

**Results of Historical Research Concerning the History of the
Grand Junction Indian School**

by

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CONTENTS

Introduction1
Methods1
Results2
 School Cemetery.....2
 History, Educational Experiences, and Student Life.....2
 Student Enrollment and Recruitment4
 Industrial, Farm, and Outing Programs.....8
 Industrial Program.....8
 Farming9
 Outing Program.....9
 School Conditions10
 Student Experience13
Conclusions13
Future Research14
References Cited.....16

INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) received a State Historic Fund Grant (No. 22-01-035) related to their ownership of the Grand Junction Regional Center, the site of the former Grand Junction Indian School (GJIS). As a part of that grant, CDHS hired Alpine Archaeological to conduct historical research focused on the history of the Grand Junction Indian School, aid in identifying the location of the school cemetery and individuals interred there, and update the GJIS archaeological site form. The archaeological site form and information regarding the individuals interred at the cemetery will be delivered separately to the Office of the Colorado State Archaeologist as they contain sensitive information. Therefore, what follows is a discussion of the school's history.

When working towards understanding of the off-reservation Indian Boarding School system in Colorado, it is easy to assume that Fort Lewis Indian Boarding School (FLIBS) and GJIS were functionally very similar, if not the same.¹ Both were created to provide educational opportunities, vocational training, and housing for students outside of the reservation boundaries. However, even with similar directives, the schools developed very differently. This document will explore the structure of GJIS, specifically the early development of the school, where students were from, and how students were brought to Grand Junction. The educational mission of GJIS and the outing program² will also be discussed, as will the history of building construction/repair and how that informs the overall understanding of school conditions.

It is important to note that this document is the product of an ongoing research effort and should not be considered a complete interpretation of GJIS. Identifying and interpreting relevant historical documents is a slow process that entails a mix of access, patience, filtering, and so much time. On top of that, interpretation of source documents that are so deeply associated with an imbalance in power—as is often true in instances of colonialism—can be quite tricky when seeking a complete perspective. The source documents that exist in relation to GJIS are all from the perspectives of those in positions of power,³ which makes the goal of this document—to center the history and experiences of the student body—much more difficult. This document is thus intended to provide a framework for both ongoing and additional research and is not a totality of available information.

METHODS

Research for this document was focused on primary documents: historical newspapers, letters, and official superintendent's and inspector's reports.⁴ The reasons for this are twofold: one, there is lack of primary documents, such as pupil or expense ledgers,

¹ GJIS was also known as the Grand Junction Indian Industrial School or as the Teller Institute; the latter designation refers to the influence of Henry M. Teller, who represented Colorado in the Senate from 1876–1882 and 1885–1909. He also served as Secretary of the Interior under President Arthur from 1882–1885. As Secretary of the Interior Teller determined that a protracted war against Indigenous communities would cost \$22 million over 10 years whereas it would cost a quarter of that to educate 30,000 Indigenous children for one year (Smith 2004:90).

² The outing program placed male students with local farmers or tradesman and female students with local families to learn domestic skills.

³ GJIS did publish a student newspaper; however, no copies have been found.

⁴ Primary documents, or resources, are the original, historical documents. Secondary documents, or resources, interpret or analyze the information collected from primary documents.

that could provide insight into the daily workings of the school;⁵ and two, using primary resources allows for the presentation of the data that is not obscured by other individuals' interpretations of the source material.

Information was gathered through a variety of means. Keyword searches of historical newspapers provided historical context for the documents gathered through other avenues. The University of Wisconsin has an online history collection that includes digitized copies of the Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, which provide general information regarding annual legislation directed towards the Department of the Interior, fiscal appropriations, and the annual School Superintendent's reports on the state of the schools. The Annual Reports were written at the end of the fiscal year and detail the proceeding school year. For example, the 1896 Annual Report discusses the 1895–1896 academic year. Documents were also found at the National Archives and Records Administration research facility in Washington D.C. (NARA DC). These include both materials associated with GJIS in the Central Classified Files, files labeled by NARA as Special Series A, and letters and telegrams sent to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from GJIS. As the indices necessary to find letters regarding GJIS within the NARA DC holdings are not digitized, a decision was made to target letters related to the early years of the school, students, and campus and building conditions. Other letters filed nearby the targeted letters were also reviewed. All documents from NARA DC were scanned and saved as PDFs to facilitate research. It must be noted that the majority of documents from NARA DC include information sent to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs or the Department of the Interior and not the information, if any, that was sent from the National Headquarters in response. This limited interpretability, as only one side of the exchange is available.

RESULTS

School Cemetery

As discussed above, official documents pertaining to GJIS are sparse. While multiple newspapers and letters discuss the presence of a small cemetery on the GJIS campus, no historical maps of the school campus showing a cemetery location were found. The original 1886 plat map showing the location of the first building was found (G. B. Frazier to John D. C. Atkins, letter, 1 January 1886, NARA DC Record Group [RG] 75, Letters Received [LR], 1886, Box 281, Letter 579) as was an 1893 map of the irrigation ditches on GJIS property (T. G. Lemmon to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs [CIA], letter, 16 October 1893, NARA DC RG 75, Central Classified Files [CCF], Box 1, Folder 27067).

