

## The Carlisle School's Impact on Indian Identity

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## The Carlisle School's Impact on Indian Identity

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### Abstract

Before the Gilded Age, little to no effort was put forth to educate the Indians in the United States. The only interaction prior to this time was in battle over land or resource rights. Many Americans even felt Indians were incapable of learning how to be civilized. At least one American, however, did not ascribe to this belief. Richard Henry Pratt, an army officer, had his first experience with Indians in 1867. He believed they were capable of great things, and he wanted to enrich their lives via schooling. However, his aim was to take Native American children from their reservations and attempt to assimilate them into "normal" white American society. Pratt and his industrial school model came to fruition in the late 19th century. The effects of this system were reprehensible, leaving its students with no culture to call their own. This outcome has carried over into tribes' identities even to the present day.

**Key words:** Indian, Carlisle, industrial school, Native American, Assimilation

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Prior to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century forth to educate the Indians in the, little to no effort was put United States.<sup>1</sup> The main interactions during this time between Indian tribes and U.S. citizens were battles over land or natural resources. Many Americans even felt Indians were incapable of learning how to be civilized. Historian Francis Parkman wrote in 1851, "He will not learn the arts of civilization, and he and his forest must perish together" while a federal judge declared in the *New York Times*

that, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian."<sup>2</sup> While much of the country held similar opinions, at least one American did not follow the status quo: Richard Henry Pratt, an army officer. Following the Indian Wars in the West, many Indian leaders were taken captive and held as prisoners at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida. In 1867, Pratt took control of this Indian prison camp, where he realized these men had potential. The Indians not only completed manual labor under his command,

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<sup>1</sup> For clarity and consistency with the primary documents used, the term "Indian" is used throughout this paper to describe those Native peoples from any tribes in the U. S. who were affected by the creation of the Indian Industrial Schools.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert L. Brunhouse, "Founding of the Carlisle Indian School," *Pennsylvania History* 6, no. 2 (1939): 73. "An Impudent Indian," *New York Times*, September 4, 1877, Microfilm.

but they also learned to cook typical Anglo-American food and to write and speak English.<sup>3</sup> This “promising” behavior led Pratt to the idea of educating them on a larger scale. The Carlisle School, which Pratt founded in 1879, was the first attempt to assimilate American Indians into “normal” American society. The strict instruction and discipline methods coupled with lackluster provisions created an overall experience in the Indian Industrial Schools, specifically in the Carlisle School, that wreaked havoc on the identities of individual students and even influenced the culture of entire tribes. This is evident in the lives of Oglala Lakota Luther Standing Bear, Yankton Dakota Zitkala-Sa, and countless others. Pratt’s educational system killed their spirits and left them in limbo: they were no longer entirely Indian, but neither were they “Americanized.” The loss of identity faced by nearly all the Indian students made readjusting to life after they returned to the reservation challenging, which ultimately affected the whole tribe.

Once the Indians’ imprisonment at St. Augustine ended, twenty-two of the men under Pratt’s command requested further schooling, which solidified—in his mind at least—the idea of assimilation.<sup>4</sup> He turned to a fellow army officer, S. C. Armstrong, head of the Hampton Institute, for assistance, which resulted in seventeen of his students attending the Institute. Despite placement of his former pupils into an established school, Pratt was still unhappy. The Hampton Institute was a leading “Negro” school, and Pratt felt mixing two minorities only caused more problems, believing that separating the Indians from the African-Americans gave the former a better chance at eventually being accepted by the general public.<sup>5</sup> Determined to make a change to the current conditions, he set out in pursuit of funding for a school of his own. Pratt pleaded with Cabinet members and Congressmen in Washington for years before a de-

cision was finally made: the army barracks in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, were granted to Pratt in 1879.<sup>6</sup>

