A Brief History of Radford School for Girls

E. L. Hogan

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Dear Doctor Waller:

Following the requirements of the course in History 390, Studies in Regional History, I am submitting a study on "A BRIEF HISTORY OF RADFORD SCHOOL FOR GIRLS."

Respectfully yours,

E. L. Hogan

Doctor John Leroy Waller
Chairman of Graduate Council
Texas Western College
El Paso, Texas
A BRIEF HISTORY OF RADFORD  
SCHOOL FOR GIRLS  

E. L. Hogan  

Submitted as requirement of History 390, Texas Western College, El Paso, Texas  

January 2, 1952
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INTRODUCTION

While El Paso today is noted for its fine educational system, both public and private, ranging from kindergarten to college, the establishment of schools was a painful and trying process prior to the coming of the railroads in 1881.

In the early days of Spanish rule, Catholic priests provided what schooling there was for the small number of Indian and Spanish children in the little settlement of El Paso del Norte, on the south bank of the Rio Grande.

After Texas was annexed to the United States in 1845, Americans began drifting slowly into the dusty village on the north bank of the river which was destined to become the El Paso of today. The census of 1880 reported only 736 persons residing permanently in El Paso, but after 1881, when the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe railroads pushed their iron rails to "The Pass," the village began to grow rapidly.

Still, there was no organized public system of education in El Paso before 1883. As early as 1867, however, the few Americans then living here made attempts to provide teachers for their children.
M. A. Jones, a local lawyer, held regular classes in his law office, located on a corner now marked by Main Street and Mesa Avenue. Mrs. Arabella Reed opened another school in 1867-68, in the block at the intersection of San Francisco and Santa Fe Streets. Mrs. Reed had stopped off in El Paso on her way to California and opened her private school. The classes in this school were taken over in the spring of 1868 by Mrs. Frances Helen Corey Clarke of New York. Mrs. Clarke's husband had come to El Paso as Collector of Customs; later he became District Judge.

In 1870 one of early El Paso's most beloved citizens, the Rev. Joseph Wilkins Tays, opened a mission school for ten American boys and girls and a few Mexican children. "Parson" Tays, as he was known by everyone, was the first Episcopal minister in El Paso and his church building became the school house on week days.

In 1871, the State of Texas passed a law making school attendance compulsory for all children, so Parson Tays employed a woman teacher, Mary Dowell, to assist him, since some parents objected to sending their children to a male teacher, even though he be the much loved Parson Tays.

The City of El Paso was first incorporated in 1873, but the city government became inactive in 1875 and local
civil government did not return until 1880. With the advent of railroads in 1881 hordes of settlers arrived in the city and in August, 1881, the county judge appointed a school commission of three citizens to act as school trustees for city schools. Private schools continued to flourish, however, because the city school lacked funds to provide adequate facilities and pay teachers.

On March 5, 1883, the first public school, paid for by public money collected as taxes assessed on taxable property, was opened and the permanent foundation was laid for today's splendid school system. In 1884, the first superintendent was employed; he was Calvin Esterly, a retired Army officer and a graduate of West Point.¹


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**THE BEGINNINGS OF RADFORD SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

By 1910 the lusty frontier town of El Paso had acquired a more sedate appearance and its cultural development was developing rapidly. Outstanding teachers joined the public school system and the educational level advanced steadily.
One of these prominent teachers who came to El Paso in 1896 to teach mathematics in the old Central High School, was Miss Ora W. L. Slater, sister of Capt. H. D. Slater, former publisher of The El Paso Times and El Paso Herald. Miss Slater, born in Marion, Virginia, was graduated from the Washington, D. C. high school and normal-school. She finished Wellesley College in 1893 and three years later arrived in El Paso.

In 1910, Miss Slater, together with Miss Olga Tafel, and a group of far-sighted El Paso men and women, organized and opened the El Paso School for Girls, a board and day-school of high college-preparatory standards. This school immediately received recognition among the leading girls' schools of the nation.

Miss Slater was deeply interested in Latin and Greek literature, Greek philosophy, English poetry, and in classic art. She made many tours to Europe and was always a close student of world affairs.

