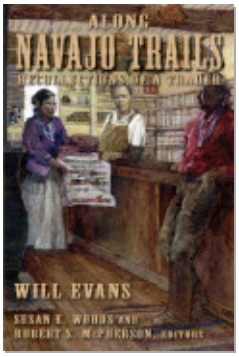
Will Evans, Trader to the Navajos



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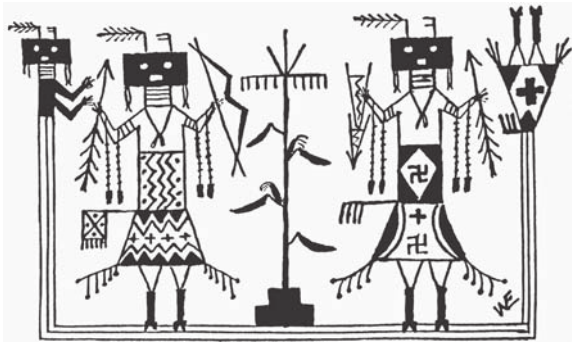


Mormon Traders in the Southwest

The American Southwest has been a place of sharp images and contrasting cultures. Starting with the prehistoric then historic Native Americans, moving to Spanish *entradas* and settlement, continuing through the Mexican period with the entrance of the Anglo-American, and ending with today's metropolises, a colorful saga of expansion and growth has played against a backdrop of antiquity and stability. Indeed, one of the most prominent appeals used in tourism and sales promotion is to call upon lingering, romanticized notions of yesteryear. Stagecoaches sell banks; rabbits and Monument Valley monoliths market batteries; and Indian tribal names denote sport utility vehicles. Image sells.

One enduring and often romanticized image is that of the Navajo trading post. Frank McNitt's classic, *The Indian Traders,* provides a broad survey of this fascinating phenomenon, where two cultures exchanged products and fostered a series of social as well as economic changes.[1] Following a brief chapter that combines the Spanish and Mexican eras and a cursory nod to Charles and William Bent's establishment in southern Colorado, the book launches into a detailed exposition of trade with the Navajo in New Mexico and Arizona, with less information on activity in Utah and Colorado. Not surprisingly, the majority of its pages focus on the last quarter of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth centuries, encapsulating the most formative period and a good portion of the "golden years" that ended in the 1930s. Readers are indebted to the author for his excellent overview of a complex period.

Although McNitt is very thorough in some aspects of this overview, there is one topic that did not receive its due, and that is the role of the Mormon traders in the Southwest and especially in the Four Corners area. While Jacob Hamblin and John D. Lee were two dramatic figures who belonged to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon), many others escaped McNitt's attention. Hardly mentioned are the large families and numerous individuals who spread throughout the region, creating extended social and economic networks that fed the posts and energized the trade. This is not to suggest that the LDS Church took an active role in directing this economic system; rather, those involved chose trading as their occupation because of individual circumstances.

The LDS Church from its inception has fostered expansion. By 1877, "more than 300 settlements had been established in the present states of Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Arizona, Nevada, California, and Hawaii."[2] Church missionaries encouraged converts to gather to "Zion" and build a physical Kingdom of God on the earth. The pattern of growth continued into the early twentieth century as the church's population swelled due to high birthrates. Many members came from the British Isles and northern Europe, where land, freedom to worship, and a desire to commune with the Saints proved to be powerful inducements to migrate.

As the Great Basin filled with small communities, expansion pushed into Nevada and northern Arizona. Many of those people who settled on the Little Colorado River were called by church leadership to take their families, apply their skills, and create a community of Latter-day Saints on the borders of the "Lamanites," a term from the Book of Mormon denoting ancestry for some of the Native Americans in North America. Beginning in the mid-1870s, planned settlements on the Little Colorado sprang up along the banks of its usually torpid brown waters.[3] Cameron, Sunset, Saint Joseph, Woodruff, Taylor, and Saint Johns were just some of those early settlements where Mormons went to practice church programs of communal living. While they never achieved the ideal state of equality taught in church doctrine, the people in these towns persevered by means of a more economically viable system.

As the tentacles of expansion shifted out of the Great Basin and into the Southwest, they placed Mormons in more direct and continuous contact with southwestern Indians such as the Navajo. Other settlements along the periphery of the Navajo domain followed the Little Colorado settlements. During the 1880s, the Four Corners region experienced a flurry of town building in Bluff and Monticello, Utah; Fruitland, Farmington, Waterflow, and Kirtland, New Mexico; and Mancos, Colorado. Each of

these towns struggled economically to survive in the austere environment of the northern Colorado Plateau.

All were initially based on subsistence farming and animal husbandry. Eventually, other people joined the original pioneers and furthered specialization in trades and services supporting the small but growing communities. Still, the question persisted as to how a small settlement, removed from efficient transportation and faced with small-scale production, could enter into the economic mainstream of the late nineteenth century. Part of the answer arose in the trade of wool and blankets sold by the Navajo.

Mormon traders brought some important features and effective skills to this trade. Considered by outsiders to be somewhat clannish, church members enjoyed the advantage of both an official and unofficial "grapevine" that made possibilities and options available. Some LDS members were "called" as part of their church responsibility to go and settle an area. They remained until "released" from their time of service and then were free to go wherever they wished. When converts from the East or from foreign countries arrived in Salt Lake City, church officials might direct them to areas where specific talents could be used in an existing community. Others went where members who shared a similar heritage lived.

The more informal grapevine existed for those mobile seekers of opportunity. As new lands opened and local economies developed, word spread. While individuals were certainly involved, entire households might transplant to an area of enterprise. Families, Mormon and non-Mormon alike, who lived in rural America, tended to be large. Thus family networks often lived in the same area, shared in a supportive economic endeavor, and prospered or failed according to their fortunes. This was particularly true of those who settled in the Four Corners area and traded with the Navajo.

Take, for instance, Joseph Lehi Foutz.[4] He spent his younger years exploring and working with Jacob Hamblin among the Paiute, Hopi, and Navajo tribes. Beginning in the 1870s, he started a career in trading that did not end until his death on March 19, 1907. In the meantime, his family of sons and daughters had become entrenched in the business so that by 1940, an army of thirty-seven relatives, all of whom were LDS, were involved in trading.[5] What follows is a brief synopsis of some of this activity. It reads like a directory of posts on or near the Navajo Reservation, illustrating the pervasive nature of the Mormon trader.

In 1878 Joseph Foutz moved to Lees Ferry in Arizona to escape persecution by federal officials against Mormons practicing polygamy. Shortly

Fruitland Trading Company, 1908–1911, owned by Frank L. Noel and a Mr. Cline.

after that, he began trading at Moenkopi then moved to Moenave on the periphery of the Hopi Reservation. Joseph Lee, son of John D. Lee, opened two posts to the Navajo—Red Lake and Blue Canyon—where Foutz worked before moving to Tuba City to trade. In 1900, the federal government bought the lands from the settlers in this community and made it part of the Navajo Reservation. Foutz arrived in Kirtland, New Mexico, where opportunity encouraged the expansion of his trading business, which was now joined by his six sons. Add to them sons-in-law and their families—three of the most prominent names being Tanner, Dustin, and Powell—and there appears a far-flung network of social and economic relations spread across the Navajo Reservation.

Those familiar with this area will realize that the following list of posts served by this net of relations is only indicative and not comprehensive. In New Mexico were Gallegos, Beclabito, Tocito, Sanostee, Smith Lake, Burnham, Bisti, Whitewater, Pinedale, Shiprock, Sheep Springs, Tó Łigaai, and Coyote Canyon. Arizona posts included Keams Canyon, White Cone, Redrock, Teec Nos Pos, Red Mesa, Dinnehotso, Piñon, Sawmill, Wide Ruins, Hunter's Point, Tuba City, Moenave, Moenkopi, Greasewood, and Cedar Ridge. Located in Utah were Aneth, Bluff, Mexican Hat, and Blanding, while in Colorado there was the Mancos Creek Trading Post.

