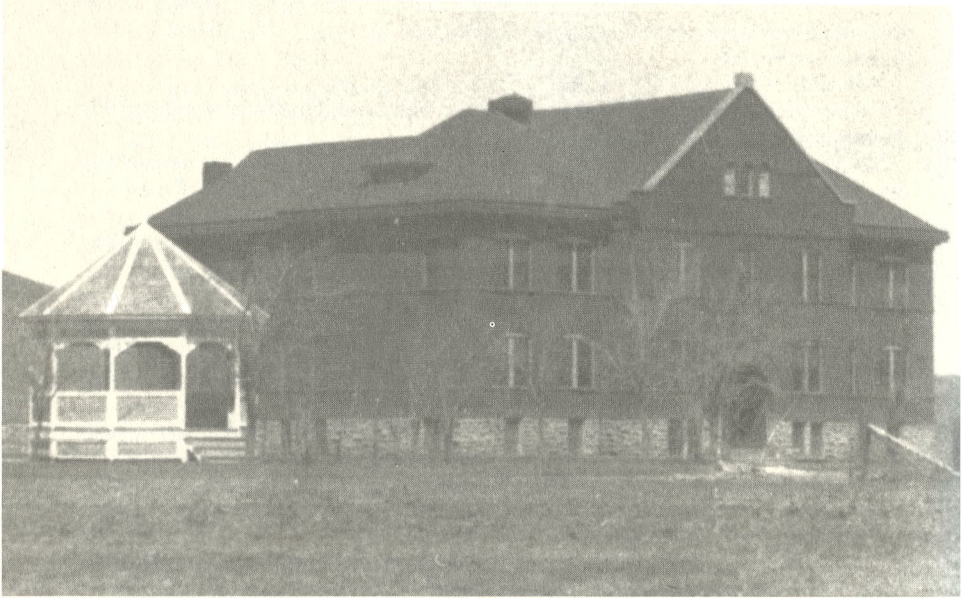
There Are So Many Things Needed



Establishing the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1891 - 1900

By Clyde Ellis

During the late nineteenth century the most widely supported solution to the so-called "Indian Problem" was the school. Reformers and policymakers believed the school could mold Indian youths into a new race, one in which the values of thrift, discipline, individuality, and Christianity would more closely reflect those of white society. To accomplish that transformation, the Indian Office supported the construction of hundreds of reservation schools, whose goal was to teach Indian children how to live.

That approach was especially critical on the Plains, where the government faced the considerable task of pacifying tens of thousands of potentially hostile tribesmen.

In 1867 the Treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek signalled an era of new relations between the United States government and the Kiowas and Comanches of western Indian Territory. By their signatures, headmen for the two tribes promised to bring their people to the reservation in the territory's southwest corner where they would begin the road to civilization according to the government's assimilationist agenda. At the heart of the treaty was an agreement to provide a school and teacher for every thirty school-age children. With an eligible population of about 600 children, the terms obligated the government to maintain at least twenty schools. In reality, however, the reservation never had more than a half-dozen schools, and several of those were private mission schools. The reservation day schools and boarding schools of the 1870s were miserable affairs—run down, chronically overcrowded, and poorly staffed. Indeed, they were of such poor quality that a government inspector once declared the Fort Sill School "a disgrace to the government that owns it." He could easily have been describing any of the reservation's other schools.

One of the reservation's most important schools opened in the mid–1890s near the town of Gotebo. Named after the mountain that stood on its west side, the Rainy Mountain Boarding School was a typical reservation boarding school. Home to nearly 150 Kiowa children during its ten-month term from September to June each year, Rainy Mountain served the outlying districts of the reservation until 1920, when it was finally closed. Its early history offers a revealing glance at the day-to-day operations of a reservation school. More than anything else, it illustrates the frustrations and limitations the school confronted as it struggled to fulfill the dreams of its planners.

As the 1880s came to a close, the Kiowa-Comanche Reservation still lacked school facilities for the overwhelming majority of its eligible children. With no indication from Washington that any significant change would come in the near future, the reservation continued to operate with a handful of schools scattered across its expanse. The Kiowas, however, soon made clear that they were losing patience with the government. Increasingly unhappy at the prospect of sending their children to Fort Sill or Riverside schools with Comanches and Wichitas, the Kiowas continued to agitate for

a school of their own. Large numbers of Kiowas who lived in the reservation's more remote districts expressed a strong desire for a school that would serve only their children. After all, the Medicine Lodge Treaty had promised a school and teacher for every thirty children. For Kiowas living in the reservation's outlying areas a school located in a spot convenient to them was the least the government could do.[1]

In the summer of 1891 the situation began to show signs of improving. Acting on the direction of the Indian Office, John Richardson, a regional supervisor for Indian education, surveyed the Kiowa-Comanche Reservation for a suitable site on which to build a new boarding school for the Kiowas. He found a place about thirty miles west of Anadarko on a creek at the base of a well-known landmark known to the Kiowas as *Tseityaedlta*, or Rainy Mountain.[2] In August, 1891, Richardson sent a long letter to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas Jefferson Morgan describing the location and commenting on the kind of school that ought to be built.[3]

From all appearances the site seemed adequate to the needs of the Indian Office. Richardson wrote that it was "in the midst of the most beautiful scenery" and was amply supplied with water, grass, timber, and native stone for building purposes. Good soil was abundant. Importantly, the site was "most happily located for health . . . no dull lake, marshy swamps or stagnant pools lurk within miles of it; nothing that breeds the dread malaria is found here." Richardson concluded that the place was a "veritable health resort." More importantly, support among the local Kiowas was widespread. Sensing a "restlessness in this settlement of Kiowas, for whose benefit the school is to be established," Richardson encouraged the Indian Office to get the school into operation as quickly as possible.[4]

One week after receiving Richardson's letter, Morgan wrote to Kiowa-Comanche agent George Day for his advice on how much land to set aside for the school. He also directed Day to offer George Moss, a thirty-seven-year-old employee at the nearby Cheyenne Boarding School, the position as the school's first superintendent.[5] By the fall of 1891, building plans were being prepared and reviewed; Moss was on his way to the Kiowa-Comanche Agency, and money had been allocated for construction of a boarding school. Finally, the Kiowas would have a school for their children.

