

A COMPLETION REPORT
ON THE HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY AND
ADAPTIVE USE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
STEWART INDIAN SCHOOL, CARSON CITY, NEVADA

By

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OVERVIEW

. . . three miles south of this city, (Carson) there is available to the traveling public and the people of this section, one of the most attractive educational centers to be found in the west.

Carson City Daily Appeal
June 30, 1927

For 90 years the Stewart Indian School operated as the only non-reservation educational facility for Native Americans in Nevada. Initially established through the Nevada State Legislature and later operated by the federal government, the school grew over time to accommodate in excess of 600 pupils, whose student population was representative of most of the western states and western tribes.

From a hodgepodge of constantly expanding wood-frame buildings just off the old Ormsby County Road in the heart of sagebrush country, the facility evolved in the 1920's into a striking campus complex of fire-resistant, easy-to-maintain stone buildings, constructed of multi-colored native Nevada rock, handsomely sited in a parklike landscape setting. By the 1970's a declining enrollment, deferred maintenance, and requirements to bring the

facility into strict code compliance with federal building safety codes and congressional budget cuts sealed the fate of the historic educational center. It closed operations in September of 1980.

Efforts were made by school officials, staff and interested citizens to keep Stewart's doors open--including requests to the Bureau of Indian Affairs--to have the school declared eligible for inclusion as a district in the National Register for Historic Places. The Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada leased all agricultural lands associated with the Stewart Indian School at that time, excluding the school campus site. The immediate purpose of the tribe in leasing the lands was to increase its agricultural production capability. Use of the Stewart lands for agricultural purposes and felt to be economically advantageous and complimentary to existing ranch operations of the Tribe associated with its Washoe Ranch. Seeking economic independence and self-sufficiency for the Tribe, it was determined that the expansion of their land base would be the most immediate and favorable method to achieve their goal. They are attempting to acquire the Stewart agricultural lands in trust for the Washoe tribe through federal legislation, and there is reasonable expectation that the transfer will take place soon.

Although initially interested in acquisition of the Stewart campus as well as the farmlands, the Washoe Tribe decided to concentrate their efforts on expanding their agricultural base. However, other Nevada Indian organizations looked to the Stewart campus as a potential resource for adaptive re-use and as such an appropriate vehicle for Indian self-determination in the state. With a view toward determining the feasibility of adaptive re-use at Stewart the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada and the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony contacted the Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Although a national register district nomination for the resource had been initiated in early 1978, processing had been slowed due to staff changes and an overload of work on office resources. In 1980, with the assistance of the State Historic Preservation Officer, the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada made application for and received from the Department of the Interior a historic preservation matching grant-in-aid to prepare a historic resources inventory and architectural survey of the cultural resource, in part to follow through on the original National Register Nomination. The contract for the inventory was let in July of 1981. Since that time the Stewart Indian School has been declared eligible for inclusion in the National Register and a district nomination was approved by the Nevada Advisory Board on Historic Preservation in February of 1982.

During the inventory process parties other than the Inter-Tribal Council expressed interest in the acquisition of all or part of the Stewart campus including the State of Nevada. The governor requested an administrative transfer of the complex for state use from the Department of the Interior. Subsequently D.O.I., using Section 293A of the Federal Code, offered the state 50 contiguous acres of the property. Federal law requires a review of such transfers by the State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to assure that historic resources are protected from adverse impacts.

It is hoped that whatever agency, organization, (public/private) or governmental body that does acquire this exceptional collection of structures will honor the intent of federal and state laws and policies that provide for the protection, preservation and enhancement of our nation's irreplaceable cultural heritage.

THE STEWART INDIAN SCHOOL

Why not encourage the Indian who is striving to lift himself up to the level of civilization?

The Indian Advance
Inaugural Issue, 1899

LOCATION

The Stewart Indian School is located in the southern portion of Eagle Valley, approximately 3 miles south of the center of Carson City (see Map #2). The elevation ranges from 4,700 to 4,750 feet above sea level. The school campus covers an area of 104 acres and is surrounded by predominately urban land uses (see Map #3).

NATURAL SETTING

Eagle Valley lies on the western edge of the Great Basin at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Geologically, the area is a faulted basin and range graben-like valley in a transitional zone with the Sierra Nevada Province (see photo #11). The valley is underlain by Cretaceous volcanic and metavolcanic bedrock covered by deep, unconsolidated, late Cenozoic sediments.¹ Both the Carson River, and one of its tributary streams, Clear Creek, transect the valley.

The characteristic native vegetative cover is a rangeland type dominated by sagebrush (*Artemisia* sp.) with rabbit brush (*Chrysothamnus* sp.), greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*), hopsage (*Grayia Spinosa*), Mormon Tea (*Ephedra* sp.), bitter brush (*Purshia tridentata*) and desert peach (*Prunus andersonii*) intermixed. An understory of annuals and grasses completes the vegetative inventory.

The riparian zone adjacent to Clear Creek is typified by the additional presence of Cottonwoods (*Populus* sp.), Willow (*Salix* sp.) and other more moisture demanding species of annuals and grasses.

Although a complete soils inventory is not available the following soils have been identified on the school site; Haybourne loamy sand, Surprise gravelly sandy loam, Prey stony sandy loam, Jubilee loam with sand substratum variant, Aldex stony fine sandy loam and Haybourne sand.²

CLIMATE

The climate of Eagle Valley is essentially continental. The summers are short and often hot, and the winters are moderately cold. Temperatures, on a daily basis, may vary as much as 50°F. Summer highs may reach 100°F with lows in the 50°F range; winter lows may reach -20°F with highs in the +20°F range. Sunshine, however, is abundant averaging 78% annually and 90% during the summer. Annual

precipitation averages 9 to 10 inches, occurring mainly as snow during the period November through February. Winds are variable, averaging 6-10 MPH with gusts reaching a maximum of 70 MPH.

WILDLIFE

The native wildlife populations of Eagle Valley have suffered from direct exploitation by white settlers as well as from loss of habitat due to settlement activities. Bighorn Sheep and Pronghorn Antelope have been essentially eliminated from the area. Populations of Mule Deer, Beaver, Rabbit, Muskrat, Bald Eagle and various hawk and falcon species have been severely reduced. Available fishery habitat has also been severely limited through agricultural and industrial uses of the valley's water supply. Indigenous Washoe Indians used many of these species as food sources.

SCHOOL FOUNDED

In 1885, Nevada's Superintendent of Public Instruction, Mr. C.S. Young, conducted a study that indicated a need in the state to establish a national industrial school similar to the one recently opened at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in which to educate the Indian population of Nevada not being served by the reservation schools.³ Superintendent Young was especially concerned about the Washoe Tribe who were chiefly located in the Carson Valley. In his findings

he specifically noted, "the national government does not provide either a reservation or a school; does not expend one dollar per annum in care of them or for their civilization."⁴ His research determined that out of approximately 1,500 off-reservation Indian youngsters in Nevada between six and sixteen years of age, no more than about 123 were receiving a basic education.

Young's report and concern received the attention of the Federal Commissioner of Indian Affairs who suggested the state first acquire land for such a school and construct a facility, promising governmental cooperation. Accordingly, in 1887 the Nevada State Legislature passed an act for the establishment of an Indian School in Ormsby County, creating an Indian School Commission and appropriating \$10,000 in a bond issue for the purpose of land and the construction of a school building.⁵ A leading advocate of the project and principal supporter in Washington was William Morris Stewart, Nevada's first federal senator. Although best remembered as the framer of the National Mining Law and the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, Stewart was also a long time and active member of the Committee on Indian Affairs.

Federal Indian policy at the time was in a period of transition from a philosophy of isolation and removal, which saw the resettlement of many tribal people to the west--a basically separatist idea--to one of assimilation. Kenneth R. Philip described the process in his recent work on FDR's Indian

Commissioner, John Collier:

Having failed to protect the Indians in the west from the onrush of white population, the federal government determined upon an all out effort to turn the American Indians into Indian Americans, to destroy the tribal communities and to absorb the Indians as individuals into the mainstream of American society.⁶

One of the legal vehicles for the assimilation process was the Dawes General Allotment Act of 1887, passed the same year the Indian School Commission was formed in Nevada. The new law broke up traditional tribal lands into individual allotments or plots. Evangelical Protestantism, a dominant theme in the American character of the time, and responsible in part for the Dawes Act, was a key ingredient of the new policy with its emphasis on the conversion and salvation of the individual, and its belief that thrift and hard work marked the path of righteousness. Government schools like the one developing near Carson City would help prepare the Indians for the expected change in life style in which, "inculcation of Christian principles was to be insisted upon, for it was citizenship in a Christian nation that was the goal."⁷

Senator Stewart expressed his personal views regarding his support for the school which still bears his name in his memoirs published in 1908:

Confining Indians to a reservation and supplying them with the necessities of life simply demoralizes them. I was anxious to educate the young Indians and prepare them for the duties of citizenship. I took measures to establish an Indian school at Carson, Nevada, and have done all in my power to secure the education of the Indians of Nevada in such matters as will make them self-sustaining.⁸

CONSTRUCTION AND EARLY OPERATION

Actual construction of the Indian school, initially designated the Clear Creek Industrial School, began in November of 1889. The winter that year was one of the worst on record in Nevada but never seemed to slow the progress of the builders. Contemporary accounts in the Genoa Weekly Courier followed the development of the educational facility closely with an occasional editorial comment on the prospects of the venture (see photograph #1).