Traders after a meeting with Superintendent William T. Shelton at the Shiprock Agency in 1912. Half of the traders identified are Mormon (M). *Top row, left to right:* Sheldon Dustin (M), John Walker (M), Jesse Foutz (M), Ike Goldsmith, Bert Dustin (M), Frank Noel (M), Alphonso (Fonnie) Nelson, June Foutz (M), Bruce Bernard, unidentified government employee. *Third row:* Herbert Redshaw (government farmer), "Al" Foutz (M), Olin C. Walker, Will Evans (M), John Hunt (M), two unidentified. *Second row:* [James M.?] Holly, Frank Mapel, Edith Mapel, Crownpoint agent Samuel B. Stacher, George Bloomfield (M), Mrs. Ed Davies, and Ed Davies with daughter Mary. *Bottom row:* Unknown, Arthur J. Newcomb, Supt. Shelton, Joe Tanner (M), Louisa Wade Wetherill, John Wetherill.

For well over a half century, this family, sharing either blood or conjugal ties, had a significant impact on the Navajo trade.

Other Mormons and their families also played an important role in the posts. Ira Hatch, like Foutz, began his official interaction with American Indians under the direction of Jacob Hamblin while serving a mission, as early as 1854. He also became conversant in Paiute, Hopi, Ute, and Navajo and eventually moved to Fruitland in the Four Corners region. With the assistance of family members, he became extensively involved in trade with the Navajos. Other LDS families who figured prominently in

this enterprise during the last part of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries in the Four Corners area included Hunt, Hyde, Stolworthy, Ashcroft, Burnham, Kennedy, Arrington, Bloomfield, Washburn, and Blair. An informal survey among relatives in Will Evans's family listed by name over fifty individuals with LDS connections involved in the trading business.[6]

Many non-Mormon traders also operated posts. It is almost impossible to determine what percentage of traders over a broad period of time was LDS because of the high turnover in posts and the comings and goings of the various owners. Many stores changed hands a dozen or more times within as many years, and so an in-depth owner genealogy of each post would have to be performed—an almost herculean task. Also, there were some posts that may have started with an LDS trader, such as Charles Nelson, who later sold his business to non-LDS Arthur and Franc Newcomb in 1913. The post became famous because of Franc's work in preserving various aspects of Navajo culture, while Nelson is relegated to the mists of history.[7] The only people who really kept track of post ownership were the traders themselves, and most of them have passed away.

What is needed is a snapshot of a certain period of history to determine trader percentages. Fortunately for our purpose, just such a photograph is found in McNitt's *The Indian Traders*. In 1912, William T. Shelton, superintendent of the Northern Navajo Agency located in Shiprock, held a meeting with the traders under his jurisdiction and had a picture taken. There are nontraders pictured in the photo, as well as some family members of participants. Once those who were not traders or who have not been identified are removed and families are counted together, twenty traders or trading families are depicted, half of whom are LDS. No doubt, not all posts were represented in the meeting, but this gives a good indication of the prominence of the Mormon faith among the traders of the Four Corners region at this time.

Another means of quantifying the extent of the trading industry in this region is with a quick perusal of a local history compiled by Rosetta Biggs in 1977.[8] Entitled *Our Valley,* this hefty tome is primarily an account of the people in and near Farmington, New Mexico, from the town's inception to the time of publication, although the majority of the work centers on the earlier years. In this book, the author identifies 150 families that range from single individuals to groups of a dozen relatives. It is not an economic history and follows no particular format, some of the entries, which were submitted by family members, are as short as a paragraph and others a half-dozen pages. Fifty-nine of the 150 families, or 40 percent, mentioned being involved in some aspect of trading, either

Traders with Shelton (retired) at Shiprock Fair, 1930. Ten of the thirteen traders identified in this photo are Mormon (M). *Front row, left to right:* Asenebá Martin, Arthur J. Newcomb, Deshna Clah (one of the first chairmen of tribal council), William T. Shelton, Bert Dustin (M), Carlos Stolworthy (M), Roscoe McGee (M), unknown. *Back row:* Walter Gibson, Don Smouse, Asa Palmer (M), Roy B. Burnham (M), Shiprock agent Evan W. Estep, Luff Foutz (M), Elmer A. Taylor (M), Richard P. Evans (M), Will Evans (M), Charles Ashcroft (M). Cline Library, Special Collections and Archives, Northern Arizona University.

as a trader, bookkeeper, freighter, or clerk. This figure does not include individuals whose families were well known as traders if the individuals did not mention their own involvement. Fourteen families also wrote of their service as missionaries to the Navajos.

What was different, then, about these LDS traders? In some cases probably nothing. Trading, as an occupation, did not require any special religious attributes, just a basic understanding of traditional Navajo beliefs that might have had an impact upon sales and courtesy in the store.[9] On the other hand, those who believed and practiced LDS teachings had a theological underpinning to their relations with Indians not found among other traders. Their beliefs derived from the origin of the church rooted in the Book of Mormon.[10]

Briefly, the Book of Mormon is a religious history of a group of Israelites who journeyed from Jerusalem to the Americas around 600 B.C. During the approximately one thousand years covered by this text, the

Four of the eight children of Thomas and Jane Ann Coles Evans. *Back row, left to right:* Wilford, Edwin (Ted) C. *Front row:* William, Thomas (father), and John.

group divided into Nephites and Lamanites, who warred against each other and became spiritually distant. The Lamanites are portrayed, generally, as a fallen race, while the Nephites maintained more of their spiritual purity but struggled to keep a proper religious perspective based upon the teachings of prophets who foretold the coming of Jesus Christ. At one point in the book, Christ visits the Americas, spends time teaching the people, and leaves them with a renewed faith and understanding of the gospel of salvation. Eventually, the Nephites depart from their ways and, by 421 A.D., have become so wicked that the Lamanites destroy them. According to LDS beliefs, at least some of today's American Indians are a remnant of the Lamanites. They have lost much of the once powerful Christian teachings held and shared by the Nephites.

When Joseph Smith received this history on gold plates, he translated the story and later, as the founder and prophet of the LDS Church, directed missionary efforts to the Indians to restore what they once had. Thus, as traders and missionaries, Jacob Hamblin, Ira Hatch, Joseph Foutz, and Thales Haskell attempted to return what had been lost. Haskell, like the others, gained his Indian experience during the settlement of the Little Colorado area, before moving to Bluff, Utah, in the early 1880s. These men and many of the traders descended from them shared a belief about these Indians' origins and their destiny.

Will Evans's Biography

William "Will" Evans in some ways is a representative figure of the Mormon experience, in general, and of the settlers in the Four Corners area, specifically. Much of the following overview of his life is based upon the research of Liesl Dees, who gathered information for an exhibition of Evans's art in Farmington in August 2001.[11] Dees's contribution through oral interviews and written sources is particularly effective in summarizing the broad range of Will's endeavors.

Evans was born in Pontypridd, South Wales, Great Britain, on March 14, 1877, to Thomas and Jane Ann Coles Evans. His father and grandfather were coal miners, and William, upon completing three years of formal education at the ripe age of nine, joined family members in the depths of Wales's coal mines. Danger of rockfalls from the roof of the shaft, fear of the "black damp"—natural gases that seeped into the corridors and ignited with a terrible explosion—and the darkness found 2,500 feet below the earth's surface created an environment the boy dreaded.

Thomas and Jane Ann initially belonged to the Methodist Church, attended services regularly, and even brought Will as a baby to the meetings. An incident occurred concerning their crying baby and their treatment in church that turned them away from that faith and toward a fellow miner and member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Thomas wrote,

> I went to the mine the next day to work with my partner. It occurred that he was a Latter-day Saint. I told him what happened the night before. He said "Why don't you come to our meeting; it is down the road below the mine along the side of the highway." I told my wife and she thought it would be alright. The man who took us out was named Robert Bishop. In the course of time we joined. Jane was baptized eleven months before me, in the month of November 1880.[12]

Held back by his fearful stammering, Thomas made fast friends with the Mormon elders who labored in Wales. He could be found with them on a Sunday, walking from village to village, attending up to eight meetings a day. He bore frequent testimony of the knowledge that came to him through this activity. Finally, urged by his wife and encouraged by his missionary friends, he was baptized in October 1881. He recorded in his journal that as he came out of the water, he began to speak clearly, his stammering vanished, and never again did his speech falter.