History, Educational Experiences, and Student Life

The following synopsis of GJIS history is not intended to be a complete history of the school. Instead, it provides a generalized history as a means to provide additional context to the generally student-centered discussion.

The GJIS was constructed near Grand Junction, Colorado, in 1886 with funding from the Federal Government. The stated purpose of school construction was to provide

⁵ This is in direct contrast to the amount and type of documents saved from FLIBS which include employee ledgers, copy books containing all of the Superintends outgoing correspondence, and maps of the entire school campus.

dormitories, school buildings, staff housing, and farm land, the last of which was intended to allow for farming instruction and provide a means for the school to become self-sustaining. A total of \$23,000 was appropriated for the 1885–1886 fiscal year toward this goal (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1885:CVI). Of particular note, however, is that fifteen thousand dollars of these funds were to be “paid from any money due the confederated bands of the Ute Indians (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1885:279).” In addition, while the government was prepared to provide the funds for the endeavor, they did not supply the land: the appropriation was dependent on the donation of at least 160 acres of land with enough water for cultivation of said lands to the Government for the construction of the school (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1885:279). Ultimately, this condition was met by local attorney Thomas B. Crawford, who, in 1885, transferred the parcel that would become the home of GJIS to the government (Alexander Gullett to Hiram Price, letter, 30 March 30 1885, NARA DC RG 75, LR, 1885, Box 234, Letter 7013).

GJIS operated from 1886–1911. Over the 25 years of operation, the school had six appointed superintendents and two acting superintendents (Table 1); the longest serving of these was Theodore G. Lemmon who held the position from 1890–1904. Lemmon provided a period of stability within the school leadership—all the previous superintendents were short-lived at the school, with each having served for approximately one school year. Superintendent Burton was the final superintendent and oversaw the closing of the school, which occurred concomitantly with the shuttering of all off-reservation boarding schools in 1911. Following its closure, the lands and buildings associated with GJIS were donated to the State of Colorado for use as an educational campus.

Table 1. Superintendents and Acting Superintendents at GJIS (Mesa County Genealogical Society 2013).⁶

Years of Employment	Name	Position(s)
1886	Dr. Julius J. Robertson	Acting Superintendent; Clerk; Physician Surgeon
1886	William J. Davis	Superintendent
1887–1889	Dr. Thomas H. Breen	Superintendent
1889; 1894	George Wheeler	Superintendent
1890–1891	Sanford Perry Record	Superintendent
1890–1893; 1896–1898	Charles H. Schooley	Acting Superintendent; Assistant Superintendent; Clerk; Staff; Teacher
1890–1904	Theodore G. Lemmon	Superintendent
1904–1911	Charles E. Burton	Superintendent

⁶ Acting superintendents held other positions at GJIS and were placed in charge while the appointed superintendent was away from the school.

Student Enrollment and Recruitment

The student body of GJIS was extremely diverse in terms of tribal enrollment, with—to date—28 tribes represented by the school population over the course of the school’s operating history (Table 2). This diversity emphasizes a shift from when GJIS was opened, with a specific goal of educating Ute children, toward a goal of educating children from across the West. As discussed below, that shift happened relatively early in the school’s history and was directly tied to the events and aftermath of the 1879 Meeker Massacre. Following the Meeker Massacre, the US government forced the Ute to cede western Colorado from reservation holdings; this—unsurprisingly—led to reluctance of the Ute to send their children away from the reservations to attend school.⁷ By the end of 1881, the last of the Utes were restricted to reservations in northwestern Utah and southernmost Colorado.

GJIS was created to educate Ute children, with assurances from Senator Teller to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that the Utes would send their children to GJIS because of its location within Colorado and specifically Grand Junction. However, within this same letter, Teller qualified his statement with a discussion regarding the difficulty he experienced in convincing the Utes to send their children away to school when he was Secretary of the Interior (Teller to Lamar, letter, 24 September 1885, NARA DC RG 75, LR, 1885, Box 265, Letter 23393). Teller’s statements are in direct conflict with a telegram received by the Office of Indian Affairs from the Special Agent in Park City, Utah, on August 6, 1885 stating that GJIS could not depend on the Utes sending their children away to school (Special Agent Folsom to the Office of Indian Affairs, telegram, 6 August 1885, NARA DC RG 75, LR, 1885, Box 254, Letter 18242). These concerns are repeated in a series of letters in October and November 1886, reiterating that the Uncompahgre Utes⁸ were not at all interested in sending their children to GJIS and that the Southern Ute, White River Agency, and Uintah and Ouray Agency should all be considered instead (Davis to the CIA, letter, 24 October 1886, NARA DC RG 75, LR, 1886, Box 350, Letter 28964; Superintendent Davis to the CIA, letter, 30 October 1886, NARA DC RG 75, LR, 1886, Box 352, Letter 29746; E. E. White to CIA, letter, 17 November 1886, NARA DC RG 75, LR, 1886, Box 357, Letter 32000). However, in a letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, E.E. White, Special Agent in Charge at the Uinta Agency, stated that when Superintendent Davis first arrived to recruit students, the Ute were open to the idea of sending their children to GJIS, but by the time Davis was leaving, they had changed their mind. Davis ended up leaving to return to GJIS with seven students: four children and three adults (E. E. White to CIA, letter, 17 November 1886, NARA DC RG 75, LR, 1886, Box 357, Letter 32000). These seven students were the first students at GJIS according to the January 1887 inspection report (Riley 1887).