In the early years of Carlisle’s existence, one of Pratt’s main focuses was recruiting students. He travelled west to visit various Indian tribes and talked with both leaders and parents to convince them to send their children with him to Pennsylvania. He first recruited the Lakota tribe; upon arrival, he gathered the leaders of the tribe and proposed his idea. After explaining the entire process and the new governmental legislation allowing for the school’s formation, Pratt was met with much backlash. Spotted Tail, one of the leaders, refused to allow Lakota children to learn the ways of the white “thieves and liars.” Pratt responded with everything he could think of to convince these men, even arguing that if their progeny learned English, the tribe’s relations with America in the future might improve, due to a better understanding of the conditions given in agreements and treaties.<sup>7</sup> The leaders eventually relented and allowed Pratt to take seventy-two children off the reservation and back to Carlisle. Following this victory, it seemed that Pratt used any means necessary to persuade tribes to send their children to his school. Sometimes, as in the case of Luther Standing Bear, he came armed with candy for the children, who then begged their parents to let them go to school.<sup>8</sup> Other times, as in the case of Zitkala-Sa, he and his associates would speak directly to the children, telling them tales of orchards full of apples ripe for the picking and rides upon the “iron horse” to sway the children’s opinions.<sup>9</sup>

While Pratt’s interest in assimilating the Indians was based mainly on experimental ideas brought about by his time at Fort Marion, rather than out of respect and desire for the Indians’ wellbeing, the government’s support of these industrial schools was even less honorable. The Bureau of Indian Affairs used the Carlisle School, and

<sup>3</sup> Brunhouse, “Founding of the Carlisle Indian School,” 75.

<sup>4</sup> Brunhouse, “Founding of the Carlisle Indian School,” 75.

<sup>5</sup> Brunhouse, “Founding of the Carlisle Indian School,” 76.

<sup>6</sup> Official control of Carlisle was granted in 1882 with the passing of the related bill through Congress; prior, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs had allowed Pratt to begin the experiment, pending the bill’s passage. Brunhouse, “Founding of the Carlisle Indian School,” 77.

<sup>7</sup> Brunhouse, “Founding of the Carlisle Indian School,” 79.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Kay Morel, “Captain Pratt’s School,” *American History* 32, no. 2 (May/June 1997): 26.

<sup>9</sup> Zitkala-Sa, “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” *Atlantic Monthly* 87, no. 1 (January 1900): 46.

others like it, as holding cells for the children of important Indian leaders, so that they could be used as an extortion tactic of sorts in treaty negotiations.<sup>10</sup> High-ranking tribal leaders were permitted to stop by occasionally on their way to negotiation meetings in Washington, D. C. and relay messages from family members; oftentimes, during these visits they were informed of a child's death. Due to poor living conditions and the introduction of a new diet and new diseases, many children died. A cemetery was added to the grounds soon after the first wave of students arrived.<sup>11</sup> While this was a logical addition, it represented yet another facet of the school that crushed Indian culture: most tribes felt it a dishonor for their descendants to be buried off their respective reservations. In first thirty years of the school's existence, 195 students perished during their tenure at the school and were buried away from their reservations.<sup>12</sup>

Pratt's ultimate goal for the Carlisle School was successful assimilation into American society, so he enforced "total immersion": he wanted to strip away any remnant of Indian culture and replace it with the "correct" American alternative. The Indians' physical appearances were completely overhauled; their long hair was clumsily chopped off, and they swapped their moccasins for hard-soled shoes. For the Sioux tribe specifically, cutting one's hair was a sign of lamentation. When the children were forced to have haircuts, they protested as best they could, screaming and wailing throughout the entire process.<sup>13</sup> Zitkala-Sa refused to give up her heritage, no matter how hard the white Americans at the Carlisle School pushed; she ran away from the administrators who were cutting the students' hair and hid under a bed upstairs. She was soon found, carried downstairs kicking and screaming, and then tied to the chair so that they could cut her hair.<sup>14</sup> The Indians' languages were banned, and the students were forced to put aside their religious beliefs and celebrate Christian holidays and

attend Christian church every Sunday.<sup>15</sup> Instead of eating, sleeping, and playing as they saw fit (as they had done on the reservation), every second of their day followed a strict schedule.<sup>16</sup> The ringing of a bell signaled the transition to a new activity throughout the day. For twenty-five years, Pratt distributed food on a military ration schedule. At mealtimes, a bell rang to instruct students to sit down; at the next bell, they picked up their utensils; on the third bell, they began eating. A final bell was rung when mealtimes were over.<sup>17</sup> The bell ringing continued throughout the entire day, signaling the end of lessons, shower time, and bed time.<sup>18</sup>

