



MELISSA BINGMANN

PREP SCHOOL COWBOYS

Ranch Schools in the American West

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



AS WITH MANY RESEARCH ENDEAVORS, THIS PROJECT IS THE RESULT of planned and serendipitous intersections with people and places that occurred over a long span of time. My first encounter with ranch schools was actually in the 1980s, when my youth group rented space at the Judson School in Arizona for a retreat. It was rustic and there were horses, and I remembered thinking, if the school was an expensive private school, why did it resemble a ranch rather than an Ivy League college? I had spent my earliest years in the Northeast and had an idea fixed in my mind of what a private school should look like. A decade and a half later, I worked at the Mesa Southwest Museum in Arizona, and on one rare occasion I happened to be in the collections area when a pamphlet for the Palo Verde Ranch School had just arrived and was waiting for processing. Only after realizing that there were other ranch schools like it did I make the connection between this brochure and the Judson School I had visited as a child.

In exploring these unique institutions, I benefited from several state repositories that work tirelessly to protect the historical records essential to the study of the past. I especially want to thank the Arizona Historical Society and the Archives and Special Collections, Arizona State University Library for the generous assistance I received from the energetic and professional staff and the richness of their collections. Christine Marin, former archivist in the Department of Archives and Special Collections at Hayden Library, went so far as to accompany me to the Judson School in 2000 to see if the school would be interested in donating its records, as it prepared to close, to the Arizona State Library. I was also fortunate to have access to the archives of the National Association of Independent Schools and the Fenster School in Tucson, which holds records from the Southern Arizona School for Boys.

I have been privileged to have support from several institutions and individuals to whom I owe a large debt of gratitude. As a doctoral student at Arizona State University, I received an award from the Arizona Historical Foundation for a seminar paper I wrote on ranch schools in Robert Trennert's research course. Dr. Trennert encouraged me to develop an article for the *Journal of Arizona History*, and I am indebted to Bruce Dinges, who helped me transform my seminar paper into an article. As I continued my research, I received generous funding for travel from the History Department at Indiana University–Purdue University at Indianapolis and the History Department at West Virginia University. Jeff Pappas invited me to participate as a speaker at the American West Program at Colorado State University, providing me a valuable opportunity to present my research to a public audience. I am thankful to Marcia Synnott for encouraging me to present at the History of Education Society, and to Susan Ferentinos for suggesting that I would benefit from participating in the Society for the History of Childhood and Youth. Both have been invaluable to me as I delved into these areas of study.

This project is the result of several years of research and writing. I am especially fortunate to have had the guidance of Gayle Gullett, Noel Stowe, and Robert Trennert at Arizona State University. All provided invaluable encouragement and support as I grew as a professional historian. I will always be indebted to Noel Stowe, who was the ideal role model for working as a public historian in academia. His untimely passing has been a devastating loss to the field and to me personally. I am honored to be able to thank several colleagues and scholars who took the time to read chapters and various versions of the manuscript and provide productive feedback. Carl Ashley, Annie Gilbert Coleman, Lynn Dumenil, Kalyani Fernando, Nancy Jackson, Katherine Morrissey, and Nancy Robertson have made this a much more analytical, accessible, and meaningful book. I am also thankful for the informal conversations I have had at various conferences with Horatio Joyce, Leslie Paris, and Abigail Van Slyk, who shared sources and their knowledge.

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generosity, I have been able to include the perspective of some of the men who worked at ranch schools.

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It has been my great fortune to work with Clark Whitehorn at the University of New Mexico Press. He is as patient as he is talented and has provided guidance in everything from selecting photographs to helping me manage the scope of the project. I will be forever thankful for his interest in the history of education in the Southwest and for thinking my work on preparatory schools would make a positive contribution to the University of New Mexico Press.

I am especially indebted to the individuals who invited me into their homes and provided other generous acts of hospitality as they shared their knowledge and experience of western ranch schools. My first contact with an actual ranch school alumnus was at a reunion event that the Judson School very kindly invited me to attend. David C. Lincoln met with me on several occasions, gave me access to several brochures that he had kept over the years, and put me in touch with several more alumni as well as Gloria Judson, who shared a treasure trove of letters and brochures from her late husband's family archives and spent hours talking to me about the school and her family. Fred Dalzell, Barbara Ferris, Robert Kilmarx, Anita McAndrews, Ormonde Parke, and David Wick treated me like an honored guest in their homes when it was really I who had the great fortune of knowing amazing individuals who have lived such interesting lives.