The school's beginning, however, proved to be much like the rest of its life—slow, mixed up, and poorly administered. Although a local construction firm received a contract to erect the school's buildings in mid-April, 1892, during the spring nothing happened. In early May Moss suggested to Day that they meet to discuss various matters concerning the school's establishment. The builder, noted Moss, was still waiting for approval from Washington to begin construction. "You are aware, of course," he reminded Day, "that there is liable to be a considerable delay in regard to receiving it, so I thought it would be a good plan for me to come down and go with you . . . to select a site for the building." Moss especially wanted to begin fencing the school's pastures and fields for Rainy Mountain's farm.[6]

In mid-June Morgan inquired about the school's preparations. Had the site been officially determined? Was it advisable for a superintendent to report for full-time duty? What progress could Day report on the construction of a building or the breaking of

Although many Kiowas such as Hummingbird and his family kept to traditional ways, they expected the government to keep its promise to provide schools for their children (All photos courtesy Oklahoma Historical Society).

farm land? Although there was not a finished building at the site when Morgan wrote, he directed Moss (who apparently still worked full time at the Cheyenne school) to "enter upon the discharge of your duties" at Rainy Mountain as of July 1, 1892. In mid-July Day reported that W.D. Lancaster, a former missionary from Kentucky, had been hired as the school's industrial teacher and farmer, and John Wolf, a local Kiowa, as the school's helper. By October Moss finally informed the Indian Office, "[T]he building is going up nicely now," while other projects on the grounds were being handled as well.[7] After more than a year, the school began to take shape.

In the late fall of 1892 Morgan again wrote Day with anxious inquiries about the status of Rainy Mountain. After reminding the agent that every effort should be made to secure all necessary supplies and hasten the completion of the main building, Morgan announced, "[I]t is the earnest wish of this Office that the school may be filled with pupils at the earliest practical opportunity." He instructed Day:

> [M]eet with parents of children and make a thorough canvass among the children of school age and suitable health who are tributary to the Rainy Mountain School, and have a thorough understanding with the parents and effect such arrangements that you may get the children into the school without delay as soon as you are ready to receive them.[8]

Morgan, anxious to get the school into service as quickly as possible, ran headlong into the galling realities of the situation. No students were enrolled for fall, nor in the spring. In mid-November, 1892, nearly a year and a half after the school's approval, Richardson reported that Rainy Mountain still lacked many of its basic necessities. There were no dining, storage, or laundry facilities. The school needed a small barn to shelter the animals and to provide training for the boys studying industry and agriculture. In an omen of future troubles, he wrote that "the manner of the water supply should be looked after at once, so that there will be plenty of water when the school is opened."[9]

It seemed a small matter, but the absence of a safe and reliable water supply symbolized much of the school's ongoing troubles and the government's half-hearted attempts to make the place suitable for its students. Determined to train Kiowa children as farmers, seamstresses, mechanics, or domestics, the government never gave the school even minimal levels of funding or facilities to make the assimilation campaign a success. If a school designed to train

Indian boys as farmers and agricultural workers had no barn for its stock, how well could it train students? How could Indian children be expected to learn and remember lessons on hygiene or cleanliness when the school lacked safe water or functional plumbing? At a school where small children would soon be forced to bathe three to a tub—and then only once every other week—because there were not adequate facilities, it seemed unlikely that the government's hopes were going to be met.

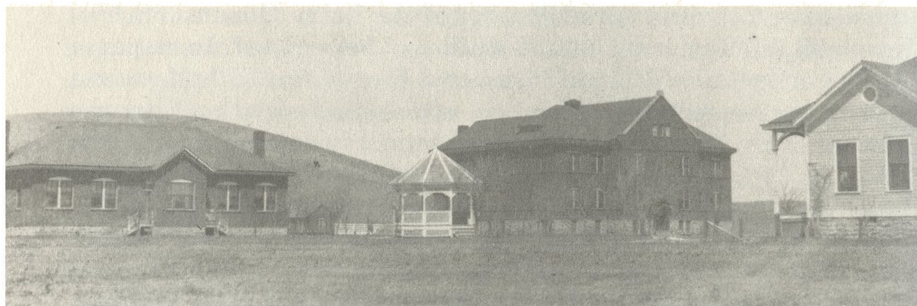
Despite those and other troubles, Day and the small staff at Rainy Mountain School continued to press ahead for the school's opening. Then disaster struck. In February, 1893, Richardson complained to the commissioner that the Rainy Mountain staff was not only inefficient but also dangerously incompetent. "The superintendent and the Industrial Teacher of the Rainy Mountain School are total failures; indolent and shiftless," he reported. In response to the allegations, Morgan instructed Day to fire both Moss and Lancaster immediately. "It is . . . utterly useless to consider the matter of Mr. Moss remaining in the service in any capacity," wrote Morgan. "You will notify him that his relief is absolute." Lancaster received the same fate.[10] Why the two men were so hastily drummed out of the Indian Service is not known. The school's administrative records contain no mention of the episode beyond the fact that they were fired. It was an inauspicious start, one from which the school never really recovered. Although no one knew it at the time, the episode involving Moss and Lancaster was a harbinger of a future filled with equally distressing developments.

The Indian Office attempted to straighten the mess out as quickly as possible. In early March, 1893, W.H. Cox, then the assistant superintendent at the Albuquerque Training School, received word of his appointment as superintendent at Rainy Mountain. T.W. Miller replaced Lancaster as industrial teacher and farmer.[11] Cox and his wife arrived from New Mexico on March 17 and immediately began to get the school back on track.[12] Cox assembled a full staff and they prepared the school's main building, a two-story stone combination dormitory and classroom, for use. By late April Cox informed the Indian Office the school would be ready for occupancy sometime in late May. Due to the nearness of the summer vacation period, however, officials decided to delay opening until the fall.[13]

Over the course of the summer and fall, Cox continued to hire his staff. Between the time of his arrival—when the number of

staff hovered between four and six—and the school's opening in September, 1893, Cox assembled nearly the entire staff necessary to operate the school. A notable exception, however, was the lack of a certified teacher. In the absence of one, Cox's wife agreed to serve as a temporary substitute. By September the school's pay vouchers listed seven full- or part-time staff. Two months later, the staff numbered fifteen, including a teacher (to the relief of Mrs. Cox), matron, cook, baker, seamstress, laundress, industrial teacher, and farmer, plus an assortment of Indian helpers and laborers.[14]

In addition to assembling his staff, Cox also oversaw the completion of the school's main building, the stocking of necessary sup-



Located at the base of Rainy Mountain, the Kiowa's school was hardly the health resort its promoters promised. Government apathy and neglect plagued the school throughout its existence and contributed to the children's health problems.

plies, clothes, and other items, as well as the plowing of the school's farm land. He made provisions to fence part of the school's four sections of land and put fifty acres under cultivation. In late March, 1893, the school received a large shipment of seeds and plants. Cox hoped to begin a modest farm operation that would serve as a laboratory and field school for the boys. Judging from the invoices, he placed especially high hopes on pumpkins, tomatoes, cabbages, and beets. He also ordered large quantities of shade trees and decorative plants to enhance the school's campus.[15] His successor, Cora Dunn, also continued to plant trees. However, their combined effort to create a tree-lined campus failed. Today the school's grounds show no evidence whatever that trees were planted.