Persecution followed, embroiling not only the parents but also Will and his three brothers and two sisters. Townspeople railed against the family and their newfound faith. Thomas wrote, "Wherever we went, the children were egged on by their parents to shout, 'Old Saints of the Devil go to Salt Lake.'" It even cost Will his front tooth in a scrap with some neighborhood boys. Years later, the Navajos gave him the name Awóshk'al'ádin, "Missing Tooth in Front," based on this characteristic.[13]

The family left their home in Wales on August 27, 1892, and three weeks later, along with 130 other Mormon emigrants from the British Isles, stood on American soil. In another month, they were in Salt Lake City hunting employment. Temporary work, including a short stint of coal mining in Scofield, Utah, by Thomas and fifteen-year-old Will, did not bring much satisfaction. An economic depression rendered any lasting benefit elusive.

Following a series of layoffs, Thomas received an offer from John R. Young, nephew of Brigham Young, to come to Fruitland, New Mexico, to work as a coal miner. The family accepted. They took the train to Thompson, Utah, continued by wagon through Monticello, on to Cortez,

Joe Hatch, Sr., Lude Kirk Hatch, and Will Evans building James "Grandpa" Pipkin, Jr.'s house, June 1897 in Fruitland, New Mexico. This was shortly before Evans's initial trading experience at Sanostee.

Colorado, to Farmington, and then west twelve miles to Fruitland. By September 4, 1893, the Evans family began life anew in the Four Corners area. Both father and sons again worked in the mines, but Will supplemented his income by assisting others in farming and construction. He was not enamored of either. He wrote, "Late in 1898, I decided that coal mining and farm labor ran into too much work. I was offered an opportunity to go on the reservation and assist in erecting the first trading post within the confines of the Northern Navajo Reservation. This trading post was located at Sanostee Valley."[14]

Evans tells the rest of the story later in this book. But for the remainder of his life, he was intricately connected to the Navajos as a Mormon trader and student of their culture. An overview of his experiences illustrates the powerful impact of these two cultures upon him, as they met over the trading post counters and circulated within the "bull pen" of the posts in which he worked.

Evans began as a trader in 1898 with the building and operating of the Sanostee Trading Post in partnership with Joseph Wilkins and Edwin Seth Dustin (Mormon). He assisted in shipping supplies to other posts located in New Mexico and to stores in Snowflake and Taylor, Arizona. During this time he met Sarah Luella Walker, who belonged to a trading family that had lived in Taylor before moving to Fruitland in 1896. Evans married her

Evans, son Ralph, and wife, Sarah, 1910.

in 1902 and eventually had four children—Ralph, Gwendolin, Richard, and David. The couple spent their lives together working in their posts and the trading business before retiring in 1948.

In Evans's early years in Fruitland, he put his building skills to work by constructing the Two Grey Hills and Fort Defiance trading posts, as well as erecting a Methodist mission for Mary Eldredge and Mrs. H. G. Cole near Farmington.[15] He also ran the post office in Fruitland from 1904 to 1909 and edited a short-lived newspaper, the *Fruitland Tribune,* in 1906.[16] For the next few years he put in stints at Two Grey Hills, Sanostee, and other posts; he worked as well for the C. H. Algert Trading Company in Fruitland as a bookkeeper.

Following a two-year respite from the trading business when he served a mission for the LDS Church in Portland, Maine, Evans returned to the Algert Company, where he worked until 1917.[17] This enterprise figured heavily in the Navajo trade of the Four Corners region. It took its name from the original owner, who, although not a Mormon, worked with them in the Tuba City area until that land became part of the Navajo Reservation in 1900. When the settlers moved to Fruitland, Algert followed and established his company. The business, "a wholesale trading store housed in a two-story building constructed of brick, adobe, and cement," was purchased within a few years by four traders.[18] Junius (June) and

Al Foutz with their two brothers-in-law, Bert and Sheldon Dustin, each paid $4,000, renamed the business the Progressive Mercantile Company, and offered goods appraised at $10,000.[19] All four of these owners were Mormon, again illustrating the influence that church members had in the trading business of this region.

In 1917, Evans purchased from Junius Foutz the Shiprock Trading Company, located on the reservation, and began his own enterprise. The post stood across a wash, about 125 yards southeast of its present location. The business shifted to today's site following the construction of a new road in 1925.[20] Evans remained there for the next thirty-one years.

Like most traders, he encouraged Navajo weavers to create rugs and blankets that would sell. In his early years at Shiprock, he fostered in his clients the idea of incorporating sacred figures into their work, popularizing a style of rug often identified with this region. Not all Navajos and non-Navajos favored the use of sacred images in this way, and to this day there are some who oppose it.[21] Evans was very aware of the dangers foretold in Navajo traditional beliefs surrounding this practice and also of the cost of protection provided by medicine men to avert risks in creating such weavings. While the growth of the "Yé'ii" rug industry has spread to many parts of the Navajo Reservation, most art historians agree that it had its birth in the Four Corners region; and while Evans was not the first to initiate such practices, he certainly knew those who did and aligned his weavers to follow suit.[22]

Regardless of the subject matter, Evans loved the beautiful products fashioned from materials of this high desert environment. When one considers the simple things used to create art—sand, wool, wood, and a little silver—the beauty and variety of the finished products are astounding. Evans recognized the skill involved and paid homage to his customers and friends: "The handling of Indian-made products is a source of great pleasure. The artistry of the Navajo blanket, which is the chief product of the tribe, grows on one. I believe that I get as much of a thrill out of buying a Navajo blanket as I did on that day way back in 1898 when I traded for my first specimen."[23]

The study of Navajo ceremonial art became another all-encompassing passion. Most white men were either not interested or did not have the trust and respect of Navajos necessary to view these holy images. Evans obtained both, was intent on preserving this aspect of culture, and was fascinated by their intricate beauty. He explains,

> I acquired the hobby of collecting copies of sandpaintings and the stories that go with them. So, for years, I have been watching the making

Evans with his prized Dominick rooster, 1920s. Behind is the original Shiprock Trading Post. The tin shed stored pelts, oil, and other inventory. Family living quarters were at the rear of the store; east of the trading room were rental rooms, while next to the porch was a cooling room to hang beef and mutton. At far left is the Old Bond Lodge Hotel.

> of these beautiful works of art, have sketched them while the medicine men worked, later making copies of them in oil paints so as to preserve them. Today, the Navajos marvel at the collection I have. At times, someone will come in to the store and ask me to let him see a certain sandpainting. He wants to make one and has forgotten some detail or other and wishes to see my copy so that he can get the items. I am only pleased to do this because he will some day reciprocate. I am satisfied that the art of sandpainting will become extinct and a collection of them will be priceless, not only in a monetary sense but from their value as study material for research into the religion of a native people.[24]

These early years in Shiprock were a time of exploration in other areas for Evans and his family. Will's son, Ralph, recollected infrequent trips to Fruitland but remembered more frequent times spent with the Navajos, attending ceremonies, or "sings," and Squaw (Enemyway) Dances, watching pony races, and hunting jackrabbits. Will's daughter, Gwen, wrote of her father's love for the mountains, enjoyment in wildflowers, and ability as a camp cook. He was known for making a slumgullion stew with canned tomatoes, corn, green beans, and corned beef—or whatever else happened to be on the shelf at the time.[25]

Evans, although living in a land where isolation was normal, was not a recluse. He was civic minded, playing the violin in the Shiprock Band as