⁷ Western Colorado was divided into two Ute reservations (White River and Los Piños) from the signing of the Treaty of 1868 until 1880.

⁸ The Uncompahgre and White River bands, along with the Uintah, were relocated to the Uintah-Ouray Reservation, which was established in 1886 near Fort Duchesne, Utah. The Mouache and Caputa were removed from their traditional areas on the Front Range to southwestern Colorado and share the Southern Ute Reservation, which was founded around 1895 and centered around Ignacio, Colorado. The Weenuchiu were removed to the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation, which was established in the early 1900s in southwestern Colorado around Towaoc, Colorado.

Table 2. Known GJIS Student Tribal Affiliations*.

Tribal Affiliation
Abequin/Cochiti
Apache
Cherokee
Chippewa
Cochiti
Comanche
Kaibab
Mescalero Apache
Mojava
Moqui (Hopi)
Navajo
Navajo from Fort Defiance
Ouray and Uintah Ute
Papago (Tohono O'odham)
Pima
Paiute
San Carlos Apache
San Juan/Santo Domingo
Shoshone-Bannock
Shoshone
Southern Ute
Tagu (likely Tiguex, who are Ysleta del Sur Pueblo)
Tonto Apache
Uintah Ute
Ute (no other affiliation given)
White River Ute
Winnebago
Yuma

* This data was compiled using a variety of resources, including NARA archival data and Colorado historical newspapers, and should not be considered a complete list.

By October of that same year, Superintendent Breen had replaced Davis and removed the Principal Teacher, Industrial Teacher, and Cook, leaving the 26 students enrolled at that time without any instructors. The October 1887 Inspection Report suggests that other big changes were afoot, with the report recommending not only that GJIS become an all-boys school but also proposing a larger policy shift wherein the Superintendents stay at the school rather than acting as recruitment agents and instead send out Indian Office Special Agents to enroll students from the Southern Ute, Jicarilla Apache, and Walker River, Pyramid Lake, and Washoes in Nevada (Armstrong 1887). However, according to the inspection reports from January 1889, these recommendations were not implemented, as Breen is reported as being in the midst of a 10-week mission away from GJIS to recruit more students at the time of the inspection. As of January 1889, there were only 14 male students in attendance, and

their parents were encouraging them to go home to Walker River so that they could attend a day school. Replacement instructors had yet to be hired, so no part of the curriculum, which included classroom learning and farming or gardening, was being taught (Armstrong 1889a). There were still no teachers as of the July 1889 follow-up report and the student population had decreased to 13, some of whom were over both 18 and 21 (Armstrong 1889b), so they should not have been considered students. Breen was once again traveling during the inspection. The low student population and absentee superintendent caused Commissioner of Indian Affairs Inspector to recommend that a new superintendent was necessary if GJIS was going to succeed (Armstrong 1889b). This recommendation was taken, and a new superintendent was appointed in the fall of 1889 (Table 1).

The 1890 records are incomplete and the student population is not known. The student population in 1891 was 27: 24 boys and 3 girls (Junkin 1891:1). However, it is unclear how many of these students were at the school voluntarily: 30 Navajo children were abducted from the Navajo Reservation in 1890 or 1891 without their parents' consent or knowledge and essentially conscripted to GJIS. Around half of them ran away to go home shortly after being taken (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1892:210). All but seven of the students were found by school officials and taken back to GJIS (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1892:657).

It is harder to obtain attendance numbers after 1891 because of the fluctuating level of detail within the Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. For example, the 1894 annual report discusses the overall health of the campus—which suffered a scarlet fever outbreak—the employees, and the state of the facilities, but does not discuss how many students were attending the school (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1894:375–377). By the mid-1890s, the student population had more than doubled, with an average of 117 students during the 1894–1895 school year (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1895:365) and an average of 135 students during the 1895–1896 school year (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1896:370).

There was a continued increase in students as indicated to by enrollment numbers for 1901, the next year with available enrollment data. A total of 179 students were enrolled at that time, with 125 boys and 54 girls (Lemmon 1901). The 1901 annual report also has a breakdown of student tribal affiliations—it is in fact one of the only documents found during archival research with a breakdown of this type (Table 3) (Lemmon 1901). There is a five-person discrepancy between the total number of enrolled students and the number of students with tribal affiliations in the Annual Report; it is probably due to either a counting error or missing tribal affiliation data.

