

# Hubbell Trading Post

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Hubbell Trading Post  
National Historic Site

## The Long Walk–Hwéeldi

For centuries before the coming of European settlers, The Navajo (Diné-The People) were accustomed to roaming freely over the vast distances of the great Southwest. This is the land that their Holy People had created for them, “Dinétaḥ,” the land within their Four Sacred Mountains. Life was hard, but good. They traded with neighboring Pueblo tribes, which enriched them both materially and spiritually. Mother Earth supplied them with everything they needed: clothing, medicine, shelter, water and food.

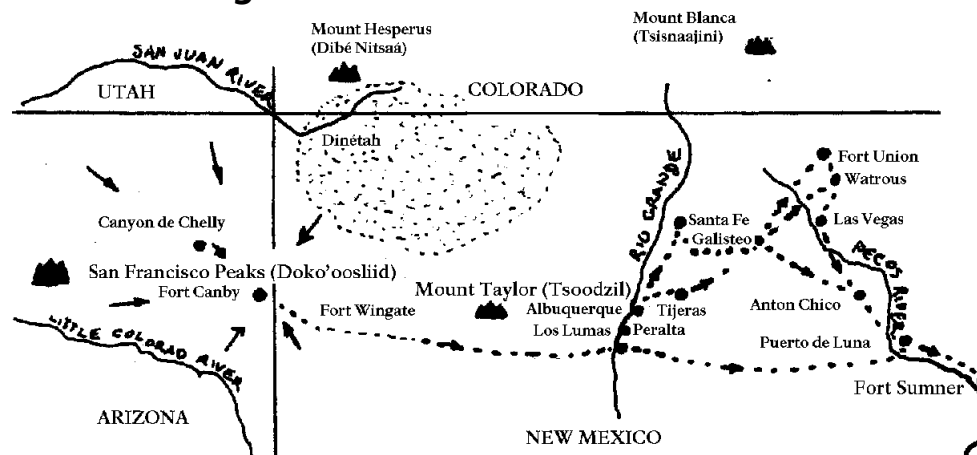
Spaniards came in the 16th century, introducing them to horses, cattle, and sheep, their religion and slavery. From the time of Spanish settlement to the occupation of Euro-Americans, Navajo history was marked by missionary activity, slave-raiding, warfare, broken treaties, challenges to peace and growing distrust from both Navajos and Euro-Americans.

When the United States took possession of the southwestern territories in 1846 after the war with Mexico, the Euro-American inhabitants were promised protection from tribes perceived as warlike, such as the Navajo and Apache. Military posts were established within Navajo country, but the Diné fiercely resisted the intrusion into their sacred land. The oral history of the Diné is to protect this land that the Holy people had created for them. The Four Sacred Mountains were created for the Diné and while within them, they are protected. In the early 1860s, American expansion continued west into Dinétaḥ. General James H. Carleton believed gold existed within Navajo country and he wanted to, “*establish a military post in the very heart of the gold country. The people will flock into the country (once the Navajo are removed), and will soon farm and have stock enough for the mines...*” Often, throughout history, the lure of gold was the motivation for terrifying campaigns around the world.

In 1863, Carleton ordered Colonel Christopher “Kit” Carson to follow the “scorched earth” policy to destroy Navajo subsistence, break up family units, and round up the Navajo population. The People fled, hiding in canyons and mountains. Carson’s troops burned their crops, killed livestock, and massacred men, women, and children. Faced with starvation and so much loss, many Navajo surrendered during the winter of 1863-1864. After surrendering, more than 8,000 Navajos were forced to march in “The Long Walk,” over 300 miles to a flat, 40-square-mile wind-swept reservation in east-central New Mexico, located on the east bank of the Pecos River, known as Fort Sumner or Bosque Redondo.



### Routes Used on the Long Walk



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From the start, the reservation experiment was doomed; Navajos had lived for generations in dispersed family groups and possessed no pattern of communal living on the scale imposed by the military. Pests, drought, and hail destroyed their crops. Irrigation water from the Pecos River contained so much salt that the land lost its productivity. Wood was scarce. Comanches raided and confiscated their livestock. Thousands of Diné died from diseases, starvation, and exposure. They believed that their Holy People had turned against them too. The People longed to go home.

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Cage the badger and he will try to  
regain his native hole.  
Chain the eagle and he will  
strive to gain his freedom  
And though he fails,  
will lift his head and  
look up to the sky...  
A Navajo leader, 1865

When the Navajo were first created,  
four mountains and four rivers  
were pointed out to us...  
that was to be our country...  
I think our coming here has been the cause  
of much death among us.  
Barboncito, Head Navajo man, 1868



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In May of 1868, a federal peace commission headed by General William Sherman arrived at Fort Sumner to investigate complaints and to hear the Diné claims. Barboncito was chosen as the spokesperson for the entire Diné and three days later the two sides agreed to the Treaty of 1868. The Diné were to return to their homeland at last, closing this bleak episode in their history. But the memories of the suffering of Hwéeldi remain a dark cloud over the Diné even to this day.

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After we get back to our country,  
it will brighten up again,  
and the Navajo will be  
as happy as the land.  
Black clouds will rise,  
and there will be plenty of rain.  
Corn will grow in abundance  
and everything looks happy.  
Barboncito, 1868