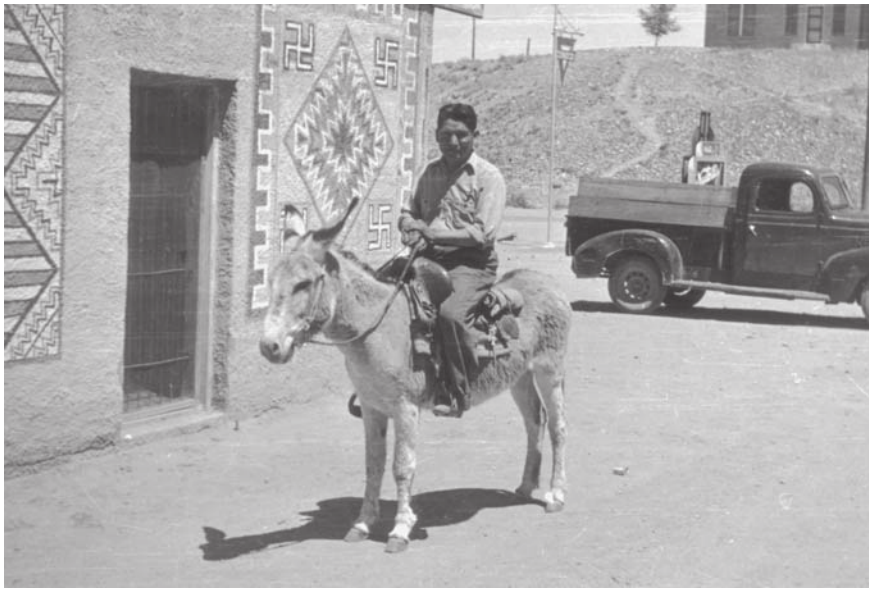
the only white man in the Navajo orchestra. At one point he encouraged local citizens to establish a historical-scientific society and dedicated a room in his post as a museum for Navajo blankets and art work.[26] In 1929–1930, Evans traveled often to Aztec, Farmington, and Santa Fe to fulfill his responsibilities in the New Mexico State Legislature as a Republican representative. He served on agriculture, judiciary, and mining committees, reflecting his regional and personal interests.[27] Three pieces of legislation that he was particularly proud of championing were a bill that granted the state the right to retain half of the archeological materials excavated within its boundaries, a law that penalized individuals who sold liquor to Indians on the reservation, and the initial survey of the San Juan River for the Navajo Dam, which was later constructed outside of Farmington.[28]

Evans, even with his desire to encourage positive innovations for the Navajo, was also a preservationist. His time in the posts saw change—sometimes slow and inexorable, other times rapid—which affected the culture. Among the milestones passed by the tribe during this time were the opening of the Shiprock Agency (1903); the first Shiprock Fair (1909); World War I (1917–1918); the influenza epidemic (1918–1919); the introduction of the automobile (1920s); livestock reduction (1930s); the beginning of the wage economy (1940s and 1950s); expansion of the coal, oil, and gas industry into the reservation (beginning around 1900); and World War II (1941–1945).

Evans realized that the older forms of Navajo practices were changing and so set about to record what he could. How he became interested in preserving sandpaintings and the teachings behind them he will explain later. But he attempted to accurately capture many of these visual images. He attended numerous ceremonies and was allowed to make sketches of the designs—images that are generally not recorded by Navajos. These religious symbols are sacred and powerful and are to be viewed only by those initiated into the ceremonies and beliefs of the People. Evans compiled a "library" of at least sixty images, which he kept in the Kiva Room of the Shiprock Trading Company.

In the late 1930s, Evans observed difficult times for the Navajo, due in part to the government's livestock reduction program. He suggested a plan for economic development in which the Navajos could build and decorate furniture as a local craft—an idea that, by this time, he was implementing himself.[29]

Evans incorporated into his own artistic endeavors visual images from the sandpaintings he recorded. He designed and built simple furniture, such as tables, chairs, and picture frames, which he painted with Navajo



Evan Smith, Navajo employee at the Evans store, 1937–1949, in front of pictures of Navajo rugs painted by Evans.

art. He also decorated other items, such as bottles, trays, metal cans, and even Pepsi signs. A niece, Florence Walker Cluff, remembered that "someone was always being surprised at what turned up newly painted after a few days absence, the mantel clock for instance."[30]

By the late 1930s, Evans had painted the exterior of the Shiprock Trading Company with geometric designs and ceremonial figures.[31] In 1941, the interior of Harry's Place, a Farmington restaurant, had similar wall coverings. Other large-scale murals included ceremonial art on the trading posts at Hogback, Waterflow, and Mancos Creek. Larger-than-life figures from Will's brush enlivened the interior of Farmington's Totah Theater. The local Avery Hotel and Stalling's gas station also sported his art.[32] His enthusiasm for Navajo iconography seemed boundless.

The end of the Depression and the beginning of World War II left the store short of funds. In 1943, Evans wrote to his son David, who was serving an LDS mission, that he had sold $160 worth of pieces that he painted—funds that allowed Sarah to have dental work and helped pay for the mission.[33] This was while Will and Sarah served as the first mission president and matron of the Young Stake Lamanite Mission (1941–1943), a proselytizing effort that covered a good portion of the northern Navajo Reservation. Roy B. Burnham, stake president of the Young Stake, and Evans divided the mission into six districts. Not surprisingly, Burnham

Evans in his den, Farmington. Sitting in a love seat he built and painted, he is applying the finishing touches to a table painted in Navajo sandpainting designs. Photo by Charles Dustin.

Eddie Lake Trading Post, Waterflow, New Mexico. Painted by Evans using sandpainting figures and designs. The abandoned building still stands as of 2005.

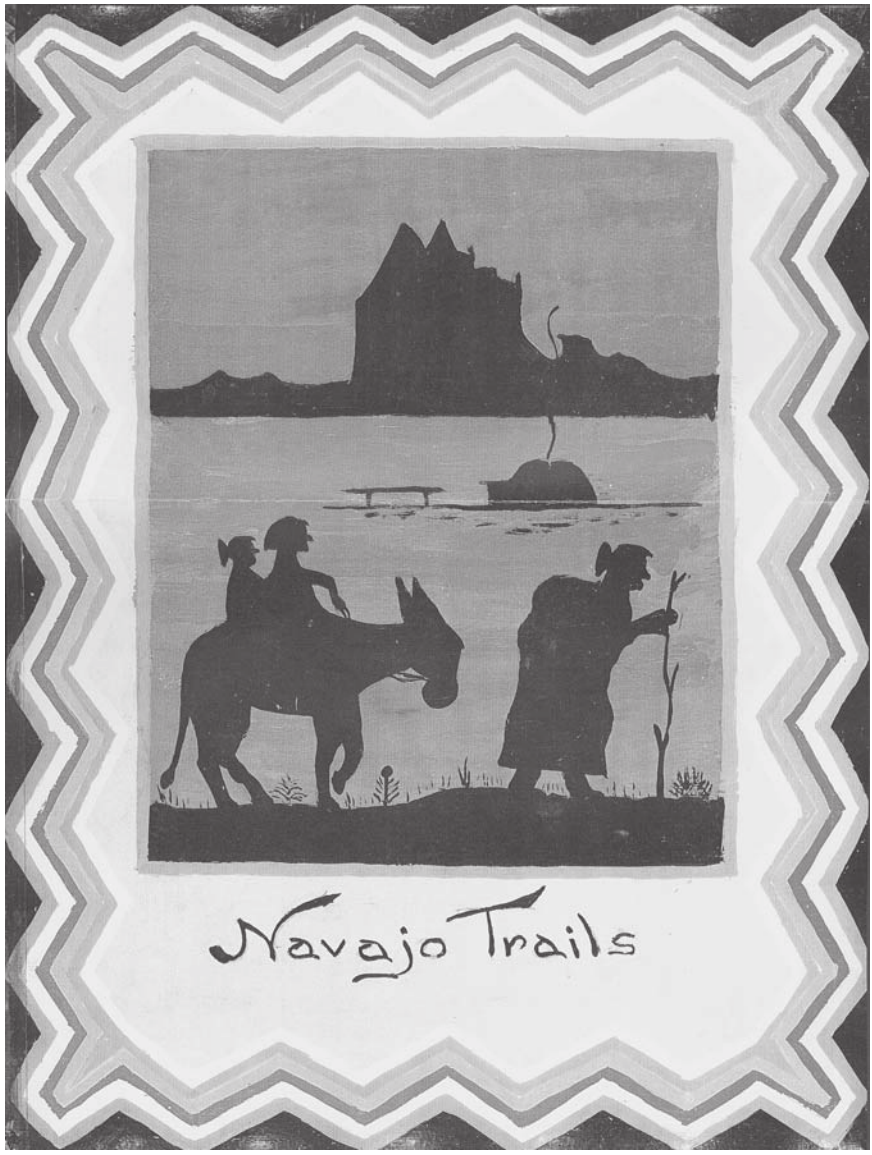
Missionaries Will Evans, Lucy Bloomfield, Ralph Evans, Clyde Beyal (interpreter), and George Bloomfield of the Young Stake Lamanite Mission, preparing to baptize Navajo converts at Crystal, New Mexico.