It was hard enough for students to adjust to new surroundings once arriving at Carlisle, but even more so when every single aspect of their culture was stripped from them as well. The diet introduced to the Indian students was heavily dependent on breads and starches, ravaging their digestive systems; they were used to eating fruits, vegetables, and game, which were served rarely at Carlisle. Since this was the first time for the vast majority of these Indians to be living and working in such close proximity to white Americans, they were introduced to several new diseases, and deaths from tuberculosis and smallpox were common in the first few weeks of a student's stay at Carlisle. Physical ruin was not the only danger; for students who survived the dietary changes and threat of disease, spirits were quickly broken by the strict schedule. Given his military background, Pratt ran his school much like an army officer would instruct his troops. Jason Betzinez, an Apache and one of the first students to arrive at the school, reiterated this fact, saying the new arrivals were given Army-style uniforms and "the place was run on military lines."<sup>19</sup> In the school's first days, supplies the government promised—food, clothes, and even beds—had yet to arrive. In his autobiography, Luther Standing Bear described his arrival on October 6, 1879: "We ran very

<sup>10</sup> Brunhouse, "Founding of the Carlisle Indian School," 78.

<sup>11</sup> Brunhouse, "Founding of the Carlisle Indian School," 83.

<sup>12</sup> "Death Record- Register of Pupils (1900-1906)," *Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center*, accessed December 17, 2015, <http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/lists/death-record-register-pupils-1900-1906>.

<sup>13</sup> Morel, "Captain Pratt's School," 31.

<sup>14</sup> Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," 187.

<sup>15</sup> Daniels, "The North American Boarding School Experience," 3.

<sup>16</sup> Morel, "Captain Pratt's School," 31.

<sup>17</sup> Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," 186.

<sup>18</sup> Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl," 187.

<sup>19</sup> Marc Simmons, "Trail Dust: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Schools across US Aimed to Assimilate Indian Youth," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 26 Feb 2005.

fast expecting to find nice little beds like those the white people had . . . We ran through all the rooms—no fire, no beds . . . We went to sleep on the hard floor, and it was so cold! We had been used to sleeping on the ground, but the floor was so much colder.”<sup>20</sup> Rather than beds or fresh food, one of the first supplies to arrive at the barracks was an old organ; this was not the first, or the last, time the Bureau of Indian Affairs was slow to fulfill promises made to Pratt. He continued to have difficulty receiving supplies up until his forced retirement in 1904.<sup>21</sup>

The Carlisle School modeled for other industrial schools how to teach English to Indians. Pratt’s method, still used in some schools today, consisted of showing an everyday object—a pencil, a shirt, or bread—and then reciting its English name; teachers drilled the proper pronunciation until students could say the word correctly.<sup>22</sup> English lessons and other practical lessons started even before the uniforms arrived.<sup>23</sup> Since receiving supplies of any kind was such a lengthy process, the industrial aspect of the education experience was gradually introduced. By April of 1880, the cobbler’s station, the agriculture station, and the tin shop were furnished with supplies.<sup>24</sup> Once the industrial program was established, students spent half of their days learning relevant academic subjects such as grammar and mathematics, and the other half practicing a particular trade. Every summer, the students participated in “outing,” a practice similar to the concept of studying abroad.<sup>25</sup> Each student stayed with a white host family that helped them practice their English speaking skills. Boys worked in local businesses or on nearby farms, while the girls stayed in the homes and practiced their cooking and other domestic skills.<sup>26</sup>

