



The effect of abundant resources on the history of Crow Reservation schools
by Charles Crane Bradley Jr

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Montana State University

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Abstract:

This dissertation is about the effect of resource abundance on the Crow Reservation schools. Using a historical approach, the writer investigated federal, missionary, and public school records dating from 1870 to 1976. From this research it was concluded that during the period of abundant energy the Crow Reservation schools shifted away from concern for physical survival. The availability of cheap energy began on the Crow Reservation in 1888. This period of cheap energy came to a close in 1975. During this period of abundant energy, technology and later money also became available to schools. The effect of increasing these resources was that beginning in the 1890s the Reservation schools gradually took survival for granted. Students and educators labored less. In fact, the period of abundant resources liberated educators so they could focus primarily on academic subjects in 1917-1975. About the time of World War II athletics grew in priority, thus competing with the interest in academic subjects. Another effect of abundant resources, particularly with the influx of large government grants which began in 1937, was that schools demonstrated increasing tolerance for Indians and individuality. As the period of abundant resources began to close in the 1970s, many of the effects also came to an end. The Reservations schools once again became concerned about survival.

THE EFFECT OF ABUNDANT RESOURCES ON THE HISTORY
OF CROW RESERVATION SCHOOLS

by

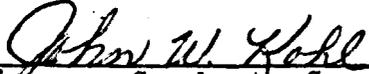
CHARLES CRANE BRADLEY, JR.

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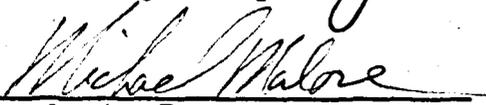
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I. INTRODUCTION

This history is about the schools located on the Crow Reservation in 1871-1976. The Crow Reservation itself is located in southeastern Montana. In 1869 the Reservation included all the land between Livingston and Hysham and between the Yellowstone River and the Wyoming border. After 1904, however, the Crow Reservation included only a little more than two million acres southeast of Billings and north of the Wyoming border.

The Crow Reservation Schools

The main types of schools on the Crow Reservation have been boarding schools, which removed students from their families, and day schools, which allowed the children to live in the Indian camps. These types of schools are the same as other reservations have had. Furthermore, with the exception of federal boarding schools, the types of schools on the Crow Reservation resemble the schools most Americans attend.

The federal government opened the first school on the Crow Reservation. The government subsequently operated schools on the Crow Reservation until 1921. The government schools were mostly boarding schools.

Missionary societies also established schools on the

Crow Reservation. Both Protestants and Catholics began schools on the Crow Reservation in 1887. Initially all of these missionary schools were boarding schools. But in 1904 Protestants and, later, Catholics opened schools which only operated in the day time. Most of the missionary schools were closed in the 1920s.

Beginning in 1904 counties lying nearby the Crow reservation established public schools. Since 1921 most Crow Indian students have attended public schools. Thus by the end of the school year in 1976 there were only two schools on the Crow Reservation that were not public schools.

The public schools in Hardin have been included in this history for three reasons. To begin with, Hardin was part of the Crow Reservation until 1937. Furthermore, about 40% of the students in the Hardin public schools are Crow Indians. In fact, the Hardin public school district has the largest number of Crow students of any school district.

The Period of Abundant Energy

Cheap energy was available on the Crow Reservation at the same time as in the rest of the United States. This period of abundant energy stretched roughly from the 1880s,

when Americans used more coal than wood, to about 1975, when the price of petroleum rose sharply. Use of coal on the Crow Reservation, and in the United States, reached a peak in the 1920s then declined after the 1940s. Thus, from the 1940s to the 1970s, petroleum was the most common source of energy on the Crow Reservation, as well as in the United States. Petroleum, moreover, proved to be the cheapest source of energy until the demands for it outstripped the supplies in the 1970s.

The Need for This Study

This history of the Crow Reservation schools has implications for educators in general, not only because the trends in the Crow Reservation schools are similar to the trends on other reservations, but also because some of the effects on abundant resources could also be generalized to other public schools. Professors engaged in training future teachers should learn from a historical examination of various school systems. This history should be useful for taxpayers interested in knowing the effect of money spent in schools. Conversely, this study should be informative for leaders desiring to bring about changes in schools made necessary by limitations in resources.

This history also has implications for people who are involved with Crow education. Such a history could combat interruption and confusion in the Crow Reservation schools by informing the new staff members about what educators have been doing. Too, understanding Crow education in its entirety could help educators overcome hidden biases, become more patient, and strive to bring about improvements. The progress in the Crow Reservation schools as measured by history may relieve some of the frustration among both educators and students. This history could also help Crows, who are becoming involved in the schools, to understand the institution. Because Indians and non-Indians on the Crow Reservation associate with each other more in schools than in any other institution, schools document the nature of cultural acceptance.

Summary

School administrators and educators are increasingly confronted with having to decide priorities. In the past, educators simply added new education programs to schools the same way they added new buildings and techniques. But now a shortage of funds is forcing some schools to make cuts. It seems appropriate, therefore, to examine the past

effect of resources on schools since resource limitations underlie the present shortage of funds. Perhaps by examining what was added to the schools during the period of abundant resources, educators and professors can have a basis for directing change rather than letting change take its course, which will probably mean that those school programs added last will be cut first.