descended from a trading family and was himself a trader, as were five of the six missionaries presiding over their districts.[34]

Although he continued to work in the store, Evans served diligently and traveled constantly as the first person to hold this position. Daughter-in-law Beth Evans remembers that he used his knowledge of Navajo ceremonies to explain the connections he saw between Navajo tradition and Mormon beliefs, drawing figures from sandpaintings in the dirt floors of Navajo hogans.[35] The drawings also may have assisted in overcoming limitations of his "trader Navajo" language, which did not have the capacity to translate deeper religious beliefs. He often took a native speaker, Evan Smith, with him.[36]

In 1924, Evans began writing essays, which he called "Navajo Trails." This inaugurated a series of articles published in the *Farmington Times Hustler* (later *Farmington Daily Times*), which continued until his death in 1954. He also published a number of articles in other journals and a small book on sandpaintings, illustrated with his drawings. As old age sapped his strength, Will eventually turned the "Navajo Trails" manuscript over to his son Richard to bring it to completion.[37]

In June 1948, Evans sold the Shiprock Trading Company to Vernon W. Jack, another Mormon trader, allowing Will and Sarah to move to Farmington.[38] He continued to paint in his new house, ornamenting the



Painted by Evans, "Hogan Gho" was to be the cover of "Navajo Trails, Being a Collection of Stories, Legends, and Records of the Navajo People," the compilation of which began December 17, 1924.

porch light with a Navajo figure and the garage door with a large sun symbol. The local newspaper reported a visit to the Evans's home, saying,

> In the kitchen there is one chest of drawers painted only a severe, plain white. When Will Evans was asked why there were no figures on it, his wife answered the question before Will could get his mouth open. "Will Evans," she said, "you just leave that alone—there's going to be one thing here that doesn't have Indians all over it."[39]

In 1952, the voters of Farmington elected Evans on the Greater Farmington ticket as the city police judge for a two-year term; and in true Evans fashion, he decorated the interior of his office at the police station.[40] As judge, he emphasized fair treatment for all and, drawing on his experiences as a trader, allowed Navajos to use jewelry as security against fines assessed in court.[41]

Sarah Walker Evans's journal records that Will occasionally sold his hand-painted pieces, but the vast majority of his work he gave away to friends and relatives. As his health began to fail, one of Sarah's journal entries commented that "Will had a very dizzy spell pass over him, his head fell against a jar he was painting and the brush fell from his hand."

He ran for police judge a second time in 1954, but lost. His health continued to fail until he passed away on December 6, 1954.[42]

Evans's Views of Navajo Religion

In one sense, Evans is a representative figure of the class of traders who lived and worked in the Navajo posts during the early twentieth century. He was hardworking, interested in profit, attentive to customer likes and dislikes, and rooted in the daily life of the Navajo community. On the other hand, he was unique. He is the only Mormon trader who recorded traditional Navajo teachings with an eye to correlating them with LDS beliefs and practices. Certainly Jacob Hamblin had earlier intellectually aligned Hopi and Navajo teachings in accordance with his understanding of Mormon views, but like so many other missionaries of his era, never recorded for publication his thoughts.

Not so with Evans. He was very public in his views on how these two differing faiths coincided. While these thoughts are not discussed in the main part of this book, it is worthwhile for the reader to understand the context within which his writings are framed.

Today, Evans would be considered an apologist. He was deeply entrenched in Latter-day Saint theology, and so his main goal was to show how Navajo beliefs connected to church dogma. He superimposed his scriptural knowledge over what he encountered in Navajo ceremonies and oral tradition to provide proof of his own beliefs and justification for theirs. This is not to suggest that he intentionally distorted what he found but only that he was primed to interpret his findings in a particular vein.

Evans was adamant that the origin of the American Indian had nothing to do with the prevalent belief of Mongolian-type peoples crossing a land bridge during the Ice Age. The Book of Mormon mentions a number of transoceanic crossings, which Evans accepted as true. By examining contemporary Navajo practices, he believed one could find proof. In "Indian Culture," an article written for a church publication in 1938, he outlines some of his basic tenets.[43] In accordance with the general story in the Book of Mormon, "as early as the fourth century, B.C., native Americans had a good working knowledge of steel and copper" and "when Caesar was invading Britain, ancient America was looking forward to the coming of the Redeemer."[44] The fall of the Nephites at the end of the book signaled the loss of a written language; and so Indians went to a form of picture writing, proof of which the Spanish destroyed during their conquests in South and Central America. The pictographs and petroglyphs etched into the rocks and alcoves of the Southwest are a remnant of this knowledge and mark the farthest advance of Central American Indian expansion. Evans wrote, "This spread of colonization reached its last great wave on both sides of the southern boundary lines of the modern states of Utah and Colorado."[45] The religious beliefs of the Hopis and Navajos are the same as those of the Ancestral Puebloans (Anasazi), who were the descendants in that region of Book of Mormon peoples. Within these Indians' oral tradition could be found stories that "to a startling degree [parallel] those recorded in the ancient Hebrew record."[46]

A number of similarities served, in Evans's mind, as proof of this history. The creation of the four worlds that occurred before and beneath this world, according to the Navajo account, was similar to what was described in Genesis and the Latter-day Saint scripture entitled the Pearl of Great Price. The correlations included the placement of the heavenly bodies by a number of Holy Beings; the separation of waters and appearance of land; the creation of plant life, animals, and man; and a snake that walked and talked like a person. Just as the Lord spoke to Job out of a whirlwind, so is there a Navajo being, Dinay-De Ginnie [Dinéé́h Diyiní (Holy Young Man)], who has a similar experience. He also raises the dead as did Christ. Another Holy Being is swallowed by a great fish, as is Jonah.

Sarah and Will holding a framed cross found in a cliff dwelling near Shiprock. To Evans, this was proof of the Ancestral Puebloans' (Anasazi) tie to the Book of Mormon. Photo by Richard P. Evans.

First Man and First Woman, comparable to Adam and Eve, are never portrayed in sandpaintings because of their sacredness. In the Yé'ii Bicheii ceremony twelve ancestors assist with the creation; and the name of the ceremony can be "interpreted as the Great Ancient One, The Ancient of Days," in parallel to Adam and others in the Christian pantheon.[47] There is a worldwide flood similar to the one encountered by Noah. A Moses-like figure strikes a rock and water gushes forth, is concealed by a cloud as on Mount Sinai, and crosses a place called Red Water.[48] Another Holy Being has a rod that shoots forth buds as did Aaron's. There are proscriptions against handling the dead, which would otherwise cause one to become unclean. Similarly, ceremonial purification for such contact is outlined by Hebrew law in the Old Testament.[49]

Evans also had a cross, which came from an Anasazi dwelling he believed to be from the eleventh century, that he saw as iconic evidence that long before Columbus ever set sail, Indians practiced Christianity in the Americas. He also believed that the ingestion of corn pollen during a ceremony was comparable to partaking of the sacrament. The washing and anointing described in the Old Testament are similar to the washing done in a medicine basket with yucca soap.[50] All of these practices confirmed what Evans believed to be true.

What, then, was his attitude toward the customers he faced every day across the counters? Was he a tight-fisted pragmatist, waiting for the

dollars to follow the Navajos' rugs and wool, or a saintly man, so caught up in intellectual study that he missed opportunities to prosper? Probably Evans shared a little of each quality. He certainly reflected the thinking of his times. He held a deep respect for Navajo traditions but at a time when most outsiders did not understand or consider beneficial these ceremonial practices. He was also somewhat skeptical of the methods, if not their ultimate efficacy. An important glimpse into his private views is found in personal correspondence with a man named B. H. Reddy, who lived in Long Beach, California.

Reddy's relationship with Evans began in July 1939, when Reddy inquired about the possibility of a "Navaho Medicine Man [holding] a healing dance or ceremony for one who is having a great deal of trouble with their gall bladder, liver, and stomach."[51] Reddy was referring to his wife, who apparently shared with him "considerable faith" in native practices.