When I called John Donaldson to inquire if he would be willing to participate in an oral history interview about his experience at the Arizona Desert School, he responded positively and asked, “Can I bring all of my friends?” As it turned out, he and his friends from the Arizona Desert School continued to get together annually in Tucson. I had the pleasure of meeting Howard Bremond, David C. Wilhelm, and Alexander (Sandy) Woods at the interview. Since then, I have been assisted by David C. Wilhelm, the only one of the group who survives, who has written a memoir that includes a chapter on his experience at the Arizona Desert School. His generosity in filling in the gaps from the group interview, sharing his personal memories, and graciously allowing me to use his personal photographs in this book have greatly broadened the scope and analysis of this work. After my interview with Charlie Orme Jr. at the Orme School, I was treated to an in-depth tour of the campus. I am thankful to Jeb Rosebrook for initiating my visit and for sharing his experience as a student and board member of the Orme School. At Hacienda Del Sol, I met with the owners, who have transformed the former girls’ school into a resort while meticulously maintaining the historic structures, before sitting down to interview Jean Porter Dunn about her memories as a student at the school. Jean then introduced me to her brother, Bob Porter, whom I was able to interview at Sabino Canyon, where he volunteered. The opportunity to visit and meet with alumni at these historic sites was my greatest inspiration and has shaped this narrative more than any other source. It is to these men and women that I dedicate this book. My greatest hope is that I have accurately portrayed their memories as a partial return for the generosity they have shown me.

INTRODUCTION

Men-in-the-Making in the American West



JACK WAS THE GRANDSON OF A SELF-MADE CAPTAIN OF INDUSTRY. He and his brother, Rust, grew up in a wealthy neighborhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and attended Shady Side Academy before heading off to Choate to prepare for admittance to Princeton and eventually assume the family business. It was expected that Jack would graduate from an Ivy League college, and his parents spared no expense in his education, sending him to Choate, one of the Select Sixteen boarding schools located on the Atlantic Seaboard. From Choate, Jack dutifully wrote home to his parents about his experience at the elite eastern preparatory school. He described attending football games, but did not participate in this or any other sport. At one point, he was very ill and spent months in a New England hospital. He subsequently transferred to the Evans School in Tucson, Arizona, in 1923 for his senior year.

Jack's letters home reflected his enthusiasm for the Evans School, as he quickly adapted to his new surroundings, even picking up some western slang, concluding one letter with the salutation "Y'Urn Truly." "This A.M. I had the best time I have had for an awfully long time," he wrote, "for I went horseback riding for 2 hours (more money) with two other fellows. We went away out into the country and had a wondrous time and some excitement." Jack thrived at the Evans School and conveyed appreciation for his new freedom and chance to strike out on his own. At Choate, he was lost in the institutional atmosphere, where "everybody has to do things at certain times and the whole is more united." In contrast, at the Evans School, there were "single fellows or

little groups of fellows doing almost exactly what they please within a certain limit. . . . I think that the fellows out here on the whole are better than those you find at Choate,” he wrote home to his parents. The change for the teenager was “interesting and to say the least quite delightful.” His one qualm with the school seemed to be that only the headmaster, H. David Evans himself, could teach the advanced course in Latin he needed to pass the College Entrance Board test.¹

Jack’s grandfather, Henry, was born into an immigrant family who subsisted on agriculture. At age eight, Henry started peddling the family’s surplus to other households. By the time he was ten, Henry had his own wheelbarrow for peddling and his family gave him three-quarters of an acre to farm on his own. Two years later he purchased a horse and cart and included some of the local merchants as his customers. In his early twenties, he and other family members invested in a company to produce canned food items. Over a fifteen-year period, the family business experienced economic ups and downs, success followed by bankruptcy, until finally it stabilized and was able to grow. Jack’s grandfather became a living example of the American dream and attributed his great business fortune to hard work.

Henry groomed his youngest son, Howard, to take over the family business. Henry believed Howard had great potential and called on phrenological analyst A. S. Fowler to affirm his son had inherited the qualities needed to preserve the company that Henry had worked so hard to create. Fowler found the six-year-old boy “quite a young whirlwind. . . . A natural boss and dominating over everybody. Will be a conspicuous man among men if he doesn’t blight young. . . . Will lead a blameless life. . . . Is a handsome, fluent speaker but his controlling feature is originality and power of intellect along with the highest sense of duty. His business talents are well developed.” Henry looked forward to the day when his son would work alongside him, and at the age of eight, Howard went to work, six hours a day, in the factory. The family did not need additional income, but Henry wanted to ensure that his son understood the value of hard work and give him a taste of what it was like to work one’s way up from the bottom. By the time he was eighteen Howard had toured Europe, mostly on bike, and developed a passion for gas automobiles. His father may have been concerned with his son’s conspicuous display of wealth, but he was proud that Howard had labored in the family factories and demonstrated an interest in the development of boys of lesser fortune. When he was a student at Yale, Howard focused his

