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# "There Was Nothing There For Us": Environment and the People at Bosque Redondo

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**“THERE WAS NOTHING THERE FOR US”:**

**ENVIRONMENT AND THE PEOPLE  
AT BOSQUE REDONDO**

**by**

**KAVEH MOWAHED**

**B.A. JOURNALISM,  
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY, 2001**

THESIS

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**“THERE WAS NOTHING THERE FOR US”:  
ENVIRONMENT AND THE PEOPLE AT BOSQUE REDONDO**

**By**

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BA, Journalism, Arizona State University, 2001  
MA, History, University of New Mexico, 2017**

**ABSTRACT:**

The Bosque Redondo Indian reservation held nearly 10,000 Native prisoners through much of the 1860s. Navajo captives outnumbered the Mescalero Apaches who were imprisoned there by about ten to one, until the Mescaleros escaped in November, 1865. Americans interned the Navajo at Bosque Redondo for another three years before negotiating a treaty that allowed for their release and return to their homeland, Dinétah.

The physical environment's role was seemingly all encompassing for Natives confined on the Bosque Redondo reservation. However, the environments in their homelands were different; they were distinct landscapes that illustrated the intimate connections people have with place. This work investigates alterations of lifeways based on three key elements of well-being for Natives during their detention: food, disease and medicine, and material culture.

The indigenous peoples of the American Southwest have long adapted to changing environments by adopting material things, and ideas, from the peoples around them. The intensity of the incarceration on the Bosque Redondo transformed Native outlooks with a trauma so strenuous it endures through multiple generations. This thesis sheds light on some of the causes of that suffering.

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## INTRODUCTION

Cadete, Chief of the Mashgalénde band of Indeh (Mescalero Apaches), and about 500 of his people holed up in Dog Canyon. Soldiers from a detachment of California Volunteers had fought them into the canyon, and the Mashgalénde fought back. They resisted from the crevices and behind rocks, the cover the canyon afforded to them, relying on their rudimentary weapons, bows and arrows, and a few firearms, though they had little ammunition. The U.S. Army had been after the Indeh (Apaches) for years, running them from site to site, promising rations and blankets – and fulfilling their promises only sometimes. It was October 1862, and the Mashgalénde in Dog Canyon were getting hungry and tired. Big Mouth, a Mashgalénde scout who was about nine years old at the time, remembered that many warriors were killed by the Volunteer's cavalry, leaving the women, children, and those who were feeble in a compromised state. "Our people were hungry and almost naked. The soldiers had killed the deer... not for food, but just because they liked to kill," he explained. "Meanwhile, we starved and froze."<sup>1</sup> Still, the Mashgalénde held hope in a man who had a history of being a friend to the Indians, at least to some of the Indians.<sup>2</sup> They were going to make a break for Fort Stanton where they knew they would find a former Indian Agent,

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<sup>1</sup> Eve Ball, Nora Henn, and Lynda Sánchez, *Indeh, an Apache Odyssey* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), 201.

<sup>2</sup> Robert A. Roessel, "Navajo History, 1850-1923," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Southwest*, ed. William C. Stuetevant, vol. 10 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 511. Roessel explained that Carson had retired from his job as Indian Agent, had taken up arms in the Civil War, and had no expectation to war with Natives again.

fifty-three year old Kit Carson, who at the outbreak of the Civil War had become a distinguished Colonel commanding the First Regiment of New Mexico Volunteers.



Figure 1. Kit Carson and James Henry Carleton worked together to execute a devastating war on the Mashgalénde and Diné.

Brigadier General James Henry Carleton, the new Commander of the Department of New Mexico, had just arrived with the California Volunteers when he was appointed to the position vacated by General Edward Canby's recall to the eastern Civil War front. Carleton wasted little time in ordering a punitive mission against the Indeh population. He issued an order to Carson, "All Indian men of



that tribe are to be killed whenever and wherever you can find them.”<sup>3</sup> The Mashgalénde probably did not know about this directive when they went looking for Carson. Carleton had risen to power in New Mexico at a fortuitous time. Just seven months earlier, Canby had driven Confederate Texans from the Territory, and they would not be coming back. The Civil War in the West had shifted from defending territory against Confederates to protecting New Mexicans from “Indian outrage,” a problem inherited from Mexico when territory had changed hands in 1848 at the end of the Mexican-American War.<sup>4</sup> Immediately, Carleton engaged campaigns against the Indeh and Diné (Navajo), the tribes most notorious for raiding New Mexico’s citizens. Luckily for the Mashgalénde in Dog Canyon, a contingency plan for Natives who sought peace had been put forward. Carleton summoned the battle-worn Indian leaders to Santa Fe to hear their plea for peaceful accommodations. Carleton’s verdict — they were going to Bosque Redondo. He ordered Carson to escort the Mashgalénde who had surrendered at Fort Stanton to a new reservation on the eastern edge of New Mexico Territory, adjacent to the newly commissioned Fort Sumner. Carleton had encountered Bosque Redondo, this modest cottonwood forest along the Pecos River, while scouting a decade earlier. It had remained prominent in his memory as a place to settle some day.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Lawrence C Kelly, *Navajo Roundup: Selected Correspondence of Kit Carson’s Expedition against the Navajo, 1863-1865* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing, 1970), 11.

<sup>4</sup> John Carey Cremony, *Life Among the Apaches* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 197.

<sup>5</sup> James Henry Carleton, “To the People of New Mexico;,” 1864, 5, <http://www.archive.org/details/topeopleofnewmex00carl>. Carleton writes an open letter to the people of the Territory, explaining his reasons for war with the Mescalero

The Bosque Redondo project was a classic case of early federal intervention into lifeways of disparate Native cultures. In this experiment the U.S. government attempted to Americanize Natives through relocation, re-education, and by assertion of jurisdiction over the environment that sustained their lives. By examining the Mashgalénde and Diné homelands and comparing them to the ecosystem and social atmosphere at Bosque Redondo, this work will argue that environment was integral to traditional lifeways. Further, it will show that the Native prisoners consciously adapted to the new setting in order to improve their lives, and sometimes simply to survive. Natives altered their understandings of food, disease, medicine, and material culture in response to the exposure to an unfamiliar environment and to American culture on the Bosque Redondo reservation. The environment proved to be the key influence shaping the relocation project, from conception to outcome.

Physical environment comprises space and place in real and imagined ways. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has explained how space and place are different, yet also codependent. “Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other,” he said.<sup>6</sup> Tuan went on to explain that people claim space and defend it as their own. He portrayed space, however, as simply the land, the region, or the area a people assert as their own, such as a state or country. Nevertheless, space can also be vast, open, and wild. Place, though, has deep intimate meanings for individuals because it holds the essence of where they

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and Navajo people. He also highlights the reason he chose Bosque Redondo as the reservation setting, including descriptions from his previous visits.

<sup>6</sup> Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 3.

live. “Places are centers of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest, and procreation, are satisfied,” he observed.<sup>7</sup> Places become where people experience life’s daily routines. While both space and place can be considered sacred, place is invariably associated with culture. In the case of Indian removal to Bosque Redondo, the United States violated Navajo and Mescalero Apache conceptualizations of space. Further, when the U.S. military invaded their homelands, and relocated them to a new, unfamiliar environment, their sense of place was turned on its head. Space and place are useful constructs to investigate how nations at the Bosque Redondo, both Native and American, navigated the world before, during, and after the reservation experiment.

General Canby was among the first Americans to conceptualize a New Mexico Indian reservation. His General Orders No. 81, written nine days before he was relieved of command, outlined a plan for two reservations: one for the Navajos at a site that would be called Fort Wingate, and one for the Mescalero Apaches near Las Cruces.<sup>8</sup> Since both of these proposed reservations would have been near the tribes’ homelands, they would have been more closely aligned with familiar lifeways. A few years earlier, Carson had recommended Indian removal as a means of control, and the trust he had built with Natives through his work as an Indian agent made him a natural choice to head the relocation operation.<sup>9</sup> When Carleton took charge, however, he envisioned a different plan, one that anticipated removal of these Natives to a secluded location that promised fertile soil and running water. It is likely Carleton based these ideas on his experience

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>8</sup> Kelly, *Navajo Roundup*, 4–5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 7.

serving on the Fort Tejon Reservation in Southern California.<sup>10</sup> Since he had previously toured New Mexico and the Southwest for more than a decade in official capacity as an army officer he knew this land well, and this knowledge shaped his ideas about how to tame it, beginning with its people. In 1863, Carleton outlined his thoughts in a letter to his commanding officer, the Adjutant General of the United States, in Washington:

“At the Bosque Redondo there is arable land enough for all the Indians of this family [Navajo and Apache]... You will observe that the Bosque Redondo is far down the Pecos on the open plains—where these Indians can have no lateral contact with settlers... If the government will only set apart a reservation of *forty miles square*, with Fort Sumner at the Bosque Redondo in the centre[sic], all the good land will be covered, and keep the settlers a proper distance from the Indians.”<sup>11</sup>

Carleton deemed his plan as “practical—practicable—and humane,” adding that the reservation would provide relief to both the suffering and the aggressive Indians.<sup>12</sup> Place mattered to Carleton, too. Like Carson, he believed that removal of Natives to a remote area would be best for the Indeh and Diné, but it would also benefit the Americans. This land on the Rio Pecos lay along the eastern edge of New Mexico Territory, more than 350 miles from Dinétah (the Navajo homeland) and a third of that distance to Hendebekeya (the Mescalero homeland). There were no cities or towns nearby. In that remote setting, Carleton was certain he could implement the second measure of his civilization plan with little chance of Natives escaping or potential interference from incoming American settlers.

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<sup>10</sup> Hampton Sides, *Blood and Thunder : The Epic Story of Kit Carson and the Conquest of the American West* (New York: Anchor Books, 2007), 400–404.

<sup>11</sup> Kelly, *Navajo Roundup*, 57.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

The purpose now is never to relax the application of force with a people that can no more be trusted that you can trust the wolves that run through their mountains. To gather them together little by little onto a Reservation[sic] away from the haunts and hills and hiding places of their country, and there be kind to them: there teach their children how to read and write: teach them the art of peace: teach them the truths of christianity[sic]... Even until you can raise enough to be self-sustaining—*you can feed them cheaper than you can fight them.*<sup>13</sup>

This letter illustrates the rudimentary thoughts that informed Carleton's Indian policy – relocation and re-education.

