

School, Jail, and Sex Ring:
The Bismarck Indian Boarding School

Dakota Wind Goodhouse
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A midsummer day in 1986 brought us to Bismarck for general shopping. We crossed the old Liberty Memorial Bridge into Bismarck and unexpectedly turned north onto a campus of brick-and-mortar buildings overlooking the Missouri River. It was the old Bismarck Indian Boarding School, now called Fraine Barracks which serves as the headquarters of the ND National Guard. It was quiet, neat, and bright-looking. The grass was carefully manicured, the drive around the old campus clean and even, and the institutional setting of the campus was somehow familiar. My grandmother Edna said the roads and buildings were arranged like an old fort. After she mentioned that I could not see it. During our brief visit to the old school, my grandmother shared a personal boarding school experience.

Edna Josephine Foster was born on the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation in 1917 and raised in the modest community of Wakpala. She and her younger sister Maime were sent to boarding school as girls. Edna recalled a moment of play when Mamie attempted a backflip off the swingset and landed face-first on the ground and in an instant she could not move. A bell signaled students that recess was over and Edna could not help her sister to stand. The matron approached the girls and seeing Mamie on the ground ordered her to stand. When Mamie could not rise, the matron ordered Edna to return to class. Reluctantly, she left her sister on the ground with the matron. When Edna entered the school she glanced at her sister and saw the matron kicking her. It was the last time Edna saw her sister alive and she regretted she hadn't done more to help her.

Edna's name appears in only one box of the Bismarck Indian Boarding School records: Incurable Students.¹ The file contains only a list of names but no reasons for

¹ RG 75, Folder 1 of 1, Box 428 "Incurable Students."

making the list. Edna shared her Bismarck Indian Boarding School experience with her children and how her name ended up on the Incurrible Student list is the culmination of escalating tensions between the matron and her.

The incurrible list features a roster of twenty-nine boarders who submitted formal requests on Dec. 8, 1932, to Supt. Sharon Mote to return home for the Christmas holiday.² There is no response from Mote in the record. Edna recalled the matron had cultivated a hostile learning environment; Tobin openly favored students who embraced the ideals of assimilation (English as spoken language, and conversion to Christianity).³

One December evening, as Tobin went about shutting off the lights without notice, Edna climbed to the top of her bunk and waited for her. When Tobin turned off the lights in Edna's room she leapt for the matron and attempted to pull her coif, which came off revealing the matron's bald head. The scuffle was loud and drew everyone's attention. The female boarders screamed because they thought Edna was fighting with a man. Edna got the best of Tobin, escaped the Bismarck Indian Boarding School, and ran on the ice, following the Missouri River downstream for a hundred miles to Wakpala, SD. There is no further record of Edna at the school. She went on to graduate from Wakpala High and entered the Women's Army Corps.

Incurrible? Only in some distant dusty file. Edna's story of defiance at the Bismarck Indian Boarding School is fondly recalled by her descendants as brave, indomitable, and intrepid.

² RG 75, Folder 1 of 1, Box 428, "Letter to Supt. Sharon Mote about students requesting to go home for Christmas vacation," Dec. 8, 1932.

³ Annis, Amber A., "Resistance On The Great Plains: The Bismarck Indian School, Resistance On The Great Plains: The Bismarck Indian School, 1916-1921" (thesis, 2012), page 79.

Mrs. Tobin had a long reputation for overcorrecting the students. One January evening in 1921, she strapped three girls, Blanche Young Bear, Alice Standish, and Gladys Bassett, for laughing and talking.

According to the superintendent, "The matron claims to have knocked on the wall between the room she occupies and the dormitory occupied by the girls as a means of silencing the girls' talk and laughter, but this had little effect upon the girls, and she consequently took her strap with her into the dormitory and gave (as she states) the offending girls a strapping. One of the girls- Blanche Youngbear- resenting the punishment attempted to fight the matron whereupon the matron gave her a double dose to bring her under discipline."⁴

Matron Tobin wasn't done with her judicial discretion. When the trio failed to appear at breakfast, she sent them to a "playroom" located in the basement. The girls fled the school for home back at Fort Berthold but were found badly frostbitten and exhausted four days later near Stanton, ND. Padgett brought the girls back to the Bismarck Indian Boarding School, however, Ms. Young Bear needed hospitalization for her frostbite. Ms. Young Bear continued to stand up to the matron's mistreatment and was eventually kicked out for "repeated desertion."⁵

Running away from the Bismarck Indian Boarding School seems to have been the last resort for students who were starved, beaten, and more. This action says more about the school and lack of positive reinforcement than it does about the parents who sent them to boarding school in the first place.