As if the culture shock induced by their new environment was not enough, the students also had to suffer excessive punishments for the tiniest infractions. Even though the policy set by the Bureau of Indian Affairs states, “Corporal punishment should be resorted to only in cases of grave violation of rules . . . No unusual or cruel or degrading punishment,” individual schools were left on their own to decide what constituted a “grave violation.” Minor infractions such as talking out of turn or not completing a task quickly enough could be punished by palm slapping, loss of a meal, or more degrading means, such as forcing boys to walk laps around the compound in girl’s clothes, or forcing girls to cut the grass with scissors. The most serious infraction, speaking their original language or expressing any religious or spiritual beliefs from their culture, was punished with public lashings or solitary confinement that could last up to a week.<sup>27</sup> For the first few months of their time at Carlisle, the students’ understanding of the English language was very limited, and the teachers and staff at the schools either did not realize it, or did not care. If students did not listen to instruction, they were beaten; in most cases, students did not know what they were being asked to do so the beatings were not effective as behavior reinforcement.<sup>28</sup> These punishments were not alone in crippling the psychological growth of these students; sexual abuse, malnourishment, and disease all detrimentally affected the student population.

The travesties suffered at the Carlisle School can be seen firsthand through the lives of several of its most prominent students. Originally named Plenty Kill, Luther Standing Bear was one of the first to arrive at the Carlisle School. While Pratt assumed that Standing Bear had agreed to attend Carlisle due to his persuasion skills

<sup>20</sup> Standing Bear, *My People, the Sioux*, 133-4.

<sup>21</sup> Pratt publicly denounced new government policy dealing with segregation on reservations. This, paired with earlier disputes with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, caused the government to request his retirement.

<sup>22</sup> Daniels, “The North American Boarding School Experience,” 4.

<sup>23</sup> Standing Bear, *My People, the Sioux*, 136-9.

<sup>24</sup> Brunhouse, “Founding of the Carlisle Indian School,” 84.

<sup>25</sup> Morel, “Captain Pratt’s School,” 30.

<sup>26</sup> Morel, “Captain Pratt’s School,” 31.

<sup>27</sup> Daniels, “The North American Boarding School Experience,” 4.

<sup>28</sup> Zitkala-Sa, “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” 188.

and the candy he provided, Standing Bear acknowledged a different reason. In Lakota culture, courage and bravery are the most revered character traits. Since times had changed and many reservations were focusing on survival rather than rituals, young men during this time were not given very many chances to showcase these traits. Standing Bear agreed to attend the Carlisle School to prove to his father he was brave. Upon his arrival, he was given a "proper" American name: Luther; Standing Bear was the name of his father, which he later readopted. While this name transition may seem insignificant, it took some time for the Indians to adjust to these new labels. At this point, the Indians knew little to no English, so while they may have noticed teachers looking in their direction and repeating a foreign word, they often did not know that the teachers were using their new names and that they were supposed to respond accordingly. Standing Bear recounted, "When the teacher called the roll, no one answered his name. Then she would walk around and look at the back of the boys' shirts. When she had the right name located, she made the boy stand up and say present. She kept this up for about a week before we knew what the sound of our new names was."<sup>29</sup> These name changes had several reasons behind them: teachers complained tribal names were too hard to pronounce, and the government was making a conscious effort to assign Indians surnames.<sup>30</sup>

Following his tenure at Carlisle, Standing Bear returned to his reservation and attempted to resume a normal life. He married a fellow Lakota, Nellie, and ran his father's dry-goods store for a while, but quickly became bored with life on the reservation.<sup>31</sup> He joined William "Buffalo Bill" Cody's Wild West show, much to the chagrin of Pratt; he was hired to be an interpreter for the Indian performers and doubled as a horseback performer and dancer.<sup>32</sup> Later, he ended up working in Hollywood as an actor. Standing Bear's integration into the white man's world was atypical; most students, after leaving

Carlisle, returned to their reservations without any idea how to handle themselves there. They had their newly-acquired Anglo skills, but no outlet through which to put them to use, and they no longer considered their native culture to be significant. This still applied in Standing Bear's case, but via the Wild West show, he was able to use his schooling while simultaneously acting out a skewed version of his original culture.