By contemporary standards it is hard to comprehend how two distinct nations could coexist on such a small parcel of unfamiliar land. The Mashgalénde were a mountain people who were at ease high in the New Mexican forests during the warm months and in the lower valleys during the winters. Over the course of hundreds of years, the Diné had adapted their culture to survive in relative comfort on the desolate high deserts of the Colorado Plateau. Although many of Carleton's contemporaries agreed with the gist of his sentiment, controversy still surrounded the reservation's chosen site.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

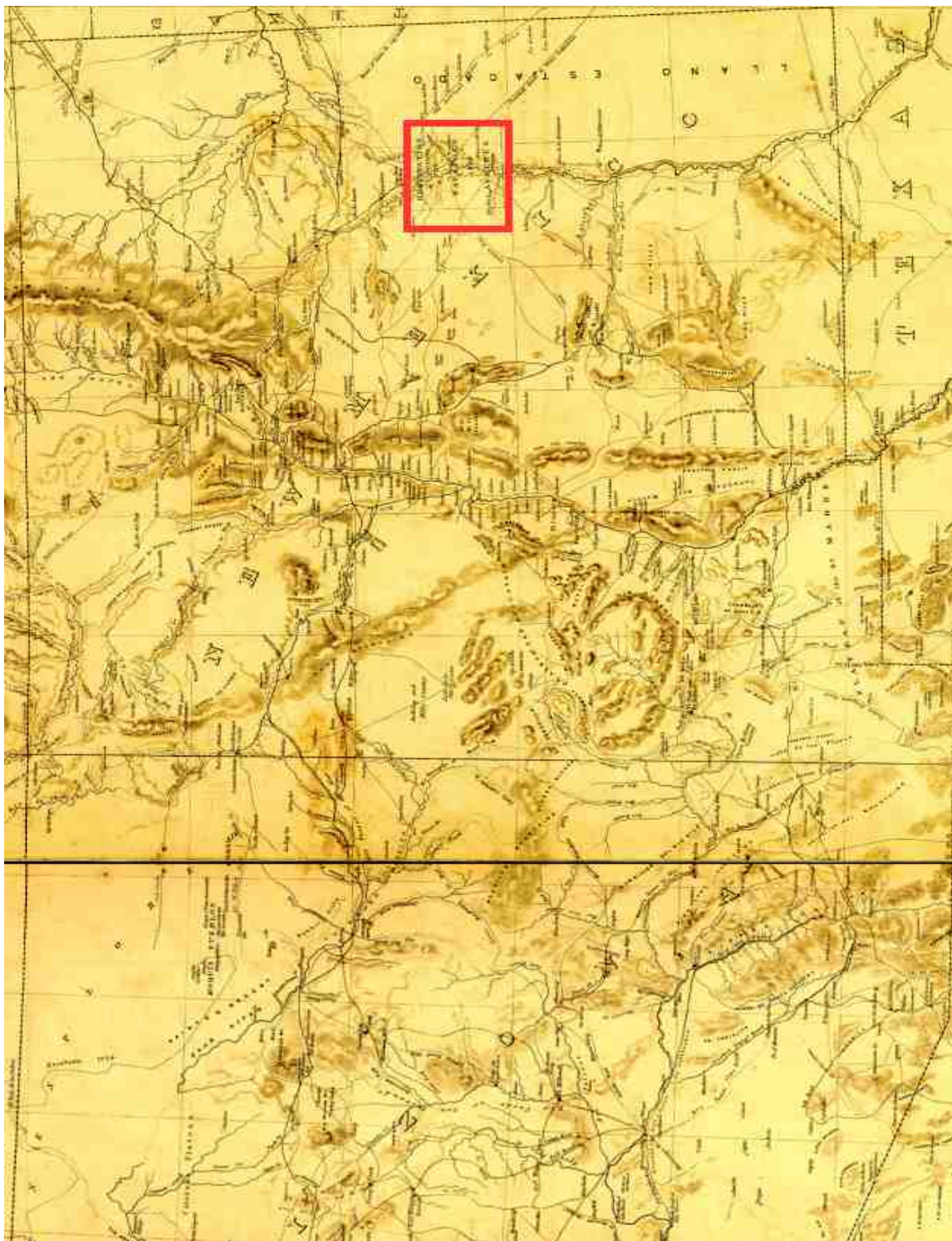


Figure 2. A map of New Mexico and a portion of Arizona Territories from the 1860s. The Bosque Redondo reservation is highlighted on the right. Notice that much of the Navajo homeland, in the upper left corner, is labeled “UNEXPLORED”. “Atlas of Historic New Mexico Maps”, New Mexico Humanities Council, <http://atlas.nmhum.org/atlas.php?gmap=26>

Captain John C. Cremony, a former journalist from Massachusetts, made his way to California in time to join the volunteer army that marched east across the desert with Carleton. In his memoir *Life Among the Apaches*, he claims to be the person responsible for choosing the spot where Fort Sumner would be built. The site of a former Mexican sheep corral would be ideal, he reasoned, because the water was readily available from the river, and there was excellent pastureland. He included only a cursory analysis of the natural limits of the surrounding landscape, with one exception. Cremony noted that the supply of wood in the area was limited. “Should any great number of persons be assembled thereat, a scarcity of wood must ultimately occur...” Cremony may have foreseen one of the earliest and most troublesome problems to strike the reservation’s population – a lack of wood to build shelters and to warm them through the cold winter.<sup>14</sup> The publication of his account in 1868 coincided with the federal government’s decision to condemn the reservation, so it is questionable whether he knew of the reservation experiment’s outcome or how mistaken he was about the site’s suitability to carry the incoming Native population.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Cremony, *Life Among the Apaches*, 199.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.



Figure 3. Michael Steck, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for New Mexico, quarreled with Carleton over the Bosque Redondo reservation plans. Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico.

Dr. Michael Steck travelled from Pennsylvania to Southern New Mexico to serve as an Indian Agent, and in 1863 he received an appointment as Superintendent of Indian Affairs for New Mexico Territory. His experience led him to support Carleton's removal and re-education policies, but he vociferously opposed the Pecos River site Carleton had set aside for the reservation. He foresaw the friction among the tribes and questioned whether the site was adequate to support large populations. Steck appealed to Washington with his objections, thereby making an adversary of Carleton, yet Steck was the pragmatist of the two men. Neither the Diné nor Mashgalénde knew how to subsist on that yellow grassland. It was a foreign place to them.

Scholarship on the Bosque Redondo reservation usually relates a story of captivity, whether it recounts a tale of suffering or of survival; and often it focuses



almost exclusively on the Diné.<sup>16</sup> While Indeh histories concede that the Bosque Redondo detention was taxing, oral histories suggest it was less traumatic for these people, perhaps because their imprisonment there lasted for only about two years, the first of which they spent confined alone before the Diné arrived.<sup>17</sup> The Diné, however, spent about five years in captivity after a relatively short, but brutal subjugation by the US Army under Carleton. Historians of the Indeh, especially those devoted to the Mescaleros, such as Eve Ball, who collected oral histories, and C.L. Sonnichsen, who wrote *The Mescalero Apaches*, tend to treat the experience as a survival story. The Diné, however, are more inclined to recall the trauma they endured during a time that forever changed their worldview. They commonly remember that their depredations against Americans warranted their suffering.<sup>18</sup> The tribes' respective histories clearly convey these incongruent remembrances.

I have yet to find any Bosque Redondo history told specifically as an environmental story. The Bosque Redondo reservation experience, however, deserves to be complicated beyond the traditional narrative. I have attempted to pursue this goal in the following chapters, each focusing on a different aspect

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<sup>16</sup> See Bailey, *Bosque Redondo: an American Concentration Camp*; Kelly, *Navajo Roundup*; Lake Valley Navajo School, *Oral History Stories of the Long Walk = Hwéeldi Baa Hané*; Ball, Henn, and Sánchez, *Indeh, an Apache Odyssey*, for descriptions of the internment, including Native stories describing trauma or simple imprisonment, depending on perspective.

<sup>17</sup> See Lake Valley Navajo School and Title VII Bilingual Staff, *Oral History Stories of the Long Walk = Hwéeldi Baa Hané*; and Sherry Robinson and Eve Ball, *Apache Voices: Their Stories of Survival as Told to Eve Ball* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000) to compare oral histories from the Navajo and Apache.

<sup>18</sup> See Lake Valley Navajo School and Title VII Bilingual Staff, *Oral History Stories of the Long Walk = Hwéeldi Baa Hané*. The Diné repeatedly recount the sentiment that Americans justly punished them for raiding and violent attacks.

critical to survival. In chapter one, I discuss food at Bosque Redondo. The Diné and Mashgalénde had adapted their foodways to their home environments over hundreds of years. The abrupt change in elevation, flora, and fauna that characterized the shift between home and reservation disrupted the Native food customs. Further, the army stationed at Fort Sumner was determined to teach these semi-nomadic people how to become sedentary farmers, like New Mexico's Native Pueblo peoples. As alluded to, however, the farming project could not withstand incessant complications springing from poor weather, bad water, infertile soil, and attacks by pests. Additionally, supplying government rations for the Natives proved problematic because of the exorbitant cost, the influence of dishonest brokers, and the Natives' unfamiliarity with American foodstuffs.

In chapter two, I examine disease and medicine on the reservation. Captives were afflicted with influenza, smallpox, syphilis, and gastrointestinal maladies, among others. The overcrowded living arrangement on the reservation proved an ideal environment for contagious diseases. Army doctors clashed with Native healers over the best courses of treatment. Natives often navigated the two systems, taking advantage of what each had to offer.

In chapter three, I shift to the environment's impact on material culture. Natives began using new things to interact with the world around them; these ranged from tools and cookware to building construction and to textiles. Ideas and implements were adopted to fit the new environment and to take advantage of the availability of goods manufactured elsewhere. Material goods are as important to a society as its food and health. People use objects as intermediaries between the self and the environment to improve their life experience.

Finally, in the conclusion I attempt to show why studying the Bosque Redondo is still important. The ability to think of the environment historically adds depth to the stories that form cultural and national identities. Conceptualizations of land and space are relevant to contemporary understandings of our place in the cosmos. This was just as true for the Diné and Mashgalénde at Bosque Redondo. For these formerly powerful indigenous nations that had once controlled vast swaths of the Southwest, the distress and trauma from their calamities in the 1860s is ongoing. Historical trauma has affected generations because of settler colonialism's interruption of self-determination for Native Americans. Settler colonialism is, on its face, about the desire to control land, space, and place – the physical environment.

Other historians of the Bosque Redondo Reservation have touched on this environmental theme. They usually include it in the narrative when they discuss impure water and non-arable soil and its association with reduced crop output on the Native farms. This is often the main premise of many Bosque Redondo histories; poor water and land harmed food production, and led to starvation among Natives. Eventually these influences contributed to the closing of the reservation. Lynn Bailey explicitly blames Americans for Native suffering, creating an apologist history. Yet her monograph *Bosque Redondo: An American Concentration Camp* (1970) must be viewed in the context of its appearance at the height of the Red Power movement. In 1976, Enrique Salmón wrote about sickness in his article "The Disease Complaint at Bosque Redondo," but he focuses on Americans' contentious reaction to Native healing methods on the reservation. Clyde Kluckhohn, a well known anthropologist, created *Navaho*

*Material Culture*, a valuable collection of data on the things of Diné life, but he offered little interpretation to help explain his findings. I appreciate the opportunity to ask my own questions of Kluckhohn's data while interpreting his findings myself.