⁴ RG 75, Decimal Correspondence, 1915-1938, Box 467 "Letter from Superintendent Spears to Commissioner of Indian Affairs on January 9, 1921."

⁵ Ibid.

This was the post-reservation era, children were sent away to boarding schools. Parents were forced to send their children away to boarding schools, and coerced to send them as far away as they could, “reformers preferred off-reservation boarding schools where children could be isolated from the contaminating influences of parents, friends, and family.”⁶

Indeed, Congress authorized the Bureau of Indian Affairs to withhold rations and annuities from families who refused to send their children to off-reservation boarding schools.⁷

The zeal for native children to attend boarding school off the reservation was real. Gerald Azure, an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, recalled a white woman who regularly drove around the reservation and picked up children in a manner like animal control rounds up stray dogs. “A white woman grabbed children and took them to the school without even letting their parents know,” recalled Azure.⁸ This story is recalled by many on Standing Rock to this day.

Who was the woman? The alleged child abductor is likely Mrs. Sharon Mote, the wife of the Bismarck Indian Boarding School superintendent in later years of operation. It turned out that Mrs. Mote did not just abduct children, but enjoyed driving the company car. In Dec. 1935, Superintendent Mote wrote to the Bureau of Indian Affairs requesting reimbursement of \$121.96 - equivalent to \$2500+ in December 2023 - on behalf of his wife for the collection of students for the school. Mrs. Mote took the school car on a cross-country drive from Bismarck to Washington DC with stops at Minneapolis,

⁶ Colin Calloway, *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History*, Fourth Edition (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin, 2012), page 426.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Dakota Goodhouse, Conversation with Azure, personal, March 13, 2024.

Chicago, and Cincinnati. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs decided to withhold reimbursement.⁹

Desertion at the Bismarck Indian Boarding School reached a high. On March 3, 1921, Mabel Bear, Olive Sherwood, Gladys Bassett, and Blanche Wolf, all from the Fort Berthold Reservation, were expelled after an altercation at the school. Wolf exchanged blows with Tobin which resulted in the matron burning her arm on the stove. Blanch was placed in solitary confinement.

When the incorrigible were brought back to the Bismarck Indian Boarding School, the school dealt with them in many ways including solitary confinement, cleaning detail, or forcing students to march comparative to the miles they had run when they were caught.¹⁰ In May of 1927, student Philip White Twin (Standing Rock) ran away and was caught and held at the Standing Rock agency jail. White Twin refused to return to the Bismarck Indian Boarding School.¹¹

Life at the Bismarck Indian Boarding School was challenging for all students. Lice was common and the boarding schools had various means to treat an infestation including dousing one's head with kerosene, cutting one's hair,¹² treatment with DDT or chlordane powder,¹³ and application of vinegar.¹⁴ Edna Foster continued to use kerosene as a means to treat lice when she became a mother.¹⁵

⁹ RG75, Box 460, Correspondence, 220 Cash Accounts, "Letter from James W. Plake, Chief Fiscal Accounts," Office of Indian Affairs, Jan. 22, 1937.

¹⁰ Annis, Amber, "Resistance On The Great Plains: The Bismarck Indian School, 1916-1921" (thesis, 2012), page 72.

¹¹ RG75, Correspondence 1916-1917, folder 4 of 7, "Letter from Superintendent Corvey to Superintendent Taylor on May 8, 1917."

¹² Lajimodiere, Denise K., *Stringing Rosaries: The History, the Unforgivable, and the Healing of Northern Plains American Indian Boarding School Survivors* (Fargo, ND: North Dakota State University Press, 2021), page 25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁵ Conversation about Boarding School with relatives, personal, April 21, 2024.