Enrollment at GJIS appears to have been consistent from 1901 to 1911 when the school officially closed. The total dormitory capacity was 190 students, with beds for 115 boys and 75 girls, and it appears that the school officials endeavored to keep the school at or near capacity from 1901 onwards. GJIS was well over student capacity during December 1906, with 229 students, including 158 boys and 71 girls, and an average attendance of 226 students (Burton 1906). As of October 1908, there were 165 students: 114 boys and 51 girls (John Charles to the CIA, letter, 20 October 1908, NARA DC RG 75, CCF, Box 1, Folder 71685). By the following January, Superintendent Burton stated that the arrival of seven students from the Navajo reservation brought the total enrolment to 185 (Burton to the CIA,

Table 3. Tribal Affiliation of Enrolled Students at GJIS in 1901.*

Tribal Affiliation (Historic)	Tribal Affiliation (Contemporary)	Number of Enrolled Students
Apache		1
Aztec		6
Kaibab		2
Mohave		1
Moqui	Hopi	3
Navajo		36
Pah-Ute	Paiute	2
Papago		68
Pima		8
Pueblo		11
Shebit		10
Shoshone		1
Tagu	Likely Tiguex, who are Ysleta del Sur Pueblo	14
Ute		6
Winnebago		5
Total Students		174

*Table created using data from Lemmon (1901)

letter, 15, January 1909, NARA DC RG 75, CCF, Box 1, Folder 48102). According to Burton, 185 students was the exact capacity of the school as agreed upon by him and his supervisor, which is five fewer students than Inspector Charles states as total capacity in the October 20, 1908 letter (John Charles to the CIA, letter, 20 October 1908, NARA DC RG 75, CCF, Box 1, Folder 71685). The definition of capacity fluctuates until the school is closed, likely because Burton is attempting to keep the school open. As of April 1910, GJIS had 215 enrolled pupils, but at least 30 of them were working elsewhere and not technically staying at the school (Burton to the CIA, letter, 28 April 1910, NARA DC RG 75, CCF, Box 4, Folder 71577).

These increasing enrollment numbers were part of a larger conversation with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs regarding Burton's trips to the Tucson area to recruit Papago students and the Navajo Reservation, with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs strongly recommending that Burton focus his recruitment efforts to reservations closer to Grand Junction instead (Burton to the CIA, letter, 20 April 1910, NARA DC RG 75, CCF, Box 4, Folder 71577; R. G. Valentine to Burton, letter, 22 April 1910, NARA DC RG 75, CCF, Box 4, Folder 71577). It is unclear if Burton narrowed his recruitment efforts after these communications; however, by December 1910, enrollment was down to 199 students, with 196 students in regular attendance (Peterson 1910). By limiting the area of recruitment, the Commissioner likely expected a decrease in the number of students brought to GJIS.

Within four months of the 1910 inspection report, Burton was under orders to start closing the school and send the remaining enrolled students elsewhere. If the students' terms were expiring in June, they were to be sent home. Any students whose terms were not expiring were to be transferred, with parental consent, to schools closer to their homes (C. F.

Hanks to Burton, letter, 11 April 1911, NARA DC RG 75, CCF, Box 1, Folder 27067, File 3). Only nine students ended up transferring to other institutions, five went to Haskell, Kansas, and four to Riverside in Oklahoma. Eleven other students opted to go to Rocky Ford under the care of Supervisor Dagenette (Burton to CIA, letter, 24 April 1911, NARA DCRG 75 CCF, Box 1, Folder 27067, File 3). It is assumed that they had already been working in Rocky Ford under the outing program; however, there is no direct evidence of this. All other students opted to go home and were sent either to the nearest city or directly back to the reservations. Forty-six Papago students were sent to Tucson, Arizona; of the Navajo students, 32 went to Shiprock, New Mexico, and 27 went to the Navajo Agency; 30 students were sent to the "Pueblos;" and 10 students returned to Hopi (Burton to CIA, letter, 24 April 1911, NARA DCRG 75 CCF, Box 1, Folder 27067, File 3). With this dispersal of students, the educational mission of GJIS was complete and only the buildings remained.

Industrial, Farm, and Outing Programs

One of the hallmarks of GJIS can be found in one of the colloquial names of the school, the Grand Junction Indian Industrial School. While ultimately not used as the school's formal name, it does provide insight into how the founders thought about the GJIS educational trajectory. The approximately 170-acre school grounds encompassed 160 acres of agricultural fields, pasture, and occasionally livestock and orchards, as well as carpentry and blacksmith shops (Riley 1887). All of these assets served dual purposes: to provide the school with necessary supplies and to teach the students trades. The other way in which students were to learn trades was the outing program. This program placed male students with local farmers or tradesman and female students with local families of good repute. Some of the placements were likely day labor; however, the majority of the students appear to have lived with the families.