In *Diné: A History of the Navajos*, Peter Iverson chooses to admonish revisionist historians' interpretations that soften American culpability for Native suffering. Journalist Hampton Sides's *Blood and Thunder* (2006) is a well-researched, popular narrative describing Kit Carson's role in the American domination of the Southwest, including the Bosque Redondo episode. Intellectual historian Hayden White's challenge to other historians to reconsider tropes and to be aware of "emplotment" when one creates a story out of raw facts, and my recent encounter with Dee Brown's history of the West from a Native perspective, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, compel me to think of new ways to write a Bosque Redondo history.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, I have found that the primary sources shape my idea that place was the most significant aspect of the Bosque Redondo narrative. The Diné and Mashgalénde oral histories, John Cremony's memoir, and official reports and letters from government agents repeatedly demonstrate that space and place were central to the ideas of home, survival, and the impact of the relocation plan.

The inspiration for approaching Bosque Redondo through an environmental lens came first from historian Elliot West, who illustrates in *The*

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<sup>19</sup> Hayden V. White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 83; Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee : An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2007).

*Contested Plains* how the landscape always has a role in history.<sup>20</sup> Further ideas come from William Cronon's book *Changes in the Land*, and his essay "Kennecott Journey: The Paths Out of Town."<sup>21</sup> In "Kennecott Journey," Cronon offers advice on how to observe and historicize the physical environment. In *Changes in the Land* he relates the story of Native and European encounters and clashes in the American Northeast, including conflicting ideas of land use. He illustrates how those ideas emerged through conflict and how each side navigated the new power dynamics that took hold when Europeans began to colonize the region. Cronon's themes are a natural fit for application to the Bosque Redondo narrative because, as in Cronon's settings, the Northeast and Alaska, colonial expansion in New Mexico hinged on conflict over control of the land and ideas of its proper use.

Lastly, a word on language usage. I use the name "American" for the non-Natives in my writing. In the 1860s this would have been an accurate term because Natives were not yet citizens of the United States. When discussing indigenous groups, I may employ the terms "indigenous" or "Native" or occasionally "Indian," although I am most comfortable with "Native" and use it most frequently. When I refer to specific Native groups, I try to use the name they use to self-identify in their own languages, especially when telling Native stories

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<sup>20</sup> Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1998). West argues that the grass on the plains was a source of energy that fueled migration and war by feeding the animals that made transportation easier.

<sup>21</sup> William Cronon, *Changes in the Land : Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003); William Cronon, "Kennecott Journey: The Paths Out of Town," in *Under an Open Sky : Rethinking America's Western Past* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).

or when writing about a Native perspective. I add the English equivalent in parentheses on first reference. I follow the same practice for place names when Native versions were available.

## Chapter 1: The Food System at Bosque Redondo

When Cadete responded to Carleton's decree to go to Bosque Redondo, he asked for humane treatment and recognition for the Mashgalénde for ably resisting their subjugators: "We have no more heart; we have no provisions, no means to live... our springs and water holes are either occupied or overlooked by your young men. Do with us as may seem good to you, but do not forget we are men and braves."<sup>1</sup> However, Cadete also admitted that the Americans overcame the Apaches by forcing hunger upon them. They had no more access to food or water and it broke their will. The Mashgalénde's knowledge of their physical environment was integral to traditional foodways. Americans would use food deprivation as a tactic against Natives repeatedly as colonialism expanded across the Southwest.

The experience at Bosque Redondo and the relocation away from their traditional homelands would prove difficult for its prisoners. The Mashgalénde and later the Diné had built enduring cultural ties to their homelands that were rooted in the land itself. Mescaleros knew how to survive in the mountains; they traveled with the seasons to ensure food security year-round. The Diné had learned how to coexist with the landscape of their high plateau home; they transformed from a hunter-gatherer society to one that embraced farming and shepherding. The low plains of far eastern New Mexico were a foreign place to

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<sup>1</sup> John Carey Cremony, *Life Among the Apaches* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 201.

both peoples. Seemingly, only grass would grow there. It was excellent grazing land, and New Mexicans had used it for that purpose for some time. Moreover, confinement upon a land with borders enclosing roughly forty square miles could never support traditional Native lifeways, or the new lives intended for them. “That place at Fort Sumner was what is now called a concentration camp,” Big Mouth remembered more than eighty years later. “There was nothing there for us except misery and hunger.”<sup>2</sup>

At Bosque Redondo, Carleton intended to create a self-supporting food system by locating the reservation on flat grassland with a dependable water supply, the Rio Pecos. Food however, disrupted, rather than eased, the relocation. It is impossible to expect that Carleton’s modest plot of land could support a self-sustaining food system. Carleton dismissed traditional Native foodways in favor of an American agrarian model. If the Americans had allotted the land to the Native residents, each of the roughly nine thousand Indians who eventually lived at Bosque Redondo would have received about 2.8 acres. Even with half of that population, the land’s carrying capacity would have been greatly overburdened. When the Army provided rations to the Mashgalénde and Diné, they were unfamiliar with the provisions. The relocation to the reservation, in effect, disrupted the traditional Native food system. Often, graft diminished the reservation’s supplies as well. Placing unfriendly tribes together on the small reservation exacerbated the trouble as Navajos frequently raided Apaches for foodstuffs and other valuables. They were there together for more than a year.

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Eve Ball, Nora Henn, and Lynda Sánchez, *Indeh, an Apache Odyssey* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), 202.



The Diné resided on the northern portion of the reservation and the Mashgalénde at the southern end, down river. Raiding likely also took place in the opposite direction, from south to north. The conflicts among tribes added to the tension that was due to the unsympathetic and unfamiliar physical environment at Bosque Redondo, making the atmosphere too toxic for the creation of a sustainable food system. While nearly all Bosque Redondo scholarship devotes some discourse to food and environment, there is little work dedicated to the issues, even though these elements were pivotal.

#### OLD NATIVE FOODWAYS

Ethnobotanists have studied traditional Native American foodways and how they have changed over time. They argue, for instance, that some eight thousand years ago populations began to settle and farm the arid Colorado Plateau where water was available. Planting strategies varied, from staggering the sowing of crops to increase the window of production to planting a large field, as well as several smaller fields that ran along natural arroyos as backup food sources.<sup>3</sup> It took a long time to learn and perfect the strategies that allowed Natives to thrive on the Southwest's difficult terrain. Ethnobotanist Enrique Salmón explains, "Resilient communities on the Colorado Plateau emerged only after they became interdependent and interrelated with each other and with their

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<sup>3</sup> Enrique Salmón, *Eating the Landscape: American Indian Stories of Food, Identity, and Resilience* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012), 100–101.

surroundings.”<sup>4</sup> Community survival depended on cooperation, and over time, the land became a part of their culture – a part of the people.



Figure 4. Two Apache women carry baskets on their backs while harvesting agave. “Apache Women Harvesting Agave,” accessed April 15, 2015, <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/plateaus/peoples/images/trek.html>

The Mescalero Apaches received their name from early Spanish explorers. The Mescal cactus provided the bulk of their food supply and encouraged their migratory behavior. They had to move frequently to find new food sources – yucca fruit and flowers, juniper and sumac berries, nuts, seeds, game, and cacti. The summer mescal crop was the staple, and harvesting it was a chore. Men

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 88.

stood guard, maybe hunting nearby, while Mescalero women reaped the desert's gift. Historian C.L. Sonnichsen describes the harvest:

First, the big leaves were cut off as close to the heart as possible. Then the Apache woman would use her piñon stick like a chisel to cut the roots, hammering on the end with her hatchet. When she finished, she had an ivory-white bulb sometimes two or three feet in circumference all ready to cook.”<sup>5</sup>

They steamed the mescal hearts in a pit over stones that a fire had baked for half a day or more. Then they covered the mescal with grass, dirt, and more rocks and left them to cook until tender, sweet, and syrupy. Anything not eaten then was dried and stored for eating or trade at a later time.<sup>6</sup> They used other fibers from the plant to make thread that could be woven into fabric. The plant was among their most prized harvests, a food source rivaled only by the wild game they could hunt in the mountains during warmer months. Except when living along rivers, Apaches did very little planting, raising just a bit of corn, squash, and beans. The Mescalero lifestyle was relatively stable considering their migratory, but deliberate, patterns.

The Diné also depended on agriculture to some extent. They had a long history of farming on the Colorado Plateau. Navajo oral tradition says they are living in the fourth world. They had already traveled through three worlds. Their ancestors, while journeying through the previous domains, learned of holy plants and carried that knowledge forward with them. Tobacco and the three sisters,

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<sup>5</sup> C. L. Sonnichsen, *The Mescalero Apaches*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 19–20.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 20–21. Sonnichsen goes into detail on the harvesting, eating, processing, storing of mescal, including contemporary uses in the form of pudding and consumption at female puberty ceremonies.

corn, beans, and squash helped to sustain the Diné in a climate where other crops could not flourish. They were probably never dependent strictly on farming, but instead used these crops to supplement hunting and gathering before the shepherding tradition took hold.<sup>7</sup> On the Colorado Plateau though, there is almost no water and very little rain – less than ten inches a year. There is a right time for planting, which is just before the winter “female rain comes, as Navajo people refer to it, softly touching the thirsty land.”<sup>8</sup>

From the eighteenth century, though, the Diné had been shifting from a hunting and farming society to one that depended on sheep. Their physical environment supported the shift. Hernando Cortés brought Churro sheep to the Americas during his 1519 expedition. By 1860, Navajos had thirty-three sheep for each person, but shepherding communities need about forty to fifty sheep per person to prosper.<sup>9</sup> The dependence on sheep for subsistence and the economic importance placed on the flocks as herds grew had negative effects too. By the middle 1800s, herding sheep as a primary mode of livelihood pushed Diné shepherds to raid American settlements more often in order to increase their

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<sup>7</sup> Salmón, *Eating the Landscape*, 90. Salmón’s account of Navajo subsistence before the era of shepherding, although brief, is among the most complete. Most scholarship focuses on Navajo livestock.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>9</sup> Garrick Alan Bailey and Roberta Glenn Bailey, *A History of the Navajos: The Reservation Years* (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press, 1989), 19–20. See the notes for a good discussion of the variances in estimates of both herd size kept by Navajos over time and the number required for subsistence shepherding. Tables show an increase in capacity.

flocks and other provisions.<sup>10</sup> The result was an increase in tensions between Navajos and settlers, both Hispanic and white.