Conditions worsened and in the 1931-1932 academic year other threats to student health emerged at the Bismarck Indian Boarding School including cases of trachoma, pink eye, dysentery, impetigo, measles, malaria, meningitis, mumps, smallpox, and syphilis.¹⁶

As a punishment, solitary confinement was a standard punishment at the Bismarck Indian Boarding School throughout its run. In 1917, the US attorney's office inquired about the state of a student suspected of being held in solitary. "I am in receipt of a letter...from Rev. George B. Newcomb...in which he claims that an Indian boy about 18 years old is being held in solitary confinement at the Indian School, and that the punishment is too severe. You will understand, that I am not interfering with you at all, I am simply asking for information and wish you would give me a full statement of the facts. He says the boy has been confined for three weeks, and that he is held in solitary confinement."¹⁷ Too severe. Despite the lack of psychological studies in the early twentieth century, people even then recognized the immense and irreparable harm that solitary confinement caused.

Cockroaches became a major concern for the Bismarck Indian Boarding School and its doors nearly closed. Sometime in 1921, Superintendent Spear ordered food supplies for his school. It looks like standard fare and was routinely ordered each month. Several hundred pounds of beans, rice, corn, oatmeal, flour, and even cocoa.¹⁸ Later that year, Spear remarked about a cockroach infestation at the school and traced the hoard to a contaminated shipment of flour. He arranged for the entire school to be

¹⁶ RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Decimal Correspondence File, "Annual Statistical Report," 1919-1938, 007, Box 436, HM 2005.

¹⁷ RG75, Box 427, Correspondence 1916-1917, Folder 4 of 7.

¹⁸ RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1914-1921, Box 435, HM 2005.

fumigated and students were able to return after a few weeks.¹⁹ Regarding Cockroach infestation at the boarding schools one “could hear them crunch or pop when you walked across the floorboards.”²⁰ In the 1920s, pest control technology employed chlordane insecticide to rid homes and buildings of cockroaches and termites. Chlordane was later determined to be carcinogenic.²¹

Life at Bismarck Indian Boarding School wasn’t always dark and gloomy. The city of Bismarck opened its first movie theater circa 1906, the Capitol Theatre, though Spear’s notes mention only that he took students to the Orpheum Theater.²² Superintendents Spear and Padgett regularly took their students to the movies on Saturday afternoons. Students who misbehaved stayed behind at the school as a punishment. According to Annis, movie field trips were a positive reinforcement, “Out of desperation, it seems, Superintendent Padgett appeared to be using trips to the city of Bismarck to appease these restless and unhappy children. As Bismarck was roughly 2 miles from the location of the Bismarck Indian School, students were allowed to make trips to the city for entertainment purposes, such as attending the movies, but if a student misbehaved, a punishment was to not allow the child to make the trip to town.”²³

Superintendent Dickinson eventually brought the movies to the Bismarck Indian Boarding School. In 1930, Dickinson arranged to rent a projector and the licenses to show *The Whip* (1930), a sound drama film, and *The California Mail* (1929), a silent

¹⁹ RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Decimal Correspondence File, 1919-1938, 007, Box 436, HM 2005.

²⁰ Dakota Goodhouse, conversation about Boarding School with my mother Emma, personal, April 21, 2024.

²¹ Robinson, William, “The German Cockroach: A History,” <http://www.pctonline.com>, July 22, 2021, <https://www.pctonline.com/news/the-german-cockroach-a-history-robinson/>.

²² RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1914-1921, Box 435, HM 2005.

²³ Annis, Amber A., “Resistance On The Great Plains: The Bismarck Indian School, Resistance On The Great Plains: The Bismarck Indian School, 1916-1921 ” (thesis, 2012), page 90.

Western film, at the Bismarck Indian Boarding School for \$21.26.²⁴ It was actually cheaper to do so. A matinee movie ticket in 1930 was on average \$0.25.²⁵ At 125 students it cost the school \$31.25 to take them to the Orpheum. The school likely saved even more money by serving their own popcorn and peanuts.