attention on a newspaper boy, concluding that this boy like many others was denied the opportunity to become a self-made man or self-reliant. He and some of his student friends created “a club for newsboys, bootblacks and other lads, who were compelled to earn their own living and, in many instances, had dependents.” He continued his philanthropic work in Pittsburgh by establishing a club for the boys who lived in the vicinity of his family’s plant. In 1906 Howard married Elizabeth Granger Rust of Saginaw, Michigan, and the couple had two boys of their own, Jack and Rust.²

Jack was similarly prepared to succeed his father and grandfather as head of the family business, and he embraced the tests of courage, masculinity, and self-reliance that were inherent in desert living and promoted by the Evans School as part of its focus to prepare boys and young men from wealthy families for life and citizenship. After graduation, while attending Princeton, Jack began learning the business of his father and grandfather from the ground up by working in one of the company’s salt plants. By 1941 Henry John (Jack) Heinz II succeeded his father as president of the H. J. Heinz Company, known for its “57 Varieties” of preserved food products. His only son, H. John Heinz III, became a popular state senator.³

The Evans School, where Jack Heinz attended for at least one year, was one of several western ranch schools located in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Wyoming. These unique private schools for boys promised the elite that through “simplicity of living,” ranch life would develop “self-reliance” and courage in boys—character traits that many Americans feared had been lost in modern urban society. Ranch school owners made this affirmation based upon an American concept of a mythic West of the past—the West that Frederick Jackson Turner declared had disappeared in the 1890s. By re-creating ranch life in the formation of preparatory schools, ranch schools offered children an opportunity to relive the experience of those who embodied the American spirit of individualism, bravery, strength, democracy, hard work, and fortitude—cowboys and pioneers—at the same time they preserved boys’ status as the next generation of American leaders.

Most western ranch schools were either founded or experienced tremendous growth in the interwar period and reflected Americans’ nostalgia for its agricultural past, with its simpler way of life, amid the rapidly changing technological advances of the early twentieth century. Thomas Jefferson’s ideal of the pioneer farmer as wholesome and all that was good in America had a resurgence in the

early twentieth century as moralists confronted American society's new urban, modern problem. Urban youth had lost a connection to the natural world and instead embraced the artificiality of new leisure activity and consumerism. Furthermore, Americans' concern over inherited privilege was heightened in the interwar period when the economic gap between the wealthy and the middle class became pronounced. The ostentatious behavior of the second and third generation of the self-made man caused concern among educators, social scientists, cultural critics, and parents.

Men who had earned the elite status that often accompanied financial success in the "Era of Big Money" from 1896 to 1932 worked tirelessly to preserve it and looked to their progeny to continue the family legacy.⁴ Their sons and grandsons, however, often seemed to lack the same work ethic of their forebears, and many blamed their unfettered access to unearned wealth as a deterrent to becoming productive men of character. Fathers and grandfathers who wished for their sons to succeed them in their place of privilege and responsibility sought environments that would shape their sons into men of character who understood the value of self-reliance, hard work, and initiative. Some, like the Heinz descendants, secretly labored in their family's industrial operations over summer breaks during college to prove themselves worthy of leading and sustaining the family dynasty. Many looked to the American West as the best place for shaping boys' characters to prepare them for the rights and responsibilities of citizenship as defined by their gender and class.

Before the United States' entry into World War II, approximately twenty entrepreneurial-minded families opened ranch schools in Arizona, and a few others founded ranch schools in California, New Mexico, and Wyoming. The West was ripe for this new industry after the postwar depression of 1919. While most other industries recuperated quickly, agriculture had a difficult time recovering, forcing many western ranchers to sell their property, equipment, and animals. Persuaded by romantic visions of the West or by the prospect of an adventurous business opportunity, easterners and midwesterners bought ranches with the intent of earning a living through agriculture, while others specifically set out to start dude ranches and ranch schools. Based on promotional material, lists created by states and railroads, and Porter Sargent's *A Handbook of Private Schools for American Boys and Girls*, western ranch schools included the Thacher School, California (1889); Evans School, Arizona (1902); Montezuma Mountain School, California (1911); Los Alamos Ranch School,

