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Can the Army tell who's buried at the Carlisle Indian cemetery?

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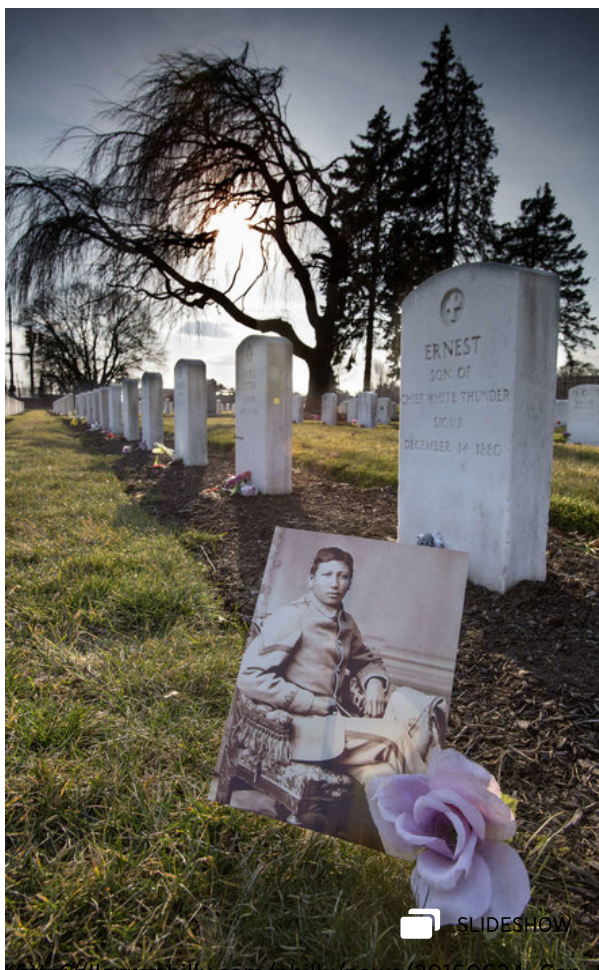
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 Barbara Landis of the Cumberland County Historical Society stands by the bandstand in the open quadrangle area in the center of the old Carlisle Indian Industrial School grounds, now the U.S. Army War College.)

CHARLES FOX / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Barbara Landis of the Cumberland County Historical Society, holding a photograph of the 1892 class, has shed some light on the remains' identity

by **Jeff Gammage**, Staff Writer

CARLISLE, Pa. - There's no doubt that Earnest Knocks Off, son of a Sioux chief, lies buried among nearly 200 children in the Indian cemetery here.



Can the Army tell who's buried at the Carlisle Indian cemetery?
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The question is, where?

He seems to have two separate headstones.

Other grave markers on the grounds of what was the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, now the Army War College, contain partial or misspelled names, wrong dates of death, and missing birth dates. The supporting paper archive is incomplete.

Now, as the Army begins to meet tribal demands to return the remains of boys and girls who died in a harsh, turn-of-the-century experiment in forced assimilation, both sides face a dilemma: When century-old records are lacking and even headstones can be unreliable, how to fully account for the dead?

Only this month researchers identified a 17-year-old boy named Fred War Bonnet, who died of tuberculosis and was buried in 1908 - but has no gravestone in the cemetery.

Thirteen stones are marked "unknown," infuriating American Indian leaders, who question how a school that controlled its students' every movement could not know the names of those who died there.

In an interview, Army officials pledged an extensive effort to resolve questions around names or resting places, comparing it to the quest to retrieve and identify the remains of U.S. soldiers killed on foreign battlefields.

The Army has written to all 566 federally recognized tribes to invite collaboration, building on the government-to-government consultations that opened last month with the Rosebud Sioux in South Dakota. The Army has scheduled listening sessions at major Indian conferences this summer in Spokane, Wash., and in the fall at Cherokee, N.C.

The Rosebud tribe leads the movement for repatriation, passing a resolution in January to seek the return of 10 children, including Earnest Knocks Off. Two other tribes say they want remains, and more are considering it.

The Army plans a single disinterment - not one every few months or years as Indian nations come forward. It has set a summer 2017 completion date.

But, like so much that surrounds Carlisle, the past complicates the present.

Decades ago, when the Army reclaimed the campus after the school closed in 1918, administrators decided to expand the post. So in the late 1920s, the graveyard was moved to the outskirts, next to what was called Poor House Road.

"It was really a haphazard job," said Russell Eagle Bear, the Rosebud historic-preservation officer. "I'm hoping the Army is accurate where they put them. That's going to become a question."

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The coffins tended to crumble when handled.

That didn't stop laborers from inspecting the interiors as they dug on an August day in 1927, according to coverage at the time in the Carlisle Sentinel.

In one casket, they found a diamond ring. Elsewhere, something more macabre: a skull with a bullet hole.

The newspaper didn't name the youth, though a decade earlier, his death was front-page news: Isaac Long Shore, a Sac and Fox from Oklahoma, about 18 when he came to school in 1914.

After two years, Long Shore was expelled "as an undesirable," the Harrisburg Evening News reported. He roamed from New Jersey to Philadelphia before traveling back to Carlisle to see friends on June 23, 1918.