Jane Begay's great-grandmother, Kinánibaá, passed down stories from the time just before the Diné marched to Hwéeldi (Bosque Redondo). Begay said Kinánibaá's mother had given birth to a son while her clan was fleeing from an enemy. They had little food and had to satisfy the newborn with plant seeds. She said he died because they had no mutton for him to eat. This indicates the close relationship between food and space. Diné were always in need of mutton because the raiding economy kept them constantly moving to stay ahead of enemies. Sometimes they traded for sheep. Three pairs of moccasins were a good trade. Eventually, the trading turned into raiding. In 1861 alone, Navajos engaged in raiding stole fifty thousand goats and sheep from New Mexicans.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, while raiding Hispanic ranches for sheep, Navajos would also steal young boys to help with the herding. Kinánibaá had heard Navajos say, "I am going to the Mexicans to get some white sheep and a Mexican baby."<sup>12</sup> Americans, too, raided the Diné. As early as 1851, Army officials in New Mexico had contended that citizens were equally involved in raiding, complicating the government's struggle

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>11</sup> James F. Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 380. In Appendices A and B, Brooks charts human captives and livestock stolen by Navajos, and by militia from Navajos, by year.

<sup>12</sup> Lake Valley Navajo School and Title VII Bilingual Staff, *Oral History Stories of the Long Walk = Hwéeldi Baa Hané* (Crownpoint, NM: Lake Valley Navajo School, 1991), 17.

to halt American and Native desires for retribution.<sup>13</sup> This cycle effectively tied violence, economy, and food into an interdependent cycle and increased tensions between Navajos and settlers, both Hispanic and white.

Despite the complications raiding added to their pastoral lives, pillaging was good business for the Diné and Mashgalénde for quite a long time. Both tribes were notably proficient raiders. During the Spanish era, reports of raids were commonplace and they did not stop, by some accounts, until the early twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> In his book *When Indians Became Cowboys*, historian Peter Iverson writes that the raiding culture was accelerated by the Spaniards' introduction of livestock to the Southwest tribes. Iverson argues that horses coming into Navajo and Apache communities proved such a radical change it altered their lifeways. He states that horses allowed the tribes to roam and control more territory and to increase cattle herd sizes – and an increase in raiding accompanied the dependence on herding. The two activities fueled each other. But Apaches were less likely to steal animals for their own herds. “The Apaches raided for cattle, without question, but had less interest in raising them

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<sup>13</sup> Durwood Ball, “The U.S. Army in New Mexico, 1848-1886,” in *Telling New Mexico: A New History*, ed. Marta Weigle, Frances Levine, and Louise Stiver (Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2009), 180.

<sup>14</sup> See Grenville Goodwin and Neil Goodwin, *The Apache Diaries: A Father-Son Journey* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). for a thorough exploration of rumors of unsettled Apaches living in Northern Mexico's Sierra Madre mountains, still surviving as hunter-gatherer-raiders, possibly as late as the 1930s. Also, perhaps the best analysis of cycles of raiding in the American Southwest is Ned Blackhawk's *Violence over the Land*, although he deals primarily with Utes in Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico. In Blackhawk we see some of the same actors and familiar, and unfamiliar, tactics involving the Utes.

and more interest in immediately consuming them,” Iverson argues.<sup>15</sup> They were subsistence raiders for the sake of survival, not for economy like the Navajos. In both cases raiding was a fundamental component of the tribes’ food systems, either directly or as a supporting element, and it had the effect of expanding their territorial hegemony.

Canby, Carleton, Carson, and Steck unanimously agreed that the United States had to put an end to the Indians’ raiding to ensure the welfare of Americans who were trying to settle in the area. In the winter of 1863, Carleton ordered Carson to charge into Dinétah, and execute a war of subjugation. Carson’s winter campaign against the Diné proved to be the turning point in their resistance. During the winter of 1863-1864, his troops destroyed Navajo food supplies, forcing them to surrender or starve in the harsh high desert. James Brooks notes that Carson’s forces seized more than a hundred thousand sheep from the Diné, even though they had no ability to herd them. The Volunteers distributed tens of thousands of the sheep among themselves as a reward for their labor, but they killed many more on the plateau.<sup>16</sup> Waging a war on the enemy’s food supply proved a successful strategy against the Navajos, just as it had been about a year earlier against the Confederate invaders from Texas and then the Mescaleros.

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Iverson, *When Indians Became Cowboys: Native Peoples and Cattle Ranching in the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 19–20.

<sup>16</sup> Brooks, *Captives & Cousins*, 332.

## FOOD ON THE BOSQUE

The Navajos' Long Walk from Dinétah to Hwéeldi merged insult, injury, and dishonor into a persisting, crushing assault. Former victims of Navajo raids regularly attacked the caravans as they traversed New Mexico. Diné had little food for the journey, and vengeful New Mexicans and Pueblo Indians stole much of what they did bring along. Carson was concerned about the lack of food for the trek across the high desert to the Pecos River Valley after hearing that a group of eight hundred Navajo prisoners and their guards set out without enough food for even the first short leg of the trip. He "respectfully suggested" to Carleton that one pound of food per day, whether meat, corn, or flour, was not sufficient to nourish the travelers.<sup>17</sup> The Diné, as a whole, arrived at the Hwéeldi in a more desperate state than they had suffered after losing the battle for Dinétah.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas W. Dunlay, *Kit Carson & the Indians* (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 303.

<sup>18</sup> There is ample scholarship on the Long Walk. It is not my purpose to retell those histories here, except to show that depredations against the Navajos along the way included violence and attacks on their food. For more see Lynn Bailey's *The Long Walk; a History of the Navajo Wars, 1846-68* and Jennifer Denetdale's *The Long Walk: the Forced Navajo Exile*.



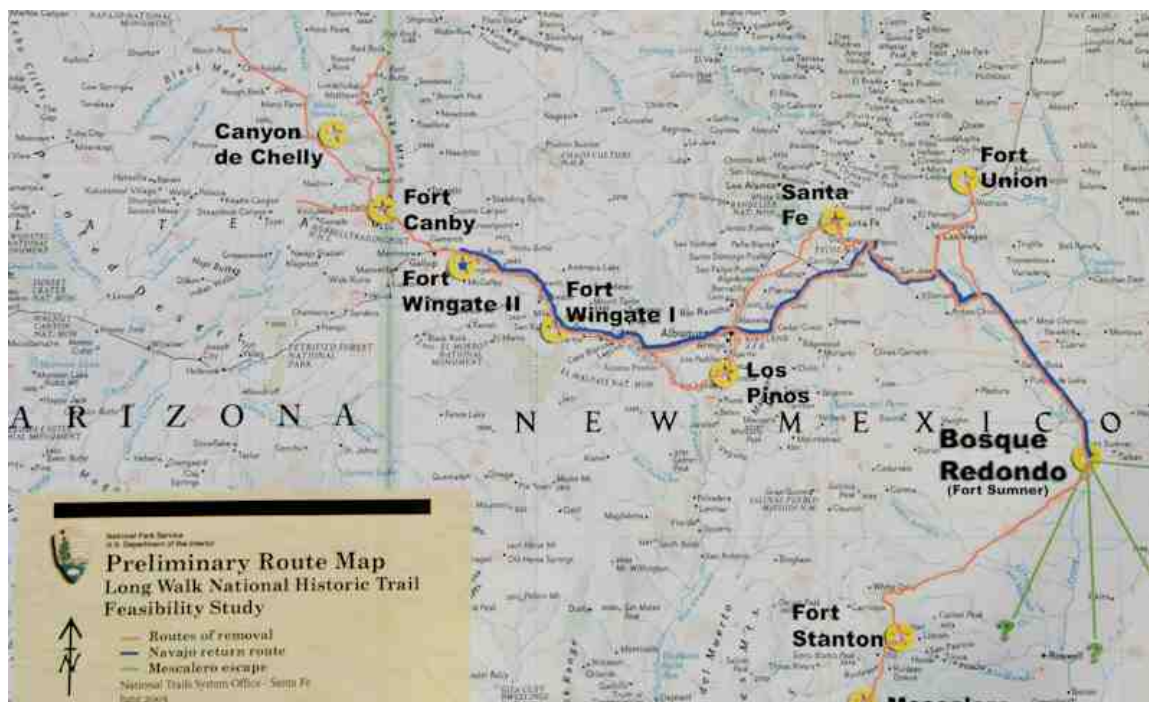


Figure 5. This map for the proposed National Historic Trail to commemorate the Long Walk shows the routes captives took to and from the Bosque Redondo. “Proposed Map of Long Walk,” Mescalero Apache Telecom, accessed July 12, 2016 <http://www.matisp.net/longwalk/images/lwmap.html>

By 1864, the tone in Carleton’s correspondence had changed. Now, he was begging for support for his reservation project in the name of progress. He also knew the reservation’s population was growing more quickly than he had expected. The six thousand captives at the Bosque Redondo already numbered more than Carleton had planned for, and more Navajos were en route. Mescaleros had been sowing fields for about a year and hoped for good crops that upcoming season. The Diné, however, had little infrastructure to support their growing numbers. They were hungry and crushed from their two-year war with the Army. In March, Carleton again wrote to the Adjutant General in

Washington, D.C.<sup>19</sup> “Now, when they have surrendered and are at our mercy, they must be taken care of... these six thousand mouths must eat,” he pleaded. In an about face, he pointed to past treatment of Native Americans as an example of travesty, now encouraged sympathy. “For pity’s sake,” he wrote, “if not moved by any other consideration, let us as a great nation, for once treat the Indian as he deserves to be treated.” Then he appealed to ideals of Manifest Destiny:

[When] at length they found it was *their* destiny, too, as it had been that of their brethren, tribe after tribe, away back towards the rising of the sun, to give way to the insatiable progress of our race, they threw down their arms... and feeling that we are too powerful and too just a people to repay that confidence with meanness or neglect.<sup>20</sup>

Carleton determined that the Indians at the Bosque Redondo had recognized that American expansion was not only an American destiny, but also that Natives were destined to capitulate – the Indians were now anticipating that the American nation would fulfill its transcontinental destiny. Moreover, he urged the United States to recognize and reward Indian compliance with stocks of provisions. Among Carleton’s requests in that letter to the Adjutant General was an entreaty for Washington to send food. He solicited 2 million pounds of “breadstuffs,” 250,000 pounds each of flour and corn, and 4,000 head of cattle. He told them not to worry about salt though. He could purchase it locally.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lawrence C. Kelly, *Navajo Roundup: Selected Correspondence of Kit Carson’s Expedition against the Navajo, 1863-1865* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing, 1970), 126–28. This letter signals the turn in Carleton’s thinking, perhaps because of altruism, but more likely because he was feeling the pressure of responsibility for the wellbeing of such a large and growing population.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