Industrial Program

The industrial education program was used as a way to entice students into attending GJIS during the initial years of the school. There was a promise of workshops outfitted with the tools necessary to learn a variety of trades, such as harness making, carpentry, shoe making, and sewing. However, when students arrived at the school in 1887, there were no workshops or tools present (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1890:282). Later, once the necessary supplies were obtained, the male students assisted the carpenter in building the barn, walkways, and a milkhouse. The girls were tasked with helping the seamstress make clothing and other items for the school and for sale (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1891). As the program developed, the industrial apprentices split their days between the classroom and their trade training programs. Goods made by the school and sold to the local populace were considered to be as good, if not better than, the other goods being sold in the area. The school also saved money by having two boys who trained in cooking operate the entire kitchen without the oversight of a staff member (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1892:658).

The documents found during this project reveal that keeping the industrial teaching positions staffed was a perpetual challenge. Without the consistent presence of these teachers, the programs other than sewing floundered. Shifting priorities probably also contributed to the demise of the industrial training program, with an increasingly greater emphasis placed on farming and the outing program than on teaching trades. The 1909

inspection report declared all the industrial training programs at GJIS worthless except for the sewing program (Davis 1909a).

Farming

The initial description of the agricultural land at GJIS in 1888 declared it “miserable adobe land” with lots of alkali in the soil (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1888:251). The crops that year failed, and it was suggested that the school needed an industrial teacher with experience in irrigation and other aspects of farming, but that in the meantime, it was proposed that the students could be hired to work on the farm for no more than \$90 a month (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1888:252, 254). By 1894, the farm started to produce more, with an emphasis on beets, hay, oats, pumpkins, and sorghum. An apiary and a dairy had been built. The irrigation system was in place but still not fully functional at this time (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1894). Three orchards were planted and all of them failed due to the soils. By 1905, the garden had been expanded and it was suggested that the farm would be able to support the school if the farmer and student laborers only worked on the farm and did no other tasks at the school (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1905:418). However in 1909, the farm was described as ruined and needing to be drained before it could once again become productive (Davis 1909b).

The documentation regarding direct student participation in the school’s farming endeavors is slim. It can be assumed that—like the industrial programs—if the students were not participating in the outing program, they were expected to work on the farm or in the dairy. This work was to provide students with agricultural skills and have them contribute to the school. How effective the education they received while participating in farmwork is also unknown considering the marginal state of the agricultural land; however, farming occurred at GJIS until the school was closed.

Outing Program

The outing program originated alongside GJIS in 1887. The first two students placed as part of the program were assigned to the local railroad shop (Armstrong 1887). The 1888 report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs states that many of the students worked for farmers during the summer who “pronounce them better workers, more reliable...than any laborers they can secure in this locality (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1888:253).” The outing program expanded quickly, so much so that in 1889, Superintendent Breen proposed shortening the spring term so that students could work. Having students attend the county public schools while working off campus was suggested to ensure they were being educated while also working (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1889:363).

It is assumed that the outing program continued to be an integral part of the GJIS curriculum; it is not formally discussed in the Annual Commissioner’s Reports from 1890–1903. The 1904 report indicates that students had been working on local farms throughout the region but none of the work had been very specialized until then 1904. The report goes on to discuss that all but three students were asked by their employers to return and that the girls had been given excellent training in keeping house by some of the “best” local families (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1904:441). The students seem to have been generally working within the surrounding community and at nearby farms; however, in a 1905 letter, Superintendent Burton proposed sending a unstated number of boys to work in Rocky Ford in the sugar beet industry. Former Superintendent Collins had a sugar beet farm

and was looking to employ a large number of students (Burton to the CIA, letter, 1 March 1905, NARA DC RG 17, LR, 1905, Box 2734, Letter 17448). While there is no direct evidence of the school sending students to Rocky Ford during the summers, indirect evidence in the form of 11 students opting to go from the school to Rocky Ford (post school closure; see Student Enrollment and Recruitment, above) suggests some prior familiarity or school association with that region—it is thus likely that students of GJIS worked at tending sugar beets.

Expansion of the outing program at the cost of lost education was pushed during the final years of the school. An August 23, 1907 letter from Superintendent Burton to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs asked if the outing program could be extended for deserving students from March until November instead of occurring only during the summer. School would be in session from November until the middle of March, allowing some classroom education to occur. Within the same letter, Burton indicated that this proposal would require leasing out the majority of the school farm to local farmers, as student labor would no longer be as plentiful (Burton to the CIA, letter, 23, August 1907, NARA DC RG 75, CCF, Box 4, Folder 72642). This belief that work and training in household tasks and at local farms provided a greater benefit than school is stated in the 1908 Annual Commissioner's Report, which also notes that 50 boys and 20 girls were participating in the program (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1908:240). All of this focus on the outing program appears to have occurred to the detriment of other industrial training programs to the point where the 1909 inspection report notes that the only training with any practical results comes from the outing program even though the students are only laborers and not learning highly specialized skills (Davis 1909a).