The educational situation on the Crow Reservation constitutes convenient parameters for studying the effect of resources on schools. The Crow Reservation schools reflect the types of education most prevalent in United States. The period of abundant resources in United States occurred simultaneously with that on the Crow Reservation. In addition, there is adequate documentation of the effect of resources on the Crow Reservation schools.

II. THE SOURCES

This chapter differs from the typical review of the literature because not much has been published on the subject. The writer deliberately relied on primary rather than secondary sources. In this chapter the writer will discuss what sources were available to him and what sources exist but were not available to him.

Sources about the Crow Reservation Boarding Schools

The annual reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of Interior are available at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. They are also at the BIA building at Crow Agency and at the Montana State University library in Bozeman, Montana. These reports contain statistics, reports, and costs of the Reservation schools in 1870-1909. Furthermore, the annual report for 1890 contains a description of the duties of the government school employees and the boarding school curriculum which was implemented in all of the reservation boarding schools.

The writer's After the Buffalo Days is a general history of the Crow tribe from the 1880s to the early 1900s. This work is based primarily upon letters concerning the

Crow Indians which were received by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at Washington, D.C. These records are stored in Room 11-E-2 of the Natural Resources Section of the National Archives in Washington, D.C. These records in the National Archives contain the most complete documents on the government boarding school at Crow Agency. The records also include information concerning the missionary boarding schools, the missionary day schools, and the Reservation public schools. The information in the government records is biased against the Protestant missionaries and their day schools. On the other hand, the government records are the only documentation of the transition of Crow students from the boarding schools to the public schools. The Crows' point of view in the government records is limited to tribal resolutions and minutes of tribal council meetings.

Sister Karen of the Catholic Church Research Center in Lodge Grass, Montana, has researched the Catholic archives in Portland, Oregon, and Great Falls, Montana, as well as at Saint Xavier on the Reservation. She obtained house diaries which the Jesuit fathers kept at Saint Xavier. She has deciphered and typed these diaries into a notebook temporarily called, "Excerpts from the Jesuit House Diaries: Written at St. Xavier Mission." This notebook covers the period 1893

to the 1960s with several gaps. Sister Karen has also collected clippings from The Indian Sentinel, published by the Catholic Bureau of Indian Missions, which had articles about the Crow Reservation. In addition, Sister Karen has collected letters and memoranda from the missionaries at Saint Charles in Pryor and St. Xavier. The Catholic missionaries tended to be concerned with the Crows' attitudes towards church rather than education. Yet the missionaries kept the most detailed accounts of summer activities in the boarding school.

Janette Woodruff's book, Indian Oasis, describes three of the schools on the Crow Reservation in 1900-08. Woodruff was a matron in the boarding schools and worked with Crow students. She was also one of the original staff members when the Pryor Boarding School was opened in 1903-1904.

Sources about the Crow Reservation Public Schools

The unpublished edition of After the Buffalo Days, Volume II, by the writer, has a chapter about the competition among the Catholic and Protestant missionaries to attract Crow students until their entry into the public schools. Again, this work is based upon the government records at the National Archives.

The manuscript, "From Individualism to Bureaucracy," by the writer and his wife, is a continuation of research done at the National Archives. It covers the general political history of the Crows from the 1920s to the 1940s.

The government records concerning the Crows since the early 1940s are stored in federal record centers at Auburn, Washington, and at Suitland, Maryland. These records seem to be open to tribal members and government officials only, unless one wishes to pay an exorbitant fee to have the public records separated from the private records. Furthermore, the writer was unsuccessful in obtaining permission to research the minutes of the Crow Tribal Council meetings, copies of which are stored at the BIA building in Crow Agency. Someone who can avoid the government fees and tribal politics should try to research these records.

While living at Lodge Grass from 1969-1977, the writer kept a journal primarily concerning the politics at the school. This journal is cited only twice in this thesis.

Although the minutes of public school boards itemized nearly every penny spent, they did not focus on students or Indians. Unfortunately the clerks took short cuts, writing down names without explaining who the persons were. Sometimes the clerks neglected to report details or school

customs. Another problem with the public school minutes is that clerks often recorded scheduled events and approved purchases without verifying whether they actually took place later or not. The writer assumed that these events and transactions did take place. The trustees sometimes handled major problems in executive sessions, which were recorded in minutes unavailable to the writer.

The most complete public school records concerning Crow students are at Hardin, Montana. The Hardin minutes cover 1907-1976. The only gap that appears in the records is for 1910-1914. All of the minutes are in order, and the clerk keeps them in the safe. The trustees' annual reports contain receipts and expenditures for the district in 1930-1976. Moreover, the Hardin administration building has the most complete set of Montana Education Directories, containing enrollment figures going back to 1930.

The next most complete records are for the Lodge Grass District. Recently the minutes have been moved from the safe to cardboard boxes in the attic of the gymnasium under the custody of the janitor. The minutes cover the period 1920-1976. Two gaps in the records are major, 1910-1920 and 1929-1946. The Lodge Grass minutes, unlike the other minutes, had some letters from teachers, administrators, and

businessmen, along with some state accreditation reports.