Government-supplied commodity foods kept the Natives alive, but were unsatisfying. Food, after all, connected these peoples to their environments and traditions through a powerfully personal relationship. Diné elder Annabelle Benally heard about the government commodities at Bosque Redondo from her mother. She said that Indians had no experience with white flour. Many of them got sick from eating it mixed with water into a paste. “Some people also ate coffee beans without boiling them and also died from it,” she thought.<sup>22</sup> She heard of Navajos eating raw bacon, too. Benally told of a Navajo, Woman Who Understands Other Languages, who had learned how to prepare the foreign foodstuffs from Mexicans. She then helped spread her new knowledge among her Diné people.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps it was in this setting that the most recognizable Native food today originated – fry bread. Folklorist Roger Welsch pointed out the perfect simplicity of the recipe. He said a military post must have been where fry bread came into being: “Historically in the regions where fry bread is now most prevalent no Indians had baking powder or flour, lard, or the iron pots necessary to make it.” That was not the case at Bosque Redondo, where the prisoners commonly received wheat flour. Welsch explained that soldiers could not preserve yeast on the trail, so baking was limited to the forts, like Sumner. Further, he suggests that it was a military staple that Natives adopted.<sup>24</sup> Still, the

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<sup>22</sup> Lake Valley Navajo School, *Oral History Stories of the Long Walk - Hwéeldi Baa Hané*, 29.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Roger L. Welsch, *Embracing Fry Bread: Confessions of a Wannabe* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 101–2; Dana Vantrease, “Commod Bods and Frybread Power: Government Food Aid in American Indian Culture,” *Journal of American Folklore* 126, no. 499 (2013): 55–69. Vantrease corroborates Welsch’s findings, adding

government commodities did not bring as much comfort to the interned prisoners as fry bread offers to Natives today.

When Joe Billy from Bisti, New Mexico, was a child, he heard the Bosque Redondo survival stories from his grandmother. “Many Navajos died of hunger,” he said. “They ate anything to survive, even dead animals. They tried to eat crows or coyote meat, but it tasted bitter,” Billy explained. “Skunk meat was good even though the musk stank.”<sup>25</sup> Americans, too, observed these scavenged meals.

Lydia Spencer Lane was the wife of an officer at Fort Stanton, where the soldiers and their families were well fed. They had a mercantile store at the fort, where soldiers and their families could buy imported goods. Lane once saw hungry Mashgalénde hanging around the Fort, hoping for food scraps, when they came across a dead mule. Lane saw them butcher the mule in short order, leaving only bones and hooves. “A dead mule is not to be despised when one is starving,” she remarked.<sup>26</sup>

Hunger was widespread. John Cremony was among the first California Volunteers to arrive at the Bosque Redondo. He witnessed depredations against the Natives from the beginning and recounted them in his memoir. He also befriended the Mashgalénde, eventually advocating for them when it was clear that their government rations would not last until the next shipment. The Mashgalénde wanted to go hunting. Cremony went to the post commander,

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that fry bread came into being about 150 years ago, making it possible that Bosque Redondo was its birthplace.

<sup>25</sup> Lake Valley Navajo School and Title VII Bilingual Staff, *Oral History Stories of the Long Walk = Hwéeldi Baa Hané*, 47.

<sup>26</sup> Sonnichsen, *The Mescalero Apaches.*, 90; Paul Andrew Hutton, *The Apache Wars : The Hunt for Geronimo, the Apache Kid, and the Captive Boy Who Started the Longest War in American History* (New York: Crown, 2016), 111.

Captain Updegraff, offering to supervise a hunting party on the nearby plains. Besides, there was no worry of the captives escaping because their families would still be “hostages” at the reservation. His argument worked. They were given forty-eight hours leave. Ninety warriors, fifteen women, and Cremony went out onto the plains – the warriors armed only with bows and arrows. They spread out in a line more than half a mile wide and combed the prairie, eventually encountering antelope. The ends of the line swooped around and encircled the animals resulting in eighty-seven kills. From that day forward, it was more common to take leave from the Bosque for a hunt if provisions were low.<sup>27</sup>

It had become clear that with the quickly growing Native population, the rations provided by the United States would likely never be sufficient. Cremony’s hunting party went out the first time in mid 1863, when the Indian population at the Bosque was around fifteen hundred , by his account. The party set a precedent for Indian agency during their captivity. They were able to seize upon any opportunity to feed themselves in ways that more closely aligned with their traditional patterns. Yet these opportunities waxed and waned. The Mescaleros’ more complete submission, as compared to the wariness of the elusive Navajo, afforded them more freedom while in captivity. After all, they were the earliest arrivals and had a record of cooperation with the Americans, stretching back to a small-scale farming project under Agent Michael Steck’s direction in 1856.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Cremony, *Life Among the Apaches*, 203; Hutton, *The Apache Wars*, 111. Hutton uses Cremony’s story to illustrate the admiration that he had developed with the Mashgalénde, going as far as to advocate for them to his commanders.

<sup>28</sup> Sonnichsen, *The Mescalero Apaches*, 91.

The Diné, on the other hand, had a two-decade history of conflict with Americans, with little record of mutuality or respect upon which to build new relationships. Carson had devastated them in the 1863-64 winter campaign at Dinétah and now they were at Carleton's mercy. However, the Diné were also able to seize upon agency by feeding themselves from time to time. Shepherding reinforced the class system among Navajos. Those with larger herds, the ricos, were able to resist the United States for a longer time period – pulling their sheep deeper into Dinétah, farther from New Mexican settlements – thereby taking advantage of a familiar environment to resist the Americans' encroachment. Eventually though, ricos such as Ganado Mucho, who succumbed to the United States in 1866, reduced hunger among poor Navajos by arriving at the Bosque Redondo with large herds.<sup>29</sup>

Carleton was headstrong. Cremony, who had worked under him in Santa Fe before being ordered to help erect Fort Sumner, said Carleton's "unscrupulous ambition and exclusive selfishness had passed into proverb."<sup>30</sup> He was determined to have his scheme work, even though it was impossible to grow enough food for nine thousand captives to live off the land along the Rio Pecos. Other than the fort, little infrastructure, agriculture, or industry was established. The reality was that importing of provisions was the only way to sustain the population there.

By 1865, Congress was growing concerned with the expense of feeding the Indians and, additionally, with the reports of missing stores. That winter, army

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<sup>29</sup> Brooks, *Captives & Cousins*, 333.

<sup>30</sup> Cremony, *Life Among the Apaches*, 198.

inspector Captain A.B. Bristol, a member of the Board of Survey ordered by Congress to investigate the reservation's troubles, wrote a detailed report of its food stocks. The board members counted about fifty-one hundred head of cattle.<sup>31</sup> They found 24 pounds of sugar had gone missing, along with other poultry inconsistencies. The Board noted that the 28,000 pounds of corn stored at the Fort Sumner was of high quality, but poorly packed. Bosque Redondo farms grew ten times more corn that year than anything else, harvesting about 375,000 pounds. There was almost 300 gallons of whiskey in stock, as well as 388 gallons of molasses – but more than 125 gallons of whiskey was unaccounted for.<sup>32</sup> Further, the Board found that a contractor who transported wheat meal was also responsible for a deficiency of about 2,500 pounds in just a single shipment.<sup>33</sup> Reports of missing stores go on and on in the Board of Survey reports, but they are unclear as to whether the foodstuffs were intended for Natives at the reservation or soldiers and their families at Fort Sumner. Either way, graft had taken hold of reservation stores. The Board went as far as to inventory stocks at Fort Sumner's store and it blamed two officers there for deficiencies, including coffee pots, tea kettles, and pans. Furthermore, although Carleton was procuring salt locally, according to the Board of Survey more than nine hundred pounds of that commodity were missing.<sup>34</sup> They pointed to poor handling during

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<sup>31</sup> United States National Archives and Records Service, *Headquarters Records of Fort Sumner, New Mexico, 1862-1869* (Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, 1987), 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, reel 5, sec. 3, p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> United States National Archives and Records Service, *Headquarters Records of Fort Sumner, New Mexico, 1862-1869.*, reel 5. Sec. 3, p. 16.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, reel 5, sec. 3, p. 32.

transportation, but asserted that there was no blame placed on the couriers.<sup>35</sup> They expected some losses because these supplies arrived overland by rudimentary wagons and roads. It was the cost of doing business in the 1860s.

At the Bosque Redondo Diné farmers produced about 35,000 pounds each of wheat and pumpkins and only 3,000 pounds of beans in the 1865 growing season. All of these foodstuffs were for the Indians' use, the Board's report explained. They also grew 14,000 pounds of oats and 2,700 pounds of sorghum, crops to be sold to government departments elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> The Native laborers were, in effect, subsidizing their own imprisonment by growing crops for sale instead of for their own nourishment. A running log of "Indian Funds" showed that, collectively, the Native population had money, varying from about \$2,000 to \$5,000, but how it accrued and where, why, and how it was spent is unclear.<sup>37</sup> Certainly, the conditions of life there differed but through farming, Natives experienced some sense of normality during internment. The Mashgalénde diet, however, did not rely on corn, beans, and squash. These new foods could have added to the pressure that drove the them to flee the reservation that autumn. Nevertheless, for the most part, Diné captives at the Bosque Redondo were growing foods they had eaten at Dinétah, but farming practices had to adapt to the new environment in order to produce anything at all.

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, reel 5, sec. 3, p. 172.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, reel 5, sec. 7, p. 12-13.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, reel 5, sec. 7, P. 20-71.