Cox also monitored the purchase of the school's staple goods and supplies, the items intended to signify the break from Kiowa life that awaited every student. An inventory from the summer of 1893 contained an astonishing collection of goods from disk harrows to shoe blacking. Hand bells, brooms, butter knives, mirrors, thimbles, gingham dresses, shoes, wash tubs, and other assorted goods and tools would be used to force the transition from Kiowa to Anglo-American culture. Former students recalled that they were not expected to bring anything to school; Rainy Mountain provided everything. Children were dependent on the school for virtually all their needs, which in turn helped to sever completely any connection to the Kiowa world. Cox left interesting records of the school's administrative supplies. His list included the usual foolscap stationery, inkstands, envelopes, and, alas, "one spool - red tape."[16]

As the summer of 1893 came to a close, the school finally appeared ready for opening. On August 14 agent Hugh Brown informed Commissioner of Indian Affairs D.W. Browning that the school would begin taking students on or about September 1. Browning authorized an opening date of September 1, but stipulated that Cox accept no more than forty pupils, probably because of the absence of a certified teacher. Browning promised to send one as soon as a qualified applicant could be found. Until then he authorized Cox to employ "some competent person as a temporary teacher."[17] Rainy Mountain School opened officially on September 5, 1893, with five scholars, as they were called, in residence. Two weeks later the number had grown to thirteen; by March 1 it had edged up to thirty-two. Within two years Rainy Mountain was home to nearly 100 students, far more than it was designed comfortably to accommodate. The Kiowas at last had their school, and a great experiment had begun.

Cox stayed at the school only for its first full year of operation. During the summer of 1894 he left Rainy Mountain and was replaced by Cora Dunn who, with her husband Alfred as the school's industrial teacher and farmer, remained for sixteen years. She saw the school through its formative years and worked to keep the school on firm ground. Often her determination alone made the difference between success and failure. Forced to endure a fumbling and indecisive Indian Office, Dunn brought purpose and devotion to her job. With her at the helm, Rainy Mountain managed to remain open despite a litany of problems and setbacks. And if Cora Dunn was anything, she was certainly determined.

Understanding the administrative history of Rainy Mountain School means recognizing the withering realities that beset it from the very beginning. From the agent's perspective, the reservation inhabitants were obstinate and violent. Agents had little control over their wards, the government's civilizing program was often little more than a joke, and schools were too few to be effective. There was the distinct possibility that Rainy Mountain would amount to little more than a holding pen for Kiowa children until they learned the rudiments of the English language and a smattering of skills that would satisfy the government's desire to civilize its Indian wards. Cora Dunn's first years at the place confirmed that life there would likely be difficult and perhaps even unpleasant.

When she arrived at Rainy Mountain in the summer of 1894, Dunn took charge of a boarding school that eventually enrolled more than 150 children every year. Once enrolled, children received the equivalent of a sixth-grade education that combined academic instruction with vocational training in domestic and industrial arts. The school hoped to emancipate Kiowa children from the uncertainties of reservation life and from a cultural identity, policymakers believed, already out of step in an industrializing modern America. But much about the school exposed the limitations of government planning. For almost its entire life Rainy Mountain was a pale and shoddy imitation of the schools envisioned by Thomas Jefferson Morgan and others. Considering the circumstances, Cora Dunn had her hands full just keeping the place afloat and operating.

The most urgent problems confronting the school in its first years were the physical plant and condition of the campus. From the beginning, the school's administrators struggled with limited supplies and inadequate facilities. Rainy Mountain's physical plant was not very large or complex. The largest and oldest building on the campus was the two-story stone dormitory that originally housed the girls, some of the boys, and most of the staff. A similarly sized second dormitory went up in 1899, as did a superintendent's cottage. A laundry, barn, commissary building, mess hall, band stand, and various service buildings went up over the next fifteen years. A large classroom building was added in 1915, but only after repeated and sometimes angry exchanges between Washington and the agency. The campus was a neatly arranged quadrangle set at the base of Rainy Mountain's east side.

In addition to the central campus, the school had 2,560 acres of adjoining land reserved for its exclusive use. Much of that land was used as pasture, put under cultivation, or, on rare occasions, leased. As reservation boarding schools went, the place was not particularly unique. The size of the school, the scope of its activities, and the nature of its operation all reflected generally the state of affairs at reservation boarding schools across the country.

The government's almost ubiquitous neglect of the Rainy Mountain campus, however, meant that the school suffered serious problems. Those in turn produced deleterious effects on students and programs alike. Poor buildings, unhealthy living conditions, and outmoded or insufficient equipment and teaching materials combined to create a difficult environment. A close look at conditions on the campus shows a troubling lack of interest or concern by the Indian Office or the Kiowa-Comanche agents. Of course, not all reservation boarding schools were as poorly maintained as Rainy Mountain; some were better, some were equally bad. But on balance Rainy Mountain was a typical institution, problems and all. At any rate, it is difficult to find schools of the same size and general characteristics that were much better off than Rainy Mountain. And the fact that Cora Dunn sometimes feared for the very roof over her head can be taken as a symbol, literally and figuratively, of what life was like in the reservation schools.

The government showed a curious ambivalence toward the physical condition of the campus. Surviving records are rife with complaints and reports detailing the Indian Office's disregard for any but the most urgent needs. And even then, school officials often had to press for help. Having invested at least $37,825 in the campus in its first six years, it seems reasonable that the government would have shown considerable interest in protecting and improving its investment.[18] That was not the case. In fact, having spent the money, the Indian Office usually appeared reluctant to appropriate more funds, even when unsafe conditions demanded repair.