El Paso School for Girls was established in Sunset Heights. The first president of the board of directors was J. W. Kirkpatrick.
In 1917 the Board of Directors decided that bigger and more permanently located facilities were necessary for the school. Especially was a need for more grounds felt. Mr. A. Swartz, the chairman of the board, was active in the choice of location, purchase of ground and construction of a permanent building. The building was made large enough to care for offices, dining-room, class-rooms and quarters for boarding students. The board financed the construction by a bank loan which was renewable from year to year. At the time the Radfords bought the school the note had been reduced to $32,600.

On September 1, 1918 school for that year opened in the new location, at the corner of Hastings and what is now Radford Streets.

The original grounds, two whole city blocks, are still the property of the school. If later additions are ever needed the school will have ample ground since the north block is still unused.³

³Mrs. Frank Feuille, Interview, December 26, 1951.
Miss Slater retired from active school work in 1924, and others carried on the work of directing the institution she had founded sixteen years before. By 1926, the resident pupils in El Paso School for Girls numbered 21. Girls in school were from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Mexico. The school was an accredited school with the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools; any graduate of the school could enter, without examination, any Southern or Western college, including the University of Texas.

In the 25th Annual Report of the College Entrance Examination Board through which students enter the best colleges in the country, El Paso School for Girls was listed among the 192 public and private schools which had honorable mention for candidates having the highest ratings in entrance examinations.

The school advertised then, as now, that "El Paso is an ideal place for girls who need a high altitude and a dry climate to finish their college preparatory work."³

³The El Paso Times, March 6, 1926, May 18, 1931.

Transition of the old El Paso School for Girls into the present day Radford School for Girls had its beginnings in 1927 with the appointment of a remarkable woman educator,
Doctor Lucinda de Leftwich Templin, as principal. She had been academic dean at Lindenwood College, St. Charles, Missouri, and had received her college education at the University of Missouri, where she took a Bachelor of Arts Degree in political science, a Bachelor of Science degree in education, a Master of Arts degree in history, and then took a Doctor of Philosophy degree in sociology.

Doctor Templin, upon her arrival in El Paso, found an enrollment of 74 in the El Paso School for Girls, a 14-teacher faculty, and a $45,000 mortgage. Not long after she became the headmistress, economic conditions beset the nation which resulted in the 1930s Depression years. While the high standards of the school remained unimpaired, the institution's financial situation became precarious, to say the least.

During her studies at the University of Missouri, Doctor Templin had become the close friend of Mr. and Mrs. G. A. Radford of St. Louis, wealthy philanthropists, who had helped many boys and girls through college. She told them of El Paso School for Girls financial needs and for four years the Radfords contributed as much as $3500 annually to the school, and also helped several girls continue their education at the school by tuition payments for them.
In 1928, Doctor Templin persuaded Mr. and Mrs. Radford to visit El Paso and make a personal inspection and survey of the school which they had helped so much financially. The couple fell in love with El Paso, with its climate and its people, and resolved to do more for the struggling little school.

On May 17, 1931, during the RADFORD IS FORMED 20th annual commencement exercises held on the school lawn, came the momentous announcement:

Mr. and Mrs. Radford had acquired ownership of the El Paso School for Girls and had renamed it the Radford School for Girls. They had assumed an indebtedness against the institution of $32,600, and revealed plans for immediate expansion, including the expenditure of $15,000 for an 11-room addition to the main building and the repair and repainting of the existing building.

The benefactors planned to place the school on a basis where it would not only rank among the outstanding preparatory institutions of this country, but also "where it can render the greatest service in the educational world."

They stipulated that the school would be operated on a non-profit basis and any surplus that might be accumulated was to be at once put back into the school, either by adding additional courses or for plant expansion.
They were determined to make Radford an outstanding private school located in the great Southwest. They agreed to supply the necessary funds for current and normal operation of the school if a deficit should occur; the permanence of a private school for girls was assured by the action of the Radfords.

The announcement of the change in the destinies of the school was made during the commencement exercises by Mr. Radford, who emphasized that the inducement for his actions in taking over the institution was the fact "that Doctor Templin is steering the ship and, knowing her as we do, we are willing to put our dollars with her intelligence and energy." 4

4The El Paso Times, May 18, 1931.

