



Carlisle Barracks

Carlisle Indian Industrial School Walking Tour

Carlisle Barracks was home to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School between 1879 and 1918, educating more than 10,000 Native American children during its 39-year operation.

The story of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School began in the waning days of the Frontier Wars where Army Lt. Richard Pratt had commanded units of Indian scouts and former slaves at Fort Gibson [now Oklahoma] from 1867 to 1875. After escorting Indian prisoners from Ft. Sill to prison at Ft. Marion in St. Augustine, Florida, where he provided opportunities for them to learn English and vocations, he was inspired to develop off-reservation education for Native Americans as a way for them to assimilate into 'mainstream' American culture. Pratt successfully lobbied the Department of the Interior and the War Department for the establishment of an Indian school and the Army transferred Carlisle Barracks to the Department of the Interior on August 25, 1879 by virtue of General Order No. 52. The Order further stipulated that the post would revert to Army control whenever needed for military purposes.

Students were recruited directly from the western reservations. The curriculum of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School combined an academic program that emphasized English language skills with vocational training. The school sought to prepare Native American students for life in American society and for skilled jobs in numerous industries. Once the student mastered English, pre-vocational courses were introduced, as were more advanced academic subjects, including chemistry, physics, government, history, advanced mathematics, and biology. The daily schedules combined hands-on work experience, academic classes, a study hour, and extracurricular activities.

The first students were enrolled for a minimum of three years. The curriculum requirements changed over the years and the minimum stay later was extended to five years. The full course of study at Carlisle required ten years to complete. The first class graduated in 1889. The faculty encouraged students interested in furthering their academic education to enroll in college preparatory schools and colleges. The majority of the students pursued vocational training that included shoemaking, tinsmithing, carpentry, blacksmithing, wagon-making, and bricklaying. The "Doll House" on the Parade Grounds served as the home for domestic arts, such as dressmaking, sewing, laundering, cooking, child care and nursing.

Carlisle also offered agricultural training and the school operated three farms. The school approached self-sufficiency with the production of food and the manufacture of clothing, kitchen utensils, rugs, furniture, leather goods and wagons. Under the supervision of craftsmen, students constructed numerous wood frame and masonry buildings on the school campus, many of which are included in the National Historic Landmark District.

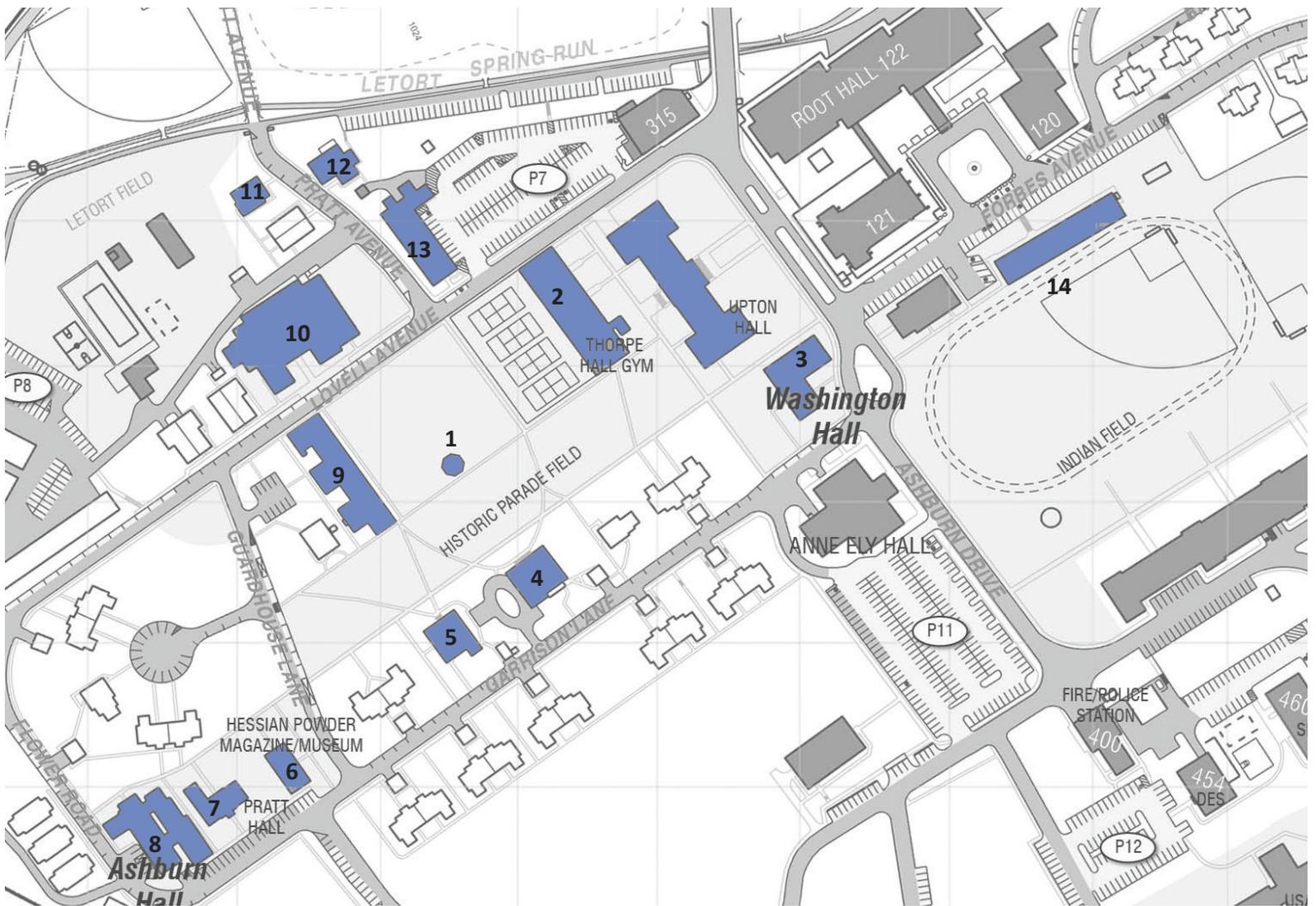
Very early in its existence, organized physical exercise became a part of the school routine. The Jim Thorpe Gym, in use today, was built for the Indian School students' use. By 1897, Carlisle athletics, led by Jim Thorpe, Charles 'Chief' Bender and Louis Tewanima -- and coaches and trainers, "Pop" Warner, Vance McCormick, and Wallace Denny, were known across the country. Their legacy is preserved and recognized during the annual Jim Thorpe Sports Days, an annual athletic competition between students from the Nations Senior Service Colleges.

