

Guide to the Fort Mojave Indian School Records

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Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Creator:	Fort Mojave Indian School
Title:	Fort Mojave Indian School Records
ID:	MS-00034
Date [inclusive]:	1890 to 1923
Physical Description:	0.37 Cubic Feet (1 box)
Physical Description:	0.42 Linear Feet
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Fort Mojave Indian School Records (1890-1923) consist of correspondence, finance and administrative records, pump station blueprints, and policy implementation and fact finding records. The school served the Hualapai and Mojave Indians at a site near present-day Kingman, Arizona. The information is contained in two bound volumes.

Preferred Citation

Fort Mojave Indian School Records, 1890-1923. MS-00034. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Historical Background

In 1889 President Benjamin Harrison selected Thomas J. Morgan as his new Commissioner of Indian Affairs to oversee the reformulation of indigenous education policy. In 1890 the United States Congress allocated funds to establish a boarding school to serve the Hualapai and Mojave Indians. On August 22, 1890 Commissioner Morgan formally turned Fort Mojave over to his choice for superintendent, Samuel M. McCowan. McCowan oversaw the opening of the school in 1890 and remained its supervisor for six years. The school was originally called the Fort Mojave Agency and School until March 9, 1891, when it became known as the Herbert Welsh Institute. By December 1892, the name was changed to the Fort Mojave Indian School. At various times, the school was also referred to as the Fort Mojave Industrial School and the Fort Mojave Indian Industrial School.

While at the school, Superintendent McCowan used the guidelines already in use at nearby schools in Albuquerque, New Mexico and Grand Junction, Colorado. McCowan hired teachers to instruct students in

rudimentary English, mathematics, geography, and American history. He received funding to hire a farmer, blacksmith, and carpenter to teach males vocational skills, and a matron to guide females in domestic skills such as sewing and cooking. With limited funds, McCowan found himself placing more emphasis on the vocational curriculum in an effort to provide students with necessities such as food and clothing.

By the mid-1890s, problems associated with the removal of Native American children from their homes became evident as runaways became a major problem at all schools. Reformers highlighted the hardships placed on both children and their families who were caught between two cultures.

A movement to reform educational policy began when Theodore Roosevelt appointed Francis Leupp Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1905. Between 1905 and 1920 Leupp worked to build a case against off-reservation boarding schools. In 1926 Secretary of the Interior Herbert Work commissioned the Institute of Government Research to complete a thorough study of reservation conditions throughout the country. Presented to Congress in 1928, the report, titled "The Problem of Indian Administration," known as the Meriam Report, found United States Indian policy to be a failure and was especially critical of education efforts.

Utilizing the social momentum of the Meriam Report, Indian policy shifted back toward the expansion of reservation schools and worked to close the remaining off-reservation institutions. The Fort Mojave Indian School closed in 1931.

Source:

"Department of the Interior. Office of Indian Affairs. Fort Mojave Indian School. (4/1/1917-8/31/1931). Organization Authority Record," The National Archives Catalog, accessed April 12, 2018. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/18573420>.

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Scope and Contents Note

The Fort Mojave Indian School Records (1890-1923) consist of two bound books of correspondence, finance and administrative records, pump station blueprints, and policy implementation and fact finding records. The school served the Hualapai and Mojave Indians at a site near present-day Kingman, Arizona.

The first book contains typed letters between the school's superintendent Samuel M. McCowan, and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas J. Morgan and Assistant Commissioner R.V. Belt. Each letter has an identification number in the top left-hand corner that was recorded with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and can be cross-referenced with the records of that department. The financial information contained in the communications include detailed authorization letters for purchasing livestock, grains, farming implements, and other supplies needed for running the school. Administrative information includes the hiring of teachers and other school personnel. Policy issues relate to federal Indian education. Fact finding information in the letters include questions from Commissioner Morgan regarding the status of nearby tribes and the physical characteristics of the school and local geography.

The second book contains press-copies of letters written by Superintendent McCowan in reply to Morgan's and Belt's letters to people doing business with the school. Letters that are in direct response include the identification number of the initial letter and can be matched to the appropriate correspondence in the first book. The originals of these letters are found in the National Archives and Record Service's microfilmed collection titled, *Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, Arizona Superintendency*.

The letters in the second book relate to finance, policy, annual reports, school functions, curriculum, school employment and census data. Financial information includes itemized accounts of foodstuffs and other material supplies such as lumber, medicine, blankets, and furnishings, as well as travel reimbursement requests and payroll accounts. Administrative information includes annual reports of the number of students at the school, the status of local tribes, McCowan's survey of the surrounding land and its suitability for farming, and blue prints for school irrigation projects. Policy information includes reports from McCowan on his efforts to comply with and implement Bureau of Indian Affairs educational policies and guidelines. This material was formerly known as the Fort Mojave Industrial School Records.

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Arrangement

Materials remain in original order.

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Administrative Information

Access Note

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Acquisition Note

Materials were donated in 1968 by Carol Pierce; accession number 1968-02.

Processing Note

Collection originally processed by Sondra Cosgrove. In 2017, Joyce Moore edited the collection description and created an ArchivesSpace finding aid. In 2018, Gayle O'Hara revised the collection description to bring it into compliance with current professional standards.

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Related Materials

Related Collections

The following resources may provide additional information related to the materials in this collection: Central Classified Files, 1924-1931; Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1793-1999, Record Group 75; National Archives at Riverside, California [online version available through the Archival Research Catalog (ARC identifier 16703540) at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/16703540>].

Report of School Buildings, 1915-1926; Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1793-1999, Record Group 75; National Archives at Riverside, California [online version available through the Archival Research Catalog (ARC identifier 16703543) at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/16703543>].

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Names and Subjects

- Indians of North America
- Off-reservation boarding schools
- Indians, Treatment of -- United States
- School superintendents
- Hualapai Indians -- Education -- History
- Indians of North America -- Cultural assimilation
- Mojave Indians -- Education-- History
- McCowan, Samuel M.
- Morgan, Thomas J.
- Belt, R. V. (Robert V.)
- United States. Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Pipa Aha Macav

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Containers
Book 1: correspondence and a blueprint design of the Fort Mojave Pump Station, 1890 (view online)	box 01
Book 2: correspondence, administrative and financial information, 1891-1923 (view online)	box 01