.”¹³⁴ It is possible that Hawley visited the Fort Shaw Indian School in central Montana during his travels. Artifacts and photographs that were donated in the Hawley estate further solidify the contention that Hawley visited federal schools while employed with the Indian Office.



Figure 6: "Fort Shaw Indian School Students in Assembly." Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Suitland, Maryland, Accession Record: 150,648, Negative # 78-2945

Somewhere along the way Hawley collected over 15 items from Fort Shaw Indian School and several photographs, including this one (see fig. 6 above). It is unclear whether he took the photographs or acquired them sometime after they were taken, regardless, this and several other images from Fort Shaw were donated with Hawley's

¹³⁴ Ibid., 366, Report from Mollie V. Gaither, superintendent of the Umatilla boarding school to Indian Agent Wilkins dated July 30, 1900.

collection of Indian artifacts. Easily one hundred children sit on benches or pews before the photographer, perhaps gathered together for this occasion. The stove pipes that run the length of the high ceiling and down the wall to the large coal stove burning in the back of the room would have been the source of warmth in the large space. The overexposed background in the photograph looks stark and few pictures are visible on the walls. While older students in the back rows sit perfectly still for the photographer, the foreground reveals the fidgeting of younger children in blurred images. A disciplinarian sits midway in the front right of the photograph keeping watch. The movement of the younger children not yet restrained by the order of the institution opposes the controlled environment. Regarding an image of boys in a photograph of a Canadian Indian Industrial School, scholar Gerald McMaster opines,

[...] despite their cropped hair and foreign clothes, an element of individuality persists[...]...The boys represented the colonial experiment, a type of colonial alchemy, transforming the savage in to a civilized human. Yet somehow their resistance remains visible.¹³⁵

Hawley may have taken this picture of composed older students and energetic younger children himself while visiting Fort Shaw Indian School between its years of operation (1892-1910). The photograph was one of at least seven in donated with his collection.¹³⁶ It is unknown when Alfred Hawley's obsession for collecting began, perhaps when he attended Philadelphia's Centennial Exposition where he surly browsed the extensive ethnographic exhibitions while in attendance of the Nation's first World's

¹³⁵ Gerald McMaster as quoted by Leslie Marmon Silko in a preface written for Lucy R. Lippard's *Partial Recall: Images of Native North America* (New York: The New York Press, 1992), 9.

¹³⁶ Accession number: 150,648 1-8, Author visit to National Anthropological Archives July 2009

Fair.¹³⁷ Four years after his death in 1911, the inaugural donation of his material was made to the National Museum. The accession consists of a Cheyenne Indian quiver, “*said to have belonged to Two Moons,*” a famous Cheyenne leader (1847-1917).¹³⁸ This was an important artifact that Hawley’s daughter recognized as belonging in the nation’s premier anthropology museum. After Hawley’s death, his widow, Chastina Hawley preserved her husband’s beloved collection of Indian artifacts for over 27 years. Finally, two years before her own death in May of 1940, she made the decision to donate the bulk of Hawley’s collection to the National Museum’s anthropology department.¹³⁹ Hawley’s collections now reside in Smithsonian repositories and include the thirteen relief carvings from Fort Shaw Indian School.¹⁴⁰ These “*ethnological specimens*” were received by curator H. W. Krieger and “*presented by Adj. Gen. Alfred C. Hawley, through Mrs. Alfred C. Hawley*”¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Hawley was present as an officer in the Centennial Guard, *Adjunct General’s Office*, Washington, and July 16, 1867 (Annual Report 1867), 684. In a report on the progress and condition of the United States National Museum 1915, “...excessive donations from Centennial Exposition of 1876 prompted need for a building, made ready by 1881.” Smithsonian Institution (Washington Government Printing Office, 1916), 12.

¹³⁸ In a report on the progress and condition of the United States National Museum for the year ending June 30, 1915. “Locker, Mrs. J. J. Washington D. C.: A Cheyenne Indian quiver from Indian Territory, said to have belonged to Two Moons, collected by Alfred Clarke Hawley (NMNH E57229) Smithsonian Institution (Washington Government Printing Office, 1916), 160. Two Moons was said to have been the model for James Frazer’s Buffalo Nickel in 1914.

¹³⁹ NMNH Accession records, December 1938. Visit from author July 2009.

¹⁴⁰ NMNH repositories and the National Anthropological Archives (NAA) are housed at the Museum Support Center(MSC) in Suitland MD

¹⁴¹ The Smithsonian Institution United States National Museum Accession Record 150648, December 14, 1938, courtesy of NMNH. Herbert William Krieger (1889-1970) served as the curator of ethnology at the Smithsonian starting in 1925. He and his assistant, John C. Ewers remodeled many of the museums out dated exhibitions in the 1930s. Krieger was curator when the wood blocks were donated in the late 1930s. *Guide to the Collections of the National Anthropological Archives*, page 4.-5

CHAPTER IV- WOOD WORK AT FORT SHAW INDIAN SCHOOL

Introduction

Fort Shaw Indian School was had much in common with the hallmark off-reservation schools that operated across the country. Children were separated from their families for months, even years, and their native culture and heritages were demonized and trivialized. Euro-American clothing, language, religion and culture were forced upon them. A Blackfeet student named Lone Wolf recalled being taken to the Fort Shaw School at age eight and having his clothing and belongings set afire.¹⁴² This practice was not uncommon as the children's clothing and accoutrements were considered dirty and lice-infested. No doubt native customs and religion were outlawed and the English language was enforced at the school. Accounts of Crow girls having their names changed demonstrate the extent of acculturation desired by officials.¹⁴³ Regardless, the purpose and need for the school remained as supporters wrote in favor of the industrial school, "[...] Montana has six large Indian agencies...The Indians in Montana do not like to send their children East [...]"¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Lone Wolf remembered the mothers' of the scared children wailing behind the wagons that left the reservation for Fort Shaw Indian School in 1893 when he was just eight years old. He recalled that once the children arrived at the school "even their little medicine bags were set afire," in Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith *Frontier Children* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 121.

¹⁴³ In this piece written by the Superintendent of the Crow Boarding School Frank Terry, the process of giving Indian students new names upon their arrival at school is discussed, "In 1893 seven girls went from the Crow reservation to the industrial training school at Fort Shaw[...]the names given by the able and successful superintendent at Fort Shaw are better than the reservation names." For example when Blanche Little-star's name was changed to Blanche Brown an attempt to weaken her personal identity and the cultural relevance of her name illustrates the degree of acculturation officials withed to accomplish. See Frank Terry, "Naming the Indians," *American Monthly Review of Reviews* (March 1897), 301-307.

