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# APPRENTICESHIP FOR CIVILIZATION: THE OUTING SYSTEM AT THE CARLISLE INDIAN SCHOOL

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IN the story of the education of the American Indians the Carlisle Indian School takes high rank. Now remembered chiefly for its record in athletics, the institution made definite contributions in the field of Indian education during the period of its existence from 1879 to 1918. As it was the first non-reservation Indian school established, it was forced to develop new methods by experience in order to cope with its peculiar problems. The educational policies evolved at Carlisle became the pattern which many later non-reservation Indian schools in the West and Middle West followed. One of these policies, however, no other school employed to the same extent or with the same success as Carlisle. This was the Outing system.

Essentially the Outing system was an apprenticeship for civilization. General Richard Henry Pratt, who originated and administered the plan during the twenty-five years he was in charge of the school, believed that Indian boys and girls should have an opportunity to live in private homes for a period of time in order to gain practical experience in self-support and to learn the ways of civilized living. Since many of the young aborigines came to Carlisle directly from the reservations, they were required to spend at least two years at the school where they received formal classroom instruction as well as training in some trade. After this short period of preparation they lived and worked with white folks in an effort to adjust themselves to a complex civilization of which they were expected eventually to become members.

## *Origin of the Outing*

The central idea of the Outing system was not new. As early as 1619 in Virginia it had been used on a very small scale. Three



years later some colonists in New England took Indians into their homes to teach them the rudiments of civilization. In both cases the missionary motive prompted the endeavors. For purely humanitarian reasons Philadelphia Quakers in 1797 brought six Indian girls from the New York reservation west of Utica and placed them in their families.

Unconscious of these historical precedents, General Pratt rediscovered the idea through his own experience. An unwelcome job faced him when he was placed in charge of seventy-nine Indians who were exiled to Florida because they insisted on stirring up trouble among their tribes in the West. Under his guidance these former "bad men" were taught to read, write, and speak English and were instructed in simple trades. Some of the younger men asked for further school opportunities and General Armstrong was prevailed upon to take them into his Negro school at Hampton, Virginia. Then Pratt thought of the idea of placing them out on farms where they could improve their English, learn agriculture, and become better acquainted with civilized living. An appeal was made to Deacon Hyde of Lee, Massachusetts, a trustee of Hampton, to find places for these boys in New England. The Deacon sent back a discouraging reply: only one patron could be persuaded to take a boy for the summer for the people in general were afraid of Indians.

Undaunted and persistent, Pratt pressed on until he was successful. He hurried to Massachusetts and took with him Etahdleuh, one of the finest of the "Florida boys." In the Congregational church at Lee, Pratt presented his idea to the people of the community. Then Etahdleuh, who was attired in the ordinary clothes of any white boy, addressed the audience in fluent English. The result was the offer of homes for seventeen Indians for the summer. This was the beginning of the Outing system.

As soon as the Carlisle School had been established, Pratt continued his efforts at closer range. Although several Indians were again sent to Massachusetts, twenty-three were placed in homes in the vicinity of Carlisle. Even after the fear of "Wild Indians" on the part of the whites and distrust on the part of the young aborigines had been overcome, the Outing during the first summer at Carlisle could hardly be called a success. Half of the twenty-

three pupils were failures. Some left their homes after a few days, others after a few weeks, and returned to the school.

### *Growth and Development of the System*

Pratt had learned one thing. The pupils had been placed too close to the school; it was not difficult for them to run away from their patrons. So he decided to avoid this trouble by placing them in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Accordingly he and Miss Anne S. Ely, who was an employee of the school and also a member of the Society of Friends, took a number of boys to the old Wrightstown school house in Bucks County where they met some of the neighborhood farmers and presented the idea. Again they were successful.