Though somewhat leery, Evans responded immediately to one of "the strangest requests that has come my way."[52] Writing of the Navajos' ability to heal, he noted that he "respect[ed] them as far as their knowledge is concerned; but there is a greater Power which can come to our rescue whenever sought. . . . He [Navajo medicine man] knows nothing of pills, soothing syrups, or drugs. . . . He uses fetishes of extremely doubtful value and his appeals are mainly to the ancient ones of their legendary lore." In Evans's mind, it was the faith of the patient that did the healing and "many cures are wrought." This was in keeping with the miracles of the Old Testament and practices explained in the Book of Mormon.

He next inquired if Mr. Reddy's patient intended to come to the reservation for the ceremony or have it performed by "remote control." This question was not facetious. Evans understood the principle of what anthropologists call synecdoche, using a part to represent the whole, as practiced by Navajo healers.[53] He concluded by saying that he had "followed the Navajos in their religion, their religious legendary history, and their ceremonies during 45 years. I have learned to respect them in their religion as I do any other race of people."

A week later, Reddy responded. He compared the British attitude toward the natives of India to those of Americans toward the Indian, who know far more about the "Book of Nature than those same Americans will ever dream about."[54] The contention of Anglo superiority ignored the reality of healing by nature. "There is no doubt but that the Indian Medicine Men have contacted that Higher Power" that only a few whites ever had. Reddy, obviously enamored of Native Americans, next pointed out that "one cannot deceive a real Medicine Man as to one's thoughts and intents" and that "Indians and other primitive tribes are the original

Spiritualists. Medicine Men are all psychics, else they would not be Medicine Men." He closes by calling them "seers."

The Californian had provided Evans with a perfect opportunity to burst an idealistic bubble. While he perhaps shared some romantic notions, as a trader operating for years on the Navajo Reservation, Evans felt he held a much firmer grasp of actual conditions. Evans responded at length. Asserting once again his credentials, he informed Reddy that Protestant missionary friends accused him of being a "lover of Indians and their ceremonies" and of "committing a sin when he attended these ceremonials."[55]

Evans believed that "the white man is superior in many respects to the colored races. In the arts and sciences he has proven that, overwhelmingly. At best, the colored races are but copyists. . . . I have learned that the white man has a mysterious something . . . which the Indian has not . . . [that] will carry him on when the Indian would falter and lag." Having thus shown he shared some of the racist attitudes of his times, he still asserted that the Indian has been "in touch with that 'Higher Power' for many, many generations. . . . They have a definite appeal to a definite individual—one of the ancient medicine men of the past." No doubt, Evans was referring to Jesus Christ, based upon his Book of Mormon orientation, yet he did not explicitly say so. As for Indians being the "original Spiritualists" and "Psychics", he believed that a real medicine man would "laugh" to be called such. He had taken the time to ask a medicine man about Reddy's situation and inquired into the possibilities of serving as a proxy. The singer told Evans that although some things could be done at a distance, better results would be obtained through actual presence. Evans closed his letter by opening his home to the Reddys if they chose to come to New Mexico.

Reddy's final letter came a week later. He told of being under the tutelage of Tibetan lamas and pointed out that if the white man had to undergo what the American Indian had, very few would have survived. He agreed with Evans's assessment of a "Higher Power" and added his own international twist from various faiths. Next he explained what had prompted his correspondence. The previous year he had stopped in Gallup and been referred to the trader Roman Hubbell as a possible facilitator of a healing ceremony. Hubbell's response made Reddy realize something to which Evans had earlier alluded. Reddy wrote,

> Inasmuch as I did not have access to the pot of gold reposing in the concrete vault underground back in Kentucky, I could not quite reach the astronomical heights to which I could visualize the expenses would

> mount to. It was not exactly clear to me just why I should have to go way out in the desert, nine miles from nowhere, live among the natives (although I have done so in the past), pay about $2 per day for a car standing idle while my own car was costing storage. I was also told the ceremonies were from five to nine days long; that the fee of the Medicine Man was from $30 to $75 depending upon the kind of ceremony. Then there was that little matter of feeding an undetermined number of relatives, etc. No, not just yet![56]

What happened to Mr. Reddy and his ailing wife is unknown. Whether they ever met Evans on an anticipated trip back East was never recorded. Evans's way of representing the Navajo to the outside world is clear in this correspondence. Having worked out a system of explanations about the efficacy of Navajo ceremonialism, he saw its healing power and did not deny it. Obviously he assumed a Mormon view of the means by which it occurred, working from his own scriptural interpretation and also asserting white racial superiority. His was not a heavy-handed approach or explanation though. Being a person who went on two proselytizing missions for his church, he presented his beliefs in a manner that was palatable to the dominant white culture, while also showing respect for Navajo beliefs. Many Navajos accepted him. He could claim never having been denied access to Navajo ceremonies and was often encouraged by medicine men to record aspects of them.

A Contemporary View of Evans's Contributions

Where, then, does Evans fit in the broader context of American historiography and, more pointedly, that of Native Americans in the West? Are his writings so imbued with Mormon beliefs that they have little value? And if not, how should they be approached? Perhaps the best way to answer the first question is to turn to Sherry L. Smith's *Reimagining Indians: Native Americans through Anglo Eyes, 1880–1940*.[57] In this work, Smith examines how George Bird Grinnell's extensive writings about the Cheyenne, Frank Bird Linderman's work with the Crow, George Wharton James's study of the Navajo, and Mabel Dodge Luhan's interest in Taos Pueblo were bearing fruit at the same time that Evans recorded information about the Navajo.

All of these writers were from the East, Midwest, or England. They viewed themselves as a voice for the Native American to the dominant culture with the intent of explaining the misunderstood. While they

lacked the sophistication of the professional anthropologist, they nevertheless provided a sympathetic view to the general public.

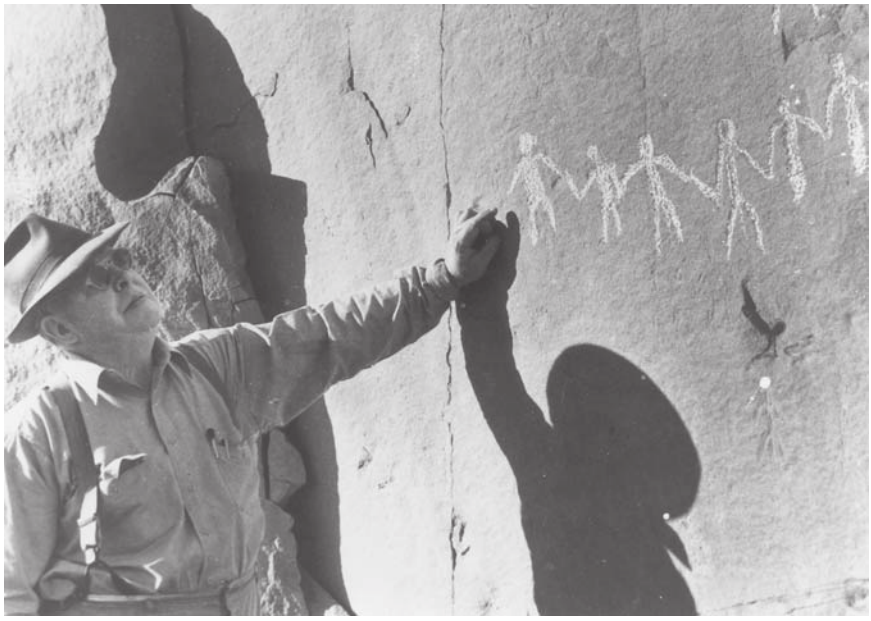
Smith argues that

> For approximately fifty years, the period roughly between the Dawes Act of 1887 and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, these writers produced books for popular audiences that offered new ways to conceptualize Indian people, alternatives to the images that had transfixed Americans for centuries. Simply put, these writers asserted Indians' humanity, artistry, community and spirituality.[58]

These writings came at a time when the country was reevaluating its own history and values, questioning the past and present behavior of dominance over less-sophisticated cultures. In a very particular way, this is in keeping with what Evans set out to do by preparing his "Navajo Trails" manuscript.