Several examples illustrate the case. At the end of his first and only year as superintendent, W.H. Cox issued an annual report on the school. He concluded the school needed "an additional building for schoolrooms and quarters for either the boys or the girls . . . the school also requires a range, and . . . some porches . . . on the present building." In response, the Indian Office expressed doubt and asked agent Maury Nichols to look into the matter.[19]

Cox's requests were both necessary and justifiable. In its first year the school had already outgrown its single main building, designed to hold approximately fifty pupils. Attendance increased from an average of thirty-one in May, 1894, to more than seventy by December, 1894. By the fall of 1895 it stood at seventy; by early 1897 it reached nearly ninety, far more than the school could adequately hold.[20] The main building was already filled to capacity by the 1895–1896 academic year. Crowded conditions were the norm for students and staff alike. The lack of employee housing made the situation acute. Many staff members suffered in the dorms, reducing the space available for students. Because it served as dormitory, assembly hall, classroom, staff living quarters, and chapel, the main building quickly began to suffer from overuse. The school clearly needed another building. Kiowas were enthusiastically filling the place to overflowing every term and something had to be done.

Cox left without persuading officials of the school's needs. After Cora Dunn assumed control, she repeatedly brought the issue to the attention of her superiors. In November, 1894, she informed the commissioner's office that the school was in need of a variety of general repairs and improvements. "The plastering of the [main] building was originally of very indifferent quality," she wrote, "and is now badly broken." She requested funds to repair the plaster and authority to build three water closets in the main building. In a separate note she asked for $550 for the barn and toolshed. Noting that the school's livestock and implements were unsheltered, she reminded the commissioner that she had written of the matter three times in her brief tenure. Presuming that the Indian Office did not take her seriously, Dunn noted that she was writing at the advice of "Special Agent Able, who appreciates our pressing need."[21]

Responding to her requests, the Indian Office suggested a number of smaller cottages instead of a large dormitory-style edifice. The office advised Kiowa-Comanche agent Hugh Baldwin of its support for economical and practical smaller buildings. Dunn agreed, though with some reservations. Her letter to Baldwin in December, 1894, noted that the plan "commends itself to me as the best and most functional method of fostering a love of homelife among these homeless children. Such an arrangement would turn out more permanent work than all the non-reservation schools with their vast machinery." With the cottages she could convert the

dining area in the main building into a chapel, and the kitchen (the pupils would cook in their cottages) into a classroom. She worried, however, about the need for additional employees. The school would need a matron for each cottage "to insure the prosecution of the work and sufficient protection for the girls." At the same time, the expense of additional matrons might be offset by eliminating the positions of cook, baker, and laundress.[22]

Nothing ever came of the plan, and three years later Dunn again complained about conditions. "The standing need of this school . . . is another large building of the same size and general construction of the one now occupied." The school's need was so desperate that the building would have to serve not only as a dormitory but also as kitchen and dining room. In addition, she requested a cottage for the superintendent, a carpenter's shop, and a milking shed. Without those and other improvements, the school simply could not provide the children with adequate instruction.[23]

Dunn also informed the agent of extensive repairs needed across the campus. Flues in the main building were "nearly ready to fall," she reported. After further inspection, she added that the flues were "in worse condition than we supposed, and it is extremely fortunate that it was discovered in time to save the building from destruction by fire."[24] Shortly thereafter the agent received a request from Alfred Dunn to build flues in the dining room and playroom. "The children are having chills," he wrote, "and ought to have fires early in the morning." Officials denied the request on the grounds that no funds existed for such repairs.[25]

During the first years, plumbing, plaster, walkways, fire hoses, wells, and new buildings all found their way into Cora Dunn's correspondence on a regular basis. She often had to plead for ordinary items, such as shoes, clothing, food, kerosene, lime for the latrines, or coloring paper for the kindergarten. In the main Dunn received little sympathy, and less help, from the Indian Office. In 1897, for example, she explained the need for a decent water system for the campus; six years later she still needed it. In the meantime, the school muddled through the years relying on the decrepit original system from 1893.[26]

By February, 1904, the condition of the school's major buildings (including a new dormitory built in 1899) had deteriorated so badly that Dunn needed more than 6,000 pounds of plaster for repairs. Blaming the condition of the buildings on the haphazard and inferior craftsmanship of the original contractors, she noted that

some ceilings were in such poor shape that they were "positively dangerous."[27] Driven to exasperation in the spring of 1905 by the bureaucratic wrangling that crippled even the simpler requests, Dunn tersely informed the agent she needed and had ordered boiler grates and a range for her cottage. "In order to obviate the extensive correspondence and tedious waiting involved in ordering through the Indian Office," she continued, "I had . . . a hardware merchant in Gotebo order them."[28]

Dunn knew from experience that government bureaucracy disapproved of individual decisions. She also knew that interminable paper shuffling often left her with nothing more than an official rejection notice. In the fall of 1897, for example, in answer to her repeated requests for $220.00 for fire equipment, the Indian Office declined to authorize the funds because the prices she quoted "seem to be about 100% above market price." In the end the office allowed her $78.05 to purchase one hydrant and 250 feet of hose.[29] Although the equipment was inadequate to protect a campus the size of Rainy Mountain, Dunn was helpless in the face of official foot-dragging to obtain any more equipment. The Indian Office also refused to upgrade the school's water system, making the fire equipment only marginally useful.

Despite repeated demands for significant changes, improvements waited until the turn of the century. For more than six years Rainy Mountain languished. While each term brought an overflow of students, the Indian Office still refused to spend the additional funds to meet the demands of increasing enrollments. However, the school received some additional buildings—a tool shed and barn in 1895; an additional dormitory in late 1899, a full five years after Cox first raised the issue and long after the school had outgrown its facilities; a stable in 1895; a playroom and lavatory in 1896; and a slaughter house sometime between 1894 and 1900. While the school needed those facilities, the Indian Office refused to address the most urgent problems of all—better living quarters

and expanded classroom space. By the time the second building went up, increased enrollments threatened to overwhelm the school again. By 1899 it had already begun to creep toward 100. In 1905 it stood at nearly 130. In 1906 Dunn informed agent John Blackmon that "the need of an additional building for school purposes has so frequently been represented . . . it is unnecessary to further enlarge upon it."[30] To dispel recent reports about unhealthy conditions, Dunn replied, "the only time the pupils really lacked for sufficient air is when all are assembled in the schoolroom used as a chapel."[31] However, relief did not come until 1915, when a third building—primarily a classroom building—went up. It marked the last major construction at Rainy Mountain. By then enrollment averaged more than 160 students.

In addition to the continuing concern about the physical state of the school's building, Dunn inherited an especially critical problem—the lack of a reliable water system. John Richardson's original report regarding the water supply was exaggerated.[32] The lack of a reliable water source and the unwillingness of the Indian

Cora Dunn's long tenure at Rainy Mountain was marked by a continual struggle to obtain the bare necessities for her boys and girls (above and opposite).