The building is located on the north side of Clear Creek; the land slopes gently to the east, commanding a fine view of Carson Valley head, as well as country about Carson and Empire. Soil will raise anything to be raised in Nevada.... Well adapted to cultivation of all kinds of vegetables, and is provided with plenty of water, so if young red men graduate from school not knowing how to run a farm and cultivate soil, he is either too indolent or does not have proper instruction.⁹

By February of 1890 the initial cost of the land and facility had increased to \$24,000 with an additional appropriation of \$50,000 necessary for the first year of operation. The teaching staff was to include a superintendent, and a corps of competent instructors including a school carpenter capable of education in academic studies as well as basic agriculture. In April of that year Senator Stewart effected the appointment of W.D.C. Gibson as first superintendent of the school. Gibson, a Nevada pioneer from Gold Hill had been born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1830 and came to California in 1849. He arrived in the Comestock in 1861

and by 1879 was a Nevada state senator for Storey County. In 1884, he was appointed Indian Agent for the Pyramid Lake Reservation, a position he held until 1888. On May 15, 1890 he signed for responsibility of the new school building and property with S.S. Sears, then United States Indian Agent for the Nevada Agency.

In his annual report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated September 7, 1891, Gibson recounted his initial responsibilities regarding preparation of the new school for operation,

During the six weeks intervening from the time I charge until the commencement of the fiscal year 1891 my time was devoted to formulating plans for new buildings, making surveys to define our farm lines, arranging to prepare the new schoolhouse for occupancy, and submitting my plans to the Indian Office.¹⁰

With limited funding from the Indian Office, Gibson set about making the campus a workable space for his first pupils. The new schoolhouse required cleaning and later, during the first summer of operation, the windows and doors had to be reset because of shrinkage induced by the difficult winter construction. A water tower was constructed and initial utility systems laid. Service support facilities, including a laundry, wood and coal storage, harness and tool shed and a carpenter's shop which produced tables, closets and shelving for the office, dining room and kitchen were erected. A wagon yard, horse corral, hay yard, cow corrals and calf pens were constructed.

Both boys' and girls' water closets were built, "furnished with modern apparatus, including automatic flushing."¹¹

Superintendent Gibson initiated the ornamental planning that would eventually make the Indian school one of Nevada's horticultural showplaces.

The front yard of the school grounds, now covered with a fine stand of lawn grass, has been made more attractive by the erection of a painted picket fence, gravel walks and carriage driveways, and an arch over the double front gates on which is painted "Visiting day, Wednesday 9 a.m. to 12 p.m." I have also had planted in rows an equal distance apart 176 shade and ornamental, and 160 fruit trees, also about 20 rose bushes, of which 90 per cent of all planted have thrived. This has encouraged me to plant as many more next spring.¹²

The school formally opened on December 17, 1890 with 37 pupils in attendance. By January, 1891, there was a student population of 91, soon increasing to 105. Five more than the schoolhouse was designed to accommodate. Superintendent Gibson had to hold further enrollment until the facility could be expanded. He noted in his initial report that interested inquiry from several "Indian headmen" suggested to him the possibility of a student body surpassing 200.

A number of children from the Pyramid Reservation attended the school whose initial population was made up of Nevada Indians, Washoe, Paiutes and Shoshone. Some came with their parents' blessing, some were simply rounded up by the school officials. Many parents camped nearby the school campus to be close to their children, or to allow the authorities to take them into the institution. Policy required

that only Indians could be employed to work on the school farm or about the school proper, except for teachers and other instructors in the mechanical and agricultural departments. Indians were to be paid for their work, and the government furnished clothing for all who attended.

The clothing came in the form of uniforms for both boys and girls. The boys had a version of the standard army dress blues, in a serge material, a holdover from the days of army control of the Indian agencies. Military discipline was a prerequisite on campus with marching and drilling every day. Every classroom training taught European culture to the children through the tenth grade. A half day was spent in learning the three R's while the other half was devoted to vocational training, which initially consisted of maintaining the school facility and agricultural program, perhaps loosely described as on-the-job training.

The use of uniforms, military drill and discipline, and the split day between academic and vocational training were patterns that would persist with minor variation at Stewart into the 1930's. Another pattern, that of epidemic disease, would also be present well into the twentieth century. Positive factors established early were intellectual stimulation among the pupils and a breaking down of internal prejudices between the three Nevada tribes represented in the initial student population.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

By 1893 the Indian Service had incorporated the Civil Service system of hiring administrators for their agencies and boarding schools. Superintendent Gibson, well over the age requirements of the new system, stepped down in 1895 and a new superintendent took over what was now called the Stewart Institute. For the next ten years the school's attendance gradually increased to about 250 with additional housing in the form of wood frame dormitory additions to existing buildings, another recurring pattern at Stewart's (see photos #3 and 4), as federal appropriations were made available. The quality of education increased as trained instructors were hired to teach the trade crafts, mostly agriculturally related. Domestic science was the principal vocational practice available for the Indian girls.

1896 was marked on the negative side by visits of both Smallpox and Russian Influenza, the latter causing a few deaths among the younger students. Respiratory diseases seemed to account, with Trachoma, for the principle medical problems of the student population over time. The school infirmary, under the supervision of a Dr. Lee seemed to do as well as possible given the state of medical art for the period. On the plus side, a new steam laundry helped ease some of the drudgery of maintenance chores for both the boys

and girls, and the receipt of a set of band instruments initiated a tradition at the school that would in time make the words "music and Stewart" almost synonymous throughout Nevada. By 1898 the Superintendent could remark in his annual report that:

So important a feature is our band that it deserves to be treated under a special caption. Its influence, both upon the pupils and parents is no small feature in producing a condition of contentment that is very encouraging.¹³

In 1899, the first student newspaper appeared at what now had become the Carson Indian School. Called The Indian Advance, the school paper was devoted to the interest of the institution, the Paiute, Washoe and Shoshone Indians and finally, to the education of all Indians. A primary resource document the paper changed its name almost as often as did the school. The July 1st edition in 1901 noted with pride that,

Never before has the advancement of the pupils in the literary branches been such as to warrant an attempt at graduation exercises. A class of eight, of the eighth grade, having completed the common-school studies and, having passed a satisfactory examination, were awarded diplomas.¹⁴

Shop buildings were erected in 1901 with shoemaking, tailoring and a sewing room in productive operation.

Two problems that plagued the school from the beginning continued to do so into the new century. The first was that of federal appropriations keeping up with the increasing student population and the second was the assurance of an

adequate water supply to develop and increase agricultural productivity on the school farm. Both were addressed in general terms at the federal level in 1901 in the Report of The Commissioner of Indian Affairs, who noted in part,

Plans for Indian schools require special adaption to their requirements. Conditions vary in the sections where they are located, and therefore each must be designed with relation to the varying climatic needs. Water is the most difficult problem confronting this office, but is absolutely essential. Schools are, as a rule, located in the arid regions of the west, long distances from the centers of supply, making transportation expenses greater than in the East and more settled portions of the country. The construction of an Indian school means the building of a home for the children, a schoolhouse for their literary development, shops for their industrial training, farms and gardens for stock and vegetables. Thus in comparing the relative cost of these plants with public school buildings, the comparison is unfair, for the reason that the standard is not the same. It is believed, however, from the records that Indian school buildings are constructed in a good, workmanlike manner, and are economical in cost. 15

The problems as can be seen were universal within the department and the Carson Indian School would have to get along as best it could for some time to come.

Improvements to the school plant did progress in spite of the problems noted above. By 1903 a water pipeline a little more than two miles long was laid to bring in adequate water for domestic and irrigation purposes from a canyon on school property to the west of the campus. It should be noted that the original 240 acre site had expanded to include off campus farmlands by this time. Congress had appropriated funds for general repairs to the physical plant as well as improvements

to include a hospital facility and employees' quarters, which would be built in 1904. The per capita appropriation for the students at the school averaged about \$167.00 during this period.

In the spring of 1903 The Indian Advance reported that the school's farmer, a Mr. Lovegrove, was preparing to plant a large number of shade trees around the dormitory buildings. This was a continuation of the process of beautification initiated by Superintendent Gibson at the school's inception. In 1905, a Post Office was established at the school and in 1906 the Virginia and Truckee Railroad established a spur at the educational facility when it pushed its tracks south toward Gardnerville.