The next morning, Long Shore was strolling in town when he passed a group of girls.

"Goodbye," he said to them.

He drew a revolver and shot himself.

Harrisburg newspapers blamed his death on "a religious mania," and the Philadelphia press declared him a "religious fanatic." School officials took charge of his body.

Today, despite the 1927 discovery of Long Shore's remains in the original burial ground, he has no named headstone in the newer cemetery.

He's not the only one.

Babies were born at Carlisle. And babies were buried.

Questions about their short lives propelled Cumberland County historian Barbara Landis toward what may be the cemetery's most disturbing mystery: the 13 headstones marked "Unknown."

How to account for their presence? There's no definitive answer. Some names may have been lost as care of the old cemetery declined and wooden markers rotted.

The Army intends to leave the unknowns in place, saying it would be nearly impossible to determine their identities, and suggesting some may not be Indians.

Yet, through painstaking, years-long analysis, and with help from fellow researchers, Landis has figured out the likely identities of seven of the unknowns. Her detective work is documented in a forthcoming book, *Carlisle Indian Industrial School: Indigenous Histories, Memories, and Reclamations*.

Landis scoured old issues of school newspapers to identify people who were buried in the old cemetery but have no named markers now.

That took her to 1886, when Apaches were held as prisoners of war in Florida. Some of the young married captives were sent to Carlisle.

In the fall of 1887, Landis found, Carlisle saw the birth of two Apache babies, Eunice Suisson and Katie Kinshoe, who were treated as tiny campus celebrities.

But Katie died in the summer of 1888, age 9 months, and Eunice died the next spring. The *Indian Helper* newspaper described their burials, but no headstones mark their graves. That enabled Landis to count them as two unknowns.

She discovered that Oklahoma historian Gillett Griswold, a specialist on Apaches held at Fort Sill, had recorded the Carlisle deaths and burials of the wife and baby of prisoner Talbot Goday. They have no markers.

Nor does Henry Rose, an Alaska native who came to Carlisle at 17 in 1903, and was buried in 1907. Long Shore, the same.

One girl's identity was discovered by accident, when descendants of Mary Kinninook traveled from Alaska to visit her grave, carrying records that confirmed her burial - and found no named stone. Mary arrived at Carlisle in 1903, age 8, and died five years later.

Landis believes all 13 eventually could be identified. But she cautions about the possibility of "unknown unknowns," children who may have died and been buried with no marker at all.

That's why, before the first earth is turned, it's crucial to study every record and map to create a detailed archival portrait of the cemetery, according to forensic anthropologist Erin Kimmerle of the University of South Florida.

Kimmerle helped lead the inquiry into deaths and burials at the infamous Dozier boys school in Florida, and was chief anthropologist for the United Nations tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, inspecting remains for evidence of war crimes. At the Smithsonian Institution, she helped return hundreds of Indian remains to tribes.

"With a historic cemetery such as this," she said, "there's always so much more to the story, to the site, to the land, to how it was used, than what we know today. . . . Every cemetery I've ever worked in or been in has mysteries and surprises."



Carlisle opened in 1879 as the first federal, off-reservation boarding school, conceived by former cavalry officer Richard Henry Pratt and guided by his motto, "Kill the Indian, save the man."

The aim was to "civilize" Indians by eradicating their culture, erasing the children's names, languages, religions, customs, and family ties.

Children who spoke their native tongue could be beaten, while overcrowding and malnourishment made them prey to fatal epidemics.

The cemetery holds only a portion of those who died. An estimated 500 or more children died at Carlisle or soon after they left - sent home when it became clear they were too ill to survive.

From a distance, the graveyard looks like a tiny Arlington, defined by six rows of military headstones. Up close, the markers bear partial names, names imposed by white authorities, mistranslations of Indian names, or a mishmash of all three.

A girl known to her people in Rosebud as Take the Tail lies beneath a headstone inscribed Lucy Pretty Eagle. Jack Mather's stone is misspelled Jack Martha, and the name Abe Lincoln marks the grave of a Cheyenne boy.

Earnest Knocks Off rests under a dull white stone that bears one word, "Earnest" - or, perhaps, under a second stone inscribed, "Ernest Son Of Chief White Thunder."

In her authoritative *White Man's Club*, historian Jacqueline Fear-Segal says only one student named Ernest or Earnest was interred, and that was Earnest Knocks Off, White Thunder's child.

County historical society records support that.

Army officials demur. They believe a second boy named Earnest died and was buried at the school, but acknowledge their records are "extremely limited."

Knocks Off arrived with the first group of students on Oct. 6, 1879, and quickly decided one thing: He wanted to go home.

The next June, when an Indian delegation visited from Rosebud and Pine Ridge, he begged to leave with them. Refused, he ran from school and stowed away on the train, only to be discovered and sent back.

Knocks Off staged what sounds like a hunger strike, refusing all food and medicine until he was too ill to recover. He died on Dec. 14, 1880.

What to expect when his and other graves are opened?

"I don't know what to expect," Fear-Segal said. "It makes me very anxious for the descendants who have family buried there."

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