The people of Pennsylvania in general and the Quakers in particular were well adapted to coöperate with the school in this type of work since their attitude for generations had been one of friendship toward the Indian. Because the Quakers were energetic and thrifty, Pratt was eager to place his young charges in their households, where they would be taught the most useful habits of civilization. Though not a Quaker himself he always sympathized with their ideals; in fact he deferred to their opposition to the use of firearms by never introducing the manual of arms in the Carlisle School.

Within a few years the Outing system produced a better understanding between the Indians and the local inhabitants. In the beginning fear and distrust were common. In 1880 on the streets of Carlisle town boys openly attacked Indian children. But by 1885 "the most amicable relations" were reported to exist between Indian children and white children attending the same public schools. This better understanding was shown in the increased demand by patrons for Indian boys and girls. After the first few years Pratt no longer had to beg farmers to take his Indians. Soon the school sent out all the pupils it could spare, and then came requests for double the number of pupils available. Even the hard times of 1894 did not diminish this demand. Each year brought requests for more pupils. In 1882 there were 142 pupils on the Outing; by 1888 the number had increased to 447; in 1893 to 621; in 1900 to 893; and in 1903 the peak was reached with



948 pupils on the Outing; thereafter the number gradually declined. Geographically the Outing pupils were not confined to Pennsylvania but were placed also in the neighboring states of Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware and New York.

With the growth of the system several new aspects developed which had not been part of the original plan. In the beginning Pratt aimed to place the boys on farms in order to learn agricultural pursuits so that when they returned to the West they could make a living from the soil; the girls were placed in homes where they could learn the duties of the household. In the 1890's, however, there was a tendency to place boys out to learn trades. Pratt welcomed new openings in all fields and he took advantage of them whenever he thought the pupils would be benefited and stood a chance of making good. In 1898 he sent a dozen boys to a summer resort to act as waiters. About the same time he had a boy living in Philadelphia working in a furniture factory; and a little later two of his boys worked for a man who trained them for the railroad service. Boys were later placed out with machinists, wagon-makers, blacksmiths, electricians, shoemakers, etc. In 1910 over twenty per cent of the boys on the Outing were trades pupils. From 1915 to 1918 sixty-eight Carlisle boys worked in the Ford Motor Company at Detroit. The weakness of the trades Outing, especially in the cases where the boys were placed in factories, was that they did not receive the advantages of home life.

After Pratt left the school in 1905, the original spirit of the Outing system no longer prevailed. Not only was the Outing in factories emphasized, but the attitude of the school as well as of the pupils changed. The careful selection of pupils, which in large measure accounts for Pratt's success with the system, was neglected. In 1914 the girls' Outing agent complained that her orders were, "Put them out; put them out"; and that in order to make up the requisite numbers, she was forced to send out pupils whom she would not have permitted in her own home. Likewise there was a change in the attitude of the pupils themselves. During Pratt's administration the Outing was regarded as a rare privilege for those boys and girls who had good records in conduct and academic work. In the later years it became part of the general routine of school life and was taken for granted by the pupils regardless of their conduct or achievement.

### *Administration of the Outing*

Four factors entered into the successful administration of the system—the patrons, the pupils, constant supervision, and the good name of the school.

In the choice of patrons the school authorities exercised utmost care. By correspondence, questionnaires, and inquiries among friends of the school the character of the prospective patron and his household were investigated. Pratt always wanted to know about the use of whiskey or tobacco, church attendance, the "class of help" employed, and especially whether the patron paid his wages promptly.

The pupils likewise were required to meet certain qualifications before they were chosen to go out. The English Speaking Meetings were turned into rallies to arouse an interest in the country. When a pupil "signed up for the country," he solemnly promised to obey his employer and all the rules of the school, to attend the nearest Sunday school regularly, to use his spare time to the best advantage, and not to smoke or drink. This was not enough, however, for the pupil's record was then scrutinized to determine whether he had a clean slate in conduct, had performed his academic work satisfactorily, and had attended the Carlisle School for at least two years. Patrons and pupils were supplied with copies of the rules governing the whole system. When placed with a patron, the pupil was to be given spending money if he used it wisely; and if out for the winter he was required to attend the local public school, and to work out of school hours for board and lodging. The patron was expected to encourage the pupil in reading and studying during off hours even at busy seasons.