RELIGIOUS TRAINING

As noted earlier the Christian faith was an important adjunct of the formal education of the Indian youngsters. Perhaps the first on-campus organized religious activity came in 1914 when Miss Lillian Corwin of the Baptist Women's Home Missionary Society established her headquarters at the Indian school. Corwin had come to Nevada in 1907 as a recent graduate of the Chicago Baptist Training School and worked among the Indian tribes from Loyalton in the west to Elko in the eastern part of the state. Recognized as an authority on Indian questions by educators and governmental officials, she was called to Washington from time to time for

consultation with the Department of the Interior. She built a church near Fallon and later was able, through donations, to erect a residence and chapel adjacent to the Carson or Stewart Indian School.¹⁶ As the designated representative of the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. she conducted scheduled meetings for the student population. A weekly Sunday evening religious service was inaugurated shortly after her arrival as was a more formal Sunday School organization at which attendance was required. Miss Corwin employed her home for most of these religious and social meetings which she equipped at her own expense with tables, chairs, books, games of all kinds, writing materials and other items for the students' benefit. In conjunction with her various organizational meetings she trained the pupils in the use of parliamentary rules and procedures. In his report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on the general condition of the Carson Indian School for 1917, Special Agent L.A. Dorrington singled out Miss Corwin's activity for praise, noting that, "Temperance and moral instruction is constantly before the pupils in a most pronounced and effective manner."¹⁷

PERIOD OF INSPECTION

1915 saw the completion of a sanatorium on the west side of the campus to deal not only with the recurring respiratory diseases of the school children and Trachoma, but to assist the adult off reservation Indian reservation as well. The inspector for the Indian Service examined the

entire campus and made specific recommendations for replacement and repair of the physical plant (see photo #2). This action initiated a series of such inspections, principally by L.A. Dorrington, Special Agent and Inspector for the Service. Specific recommendations included upgrading of utility systems, repair or replacement of the existing school buildings and a more adequate fire safety program. Dorrington re-inspected the educational complex in 1917 noting compliance in most instances with his previous recommendations. Recognizing the value of the school to the Indian population of Nevada he commented as follows:

It is believed this school should be increased to a capacity of 500 pupils. The great number of Indians living on the Public Domain of Nevada will warrant same for many years to come, probably longer than any other Indian country. The fact that public schools are scarce and always will be so long as large land holdings are confined to but few people. Nevada is decidedly not a home state, and public schools are few and far between.¹⁸

Internal changes at the school during the period of inspection included a change of name and schedule of publication for the student newspaper. In 1916, The Nevada American, as it had come to be known was circulated monthly rather than weekly as had been the previous practice. The students were participating in outside activities including representation in the Nevada State Fair and the band was gaining recognition and a sound reputation as a musical unit.

A new superintendent, James B. Royce responded to the

identified need for more adequate fire protection by removing a series of small wood frame buildings from around the main structures and moving others to the west side of the campus, along what is now Wa-Pai-Shone Ave. (see photos #5 and 6). Royce continued to up-grade the campus and with his wife initiated what was called an outing system.

THE OUTING SYSTEM

The system operated during vacation periods and was aimed at placing the more advanced girl students into good homes in the Oakland and Berkeley, California area as domestics. The first experiment in this program was conducted in 1916¹⁹ with about 20 students and proved so successful that the number of girls working increased to 40 the next year. It came to a point where there were more requests than there were girls to fill them. The system met a number of school needs: to assure employment of the pupils upon graduation; to allow the girls to earn their own income, (they averaged from \$15 to \$40 per month during vacation); and to see that they were placed in a suitable Christian environment. To this end the girls were affiliated with the Oakland Y.W.C.A. and Mrs. Royce accompanied them to the Bay Area to maintain close touch with their progress.

THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

Despite adequate medical facilities available at the Carson School, an influenza epidemic did great damage in 1919, including taking the life of Superintendent Royce and one of

his matrons, Under a new superintendent, Frederick Snyder, the institution would enter an era of evolving progressive Indian policy which would be partially manifested in a dramatic change in the physical appearance of the campus.

One product of the federal Indian assimilation policy introduced in the 1870's was a breakdown of the Indian's heritage and cultural pride without a viable substitute in its place. Many Indians became lost somewhere between their own historic identity and the white American culture they were being educated to accept, but which was still unwilling to accept them. Disease, poverty and a limited educational background were recognized as contributing factors in what was becoming a serious problem in Indian country in the early decades of the twentieth century.

It was during the period between WWI and WWII that progressive tendencies at many levels of society helped change the course of federal-Indian relations. Many progressives recognized that culture, not politics was the tool for providing social cohesion and unity within the heterogeneous American society created by the Industrial Revolution; so too with the Native American population. Ultimately, under the administration of John Collier, Franklin Roosevelt's Commissioner of Indian Affairs, these attitudes and ideas would be codified in legislation like The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, and an attempt would be made to reestablish Indian society with an emphasis on cultural and religious freedom, tribal status and responsibility, and a restoration of the communal land base.

"A secularized democracy would replace American Christianity as the essential end to be sought." ²⁰

Frederick Snyder was born in 1871 in Albany, New York. He attended local schools and earned a college degree before he answered a newspaper ad asking for applicants in the Indian Service. His first assignment was in the Hoopa Valley of California as teacher at a reservation school. After 1900 he was transferred as assistant superintendent to an off reservation school in Arizona, where he became Superintendent for Indian Affairs in 1913.

In 1918, with serious thoughts about leaving the service, he asked and was granted a leave of absence to review his options. He was in New York state when the opportunity to take over the Carson Indian School was offered. He accepted and spent the next 15 years (1919-1934) as principal administrator for the institution, the longest period of service at the school by any superintendent.

Snyder inherited the problems that Royce was trying to rectify before his death. They were part of the same pattern that had existed at the school since its inception, primarily an aging physical plant and an expanding enrollment with federal appropriations coming at a slower pace than the school needs. In his annual report for 1921 Snyder complained that his dining hall and kitchen which had been designed for 200 was serving twice that number. Like his predecessors he relied heavily on staff, and student apprentices in the various trades taught at the school for maintenance and repair, i.e. on-the-job training.

While in Arizona, Snyder had admired a church constructed of native stone. He had noticed an abundance of multi-colored rocks available for the taking in his tours of inspection around the campus and determined to employ them in any future construction on campus. The employment of stone in building offered him a number of advantages. It was a free building material, was fire resistant, (an important consideration given the existing make-up of the physical plant), it acted as an insulator for the broad climatic changes experienced on site, it was easy to maintain and perhaps most importantly, it was an expression of locally produced materials in which the Indians could appreciate and take personal pride.

Snyder was the quintessential gardener and the Carson Indian School blossomed under his supervision, (see photo #12). Along with beautifying the campus he began decentralizing it with his building program. Recognizing in part the isolation of his wards from the mainstream of Nevada life he determined to make the Carson School a showplace in all respects to instill pride and accomplishment in those attending. He specifically noted in his June 30th annual report for 1922 that,

The prejudice on the part of white communities against receiving Indian pupils in school is very pronounced.²¹

But then went on to say,

The State Superintendent of Instruction, with his assistants, however, are co-operating in every way to bring about a different attitude in this respect, and in some places Indian children are attending public school.²²

In 1925, the Reno Indian Agency, comprising Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation, Summit Lake Indian Reservation, Fort McDermitt Reservation, the Indian colonies at Reno, Dresslerville, Lovelock, Winnemucca, Battle Mountain, Elko, Ely, Austin, Carson and the scattered Indians of the northern and eastern part of the state were turned over to the Carson School jurisdiction, first under title as The Carson Indian Agency and later as The Nevada Indian Agency. Frederick Snyder became the superintendent, widely broadening his responsibilities. (In 1930, the Pyramid Lake Reservation was separated from the jurisdiction.)

Other improvements initiated by Snyder on campus included a much expanded sports program with the addition of tennis courts, a swimming pool (see photo #7) and in the late 1920's, inclusion of the school in the state interscholastic athletic league where the students particularly excelled in basketball and boxing. Despite improvements the U.S. Board of Indian Commissioners recommended in 1928 that the students needed more academic and vocational training. ²³ Snyder's "on-the-job" training was seen as menial labor and it was suggested that more staff be hired so the pupils' classroom time could be expanded. The half day classroom and half day vocational program was still in effect.

By 1930 at least 12 major stone buildings had been constructed on campus, with more planned, including residential units for the increasing staff (see photos #8 and 9). The original school building however, was still being employed as

quarters for employees, set in a mature grove of stately Lombardy Poplars, the legacy of W.D.C. Gibson. The campus was capable of accommodating 500 pupils. By that date the school was accepting students from California and Oregon as well as Nevada, where the majority of its pupils were coming from the Western Shoshone, Walker River and Pyramid Lake Reservations. An excellent detailed account of the curricula for all grades, prepared by the school principal can be found in the Carson Indian School Annual Report for 1931.²⁴ Demand for the use of the school facility increased in the early 1930's with the closing of boarding schools at Fort Bidwell, Fort Mojave and Hoopa Valley, and the exclusion of the lower grades at Sherman Institute in Riverside, California. In 1933, school enrollment reached 637 from the first through 10th grades.

An important addition to the school staff about this time (1930) was Earl T. Laird who was hired as band director. Laird's expertise and devotion over 39 years of service turned the musical organization into a Nevada institution. Composed mainly of Paiute, Shoshone and Washoe Indian students in 1940, it became the first Indian band to qualify for the National Regional Music Festival, earning a "superior" rating in that competition.²⁵ Laird's philosophy of "helping young Indians help themselves through music..." was typical of instructors and staff in the field.

Frederick Snyder's tenure ended with his retirement in 1934, the same year the Indian Reorganization Act became law.