One of the most important motivations for his work was an "intense fascination" with Navajo thought and character. He recognized early in his career that Navajo culture was a stimulating philosophical venture far different from what he had encountered in his own world. Their culture was very much intact at the beginning of the twentieth century, not having been seriously damaged by inroads of white culture. Will stood at a vantage point, seeing that change was inevitable and there was much to be recorded. As author and friend John Stewart MacClary wrote of him, "The 'intellectual storekeeper' role does not fully portray the character of the man. Yes, he is a storekeeper. His trading post provides home and livelihood. Intellectual by nature and by self-development, Will Evans has vision far beyond the side-meat and beans of his business enterprise."[59]

In a letter dated October 16, 1938, Evans wrote of his very specific intentions to preserve the culture. A few months before this, he had taken an old loose-leaf ledger lying around his trading post, had covered the worn leather with muslin, then had drawn on the front a picture of Shiprock and an old Indian woman walking with her dog. He named his collection of materials, then an inch thick, "Navajo Trails." The manuscript started with Navajo biographies then went to "legendary lore" and "everything connected with Indians." He mused, "When this thing is completed, it will be one of the most valuable collections of Indian and Book of Mormon subjects in existence."[60] While much of his Mormon theology and comparisons have been left out of this work, his experience with the Navajo and their teachings are included intact.



Evans studying petroglyphs, which he saw as the remnants of ancient writings from a fallen people.

Evans's sense of urgency in obtaining a full record of the Navajo people is mentioned later in the same letter. After writing about obtaining an interesting story from "old Salow-Elt-Socie [Siláo Ałts'ózí], who was born during the captivity [Long Walk era] on the Pecos River," Will noted,

> I must get real busy on the biographies of the older Indians who had much to do with shaping the destinies of the tribe. They are passing quickly and I must get the job done soon. Old Fat Medicine Man passed away last week, and one more tribal historian is gone. Soon, the material I have been fortunate enough to get will be well nigh impossible to obtain.[61]

How prophetic. Much of what is contained herein would now be lost if it had not been for his efforts.

The primary means that other writers of this period used to achieve the ring of authenticity was to use the Native American voice. Although a great deal had been written about Indians, only a feeble attempt had been made to incorporate their perspective. Now there were those who insisted on it. These white authors "exuded great confidence about their abilities to serve as purveyors of truth about Indians."[62] How effective they really were at doing this is another story. Little internal or external evidence

remains to document the interview process; nor is it known what the interviewee intended beyond what the author provided through translation and the writing style he or she adapted to the material.

Few readers doubt these authors' sincerity. They did not dabble in the extremes of nobility or savagery but concerned themselves rather with the humanity of Native Americans, providing a much-needed antidote to previous portrayals. Still there were problems. The cultural perspective of an outsider, no matter how well intentioned, still too easily missed the mark. "To acknowledge that they often failed to grasp the complexities of Indian peoples; that they often failed to transcend their own ethnocentric and even racist assumptions; and that early twenty-first century Indian and Anglo readers might find their works sentimental, romantic, and simple-minded does nothing to negate their cultural power."[63]

This is also true of Evans's writings. He worked at portraying what he learned from his Navajo friends, although often he was unable to leave behind his own biases. When one considers the fairly good collection of autobiographical writing by traders about the Navajo, Evans holds his own.[64] Many of these books are of recent vintage, and most of them discuss the life of the trader during the first half of the twentieth century. They also tend to follow a pattern of interesting episodes that took place between store owner and customer, difficulties of life on the reservation, and insights concerning Navajo culture.

Very few traders, Louisa and John Wetherill, Gladwell Richardson, and Franc Newcomb excepted, labored to record and preserve the culture for future generations; and even they, like Evans, only partly succeeded. The Wetherills published relatively little, while Gladwell Richardson was more prolific but aimed his writing toward the tourist trade. Franc Johnson Newcomb, however, parallels closely Evans's work. During her stint as a trader, she collected over 450 sandpaintings, many of which today reside in the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian. Some of her published works include *Navaho Neighbors,* which discusses her life as a trader; *Hosteen Klah,* which chronicles the life of a powerful medicine man; and *Navaho Folk Tales,* a collection of traditional stories.[65] Whether Will and Franc ever compared notes is not recorded. But she certainly shared a common acquaintance: Lucy G. Bloomfield, whose husband, George, ran the Toadlena Post and served in the Young Stake Lamanite Mission with Evans. Lucy wrote the foreword to *Hosteen Klah*.

Evans, like Newcomb, was embroiled in the business of the trading post yet spent hundreds of hours on his "avocation" of interviewing and recording Navajo life stories, historical events, and cultural insight. Indeed, his collection of materials concerning the 1913 fracas at

Beautiful Mountain provided him with regional recognition as one of the most knowledgeable about the incident. His interviews with some of the main participants captured details that would otherwise have been lost. The same is true of the life histories that provide family and local insight, which by now would be forgotten.

Evans faithfully recorded this information. Through it all, he had only "pleasant memories and no regrets. The many years spent as neighbor to and among the Indians in Navajo land are certainly not counted as lost, but as a privilege and as an integral part of a life-time education."[66] Intellectually, he was engaged. When asked what some of the reasons were that kept him in the "desert," he responded, "In dealing with the natives, I like to match wits with them and that, sometimes, is no small task. One has to be on his toes all the time and that also keeps [me] interested."[67]

This is a telling comment. In spite of his intense interest in Navajo culture, he was still an outsider. His comments about racial superiority, that "mysterious something" that white men had that prevented them from "faltering" and "lagging" as Indians did, speaks of underlying cultural assumptions. Stereotype is not too strong a word in some instances. No matter how honest and straightforward his evaluation may be, there is no missing that he is a white man of the early to mid-twentieth century. While this does not negate his work in the following pages, the reader needs to be aware that those times were very different from the present.

Here are a few examples. At one point, while discussing the culture, Evans writes, "Navajos do not have double standards of morality. In fact one might say that in the past there was little standard at all and that being found out [in some type of transgression] was the only sin." This is difficult to understand, given his depth of knowledge of Navajo practices. The entire Navajo universe is saturated with laws and penalties established by the Holy Beings. Indeed, the ceremonies and sandpaintings with which he was so fascinated were performed or created because of a transgression of one of these laws. What Evans fails to recognize because of his own belief system is that Navajo religion emphasizes a different set of values that, given their basic teachings, is just as "correct" and rational as his own. The only time he reaches a point of agreement on this is when the two sets of values coincide based on LDS beliefs.

"Matching wits," which keeps him "on his toes," could take a similar course. When he tells Slim Policeman that owls have told him about a coming eclipse just before it happens, he is amused at the amazed and subdued response. The Navajo is portrayed as being naive and mystified by the information this white man has, playing off an implied ignorance. Navajos were very aware of what an eclipse was and employed a series of

traditional practices to counter any effects derived from the experience. Evans, whose conscience spurred an editorial apology to Slim Policeman, realizes that he had taken advantage of the situation and a friendship.

With others, there was no apology. Bizhóshí, a man with whom Evans had a direct confrontation over the building of a post and whose two sons physically fought with Evans, receives a number of well-placed jabs. The old medicine man carried the title of "Missing Link" because he looked Mongolian in appearance and seemed to Evans to be like a relic from the past. Three of his four sons acquired the epithets of Big Link, Middle Link, and Little Link because of their family connection. And when the events of the Beautiful Mountain Uprising came to a close, Bizhóshí and his fourth son, Little Singer, were described as sitting before General Scott "weeping when the General lectured them as only an army officer can." This, to Evans, is a fitting reproof of a man who is pictured as a tough stalwart resisting the change fostered by white culture. Evans gives qualified respect to Bizhóshí in spite of the conflict, but it definitely appears grudging.

Today's reader may also be offended by some less dramatic forms of ethnocentrism. While lice were a very real problem on the reservation—exacerbated by lack of soap and water and an overabundance of poverty—Evans's discussion with Dan Pete, who is trying to rid his clothes of the creatures, is instructive. At one point the Navajo receives a lecture about cleanliness that ends with a reminder that the whites at the post "get them [lice] only when they crawl off you fellows in the summer time." No subtlety there.