Office to provide anything but the most meager appropriations for a serviceable water and sewer system forced Rainy Mountain to operate under crude and unhealthy conditions. Each year after 1900, the school's ability to care adequately for the health of its students was compromised. After 1913, when more than 160 students crowded into the school, poor bathing and laundry facilities produced the highest reported levels of trachoma in the Indian schools.

The clamor for safe water runs like a thread through all of the official correspondence for the entire history of the school. In December, 1893, nearly two years before the school opened, Richardson had advised the commissioner, "[T]he manner of the water supply [should] be looked after at once, so that there will be plenty of water when the school is opened."[33] When Rainy Mountain opened, the water question had not been resolved. The school's supply was brought in daily from a spring located three miles south of the campus. W.H. Cox complained that it took an employee nearly half the day to haul the necessary amount.[34] In August, 1894, Cox asked agent Maury Nichols for permission to hire a man to dig a well at the campus. Because Rainy Mountain Creek ran near the school, Cox suggested that a well dug some fifteen to twenty feet deep "would likely furnish a supply of water."[35] Nichols did not approve the request.

In the summer of 1895 Dunn submitted an estimate for a well to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Daniel Browning. A small well had recently been dug for Indians who gathered at the school for the issue of rations and annuities; a larger one at the same place "would furnish an inexhaustible supply of pure water . . . at a moderate cost." There was some urgency about the issue, she continued, as the small well was the school's only reliable source of water short of continuing to haul it from the spring three miles away.[36]

Browning's reply is revealing. Baldwin's request for $1,799.24 to upgrade the water system was denied on the grounds that the Indian Office was investigating which of the agency's school ought to be enlarged to accommodate a larger than anticipated pool of children. Until such a decision had been reached, Browning would not authorize the request.[37] By tying improvements to matters that had nothing to do with the actual problem, the Indian Office virtually assured that pressing needs would often go unattended. The merits of its case for a new well, clear and convincing though

they were, did nothing to help the school. In the end, Dunn's subsequent request for $40 for a wagon-mounted water barrel received a curt response. The agent authorized her to spend "no more than $30.00 for one wagon water tank."[38]

By early 1896 the Indian Office apparently had a change of heart and authorized $1,381.94 for a well, water tower, pump, and pipe. Hopes ran high on the campus and Dunn anticipated the end of a troubling dilemma. That summer the Indian Office hired a local contractor to plumb most of the school's main buildings. Another dug a well, and a third erected a windmill, motor, pump, and pipe. The total cost was $637.71. How the remaining $722.23 was spent, or if it was spent, is not known.[39]

No sooner was the problem solved, however, than a new series of disasters appeared. In December, 1896, most of the new pipes laid that summer froze and burst. In a letter to Herman Veidt, who had done the installation, Alfred Dunn implied that shoddy workmanship was to blame. "There are several things that will be a continual source of trouble," warned Dunn, "and they had better be fixed now."[40] Veidt apparently complied.

Shortly after that episode, a train of events occurred that defy explanation. On March 21 Alfred Dunn notified Baldwin that a spring storm the previous evening had wrecked the school's windmill. The apparatus was "torn all to pieces," and it left the school with less than a week's supply of water.[41] By early April Dunn had overseen the digging of a new well but was anxious to know when the school could expect a new windmill; without it there was not sufficient water (short of hauling it, an onerous task that Dunn wished to avoid at all costs) to supply the school's water closets. Fearing that he would be forced to tear down the water closets because of a health hazard, thus leaving the school to rely only on drop-pit latrines, Dunn appealed for help.[42] By late April he informed Baldwin that matters were becoming serious. "[I]f we do not get relief soon" he wrote, "we will be compelled to let some of the children go home. We are running our water wagon all the time and our cisterns have given out, so that we are dependent on the water wagon to furnish drinking, cooking, and laundry water, besides water for the closets."[43] The matter had gone beyond inconvenience; it threatened to affect the operation of the school.

One week after Dunn's plea, the Indian Office authorized $225 to replace the destroyed mill.[44] It had taken nearly six weeks for it do so; it would be almost another month before the second mill

went up. And then disaster struck again. In early June, as the mill was being raised into place, a rope parted and the mill crashed to the ground. "It is in nearly as bad shape as the other mill," reported Dunn. But Baldwin could take some solace from the knowledge that the broken rope belonged to the man hired to erect the mill, "so no blame can possibly rest on us." After repairing and raising the mill again, Dunn complained that it was so bent it did not function. Worse, it was in danger of falling down in even a moderate wind. In early June the Indian Office authorized funds to replace the second mill. But it did not spend very much money. Despite Dunn's warning that without a good mill the school would "of course be out of water the rest of the year," the office allocated only $28.94.[45]

Events then verged on the ridiculous. Apparently a third mill went up in late June but not for very long. On June 25 Dunn informed Baldwin that "the 'expected' has happened to the windmill." The mill was destroyed; Dunn's letters do not reveal exactly what happened.[46] The Indian Office, probably flinching every time it heard from the school, agreed to spend $179.04 for a fourth windmill. It went up, and miraculously stayed up, in mid-August, 1897.[47]

However, the problems were not solved. In early September Dunn wrote to Baldwin, "I am sorry to say it, but the mill will not put the water in the [storage] tank. . . . I am satisfied the tower will have to be raised in order to give wind steady and strong enough to do the work." Until that was accomplished he would haul water for the kitchen and laundry as well as for the school's forty hogs.[48] By October Dunn reported that the school had water in limited quantity only and that the water closets had been moved. He was increasingly afraid of the fire hazard related to the lack of water across the campus. Shortly thereafter Baldwin won approval for a steam engine to pump water from the well or nearby creek to the main buildings. But as the winter deepened, so did the trouble with the water supply. In early January, 1898, Dunn told the agency the school was "out of water and have been for three weeks."[49]

At that point a new solution came to hand. Sometime between late 1897 and late 1900 a reservoir was constructed at or near the top of Rainy Mountain. Parker McKenzie, a student at the school from 1904 to 1914, believes the reservoir was built sometime around 1897. Official estimates from Cora Dunn concerning the

cost of the plan, however, do not appear in the records until late 1900. Perhaps the project spanned several years, thus explaining the discrepancy in dates. At any rate, in October, 1900, Dunn requested $535.25 for the "proposed reservoir at the top of Rainy Mountain." In March, 1901, she included as part of a general estimate for campus repairs a request for cement "to be used in repairing the water reservoir and rendering it insect and vermin proof. Its present condition is a standing menace to the school and must be remedied."[50] By using the steam engine to pump water from the well or creek, the system then relied on gravity to send water at sufficient pressure to the campus below.