Other pastimes included games such as checkers, tiddly wink, table croquet, Parcheesi, ten pins, dominoes, marbles,²⁶ and readings for dramatic recitation.²⁷

The school had a maximum capacity of 135, but it was overcrowded in 1930. Basic facilities were overburdened. Superintendent Mote recorded that students were bunked two to a bed.²⁸ Annis expresses it best in her work *Resistance on The Great Plains* about the Bismarck Indian Boarding School, “Aside from the overcrowding, the superintendent referred to the out-dated nature of the facilities, ‘The plumbing, toilets, bath fixtures and lavatories are out of date, out of repair, and should be out of existence.’”²⁹

Students resented their cramped quarters. “The buildings were so overcrowded and there was so little room for employees, many of the larger rooms in the main dormitory were used by one employee, leaving the pupils cramped in even smaller rooms.”³⁰

²⁴ RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1914-1921, Box 435, HM 2005.

²⁵ Pasquarello, Thomas, “22 the Great Depression and Its Effects on the Movie ...,” Digital Commons @ West Chester University, 2007, https://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1094&context=hist_wchest.

²⁶ RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1914-1921, Box 435, HM 2005.

²⁷ RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Decimal Correspondence File, 1919-1938, 007, Box 436, HM 2005.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Annis, Amber A., “Resistance On The Great Plains: The Bismarck Indian School, Resistance On The Great Plains: The Bismarck Indian School, 1916-1921 ” (thesis, 2012), page 93.

³⁰ Ibid., page 94.

Superintendent Padgett reflected on the living conditions of the students and staff. He wasn't a psychologist but he was so close to understanding the difference between nature and nurture. "The result of such conditions is quite apparent- the children become irritable, discontented and [have] a desire to be somewhere else - no matter where becomes an obsession with them. They commit breeches [sic] of discipline and conduct for which they are punished, and resent the punishment. They cannot understand, like an adult, that they are traveling through a stage of their life which demands that they be taught the proper path to follow, but resent any form of punishment, which if proper conditions existed at this school such punishment would be decreased to a very substantial extent. One punishment leads to another until some pupil and his or her immediate companions get it firmly fixed in their minds that they are being abused and mistreated and that the school is really a jail, and that the only way that they can get their freedom is to run away, go home, and tell their parents and neighbors of the abusive treatment they and their fellow pupils receive at the school. This they tell in order that the parents will not send them back, and the children are not sent back by the parents although the children need the schooling very badly."³¹

The discipline Padgett, Mote, and Spear employed was reactionary and disproportionate to student conduct, relying on heavy negative consequences suited to punishment in the military. It depended on interpreting Christian mores based on scripture such as Proverbs 13:24, "Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them," more commonly interpreted as "Spare the rod, spoil the child."

³¹ RG 75, Decimal Correspondence, 1915-1938, Box 467 "Letter from Superintendent Padgett to Commissioner of Indian Affairs on February 27, 1921." Page 2 of 8.

The application of heavy-handed discipline can be traced back to the founding of the Indian Boarding School program at Carlisle in 1879. There Pratt treated students as if they were little soldiers, and cruelly disciplined them as such. All superintendents saw themselves as god-fearing patriots called to do God's work. Mote took to heart meeting the spiritual needs of students and rather than just taking them all to one church he felt compelled to take students to the denomination their parents attended. "We are endeavoring to maintain the proper church affiliation for all of our girls in accordance with the desires of the parents and do not permit the girls to change from one church to another without the parents approval."³² Mote's correspondence came out of the concern that a Catholic student wanted to attend services at a Protestant church.

Native American students were objectified, and there is no clearer statement of this than Captain Richard Henry Pratt's quote about Indian education, "A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one, and that high sanction of his destruction has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian massacres. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."³³ The strappings, solitary confinement, and other negative reinforcements were all to do what Pratt so succinctly stated and endorsed.

Runaway students were treated like deserters. Speaking and laughing after vespers was regarded as contempt. Lack of honorifics, a disrespect. How did students cope with this kind of education? Some embraced assimilation.

³² RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Decimal Correspondence File, 1919-1938, 007, Box 436, HM 2005.

³³ Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, accessed April 24, 2024, <https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/teach/kill-indian-him-and-save-man-r-h-pratt-education-native-americans>.

Regina Whitman (Mandan and Hidatsa) became Catholic, spoke only English, took up piano, and embraced the domestic arts endorsed by the American program that called for women to be stay-at-home wives and mothers. Whitman was not punished or strapped. She was, in fact, grateful for her educational experience at the Bismarck Indian Boarding School and moved on to Flandreau Indian School in South Dakota. In Whitman's latter days when she worked as a historic guide at Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park where she interpreted her ancestral Mandan heritage through a lens syncretic with her lifelong Catholic faith.