Nothing was left undone to give each pupil an auspicious start in his new adventure. Clothing of the best quality was provided for each boy and girl. For pupils going out for the first time trunks were bought and charged against their future earnings. When the first country party went out, which was usually at the beginning of April, the boys' field agent went to Philadelphia to see that the various groups boarded the proper local trains for their destination. On the following day a similar party of girls left under the guidance of the women's field agent and a matron. The patron had already been notified when the pupil would arrive.



In the early years the railroad fare was paid by the patron, but in later times it was charged against the pupil's first earnings.

The economic aspect was a prominent part of the system. After a two weeks' trial, patron and pupil discussed the problem of wages and an agreement was reached which was communicated to Carlisle for approval. Pratt aimed to have the pupil receive the wages customary in the locality in which he worked; in numerous cases he received the highest wages paid for the type of labor performed. These earnings became a basis of education in thrift. All pupils were required to save at least one-half of their wages which were forwarded to Carlisle periodically by the patron. As soon as a pupil accumulated twenty dollars, it was placed in bank at six per cent interest until he left school. In fact many pupils even sent money home in ten or twenty dollar installments.

The supervision of pupils on the Outing was administered in various ways. Patrons made monthly reports to the school, which covered the habits and conduct of the pupil as well as a complete account of the money he earned. A more effective check, however, was the work of the Outing agent. At least twice a year this agent paid a visit not only to the farm where the pupil worked but also to the public school which the pupil attended. The aim was to see that the relations between pupil and patron were beneficial to both parties. If such was not the case, the agent recommended the withdrawal of the pupil. In some such cases the fault lay with the pupil who might have been disobedient, stubborn or unwilling to go to school. Sometimes the patron was at fault, as when the agent discovered that family friction, slovenliness, or the use of profane or vulgar language provided an unwholesome atmosphere for the young Indian. The number of such misfits was never large. During the first five years less than five per cent failed to give satisfaction, and in 1891 as few as three and a half per cent returned before their term had expired.

The Outing system was not free from difficulties. In the country conditions were not all that could be desired. Inclement weather made Sunday schools inaccessible for several months in the winter. Some homes did not possess sufficiently high moral and religious atmosphere. In the public schools the methods of formal education were not well adapted to Indian pupils for the

teacher did not have time to give special attention to retarded cases. There was also the possibility that a young Indian would get into bad company as was the case with Lafayette Webster who was induced to drink whiskey to excess.

Other difficulties arose over the emotional reactions of the Indian to his patron. Homesickness sometimes made a boy sullen and depressed, resulting in a spirit of hostility. One boy absolutely declined to speak with any member of the immediate household but made his communications in writing. In another case a boy vented his wrath against the family by beating the livestock. Probably the most serious objection to the employment of Indian pupils as compared with the employment of other help was that Indians had to be shown how to do things while others could be told, and that often they were so unresponsive as not to indicate whether they had heard what they had been told. It was not unusual for a patron to complain, "The boy won't talk; can't get anything out of him."

These difficulties were not general or widespread for the number of misfits was small. Sometimes a few words from the visiting agent would smooth out the difficulties between pupil and patron. If remedial measures were unavailing, the boy was sent back to the school. But this did not imply that he was a failure, for he was often sent out to a different patron and proved successful. Considering the enormous difference between the psychological background of the farmers of Pennsylvania and of the Indians from the western plains, it is remarkable that difficulties were so few and successes so numerous.