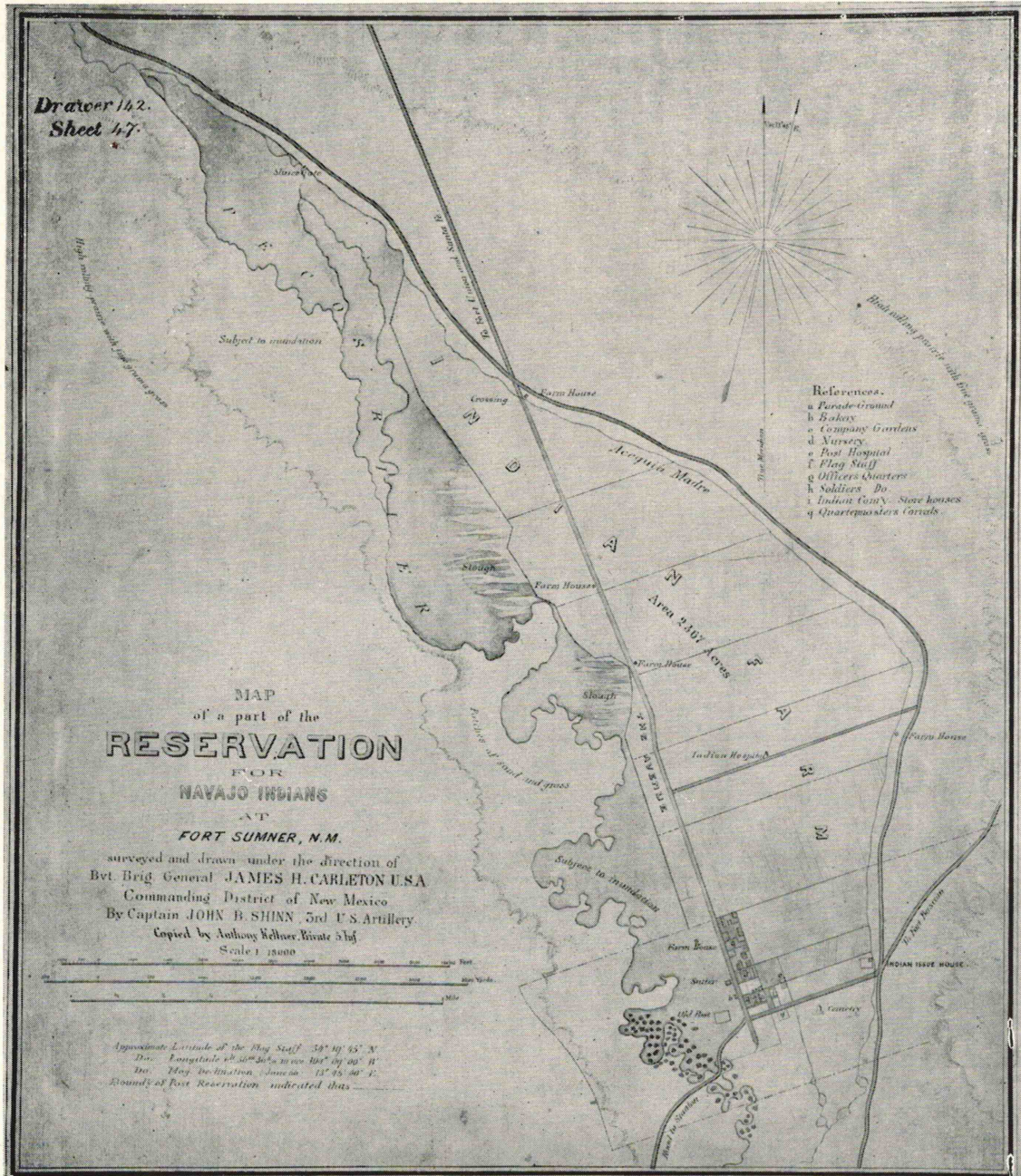


Figure 6. In the reservation map, the space set aside for farming, the irrigation system, the Native villages, and Fort Sumner are laid out in the Pecos River Valley. From Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!*, 170.

Natives complained of the alkaline water and soil at the Bosque Redondo. The alkalinity was a reflection of a high pH in the soil, relative to that of Dinétah.

The Navajo homeland, famous for its red soil full of iron, had an agricultural advantage over the lands adjacent to the Pecos. Beans, in particular, require soil with a high iron content to grow well, and they offer other benefits to farming. Beans are able to free nitrogen in the soil for other plants to use, leading to greater crop output from other plants. The reservation's alkaline soil inhibited plants' ability to utilize iron because it becomes less soluble as pH levels increase.<sup>38</sup> Significantly, beans raised on the reservation were less than one tenth of the crops produced. Iron is also necessary for plants to produce chlorophyll. A deficiency, called iron chlorosis, causes a yellowing of leaves and reduced fruit production – a possible explanation for the modest food production.

The Bosque Redondo was among the first Indian relocation experiments in the West. Its success hinged on food and environment, with the balance tipped toward failure after the arrival of the unmanageably large Diné prisoner population. Uprooting indigenous peoples with foodways closely tied to their homeland environments added to the pressures that led to a failed reservation experiment. However, food, a personal and culturally important factor, was central to the experience there. The Mashgalénde and Diné held captive at Bosque Redondo found ways, through food, to seize upon agency, making internment fractionally more familiar and comfortable while their people endured confinement. Ultimately, there was never enough food to support the reservation once the Diné had arrived. Farming proved futile and procurement of food from the outside was simply prohibitively costly. The federal government

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<sup>38</sup> Diane Marshall (Professor of Biology, University of New Mexico) in discussion with the author, May 2, 2015.

would not pay to keep the Diné prisoners fed after 1868. Instead, the Diné negotiated their release and the reservation closed.

## Chapter 2: Disease and Medicine on the Reservation

Carleton appointed George Gwyther to manage medicine at Fort Sumner. In 1871, just three years after the release of Bosque Redondo's remaining prisoners, he described New Mexico in an article about Pueblo Indians that he wrote for *Overland Monthly*. Gwyther outlined his perception of the various classes of people who populated the region, the flora and fauna that supported them, and the environment more generally. "Her climate is so salubrious," Gwyther wrote, "that the army medical officers have designated the country a sanitarium, where scrofula and consumption never originate, and imported cases rarely fail of rapid and permanent cure." Gwyther was describing space and its relationship to good health. He went on to praise the healing powers of the "violent" winds that sweep across the Territory from afar: "They are healthy and life-giving to the invalid, who finds there, in a few months, a renewal of that vitality which he had elsewhere thoroughly despaired of."<sup>1</sup> In line with his worldview, one that elevated American lifeways over the Natives', he did not try to reconcile the need for his medical expertise in this healthy environment. Nor did Gwyther attempt to explain the Natives' seeming propensity to illness while under his care at Bosque Redondo just a few years prior, although he did disparage the Navajo people in particular, and with great malice, compared to the kind portrayals of the Pueblo people who were the focus of that particular article.

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<sup>1</sup> George Gwyther, "Pueblo Indians," *Overland Monthly*, 1871, 260.

The irony of Gwyther's account, however, is that records and narratives from Fort Sumner offer no support for his depiction of New Mexico's salubrious climate. Both Natives and Americans suffered from illness, spread disease, and sometimes died from it while at Bosque Redondo – while he was working there – even while he pronounced the reservation “peculiarly healthy because of its locality upon an open plain, [and] its freedom from stagnant waters...”<sup>2</sup> Sickness and diseases that Natives had not experienced before, or sometimes did not know how to cure on unfamiliar terrain, struck particularly hard. Among the broadly accepted misconceptions, Gwyther and other Americans did not appreciate that New Mexico Territory lacked a physically homogenous environment. Nor did they understand that Native tribes and bands had adapted to regional differences as a means of sustaining a healthy population. Americans, generally, had little regard for Native healing ways, and most military men considered Native healers an obstacle to the civilizing process.

New problems with contagion, pervasive outbreaks of sexually transmitted illnesses, and protracted digestive complications, shaped the Bosque Redondo experience for the Native captives and for the American overseers tasked with the responsibility of stimulating the well-being of the population. A closer look at disease and medicine on the Natives' homeland and at the Bosque Redondo reservation, from both American and Indian perspectives, reveals that the

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<sup>2</sup> Roberto Mario Salmón, “The Disease Complaint at Bosque Redondo (1864-68),” *Indian Historian* 9, no. 3 (1976): 2–7; Lynn R. Bailey, *Bosque Redondo; an American Concentration Camp* (Pasadena, California: Socio-Technical Books, 1970), 86–87. Salmón does the best job of compiling death records into one narrative document to address disease at Bosque Redondo. Bailey, however, creates a more compelling narrative.



physical environment fundamentally influenced how people understood the world around them and that they negotiated health care based on the place they inhabited. People contrive value in land based on how they learn to live on it, interact with it, and use it to support their own health and well-being, even drawing on it as a source of medicine or pronouncing it a source of sickness or health. This is as true now as it was in New Mexico during the 1860s.



Figure 7. The so-called “salubrious” environment of Bosque Redondo was very much an ordinary dry, dusty desert landscape. “Bosque Redondo era Indian captives at Fort Sumner,” Palace of the Governors Photo Archive, New Mexico History Museum, Santa Fe, accessed November, 15 2015.

<http://econtent.unm.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/acpa/id/14588/rec/12>

Scholars have identified several factors that led to the failure of Bosque Redondo as a long-term Indian relocation project.<sup>3</sup> Failed farming and other food issues brought on hunger, and confinement's assimilation policies led to cultural suffocation and Native resistance both passive and active; and the contrasting ideas of health and medicine among cultures contributed to the catastrophe at Bosque Redondo. However, few scholars have closely examined the connection between physical environment and health at Bosque Redondo. Once they had been removed from their homelands, the Mescaleros and Navajos were prisoners in a land that was largely unknown to them. Further, it was unable to accommodate their ideas of health and healing. The Mashgalénde traveled only a few days on their journey from Hendebekeya (their homeland), by southern New Mexico's Sacramento Mountains, to the new reservation at Fort Sumner.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, the Diné walked for weeks from Dinétah to the reserve. Regardless of the distance between home and the Bosque Redondo reservation, both of the displaced peoples found an unfamiliar environment with different physical characteristics and a climate that could not support their understandings of health or medicine. When Mescalero Apache Big Mouth remembered his peoples' internment along the Pecos more than eighty years later, he recalled an

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<sup>3</sup> See Salmón, "The Disease Complaint at Bosque Redondo (1864-68)" for the most thorough analysis of disparate ideas of health at Bosque Redondo; also Watkinson, "We Have No More Heart"; Bailey, *Bosque Redondo; an American Concentration Camp*; Sonnichsen, *The Mescalero Apaches* for discussions on why the reservation failed, especially for famine, general welfare including health, and cultural loss.

<sup>4</sup> Freddy Kaydahzinne (Curator, Mescalero Apache Culture Center Museum) in telephone discussion with the author, May 3, 2016. Kaydahzinne was able to provide names for people and places in the Mescalero language and pointed out that they do not have a name for Bosque Redondo, unlike the Diné's Hwéeldi.

overwhelming despair among the prisoners and that there was never enough food to satisfy their hunger.<sup>5</sup> Although he failed to talk specifically about the Natives' suffering from illness during captivity, sickness took a notable toll on them. Illness brought by Europeans, though aggravated at Bosque Redondo, was not introduced to the Mashgalénde or Diné by the U.S. Army in 1862. Foreign disease had struck populations throughout New Mexico for centuries.<sup>6</sup>

## CONTAGION

Fort Sumner's head doctor, Gwyther, asserted that New Mexico's physical environment stimulated health; the dry air seemingly cured disease-stricken travelers within weeks of their arrival.<sup>7</sup> This line of thought, called miasma theory, was popular among his contemporaries, and had developed much earlier in other places. In 1717, Italian physician Giovanni Maria Lancisi earned credit for being the first researcher to define miasma theory clearly, although Greek physician Aelius Galenus probably introduced the theory in the second century AD. The belief was that contagious disease spread among susceptible people, but breathing air tainted with "decaying organic matter" caused the initial infection. Therefore, a person's health could depend on whether one is breathing good or bad air. Malaria is an affliction commonly cited as evidence that bad air could

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<sup>5</sup> Eve Ball, Nora Henn, and Lynda Sánchez, *Indeh, an Apache Odyssey* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), 202.