In such an institution one has few choices, none, or bad choices. While some students defied the school and ran away or endured the harsh discipline, and some found their place in the Christian faith, others found solace in alcohol.

Superintendent Mote was careful about his language in a letter to the superintendent of Standing Rock, Mr. E.D. Mossman when addressing the accusations of students getting inebriated at the Bismarck Indian Boarding School, reducing the concerns of a student to hearsay. In the letter, Lizzie Silk's parents came to the Bismarck Indian Boarding School to remove their daughter. Mote protested, "Yesterday the father of Lizzie Silk came in my office and stated that he wanted to take his daughter home. I told him I did not approve it and that there was no reason for her to go and we could not run a school and accept pupils one day and let them go home the next day without reason." Except Lizzie had reason. Lizzie informed her parents that she observed girls getting drunk at the school. Then Mrs. Silk came for her daughter. Mote went on to say he "refused permission to her and offered her my suggestions as to

cooperation with the school authorities in order to provide proper control of their children left in our charge.”³⁴

Lizzie had no reason to lie, and seeing that Mote refused to discharge her, Mrs. Silk asked for a general release to take Lizzie shopping and Mote conceded on the promise that Mrs. Silk would return Lizzie before that afternoon’s lessons. “They left,” Mote wrote, “and I have seen nothing of the girl or her parents since and I presume that they have gone on home.”³⁵ Mote didn’t assuage the Silks’ concern with an affirmation of an investigation. No, Mote issued the impotent threat to Lizzie’s parents that unless they returned her to the school Lizzie would be deprived of any government facilities at the Bismarck Indian Boarding School and his future recommendation for her to any other academic facility.

It would take something big for Superintendent Mote to acknowledge his poor investigative skills, his inattention to the needs of his student, his indiscretion in allowing his wife to take the school car for a cross-country excursion, and his decision to employ his wife in abducting children from the reservation to bolster the school’s roster.

In the spring of 1931, Agnes Everett was removed from the Bismarck Indian Boarding School and placed in the custody of the Mandan Training School. Agnes’ father Mr. Clair Everett contacted Mote to intervene in Agnes’ placement in Mandan. Mote stated that he had no authority to intervene and reminded Clair that Agnes and other students behaved rather poorly that past January.

On January 3, 1931, Agnes and two other girls “overstayed their Saturday afternoon leave in town and after searching for them several hours we found them at

³⁴ RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Decimal Correspondence File, 1919-1938, 007, Box 436, HM 2005. *Letter to Lizzie Silk’s parents.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

9:50 PM on the streets of Bismarck in company with three soldiers from Fort Lincoln.” Agnes encountered the soldiers that evening at the railroad station and asked them to take her and her friends to a bar. The men took them to a private residence of one of the soldiers instead, south of the railroad, a soldier Mote noted, of “poor reputation.”³⁶ They partied for two hours. Mote included himself among the Bismarck City Police and a social worker who searched high and low for Agnes and the girls.

Mote placed no responsibility on the soldiers. “Agnes boldly and maliciously accused an innocent man of taking them to his home.” Wait, didn’t Mote tell us the soldier had a poor reputation? Mote laboriously detailed the poor character of Agnes in the second page of his letter to Claire, insinuating her upbringing and lack of virtue was cultivated at home. Mote must have left the barracks open and unlocked, then shook his fist when Agnes sneaked out the evening of January 19; she was found on the streets of Bismarck again, this time at 11:00 PM. Agnes took off again the night of January 31 with a different girl; Agnes’ presence a corruptive force. Agnes and company returned to the school and broke into the school dispensary and took a bottle of alcohol. Why Agnes wasn’t placed in solitary confinement Mote never says.

“On February 24th she left the dormitory without permission at 7:30 P.M. taking two young girls with her and although we searched thoroughly to find them, we were not able to locate them until one o’clock in the morning [spelling out here to maximize outrage] on the streets of Mandan very much intoxicated.”³⁷ The letter is lengthy, dramatic, and written without paragraph breaks. He wasn’t done recounting Agnes Everett’s Day Off either.