New Mexico (1917); Deep Springs Preparatory, California (1922); Mesa Ranch School, Arizona (1922); Valley Ranch School, Wyoming (1922); Fresno Ranch School, Arizona (1924); Arizona Sunshine School (1927); Foxboro Ranch School, Arizona (1927); Arizona Desert School (1927); Judson School for Boys, Arizona (1928); Orme School, Arizona (1929); Palo Verde Ranch School for Boys, Arizona (1929); Hacienda del Sol, Arizona (1929); Albuquerque Ranch School, New Mexico (1930); M Bar V Ranch School, Arizona (1930); Southern Arizona School for Boys, Arizona (1933); Green Fields Preparatory, Arizona (1933); Remuda Ranch School, Arizona (1933); Jokake School, Arizona (1934); and Desert Willow Ranch School, Arizona (1935). In philosophy and aims, they were remarkably similar to the more established eastern private preparatory schools yet incorporated elements of dude ranching, progressive education, and summer camps to create a unique educational experience for America's wealthier children. Most no longer exist, yet in their pre-World War II heyday, they provided an alternative to the more established Select Sixteen boarding schools in New England and on the East Coast.⁵

Loosely defined, a ranch school was a private, nonsectarian boarding school that offered the benefits of an "authentic" western experience and catered to the elite of the Atlantic Seaboard and Midwest. Sargent first used the term "Western Ranch School" as a classification for a type of private school in the 1928–1929 edition of *A Handbook of Private Schools for American Boys and Girls*.⁶ In addition to those categorized by Sargent as a ranch school, this study also includes ranch schools listed as such in tourism literature and self-proclaimed ranch schools. Arizona had a significant number of ranch schools when compared to other western states, most likely because its warm winter climate allowed students to study and participate in recreational outdoor activity throughout the school year. In following editions of Sargent's *Handbook*, the number of Arizona ranch schools listed continued to grow, outnumbering those in all other states. Much like dude ranches, ranch schools were a result of, and contributed to, the burgeoning tourism economy that marketed western authenticity by highlighting the landscape, natural wonders, close proximity to national parks, horsemanship, and relaxed lifestyle. Several ranch schools were established for the specific purpose of serving winter visitors with children, who, because of the length of their stay, needed private schools that meshed with a traditional preparatory curriculum of the Select Sixteen.

Ranch schools varied by the gender and age of the students, whether they accepted day students, and how closely they resembled a self-sustaining preparatory school or whether the experience was more similar to private tutoring at a dude ranch resort. The most prestigious and iconic ranch schools were boarding schools, exclusively for boys, that recruited students independent of their families. In Arizona, these included the Evans School, Arizona Desert School, Judson School for Boys, Southern Arizona School, Mesa Ranch School, Fresno Ranch School, and Palo Verde Ranch School. Material on the Evans School, Arizona Desert School, Judson School for Boys, and Southern Arizona School seems to leap from archival collections and remain in popular memory, while the latter three have somewhat faded from existence. Greenfields is one of the few schools that currently exist, but from all accounts, it seemed somewhat more insular and self-contained than the others. Founded the same year as the Southern Arizona School, it evolved from an alfalfa farm intentionally but slowly into a school. The Southern Arizona School on the other hand immediately and purposefully replicated existing ranch school practices and joined them in interscholastic polo competitions from its inception. All eight were exclusive to boys who for the most part boarded at the school, had no direct affiliation with a resort or dude ranch, and asserted their primary aim to prepare students for college.

Thacher School in California, Los Alamos School in New Mexico, and Valley Ranch School in Wyoming were clearly on par with the “first-tier” Arizona ranch schools, but were slightly nuanced by their location, founding, and geographic isolation from like institutions. Rarely recognized as such, the Thacher School was the earliest model, but its designation and identity as a ranch school did not take hold until the 1920s. Prior to that, Thacher was simply a preparatory school on a ranch that evolved naturally from the needs of the community and Sherman Thacher’s desire for a way to earn a living in California. Los Alamos’s most distinctive attribute was its owner’s adoption of Boy Scouting as a means of instilling character and providing outdoor and nature study. Valley Ranch School evolved from a dude ranch in order to maximize revenue during the off-season. Dudes enjoyed the optimal summer weather, while boys studied and endured the cold as they attempted to participate in the adventurous activity common to ranch school curricula. In a similar vein, Foxboro Ranch School in Arizona evolved from a summer dude ranch into a year-round school. The existence of the Foxboro was fleeting, and it is not certain how long it operated or whether it was ever in continuous use as a school.