Another example is found when Evans discusses the loss of traditional practices. In addition to the changes in sandpaintings and diminishing ceremonial knowledge, he is also concerned that the younger generation is losing the spirit of what both should be. His attendance at an Enemyway ceremony prompted the following observation: "Now, squaw dances are held when the weather is warm enough in the spring and into the summer. These have degenerated into an arm-in-arm crow-hopping exhibition to cadences of the singers and the tom-tom, à la Hollywood barn dances."

A final question needs to be asked about his use and exploitation of Navajo ceremonial figures in art. Was he being presumptuous and offensive by taking this sacred iconography and putting it on every piece of furniture, object, and building he could? What would he have said if sacred Mormon art had been treated likewise? As mentioned previously, he was neither the first nor the only one to be doing it. Hastiin Klah, with the encouragement of Franc Newcomb, provided the basis for her collection. No

Evans surrounded by his artwork with his trademark designs and colors. Note the arrowhead collection on the shelf above his head. Photo by Charles Dustin.

criticism or boycotting of Evans's store because of his gathering practices is recorded. Indeed, he mentions in a number of instances that medicine men came to him to refresh their memory of some of the designs. He emphatically states he obtained the information with permission and a clear understanding of its use from the medicine men.

Still, it does not appear totally right. In a society where a sandpainting has to be destroyed before the sun either sets or rises (roughly twelve hours), to portray one on a table or to place a Holy Being on a Pepsi sign is, for at least some Navajos, desecrating the sacred. Placing a Heinz catsup bottle over an image of Black God and setting a drinking glass on the symbol of Mother Earth would have been disrespectful to the believer, just as putting Christ's face on a footstool would be to a Christian.

Evans was obviously not a believer. While faithful to his own religion and respectful of some aspects of Navajo beliefs, he did not make the transfer of power and sacredness between the two differing systems of symbols. Navajo paintings were only art. Today's society shows a greater concern for such matters. Never before has there been so much controversy over issues of cultural sensitivity, ranging from the use of Indian

names as team mascots to labels on beer to visiting sacred geographic sites to attending dances and ceremonies. These feelings have derived from very real issues and a greater need for respect of people's values.

In Evans's day, collection and preservation of the objects were the important points. Very much in keeping with both past and present periods of history, if the unique and powerful can be turned into an economic venture, so much the better. Encouraging Navajos to make furniture with sacred symbols on it may have helped feed some people, but it also encouraged profaning the sacred, which was probably why this plan never came to fruition.

This concern was not as prominent then as it is now. Those medicine men who allowed Evans to copy the designs did so willingly, showing not only their trust in him but also their fear of having treasured teachings and ceremonies lost. From the vantage point of hindsight, this has proven to be the case. The number of obsolete or extinct ceremonies has grown. Of twenty-four chantways that are known to have existed among the Navajo "only eight were well-known and frequently performed in the 1970s."[68] Although the copying and use of sandpaintings may be questioned, it is highly doubtful that Evans ever did it in a secret, malicious manner. He never related what he was doing to his own religious beliefs, but he was true to his friends.

In spite of the preceding examples, Evans expresses far more often his appreciation and love for, and his faith in, the Navajo people. He is genuine in his respect and established lifelong relationships during his work with them.

What of the origins and motivation behind his "Navajo Trails"? Evans began his recording at the very beginning of his trading career with an eye toward publishing. Unlike many traders who share their memoirs after the fact, he intentionally collected material on a daily basis. His son Richard recalled how he worked at it "with two fingers in the hunt-and-pick style . . . on an old typewriter when alone at a trading post at Little Water and later Sanostee and other reservation locations."[69] Between 1924 and 1954, he frequently contributed to the local paper, *The Farmington Hustler*. He persisted for years, recording lore, biography, history, and observations as he went.

Although he worked on this manuscript for eight years, he was never able to bring it to fruition. In 1945, he bequeathed all of his materials to Richard, who showed more of an interest in it than the other children. A witnessed statement charged him to "protect and preserve" what he received so that he could "correlate and develop the above material for eventual publication, to the end that a true knowledge of these things

might be made available to the world" and "be preserved for the Navajo people themselves in future generations."[70]

Richard took his charge seriously. For thirty years, he safeguarded and performed light editing by shortening some of the longer sentences and removing some of the anachronisms in the writing style. He, like his father, never completed the task. His daughter, Susan Evans Woods, next assumed the responsibility. She continued the light editing process and helped organize the materials into a sensible scheme. She estimates, when comparing the original to this manuscript, that 95 percent of the writing remains in Will's voice and that all of the content is present.

Today, Evans's materials reside at the Brigham Young University Library. This includes over sixty sandpaintings of various sizes, the "Navajo Trails" manuscript, approximately one hundred pages of Navajo folklore and teachings, and all of Evans's other writings and correspondence. Still in the possession of his granddaughter is a large collection of photographs. His goal of preserving elements of Navajo culture for future generations has been achieved.

What the reader encounters in the following pages is a "period piece." The work has not been "sanitized" to fit in with twenty-first-century values, but rather serves as an expression of a white trader living in a Navajo world. While sensitive and genuine in his respect, he framed everything that he saw and was told within his own worldview. He lived at a time when tremendous changes and some dramatic events were occurring with the Navajos. As a conscious recorder of this history, Evans provides a fascinating glimpse into the lives and world of the People.

This book is divided into three sections—starting with the historic events, then moving to the people, and ending with the culture. This sequence provides a context for the actors. There has been a liberal amount of grouping of materials on the authors' part and a moderate amount of editing to make the text flow. The generous inclusion of photographs throughout gives an unparalleled opportunity to put a face or place with a life history or story. Few white authors during this period were as conscientious about giving their native informants so much credit. Again, Evans was true to his friends.

The most valuable section of his writing is the historical. Evans spent days recording events on the reservation and became an expert on the Beautiful Mountain Uprising. By capturing firsthand accounts, especially from the traders intimately involved in the incident, he provides not only detailed information that parallels the official accounts, but also a texture in the lives of the participants. Other sections provide a loose chronology of some of the major events in Navajo history. Starting with the struggle of

life before the Long Walk period, the incarceration at Fort Sumner, the establishment of early trading posts on the northern part of the reservation, livestock reduction, and the expansion of the oil and gas industry, Evans provides personal insights from those who lived through these events. The history section concludes with a Christmas celebration that serves as a point-counterpoint to his first Christmas spent at Sanostee, forty-four years earlier. The warmth that emanates from this experience captures Evans's own feelings toward those he was working with as a Mormon missionary.

The biographical section contains elements of fourteen life histories that parallel the events in the preceding section. More importantly, these accounts are personalized, the characters real, and the tenor of life for the Navajo more explicit. While Evans selected some of the most prominent individuals to interview, he allowed them to tell their own story. This is an invaluable service not only to family members now, who want to learn about those who have gone before, but also for the Navajos as a whole, who have an oral history committed to paper so that it will not be lost. Starting with Costiano and Black Horse and ending with Dan Pete and his stories, the reader has wonderful slices of life to draw upon in understanding the Navajo experience.

The final section on culture is a potpourri of customs and beliefs, ranging from birth to death. Although Evans viewed these practices as a white trader, he has a depth of understanding that is both sympathetic and highly observant. He does not approach the topics as an anthropologist would, with detailed questions, but rather as he understood things from his world of the trading post or as he sat observing Navajo ceremonies. Some of his longer sections are on trading, blankets, silversmithing, sandpaintings, and the rituals. These were familiar or dramatic events. But there are also some interesting glimpses into family life, marriage and divorce, hairstyles and cleanliness, morality and witchcraft, and general hospitality. He has preserved observations of Navajo life as it existed in the 1930s.

There is one last thought concerning Evans's writings. Anyone who has had the pleasure of listening to an "old time" trader (and that opportunity is fast disappearing) knows how interesting the experience can be, in spite of, as well as because of, the "flavor" of the time from which the trader comes. So as you settle down in the "bull pen" to listen to Will's experience, enjoy not only what the Navajos are saying but also our narrator's voice. Traveling "Navajo Trails" is an opportunity to visit the past, without the discomfort and problems of that bygone era, and to meet some colorful personalities along the way. Let Evans be a guide, with all of his strengths and weaknesses, into the past of a trader on the northern Navajo Reservation.