Some Indians struggled so much with this identity crisis that they did anything they could to restore a sense of belonging to one group or the other. Plenty Horses, a Lakota who attended Carlisle for five years, murdered an army lieutenant to re-establish his place among his people. When put on trial for his actions in 1891, he said, "I was lonely. I shot the lieutenant so I might make a place for myself among my people. Now I am one of them. I shall be hung and the Indian will bury me as a warrior. They will be proud of me. I am satisfied." Unfortunately for Plenty Horses, the judge acquitted him of the charges and, despite his efforts, he still spent the rest of his life stuck between two cultures.<sup>33</sup>

One of the best examples of the effects of industrial schools can be found in Yankton Dakota Zitkala-Sa; not only was she a student at Carlisle, but she later returned to teach at Carlisle as well. In her memoirs, Zitkala-Sa, which is translated as "Red Bird" in the Sioux language, told of a childhood with "wild freedom and overflowing spirits."<sup>34</sup> She roamed around the reservation on horseback or on foot almost daily, interacting with and showing appreciation for her surroundings. Despite such a relaxed and free childhood, she had always disliked "the paleface," mainly due to her mother's influence.<sup>35</sup> Zitkala-Sa's uncle and sister were killed by white men before Zitkala-Sa could remember, and her father, a Euro-American, abandoned Zitkala-Sa and her mother soon after her birth. When Pratt and his fellow teachers arrived at the Yankton reservation to convince the tribe their children needed to be educated, her mother hesitated;

<sup>29</sup> Jamie Daniels, "The North American Boarding School Experience," *Western Washington University: Northwest Center for Holocaust, Genocide, and Ethnocide Education*, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Daniels, "The North American Boarding School Experience," 3.

<sup>31</sup> Morel, "Captain Pratt's School," 32.

<sup>32</sup> Luther Standing Bear, *My People, the Sioux*. (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 254.

<sup>33</sup> Morel, "Captain Pratt's School," 33.

<sup>34</sup> Zitkala-Sa, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," 37.

<sup>35</sup> Zitkala-Sa, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood," 38.

the idea of education was a “tardy justice” for the wrongs whites had committed against the tribe, and her mother felt “their words are sweet, but, my child, their deeds are bitter.”<sup>36</sup> Zitkala-Sa eventually convinced her mother to let her attend Carlisle, but immediately after leaving her mother’s side and stepping onto the “iron horse,” she “no longer felt free to be [her]self.”<sup>37</sup>

When she and some of her classmates returned to the reservation from a session of schooling, Zitkala-Sa noticed a drastic difference in her behavior when compared with theirs. While she was content to wear her moccasins and animal skins as she had before her schooling, the rest of the children in her tribe ran around in their English garments and voluntarily spoke in English.<sup>38</sup> It was clear assimilation had not taken hold for her yet; she was a work in progress, still leaning toward the world of her ancestors rather than that of the white American. Several years after this summer of confusion, Zitkala-Sa travelled to Earlham College in Indiana to complete her education, and there she became a great oratory competitor, catching the attention of many prominent Indian activists—including her former headmaster, Richard Henry Pratt. He offered her a position at the Carlisle School, and she taught music and directed the band program for two years. She was even sent west in order to recruit future students.

Zitkala-Sa was never able to put aside the toll that Carlisle took on her physically and emotionally during her time as a student; she was dismissed in 1901 after publishing an article discussing the identity loss she had felt since attending Carlisle. She declared in this article, “Well, you can guess how queer I felt away from my own people—homeless—penniless—and even without a name!”<sup>39</sup> Even though Zitkala-Sa seemingly had integrated smoothly into American culture and society and had begun to teach other

Indians in hopes of assimilating them, her experience at the Carlisle School irreparably damaged her sense of self and ultimately cost her this façade of assimilation.