Ranch schools were predominantly for boys, but the Orme School, Arizona Sunshine School, and the Remuda Ranch were coeducational. The Orme School, much like the Thacher School, evolved naturally from a need to educate the Orme children rather than intentionally as a ranch school, and it continues to operate. The Remuda Ranch School in Wickenburg was a prime example of a ranch school centered around a dude ranch and catered specifically to vacationing families. Because the tourist season coincided with the school year, students and vacationers were often one and the same, and the school and dude ranch shared physical space. The Arizona Sunshine School was primarily for younger day students whose parents wintered in Tucson, but it was not affiliated with a resort.

The other exceptions to the exclusively male ranch schools were San Luis Ranch School in Colorado Springs, Hacienda del Sol in Tucson, and Jokake in Phoenix. Founded in 1889, San Luis Ranch School became an open-air school in 1917 and held all of its classes outdoors. Camping and horseback riding were only a slim part of the varied activities offered by this school for girls, which maintained “the best of eastern traditions combined with the freedom and charm of western ranch life.” Hacienda del Sol, Tucson’s first private boarding school for girls, was founded in 1929 as a college preparatory school that combined the ideals of a ranch school for boys with a traditional female boarding school curriculum. Porter Sargent’s handbook stated that Hacienda del Sol was “one of the first schools to capitalize on the new interest in the Southwest as a winter residence.”⁷ Jokake School for Girls opened in 1934 as an addition to Jokake Inn in Phoenix. The daughter of the Inn’s owner, Barbara Evans Ashforth, along with her husband, George Ashforth, started the ranch school for girls, which grew quickly and became an accredited preparatory school. Since it was located near the Judson School, some families conveniently sent their daughters to Jokake and their sons to Judson.

Western ranch schools provide a unique chance to study citizenship, class, gender, and region through institutions that were designed to counteract the problems of inherited wealth and modern urban America by constructing an experience for the purpose of instilling character traits associated with the Old West. The presence of ranch schools suggests an expanded interpretation of the American West in the interwar period that incorporates the growth of tourism but also supports the idea of the West as a colony for the eastern and midwestern elite. Although unique in their use of the West as a physical and conceptual

place to achieve the aims of private school education, the schools accepted standards set forth by their eastern predecessors, Ivy League schools, the College Entrance Board, and the Secondary Education Board. In the final analysis, they replicated one of the most important avenues for the transference of elite culture created by the eastern establishment. In the minds of Americans, the cultural geography of the West had the power to transform pampered, effete children into gentleman cowboys who could rightly assume positions of power as adults. Bravery, courage, self-reliance, and initiative—traits associated with the pioneering spirit of the Old West—were the very same attributes advocated by character education reformers as necessary to preserve the nation through the next generation. The West portrayed by ranch schools embodied the moral attributes believed to be lacking in urban America. As a result, the ranch school narrative links the history of education and western history to provide a new interpretation of the West as moral space.

Both children and adolescents attended ranch schools, often independent from their families. By catering to the needs of adolescent boys, ranch schools reflected Americans' fear over this newly identifiable and seemingly growing population. Kent Baxter argues that the construct of this recognizable developmental stage at the turn of the century reflected "broader cultural anxieties that characterized American society." Created in tandem with the rapid changes resulting from urbanization, industrialization, and their related problems, "this new age category came to represent all that was threatening about 'modern life.'" He argues that this demographic group was not really new, but simply more conspicuous in American cities, and from its inception, the "adolescent" was perceived as a threat to be contained through measures of control and rehabilitation. This was most apparent in education reform, which segregated students by age through the creation of high schools, and the rise of the juvenile court system to deal with anxiety over the multitudes of unemployed youth visible on the city streets. This fear and the dilemma of how to best usher these youth into productive adulthood was at first focused on those perceived most likely to commit a crime or become a drain on society because of their inability to enter the workforce.⁸ By the interwar period, I argue, economically advantaged adolescents became an equally conspicuous problem as newspaper reporters tracked their outrageous escapades. The resulting crisis of the rich man's son, however, was more dire because Americans depended on this next generation of leaders.