Mr. Radford announced that Doctor Templin would continue as principal and that the same board of directors, composed of prominent El Paso business and professional men, would continue to manage the school. He expressed the hope that the fame of Radford School would grow all over the United States.

Members of the board of directors during the transitional year were:

1. W. S. Crombie, president
2. Brent N. Rickard, vice-president
3. W. H. Peterson, secretary-treasurer
4. A. T. White
5. G. E. Spinnler
6. J. W. Kirkpatrick
7. Leon A. Rosenfield,
8. H. T. Ponsford
9. I. Weiss
10. Louis Zork
11. J. Wylie Brown
12. Mr. Radford became chairman of the board.

The woman's advisory board at that time was composed of:

1. Mrs. Z. T. White, president
2. Mrs. A. P. Averill
3. Mrs. C. N. Bassett
4. Mrs. D. V. Fennessy
5. Mrs. Sam Watkins
6. Mrs. Will T. Owen
7. Mrs. W. W. Turney
8. Mrs. Harris Walthall
9. Mrs. Louis Zork

Graduates at this historic commencement were:
1. Miss Vivian Webb of Fabens, Texas
2. Miss Beverly West of Engledood, Kansas
3. Miss John Ann James of Amarillo, Texas
5. Miss Margaret Dolth of Elmore, Oklahoma
6. Miss Marilyn Fox of El Paso, Texas
7. Miss Martha Baldridge of El Paso, Texas
8. Miss Hattie Wisbrun of Chihuahua, Mexico
9. Miss Elizabeth Van Ginkle of Lamar, Colorado
10. Miss Isabel Matson of Tererror, New Mexico

Mrs. Radford, during her remarks at the 1931 commencement exercises, declared that "our need today is womanhood. We need that more than anything else. Reading, writing, arithmetic and other subjects, of course, are well enough, but it is the character building element in this school that makes me love it."  

5 The El Paso Times, May 18, 1931.

By August 30, 1931, Mr. and Mrs. Radford had spent about $50,000 on the school, and the new addition of eleven single rooms with necessary shower baths had been completed. The entire building had been repaired and put in first class condition. Under the direction of Paul Harvey, a member of the advisory board, the grounds were greatly improved and beautified.

Mrs. Radford, touring Europe during the summer, wrote that upon her return in September she would provide an
endowment of $50,000 in order that further improvements might be made to the school.

The financial assistance provided by the Radfords came at a most opportune time. Because of the Great Depression, many parents could not send their children to schools of higher learning. Radford School, however, was able to keep the cost of tuition, board and room at a minimum because of the generous contributions of Mr. and Mrs. Radford during this period.

Doctor Templin announced as a school policy that "The Radford School for Girls hopes to gradually provide for its students a curriculum which will insure:

1. The general schooling which is essential to the development of both the boy and the girl.

2. For the sake of the community, as well as the individual—preparation for self-maintenance, whether this duty is immediately imperative, or remotely possible.

3. Adequate preparation for the responsibilities involved in the direction of a home.

4. The best use of leisure time."  

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6 The El Paso Times, August 30, 1931.

On March 7, 1933, during a party given by the Mothers Association in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Radford, Brent Rickard,
president of the board of directors, announced that the $30,000 mortgage on the school had been paid in full by the Radfords, further assuring the security of the school.

A few months later, El Pasoans and everyone associated with the Radford School for Girls were saddened when George Arthur Radford, 69, died in his summer cottage on Plum Lake, Sayner, Wisconsin. Death occurred at 10 a.m. on July 8, 1933. He had been in ill health for several months and had left El Paso two months previously to visit in Wisconsin.

Mr. Radford was born in Kentucky on Feb. 28, 1864, the son of poor parents. The family later moved to Missouri, where he received his education. Working as a railroad section hand, he managed to obtain a college education and for a while earned his living as a teacher. In 1893, he met and married Miss Julia Brown, daughter of Paul Brown, one of St. Louis' wealthiest and most influential men. Mr. Radford became connected with the American Tobacco Company and rose to district manager, with headquarters in St. Louis. He later became president of the Paul Brown Investment Company and was named a partner in Paul Brown Company, two of the largest stock and bond companies in St. Louis. His own struggle for an education led him in later life to help scores of American boys and girls to secure an education.
Under terms of Mr. Radford's will, $50,000 was left in trust to Radford School for Girls.  