The stories of prominent alumni of Carlisle were just one way that the school garnered publicity nationwide. The fame attributed to the Carlisle School was in part due to Pratt’s talent for keeping his school in the spotlight. Visits from wealthy sponsors, national exhibitions at fairs, and the success of the Carlisle athletic teams brought the school into the public eye. While athletics was a huge publicity draw for the entirety of Carlisle’s existence, in no other time was it greater than when Jim Thorpe attended the school. Thorpe, a Sac and Fox Indian, attended the Carlisle school from 1904 to 1909 and then again from 1911 to 1912. He participated in football, baseball, lacrosse, ballroom dancing, and—most notably—track and field.<sup>40</sup> His sports career began in 1907, after Thorpe was dared to try out the high jump set up for the school’s track practice. He sailed past the competition and was immediately offered a spot on the team.<sup>41</sup> He also was an All-American football player, and he eventually played professional football. He was the first president of the American Professional Football Association, the predecessor of the National Football League (NFL).<sup>42</sup> He was a star pitcher and outfielder on the Carlisle baseball team; he pitched a no-hitter in his first game as a starter in the spring of 1908, and went on that summer to play in a semiprofessional league.<sup>43</sup> Following his successes at Carlisle, Thorpe competed in the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden. Dubbed “the greatest athlete in the world,” by the King of Sweden, Thorpe definitely lived up to this title.<sup>44</sup> He won gold medals in both the pentathlon and decathlon, and his scores in both were unmatched for over thirty years.<sup>45</sup>

Sports were not the only extracurricular activity that brought Carlisle to the forefront of the public eye,

<sup>36</sup> Zitkala-Sa, “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” 46.

<sup>37</sup> Zitkala-Sa, “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” 47.

<sup>38</sup> Zitkala-Sa, “The School Days of an Indian Girl,”

*Atlantic Monthly* 87, no. 2 (February 1900): 192.

<sup>39</sup> Dorothea M. Susag, “Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin): A Power(full) Literary Voice,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 3.

<sup>40</sup> Gray Cutler, “Jim Thorpe: Native American Legend,” *Films in Review* 47, no. 7 (1996): 7.

<sup>41</sup> Cutler, “Jim Thorpe,” 8.

<sup>42</sup> Rosemary K. Updike, *Jim Thorpe, the Legend Remembered*, (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1999), 69.

<sup>43</sup> Cutler, “Jim Thorpe,” 10.

<sup>44</sup> Cutler, “Jim Thorpe,” 6.

<sup>45</sup> At the time of his wins, there was a strict policy that all Olympic contestants must be amateur athletes; given Thorpe’s past in the semiprofessional baseball leagues, he was in violation of this rule and was immediately stripped of his medals. They were later reinstated and presented to his son. Cutler, “Jim Thorpe,” 7.

though. The Carlisle School marching band participated in every single presidential inauguration parade that occurred during the school's tenure. Under Zitkala-Sa's leadership, the band also performed at the Paris Exhibition in 1900.<sup>46</sup> Luther Standing Bear was a prominent member of the Carlisle Marching Band, serving as chief bugler during his years as a student. The bugle calls were similar to the bell ringing at mealtimes; it signaled bed times. The first call meant to get out of bed and get dressed. At 8:50 p.m. it sounded again, meaning all children must be in their rooms; the lights out call came ten minutes later.<sup>47</sup>

One way Carlisle kept its doors open was via private donations. Wealthy Eastern city-dwellers often made trips to Carlisle to tour the grounds and learn about its mission; this was one of the main ways Pratt acquired funding.<sup>48</sup> After seeing the success of the modified living standards and overall curriculum in assimilating the Indians, families often deemed the school a worthy cause and donated to Pratt and his school. Soon after opening the school, Pratt began a newsletter that circulated not only in the local Pennsylvania communities, but throughout much of the Northeast. This was a great source to check on Carlisle's progress, not only for the wealthy who had already visited and donated, but especially for those who lived too far away to make a visit to the grounds. The newsletter, *The Morning Star*, published news regarding sports accomplishments, academic progress, and even contained a special section on donors. Pratt listed all donations of money and equipment, and in each issue he made sure to acknowledge the great role that wealthy "friends" could play in the success of these less fortunate children.<sup>49</sup>