¹⁴⁴ In the Annual report of the Secretary to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 18, 1895 also notes the increasing enrollment from 1893 to 1894 and lists tribes in attendance including Assiniboine, Piegan,

Over the school's eighteen years of existence there were individual teachers and administrators over the years and an impressive student body consisting of thousands of students who hailed from a diverse array of tribal nations. Most years there were a near equal ratio of male and female personnel, with approximately half of them having native heritages. The school served as an industrial training campus and had many vocational shops and a special focus on agriculture and animal husbandry. There was sewing, cooking and other domestic courses for the female students. Five years into his tenure as superintendent of Fort Shaw, Dr. Winslow states:

[...] their quickness in picking up manual training was very marked, indeed [...] The course of work runs from knife work by the youngest pupils to constructive carpentry and building by the older ones. Drawing is made an essential part of the work [...] The girls go to the carpenter shop and use the sloyd benches for this work.¹⁴⁵

The girls were doing well in their domestic courses, especially in the sewing room where they learned to “draft patterns, cut and fit dresses.” Winslow reported that many girls had “taken up fancywork of different kinds.”¹⁴⁶

Fort Shaw held one of three annual institutes for Indian school workers July 31-August 4th, 1895 and over 90 people were in attendance at the “Indian Summer School.” This event at Fort Shaw drew on many participants, including Carlisle's mastermind Captain R. H. Pratt, who, “[...] devoted a full afternoon and evening to instructive and inspiring reminiscences and counsel.”¹⁴⁷ At similar meetings that summer, administrators

Crow, Yankton Sioux, Cheyenne. United States Congressional Series Set, Issue 3226 for the Second Session of the Fifty-Third Congress, Government Printing Office 1893-'94 1895: pg 85-86

¹⁴⁵ Superintendent of Fort Shaw to Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1897 Annual Report, 356.

¹⁴⁶ 1895 Annual Report, 388-389. This year at Fort Shaw there are 31 employees and an average attendance of 194 students, *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴⁷ 1895 Annual Report, 361

stressed the, “practical instructions in drawing, manual work, language and number work,” to be carried out in the schools.¹⁴⁸ Fort Shaw kept up the pace advancing industrial work including, and at the summer institutes in Portland, Oregon in 1897, Fort Shaw teacher, Byron White presented on the “Organic Connection between the Industrial and Academic Training in Indian Schools.”¹⁴⁹ Newspaper coverage of schools exhibition at a local fair in 1900 exemplifies the material outcomes of the work being done at the school stating,

The exhibit by the Fort Shaw Indian School at the Cascade county fair held at Great Falls [Montana] last October in the way of carving on woods, shoe working, plain and fancy needlework, embroidery, drawing and penmanship was excellent.....There was about thirty of the young Indian boys and girls accompanying the exhibit, with Dr. Winslow, the Superintendent, in charge.¹⁵⁰

The local press reported often on the school, again noting the progress being made there when the feature editor hailed the impression after a visit from the states’ senator in 1901 that Fort Shaw was “one of the largest and best Indian boarding schools,” continuing by stating that the visitors agreed that the Indian students were, “much further advanced than [Montana’s] white children of the same age.”¹⁵¹

Implications of the Gender Safety Zone

Trade and vocational course work in Indian boarding schools has historically been presented as strictly gendered. Though gender was typically dichotomized by specific

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 1895:360 Meetings were held in St. Paul, MN Chemawa, OR and at Chilocco, OK in addition to Fort Shaw, MT that summer.

¹⁴⁹ Portland Institute, Aug 2-7, 1897, On August 4th, 1897, Miss Jennie Erickson lectured on sloyd at the Omaha Institute, the Ogden, UT institute before that 1897: pg29-32

¹⁵⁰ Robert Vaughn, *Then and Now; or, Thirty-Six Years in the Rockies* (Minneapolis: Tribune Printing Company, 1900), 389.

¹⁵¹ Great Falls Daily Tribune, May 26, 1901, in Peavy and Smith, *Full Quest Court*, 132.

trades and industries designated male or female, students and curriculum in Indian boarding schools defied these notions when it came to some manual arts. Where else in the literature on schools can you see the gender lines tested or crossed? In the shoe and harness making there were no female students. Likewise with lace and embroidery work there was certainly no instruction for male students. The closest place is in tailor and seamstress positions (vocations whose boundaries had been hazy for a while) and instruction in music. Emerging sports do indicate changing American attitudes as does manual training for both genders, such as sloyd. The employment of female students in the schools and on the reservation after graduation enforced acculturated gender identities. Betty Bell states “[...] gender determined the content and direction of students’ instruction.” She further observed that, “[...] home management took an important role in the education of Indian girls. The educated female elite[...]were enlisted into the field matron service in order to bring domestic science to the reservation[...]”¹⁵² While this is generally true, a closer consideration of curriculum at Fort Shaw and other schools indicate gender boundaries were being tested.

Jenny Ericson’s stance on sloyd training for female students is quite clear. The Carlisle educator was adamant that sloyd is for both sexes. She contends that girls should not be denied the privileges of educational sloyd when it is so healthy for the physical body and mental state. In Ericson’s presentation at the summer institutes for Indian school teachers she argued,

Therefore I appeal to you, teachers and educators, let the girls as well as the boys partake in this training that which is founded upon the principals of true

¹⁵² See Betty Bell’s “Gender in Native America,” in Philip Deloria and Neal Salisbury, eds., *A Companion to American Indian History* (Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 216-317.

usefulness. It will make them better women and better wives, and will in many ways prepare them for life in general.¹⁵³

Ericson and her colleagues really believed that sloyd training would benefit all children enrolled in Indian schools, including the female students at Fort Shaw. Sloyd was considered essential to the outcome of the rest of their lives. A holy trinity of “well-trained hand, head, and heart” would contribute to developing a perfect character.¹⁵⁴ Whatever the case, it was in these “minor” industrial arts that space was created for female students to excel at subjects ranging from lace making to wood carving.

Photographic & Archival Considerations



Figure 7: "Woodworking Class at Fort Shaw Indian School, Montana." Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Suitland, Maryland, Accession Record: 150,648, Negative # 78-2944

¹⁵³ See the circular included in the Annual report of the Superintendent of Indian Schools, in the 1896 Annual Report, 38.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 1896:38

In a photograph of a wood working shop at Fort Shaw circa 1900, over twenty boys dressed in identical woolen suits work with long chisels at standing workbenches (see fig 7 above). In the foreground at the front left bench is a boy with his jacket unbuttoned, perhaps to allow for greater movement. His face is relaxed and though he is looking down, he does not appear truly engaged with the project alluding that this photograph like most, was staged. All of the boys have short cropped dark hair and wear identical uniforms and stand at sloyd benches. Raw materials that appear to be sections of one inch thick wood line the shelves on the left of the room and long boards are leaning against the right wall of the room. Next to an empty square frame hang several plaques that could be finished examples or models for students learning to carve in relief on wood. In the back of the room is a coal burning stove and kerosene lamps are mounted on the room's walls. It is difficult to discern a teacher although a man towards the back left of the room is in different clothing than the other males and appears somewhat authoritative by this difference. The name "Dan Friday" who is not specifically identified is written on the back of the original print.¹⁵⁵

It is impossible to know if the carvings from NMNH are present in this image and there is a decided division of gender in this picture as not a single female is there. In her study of images and photography concerning Native subjects, Lucy Lippard considers what can be ascertained from photographs when considered as primary or even first-hand sources. Lippard opines, "...the pictures do not simply surrender their secrets. Instead, the calm flow of paternalistic history is embedded and diverted. New paradoxes emerge

¹⁵⁵ Arriving as part of Hawley's Accession # 150, 648, as 1/78 of "boudoir prints" (which imply that they were part of his private collection), author visit to NAA, July 2009.

from the forest of grays.”¹⁵⁶ The *grays* in this and several other images in Hawley’s collections from Fort Shaw remain veiled.