Mrs. Radford continued an active interest in the School for Girls and was a frequent visitor in El Paso. On the evening of May 24, 1934, she was the guest of honor at a banquet in Hotel Paso del Norte, with more than 300 guests from El Paso and Fort Bliss attending.

Expressing her appreciation for the dinner, Mrs. Radford said:

The dream of my girlhood has come true ... This dream was to do something for girls. I longed to be able to give them a vision by which to live—for people without vision die. This possibility has come to fruition through the Radford School for Girls and El Paso's co-operation.

Among the other speakers was Brigadier General George Vidmer of Fort Bliss, who replied for the Army:

Let Radford educate the girls, our young officers will marry them, for the ideals taught girls in the school fit them to be mothers of future generations of men.

Commencement exercises at Radford often form the setting for important announcements concerning the future
of the school. Such was the case on May 21, 1937, when Doctor Templin revealed plans for the construction of a new administration building, estimated to cost $55,000, exclusive of equipment and furnishings. Mrs. Radford was in El Paso to supervise awarding of the contract, which went to H. T. Ponsford and Sons. The plans were drawn by Percy McGhee and Guy L. Frazer, El Paso architects.

The new building, named The Julia Brown Administration Building in honor of Mrs. Radford, her maiden name, was completed early in 1938. The architecture corresponded with that of the existing structure to the south. There were five class rooms in the basement; offices, kindergarten, and five classrooms on the first floor; three laboratories, a study hall, library, and two classrooms on the second floor. Indian and Mexican themes were followed in interior decorations and many of the rooms were named for important historical and literary personages. The administration building was erected and furnished at a cost of $70,000, the gift of Mrs. Radford.

Three years later, on January 23, 1941, Mrs. Radford died in her home in Webster Grove, Missouri, at the age of 71. Her will, filed in St. Louis on January 27, 1941, specified bequests of $741,500, with one-fourth of the residue to be placed in trust, the income going to Radford School.
While no estimate was placed on the entire value of her estate, she had inherited about $2,000,000 from the estates of her father, Paul Brown, and her husband. Mrs. Radford bequeathed $25,000 to Doctor Templin, principal of Radford School for Girls.\(^9\)

\(^9\) *The El Paso Times*, January 24 and 28, 1941.

According to Doctor Templin, the combined endowments left by Mr. and Mrs. Radford total nearly half a million dollars and during their life time they spent over $300,000 on additions and improvements, including a new administration building and much equipment.

The bequest is unique in the history of education, Doctor Templin says, explaining that the reason these generous benefactors were willing to finance this educational experiment was that they were deeply interested in the program which had been established by the present administration. Radford provides for young girls a type of education not obtainable elsewhere. A distinctive curriculum for women has been worked out and in addition to the usual preparatory school courses, the girls are trained to meet the problems of living, which, Doctor Templin insists, is the true purpose of education. Spiritual and physical
development are stressed while maintaining a well balanced academic program.

Doctor Templin is proud of the fact that the large staff of teachers at Radford have attended outstanding colleges in every part of the United States. This broad training and large staff means that the usual classroom work is vastly enriched and a broader outlook and greater stimulation is given the students.

Radford classes are kept small and the students have a great deal more individual attention from the instructors than is possible in a school where the classes are large and the ratio of teachers to students is smaller. The limited enrollment makes it possible for any student to have friendly contacts with the principal and other members of the faculty, and at the same time to know personally all members of the student body. Because the school is small and is operated as a home it is possible to combine social training and experience with the educational work."^{10}

^{10}The El Paso Times, 1944.

Radford School for Girls, situated close to Fort Bliss, chose as the principal speaker for the 40th annual
commencement Major General John L. Homer, at that time commanding general of the Army Post. His topic was "What Will You Contribute?"