The briefest minutes of board meetings are those for Wyola. The minutes are in boxes in the teacherage. The Wyola minutes cover only the periods 1941-1954 and 1975-1976. It is unfortunate that the minutes are so brief because the Wyola clerks could have documented more clearly the effect of the government programs on such a small school.

To some degree the Pryor minutes complement the Wyola records in that they document some of the effect of the government programs on a small school. Unfortunately, the Pryor records are the most incomplete because the minutes before 1963 have been destroyed.

The state audits were the only documents containing the total expenditures for any of the schools on the Crow Reservation since 1909. The writer was able to research most of the reports for the period 1962-1976. These records were in Hardin at the office of the Big Horn County Superintendent of Schools.

The state reports on Indian education, available at the Education Office at the Billings BIA Area Office, contain statistics and enrollments of Indians and non-Indians in some of the Crow Reservation schools. The purpose of these reports is to explain how the Johnson O'Malley funds

were spent for meals and buildings at the various schools.

Curriculum Guides

The state curriculum guides for various subjects in 1917-1949 were at the Office of the Big Horn County Superintendent of schools. These guides reflected the philosophy of teaching current at the time and no doubt influenced the Reservation schools. Several teachers who taught on the Reservation in the 1930s and 1940s recalled that they followed the state guides. Some kindergarten guides for 1964-1975 were obtained from Janet Stevenson of Lodge Grass. Janet indicated which Reservation schools used these kindergarten guides.

Sources about the Bilingual Programs on the Crow Reservation

John Dracon gave the writer permission to use the results of his questionnaire of Crow Reservation teachers concerning bilingual education taken before the first bilingual program was established at Crow Agency. Most of the information about the bilingual programs was obtained in the office of Dr. Elnora A. Old Coyote at Montana State University. These records included notification of grants awarded in 1971-1974, applications and continuation proposals for

bilingual programs in 1970-1976, and evaluations and audits in 1970-1975. The records concern mostly the program at Crow Agency, but a few of the records cover the programs at three other schools. The 1976 evaluation of the Wyola bilingual program was obtained from Steve Chesarek, also at Montana State University. The bilingual proposals and evaluations reported success in the bilingual programs; whereas, the outside evaluations criticized the programs.

Letters and Conversations

Rather than using random sampling and impersonal questionnaires, the writer selected human resources upon the basis of their length and type of involvement in the Crow Reservation schools. The writer attempted to get people of various races, occupations, levels of education, and different locations on the Reservation. The writer was successful in contacting ten of the twenty-eight people he tried to reach.

Genevieve Fitzgerald's father founded the Baptist Home Mission School at Lodge Grass in 1903. This school was the first day school on the Crow Reservation. Petzoldt, her father, also helped found the first public school in Lodge Grass in 1910. Fitzgerald attended public school in Lodge

Grass when it first opened. She graduated with the first class in 1919. She later taught at Lodge Grass for twenty years. Her letter and an article in Lookin' Back were all that the writer could find to complement the government's critical information about the Protestant day schools on the Reservation.

Several people provided information about the Reservation public schools. Altha Montgomery referred to some notes she had kept while teaching at Wyola in 1925-1967. George Bull Tail attended the Pryor Boarding School in 1910-1920. He knew Oberlander, the first superintendent of the school. Rose and Ted Gran have taught at Lodge Grass and Hardin since 1970. Caroline Riebeth was a student at Crow Agency Public School when it opened; she was also a teacher and a clerk in the Hardin School District in the 1940s and 1950s. Josephine Russell was a student at Lodge Grass in 1921-1933. She taught on the Reservation in 1942-1972. She was the first certified Crow Indian public school teacher. Gary Stevenson was a student at Lodge Grass in the 1950s. Two of his grandfathers contributed buildings to the public school. Janet Stevenson taught kindergarten and substituted in both Lodge Grass and Wyola.

Summary

This history refers to federal, missionary, and public school records. In spite of the diversity of documents, references are scarce concerning the Protestant missionary day schools and the teaching techniques used in the early schools on the Crow Reservation. Nevertheless, the documents which are available inadvertently describe the effect of abundant resources on the Reservation schools.

III. PHYSICAL SURVIVAL AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN THE RESERVATION BOARDING SCHOOLS

1870-1921

Before the establishment of the Crow Reservation and the first schools, the Crow Indians had a system for teaching youngsters how to survive. For the males survival depended upon skill in warfare and hunting. The boys probably learned hunting from their fathers.

They usually went to their maternal uncles to learn the art of warfare. This part of Crow education was competitive and active. The boys learned to run faster by smashing butterflies against their chests. They learned to swim harder by racing to see who could gather the most sticks floating on the water. They learned stealth by stealing meat from the old ladies in camp. In their early adolescence, the boys accompanied war parties. They went as water carriers and fire builders.