Russell and Olivia Sage, a prominent New York couple and close friends of the Pratt family, were devout supporters of the assimilation movement; Olivia Sage was especially drawn to the cause after visiting the Carl

isle school. Fueled by a strong desire to "domesticate the alien within," Sage and her philanthropist friends sponsored a visit to Philadelphia and New York for 140 Carlisle students and teachers in order to further their educational progress. They visited the Statue of Liberty, the Brooklyn Bridge, the Philadelphia mint, and many other landmarks in an attempt to have students connect to America's "real history." She urged her friends to donate in other ways as well, collecting over one hundred dollars and countless books and other supplies the students utilized.<sup>50</sup> She was proud to be a part of these efforts, as were many of her fellow philanthropists: they truly believed overhauling Indians' beliefs and culture would allow them to prosper once they completed school. The entire goal of these industrial schools was full assimilation so the students could function effectively in typical American society; losing their language and culture was just an unfortunate side effect.<sup>51</sup>

Visits by wealthy citizens were not the only means of acquiring private funding; exhibitions at national fairs and other functions gave the Carlisle School plenty of exposure to attract potential donors. Pratt did not approve of these national exhibitions for a variety of reasons, primarily because the Bureau of Indian Affairs mandated that Indian tribes participate.<sup>52</sup> The government also took charge of what the tribes were allowed to display at this exhibition. Artifacts chosen by the Smithsonian Institute and forced schoolwork completed at the Industrial Schools were the only displays permitted at the exhibition.<sup>53</sup> The idea of "the Western myth" was at the height of American culture at the time; the West was perceived as the "purest example of America's ideals of progress, independence, and democracy," and the U. S. government wanted to keep this viewpoint alive for as long as possible. The Smithsonian even created introductions for each artifact, always beginning with, "the monuments of the past and the savage tribes of man are

<sup>46</sup> Ron Carpenter, "Zitkala-Sa and Bicultural Subjectivity," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 16, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 11.

<sup>47</sup> John W. Troutman, *Indian Blues: American Indians and the Politics of Music, 1879–1934*. (Oklahoma City: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 118.

<sup>48</sup> Ruth Crocker, *Mrs. Russell Sage: Women's Activism and Philanthropy and Progressive Era America*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 97.

<sup>49</sup> Crocker, *Mrs. Russell Sage*, 97.

<sup>50</sup> Crocker, *Mrs. Russell Sage*, 99.

<sup>51</sup> Ben Railton, *Contesting the Past, Reconstructing the Nation*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008), 80.

<sup>52</sup> Railton, *Contesting the Past, Reconstructing the Nation*, 6.

<sup>53</sup> Railton, *Contesting the Past, Reconstructing the Nation*, 7.

rapidly disappearing from our continent.”<sup>54</sup> To the average American, these exhibits made it seem as though Indian tribes were declining; little did they know that the government was behind their regression. The Bureau desired to make Indian culture a “part of America’s past, rather than its present,” so it would order students to create artwork and literary pieces that reflected the government’s views on the situation, rather than reflections of the students’ individuality and creativity.<sup>55</sup> Such strict rules regarding the expression of Indian culture made assimilation a necessity, as students were not allowed to express their true culture adequately. The government was no longer letting them express their original culture, so they would have to form a new one.

Unfortunately, the booths representing these tribes were usually located directly next to the booth of William “Buffalo Bill” Cody’s Wild West show. Americans were fascinated by this false representation of Indian culture and could not get enough. Set up as a variety show resembling a circus, Cody’s show featured sharpshooters, pony races, and reenactments of the Battle at Little Big Horn. Although it advertised an educational component along with its entertainment value, most Americans attended the shows to be entertained. In any case, the education the shows provided did not adequately represent true Indian culture; the dress and the skills displayed may have been accurate representations of a tribe, but for the most part the shows played on the stereotypical Indian image that was described in media of the time. Even though as a whole the performers were viewed as savages by white Americans, they were still respected for the skills showcased in these shows.<sup>56</sup> While Cody’s show did employ several former students of the Carlisle School and assimilated them into the media circuit, the content of the show itself worked against Pratt’s ideas of assimilation. Showcasing typical Indian skills and exploiting this culture for profit just further separated them from their white American counterparts.