Interestingly enough, each woodcarving has a biographic label attached to the back of it. This is unusual as most Indian artists on the northern plains did not sign their work before the 1930’s. There are few examples aside from the woodcarvings that include individual artisans’ names. Cotton cords are affixed to most of the carvings by two nails, indicating that the plaques were hung for display at one time (see figures 8 and 9 below).



Figure 8 and 9: Willie Williamson’s carving, front and back, NMNH E379,950-2, Photo Credits: Kristi D. Scott, July 2009

The first industrial teacher at the school was J. H. Peas who was employed in both this position and as the school farmer. Peas, and his wife, who would serve as Fort Shaw’s clerk for years to come, were inaugural employees at the new Indian school.¹⁵⁷ He remained the industrial teacher for almost three full school years before he was replaced by F. N. Asken in 1895. Peas may have developed training models based on sloyd or

¹⁵⁶Lipard, *Partial Recall*, 14.

¹⁵⁷ Fort Shaw Employee Rolls, NARG75

similar concepts.¹⁵⁸ Serving as carpenter this entire time, White may have also had a hand in the elaborate planning of manual training that connected aspects of various coursework. On July 18, 1895, Dr. Winslow reports,

Drawing is taught in the school rooms and the principals applied in the shops. A study of lines, planes, and solids has been taken up in regular order. The same things are reviewed and reproduced in materials in the shops, more particularly in the carpenter and blacksmith shops. Work in wood and iron has been done almost entirely from models. Our intention is to have pupils make drawings from models in the schoolrooms and make the models in the shops from these drawings. Conventional designs can be reproduced in needlework, fancy designs, and patterns. Wood carving will also claim attention this year. In woodwork pupils should learn the growth, structure and kinds of wood.....We expect to start a class of girls in woodwork this year, including night work in wood carving...¹⁵⁹

The school utilized local materials and likely harvested nearby supplies of lumber including white pine, Douglas fir and cottonwood. Though not ideal, fir may have been used as a medium for carving, cottonwood not being a suitable choice as the wood is too stringy.¹⁶⁰ Students met at least twice a week and were divided into two divisions, “[...] one for knife work and one for bench work. The first hour [...] is devoted to blackboard exercises and [...] using objects to be seen in the shop [...] The second and third hours are devoted to actual work.” The students were allowed to “sit or stand, as they chose...conversation concerning the work is encouraged.¹⁶¹ It is during the first decade of the schools operation that at least some of the carvings were done. Curriculum was likely

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ 1895 Annual Report, 345-346.

¹⁶⁰ John Clarke however used cottonwood as it added to the effect of “fur” for his animal sculptures which he was so famous for.

¹⁶¹ 1895 Annual Report, 346.

influenced at minimum by Fort Shaw industrial teachers including Peas (1892-1894), Asken (1895), White (1892-1898) and Thackery (1899).¹⁶²

Northern Plains Aesthetics and Individual Aptitude

The woodcarvings have not been invisible during their entire stay in our Nation's vast repositories. They were studied by Smithsonian curator of ethnology, John Canfield Ewers in the early 1980s. In his 1986 publication, *Plains Indian Sculpture: A Traditional Art from America's Heartland*, Ewers devotes almost two pages to the relief carvings from Fort Shaw. He features two carvers in particular who he even includes in a chart in his appendix titled, "Named Plains Indian Sculptors Active During Twentieth Century," and came to solid conclusions about their genesis.¹⁶³ Ewers contends that these works are the first of their kind for Plains Indian carving and that the form was learned at the Fort Shaw Indian School.¹⁶⁴ He continues,

As part of their training in the useful arts, both boys and girls were instructed in woodworking, and part of that instruction included the carving of decorative plaques from ten-inch-square pieces of one-inch pine boards, using metal gouges and stamps to create botanical design on the top surfaces of the boards. There was no precedent in Plains Indian art for such designs in wood, so we may safely assume that the designs were suggested by their instructor and probably copied from ones furnished by him also.¹⁶⁵

Ewers assertion that patterns or models were used is confirmed by the material record as two examples exist where a single design is closely replicated (see figures 13

¹⁶² White's tenure at Fort Shaw overlapped in several trades and lasted for over six years from 1892-1897 when he was "terminated and transferred to Fort Berthold." Fort Shaw Employee Rolls, NARG75,

¹⁶³ John C. Ewers, *Plains Indian Sculpture: A Traditional Art from America's Heartland* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Press, 1986), 214-5.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 214-215.

and 14 below). Conversely, several carvings in the group exhibit unique designs and genuine creativity (see fig. 12 below). While it is quite significant that Ewers includes children in his examination he does not call much attention to the female participants. His exclusion of several of the student carvers is puzzling, though Ewers does list two Blackfeet boys, Charles Pepion and Willie Williamson; he leaves out the Assiniboine-Sioux male carvers. There is no mention of the female carvers from Fort Peck, Carolina Heath, Leatha Alder, Mollie Buckles, or Louisa Wirth's artistic endeavors, or of Blackfeet carvers Rose Aubrey and Mary Johnson.¹⁶⁶ It should be noted that in addition to the carvers at Fort Shaw, the Ursuline Sisters were carving with their students at St. Peter's Mission just 20 miles south as the crow flies (see figs. 10 and 11 below).



Figure 10 and 11: Wooden chairs with intricately carved backs, Ursuline Western Province Collection, Photo credits: Kristi D. Scott, May 2008.

¹⁶⁶ In Ewers appendix titled, “Named Plains Indian Sculptors Active during the Nineteenth Century” he lists Pepion and Williamson as the last two entries on the first page yet there is no mention of the female carvers. Just three female carvers are included in the entire appendix Ewers compiles including those he cited from Mrs. Collier’s earlier report, Ewers, *Plains Indian Sculpture*, 229.

In the 1895 *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, the supervisor of Indian schools mentioned that the students are taught woodcarving amongst other cultural pursuits, and goes on to give glowing reviews to the Ursuline Sisters, stating that their school for Indian girls “is not lacking anywhere.”¹⁶⁷ According to records, these examples of woodwork were the first the superintendent had seen in this context.¹⁶⁸ It is not surprising as the sisters became well known for offering fairly elaborate artistic and cultural educations that were unique and forgiven to the region, when finances permitted.¹⁶⁹



Figure 12: Set of Wood Carvings from Fort Shaw Indian School, Photo Credits: Kristi D. Scott, 2009

¹⁶⁷ In addition to this, a Miss Lavinia Whitfield of Cincinnati, Ohio was hired to teach the Sisters carving in October of 1891. Miss Whitfield stayed at St. Peters for this purpose until July the following year teaching the Ursulines, “they, in turn, taught the Indians,” McBride, *The Bird Tail*, 166.