The shift from emphasizing both education and vocational training toward a narrow focus on the outing program over all other training and educational opportunities occurred when Burton became the superintendent. His reasons for advocating this approach are explicitly stated: an “Indian youth who becomes a fruit-grower is not a nomad (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1904:441).” And again in 1906: “...good training and good examples of home-life are necessary to the uplifting of any people struggling for civilization (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1906:211).” These two quotes provide insight into how Superintendent Burton viewed his job at GJIS. The intent—his intent—was to ensure that the students at GJIS left the school with Euro-American ideas of what constitutes an “appropriate” way of life. While it is understood that this was the primary motivation in the creation of the boarding school system, especially the off-reservation schools, rarely within this research effort was it found to be directly stated within official documents.

School Conditions

One of the common discussion points across many of the historical documents concerning GJIS is the general, often poor, overall condition of the school buildings and associated grounds. This was helpful, as such information allows for the creation of a more holistic understanding of the conditions under which the students lived and studied. Issues were present from the very beginning of the school. One of the earliest concerns, as reported by Dr. Robertson, the acting superintendent at the time, to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs was the lack of easily accessible drinking water. Dr. Robertson suggested that a cistern could potentially be used, but noted that the area is often dry and that he was concerned about maintaining a potable water supply. The other options were digging a 300-

ft.-deep well or transporting water from the river (Dr. Julius J. Robertson to the CIA, letter, 16 July 1886, NARA DC RG 17, LR, 1886, Box 322, Letter 19313). The eventual solution was to use water from the irrigation ditch (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1890:282). By 1890, there was a buried water line connected to Grand Junction's domestic supply (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1901:535).

By November 1, 1886, although ostensibly open, GJIS did not yet have furniture, heating and cooking stoves, blankets, or clothing (Robinson to the CIA, letter, 1 November 1886, NARA DC RG 75, LR, 1886, Box 351, Letter 29553). Clearly the school was not ready for students, a point that was reiterated in the January 1887 inspection report. According to the report, the students had to be boarded at a hotel in Grand Junction upon first arriving in November, as there was no stove in the school building until December. It further mentions that no additional improvements beyond the initial construction should occur until a larger student population was secured (Riley 1887). The next piece of information is from the October 1887 inspection report, which describes the school as poorly equipped. The buildings and grounds were considered lacking. The store house was described as a "mere wooden shell" and the report also specifies that the school should have a windmill, water tank, and hose in case of fires (Armstrong 1887).

By the 1888 report to the Commission of Indian Affairs, Superintendent Breen indicated that proper accommodations had been built for 50 boys and that the campus was much improved. He specifically mentioned the construction of additional shops and outbuildings, as well as a windmill with a 1,000-gallon-capacity water tank. Two bathrooms with hot- and cold-water connections, a washroom, and a laundry facility were also completed (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1888:254). These improvements suggest that the facilities were in good shape and being actively maintained. However, the 1889 Annual Report states that the original 1886 school building and the other 11 frame buildings were all in need of repair (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1889:350). More buildings were constructed in 1891, including a two-story brick house with dormitories, a kitchen, and an infirmary, as well as farm buildings and other facilities. This upgrade to the campus appears to have been much needed.

The question of how to handle waste had become a concern by 1891, as the sediment at the school was not conducive to adequate drainage. The proposed solution was to construct cesspools that would be 20 to 30 ft. deep and excavated to the underlying gravel and groundwater (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1891:559). While not a fantastic long-term waste-management strategy, this solution was implemented and used for some time. The alternative at that time—to transport school sewage to the Colorado River—was untenable, as it would result in waste being deposited just above the Grand Junction City waterworks. Yet, as early as 1892, there was concern about finding a new waste solution prior to the ground becoming completely saturated (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1892:657-659). Nonetheless, the disposal of waste into cesspools continued into 1900, when the Secretary of the Interior received a report from N. H. Graves, a U. S. Indian Inspector, regarding the state of sanitation at GJIS. The report details the need for GJIS to install a sewer system that would connect to the City's system. Cesspools filled up and new ones had to be excavated, with all the cesspools collectively resulting in discolored soil in close proximity to several of the buildings due to waste saturation. Additionally, the high-water table (approximately 8 ft. below ground surface), combined with the cesspool seepage, resulted in an even higher water table that was within 2 ft. of the surface and was in direct

contact with basement walls. This contact not only shortened the life of the buildings, but also had the potential to—and likely did—directly impact student health (N. H. Graves to the Secretary of the Interior, letter, 5 April 1900). By the 1901 Commissioner’s report, GJIS had been connected to the city of Grand Junction’s domestic sewer (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1901:534-535).