Awards, gifts and scholarships had been increasing steadily and those presented at the 40th commencement, on May 24, 1950, were the following:

Awards: Bausch and Lombe Scientific Award; Time Magazine Award in Current Affairs; Latin Junior Classical League Award; National French Contest, two medals; $4500 anonymous gift; $500 Fulwiler Scholarship, by H. D. Fulwiler; $250 Ella Rice Templin Scholarship, given by Doctor Templin in memory of her mother; $100 Elizabeth Merrill Bell Scholarship, given by Mrs. A. P. Coles in memory of her mother; $50 Sudie Beall Neff Scholarship, given by E. E. Neff in memory of his wife.11


In the spring of 1950, Doctor Templin invited an evaluation committee composed of El Paso Public School and Texas Western College educators to make a study of Radford School for Girls. The committee was headed by Byron England, director of instruction in El Paso Public Schools, and Robert L. Springers, local high schools supervisor.
One of the most outstanding features of Radford School, the 21-member committee reported after a three-day study, was a curriculum adapted to the needs of the students rather than demanding that the student be fitted into the curriculum.

"Radford School," the report said, "achieves results which place it in the upper bracket of successful schools in Texas, whether the schools be public or private."

The committee found that Radford is in the extremely fortunate position of being able to guarantee small classes, which in turn provides for teaching that is individualized to an extent not found elsewhere in the state.

Radford's full right to claim accreditation by both the Texas Education Agency and the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools was reaffirmed.

The committee noted outstanding superiorities in every department of both the lower and secondary school and emphasized Radford's individualized teaching, as evidenced in superior teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil relations, attention to the individual differences and needs of the pupils, and increased skills in the study of foreign languages, speech, music, art, general reading, and other studies.

There was a complete absence of tension or strain on the part of the pupils during the almost constant visitation over a three-day period, showing the unusual poise
developed in Radford students. Radford is effectively achieving the purposes set forth in its philosophy of education and its major objectives, the report continued, listing the objectives as follows:

1. To provide a thorough and balanced preparation for advanced educational training.

2. To develop special talents and skills in individual students.

3. To instill proper work habits and a mastery of the tools of learning.

4. To develop desirable social attitudes.

5. To encourage interest and participation in community affairs.

6. To aid students in developing a worthy philosophy of life.

One of the significant strong points of the Radford School secondary school, the committee reported, was the Foreign Language Department. Nearly all the second-year group in both French and Spanish showed complete comprehension and the ability to carry on an ordinary conversation with the visiting committee, which the committee said was an unusual degree of fluency for this level. Similar extraordinary progress was shown in the fields of music, reading and speech.
The committee members, without exception, were impressed by the pupils' 100 per cent participation in the upper school's activities program. Radford offers every opportunity to exercise leadership, and an individual pupil activity record is kept on each student.

Radford's classes are divided into the upper and lower levels--corresponding to the grade and high school levels.

Courses on the high school level include English, Latin, Spanish, French, American history, ancient history, modern history, sociology, biology, chemistry, physics, algebra, plane geometry, solid geometry, trigonometry, typing, shorthand, bookkeeping, home economics, cooking and sewing.

Fine arts courses include dramatics, voice, instrumental, speech and painting.

Physical education is a required course.

Many traditions and customs have become a part of Radford through the years. One of these is the "Burning of the Yule Log," the traditional Christmas ceremony. The Yule Log is lighted by a junior girl student and gives the response to a senior, who has explained the meaning of the ceremony. The annual ritual provides that the Senior Class pass on the tradition to the Junior Class.
Another Christmas custom was inaugurated in 1946. The girls collect and contribute money which is turned over to a charity chosen by the students.

In January or February of each year students present an annual dancing and gymnastic demonstration in the YWCA.

THE MUSEUM

Many visitors at Radford School for Girls are surprised to find a large display of war weapons on the grounds. The weapons, representing several nations which participated in World War II are a part of the Radford Museum, a pet project of Doctor Templin. The Museum contains a collection of war relics surpassed by few schools.

Purpose of the Museum, Doctor Templin explains, is to familiarize her students with past wars if they are to be active in promotion of world peace.