¹⁶⁸ In May of 1892 the Superintendent visited the school he was very pleased with the carving saying that “he had not seen it in any Indian school which he had visited,” Ibid., 159.

¹⁶⁹ The skills and courses taught at St Peters by well educated nuns extends from Latin to geometry. In addition to academics pupils in the grammar department were offered “crayon work, woodcarving, painting in oil and water colors, given free of charge[...]Instrumental music, piano, violin[...]to pupils evincing talent,” McBride, *The Bird Tail*, 159-166.

Viewing the woodcarvings that were created in the workshops at Fort Shaw provoke a sense of awe and amazement (see fig 12 above). Deep grooves and curved lines plow out once smooth wooden surfaces of the detailed relief carvings and culminate in central foliage and floral designs. A couple of the carvings feature similar designs to one another, and all are carved in mid and low-relief testifying to the skilled hands of child artisans. The backgrounds of the compositions have been meticulously carved away allowing a central design to project from the surface of the wood block. After lowering the field behind the main shape, intricate sculpting took place. Most of the sunken reliefs have stippled or stamped backgrounds that add dimension and texture and smooth borders frame many of the compositions.

Wood is a versatile medium and there are endless possibilities for design choices and applications. The process of creating these carvings began with a design idea that is drawn out by hand on paper and then transferred to the flat wooden panel. Hand tools including sloyd knives and chisels are used to carefully remove some of the wood around the central design. After the initial modifications sculpting or modeling of the wood left intact further defines the main pattern or design. Specialized tools are used and the central projection is carefully manipulated to get the desired effect to varying degrees depending on skill level.



Figure 13: Carolina Heath, Sioux, wood carving, NMNH E379,9500-7
 Figure 14: Rose Aubrey, Blackfeet, wood carving NMNH E379,9500-1
 Photo Credits: Kristi D. Scott, July 2009

Floral designs would have been familiar to many northern plains children, resembling designs from their worlds back home. The students may have become familiar with the designs, perhaps being introduced to them while students at the nearby missions at St. Peter's in central Montana and St. Paul's, on the Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana.¹⁷⁰ It is certain that French traders in the region wore garments with floral designs since a century prior while navigating the upper Missouri.¹⁷¹ The influence of mixed families and the hybrid nature of Métis culture in the region must also be considered. Abstract floral designs may be symbols of subversive art, providing examples of identity and cultural resistance such as is pointed out with the Great Lakes

¹⁷⁰ The Ursuline's education system around the Great Lakes region with tribes like the Huron are credited as encouraging floral embroidery having a real impact on Native designs, scholar Richard Conn, addressed some of the complexities of European impacts on native design, Richard Conn, "Floral Design in Native North America" in *Native American Art from the Permanent Collection* (Claremont: Galleries of Pomona College, 1979).

¹⁷¹ "Although the aboriginal designs of most tribal groups were arguably geometric, floral motifs seemed to have appeared in the wake of the fur trade, missionaries and their schools, and white settlement," Grafe, *Origins of Floral Design*, 38.

floral style.¹⁷² The cultural process of appropriation of specific European designs, materials or forms, is apparent in these carvings as in other American Indian art from this time period and as scholar Nancy Parezo adequately states,

These double heritages and aesthetic preferences are crucially bound up in market value, reflecting consumers' stylistic preferences and the requirements of artistic media. The market presents problems: artists must sometimes compromise with the Euro-American art-buying public or compartmentalize the art produced for internal and external use.¹⁷³

While most of the wood blocks depict floral and floral-like designs, the one made by Louisa Wirth stands out with a geometric design of an eight pointed star. A perfectly proportioned and well balanced design sets in the center of Louisa's wooden plaque (see fig. 15 below). Each of the eight points of the star are beveled with subsequently protruding ridges that reaches equal distance from the middle of the design. Decorative corners with cut-outs frame the star's rays, which are accommodated with perfectly curved interiors. The multi-pointed star appears to rise out of the center of the wood block, with an intricate addition of a smaller, yet similar figure, within the larger star design. The smaller star-like figure too has beveled edges/planes. This pattern reveals a design with considerably less distance between the protruding rays, producing an almost flower like design.

¹⁷² David Penney suggested that the Great Lakes floral style actually developed as a subversive exercise whereby "a civilizing art (mission school that taught embroidery) was re-contextualized." Rather than providing evidence of assimilation, floral designs were reinterpreted by native artists to become symbol of authentic identity and cultural resistance, in Jaquile Peterson and Laura Peers, *Sacred Encounters: Father DeSmet and the Indians of the Rocky Mountain West* (Norman: OK University of Oklahoma, 1993), 86.

¹⁷³ Parezo, *Indigenous Art*, 222.



**Figure 15: Louisa Wirth, Assiniboine, wood carving, NMNH E379,9500-11
Photo Credit: Kristi D. Scott, July 2009**

The entire composition is framed by a smooth raised quarter inch border around the outside edge of the piece. The background between the border and the star has been skillfully carved away to allow the central design to protrude as it does. A final step may have been the subtle dimpling of the background adding dimension to the completed work. Judging by this fine example, wood carving at Fort Shaw was a success for female students.

As noted earlier, the Assiniboine and Lakota Sioux of eastern Montana are well known for their star quilts. The design is a star made up of many diamond shapes sewn together. Geometric designs of circles, diamonds and triangles were historically painted

on buffalo hides that were used for everything from housing to clothing. Eventually the hides were no longer directly part of Ft Peck Assiniboine-Sioux culture and women began to design and make quilts that replaced the hides. Research also suggests a connection of the Lakota morning star to missionary quilting patterns.¹⁷⁴ It is unknown if this child's design might assert cultural identity and resistance in the northern plains boarding school far from her home at Fort Peck. It is important to keep in mind that there was regional and personal variation in individual schools. Some institutions on the plains are noted for being culturally lenient and permitting female students to set up Indian camps that emulated native traditions.¹⁷⁵ American Indian culture and identity had not been absorbed by America. Not only did Louisa Wirth have a thorough understanding of her heritage and a connection to her design as the granddaughter of an Assiniboine leader, she was a talented artist. One of the youngest carvers in the group, she was invested in her project and likely enjoyed her time working on it.

Mary Johnson

Mary Johnson was one of the student carvers who attended Fort Shaw that has many descendents in Indian country today.¹⁷⁶ Her artwork (see fig. 16 below) features a

¹⁷⁴ Albers and Medicine, *The Hidden Half*, 123.

¹⁷⁵ Lomawaima and McCarty note two such images depicting similar scenes, one at Crow Agency School in Montana and one at Cantonment Indian Boarding School in South Dakota. In later image it is noted that grown men peer over a ledge observing the girls playtime, reminiscent of old times, Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain Indian*, 2-3. It is noteworthy that this author has viewed several collections of dolls, with many being connected to Indian schools. This includes before mentioned artifacts and an interesting collection from the Koehler and Morgan Collection at the National Museum of the American Indian. These were collected by school teachers Septima Koehler and Thisba Hutson Morgan from the Sacred Heart School in South Dakota and includes over twelve dolls of simple cloth design and a miniature tipi. Author review of accession records courtesy of Emil HerManyHorses, curator, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, July 2009.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Nora and Mary Lukin, niece and great-niece of Mary Johnson, by author April 2011.

low-relief floral carving with foliage reaching towards either diagonal corner of the once flat surface.