<sup>6</sup> See Fenn, *Pox Americana*, especially chapter 5 for a discussion focused of the introduction of smallpox to the Southwest through Mexico in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as an example of contagion's ability to reduce populations at devastating rates.

<sup>7</sup> Gwyther, "Pueblo Indians.," 260.



cause sickness.<sup>8</sup> It is understandable that scholars and physicians offered malaria as proof of the theory, given its prevalence in hot, humid climates and scarcity in dry, cooler environments; it is a bit puzzling, though, that Gwyther would still subscribe to this theory after his experiences at Fort Sumner. Perhaps he believed that the infirm prisoners on the reservation needed little medical attention and would heal with rest. Historian Lynn Bailey alluded to this idea, observing that “During the first year of Gwyther’s residence at Fort Sumner, the Indian traffic through the hospital was relatively light, and certainly substantiated the doctor’s beliefs.”<sup>9</sup>

Another important implication of miasma theory is that certain populations are prone to contagion once infected, but infection still hinges on the quality of the air in a particular environment. Many physicians considered New Mexico’s high elevations among the healthiest because of the observation that the cleanest air and lowest air pressure were found at high altitude.<sup>10</sup> Elevation in the state ranges from 2,800 feet above sea level to more than 13,000 feet atop the mountain peaks near Taos; the average elevation is about a mile high.<sup>11</sup> The conceptualization of environment being either healthy or harmful remained prominent among the leading medical theories until the late 1800s, when germ theory gained acceptance. The work of doctors Joseph Lister and Robert Koch,

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<sup>8</sup> Miquel Porta, *Dictionary of Epidemiology* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2008), <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10375136>. p.155

<sup>9</sup> Bailey, *Bosque Redondo; an American Concentration Camp*, 87.

<sup>10</sup> Jake W. Spidle, *Doctors of Medicine in New Mexico: A History of Health and Medical Practice, 1886-1986*, 1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), 92.

<sup>11</sup> United States Geological Survey, “Elevations and Distances,” accessed July 23, 2016, <http://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/Elevations-Distances/elvadist.html>.

and chemist Louis Pasteur helped prove the existence of infectious microbes that cause particular illnesses.<sup>12</sup> However, germ theory was so revolutionary that the new understanding of the spread of pathogens was unhurried. The perception of New Mexico as a healthy environment with good air drove the region's reputation as a magnet for healing well into the twentieth century. Invalids, most often afflicted with tuberculosis, came from far away places hoping for restored health.<sup>13</sup> Widespread acceptance of germ theory eventually compelled populations to reconsider the significance of interactions among themselves, within the environment, and even the established conceptualization of health. This medical reformation did not come soon enough to help the Native captives at Fort Sumner in the 1860s.

Long before the Diné began their Long Walk, however, they had suffered from infectious disease. In his description of common pre-contact diseases among the Navajo, historian Robert Trennert mentions a number of ailments, including "dysentery, pneumonia, various insect-born and viral fevers, round worms, non-venereal syphilis, a wide variety of nutritional diseases and bacterial pathogens, and food poisonings."<sup>14</sup> Trennert's point was not that the Diné would have suffered regardless of contact with outsiders, but that they had long known how to survive these illnesses. The new foreign contagions would prove far more deadly to them. Perhaps Trennert may have been alluding to historian Alfred

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<sup>12</sup> "Harvard University Library Open Collections Program: Contagion, Germ Theory," *Harvard University Library Open Collections Program: Contagion, Germ Theory*, accessed July 6, 2016, <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/contagion/germtheory.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Spidle, *Doctors of Medicine in New Mexico*, 87. Spidle says the proliferation of tuberculosis sanatoriums in New Mexico hinged on the ideas of good and bad air.

<sup>14</sup> Robert A. Trennert, *White Man's Medicine: Government Doctors and the Navajo, 1863-1955*, 1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 3.

Crosby's "virgin soil" theory. Crosby's explanation of population decline in the Americas after European invasion is contingent on new diseases entering a population without previous exposure and therefore with no built-up immunity among the populace. The disruption of social patterns caused by debilitating disease exacerbates the problem when children are neglected, crops are left untended, and so forth. Eventually, the crippling infection creates a society that cannot support itself – leading to the loss of future generations and massive population decline.<sup>15</sup>

The illnesses Americans carried with them across the continent were not entirely unfamiliar to the Natives of the Southwest. Trennert described the Pueblo Indians as culture brokers between Europeans and the Navajo.<sup>16</sup> It is easy to deduce, then, that Pueblos were also inadvertently spreading disease among the groups as they intermingled. The big difference Trennert alluded to between the Pueblos and the Navajos is that the Pueblos were concentrated in dense living spaces, built villages, where disease can spread easily. The Diné, however, were spread out over great distances where contagion had little chance to overwhelm populations. This idea is in line with the modern understanding of contagion and germ theory. Crosby and Fenn, however, both demonstrate the spread of disease over time and space by explaining that some individuals in populations struck with illness would undoubtedly flee their homes to live in settlements not yet

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<sup>15</sup> Alfred W. Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (1976): 289–99.

<sup>16</sup> Trennert, *White Man's Medicine: Government Doctors and the Navajo, 1863-1955*, 4.

afflicted, thereby unknowingly bringing contagion to virgin soil. Therefore, germ theory and “virgin soil” theory are not mutually exclusive.

Historian Roberto Mario Salmón’s views on pre-contact Navajo health differ somewhat from Trennert’s. Both agree that Navajos generally were a healthy people when the United States took control of the region in 1848, but Salmón asserts that this finding is arguable because few records exist from people with medical training who would be qualified to venture an opinion on the general health of the people. Both historians, however, conclude that remarks from traders such as Charles Bent indicate that the Diné population was stable or increasing – an apparent sign of general well-being.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, in 1863, after their defeat by Carson, they were already in a critical state of health when they began to surrender at Forts Canby and Wingate. By then, the Diné were starving and perishing. Carson had invaded and ravaged Dinétah during the harsh winter. Their rural, semi-nomadic lifeways changed dramatically when the American military forced most of the Diné population onto the relatively minuscule reservation. The new, dense living arrangement created the perfect setting for contagion to run rampant among the Diné. The Mashgalénde had already experienced this trauma during the year they had lived on the reservation.

Cremony wrote, “Nothing can induce the Apaches to remain an hour in the place where one of them has died from disease...”<sup>18</sup> He stated that they would go

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 4–5; Salmón, “The Disease Complaint at Bosque Redondo (1864-68),” 2–3. Salmón said he relies on accounts like Bent’s because there is little evidence to refute those observations; Trennert is less explicit about his deferrals to Bent’s descriptions of the state of Native health in the Southwest.

<sup>18</sup> John Carey Cremony, *Life Among the Apaches* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 233.

out of their way to create a lot of space around places known to them for death. They had observed the spread of disease and understood the process in a way similar to germ theory. Cremony asked a Mashgalénde man, Klo-sen, why his people bury all of a deceased person's belongings with the body. Klo-sen explained that before he was born, a disease, probably smallpox, killed many Mashgalénde. "It was found that to use the clothing or household property of the deceased, or to come in contact with such person, was almost certain to result in a like sickness."<sup>19</sup> This awareness compelled them to avoid places where disease was present, for the sake of self-preservation. It is hard to reconcile the Apache drive to escape sickness with Cremony's thoughts on the lax guard over the reservation. "The force at Fort Sumner was so ludicrously small, in comparison with the number of Indians to be controlled and guarded," he explained.<sup>20</sup> So why did so many Natives accept captivity when they were seemingly surrounded by disease? Perhaps the Americans won over the captives' allegiance, at least in some instances, with their successful medical treatment. Cremony described an event that fits this scenario. In either 1863 or 1864 influenza was ravaging towns around Bosque Redondo for more than a hundred miles. Nearly all of the "Mexicans" were sick; many children and several adults had died, Cremony said. "Although nearly all were more or less affected," there was no life lost to that flu at Bosque Redondo because Dr. Gwyther was "unremitting in his attention," aided by Cremony's skill as a translator.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

The inclination to avoid places where death had occurred was not unique to the Mashgalénde; trepidation of the dead and the places they expired has also been a trait common to the Diné people. By the end of 1863, the Diné just begun to arrive at the newly constructed fort. It already boasted a hospital with twenty-four beds to nurse the ill, whether Americans or Natives. The structure had been built of thirty-inch-thick adobe that complemented the climate by insulating those inside from extreme temperatures. Bailey explained, “In nearly every aspect this hospital was of the best design and construction, and in all probability was one of the finest medical wards in the Southwest.”<sup>22</sup> Enrique Salmón, though, contends that there was disagreement among the physicians over whether the facility was adequate for treating the sick. Salmón wrote that one surgeon called the hospital a “tumble-down concern,” and another felt it was unfit for more than fifteen patients.<sup>23</sup> It is unclear why opinions of the facility differed so drastically. Described as “about one hundred and seventy feet long and twenty-five feet wide,” it is hard to imagine that the newly built facility was anything less than satisfactory for a modest patient load.<sup>24</sup> Yet Bailey contends that, regardless of the fitness of the hospital, “the medical practice of the white man bewilders the Navajo patient.” Bailey went on, “The Anglo-American doctor appears to the sick Indian as a totally unrational person.” She explained that the Diné thought illness set in because of “violations of Navajo religious practices, contacts with ghosts, or

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<sup>22</sup> Bailey, *Bosque Redondo; an American Concentration Camp*, 86.

<sup>23</sup> Salmón, “The Disease Complaint at Bosque Redondo (1864-68),” 4.

<sup>24</sup> United States Congress, “Condition of the Indian Tribes: Report of the Joint Special Committee, Appointed under Joint Resolution of March 3, 1865. With an Appendix,” 341, accessed April 22, 2016, <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/ABB3022.0001.001>; Trennert, *White Man’s Medicine: Government Doctors and the Navajo, 1863-1955*, 28–29.

witch activities.”<sup>25</sup> The Diné healing practices focus on the causes of the illness and performance of the ceremony designed to correct the spiritual imbalance that lead to disharmony.<sup>26</sup> American doctors, on the other hand, treated the biological causes of illnesses and symptoms. Furthermore, American medical techniques practiced in the mid-nineteenth century caused many sick people to die in hospitals. The Diné realized that medical care, even in the hospital, did not ensure recovery from sickness. “There is a hospital here for us; but all who go in never come out,” observed Herrero Delgadito, a Diné headman.<sup>27</sup> It was a place of death in their minds.