The new superintendent, Alida Bowler, held the views of the Collier administration and did all she could to revitalize that portion of Indian civilization under her jurisdiction by employing the concept of cultural pluralism. In some ways she was successful; in others the task proved her downfall. Collier's ideal of creating energetic Indian communities was based upon the quality of the Bureau of Indian Affairs educational programs. However, emphasis was placed initially on the restoration of traditional Indian values rather than concentrating on training the tribal leaders in the difficult and sophisticated administrative skills necessary to make the Act work effectively. The quality of education and educators improved and boarding school curriculum incorporated the practical aspects of dealing with modern rural life as well as continuing the basics of the three R's.

Another facet of the Indian "New Deal" was the rehabilitation of existing school facilities, including the Carson Indian School whose post 1934 expansion fell to the Construction Division of the BIA and its Chief Architect, Carl Cederstrand. It was Cederstrand who created the first formal architectural design criteria for boarding and day schools under control of the Bureau. His purpose was to facilitate the handling of school building programs through the unification of future construction requirements. His contribution to the Carson Indian School in this regard is covered in another section of this report.

By 1935 the school had added pupils from Idaho and Utah

to those coming from California and Oregon. It was providing 12 grades of vocational training in a program that included for the boys, agriculture, animal husbandry, carpentry, mechanics, and their related aspects of mathematics, science and English.²⁶ The girls, for the most part were still relegated to the domestic sciences. The recreational aspects improved with the addition of a new gymnasium in 1938 that was considered at the time to be the best in the state. A school pageant was instituted based on Indian legends, songs and dances, which was performed each spring.

WA-PAI-SHONE CRAFT COOPERATIVE

Bowler placed emphasis on traditional Indian arts and crafts by organizing the Wa-Pai-Shone Craft Cooperative which gave the various Nevada tribes an outlet for their creative talents. A trading post was established in Building # 14 at the Indian school for this purpose (see elevation #7), and for a time outlets existed at Reno and Lake Tahoe. Indian women made most of the buckskin items, baskets and beadwork while students, mostly boys, did wood carvings. The Indians themselves owned the cooperative, electing officers and directors for the organization.²⁷ The only paid staff was a part time bookkeeper. All items were handmade by Indians. The first Indian uniforms for the band, made of Hopi sheepskins obtained by Alida Bowler, were fabricated by the Paiute women at the Pyramid Lake Reservation as part of the Wa-Pai-Shone Craft program in 1940.²⁸

Among other things, the Indian Reorganization Act abandoned the allotment system in operation since the Dawes Act of 1887. It made provision for the consolidation of checkerboard reservations through voluntary exchange of existing allotments, continued existing practices of inheritance, and restored remaining surplus lands created by the Dawes Act to tribal ownership. It was in this area that Superintendent Bowler ran into trouble. She made the mistake of fighting with politically popular and powerful federal Senator Patrick McCarren of Nevada over the transfer of land rights at Pyramid Lake Reservation, an action which cost her removal from office.

WORLD WAR II AND THE POST-WAR ERA

By the beginning of WWII the rehabilitation and expansion of the campus was nearly completed. New classrooms, dormitories and employee housing (see photo #10), had been erected, as well as a new shop building. With the advent of hostilities many of the older male students joined or were drafted into the armed services. A continuing, correlated academic and vocational training program centered around agriculture, home economics, industrial arts and general problems of living. Approximately half of the students came from the Carson Agency jurisdiction. Others came from California, Idaho, Oregon, Utah and the Western Shoshone Jurisdiction in Nevada. There were thirty-seven tribes and branches and tribes represented in the student body, of which more than half were

full-blooded Indians.²⁹ The school ranch, as it had from the early days of the institution, offered practical training in agriculture as well as supplying food for the school dining room. At the time, additional farmland was being sought with attendant water rights to expand the agricultural program.

It should be noted that many Stewart Indian School students served with distinction during the war. Among them was John B. Keliiaa, a Washoe who graduated in 1942 and entered the Army Air Corps.

After distinguishing himself as a copilot, Keliiaa entered the University of California at Berkeley where he excelled in academics and sports. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa and entered the Indian Service as a Management Trainee in 1950. By 1957 he was the Superintendent of the Jicarilla Apache Agency in Dulce, New Mexico where his intelligence and understanding of Indian problems helped initiate a series of productive programs. His premature death in 1962 was a tragedy, little compensated by the posthumous presentation of a Distinguished Service Award, the highest honor of the Department of the Interior.³⁰

One problem that arose in WWII was that of illiteracy among the Navajo Indians that kept them out of the service. Although many Navajos served honorably, especially as telephone talkers with the Marines, it was determined to give them crash courses in the English language to get them into uniform. The Indian boarding schools were called upon to accommodate this need.

NAVAJO PROGRAM

The first group of Navajos to arrive at Stewart did so in 1947. 147 students ranging in age from 12 to 20, accompanied by interpreters, began a special curriculum designed, in part by Hugh O. Tyler. Tyler had come to the Indian school in the late forties from the Chippewa Reservation in northern Wisconsin as Vocational Supervisor for the industrial shops program. He explained the problem with the Navajos as being one of a nomadic tribe which was constantly on the move, and never long enough in one place for the children to attend a proper school.

The program he helped initially design was on a five year schedule. The first three years concentrated on academic studies with one hour each school day devoted to vocational training. In the fourth and fifth year the curricula was half-day academics and half-day vocational with the view that by the end of the course the youngsters would have the educational basics and enough experience in one skill to make a living at it. In the fifth year, the school attempted to place the students in jobs at the entry level. Tyler described the Navajos as good students and eager to learn.³¹ The project expanded to include six and eight year programs. These pupils participated in school athletic activities and even had a Navajo band. In 1958, eleven years after its inception over half the student body at Stewart was Navajo.

A product of the Navajo program was the opening of

off reservation boarding schools to students from any tribe who could qualify as eligible. These requirements included being at least one-quarter Indian, living in an isolated area without access to public schools, coming from a broken or poverty-level home, or from a home where disease was prevalent until the medical problem was arrested, and if the pupil were in trouble with the authorities and the problem be better corrected in an educational rather than penal environment. It is interesting to note that most of these rules were in operation after 1932 when they first appear in former superintendent Snyder's annual report for that year.³² Coupled with the fact that returning veterans were being provided with vocational training under the G.I. Bill at Stewart, as it was now being called, and that many Nevada Indians were enrolling in local public schools, both the population and the character of the Indian school began to change.

The period also saw the development in 1940 of a Baptist Mission Chapel on the north edge of the campus in what had been the original location of Frederick Snyder's greenhouse complex. The sanatorium was torn down sometime before 1945 as a cure for Trachoma had been established and Tuberculosis was being brought under control. In 1949, the Corpus Christi Catholic Mission was established across from Stewart's main gate. Interestingly enough in the same year E. Rooseman Fryer, the school superintendent, issued a circular on the maintenance of buildings and utilities that said in part:

The buildings and utilities of this jurisdiction are not being adequately maintained. This is due, in a large measure, to the inadequacy of funds, but it is due, in some measure, to spreading our supervision of maintenance too thin.³³

The old patterns seemed to re-emerge.

EFFECTS OF THE TERMINATION ACT OF 1950

In 1950 the pendulum swung full arc once again in American Indian policy with the passage of the Indian Termination Act. This legislation marked the extreme point in a national attempt to assimilate Indians and end their unique relationship with the federal government. Fundamental changes in land ownership were made, trust relationship and tribal sovereignty was effectively ended and all special federal programs to tribes were discontinued. A strong emphasis was placed on the relocation of reservation Indians to urban areas. In regard to Stewart, students were to be relocated to the cities as well, or to other locations for their vocational training. In keeping with the Termination policy,

...the terminal vocational trade courses were phased out at Stewart. The bakery and laundry were closed. The dairy cows and pigs were sold. The farm became a cattle-hay operation.³⁴

By 1959 the Commissioner on Indian Affairs noted that Bureau schools would,

...provide a solid academic program for those going on to college and a high school program with two years exploratory vocational courses for those who want advanced training in technical or vocational fields.³⁵

Given the student population and its real needs in relation to the goals of the BIA's educational program it is little wonder that by the late 1960's a federal report titled "Indian Education: a National Tragedy - a National Challenge" found Stewart's academic and vocational programs lacking. The 1955 transfer of Indian Health Services from the B.I.A. to The Public Health Service also created divided management and services on campus.

SELF-DETERMINATION -- THE BEGINNING AND THE END

By 1965, because of problems obvious in earlier policies of termination of federal paternalism, both Congress and the executive branch shifted to another policy regarding the American Indian, which is in force today. This policy recognizes tribes as permanent, discrete political units free of state and local controls, unless otherwise negotiated. It represents measured separatism, or, self-determination. As it works, the tribes are semi-sovereign governments with some inherent, (not delegated) powers. Yet Congress can pass laws affecting tribal powers -- either to affirm, modify, or restrict them.

In the mid-1970's the Stewart Indian School had been accredited by the Northwest Association of Secondary Schools, had just erected a second fine gymnasium, known locally as "Moccasin Square Garden", and was looking forward to the construction of a series of new facilities to meet the educational needs of its student Indian population. Four hundred pupils representing over twenty tribes from the 9th through the 12th grades were in attendance.