**Figure 16: Mary Johnson, Blackfoot, wood carving, NMNH E379,9500-0
Photo Credit: Kristi D. Scott, July 2009**

Seven veined alternating leaves line the stem with two abstract bud-like designs above and below the double stemmed flower. A smooth border outlines the composition and an evenly stamped background adds dimension to the carving. The creative leisure in the abstract design indicates free-hand drawing and genuine planning and design by the individual artisan.

Mary Johnson was born near Belt, Montana, in 1880, and like Louisa Wirth, Mary was of mixed heritage.¹⁷⁷ Many cultures in the region had an appreciation for floral designs at this time and Mary's Blackfoot mother may have used the design in her beadwork and embroidery. Mary's German father Charles Johnson was a rancher south

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

Fort Benton, where the Blackfoot Agency was located at that time. He met Mary's mother Jenny (also known as Nearly Died) at the Piegan encampment near there and married her, a woman half his age.¹⁷⁸ They had six children, Mary being the oldest and continued to live south of Fort Benton near Kibby Canyon. While building a house for his family, Charles Johnson was killed when some logs rolled onto him.¹⁷⁹ After his tragic death, Jenny moved her family to her allotment on Blacktail Creek near Heart Butte on the southern portion of the Blackfeet Reservation.¹⁸⁰ Mary learned about her mother's people and acquired the Blackfeet language in her new home. When the agency school at Willow Creek opened in 1892, Mary was enrolled in primary school there.¹⁸¹

Though she had been previously exposed to Euro-American schooling briefly, this was her first experience boarding away from home. At one point she was overcome with homesickness and "desire gave wings to her feet" and she ran home to her mother, only to be escorted back to Willow Creek as an escapee shortly thereafter.¹⁸² Jenny Johnson shortly thereafter began working as the school's laundress, that enabled her to be closer to her older children.¹⁸³ Fifteen year old Mary Johnson was transferred to the school at Fort Shaw, in September of 1895. Her younger siblings Charles, William,

¹⁷⁸ According to the 1880 census records, Mary Johnson is listed as the two-month-old daughter of Chas. Johnson (whose occupation is listed as "Hunter") and Jane Johnson (also known as Jenny, who is "Keeping House"). In this record James is listed as a 31 year old male from New York and Jane (or Jenny) is just 16 and from Montana. Courtesy of Mary Lukin.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Nora Lukin, Mary's niece, and Mary Kukin, Mary's great-niece, by author April 1, 2011.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ "An Indian Marriage on Christmas Day," *Anaconda Standard*, newspaper article originally in Nettie Wirth Mail's scrapbook held by descendent Terry Bender, courtesy of Mary Lukin.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Interview with Nora Lukin, Mary's niece, and Mary Kukin, Mary's great-niece, by Author April 1, 2011.

Belle, James and Ida, would all eventually attend Fort Shaw School also.¹⁸⁴ Mary learned to play the piano and the banjo well and excelled at the Indian clubs in the gymnasium while a student. According to the label on the back of her carving, Mary Johnson spent at least one year in the wood shop during her time at Fort Shaw Indian School. She completed the woodcarving at age seventeen, two years after her admittance to Fort Shaw.¹⁸⁵ After three years of education at Fort Shaw, Mary was hired on at the school. Her first position was as an Indian assistant, she was later promoted to a better paying appointment as assistant matron. The later position in particular would have had her working closely with students, including her younger sisters.¹⁸⁶ During Mary's tenure her younger sister Belle's champion basketball team won matches regionally and nationally, of which Belle was the captain.¹⁸⁷ Sadly, Jenny Johnson died around this time, Mary's youngest sibling Ida was just ten years old.¹⁸⁸

During her career, Mary Johnson went to Charleston, SC to attend a conference put on by the Indian Department with co-worker and former fellow student, Josephine Langley. A newspaper covering the event stated that Indian teachers from Montana, Oklahoma and "the far western states" attended.¹⁸⁹ While at the conference,

¹⁸⁴ Nora Lukin is the daughter of Ida, the youngest Johnson child, while Mary was the eldest. Nora's daughter Mary Lukin would be Mary Johnson's great-niece. Interview April 2011

¹⁸⁵ Dating her carving to 1897?

¹⁸⁶ "For three years she was a student learning in books and in all the industrial departments in which a girl could be taught. For her opportunity she was well advanced in instrumental music" including the piano and banjo. Mary excelled at the Indian clubs in the gymnasium and was hired as assistant matron, "An Indian Marriage on Christmas Day," newspaper article originally in Nettie Wirth Mail's scrapbook held by descendent Terry Bender, courtesy of Mary Lukin.

¹⁸⁷ Peavy and Smith, *Full Court Quest*, 2008.

¹⁸⁸ Jenny Johnson died around 1900, *Ibid.*, 105, 400.

¹⁸⁹ "Young Indian Women: Two Bright Representatives of the Race Attending the Convention," July 9, 1900 *unknown source*, was shared with me by Mary Johnson's great-niece Mary Lukin and is actually a clipping from a Charleston, South Carolina newspaper article originally in Nettie Wirth Mail's scrapbook held by descendent Terry Bender, courtesy of Mary Lukin.

both participated in the “Teaching trades to Indians” session. The article states that the women got to the conference with their own money and are quoted as saying, “We made up our minds to attend.....We have saved up all the money we could, and here we are. We are going to remain here all week and intend to see and learn all we can.”



Figure 17: “Indian Wedding at Fort Shaw.” Newspaper article originally in Nettie Wirth Mail’s scrapbook held by descendent Terry Bender, courtesy of Mary Lukin.

Mary married Edward Rock Gobert, a fellow student turned employee at Fort Shaw as well (see fig. 17 above).¹⁹⁰ The school was dear enough to the both of them that they married there Christmas Day in 1900.¹⁹¹ Both Mary Johnson and Eddie Gobert continued to work in the schools furthering their careers and helping students before they moved home to their cattle ranch. They welcomed their first daughter Charlotte born

¹⁹⁰ Eddie was born in about 1880 at St. Peter’s Mission. “His mother also was a full-blood Piegan woman, his father a rancher near Cascade.” According to the Anaconda News paper, and after four years at Fort Shaw Eddie took up the care of his cattle at his ranch on the Blackfeet Agency.

¹⁹¹ “Indian Wedding at Fort Shaw,” *Great Falls Newspaper* January 2, 1901, courtesy of Mary Lukin.