It was a good idea that promised to solve a disgraceful situation; unfortunately it did not work well. In early February, 1900, in an event that elevated the school's misfortunes to epic proportions, the fourth windmill was blown "completely to pieces," and ruined the limited improvement in Rainy Mountain's still primitive sewer and water works. Later that year Dunn informed agent James Randlett that the "automatic flushing apparatus of the water closet in the girls' building refused to work" and that the plumbing in most of the other buildings was failing. The only water the school received was water it did not particularly need; the main buildings leaked like sieves, and their ceilings were ruined. By the spring of 1902 she asked for a new well as the old one could no longer supply the school. And in the summer of 1903 she lectured Randlett emphatically on the "immediate necessity of repairs . . . to the plumbing and water system at this school." The grates of the steam boiler in the laundry had given way, the girls' dorm needed a complete plumbing overhaul, and the water closets would not flush anywhere on campus. "All the plumbing at the school was originally of the most inferior quality and workmanship," she wrote, "and no repairs have ever been made except such as could be effected by school employees. The health of the employees [to say nothing of the children] . . . is greatly endangered." She demanded $44.50 to set things right immediately. Two months later Randlett finally authorized the money.[51]

Had the effects of the windmill episodes not been so important for the health of the children, they would seem humorous. But the lack of attention to the situation made the water issue critical. The danger from fire and the inconvenience of hauling water aside, the health of the children was badly compromised. And employees suffered as well, although they were rarely affected like the child-

ren. Inoculated against disease, able to take advantage of other facilities, employees might have been uncomfortable but rarely were they threatened. Alfred Dunn, for example, could easily find ways to keep himself and his wife supplied with fresh water and other goods. Who would question the need of the principal to maintain a certain level of cleanliness and hygiene?

Students, on the other hand, endured primitive conditions. Drop-pit latrines located at a distance from dorms, water so limited in quantity as to allow bathing only once every other week—and even then in tubs shared by two to three children, no regular physician, and susceptibility to a variety of illness and diseases meant that life at the boarding school could be very hazardous. Remarkably there were never any severe outbreaks of smallpox or other scourges. For the most part, trachoma was the most troublesome affliction, and it was related directly to the presence of dirty water and unsanitary conditions. Reluctant to spend money to remedy the situation, the Indian Office forced the school to suffer through prolonged periods of official neglect that bordered on abuse. The neglect compromised the pupils' ability to learn and grow. The lack of clean drinking water created an atmosphere harmful to learning.

Teachers during the 1917–1918 term gathered in the school's gazebo. Mamye Blakely, whose family's farm was nearby, is second from left.

In addition to the school's physical woes, it suffered constantly from poor support. For much of her tenure, Cora Dunn battled the agency or the Indian Office over shortages of important supplies or about one pressing need or another. The school's official correspondence for much of its first decade reveals a deeply felt sense of isolation. Located far from the agency office in Anadarko, the place was inconvenient for visits or inspections. Out of sight, and just as often out of mind, Rainy Mountain seemed very much like a remote outpost.

That remoteness was most clearly revealed through the attitude of the Indian Office regarding Dunn's endless requests for more help, better staff, improved instructional materials, and other myriad needs. In its formative years the school faced enormous shortages of nearly every necessity. The Indian Office often ignored Dunn and her successors' demands for a minimum of supplies. Several examples illustrate this point.

The Indian Office required all students to wear "citizen" or non-Indian clothing. On most occasions Dunn saw that the children dressed in accordance with the regulations. But she often had to make do with salvaged goods and cast-offs from other schools or relied on the charity and good will of missionaries. Her invoices for supplies of clothing revealed regular items, especially shoes. In August, 1903, for example, she implored Randlett to find enough shoes so that she could open school on schedule. "There are no shoes on hand for the opening," she wrote, "and as yet none received. If you would call the attention of the Indian Office to this also, it would help me out of an embarrassing situation." In September she again asked Randlett for help. "Where are my shoes?" she queried the agent. "We have none at all for the children. . . . The Indians are greatly dissatisfied over it." On the same day that she wrote Randlett, the agency received 427 pairs of day shoes and Sunday shoes for boys, youths, and misses.[52]

In the fall of 1905 Dunn pressed for shoes once again, as well as for clothing for her older students, especially the boys.[53] Three months later she informed the agent that, although she had shoes on hand, they were "so coarse and stiff as to occasion the children great discomfort in wearing them. Lighter shoes, I think, would wear quite as well and effect . . . the relief that would be afforded the unhappy wearers of those now in use."[54] By the end of the spring term for 1906 the school was so low on essentials that Dunn attempted an early closing. "We are now out of bacon, lard, rolled

oats, potatoes, hominy, and rice," she wrote. Her supplies of beef, soap, and sugar were good for about three weeks, and she offered to slaughter part of the school's dairy herd. That would not be a very practical solution, she noted, because of the lack of ice and proper storage for the dressed beef.[55]

In early October, 1906, Dunn again approached the agency for help. "I am sorry to mention the subject of shoes again," she wrote, "but a number of our children are barefooted and are really suffering these cold mornings." She noted that their parents either would not or could not buy their children shoes. (Some saw it as an obligation to be borne by the government. Others simply did not have the money.) "Many of the children have colds and I am trembling in fear of some of the barefooted ones having pneumonia." Worse, she had to deal with angry parents. "The Indians are greatly incensed over the matter and I cannot blame them." Turning their ire to her use, Dunn reminded the agent that the Kiowas did not know "how perfectly helpless I am as far as providing for their children." At the end of the month she submitted bills for the emergency purchase of shoes for children whom she carefully noted "were barefooted."[56] Kiowa parents went away perplexed and angry at a government that confiscated and burned the students' native clothing and shoes, but then proved unable to supply them with suitable replacements.