Early in the 20th century, annual enrollment at the Indian School reached 1,000 students, representing more than 70 tribes. Pratt focused on programs to develop upon potential for independence and economic well-being. Military uniforms and drill were the order of the day. The school's focus on acculturation came at the expense of the native cultures and languages. When officials in the Bureau of Indian Affairs pressed Pratt to modify his system to include non-white cultures, he resisted and on May 25, 1904, was placed on the retired list as a brigadier general.

His successor, Captain William G. Mercer, gave students more freedom. Native arts and crafts were encouraged and evening moral lectures ceased. In October 1914, the school celebrated its 35th anniversary.

Native Americans served in 'the Great War,' but the 1st World War triggered closure of the 39-year-old Carlisle Indian Industrial School. On September 1, 1918, Carlisle Barracks reverted to War Department control. Today Carlisle Barracks serves as link to this time with 20 buildings in the Indian School Historic District on post. Many of these are private homes or offices. Photography is limited to the parade grounds area and exteriors of the buildings.





1. Wheelock Bandstand- The current bandstand was erected in 1980 near the site of the original 1867 bandstand of the Cavalry School and later, the Indian Industrial School. It is named for Dennis Wheelock, a 1890 graduate of the school and the first Indian Bandmaster.
 2. Thorpe Hall Gym- Built in 1887 by Indian School students is named from Jim Thorpe of Sac and Fox Indian Heritage, a student from 1904-1909 and 1911-1913. He and his teammate's football fame brought national recognition to the Indian School.
 3. Washington Hall – Built in 1884 as a hospital, was converted into athletic dorms in 1908. Currently the home to IHG Army Hotels Carlisle Barracks.
 4. Superintendents Quarters (Quarters 2) - Originally built in 1821, the colonial style portico was added in 1913. During the days of the Indian School it served as the home for Brig. Gen. Richard Pratt, founder and first superintendent of the school from 1879 to 1904. It is now used for Army housing.
 5. Administration Building (Quarters 3) – Built in 1891 by Indian School students and local contractor Andrew Wetzel as a vocational project, it housed the administrative offices for the Indian School. It is now used for Army housing.
 6. Guard House (Hessian Powder Magazine)- Constructed in 1777 for use during the Revolutionary War, it was a guardhouse during the days of the Indian School and marked the schools original entrance. It is now home to a museum highlighting the history of Carlisle Barracks.
 7. Doctors Quarters (Pratt Hall) – Constructed in 1908 as doctors quarters, was enlarged and now serves as lodging for IHG Army Hotels Carlisle Barracks.
 8. Hospital (Ashburn Hall) – Built in 1908 as a hospital where Indian School students trained and worked as nurses. Enlarged several times and now serves as lodging for IHG Army Hotels Carlisle Barracks.
 9. Teacher's Quarters (Coren Apartments) – Rebuilt in 1863 after being burned down during the Civil War, the building served as teachers quarters during the Indian School. It is now used for family housing.
 10. Print Shop (LeTort View Community Center) – Built in 1909, it served as a print shop, tannery and housed other vocational activities. It is now home to the LeTort View Community Center.
 11. Pop Warner House – Built in 1909 and served as the home for Glen S. "Pop" Warner, coach of the Indian School Football team. It now serves as family housing.
 12. Leupp Indian Art Studio – Named for Francis E. Leupp, Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1904-1909, the building was designed and built by Indian School students in 1907.
 13. Laundry (Armstrong Hall) – Built in 1895 it served as a laundry facility during the days of the Indian School. It is now home to Carlisle Barracks Resource Management and Contracting Offices.
 14. Grandstand at Indian Field- Students of the Indian School graded and removed rock from this area to create a practice field for athletes in 1901 and built the original grandstand in 1902. The current grandstand was built in 1940 and serves as the home to the Indian Field Fitness Center.
- Not Pictured: The Carlisle Barracks Cemetery includes 228 graves: 186 graves of Native Americans who attended the Indian Industrial School, and 42 graves of veterans and/or their eligible dependents. When the Army assumed control of the post in 1918, the cemetery became a military cemetery. In 1927 the cemetery was relocated to its current location near the main entrance on Claremont Road. The first burial occurred in February 1882; the cemetery was closed to further interments in 2005.