³⁶ Ibid. *Mote’s Letter to Clair Everett.*

³⁷ Ibid.

Agnes and company caught the bus to Mandan and there met up with some men who took them on a drive out in the country and “made indecent proposals to them,” but Mote goes no further there and brings it back to Agnes and her friends returning to Mandan only to get in a coupe with two other men with whom they reached their midnight drunken state. When Morton County authorities caught Agnes, Mote says she falsely accused the second set of men of giving them alcohol. According to Mote, Agnes was angry at the men without motive, and Agnes now a proven habitual liar.

Not content with incriminating Agnes, Mote established himself on the high horse of his morals and values, “If this is not sufficient for some disciplinary, then I have my code of social ethics all wrong...I feel fully justified in urging you to not think of endeavoring to obtain Agnes [sic] release and I assure you that I cannot conscientiously assist you in any such plan for the present.” Mote concludes his letter to Clair with a faux olive branch, “I am perfectly willing to accept her back at this school when it appears reasonable that she has benefited by her stay at Mandan.” Mote’s letter practically glows with self-satisfaction, “Two months over there is of very little no value in judging habits and ideas as indicated by the conduct of Agnes during her stay here this past winter.”³⁸

On March 20, 1931, Mote revisited his code of moral ethics regarding the soldiers from the January incident and recognized that the soldiers buying students alcohol and taking them to a private residence was of poor reputation after all and pressed charges on Mr. Jack Pierce and Mr. Jess Jones.³⁹

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid. *Mote’s Letter to Colonel McNamara.*

Mote's letter to Col. McNamara, the commanding officer of the Fort Lincoln Detention Facility, indicates knowledge of a continuing practice of soldiers "loitering and camping on the hillside near the school, spending many nights out here, and inducing our young Indian girls to sneak out of the girls dormitory to meet the soldiers in the dead of night and spend hours there on their blanket rolls, a practice which has been going on more or less for a year or more."⁴⁰

Mote's high moral ethics were not sufficiently challenged in that time. He was comfortable with the arrangement until the police and a social worker began an investigation.

Being the exemplar of North Dakota Nice, Mote informed McNamara that he considered additional charges "against several more of the soldiers who have been molesting our Indian girls. But it is not my desire to stir up things any more than is absolutely essential for the proper protection of our girls. I have come to the conclusion that for the present it might be best for me to take no further action."⁴¹

On March 28, 1931, Mote received a letter from the US Attorney requesting the presence of the young Indian girls to testify against the soldiers who bought the girls alcohol that January. Perhaps sensing apprehension from Mote to bring the girls to Fargo, US Attorney Peter Garberg offered to pay for all expenses.⁴²

Mote believed the example of two men facing charges would dissuade the soldiers from bringing their bedrolls to the hillside by the school. It did not. On December 9, 1931, Mote posted an internal memorandum about Vitalyn Fournier, Rachel Young, and Evelyn White Thunder, to restrict them. These three young girls left

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid. *Letter from the US Attorney to Superintendent Mote.*

the dormitory without permission “last Saturday evening about 7:00 P.M. and returning about 1:30 or 2:00 A.M. after meeting some soldiers, [and] riding with them to a deserted house.”⁴³

The Bureau of Indian Affairs determined that the Bismarck Indian Boarding School would close and terminate funding in the spring term of 1937. Mote issued an official announcement himself, “This school has had widespread influence in the lives of many Indian young people in this area. You and we are proud and happy over the courage and sturdy character this school has helped to develop in young Indian lives.”⁴⁴

In 1921 Superintendent Padgett wrote that the Bismarck Indian Boarding School “is virtually a jail for the pupils and they soon consider that they are merely doing time until the end of the school year when perhaps they will be let out and go to their homes.”⁴⁵

In summary, under Supt. Spear the institution began as a school. It transformed into a jail under Supt. Padgett’s watch. Supt. Mote operated the school as a sex ring.

The Bismarck Indian Boarding School operated from 1908 to 1937.

⁴³ Ibid. *Mote internal memorandum.*

⁴⁴ Ibid. *Mote announces school closure.*

⁴⁵ RG75, Decimal Correspondence, 1915-1938, Box 467.

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