Boys also learned from sponsors and medicine men, too. Sponsors encouraged and prepared the boys for the vision quest, for example. Most boys went on a vision quest for a few days when they were teenagers. Once at the vision quest site, the boys were by themselves with no food or water. Old men sometimes interpreted the visions the boys received.

The visions seemed to give direction to the lives of the young men.¹

Traditionally the Crow women were in charge of the rest of the necessities for survival, including gathering wood for the fires and butchering the buffalo. So the girls learned by assisting the women. They dried meat, gathered wild berries, dug for wild roots, constructed teepees, and made clothing.²

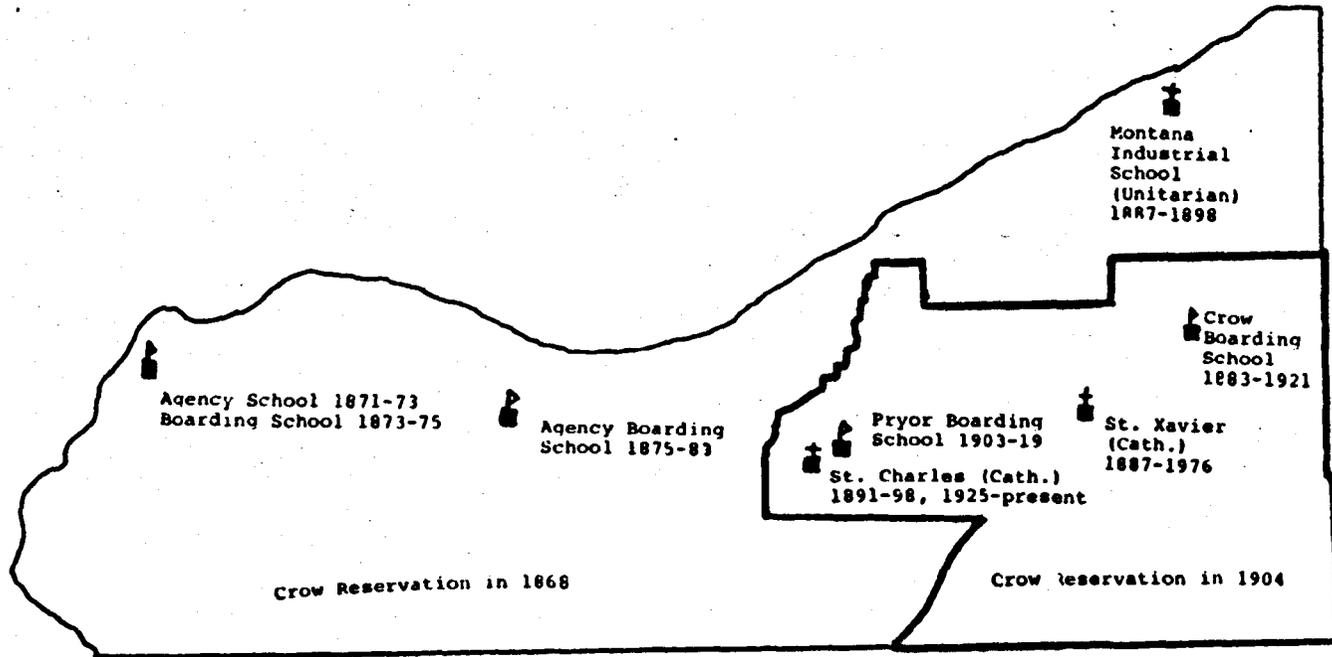
The resources for traditional Crow survival, nevertheless, began to disappear before the Crows were settled on the Reservation. The Crow tribe suffered from famine and diseases. As hunting became less feasible, the government sent rations to the Reservation. By 1868 government officials believed the Crows needed to learn how to homestead in order to survive. Homesteading required numerous skills that could be taught in schools. Thus, in Article 7 of the Treaty of 1868, the government promised to build schools and send teachers, and the Crows agreed to send their youngsters to the schools.³ Actually the Crows understood the need for homesteading, but they did not understand the need for schooling. So in the 1880s the government officials forced Crow parents to cooperate by withholding food rations from those who did not send their children to school.⁴

Educators on the Crow Reservation in the late 1880s experienced harsh conditions. So these educators taught Crow youngsters to work with them in order to survive. By hard labor, the early educators and students provided heat, food, and some of the school buildings. Together the educators and students made the schools of the 1880s as self-sufficient as possible. Since survival seemed to require cooperative effort, most of the early Reservation schools were boarding schools.

The Establishment of Boarding Schools

The first school on the Crow Reservation was part of the government's first agency for the Crow Indians. (See Map 1.) The agency was in the western part of the Reservation, near present-day Livingston. Even though there was a school building, no school was held in 1870.⁵ In 1871, J. H. Aylsworth opened a day school for the children near the agency.⁶ The school became a boarding school on 27 October 1873. By that time a matron took care of the children while a minister taught the students.⁷ The government moved the boarding school twice. Then the school continued steadily at Crow Agency until 1921. The government also established a boarding school at Pryor in 1903.