The rise of western ranch schools reflects the predominance of the pediatrician, psychologist, and other child science experts who sustained reform efforts of the Progressive Era by focusing on solving the problems of American families and children in the interwar period. Social science experts sought to exert their intellectual influence not only for the sake of social control, but in order to better society.⁹ By focusing on children, a small group of middle-class experts were able to influence children of all classes, giving them a degree of cultural power over the economic elite through shaping the next generation of leaders. Headmasters were prolific in their published diatribes, giving advice on everything from the problem of overprotective mothers, the best ways for preparatory school boys to spend their summers, the value of studying the classics, and the significance of competitive sports, to the problems of modern society generally. Porter Sargent's directory of private schools typically included his lengthy commentary on varied contemporary social issues of modern America. The intended audience included headmasters and parents who could afford to send their children to private school. In widely disseminating their opinions, research, and studies to affluent parents, headmasters and private school educators became moral experts who gained the authority to influence the character of the next generation of leaders.

The fact that so many children attended ranch schools for their health was an important indication that parents followed the advice of scientific experts when it came to the well-being of their children. Doctors advised families with asthmatic children to move to dry, warm climates, and all ranch schools catered to children who suffered from sinus trouble, respiratory ailments, rheumatism, and other health-related concerns that were not the result of communicable diseases. Brochures from the majority of Arizona's ranch schools, including Arizona Desert School, Hacienda del Sol, Judson School for Boys, Palo Verde Ranch School, and Southern Arizona School for Boys, identified the dry climate as particularly beneficial for the cure of certain ailments as one of the many features of their unique schools. Girls who attended Hacienda del Sol and who suffered "from discomforts caused by colder climates or by higher altitudes [would] find complete relief in the dry, warm air of Arizona." An Arizona Desert School brochure noted that it specialized "in the care of those who have asthma, chronic colds, sinus infections or bronchial complications" but was "by no means confined to boys suffering from these difficulties." The dry, sunny desert air was equally "beneficial to boys who need general building up or who must

avoid the damp winter climate in other parts of the country.”¹⁰ In the era of the “priceless” child, ranch schools existed because physicians advised parents that the desert climate was the best environment for their children’s health.

The introduction of the psychology of behaviorism provides an important example of the confusion many parents must have felt as they were confronted with conflicting ideologies about child rearing and nature versus nurture. The idea that humans were hollow shells who could be shaped by their environment and external stimuli, referred to as behaviorism, popularized by John B. Watson’s *Behavior: An Introduction to Comparative Psychology* (1914) and *Behaviorism* (1925) and applied to child rearing in his *Psychological Care of the Infant and Child* (1928), contrasted with many elites’ belief in social Darwinism. As a generation of child rearing–advice givers adapted the idea of behaviorism to be less rigid in its discipline, environmental manipulation evolved as an important means of instilling habit and behavior. Instead of enforcing habits through rewards and punishments, the environment surrounding children could be altered to prevent the development of a bad habit.¹¹ Dramatically changing the geographic and cultural environment of youth by sending them to a western ranch school indicated a shift in approach from one that emphasized the inherited nature of certain individuals to become leaders to one that required some degree of purposefully instilling character traits. As affluent families noticed that their sons had less initiative than their forebears who were “self-made,” an environment that forced boys to prove themselves appealed to many parents. The Heinz family demonstrated a blending of social Darwinism and behaviorism with the belief that their sons had inherited an ability to succeed that needed to be cultivated in a specific environment. H. J. Heinz had a phrenologist assess the innate leadership qualities of his son Howard, yet also insisted that he cultivate these through hard work by laboring in a factory. Many looked to the pre-1890 American West as the best environment for instilling the traits that created the American spirit of individualism, democracy, bravery, and self-reliance.

Private school educators embraced new social science research ushered in by the interwar child science boon that supported enacting change for the betterment of children and society. The importance of character education in private schools was reflected in the results of a 1928 study that found “the development of character” was the number-one aim of private school education for boys. Robert Danforth Cole proposed to present a “broad, general picture of private secondary education for boys as it exists in the United

States” by examining two hundred private school catalogues.¹² His work provides the context for comparing ranch schools to private boys’ schools across the country. After compiling his data, he listed thirty purposes most frequently found and then grouped them into ten main headings. “Formation of ethical character” (85 percent) led the list and was followed by “College preparation” (81 percent), “Health” (47 percent), “Meeting the needs of individuals” (42 percent), “Formation of habits” (38 percent), “Citizenship and leadership” (38 percent), “Providing for non-college students” (30 percent), “Manners and general culture” (25 percent), “Substituting or supplementing the home” (24 percent), and lastly, “Mental discipline” (21 percent). The time period between 1890 and 1940 was particularly ripe for a renewed interest in moral education because of the rapid societal changes brought about by modernization. “More than simply a reaction against modernity,” historian Edward McClellan argued, educators sought new methods for preserving traditional values in an ever-changing world.¹³

