

book will disappoint those who expect many insights into the relationship between communalism and American society.

All of the essays were written specifically for this volume under one guiding approach, what Pitzer calls "developmental communalism," that is, a concern with the origins, founding, growth, and decline of a community as elements of a dynamic developmental process. He would like us to believe that this approach is something new, a claim that may well irritate those who have long applied it to the subject of communalism. Original or not, this approach does establish some unity here, but that unity is far from complete and is attained at a cost. The cost is that often so much attention is given to the origins, especially the religious origins, of communities that there is insufficient space to discuss the inner workings of the communities themselves.

These are serious weaknesses, but they should not be seen as outweighing the important contributions made by the scholars who have contributed to this collection. They have given us a rich treasury of insights and understandings regarding America's communal past from which we can profit in countless ways. Whatever the weaknesses of his own work, Donald Pitzer deserves our thanks for making this possible.

Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940, by Brenda J. Child. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. xvi, 145 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth.

REVIEWED BY S. CAROL BERG, COLLEGE OF ST. BENEDICT

Brenda J. Child, an Ojibwe from Red Lake, Minnesota, a graduate in American history from the University of Iowa, and currently an assistant professor of American Studies at the University of Minnesota, has written an engrossing study of Indian boarding school life, focusing on the years 1900–1940. She was stimulated by stories told to her by her maternal grandmother, Jeanette Auginash, a former student at Flandreau (South Dakota), one of the two boarding schools—Haskell (Kansas) is the other—Child covers in *Boarding School Seasons*. Research in the Bureau of Indian Affairs records and in state historical societies in Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, and South Dakota gave her access to documents that tell of boarding school experiences "from the perspective of the American Indian students and their family members who lived in or lived with these institutions for many decades" (xiii). She quotes extensively from letters of both students and parents, the heart of this book.

There are seven chapters, each having a specific topic such as homesickness, illness and death, working, and runaways. Tales of struggle and hardship fill the letters students wrote to their families from Flan-dreau and Haskell. We learn of such experiences as bouts of homesickness, strict discipline, acts of rebellion, and the toll taken by diseases, especially tuberculosis. Students and their families sometimes strongly resisted the forced schooling, often in institutions far away from the home reservation. Child notes, in particular, the defiance of the Southwest Hopi and the Iowa Mesquakies. However, many Indian families did cooperate with compulsory schooling, especially during the Great Depression and other times of economic hardship. They wanted their children to learn a trade and to be successful.

Sadly, the boarding schools seldom provided the type of education needed by these Indian children. Partly this was because so many arrived without basic English language skills and there was not much time for a broad curriculum. Above all, the schools aimed at assimilating the children into American values, culture, and aspirations. This meant a deliberate effort to eradicate Indian culture. The letters make clear that many students resented and resisted assimilation so strongly that they ran away. However, substandard living conditions were also a major cause of desertion. Overcrowding, poor sanitation, insufficient food, and overwork were hopelessly chronic in many schools. The famous Meriam Report (1928) highlighted common problems in boarding schools across the nation, affirming "the complaints Indian families and students had been making for years, among them that the federal government neglected to provide Native children with even the most basic necessities in schools where they resided" (32).

Despite the negative boarding school experiences, Child ends her book on an upbeat note: "The letters between family members speak for the deepest of bonds, able to survive separation and efforts to undermine American Indian families. . . . The boarding school agenda did not triumph over Indian families or permanently alienate young members of the tribe from their people" (100). While she refers here specifically to Ojibwe families, the inference is clear: the boarding schools often broke bodies, but they did not always succeed in breaking spirits.

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