Crow Reservation Boarding Schools



Map 1

Missionaries, too, established boarding schools on the Crow Reservation. The Unitarians settled on the lower Big Horn River. In 1887, Henry F. Bond, their leader, opened the Montana Industrial School. This school was also known as the Bond School. On 1 October 1887 Peter Paul Prando, a Jesuit, opened Saint Xavier Mission School, near Saint Xavier.⁸ Later four or five missionaries joined Prando in opening the Saint Charles Mission School at Pryor. The first students arrived in 1890 or 1891.⁹

Most Crow youngsters did not go to school until 1911. But those who did go to school in 1873-1909 usually went to boarding schools.¹⁰ (See Figure 1.) From 1871-1912 educators rationalized that boarding schools on the Crow Reservation were necessary in order to separate the students from the influences of the Indian camps.¹¹ This separation provided educators with what they thought was the ideal environment for teaching Crow Indians how to survive by working.

The Harshness of Survival in Boarding Schools

Physical survival must have been constantly on the minds of the educators in the late 1880s. There were so many dangers to face. One of the early sources of danger was Indian raids. The conflicts between the Crows and Sioux

Crow Attendance in Boarding and Day Schools
1871-1921

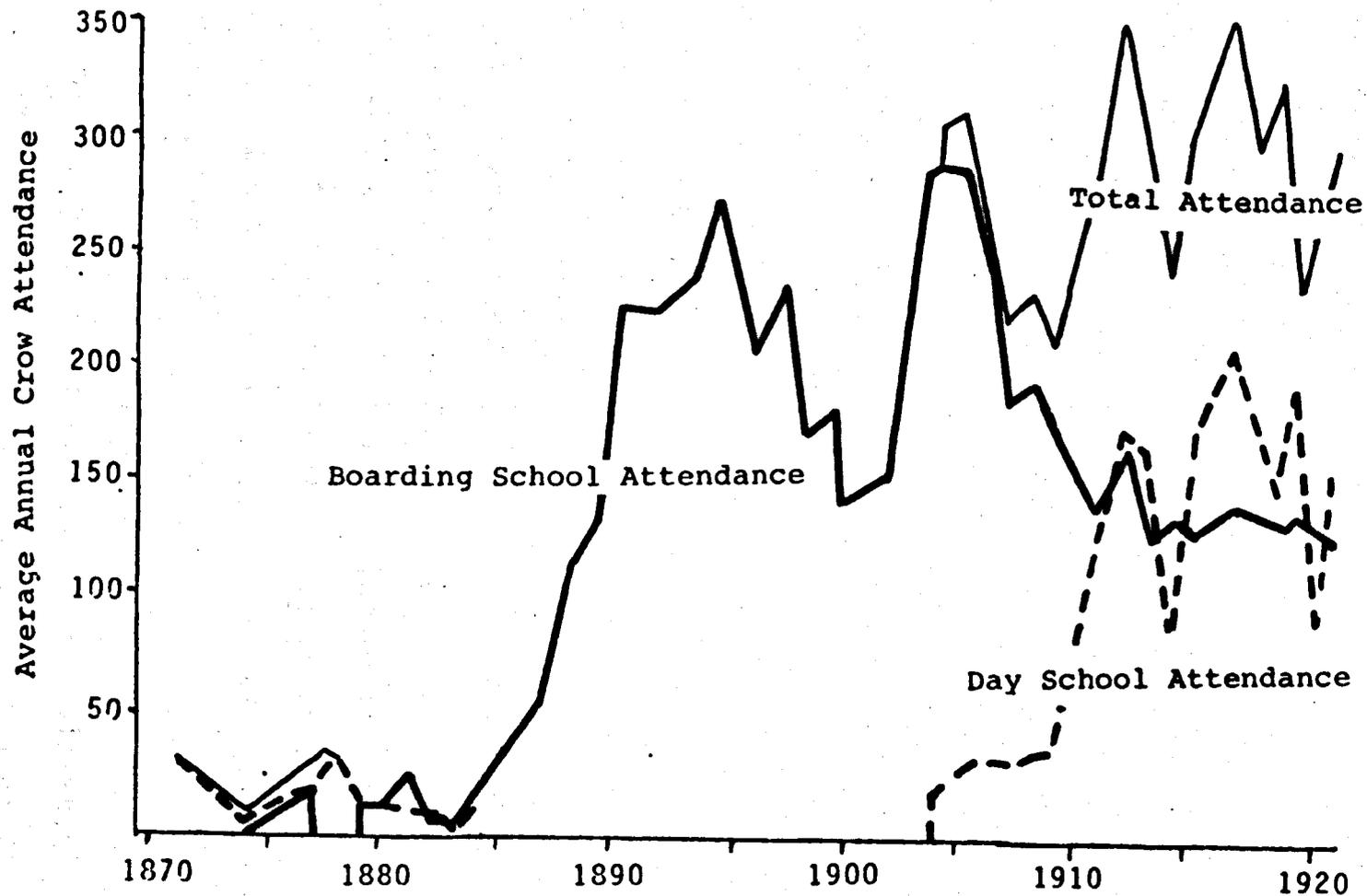


Fig. 1

disrupted the agency school in 1873, for example.¹² Indian conflicts seem not to have affected the schools much after 1873, even though the Sioux continued to occupy the eastern end of the Crow Reservation until the aftermath of the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876. Moreover, the Crow "scholars" continued to attend school peacefully in spite of the Crow Indian uprising at Crow Agency in 1887.¹³