While the disposal of waste was an ongoing concern until the sewer connection occurred, there were other continuing issues with aspects of the physical plant.⁹ This is not unexpected given the wear associated with constant use of the buildings, and the Commissioner’s reports discuss ongoing repairs, remodels, and construction of new buildings. Nonetheless, some issues remained persistent—often discussed, but perhaps not satisfactorily addressed. Heating was one such issue. The 1902 Commissioner’s report notes that all buildings, except for the new girls’ dormitory, were heated by coal stoves. These devices were not efficient, were dangerous, and were unsanitary, as children were living their lives in rooms that were either too cold or overheated, neither of which is great for health (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1902:453). An appropriation of \$7,625 was discussed in the 1903 report with the plan that all of the coal stoves would be removed in the coming year and replaced with a boiler system (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1903:416). The installation of steam heat in the older buildings was mentioned in the 1905 list of completed improvements along with the construction of new employee housing, a superintendent’s cottage, a steam laundry, a dairy barn, and a shops building (United States Office of Indian Affairs 1905:418). The school added additional buildings once more, in 1907, with the construction of a laundry, mess hall, office, privy, tool room, and workshop (Peterson 1910).

If the annual self-reports are to be believed, the school was regularly maintained. Inspection reports suggest otherwise. In the 1909 inspection report, the inspector notes that heating fires were not being properly kept up and the pipes were constantly freezing, which, by that time had resulted in damage to three boilers and the pipes that had frozen. But he also noted that there was more general building damage where the boys congregate due to a “want of discipline (Davis 1909c).” An inspection report from December 1910 states that the lavatories, closets, and urinals for the [older] boys and were “abominable...[and] unspeakable bad (Peterson 1910).” It is probable that these reports reflect the conditions at GJIS for the entirety of its operation that were simply not self-reported in the Annual Reports. Unfortunately, this interpretation of the 1909 and 1910 inspection reports cannot be crosschecked: the corresponding 1909 Annual Report does not contain a report on the state of GJIS, and the 1910 Annual Report is not, at the time of this report, within the project archives.

The GJIS physical plant was expanded and improved throughout the school’s existence. However, when looking at inspection reports along with the various superintendent’s letters and reports to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, it is clear that conditions were often subpar. From the lack of general supplies and a reliable water source to the high-water table that was only made higher with the use of cesspools to the unreliable heat and frozen pipes, GJIS was not uniformly in good repair. Living and studying in buildings where the basements were seeping contaminated water or that have insufficient heat would have impacted the students’ health and ability to learn (H. B. P. to the Education

⁹ Physical plant herein refers to the buildings and grounds, as well as the associated infrastructure, including the heating, water, and sewer systems.

Division, letter, 20 March 1911, NARA DC RG 74, CCF, Box 3, Folder 31333-1). Without the majority of the monthly superintendent's reports which include the statistics on how many students were in the infirmaries, it is difficult to track regular illnesses that might have occurred as a result of subpar conditions. There are reports on the larger disease outbreaks at GJIS and within the city of Grand Junction; however, it is probable that the poor living conditions resulted in consistent low-level illnesses among the student body that did not warrant more formal reporting.

Student Experience

It is necessary within a document such as this to postulate what it was like to be a student at GJIS; however, as discussed throughout, the available sources do not reflect the student's point of view so this is primarily inference. What is known is that the students were provided basic classroom lessons; opportunities to participate in a Glee Club (The Daily Sentinel [Grand Junction, Colorado] December 18, 1906), football team (The Daily Sentinel [Grand Junction, Colorado] March 9, 1906), and a well-regarded band (Fort Schott Daily Tribune and Fort Scott Daily Monitor [Fort Scott, Kansas] October 18, 1895: Page 1.); farming and industrial education; and the outing program.

But how was the overall student experience? Unlike other boarding schools, there are currently no clearly documented instances of abuse at GJIS (Child 1998). However, that does not mean that the quality of education and student life was good. The educational system was focused on teaching skills such as cooking, farming, or sewing that allowed students' work to directly benefit the school. Learning traditional classroom skills occurred, but it was not the focus of an education at GJIS.¹⁰

As highlighted above, the GJIS dormitories were often overcrowded, much of the school was without adequate heat and the physical plant left much to be desired no matter how much maintenance was supposedly happening. Poor conditions likely exacerbated the feelings of displacement and loneliness resulting from leaving your family and being forced to assimilate into a completely different culture. These feelings were probably even more acutely felt by the students who participated in the outing program. Being placed with "good" families who presumably only spoke English without their peers from GJIS would have been socially isolating. Which was the point. The more distance the institution could place between a child and their family, the easier it was to force assimilation.

CONCLUSIONS

The formulation of conclusions during the early stages of research and analysis can be difficult; therefore, what follows should be considered preliminary reasoning based upon the information presented above. As discussed throughout this document, the known history of GJIS is predicated on the interpretation of documents written by and for a non-indigenous audience and do not give clear voice to the students at these schools. The overarching conclusions discussed within this section are based upon the information above and are intended to provide a more synthetic discussion of the topics.