Character education at private schools resembled the ideologies of Progressive Era character-building organizations like the YMCA and the Boy Scouts. They both emphasized Protestant values; however, character education addressed a sense that the moral guidance of religion had been lost during the Progressive Era when reformers advanced a more secular agenda for social betterment. Both reflected anxiety over the impact of modernization and urbanization on the next generation, but whereas Boy Scouting focused on nonrural middle-class boys, character education was discussed most frequently among educators and private school leaders in particular. Ranch schools and Boy Scouts shared the goals of character building and citizenship; however, the former emphasized individuality and leadership whereas Boy Scouting promoted middle-class aspirations “to mold the rising generation into a cohesive, hard-working citizenry—patriotic, disciplined, and conventional in values.” For example, Boy Scouts downplayed unplanned adventure and emphasized group experience. In contrast, a key component of ranch schools was the opportunity for boys to conduct overnight camping trips in small groups independent of adult supervision. Ranch schools sought to instill self-reliance in an effort to cultivate leaders and successors to power, rather than workers.¹⁴

The experience at ranch schools was largely focused on a traditional preparatory school curriculum but also reflected cultural manifestations similar to those of Boy Scouting and summer camps. The popularity of summer camps

reflected a reaction to a culture of a rapidly changing world that valued nostalgic skills of canoeing and cooking over an open fire as representative of a simpler past. There was a sense that youth no longer connected to the natural world and that immersion in the pastoral, rural setting of camps was necessary to preserve American character and values. In her analysis of summer camps, Leslie Paris found that “what the men and women who brought urban children into the woods envisioned was a kind of nostalgic countermodern that conjoined traditional aesthetics and modern sensibilities.” Camps were both “an antidote to modernity’s ills” as well as “an expression of the latest leisure and childrearing practices.”¹⁵ In a similar fashion, ranch school owners depicted the environment of the schools as reminiscent of the “Old West” situated in geographically isolated locations. At the same time, parents were assured that the West was civilized, with modern conveniences of transportation, electricity, running water, and other technological amenities available in the nearby urban centers. Ranch schools provided the experience of a West from the past without the sacrifices of living in a premodern society.

The ranch school narrative is rife with similar paradoxes and ironies that mimic those predominant in American culture during the interwar period. For example, Americans perceived the West as more democratic and less pretentious when compared to eastern and midwestern cities, yet the establishment of these most sacred of all elite institutions contributed to the region’s continual transformation. They promoted an emphasis on creating true American citizens, yet most ranch school students’ community service was limited to the immediate community through school improvement projects. Civic participation came through the pageantry of the rodeo, which in itself was a constructed ideal of the West. Rather than take advantage of their proximity to Native cultures, ranch school owners isolated students from these living communities and encouraged students to explore Indian ruins and collect Indian artifacts left by prehistoric cultures. The Hispanic heritage of the region was experienced only through trips to “Old Mexico” and the occasional interaction with one of the few Mexican workers employed at a ranch school. As a result, the ideal of Manifest Destiny through the conquest of Native Americans and Hispanics was reinforced in the minds of the elite youth since they experienced these cultures as relics of the past or as workers.

The consumerism of ranch schools diverged from the idea that the West was less tainted by luxuries and wealth than were the urban centers of the Atlantic

Seaboard and Great Lakes region. Progressive Era and interwar-period cultural critics focused much of their attention on ostentatious displays of wealth made more prevalent by the greater availability of consumer durables after World War I, as the traditional American middle-class mentality that valued family life, the work ethic, and moderation gave way to an acceptance of consumption, leisure, and immediate gratification. The rise in consumerism, especially among boys and adolescences, was the antithesis of the ideology of the self-made man that was premised on the nineteenth-century ideal that valued production over consumption.¹⁶ As consumer goods became available to a wider portion of the population, elites sought new experiences, including national and international travel, unavailable to other classes. By sending a child to a ranch school, parents commodified the West, purchasing an experience for their child that was exclusive to those of economic means.¹⁷ Although the ideal of the Old West promoted an authentic “simple life,” the purchase of consumer goods was essential to the ranch school experience. Henry John (Jack) Heinz II often wrote home requesting money for a horse, saddle, custom boots, cameras, guns, and ammunition.