In 1980 a combination of factors, some arbitrary, sealed the fate of the educational institution. Deferred maintenance, the Uniform Building Code, and a relatively new set of construction standards worked together to create a perceived economic impasse. Coupled with a reduced federal budget the threat of closure was imminent. Despite efforts on the part of local supporters and the endorsement of the Phoenix Area Inter-Tribal School Board and others, the institution that had stood as the symbol of Indian education in Nevada for 90 years graduated its last class in June and closed its doors in September.

Perhaps the saddest aspect of the school's closure was the fact that the same set of building standards caused its demise as an educational facility could have been employed by more perceptive minds to ensure its continuation, not only as a viable institution of learning but as one of the most significant historic resources in the state. This non-renewable cultural resource retains great potential through adaptive re-use to serve as a vehicle for Indian self-sufficiency and self-determination, and to be a model for historic preservation in Nevada.

FOOTNOTES

¹Roy F. McKinny, "Environmental Geology of Southeast Carson City, Nevada" (unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Geology, University of Nevada, Reno, 1976), p. 42.

²"The Stewart Properties: A Master Plan for Tribal Acquisition and Land Use" (Resource Concepts, Inc., Carson City, Nevada, April 1981), p. 57.

³James G. Scrugham (ed.), Nevada: A Narrative of the Conquest of a Frontier Land (New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1935), p. 348.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Carson City Morning Appeal, January 20, 1887, p. 1.

⁶Kenneth R. Philp, John Collier: Crusader for Indian Reform 1920-1954 (Flagstaff, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1980), p. ix.

⁷Ibid., x.

⁸George Rothwell Brown (ed.), Reminiscences of Senator William M. Stewart of Nevada (New York: The Neale Publishing Co., 1908), p. 282.

⁹Genoa Weekly Courier, February 14, 1890, p. 2.

¹⁰W.D.C. Gibson, "Report of Stewart Institute, Carson, Nevada," September 7, 1891 (Washington: Executive House Documents, 1st Session, 52d Congress, 1891-92, Vol. 15), p. 569.

¹¹Ibid., p. 570.

¹²Ibid., p. 571.

¹³Eugene M. Hattori and Edward C. Johnson, "The Archaeology of the Stewart Dump Site (260R121) (Carson City, NV: Nevada State Museum Archaeological Services, 1978), p. 14.

¹⁴The Indian Advance, July 1, 1901.

¹⁵"Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs" (Washington: Executive House Documents, 1st Session, 57th Congress, 1901-1902, Vol. 23), p. 33.

¹⁶Nevada Historical Society Papers 1913-1916 (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1917), p. 159.

¹⁷Dorrington, L.A., "Inspection Report-Carson Indian School-Nevada," May 24-29, 1917. RG 75, RA 10; 407/F Box 2, National Archives, FARC, San Bruno, California.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 16.

²⁰Philp, John Collier: Crusader for Indian Reform 1920-1954, p. xi.

²¹Frederick Snyder, "Annual Report Carson Indian School, Stewart, Nevada," June 30, 1922. RG 75, Microfilm M1011, Reel 9, Frame 722, National Archives, FARC, San Bruno, California.

²²Ibid.

²³Carson City Appeal, March 13, 1977, p. 8.

²⁴Frederick Snyder, "Annual Report Carson Indian Agency," 1931. RG 75, Microfilm M1011, Reel 10, Frames 549-555, National Archives, FARC, San Bruno, California.

²⁵Interview with Earl T. Laird, former band director, Stewart Indian School, Carson City, Nevada, November 20, 1981, interviewer Kent L. Seavey.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Letter from Gladys M. Gardner to Mrs. Charles A.

Butler explaining the operation of the Wa-Pai-Shoni Craft Cooperative, March 7, 1949. RG 75, RA 8, 321/G, Box 114, National Archives, FARC, San Bruno, California.

²⁸Laird, November 20, 1981.

²⁹"Program, Carson Indian Agency and Carson Indian Boarding School, Carson Agency," March 1944 (Single Xerox sheet from unidentified publication, located in Stewart Indian School file, Nevada Div. HP&A, Carson City), p. 225.

³⁰Jo Ann Nevers, Wa She Shu: A Washoe Tribal History (Salt Lake City: Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, 1976), p. 87.

³¹Frederick Snyder, "Annual Report, Carson Indian School, Stewart, Nevada," September 30, 1932. RG 75, Microfilm M1011, Reel 10, Frame 609, National Archives, FARC, San Bruno, California.

³²Interview with Hugh O. Tyler, former vocational supervisor, Stewart Indian School, Carson City, Nevada, November 21, 1981, interviewer Kent L. Seavey.

³³E. Rooseman Fryer, "Circular No. 11, The Maintenance of Buildings and Utilities, Carson Indian Agency, Stewart, Nevada," March 16, 1949. RG 75, RA 8, 321/G, Box 114, National Archives, FARC, San Bruno, California.

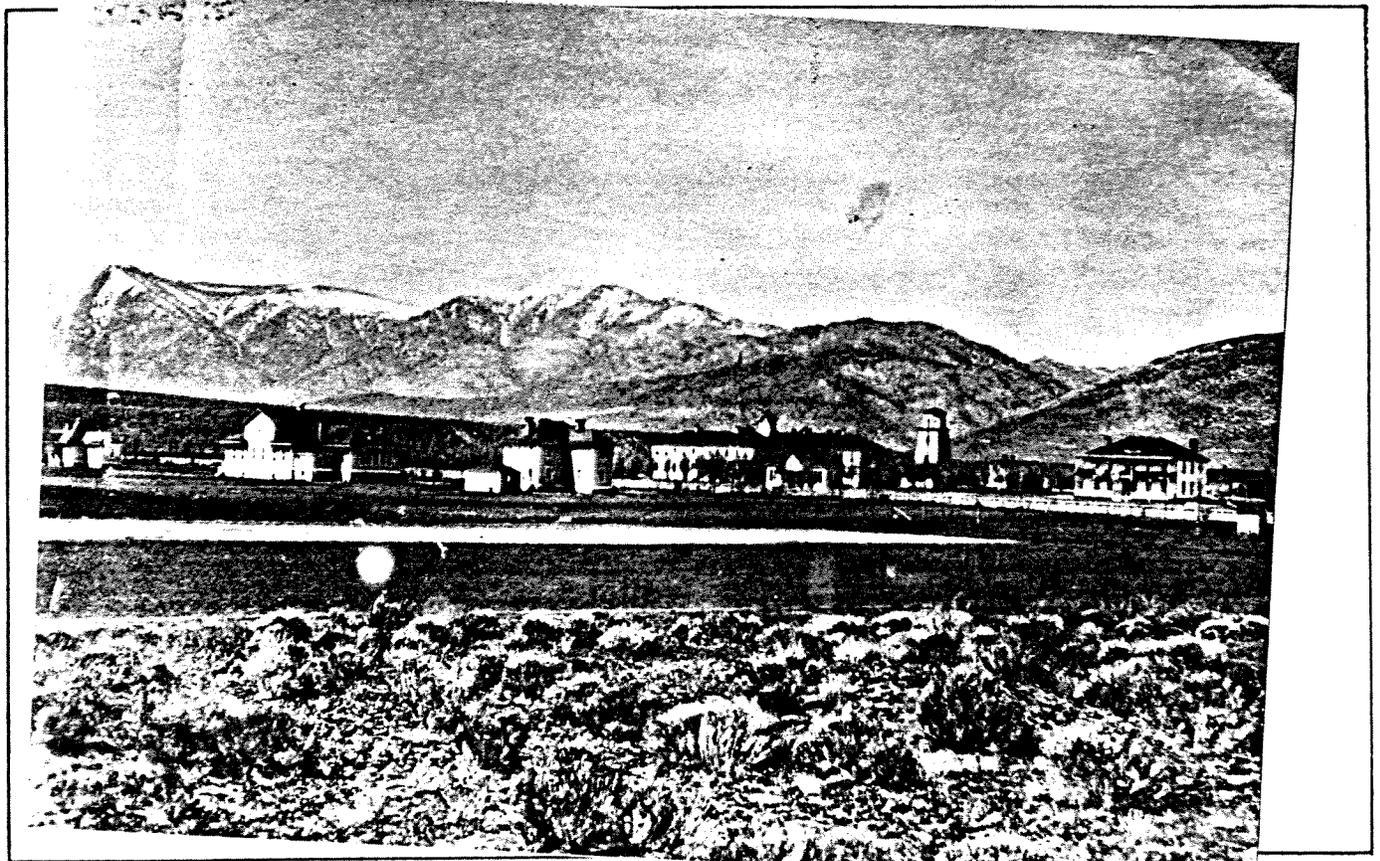
³⁴Carson City Appeal, March 13, 1977, p. 9.

³⁵Ibid.