Clothes were only one problem. Equipment and instructional aids also were a matter of contention. In November, 1895, Dunn advised the agency that a sewing machine intended for Rainy Mountain had been sent instead to the Fort Sill School. The foul-up rankled her enough that she dropped her normally respectful demeanor. "Whatever the need for a machine may be there, it can't be as great as at our school, for we have only two machines, one of which is practically worthless, while [I] understand that Fort Sill has five already." Three weeks later she raised the matter again. Not wanting to seem importunate, she wrote, she was nevertheless driven to remind the agent that her personal sewing machine had been pressed into service the preceding year. "I think each of the other schools [has] as many as five, and I don't quite understand why we are not allowed those that have come for us." She never got her sewing machine back from Fort Sill and was forced to divide her two usable machines between forty-nine female students.[57]

An especially important part of the school's program was its kindergarten, where incoming pupils received their first taste of

formal schooling. Dunn considered it a critical component in the "civilizing" process. Like many of the school's other programs, however, it suffered from a lack of supplies and support. Indeed it was all Dunn could do to keep a kindergarten teacher, or any other teacher for that matter, in the school long enough to maintain any direction over the children. Between 1897 and 1902, for example, no fewer than three women served as kindergarten teacher. Worse, some of them were of the poorest caliber. In 1907 Dunn complained to agent Blackmon that her current kindergartner "has done very much less work than any kindergartner I have ever had and has done that little very poorly." In 1894 Dunn requested various materials for the kindergarten and pleaded for the agent's consideration on the grounds that "the material asked for is mainly colored and really costs very little."[58] In 1899 she was again in the same circumstance. "Miss Mattoon [the kindergarten teacher] complains that she has not the proper material to successfully prosecute her work," wrote Dunn. "If the present estimate could be filled this year it would aid her greatly. We have received no kindergarten supplies for two years."[59] And in 1905 she simply asked for authority to purchase her own materials. "No supplies of this character have been furnished this school for three years," she wrote, "and there are none on hand now." Thankfully, her request was approved.[60]

The situation in the kindergarten was illustrative of the entire school's problems. Administratively, it reflected the overall problems of poor supply, high employee turnover, and lukewarm support from the Indian Office. Indeed, personnel turnover was chronic at the school for its entire history. It was especially high during its first ten years. For example, between 1895 and 1902 the school had no fewer than fifteen teachers. Only one of that group stayed two years, the rest drifted in and out on average every six months. Only once during that span, from September to December 1899, did the school have as many as four teachers. By December the number had dropped to three; one year later the school had only one teacher for the entire spring term when the enrollment was 110. It averaged two per year for the years 1895 to 1902. Other positions had similar rates. Between 1895 and 1902 the school employed at least six matrons, three seamstresses, four cooks, and five laundresses. Rainy Mountain's predicament was not unique; by 1927 personnel turnover in the Indian school system reached 48 percent. Parker McKenzie said that during his time at the school

"there were not less than six changes in the position of boys' disciplinarian. . . . Three seamstresses served in my time, and . . . two different laundresses."[61]

Although Cora Dunn rated most of her employees satisfactory, she frequently had to settle for second-rate workers who had little interest in building the school into an effective institution. In 1901, however, Dunn happily but dryly reported that a recently hired laborer was working out nicely. "I find he is a trained machinist, a competent musician, and, as he did not during the night develop aspirations to the position of superintendent, I think he will do."[62]

More often she faced less encouraging situations. On one occasion Dunn worried that a prospective employee did not quite appreciate the school's predicament and feared the woman was wholly unprepared for the rigors that awaited her. On her application for kindergartner, Alice B. Moncure of Virginia made inquiries about the size of Anadarko, the number of white inhabitants in the area, the availability of a physician and "a minister of the gospel," and whether or not the climate was "dry and healthy." Dunn wrote to agent Blackmon, "[T]he lady is laboring under some illusions that ought to be dispelled at once before she comes nearly two thousand miles. . . . I have one employee now who wants the earth and I doubt my ability to divide it satisfactorily between the two." On the other hand, she needed a kindergartner and was willing to do what was necessary to get one. She enclosed a copy of her yet unmailed reply to Moncure with a note to Blackmon saying that if it was an "unduly discouraging" letter that he ought to return it and "I will gloss things over a little more."[63]

During its early years Rainy Mountain School suffered from a chronic list of problems. Its treatment by the Indian Office marked it as an isolated, often neglected school. Its physical plant was poorly built and maintained and the campus was forced to make do without many essentials. Hobbled from the beginning, the place worked against great odds in its attempt to educate Kiowa children. But it survived, often due only to the perseverance of Cora Dunn and sometimes because of good luck and timely aid. She more than any other person or administrator stamped the school with a sense of mission and dogged determination. A more easily satisfied principal would likely have seen the place fall to pieces. Cora Dunn was undeterred in her work, even when the school struggled with repeated shortages and disasters. And she even kept a sense of humor about her situation, though it was tinged

Former student Parker McKenzie visited the site of Rainy Mountain School in 1978. The superintendent's home is in the background. Today nothing remains of the school's buildings.

with understandable bitterness. In a letter to Randlett in 1903 decrying the latest in a series of setbacks, she wryly observed that Rainy Mountain's somewhat diminished facilities "could not fail to gratify the practical statesmen who framed the Indian appropriation bill." Five years later she reminded one of Randlett's successors that "there are so many things needed for the school" that she was running out of ideas.[64] But she never ran out of energy or devotion, and that meant the difference between abject misery and heartfelt concern for hundreds of Kiowa children.

ENDNOTES

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[1] For representative evaluations of conditions on the reservation see *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1875: 567 (hereafter cited as *ARCIA* and year); "Annual Report of the Central Superintendency," *ARCIA*, 1875: 766, 768, 775; "Annual Report of the Kiowa Agency," *ARCIA*, 1877: 484 (hereafter cited as ARKA); *ARCIA*, 1887: 164–165. See also William T. Hagan, *United States-Comanche Relations: The Reservation Years* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990).

[2] *ARKA*, 1892: 891; Thomas Jefferson Morgan to John Richards, July 27, 1891, Rainy Mountain School Records, Record Group 75, National Archives (hereafter cited as RMS, RG and number, NA). These records are housed in the Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

[3] Richardson to Morgan, August 15, 1891; Morgan to George Day, January 14, 1892, *ibid.*

[4] Richardson to Morgan, August 15, 1891, *ibid.*

[5] Morgan to Day, August 23, 1891, *ibid.*

[6] Morgan to Day, August 26, 1892, *ibid.*; George Moss to Day, May 11, 1892, *ibid.*

[7] Morgan to Moss, June 24, 1892; Day to Morgan, July 19, September 13, September 14, and September 17, 1892; Pay Voucher for Rainy Mountain School, September 30, 1892, *ibid.*

[8] Morgan to Day, November 14, 1892, *ibid.*

[9] Richardson to Morgan, November 17, 1892; Morgan to Richardson, October 10 and December 8, 1892, *ibid.*

[10] Richardson to Morgan, February 28, 1893; Day to Morgan, February 24, 1893; Morgan to Day, March 10, 1893, *ibid.* When Moss attempted to resign and avoid the stigma of having been fired, the commissioner refused to allow it. See Morgan to Day, April 17, 1893, *ibid.*

