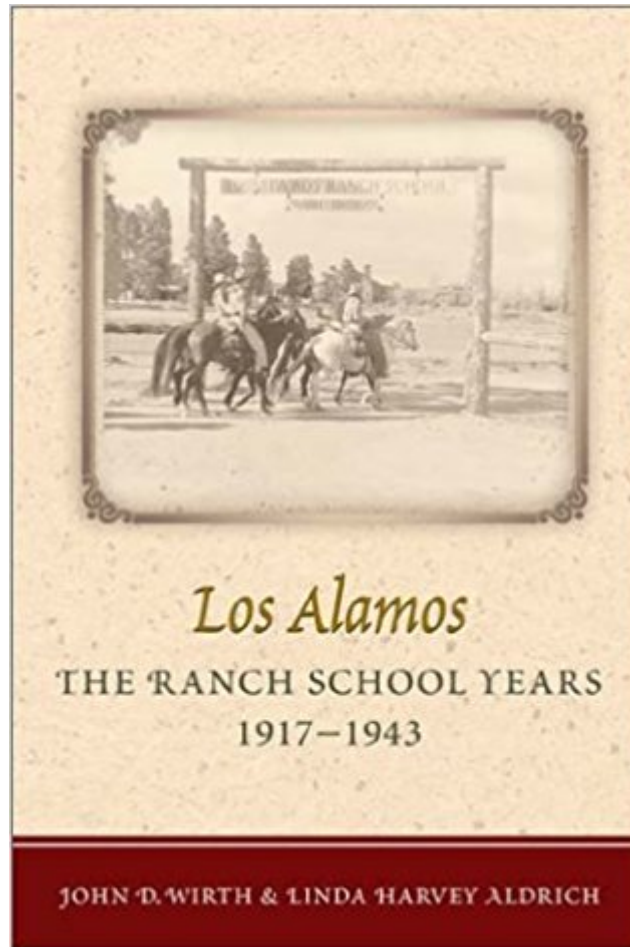




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# Los Alamos--The Ranch School Years, 1917-1943



## Synopsis

Twenty-five years before the Manhattan Project created the town of Los Alamos, the Pajarito Plateau was home to an elite prep school for boys, ages twelve to eighteen. The Los Alamos Ranch School combined a robust outdoor life and a carefully cultivated wilderness experience with a rigorous academic program and the structured discipline of a Boy Scout troop, perfectly mirroring the Progressive Era's quest for perfection. John Wirth's father, Cecil, taught at the school and directed its summer camp. John spent his early childhood at the school along with his brother Tim, later a U.S. Senator from Colorado. Drawing on oral accounts, memoirs, and archival documents, as well as John's firsthand knowledge and family lore, the authors situate the school within the educational trends of the day and New Mexico's cultural milieu. Wirth and Aldrich examine the influence of the school's controversial director, Albert J. Connell, who was roundly disliked by two of the best-known students, Gore Vidal and William S. Burroughs. Many other students reported their time at the school to be a profoundly positive, often life-changing, experience. Additional chapters recount the growing-up experiences of ranch workers' children and the role the school played in their lives and those of area residents.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Wirth and Aldrich have succeeded in writing a thoughtful institutional biography of a western boarding school of uncommon character." (Western Historical Quarterly)"The school comes alive for us. . . LARS should not be forgotten." (Santa Fe New Mexican)"This is the definitive book on the Los

Alamos Ranch School." (New Mexico Magazine)

Wirth and Aldrich examine the Los Alamos Ranch School, an elite prep school for boys, ages twelve to eighteen. In existence between the two World Wars, the school's curriculum combined a robust outdoor life with a rigorous academic program mirroring the Progressive Era's quest for perfection.

This is an excellent book, particularly for anyone curious about Los Alamos history. Most people know about the Manhattan Project and the war-time development of the first atomic bomb. This book steps back and reveals the local history and culture of a boys school that was part boy scout training, part classical schooling and part health retreat. A must read for anyone who enjoys New Mexico history and I am grateful that someone was willing and able to pull together a very readable history of "pre-war" Los Alamos.

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