Pratt published statistics for the Carlisle School in an annual *New York Times* report. In 1900, the twenty-first year of the school’s existence, it was reported

the school had welcomed students from seventy six tribes since its beginning, facilitated over 8,000 outings into the community, and boasted an aggregate earning of all students of \$226,255.<sup>57</sup> Based solely on these statistics, it would seem Pratt’s assimilation had been a success. With the graduates of his program making over a quarter of a million dollars in twenty years, it seemed like the Indians had assimilated themselves effectively into the greater society. Pratt ran Carlisle for twenty four years and saw nearly five thousand students walk through its doors; his influence touched thousands more. Once the students returned to their respective reservations after completing their time at Carlisle, their attitude changes tended to rub off on the elder members of their tribe. Zitkala-Sa’s mother, for example, transitioned from her typical teepee shelter to a shabby log cabin after her daughter’s return from school.<sup>58</sup> Dawee, Zitkala-Sa’s brother, put his education to good use as a government clerk on the reservation. After holding his position for only a couple of years, the government sent in a white American replacement, which left Dawee with an education and no means to use it.<sup>59</sup> Pratt’s idea of assimilation worked for a little while in some cases, but the federal government refused to let it take full effect. They welcomed these new members of society into jobs and communities at first, but the white American still outranked any native, no matter how educated.

For the entirety of the industrial schools’ existence, not only were the Indians learning new concepts and having their identities molded, but the teachers learned from their students as well, which shaped *their* identities. In the school paper, *The Red Man*, Pratt compiled interviews with his teachers that shed light on their experiences at Carlisle. Given his desire to promote a positive image of his school, the quotations used must be examined carefully. For example, “they all really want to learn,” was clearly an exaggeration when compared to the countless accounts from students who detailed horrible stays at the school. Professor B. claimed that “he had seen more genuine beauty of character among these Indian children than among any others he had

<sup>54</sup> Railton, *Contesting the Past, Reconstructing the Nation*, 75.

<sup>55</sup> Railton, *Contesting the Past, Reconstructing the Nation*, 6.

<sup>56</sup> Charles W. Calhoun, *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*, (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2011), 202-3.

<sup>57</sup> “Carlisle Indian School Statistics,” *New York Times*, 18 Nov 1900.

<sup>58</sup> Zitkala-Sa, “The School Days of an Indian Girl,” 191.

<sup>59</sup> Zitkala-Sa, “An Indian Teacher among Indians,” *Atlantic Monthly* 87, no. 3 (March 1900): 384.

ever known,” and added, “If they possess one quality that is all but universal among them and in which they are our superiors, it is that of personal dignity.” Miss S. remarked that the Indians had a “true eye . . . and render nature with truth,” which she claimed was much different than her previous experience in white American schools.<sup>60</sup> While some of this self-actualization and cultural awareness truly could have been discovered by the instructors, it is more likely they came up with these quotations to draw in more funding from benefactors. Wealthy families were no doubt more likely to contribute to a cause that would help dignified and honorable students live up to their potential.

Thanks to donations from families like these, the school stayed active through 1918. The stories of Zitkala-Sa, Luther Standing Bear, and Jim Thorpe are just a few examples of the effects of the Carlisle schooling experience. Thousands more stories exist which further expand on the detrimental effect the lifestyle at the school had on the Indians. Furthermore, the effect does not stop with the generation who actually attended Carlisle. Maurice Kenny, a Mohawk poet popular in the 1950s and 1960s, used photographs from the Carlisle School as inspiration for his work:

who is this boy . . . hair cut, tongue cut  
whose youthful warrior braids lie heaped  
on the barber's floor  
spine straightened by Gen. Pratt's rules of order . . .

He has no name only a reflection  
His is one of the many spirits  
which will forever roam this once  
free and beautiful land  
before it came to be America . . .

Who is he . . .  
my Grandfather.<sup>61</sup>

The effect of Pratt's Carlisle School, and the other industrial schools nationwide, affected the students' parents and grandparents, and even their progeny, as seen in Kenny's poem. The abuse, poor provisions, and the demanding curriculum left a lasting impression on the lives of America's Indian population.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Henry Pratt, *The Red Man*, February 1900.

<sup>61</sup> Maurice Kenny, “Photography Carlisle Indian School (1879-1918),” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 63-64.

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