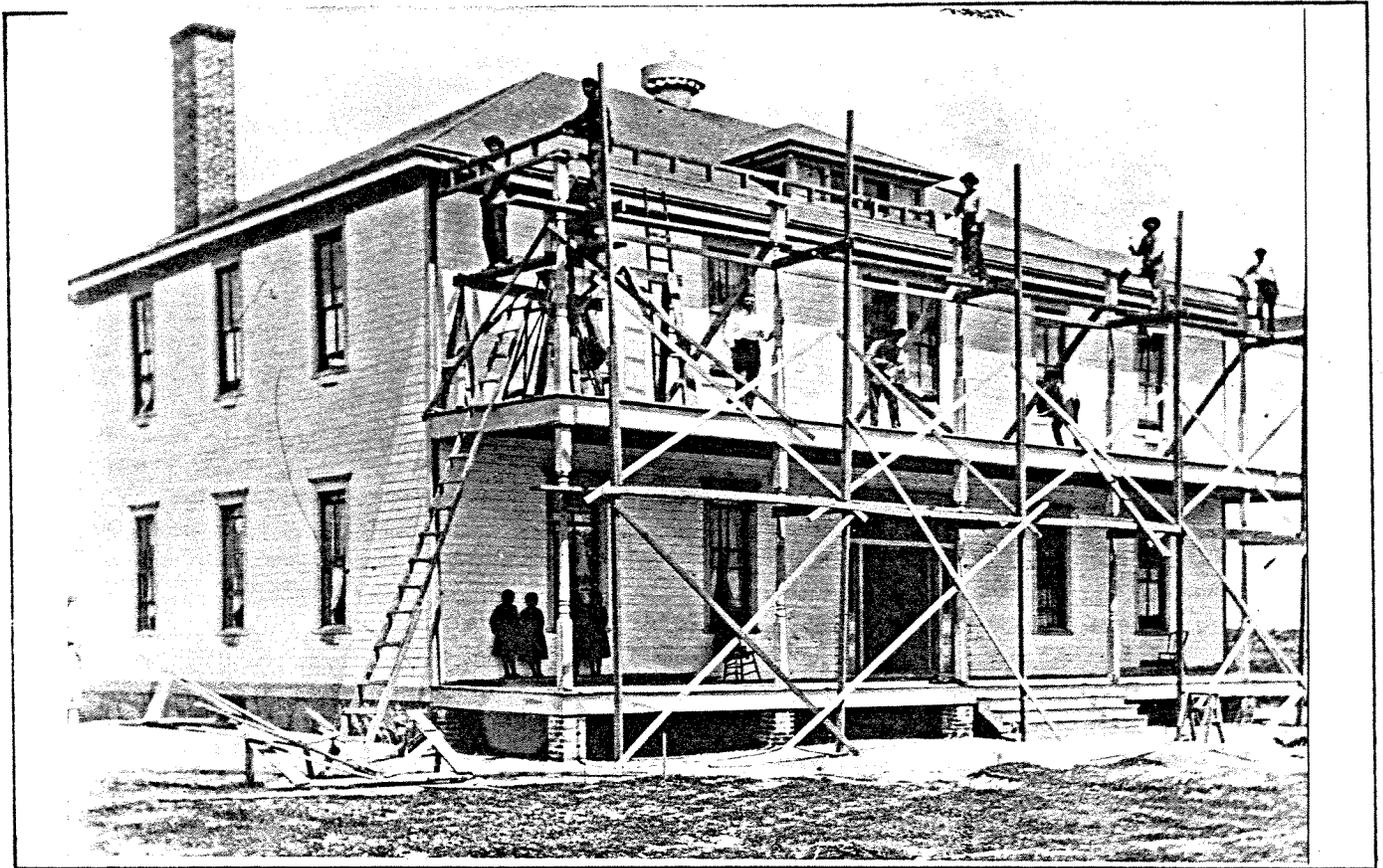
Carson Indian Training School, Ca. 1891
(Coll. Nevada State Historical Society, Reno)

Photo No. 1



Carson Indian School campus, Ca. 1910
(Coll. Nevada State Museum, Carson City)

Photo No. 2



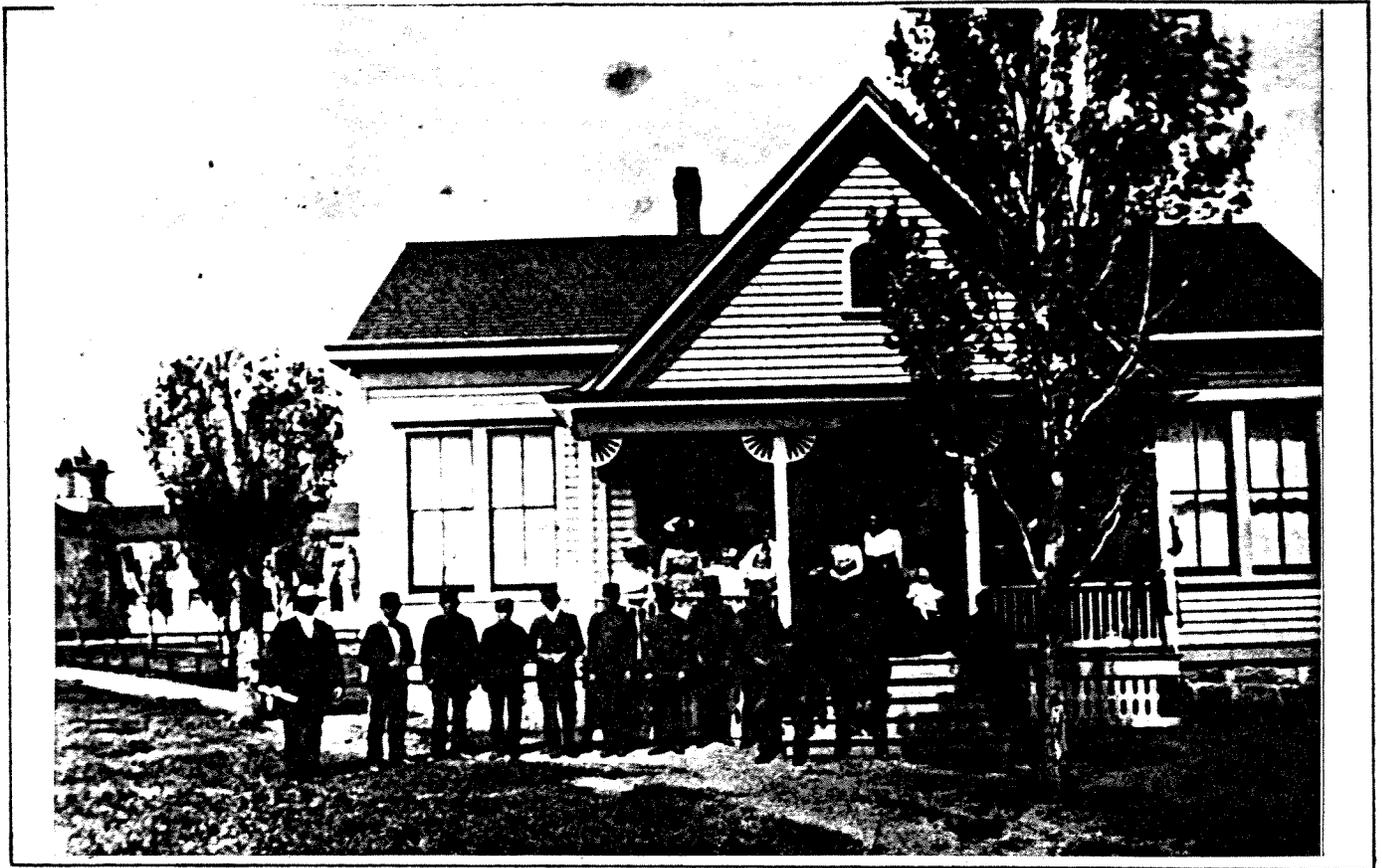
Student carpenters at work on girl's dormitory, Ca. 1908
(Coll. Nevada State Museum, Carson City)

Photo No. 3



"Old Main" building with additions, Ca. 1915
(Coll. Nevada State Museum, Carson City)