[11] Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Day, March 9, 1893; Pay Voucher for Rainy Mountain School, March 31, 1893, *ibid.*

[12] Cox to Day, March 17, 1893, *ibid.*

[13] Cox to D.W. Browning, April 5, 1893; Browning to Day, April 22, 1892, *ibid.*

[14] Pay Vouchers for Rainy Mountain School, June 30, September 30, December 31, 1893; Browning to Hugh Brown, October 20, November 24, 1893; Cox to Brown, November 28, 1893, *ibid.*

[15] Invoice from F. Barteldes, Lawrence, Kansas, March 25, 1893, *ibid.*

[16] Inventory list, February 15, July 1, 1893, *ibid.*

[17] Browning to Brown, August 21, 1893, *ibid.*

[18] The figure is derived from a 1912 annual statement on government buildings and improvements at the campus, *ibid.* The list showed these structures: boys' dorm (1892, $12,000), girls' dorm (1899, $12,000), superintendent's cottage (1899, $1,200), farmer's cottage (1894, $500) laundry (1894, $2,000), pump house (1900, $400), playroom and lavatory (1896, $400), mess hall (1899, $8,000), two small stone storage houses (1895, $400 each), and a stable (1895, $525).

[19] Cox to D.W. Browning, May 3, 1894; Browning to Nichols, May 16, 1894, *ibid.*

[20] Figures are derived from weekly supply invoices and quarterly attendance reports that listed all enrolled students by sex, age, and grade, *ibid.*

[21] Cora Dunn to Browning, November 6, 1894, *ibid.*

[22] Cora Dunn to Hugh Baldwin, December 13, 1894, *ibid.*

[23] Cora Dunn to Baldwin, August 3, 1897, *ibid.*

[24] Cora Dunn to BAldwin, January 4, January 11, 1897, *ibid.*

[25] A.M. Dunn to Baldwin, October 1, 1897, *ibid.*

[26] A.M. Dunn to Baldwin, August 23, 1897; Cora Dunn to James Randlett, July 17, 1903, *ibid.*

[27] Cora Dunn to Randlett, February 15, 1904, *ibid.*

[28] Cora Dunn to Randlett, March 19, 1905, *ibid.*

[29] A.M. Dunn to Baldwin, August 23, 1897; A.G. Turner to Baldwin, September 24, 1897; William A. Jones to Baldwin, October 26, 1897, *ibid.*

[30] Cora Dunn to Randlett, August 22, 1899; Cora Dunn to John Blackmon, January 6, 1906, *ibid.*

[31] Dunn to Blackmon, January 6, 1906, *ibid.*

[32] Richardson to Morgan, August 15, 1891, *ibid.*

[33] Morgan to Day, December 8, 1892, *ibid.*

[34] Cox to Nichols, July 2, 1894, RMS, RG75, NA; Parker McKenzie to Bill Welge, June 6, 1990, in author's possession. An undated but early plat map in the school's records at the Oklahoma Historical Society clearly indicates a spring south of the school. McKenzie indicated that it was the source for the school's water during this period. An attempt to locate it during the summer of 1990 failed.

[35] Cox to Nichols, August 30, 1894, *ibid.*

[36] Dunn to Browning, July 6, 1895, *ibid.*

[37] Browning to Baldwin, August 3, 1895, *ibid.*

[38] Cora Dunn to Browning, August 26, 1895; Browning to Baldwin, September 13, 1895, *ibid.*

[39] Voucher to D. Farriss, June 19, 1896; Voucher to J.A. Rose, June 23, 1896; Voucher to Herman Veidt, June 25, 1896; A.M. Dunn to Baldwin, November 1896, *ibid.*

[40] A.M. Dunn to Veidt, December 7, 1896, *ibid.*

[41] A.M. Dunn to Baldwin, March 21, March 24, 1897, *ibid.*

[42] A.M. Dunn to Baldwin, April 11, 1897, *ibid.*

[43] A.M. Dunn to Baldwin, May 5, 1897, *ibid.*

[44] Thomas Smith to Baldwin, May 5, 1897, *ibid.*

[45] A.M. Dunn to Baldwin, June 2, June 6, 1897; Thomas Smith to Baldwin, June 11, 1897, *ibid.*

[46] A.M. Dunn to Baldwin, June 25, 1897, *ibid.*

[47] William A. Jones to Baldwin, August 17, 1897, *ibid.*

[48] A.M. Dunn to Baldwin, August 17, 1897, *ibid.*

[49] A.M. Dunn to Baldwin, October 1, October 22, 1897; William A. Jones to Baldwin, December 9, 1897; A.M. Dunn to Baldwin, January 4, 1898, *ibid.*

[50] McKenzie to Welge, June 6, 1990; Cora Dunn to James Randlett, October, 1900, and Cora Dunn to Jones, March 15, 1901, *ibid.*

[51] Cora Dunn to Randlett, February 8, September 26, 1900; Cora Dunn to Randlett, May 7, 1902, July 17, 1903; Randlett to Cora Dunn, September 9, 1903, *ibid.*

[52] Cora Dunn to Randlett, August 21, 1903; Invoice of September 1903, *ibid.*

[53] Cora Dunn to John Blackmon, November 23, 1905, *ibid.*

[54] Cora Dunn to Blackmon, February 9, 1906, *ibid.*

[55] Cora Dunn to Blackmon, May 23, 1906, *ibid.*

[56] Cora Dunn to Blackmon, October 3, 1906; Cora Dunn to Charles Ellis, October 29, 1906, *ibid.*

[57] Cora Dunn to S.A. Johnson, November 4, 1895; Cora Dunn to Baldwin, November 27, 1895, *ibid.*

[58] Cora Dunn to Baldwin, November 28, 1894; Cora Dunn to Blackmon, May 4, 1907, *ibid.* Employee statistics are derived from the school's quarterly reports.

[59] Cora Dunn to Randlett, December 22, 1899, *ibid.*

[60] Cora Dunn to Randlett, April 18, 1905; C.F. Larrabee to Randlett, April 28, 1905; Charles McNichols to Randlett, June 5, 1905, *ibid.*

[61] McKenzie to author, August 1, 1990; Sally J. McBeth, *Ethnic Identity and the Boarding School Experience of West-Central Oklahoma American Indians* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983), 94.

[62] Cora Dunn to Randlett, October 28, 1901, *ibid.*

[63] Alice B. Moncure to Blackmon, November 24, 1906; Cora Dunn to Blackmon, December 14, 1906, *ibid.*

[64] Cora Dunn to Randlett, April 17, 1903; Cora Dunn to Stecker, March 12, 1908, *ibid.*