Aug 1904 and a second one, Maude Edna Gobert July 1906. Sometime after the birth of the couple's second child, Mary died.¹⁹² While their eldest daughter married a man by the name of Percy DeWolf and had one child, the youngest Maude married and had four children. One of her descendents is the famous Curly Bear (Clarence) Wagner (1944-2009) who participated in the American Indian Movement and was also a noted cultural historian. Mary Johnson's great-niece Mary Lukin, currently serves on Montana State University's Council of Elders.

¹⁹² Eddied married Abbie Gobert and they had Anna M Gobert in March of 1911, therefore Mary died between 1906 and 1910. Records provided by Mary Lukin April 2011.

CHAPTER V - CONCLUSIONS: CIRCULATING MEMORY

Northern Plains Carving Tradition

Hanging over the entry-way to the Museum of the Plains Indian (MPI) in Browning, Montana is a large relief wood panel featuring traditional Plains Indian life. This impressive sculpture is massive and quite detailed.¹⁹³ One source says the panel at MPI was carved by the famous Blackfeet sculptor, John L. Clarke (1881-1971).¹⁹⁴ Interestingly enough, Clarke was a student at Fort Shaw where he learned woodcarving.¹⁹⁵ It is probable that the technique used to produce the large artwork stems from curriculum at Fort Shaw. The sunken relief style carving is achieved by cutting away the background and leaving the points of highest relief level with the original surface of the wood, just as in the Fort Shaw carvings. Clarke's favorite subjects were the wildlife of Glacier Park, including bears, goats, birds and bison, while the pictorial panel depicts American Indians on horseback pulling travois with a natural horizon rising in the backdrop. Clarke moved home to the Blackfeet Reservation in 1913 and set up a studio in East Glacier. By the late 20th century, Clarke's work had gained national attention, and had become a successful model for local artists who worked in wood.

¹⁹³ Personal visit to the Museum of the Plains Indian (MPI), Browning, Montana, by author, April 2010.

¹⁹⁴ John Clarke's grandfather Malcolm Clarke is infamous as his murder led to the Baker Massacre of Heavy Runner's band of Blackfeet in 1870. John was born in Highwood, Montana and was "three-fourths Blackfeet," Ewers, *Plains Indian Sculpture*, 215.

¹⁹⁵ John Clarke was left deaf and unable to speak by scarlet fever at a young age. After attending Fort Shaw, Clarke went on to the North Dakota School for the Deaf in Devils Lake. Later, Clarke was employed as a "wood carver" according to Ewers research, and went on to master art of carving. Clarke was commissioned by Ewer's via the Museum of the Plains Indian in Browning, Montana in the 1940s to create several pieces that are still in the Museum's collection. Ewers, *Plains Indian Sculpture*, 215 -216.

Inside the doors of the Museum of the Plains Indian, the continuum of the tradition of woodcarving among Plains Indian artists is displayed.¹⁹⁶ Spurred by the early years of the Great Depression, the bottom fell out of the already struggling Indian art market and the foundation for the Indian Arts and Crafts Board was laid. MPI was one of three museums developed by the Educational Division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in cooperation with local or state governments to serve the dual purpose of “interpreting traditional Plains Indian culture to visitors and providing markets for authentic contemporary Plains Indian arts and crafts.”¹⁹⁷ The museum opened on the reservation in June of 1941 under the direction of John Ewers, who went on to serve as curator for three and a half years.¹⁹⁸ Ewers was familiar with Blackfeet carvers, including Clarke, long before he encountered the woodcarvings created by students at Fort Shaw during the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁹⁹

During the early 1930s, Mrs. Nina C. Collier took up the ambitious plan of compiling a list of Indian artists. Collier’s directory of artists was amassed from information gathered by Indian traders, agents and collectors and is used by Ewer’s in his consideration of the Plains Indian sculpting tradition.²⁰⁰ John Clarke is the only one from

¹⁹⁶ On a personal visit to MPI I noticed several examples of John Clarke’s sculpture and other wood work in addition to the panel above the outside doorway, April 2010.

¹⁹⁷ The Sioux Indian Museum opened in 1938 in Rapid City, SD and served as a museum and craft shop for Indian art. It was followed by MPI and the Southern Plains Indian Museum opened in Anadarko, Oklahoma; all three museums are currently operated by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, Ewers, *Plains Indian Sculpture*, 221.

¹⁹⁸ MPI was opened with a specific mission to, “... interpret the culture and serve the Indian tribes of the northwestern Great Plains.” Soon after, the Northern Plains Indian Arts and Crafts Cooperative, headquartered at the Museum, opened. Ewers, *Plains Indian Sculpture*, 222.

¹⁹⁹ Ewers went on to work for the Smithsonian years later and in 1984 he amended the woodcarvings catalogue card, personal visit by author, MSC, Suitland, MD, July 2009. Ewer’s *Plains Indian Sculpture* was published two years later.

²⁰⁰ Nina Collier was the daughter-in-law of Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier, who strongly encouraged and implemented Indian policy reform during the late ‘Allotment’ and ‘Reorganization’ eras.

the Blackfeet Reservation who made Collier's list. Following his inclusion he was, "commissioned in 1940 to execute two wood relief panels in Philippine mahogany, interpreting aspects of the traditional buffalo hunt, which were installed over the entrance doorways to the museum."²⁰¹ Ewers states that Clarke inspired other Blackfeet carvers like Albert Racine (1907-1984), whose wood relief of *The Last Supper* is carved into the altar at the United Methodist Church in Browning, Montana.²⁰² Clarke's work in wood relief carving influenced several of his contemporaries, in addition to several emerging Blackfeet artists, including Mike Swims Under, Lawrence Mad Plume, Webb Pepion, William Weatherwax and Bob Scriver, among others. In his conclusion of *Plains Indian Sculpture*, Ewers nostalgically implores "[...] future Plains Indians [...to]...realize that their people possess a sculptural tradition of which they should be proud."²⁰³ Sculpting in natural materials is not novel to plains artisans, who have a tradition of carving stone pipe bowls out of local soapstone or imported materials.²⁰⁴ Regarding a comparison of the tradition of carving in wood versus stone Ewers contends,

Plains Indian wood carving had a quite different history. Effigy carving in wood may have been an older art than stone carving among those Indians because wood could have been worked more easily than stone with tools available to them before they obtained metal from whites. However, because wood deteriorates

Collier's reform encouraged traditional arts and crafts as part of American Indian culture; Ewers, *Plains Indian Sculpture*, 218. Ewers referenced Nina Collier's early study concerning American Indian artists for his appendix "Named Plains Indian Sculptors Active During Twentieth Century," Ibid., 229-232.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 222.

²⁰² Racine was commissioned to do the altar by Reverend Wilcox, and also went on to open a studio in East Glacier like Clarke. Some sources credit Racine with producing the entryway carving at MPI, Ibid., 222-223.

²⁰³ Ibid., 229-230.