Diseases threatened the Crow Reservation schools more than Indian raids. Diseases were the principal cause for the population decline of the Crow tribe throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁴ Furthermore the Reservation schools sometimes had to be closed because of diseases. The agency school was closed in the spring of 1880 because of scarlet fever.¹⁵ All Reservation schools were quarantined in 1909 because of scarlet fever.¹⁶ Measles also affected the Reservation schools. The Crow Boarding School was closed for a month in 1897 because of measles. The entire staff joined together to help all 108 students recover from the disease.¹⁷ All but a few students got the measles at Saint Xavier Mission School.¹⁸

The worst disease on the Crow Reservation during the early nineteenth century was smallpox. This disease threatened the schools in 1900. Even though the staff and

students at Saint Xavier Mission School had been vaccinated, the Crow Indians seemed to sense that smallpox was going to strike there. In March 1900 the chiefs brought horses for the children. But the missionaries refused to give up the children. As the Crows headed into the mountains, a case of smallpox developed at the mission. The government agent and the agency physician went to Saint Xavier and closed the school quickly. Some children went home, but the missionaries kept the older girls and three boys. By 1 April the school was quarantined. Another smallpox case developed a week later.¹⁹ Soon all the Reservation schools had to be closed temporarily.²⁰ When smallpox struck Crow Agency in February 1903, no one was allowed to leave the various districts on the Reservation. The Crows did not even have their usual George Washington Birthday dance that year.²¹ Smallpox then spread to Pryor. Students stricken with smallpox camped in teepees 600 feet in back of the Pryor Boarding School. Chief Plenty Coups helped calm the Crows who demanded to see their children. A few months later measles, too, struck the Pryor Boarding School.²² Smallpox continued to haunt the Reservation schools as late as 1914.²³

Tuberculosis was another disease that affected the

Reservation schools. Children with tuberculosis were not admitted to the schools. Yet, the disease was the most common problem among the students in the early 1900s.²⁴ Students who caught the disease in 1900-08 left school and went home, usually to die.²⁵ By 1911 half the Crow students had tubercular infection. After 1911, however, tuberculosis declined as a cause of death among the Crow Indians.²⁶

Meningitis and poliomyelitis also forced Reservation schools to close. The Reservation schools were closed in 1906 because of cerebro-spinal meningitis.²⁷ In the fall of 1916 the whole Crow Reservation was under quarantine for poliomyelitis which spread from Pryor. The government officials did not allow people to move from one district to another.²⁸ The public schools on the Reservation opened a month late because of the disease.²⁹ To help contain spinal meningitis in 1918 the Hardin city schools were delayed from opening for a week. Then Hardin teachers had to teach on Saturdays for a month to make up for the days "lost on account of influenza and infantile paralysis epidemics ..."³⁰

Minor diseases troubled the Reservation schools, too. After the weekends when the parents visited the children at the boarding schools, hair lice usually spread among the children.³¹ In addition, Crow students suffered from

trachoma. Trachoma even blinded some students.³²

Besides diseases, fires endangered the early boarding schools. With one possible exception the Reservation school buildings were made of wood until 1891.³³ Although frame and log buildings were easy to erect, they were very vulnerable to fires. Wood stoves, coal stoves, and kerosene lamps were especially hazardous during cold spells. Fire protection was minimal and usually consisted of little more than buckets and pumps.³⁴

Thus, with one exception, all the boarding schools on the Crow Reservation suffered disastrous consequences from fires. The boys' dormitory at the agency boarding school burned down on 1 August 1883. The school became crowded and lessons had to be held in the girls' dormitory.³⁵ The boys' dormitory at the Montana Industrial School burned down in 1895. Living quarters became cramped, and in the summer the Unitarians turned the school over to the government.³⁶ Saint Xavier Mission School had fires in 1902 and 1906.³⁷ In October 1922 a fire destroyed the water system at the Mission School.³⁸

Not only were living conditions in the schools hazardous, but transportation on the Crow Reservation in the late

1800s was limited. Employees traveling to the Reservation after 1883 took the Northern Pacific Railroad to Custer Station, present-day Custer, Montana. From there they rode in a stage coach to the Big Horn River, near present-day Hardin.