Photo No. 4



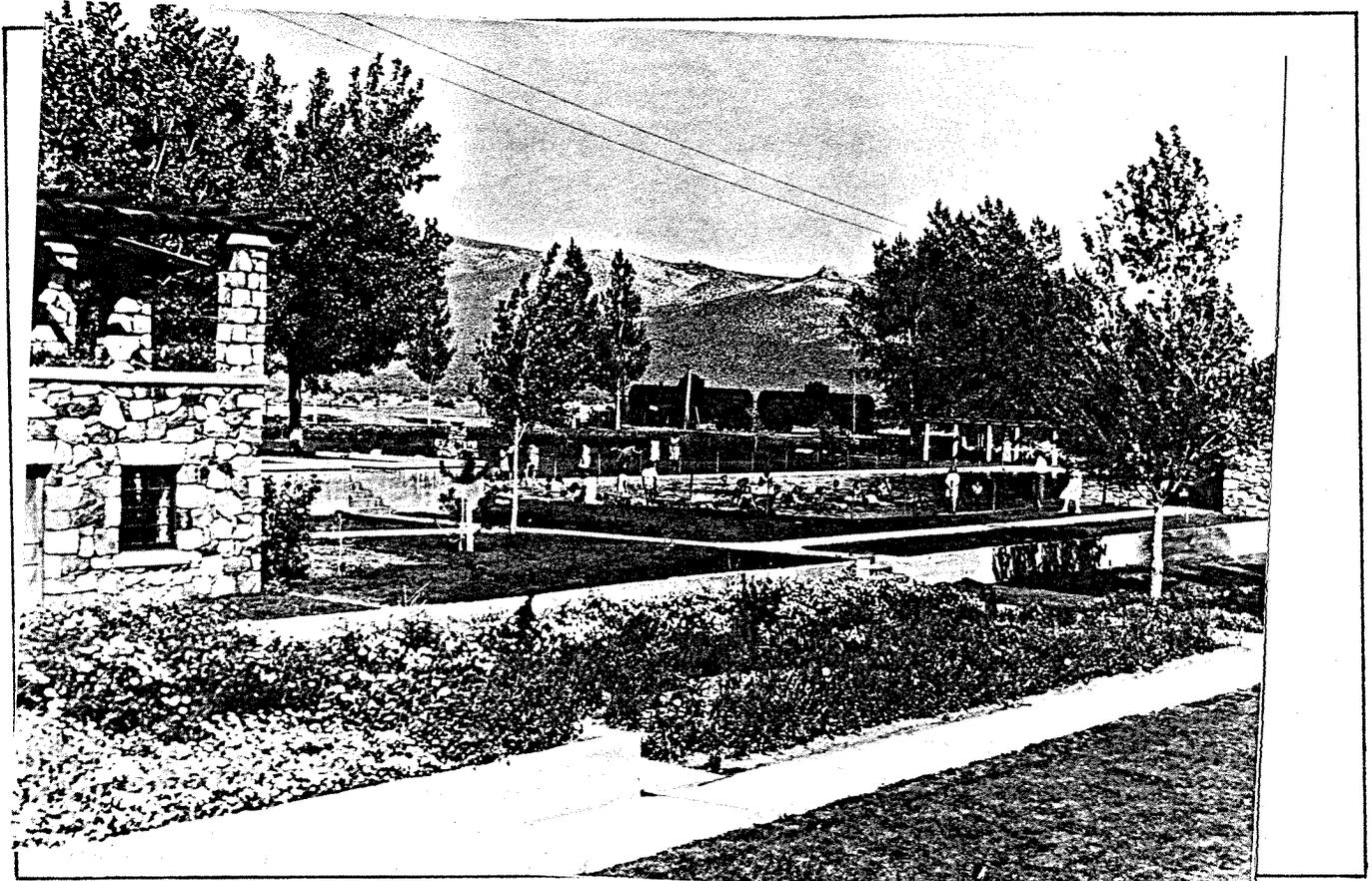
Early school office location, Ca. 1905
(Coll. Nevada State Museum, Carson City)

Photo No. 5



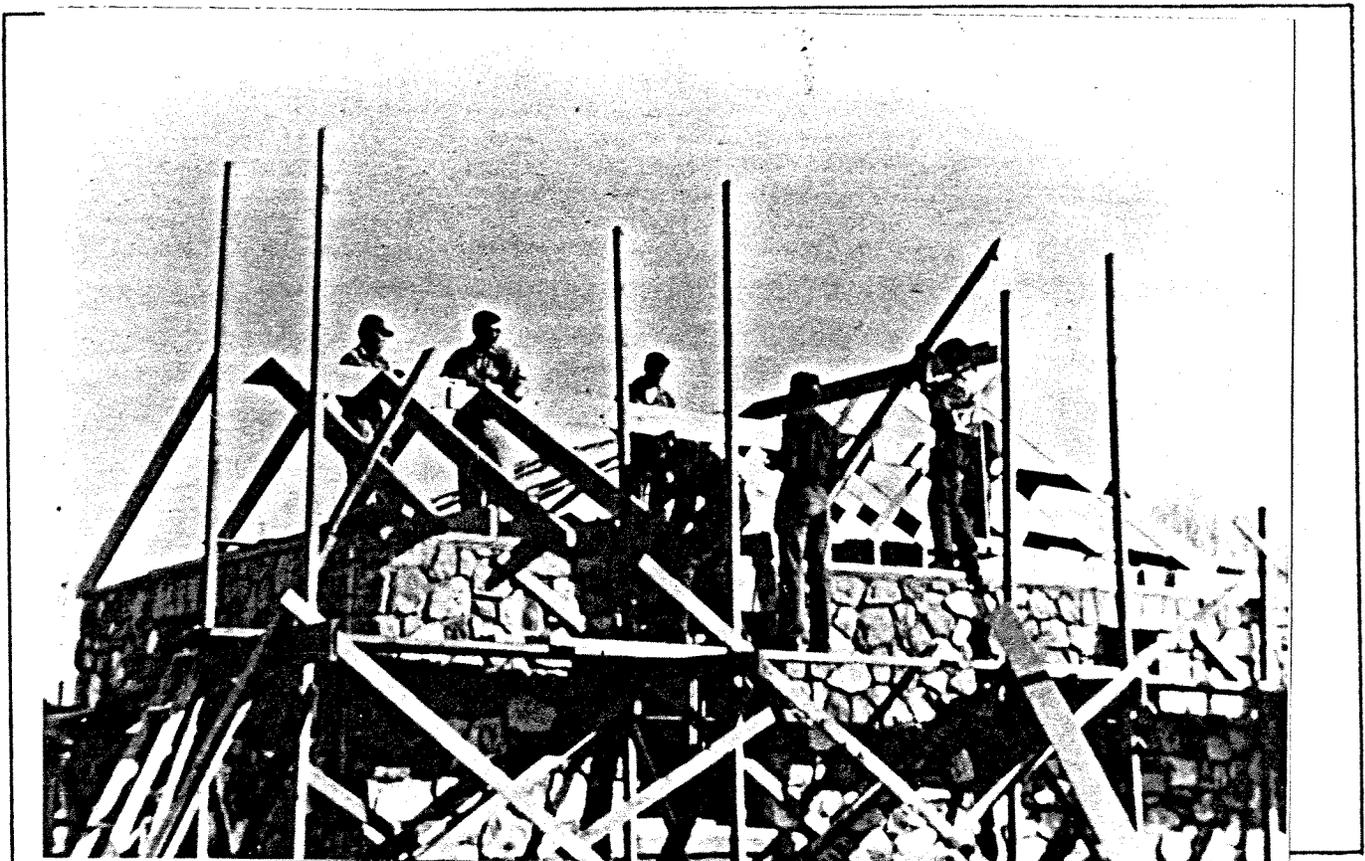
Old office building moved to Wa-Pai-Shone Ave., Ca. 1932
(Coll. Margaret (Snyder) Jones, Carson City)

Photo No. 6



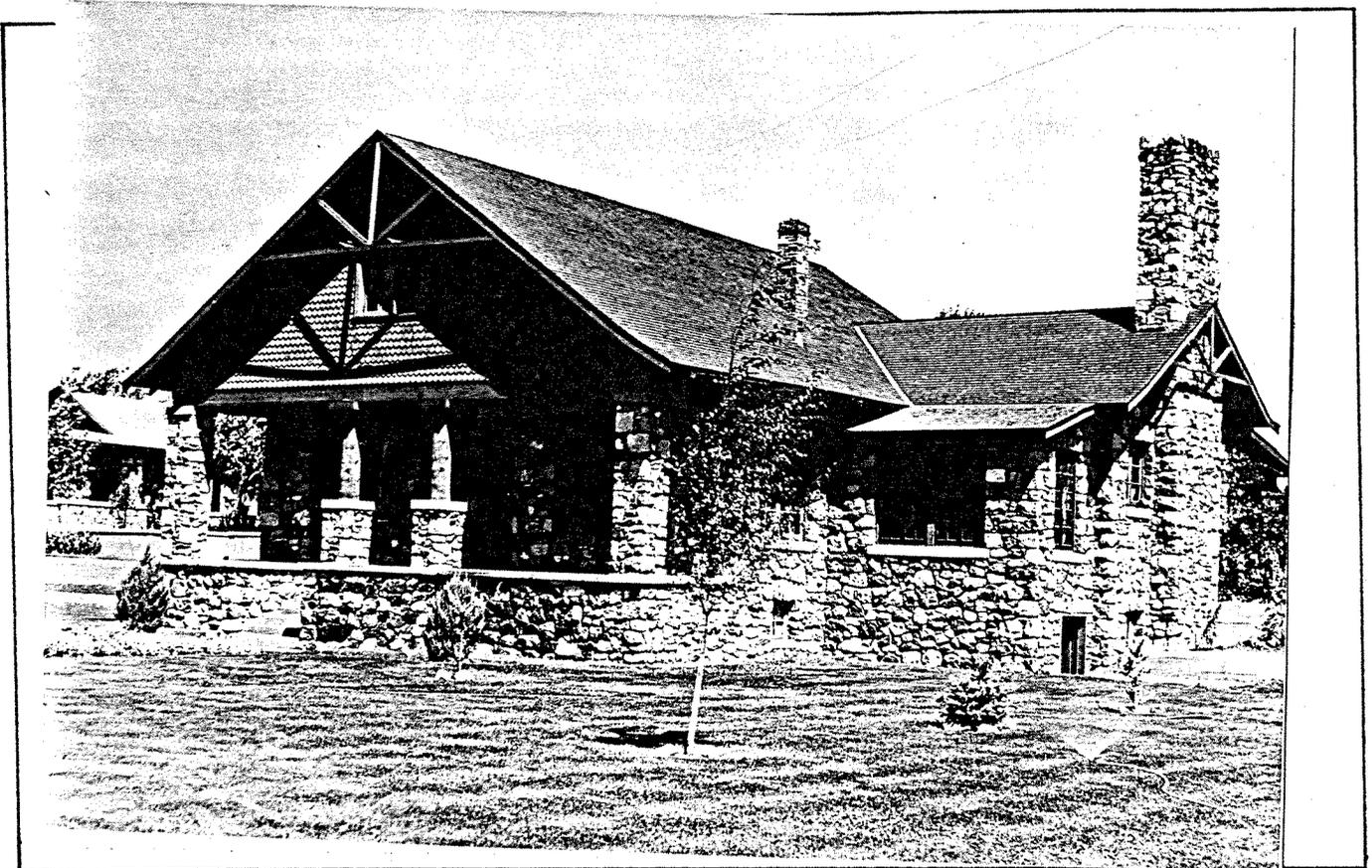
Swimming pool and Virginia & Truckee rail spur, Ca. 1932
(Coll. Margaret (Snyder) Jones, Carson City)