²⁰⁴ While working at the C. M. Russell Museum as curatorial assistant in 2006, my first assignment was to research two distinct collections of Plains Indian pipes. While most of those attributed to Blackfeet were of steatite or local soapstone, several were fashioned from catlinite, a red stone that is traditionally quarried near Pipestone, MN. Further, Ewers explores how the fairly early tourist trade in stone pipes, most notably catlinite, influenced the themes and style of effigy pipes. Ewers, *Plains Indian Sculpture* 15.

rapidly when embedded in the ground, no wooden effigies of prehistoric or early historic times have been found in archeological sites on the Great Plains.²⁰⁵

Regardless of wood carving's exact origins, Plains Indian artisans certainly created objects out of wood and included sculpture in their repertoire. Plains Indian women had been diligently producing functional art for centuries in the form of tanned hides and incised designs on parfleche containers, a form of relief or intaglio carving. While manual arts using tools to fashion natural materials may have been viewed as a new thing for female students in the boarding schools, the creation of utilitarian art objects demanded physical labor and the use of tools such as hide scrapers and bone awls in traditional Plains Indian life. A continuum of Plains Indian carving using tools and natural materials preceded the arrival of Euro-Americans. If anything, it is the utilization of specific woodworking tools that can be attributed specifically to the Fort Shaw Indian School, and we might speculate that it was Indian girls' interest in and capacity for carving (because it is an accepted practice) that spurred their non-Indian captors to allow them this form of expression. Thus yet another example of agency among boarding school students in the contact zone.

Material Culture as Windows into the Boarding School Era

As this research has demonstrated, Indian boarding school relics transfer knowledge and information through sensory experiences that are unique to three-dimensional artifacts. The artifacts present a fourth dimension of meaning that transcends time in different ways for different reasons, to each individual. This allows a

²⁰⁵Ibid., 15.

continuum and circulation of knowledge and memory each time the creation, communication and consumption of the artifacts are considered. A smoothly sanded piece of furniture, a thickly embossed piece of earthy leather or an exquisitely beaded design of a doll's dress, comprised of teeny tiny colorful glass beads, each embodies the environment of their origins. Cultural exchanges had in schools are unearthed, revealing contexts of shared social histories. These tangible examples of boarding school curricula illuminate the individuality of students, and bring attention to the little-heard and undervalued voice of Native American children as artists during the 19th and 20th Centuries. From this analysis of intersecting material cultures, we can re-engage artifacts with historical and contemporary social meanings.

These physical outcomes, produced during a time of great adversity for Indian people, may help to fill in the crevasses created by the boarding school phenomenon. "Gaps and fissures fragment our knowledge of Native experiences over the last century [...]" and the removal of several generations of Indian children from their homes contributes to this greatly.²⁰⁶ In most cases in the federal schools, cultural expression was discouraged and often forbidden. The exceptions that existed within Indian arts and crafts curricula can be seen in few sources, museum collections being one of them. Art and handicrafts from boarding schools bare silent witness to the experiences of Native children in the contact zone.²⁰⁷ In their analysis of the safety zone, Lomawaima and McCarty examine "a number of photographs preserved in the National Archives [that]

²⁰⁶Referring to these gaps as "black holes" in American Indian Studies, the authors quote N. Scott Momaday's take on these chasms via personal communication, stating that Momaday reminded them of the many lost memories and indigenous knowledge embedded in the "stories that fall just beyond our grasp," Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain Indian*, 12.

²⁰⁷Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 6-8.

provide tantalizing glimpses of the ways that federal staff tried to domesticate Native cultural expressions within the confines of the schools.”²⁰⁸ The boarding school artifacts explored at NMNH confirm the native industry and aesthetics that were fashioned in arts and crafts classes at schools. These materials can be added to the list of indicators or “tantalizing glimpses” of the ways in which federal personnel “tried to domesticate Native cultural expressions.” The glimpses simultaneously act as portals that offer insight into the real experiences of individual students in the boarding school classroom.

Course work in native industries was introduced primarily by Estelle Reel in her 1901 Uniform Course of Study (USC), and certainly impacted student experiences in a variety of ways in the schools. Lomawaima and McCarty note that corresponding evidence of “[...] identities, motivations –or the outcomes of craft production [...]” are generally muted in archives and records. They continue:

We can only speculate what the classes...[...] meant to Native women [...]and] imagine that young women must have found a refuge in these classes, a small space carved out of an repressive institution where they could express, or at least feel, the precious presence of Indigenous identity, knowledge, language and daily practices.²⁰⁹

In the examples presented in this thesis, one can directly engage with the physical outcomes of the native industries curriculum. The meanings engaged by a close examination of the visible and tangible of material culture from boarding schools fosters a connection to the past that other sources often cannot. The wood carvings revealed in

²⁰⁸ Though Indigenous arts and crafts are not readily apparent in boarding school history and literature, “hints suggest their [Native arts programs’] sporadic survival,” Lomawaima and McCarty, *To Remain Indian*, 58.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

this project illuminate artistic skill and expression otherwise concealed in the “black hole” that federal assimilationist policies left in their wake.

Material Culture as Context

The meanings we associate with archival and photographic sources are enriched by an effort to interpret the relevant artifacts. Though the image below appears in several publications, no connection is made between it and wood carving at Fort Shaw Indian School until now (see fig. 18 below).²¹⁰



Figure 18: Manual Industries at Fort Shaw Industrial School, Credit: Montana Historical Society Research Center Photograph Archives, Helena, MT, no date, unidentified photographer, Catalog # 947-400

²¹⁰ Emma Toman, “Sun River Country,” in *The Cascade County Album: Our History in Images* (Great Falls: The Cascade County Historical Society Publication, 1999), 33; Peavy and Smith, *Frontier Children*, 19.

In this image (see figure 18 above) of a classroom at Fort Shaw Indian School taken about 1900, boys and girls of varying ages and their instructors, pose for a photograph. The young pupils appear to be carving decorative wooden plaques, similar to the carvings now at NMNH. The room bears a resemblance to the setting for Hawley's "*Woodworking class at Fort Shaw Indian School*" (see fig. 7 above), yet there is no visible coal burning stove in the background. The young woman standing behind the children near the wall is perhaps an Indian Assistant. She is wearing a prominent, fashionable hat, and near her but seated is another young woman in a wider brimmed hat peering from behind a student seated in front of her. The women are set amongst younger boys who hold tools, perhaps they are there to keep order for the special occasion of having a photograph taken. There is a young pale skinned male holding a hat in the foreground, appearing unmoved by the occasion and unsure of what to do with his hands (it is possible that he is the teacher's child).

Byron White may be in the far right background behind the nine female students, he is wearing a pressed white shirt, vest and tie. Standing beside him and across the entire background of the composition are older male students posed for the picture. The younger boys and girls sit on benches at both sides of two long tables running parallel down each side of the large room. Scattered papers and projects lay before them, and many of the children are holding wood working tools in their hands. In particular, a boxed set of chisels and gouges for woodcarving are at the front of the table. The male students far outnumber the females in the photograph, and it is probable that the female carvers holding the woodworking tools include Leatha Alder, Mollie Buckle, Carolina

Heath and Louisa Wirth -who carved the star. Either Charley Mitchell, Chester Pepion, Willie Williamson, B. Alvero or the one unknown child, are sure to be present in the sea of over 30 faces. Perhaps Mary Johnson carved her own piece while supervising the group of younger students, as she was several years older than the majority of the carvers, and went on to serve as assistant (see Table 1 in appendix). High above the heads of the women in hats, hang at least seven distinctive looking plaques resembling relief carvings. A closer examination reveals that though they appear similar in technique, they differ in subject matter, featuring animal-like forms, with the largest plaque showcasing a stag with antlers. From the ceiling in the foreground hang various geometric and abstract objects of differing shapes and sizes that may have been produced as part of sloyd exercises. New meanings radiate from this old image as we consider the social lives of the physical artifacts produced by Fort Shaw students, and what they tell us about the experiences of their child makers.