Travel across the Reservation was treacherous at times. For example, in February 1891 three Ursuline Sisters, a Jesuit, and a lay brother left Saint Xavier to help establish Saint Charles Mission School in Pryor. They began their journey after a three weeks' storm. They rode in a sleigh "wrapped in fur coats and blankets." They had with them a larger sleigh conveying trunks, bedding, and provisions. As soon as they had crossed the Big Horn River, the ice broke. Muddy roads made sleighing difficult and slow. They camped fifteen miles from a cow camp. The Sisters slept in the sleigh, the men on the ground. A wagon arrived from the cow camp, and the missionaries spent the next night sitting up in a tent during a wind storm. They drank water that was collected in the hoof prints. Upon arriving at Saint Charles Mission, the missionaries followed Prando to the chapel where they offered thanks.³⁹

Crossing the Big Horn River was dangerous. In the early 1880s, there was a ferry across the Big Horn at Fort

Custer. By 1892 employees crossed the Big Horn by a cable car known as the "air ship."⁴⁰ Later they crossed the River on a pontoon bridge, but in winter they rode horses over the ice. Crossing the Big Horn at Saint Xavier proved to be still risky in June 1898 when a Catholic priest was drowned. A layman, who was with the priest, somehow saved the wagon, a horse, and the student.⁴¹

Thus, deadly diseases, hazardous fires, and dangerous modes of transportation combined to make harsh living conditions on the Crow Reservation. Similarly, the early school policies reflected the harsh conditions. Government policies prohibited dancing and gambling at the schools.⁴² Furthermore, the Reservation schools did not have summer vacations until after 1893,⁴³ and the twelve-month school continued at Saint Xavier Mission School until 1904.⁴⁴

Not only did the early boarding schools operate all year, but around the clock, too. Teachers had to teach evening classes.⁴⁵ At night the employees of the schools had to watch the buildings for fires and intruders.⁴⁶ Sometimes the employees of the Crow Boarding School took turns sitting up all night with patients in the hospital, too.⁴⁷

Hence, the employees had little relief from the students. Even the superintendent had to live at the boarding

school and teach and punish students.⁴⁸ The boarding schools also employed full-time matrons to live with the girls.⁴⁹

Not only did survival require work, but studying required work, too. The students learned by memorizing and reciting. The superintendent of the Crow Boarding School exemplified the proper way to teach in 1889 when he used drill and when he required the students "to read and recite constantly."⁵⁰

Working Together at the Boarding Schools

The employees and students met the harshness of survival by working together to make the boarding schools as self-sufficient as possible.⁵¹ The girls in all the Reservation boarding schools swept the dormitories and washed the clothes.⁵² The girls mended stockings.⁵³ The small boys, too, learned to darn stockings and sew on buttons.⁵⁴ By 1890, with the help of matrons and seamstresses, the girls produced sheets, pillow cases, towels, and all the clothes needed at the Crow Boarding School.⁵⁵

The industrial work usually came in the afternoons. As with the housework and sewing, the industrial work contributed to the self-sufficiency of the boarding schools.⁵⁶

The students cut and hauled most of the wood used to heat the dormitories.⁵⁷ Until 1896 the employees and the students at the Crow Boarding School hauled water from a ditch in buckets.⁵⁸ At Saint Xavier Mission School the boys helped paint the buildings.⁵⁹ More importantly, in all of the boarding schools the employees and older students worked together in the school gardens, milk barns, and hay fields.

Concern for Food in the Boarding Schools

The government granted farms to each of the first boarding schools. These farms helped make the boarding schools self-sufficient. The importance of farm work in the Reservation boarding schools was symbolized by the industrial teacher, who was the highest paid teacher in the government schools.

Farming was one reason why the early boarding schools ran all summer. For example, by 1900 half the boys stayed at the government school to do farm work for half the summer. Then the other half of the boys returned to the school farm.⁶⁰

Besides teaching the students how to farm, the purpose of agricultural work was to produce food for the boarding schools. By 1887 the students at the Crow Boarding School

raised more vegetables than the school required.⁶¹ Thus, in 1894 they sold enough surplus produce to buy the school a new piano.⁶²

To help the Crows understand the relationship between work and survival, the students sometimes raised individual gardens.⁶³ The employees at the Crow Boarding School carried the connection between gardening and survival a step further. Each student harvested and ate his own produce.⁶⁴

The Reservation boarding schools were responsible for preparing food as well as raising it. Thus, the boarding schools employed cooks and bakers.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the students in all of the Reservation boarding schools learned how to cook and make butter.⁶⁶

Storing and preserving food was another way in which the Reservation schools worked toward self-sufficiency. The employees usually cut and hauled the ice, while the boys put the ice in the ice houses.⁶⁷ Some of the schools had root houses in which the boys learned to store vegetables.⁶⁸ Sometimes the boarding school students camped in the mountains so they could pick wild fruit for canning or for making preserves for the school.⁶⁹

Relaxation in the Boarding Schools

The school employees and students at the boarding schools not only lived and worked together, but occasionally, they relaxed together. On Sundays the employees and students went to church together.⁷⁰ Sports involved both the employees and students. For instance, the Pryor Boarding School superintendent, who was also a physician, took the time to play baseball with the students.⁷¹

From 1889-1908 the students at the boarding schools sang at least one evening each week.⁷² The employees usually sang with the students.⁷³ At Saint Xavier the students even played the guitar and the mandolin.⁷⁴

Boarding school students took a little time off from the continual work for survival and self-sufficiency. The Saint Xavier students used Thursdays for "pic-nics, fishing and hunting parties, riding, and similar amusements ..."⁷⁵ Beginning in 1893 the students and employees of Saint Xavier sometimes went on camping trips in the summer.⁷⁶ The students at the Crow Boarding School usually had classes in the evenings. But on Friday nights they played games.⁷⁷ Saturday afternoons were also considered holidays in the government schools. In the early 1880s the agency school

students went for Sunday afternoon rides in the wagon with the agent. Not until 1900 were the students free to walk, ride horses, or ride in the buggy on Sundays.⁷⁸