An obvious factor in the administration of the system was the necessity of preserving the good name of the school. The conduct of the pupils while on the Outing and after they had returned to their homes frequently became a subject for discussion when the matter of the appropriations for the maintenance of the school came up in Congress. This was doubtless one of the reasons why a pupil was required to spend at least two years at the school before he was allowed to go on the Outing; during these two years the school had an opportunity to give the pupil sufficient training as well as to observe his character and abilities. To avoid criticism from another direction school officials in the 1890's took more care in placing Catholic children in Catholic homes.



### *Aims of the Outing System*

One of the primary objects of the system was to enable the pupil to acquire greater facility in the use of the English language. As Pratt visioned the Indian in the future working and associating closely with the white man, he realized that the fundamental barrier of language had to be removed. Although schoolroom exercises might provide the beginning of this knowledge, only living with civilized people could teach the everyday idiom.

No less important was the objective of vocational training. As in the case of language the pupil received elementary instruction in farming or trades at the school, but only actual experience gave him the practical training. Often pupils learned entirely new vocations on the Outing.

A more general aim of the system was to destroy mutual race prejudice. This was part of the larger purpose of the Carlisle Indian School which, said Pratt, was "to educate the Indian and to educate the people of the country. We want the people of the country to understand that the Indian can be educated, and the people need education in that respect as well as the Indians." Aborigines in the far West entertained more kindly feelings toward the white man after they received favorable letters from their children on eastern farms; likewise, the people of the country had a higher regard for the Indian when it was demonstrated that he could work and live like themselves.

Building character and acquiring good habits constituted another aim of the system. In Quaker homes industry and thrift were usually well inculcated by precept. Attendance at church and Sunday school provided formal religious instruction. No self-respecting housewife failed to teach her young ward the habits of cleanliness and tidiness. Allowing the pupil to spend a portion of his wages with the advice of his patron provided lessons in the use of money.

The most important aim of the system was to give the Indian the "courage of civilization." In a country home the young Indian found himself totally different from his surroundings and his new friends. In this situation he was forced to learn the new habits and to accept the new culture. The system practically drove him to adopt the new civilization. In the midst of everyday problems

he acquired self-reliance and forethought. The "courage of civilization" drew him away from tribal life and directed his attention toward the goal of citizenship.

In attempting to eradicate most of the traces of aboriginal culture and to introduce young Indians into the habits of civilized life within a period of several years, the Outing system assumed a huge task. The success it enjoyed was due to the preparatory training of the pupils, the careful selection of the patrons, and the intelligent administration of the whole plan. This system provided a unique contribution to the field of Indian education.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

There is no satisfactory treatment of the Outing system. Helpful contemporary accounts of varying value are G. B. Grinnell, "Indians and the Outing," *Outlook*, LXXV; Ruth Shaffner, "Civilizing the American Indian," *Chautauquan*, XXIII; E. G. Eastman, "A New Method in Indian Education," *Outlook*, LXIV; Laura Jackson, "The Value of the Outing System for Girls," *Proceedings of the National Education Association* for 1902; the best single account is by A. J. Standing in the *Red Man*, July-August, 1896. The newspapers published by the Carlisle School are necessary for a fuller understanding of the system.

Of the numerous addresses of General R. H. Pratt, "Indians Chained and Unchained," "The Way to Civilize the Indian," and "The Carlisle Indian School," are the best for the aims he set up and the claims he made for the system. More detailed are the pertinent sections of his annual report published in *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*; the one for 1891 gives a clear picture of the administration of the Outing at that date. Unfortunately the manuscript autobiography of General Pratt adds little to his published writings on this topic; the same is true of the correspondence of the Carlisle School in the Department of Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.

Another viewpoint of the system can be gathered from interviews with patrons who had Indian boys or girls in their homes. Aside from such interviews the present author had the advantage of information from Howard Gansworth, of Buffalo, New York, who had been a pupil at the school and later served as Outing agent for the boys. Indications of the decline of the system near the close of the existence of the school may be found in "Hearing before the Joint Committee of the Congress of the United States . . . sixty-third Congress, second session, to investigate Indian Affairs . . . 1914."