¹⁰ A small selection of examination papers from 1888 and 1899 are present in the NARA DC collection. Record Group 75, Examination Papers 1889–1915, Entry Number 752, Folders 1–6.

When founded, it was assumed that GJIS was going to provide educational opportunities exclusively to Ute children. However, the Uncompahgre Utes were not interested in sending their children away to school. Because the expected student population did not materialize, the superintendents spent a large amount of time traveling to different Indian Agencies and reservations to recruit students, leaving other faculty members in charge of the school. Inconsistent leadership and limited oversight can likely be directly correlated to the poor management of GJIS and the almost annual appointment of new superintendents until 1890 with the appointment of Lemmon partway through the 1890–1891 academic year. The early years of GJIS were also plagued by staffing issues, with reports both of instructors not being present at the school and of mass firings. The appointments of Lemmon and Burton as superintendents provided long-term stability in the school's leadership even though these individuals also traveled extensively. From 1890 to the school's closing in 1911, the student population was often larger than the GJIS dormitories could accommodate. While some of these students were living elsewhere because of placements in the outing program, overcrowding can also lead to poor conditions.

Overcrowding was likely not the primary cause of poor living conditions at GJIS. The buildings were often in disrepair and the ground water was inundated with waste from the cesspool system. This affected the buildings basements, causing them to have direct contact with the waste water. Additionally, in an inspection report completed shortly before the schools closing, it was noted that heating fires were not being properly kept up and the pipes were constantly freezing (Davis 1909c). While the same report notes that the older boys were often acting up, there could be a correlation between the school conditions and student behavior. If the students were regularly exposed to uncomfortable or even unsanitary conditions that did not convey a sense of care, acting up is to be expected. While a direct correlation between school conditions and student behavior cannot be drawn, children cannot thrive when daily conditions are subpar.

The foundations of the GJIS educational mission were the industrial education and the outing programs wherein students were provided opportunities to learn trades or housekeeping skills. It is clear that the local economy both around Grand Junction and across the state benefited from student labor. As discussed in the Student Experience section, it did not necessarily benefit the students.

There are myriad ways to oppress a person. One way is to commit violence on that person and their family. Another is to humiliate and denigrate that person. The way that boarding schools oppressed Indigenous children was to take them from their homes, sometimes through the promise of a better economic future, and strip them of their culture through assimilationist practices, such as the outing program. The boarding school experience was harmful to children. Full stop. While the practices of GJIS were not, as far as the reviewed documents can address, abusive in a physical sense, they were patently neglectful, passively abusive, and most certainly exploitative.

FUTURE RESEARCH

As discussed throughout the above sections, there are still large data gaps in the documentation of GJIS history. The documents in the Central Classified Files state that Superintendent Burton was to send all non-personal paperwork to Washington DC, specifically the Office of Indian Affairs. All personal documents could be destroyed upon the

closure of the school (Acting CIA to Burton, undated letter. NARA DC RG 75, CCF, Box 1 Folder 17067). As searches of the entire NARA catalogue, specifically NARA DC and Denver, did not find any accounting ledgers, employee or student ledgers, copy books used to document outgoing correspondence, or maps of the school, it is easy to assume that they were destroyed instead of archived as instructed. However, these documents could be in long-term storage and never properly accessioned into the NARA holdings. There is no clear path to determining where these documents are, if they are in existence. The best possible outcome would be that these documents are among the other boarding school documents that the Department of Interior is currently cataloging. Ideally these documents would provide additional insight into who the students were, the daily operation of the school, and the interactions between the school officials and various Indian Agents. A fuller understanding of how GJIS officials and Indian Agents interacted, especially regarding how student selection worked, would allow a more complete understanding of why students were sent to GJIS over other off-reservation schools and how this might have been influenced by personal relationships between the Superintendents and Indian Agents.

Additional research pertaining to the catalogued Office of Indian Affairs received letters that are archived at NARA DC is also necessary, even though these files only include letters up to 1907 and the school did not close until 1911. Some correspondence from the founding of the school through 1907 was obtained; however, the entirety of the archival holdings should be collected for further research. This correspondence will include the mundane aspects of the everyday, such as approval for basic supplies, as well as more detailed information possibly pertaining to student education and employee management. This information enables researchers to create a fully developed and nuanced understanding of the history of GJIS, especially when coupled with historical newspapers, the already collected correspondence, and other files found in the NARA collections.

If possible, oral histories should also be collected. While it is unlikely that individuals who attended GJIS are still living, they might have shared recollections of their time as students with their family or other community members. The formal collection and documentation of these histories is one of the best, if not the best, means of creating a more student-centered history of GJIS.

Specific aspects of GJIS that should be studied in more detail include the outing program; student life and how it was impacted by the conditions of the GJIS campus; and the relationship between GJIS, the region, and the city of Grand Junction. These research avenues should be undertaken to more fully understand the history of GJIS.

There is significantly more work to be done. The collection and interpretation of additional historical documents will enable a more complete interpretation of not only GJIS but also the off-reservation boarding school system.

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