There were a few holidays, too. The Crow Boarding School students had the following eight holidays: New Years, Franchise Day, Washington's Birthday, Arbor Day, Decoration Day, July Fourth, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.⁷⁹ The mission students had fewer holidays than the government school students. Sometimes the Catholic missionaries celebrated the Fourth of July. For instance, they raised the flag on 4 July 1893 amidst shooting. The children each spent five cents at the store. The boys and priest also shot at targets and at prairie dogs. The best shots received extra lunches.⁸⁰ The missionaries also celebrated Christmas. A Crow Indian Santa Claus distributed gifts among the children on Christmas Day in 1900.⁸¹

The missionary and government school students occasionally went to fairs and circuses in Billings.⁸² In 1904 the superintendent of the Reservation introduced the Crow Fair primarily as a way of keeping the Crows farming at home, instead of attending fairs off the Reservation. At the Crow Fair the Crows displayed their produce and stock. They received prizes for individual work and district projects.

Beginning in 1906 the Crow Fair became an annual custom. The students at both Saint Xavier Mission and Crow Boarding Schools attended the Crow Fair in 1906. The missionaries usually let the students out for a week to ten days to attend the Crow Fair.⁸³

The Shift Away from Concern for Self-Sufficiency

To some extent the boarding schools, along with other government programs for the adult Indians, produced the intended results. The Crow Indians seemed to be headed on the road toward self-support. In the 1890s, they began selling surplus farm products. By 1906 they were off government rations. Slowly the population of Crows began to increase after 1911.⁸⁴

As the Crows became more self-supporting, however, the Reservation boarding schools became less self-sufficient. Wood shortages forced schools to purchase coal. In 1888 the Catholic mission school began using coal.⁸⁵ The government installed coal stoves at the Crow Boarding School in 1894.⁸⁶ By 1914 most of the Reservation schools used coal.

Furthermore, schools began to replace frame and log structures with imported brick for buildings. In 1891-1892

the Catholics built a new three-story brick building at Saint Xavier Mission School.⁸⁷ In the 1890s the government built three brick buildings at the Crow Boarding School.⁸⁸ When the Pryor Boarding School was opened in 1903, the school had a two-story brick dormitory, complete with steam heat and gas lights.⁸⁹

School officials began to rely upon new technology for water systems, too. The Unitarians used a windmill water pump at the Montana Industrial School. In 1894 they got a new one to provide water for the school but continued to use the old one to irrigate the school gardens.⁹⁰ The Crow Boarding School may have been the first Reservation school to have indoor plumbing. The school abandoned the easily constructed outhouse in 1896 when the government completed a new water and sewage system which included "water closets."⁹¹ These changes eventually affected the curriculum; for, the government boarding schools implemented courses in plumbing.⁹²

The mode of travel changed, too. In 1902, for instance, the Saint Xavier Mission School went to Billings to give a band concert. Although the students could have ridden a train from Hardin to Billings, the boys and prefect

rode horses and spent the night somewhere on Pryor Creek.⁹³ The Mission School still used horses and wagons in 1913. In 1915, nevertheless, the mission girls went to the Crow Fair in autos.⁹⁴ In addition, the Mission had a telephone by 1914.⁹⁵ The government boarding schools adjusted the curriculum to the age of motors with courses on gas engines.⁹⁶

Though they made school life more comfortable and perhaps less hazardous, fossil-fuel heat, brick buildings, indoor plumbing, motorized transportation, and electric communication required money, rather than local materials and labor. Therefore, inadequate finances forced all but one boarding school to close on the Crow Reservation. The Unitarians could not find funds to maintain the Montana Industrial School so they turned it over to the government. The government supported the school for a while but abolished it in 1897.⁹⁷ The Catholics ran into financial difficulty and had to close Saint Charles in 1898.⁹⁸ In the 1890s and early 1900s, the government maintained its schools on the Reservation in part with Crow tribal funds. The Acts of 1891 and 1904 sold large portions of the Reservation. From these sales the government obtained money for school buildings.⁹⁹ By 1920, however, these funds were nearly depleted.

As financing World War I preoccupied the government officials, they allowed the standards in the government schools to decline. Hence, they were as ready as the Crow tribe to close the government schools on the Reservation in 1921 and turn the students over to the public schools.

Summary

As long as educators had to struggle to survive, they worked toward making the schools self-sufficient. Thus, the employees and students labored together in the school gardens and in the dormitories. Beginning in the late 1880s, however, living conditions became more comfortable and schools became less self-sufficient when they no longer needed to labor for such aspects of physical survival as building materials, heat, and transportation. The reduction of labor came as a result of the availability of cheap energy.

Hence, as the use of energy increased, labor declined. Likewise, money became more important than labor. The decline in labor at schools led to an increasing separation between educators and students.

References

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