Chapter 1 will explore the development of heightened national concern over the problems of the “rich man’s son” popularized through periodicals, novels, and film. Ranch schools drew students from affluent families and often established migration patterns of the elite to the Southwest from the Atlantic Seaboard and Great Lakes states. As visitors and permanent residents, they replicated the institutions of the eastern establishment as they invested capital in this developing region. Chapter 2 describes how ranch schools compared academically to their Select Sixteen counterparts and examines the evolution of professional organizations for private school educators who became the voice of expert opinion for parents. Ranch schools incorporated the new emphasis on national tourism as a means of citizenship and progressive education through cultural geography into a traditional preparatory school curriculum. The argument presented in chapter 3 focuses on how owners and headmasters constructed a version of the Old West based on easterners’ and midwesterners’ expectations that simultaneously provided a rugged environment that was safe and civilized. Chapter 4 links character education and masculinity and describes how ranch schools created an experience designed to transform boys into cowboy gentlemen. Chapter 5 describes the challenges of modern homes and families, the evolution of the preference for the boarding school atmosphere to be homelike, and the significance of women in sustaining ranch schools.

Ranch school wives countered the influence of the cowboy, acting as civilizer on the untamed frontier, and provided a stable atmosphere that seemed to solve the problems of overprotective mothers, parental absenteeism, and other situations that experts had determined were ruining American children.

The West of ranch schools was populated by families who made their living by serving affluent boys who were anticipating their future. Children have largely been left out of western history, but as Elliott West explained in his path-breaking study, children's perceptions as explorers who roamed freely with a greater sense of curiosity provide an important perspective. They were at the center of social and political life as the driving force for establishing schools and other social and cultural institutions for the purpose of transplanting traditions. The true settlers of the West came as families, "determined to build what they considered a proper social order."¹⁸ The history of western education is limited to the pre-1890 period, the "Old West," with the exception of studies that explore the Americanization efforts geared toward Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans. Other than these important works, the history of education in the West seems to be dominated by schoolmarmes who taught in one-room schoolhouses. The ranch school narrative helps to bring the history of education in the West into the twentieth century. Furthermore, by using class, gender, and race as analytical frameworks to treat the education of elite Anglo-Saxon males at ranch schools as unique, it relieves Native American boarding schools and Americanization schools from their status as "other" or outside of what is standard.

This exploration of ranch schools also expands our understanding of the history of American education and boarding schools. The two most significant developments in private school education during the interwar period were an attachment to regionalism and the professionalization of private school education. James McLachlan's seminal work, *American Boarding Schools: A Historical Study*, focuses on the East and ends in 1920, just when the ranch school story begins. The private schools established in the interwar period that centered on the unique characteristics of a particular region became distinctly American institutions. Most Select Sixteen preparatory schools drew from English precedent with little attention to the local geography or culture. Ranch schools adapted this New England boarding school model to create a unique educational experience that drew from the postwar rise in American cultural heritage tourism. Through travel to uniquely American places, students learned just as

much about America as they did about the classics, and in the process became better citizens.

The interwar period is further significant to the history of private schools because they were impacted by the rise of psychology and “child science,” which led to the creation of professional organizations specifically for headmasters. Headmasters met at conferences to share their experiences but more importantly to advance what they thought were the solutions to America’s most pressing challenges—ensuring that the next generation of leaders had the capacity to safeguard the progress of the nation. A newly created professional group dedicated to extending the boarding school experience to younger students to equip and adjust them in anticipation of attending a college preparatory school indicated their desire to expand their influence on America’s affluent families. The study of private boarding schools, ranch schools in particular, focuses attention on character education, which otherwise is subsumed under “progressive education.” There was some overlap, but their philosophies and approaches often competed. Whereas progressive education came out of the wider social reform movements of the Progressive Era, character education peaked in the 1920s, resulting from an antimodernist trend that sought to restore morality in American culture and society.¹⁹

By focusing on children and adolescents from affluent families, the social construction of interwar childhood and youth can be explored uninterrupted by the Great Depression. Although the Great Depression altered the agendas of traditionalists and modernizers, and forced some young people to postpone their dreams, the fundamental social and cultural forces of the postwar era that ushered in reliance on child science and emphasis on peer culture remained intact. The majority of families who sent their children to ranch schools maintained their economic status during the Depression, and “young people from affluent families found their lives relatively unchanged.”²⁰ However, the Depression magnified differences in class, and the visual lessons of poverty on display in public spaces for the gaze of impressionable youth may have affirmed the decision to send a child out West. An Arizona Desert School alumnus remembered vividly his astonishment at seeing “hundreds of men covered with newspapers trying to keep warm on the lower level of the Michigan Avenue Bridge as the winds of Lake Michigan whipped over them.”²¹ One headmaster used the economic circumstances of the Depression to preach thrift and value at the Valley Ranch School’s weekly chapel service. The readjustment of