Indigenous Knowledge and Memory

The Fort Shaw wood carvings present a *mélange* of implications. Though they are clearly a form of artwork, they sit in the Museum's ethnographic collections as representations of culture. They feature designs and mediums that are attributed to both euro Americans and native peoples.²¹¹ This account raises a need for re-newed attention to American Indian art and northern plains schools in addition to inclusion of female students as artisans in manual trades. Much additional research is needed to understand the implications of these artworks, and to reconnect tribal kin and descendents to the

²¹¹ See section on individual aesthetics and aptitude included above.

artisans in an effort to elicit contemporary meanings. This potential for indigenous knowledge and memory should not be overlooked. The invaluable voices of the people most intimately involved in and affected by the stories that these artifacts can tell, enhance our comprehension of experiences and outcomes from the boarding schools.

Correspondence with the niece and great-niece of Mary Johnson recounted a family photograph that features Mary, her sister Belle, and Mary's young daughter Charlotte. Charlotte is dressed in traditional style Blackfeet clothing that expresses Mary's continued connection to her Blackfeet heritage. Though she both endured the assimilation movement embodied in Indian School education, and was employed by the schools, Johnson's culture was not simply eradicated.²¹² Even if students did readily accept the schooling and even enjoy it at times, there is little evidence that every individual gave up their Indian heritage and identity in the institutions. About the actions and reactions of students in schools Lomawaima concludes, "Indian people at boarding schools were not passive consumers of an ideology or lifestyle imparted from above by federal administrators. They actively created an on-going educational and social process[...]"²¹³ The inclusion of objects created by and collected from children merit attention as they have great potential to help us better understand the ways in which social conditions and individual expression were manifested in art. Native people formulated ingenious ways to escape or improve their situations in schools where "[...]

²¹² Family history links Mary Johnson to Genoa Indian School in Kansas, interview with Nora and Mary Lukin, April, 2011.

²¹³ "They marshaled personal and shared skills and resources to create a world within the confines of boarding school life, and they occasionally stretched and penetrated boundaries. In the process, an institution founded and controlled by the federal government was inhabited and possessed by those whose identities the institution committed to erase. Indian people made Chilocco their own. Chilocco was an Indian school," Lomawaima, *They Called it Prairie Light*, 167.

covert resistance has been a hallmark of colonial education [...], students devised strategies to assert independence, express individuality, develop leadership, use native languages, and undermine federal goals of homogenization and assimilation [...]²¹⁴ Another example of cultural resistance was discovered through correspondence with a descendent of Lizzie Wirth, -Louisa Wirth's younger sister. Lizzie likely spoke perfect English from her many years at school, and went on to marry a white man. Despite these cultural changes, she held onto her traditional Assiniboine customs, giving each of her children Indian names and a small protective amulet.²¹⁵ Like Lizzie's clear expression of Assiniboine identity, Louisa's carving is another assertion of retained cultural knowledge, made by a child in a world in-between her own and that of Fort Shaw Indian School.

Over one-hundred years later, these artworks reside over one-thousand miles away from Fort Shaw, in the Smithsonian's vast repositories. They have been out of sight from most descendants and community members for so long that they were nearly forgotten. This research seeks to reconnect community members, both native and non-native, with tangible forms of memory that contribute to our understanding of this *defining experience* for American Indians. Material cultural artifacts serve as portals that have the ability to take us, even if just for a brief moment, to the place and time in which the artifact was made. As we re-imagine the stages of production, communication and consumption, memory and knowledge are, to varying degrees, transferred from the past to the present. The intersecting lives of students, instructors, curators and researchers sometimes coalesce in a single artifact that, in turn, represents a continuum of

²¹⁴ Lomawaima, *American Indian Education: by Indians versus for Indians*, 423.

²¹⁵ The traditional amulets were made of a tanned deer skin leather pouch with quill and bead work that safely held the child's umbilical cord wrapped in tobacco leaves, Thomas, *Early Years*, 47-48.

experiences, stories and values. Molly Buckle, Leatha Alder, B. Alvero and Caroline Heath all have stories of their own that extend beyond their time in a wood shop at Fort Shaw. With more time and attention to these stories, the artifacts they created take on renewed significance. In addition, further examination of museums and collections-based research is warranted, as well as ethnographic studies of museums such as MPI. As we consider how art created by female students reveals experiences of those held captive and otherwise silenced, a counter-part to the popular study of ledger art emerges. Perhaps a closer consideration of gendered training and the cultural safety zone introduced by Lomawaima and McCarty will ensue. Art and artifacts in this consideration conform to their theory in several ways, but a study of the arts and crafts movement, industrialization, and concepts behind minor manual arts like that of sloyd deserve a closer look, as well. Gender training and the negotiable boundaries of this era beg for further analysis. So does the continuum of carving in northern plains tradition, especially as it relates to the female carvers whose voices have, until now, been absent from the historical record.

TABLE:1 Table of Fort Shaw Carvers

NAME, AGE WHEN ENTERED SCHOOL, HERITAGE	AGE at time of Carving	Years at F.S.	Time in Woodshop	Number of Carvings
Leatha Alder, Sioux	15	8/1896-6/1899*	6 Months	1
B. Alvero, Sioux	16	*	2 Years	1
Rose Aubrey, 15, Piegan	16	12/1893-7/1897	2 Years	2
Mollie Buckle(s?), 7, Sioux	13	2/1893-12/1898	1 Year	1
Carolina Heath, Sioux	15	*-1899	6 Months	1
Mary Johnson, 15, Blackfeet & German	17	9/1895-10/1898	1 Year	1
Charley Mitchell, 6, Assiniboine-Sioux	12	12/1892-6/1899*	2 Years	2
Chester Pepion, 10, Piegan,	12	9/1894- 11/1898	2 Years	1
Willie Williamson, Piegan	12	9/1895-6/1897	2 Years	1
Louisa Wirth,9, Assiniboine	10	12/1892- 6/1899	1 Year	1
And one unknown child				

*B. Alvero does not appear in the BIA records at all, Heath entrance is listed as “Do” on page 33 of the Fort Shaw Student Records, Alder has 2 withdrawal dates:6/1896 and 6/1899 page 27 of the same records, and Mitchell has a note that he re-entered the school on 8/1899 as noted on page 17 of BIA records. This table is an ongoing project that results from the authors compilation of information from BIA records at the National Archives, information gleaned from the carvings at NMNH and family genealogies.

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