Photo No. 7



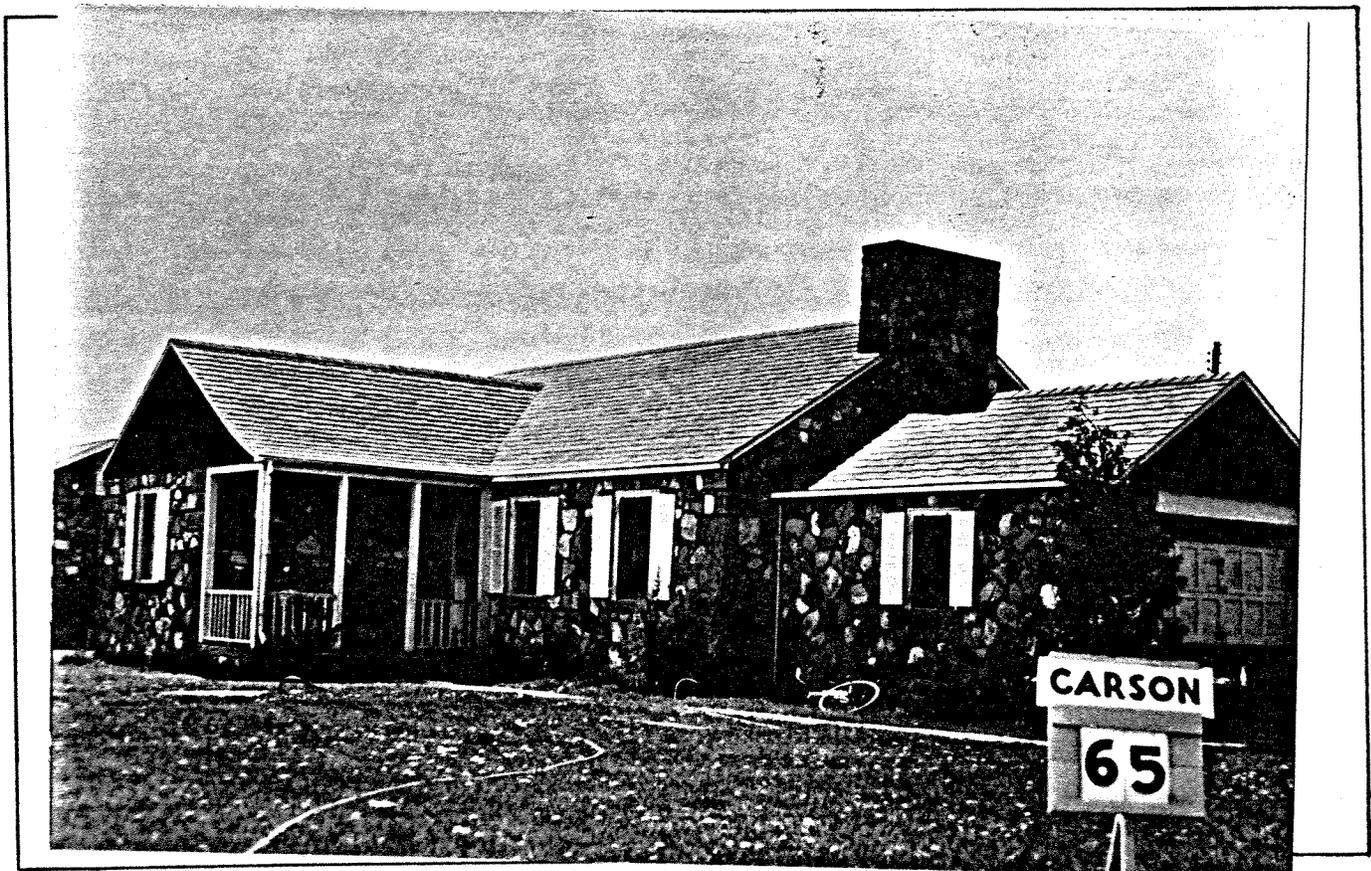
Students constructing stone cottage, 1956
(Coll. Hugh O. Tyler, Carson City)

Photo No. 8



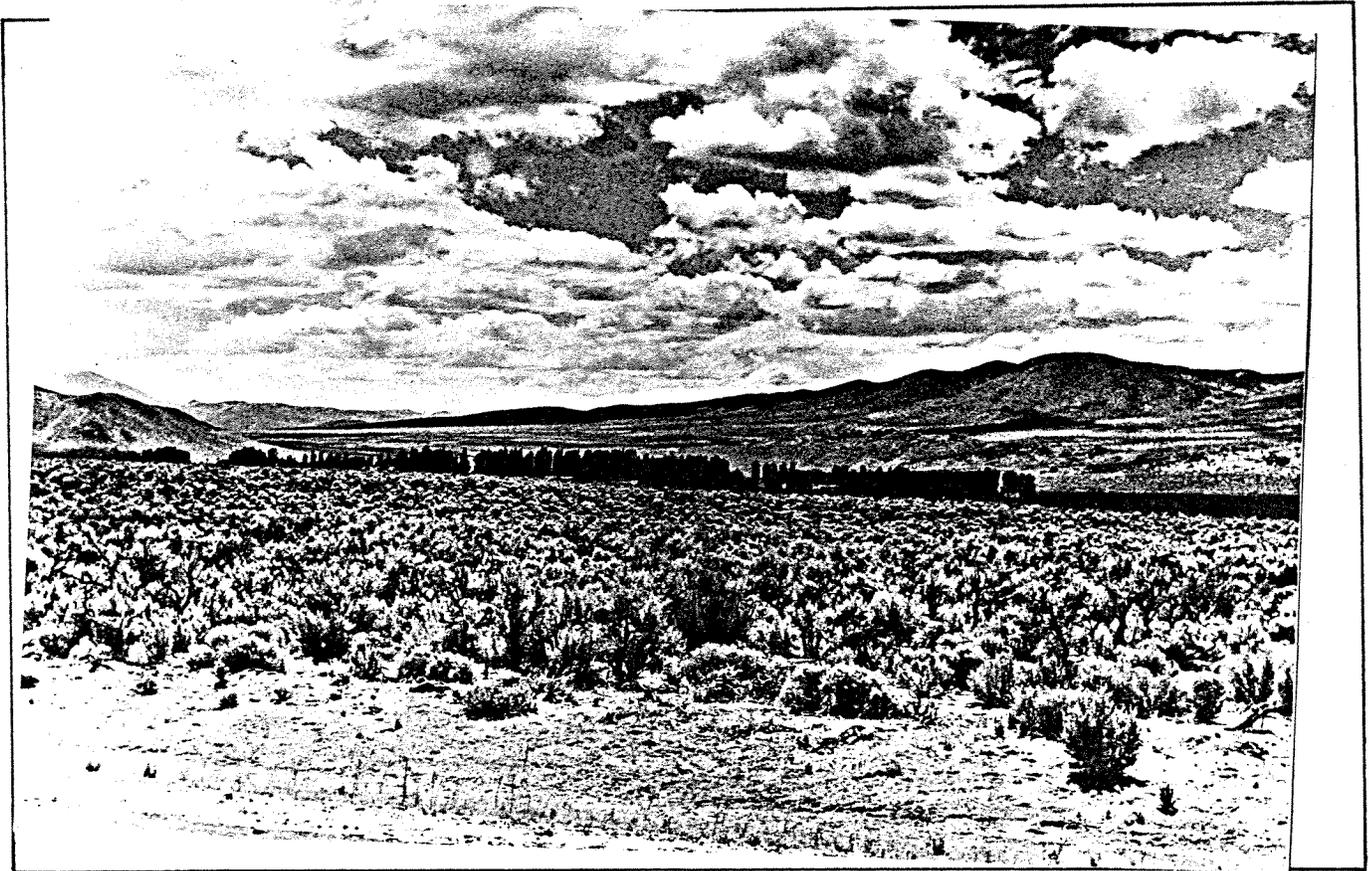
"Rustic" stone administration building, Ca. 1932
(Coll. Margaret (Snyder) Jones, Carson City)

Photo No. 9



"Cape Cod" cottage residence at Stewart, 1943
(Coll. Western Nevada Indian Agency, Carson City)

Photo No. 10



Stewart campus in sagebrush country, 1945
(Coll. Nevada State Historical Society, Reno)

Photo. No. 11



Stewart campus with tennis courts, Ca. 1932
(Coll. Margaret (Snyder) Jones, Carson City)

Photo No. 12