There is a large collection of autographed photographs of world figures, including General Dwight Eisenhower, the late Jan Masaryk of Czechoslovakia, and top Government officials of the United States.

The Museum articles are too numerous to enumerate separately, but on the list are the flag that flew over General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters in the Philippines, which was recaptured from the Japanese; full regalia for a
U.S. paratrooper; German war decorations and rifles used in the war; a rusty Japanese water canteen; a German parachute, camouflaged in beautiful shades of green, red, blue and other colors; an English gas mask; a collection of British ration books; an American Silver Star, recipient unknown; letters from Italian, German and British prisoners of war; collection of invasion money issued by the Japanese in Dutch, Chinese and English; National Broadcasting Company recordings of speeches by Allied leaders and commentators on D-Day; and a caricature of the former Russian ambassador to the United States, Maxim Litvinoff, sketched by his wife.

A valuable addition to the museum is the flag carried by Major Gen. Terry Allen's 1st Infantry Division in the initial landing at Arzew, North Africa. General Allen, now retired and living in El Paso, also flew the flag from his vehicle when he entered Oran on Nov. 10, 1942.

On April 25, 1949, Major General John L. Homer, then commanding general of Fort Bliss, presented 13 new pieces of equipment to the War Museum on behalf of the United States Army.

Speaking on the lawn in front of the Julia Brown Administration Building, General Homer told students and guests that the gun collection should serve as a challenge to the younger generation to establish an effective peace and a more noble way of life.
The museum also is notable for Doctor Templin's personal collection of Napoleana, considered one of the most complete in the country. Former students and friends continue to add to the many prints, personal items and books which she has collected for many years.

DOCTOR LUCINDA DE LEFTWICH TEMPLIN

The high standing of Radford School for Girls is due in large part to its principal, Doctor Lucinda de Leftwich Templin, who has directed the institution since 1927.

Before a meeting of the Mothers' Association of Radford, on September 22, 1934, Doctor Templin summarized her philosophy of education:

"If the purpose of education is preparation for living, it must include development of character, absolute honesty, and recognition that each person is an individual."
Doctor Templin has gained a national reputation as a blunt speaker, her subject often being "Problem Parents."

In a talk before members of the El Paso Rotary Club, on August 11, 1949, the school principal declared that parents were unfair to their children when they wanted to protect them against adverse circumstances and criticism. Some parents, she said, thought that school rules were perfect—except for their own children.

Stressing character development and scrupulous honesty, she asserted that girls must be trained to be fine wives and mothers, must know how to operate their homes economically, must have good manners, must have the ability to think quickly and accurately and have an appreciation of the best in art, literature and music. 14


Doctor Templin was the subject of an educational article in Time, the national news weekly magazine, in March, 1950. Shortly before the article appeared, she had been touring the East and Middle West, lecturing to service clubs on the failure of parents to meet their responsibilities.

The woman educator's sociological studies have brought her national recognition and for eight years she was a member
of the National Committee of Prisons and Prison Labor. As part of her work for this committee she investigated eight of the larger prisons in the East. She also served on a committee of 12 called to Washington to draft legislation that later was proposed to Congress for the establishment of a National Prison for Women at Alderson, West Virginia.15

15El Paso Times, Sept. 14, 1939

She keeps in close contact with her girls after graduation and one of the features of her annual tour of the East is the alumnae luncheon held in New York City, attended by Radford graduates attending college in and around New York.

In 1949, during a summer lecture tour before prominent West Coast service clubs, Doctor Templin was presented with the 1949 Award for Americanism by the Bellarmine-Jefferson High School in Burbank, California. Inscribed on the document designated as the Americanism Award of the First Company Bellarmine Jefferson Guards, St. Robert Bellarmine Parish School of Burbank, California, is the following:
To teach children that Americans can live as friends without sacrifice of either racial or religious ideals. To enable children to better understand that the secret of the Brotherhood of Man is fidelity to the Fatherhood of God, not the school, nor the state is the source of American's rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. They are invited to honor the following representatives of the Jewish, the Protestant and Catholic friends who have been notable in the championship of the spiritual values in Americanism.

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