By 1865, it was clear that Natives were avoiding the hospital. Even the post’s medical chief, Gwyther, recognized the combination of rampant contagion and the lack of Native patrons: “Sickness is plentiful among them. The rattle and song of the medicine men may be heard in many huts. The blackened bodies, close cut hair, destroyed huts – the common signs of sickness and death – are very frequent sights.” Yet, the hospital reported to Gwyther, “No one comes here now, doctor.”<sup>28</sup> It is difficult to reconcile these reports with the comments Gwyther made in 1871, that the environment was so salubrious that the sick healed without any treatment. A report that Bosque Redondo’s prisoners overcame a malaria outbreak simply by moving Native encampments away from

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<sup>25</sup> Bailey, *Bosque Redondo; an American Concentration Camp*, 89.

<sup>26</sup> Trennert, *White Man’s Medicine: Government Doctors and the Navajo, 1863-1955*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Salmón, “The Disease Complaint at Bosque Redondo (1864-68),” 4.

<sup>28</sup> Bailey, *Bosque Redondo; an American Concentration Camp*, 89. Bailey cited this quote from Gwyther only as “wrote Guyther.” Its source is unclear, but I judge it as trustworthy given the context and my perception of the author’s tenacity, after examining her entire monograph.

the river's edge to higher ground, while based on the idea of healthy spaces, is hardly an endorsement of Gwyther's proclamation issued a few years later.<sup>29</sup>

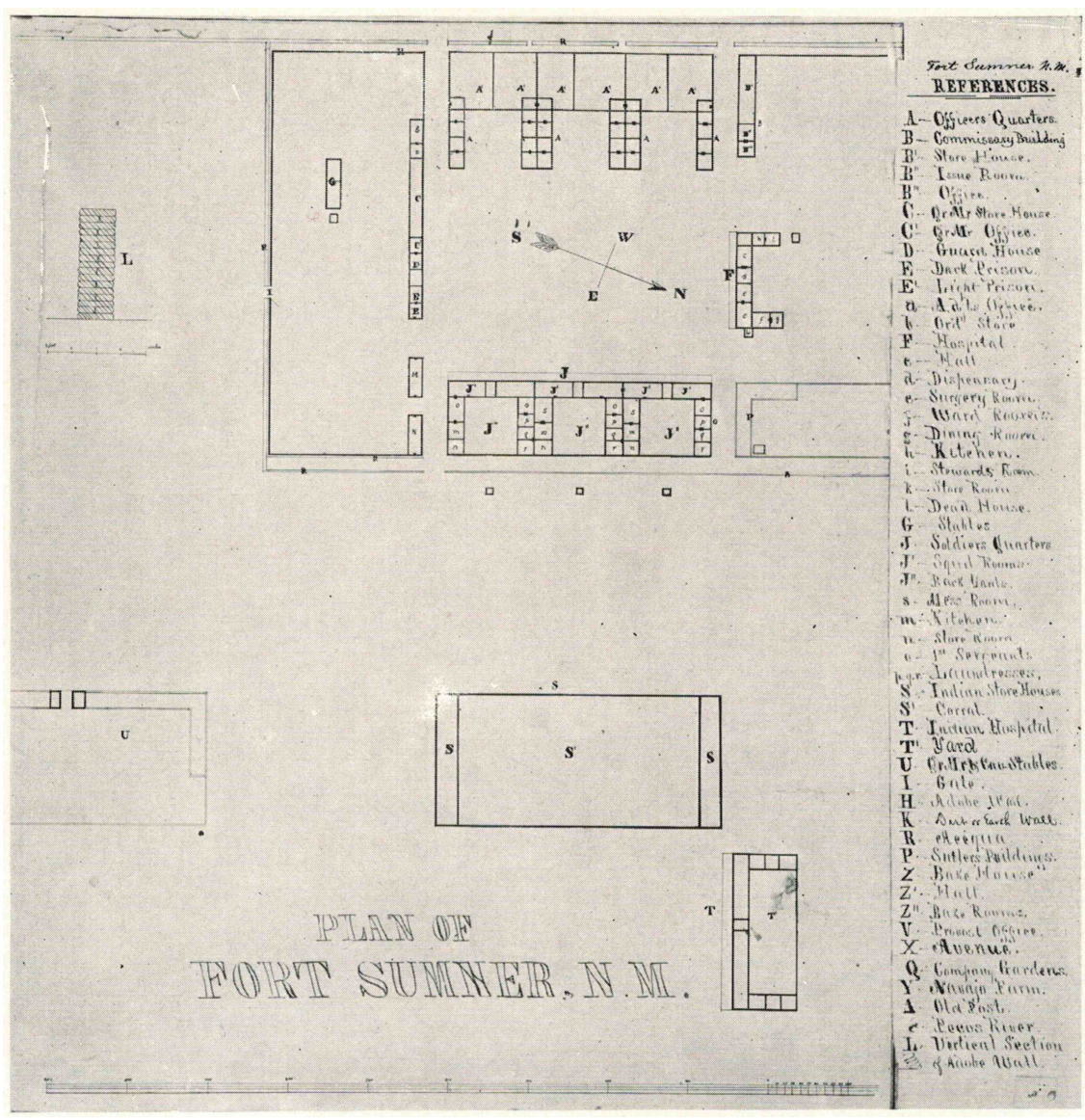


Figure 8. The plans for the fort show the hospital building, C-shaped, in the top right of the map. The nine separate rooms are visible. Notably, the hospital is located in the center of the administrative complex. From Underhill, *Here Come the Najaho!*, 169.

<sup>29</sup> United States Congress, "Condition of the Indian Tribes," 342.



For Natives, health was dependent on being in a familiar place. In the hospital, Natives felt they were alone. They were only tended to by doctors' occasional visits through the day; and they longed to be home. Treatment from a medicine man, however, was a protracted, participatory experience in a familiar environment. Even the hospital's manager, Warner, suggested that the medicine men were often successful with their treatments, but he also observed that success strengthened the reputation of medicine men as leaders, while it jeopardized American authority on the reservation.<sup>30</sup> Gwyther concurred, saying of the medicine men, "The political influence of that fraternity acquired by their profession, and more likely to be used injuriously than beneficially, should be weakened."<sup>31</sup> Salmón contends that eventually the Army realized that indigenous medicine contributed significantly to the healing of sick Natives, and Army doctors began consulting medicine men for chants and other services before offering their own treatment.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps this allowance served as the Army's tactic for limiting Native agency and medicine men's opportunity to seize on hegemony, or it may have been simply a way to counter the Natives' passive resistance. The Diné, however, had another reason to stay away from the hospital at Hwéeldi.

Diné women suffered from sexualization by American men at Fort Sumner. Prostitution, possibly sometimes an exchange of sex to soldiers for ration tickets, was common. The Americans, however, thought of the Mashgalénde women differently; they described them as chaste and virtuous.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Bailey, *Bosque Redondo; an American Concentration Camp*, 91–92.

<sup>32</sup> Salmón, "The Disease Complaint at Bosque Redondo (1864-68)," 4. It is unclear when the Army started including indigenous medicine during treatment, but Salmón does allude to it being later than the Bosque Redondo era.

Captain Cremony, who had worked for years to form close social ties to Apache peoples, said, “Cases of conjugal infidelity are extremely rare among them [the Mescaleros], and the girls take no ordinary pride in guarding their purity.” He went on to contrast them with the Navajo women. He concluded, “On the other hand, the Navajoes [SIC] are extremely loose and sensuous.”<sup>33</sup> This work will not focus on the veracity, equity, or acceptability of the problematic rhetoric of sexualization of Native women by Americans in the 1860s. Instead, I will use it as a starting point to examine the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) at Bosque Redondo, especially among Americans and the Diné.

Among the greatest health threats at Bosque Redondo was the widespread illness caused by sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), namely syphilis. It is useful to differentiate between a latent infection that may show no symptoms, an STI, and a more easily observable STD, where the infected person is symptomatic and suffering.<sup>34</sup> STIs were certainly present, but government reports and correspondence from the reservation most often highlighted the STD syphilis.

Dr. M. Hillary arrived at Fort Sumner in 1866. That year, he said, most Natives came to the hospital for treatment of syphilis. He reported a “vast preponderance of syphilis over every other disease, and such will always be the

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<sup>33</sup> Cremony, *Life Among the Apaches*, 244.

<sup>34</sup> “STD, STI, STI, STD...What’s the Difference?,” *Medical Institute for Sexual Health*, accessed July 10, 2016, <https://www.medinstitute.org/2011/11/std-sti-sti-std-whats-the-difference/>. The definitions given by the Medical Institute for Sexual Health are useful to distinguish among different types of sexually transmitted illness, even looking back to the 1860s. Any carrier of a pathogen has an STI, but once symptomatic the carrier has an STD.

case as long as so many soldiers are around here.”<sup>35</sup> While Hillary does go on to disparage Diné women for what he understood as promiscuity, he assigned equal blame to the Americans who were occupying the place alongside the Natives. This is exceptional because this doctor’s voice offers one of few assertions that Americans, in part, had compromised the health of the space. Most Americans there placed full blame on the Natives. About a year earlier, Warner reported that pneumonia, typhomalarial fevers, and rheumatism had struck hard, but that venereal disease was rampant.<sup>36</sup> Both doctors concurred that they did not know of any deaths caused from STDs at the reservation. Gwyther, though, had a more spectacular opinion of the syphilis outbreak at Fort Sumner: “Syphilitic cases, which have defied all treatment, including courses of mineral waters, have been here apparently cured... It is a most salubrious locality.” The paradox of Gwyther’s account is that he was not including the Diné when describing the healing powers of the place. “There is considerable difficulty in curing Indians of either sex of syphilis,” he said. He laid the blame on Native patients and their kin for refusing to take his treatment or for sneaking away to seek Native healers instead.<sup>37</sup> Using Gwyther’s reasoning, the land must not have been sufficiently salubrious to cure the captives on the reservation.

More than a year after the Dinés’ arrival, the threat of disease and the fear of death had overwhelmed the Mashgalénde. They no longer felt the reservation was a place that could support their well-being. Big Mouth, who was a captive at

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<sup>35</sup> United States Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for the Year 1866* (Washington : G.P.O, 1866), 150, accessed April 11, 2016, <http://archive.org/details/usindianaffairs66usdorich>.

<sup>36</sup> United States Congress, “Condition of the Indian Tribes,” 342.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 338–39.

Bosque Redondo as a child, remembered that a smallpox outbreak was what finally drove his people to disappear from Fort Sumner some time in the night early in November of 1865. He said, “The Navajos were brought there and camped above us on the Rio Pecos. They had got the sickness from the soldiers—what you call the smallpox.” Historian Eve Ball noted that most of the twenty-three hundred Diné who died of smallpox at Bosque Redondo succumbed to the 1865 outbreak.<sup>38</sup> Big Mouth, using his son as an interpreter, gave a more graphic description of the Mashgalénde desperation: “They [the Diné] died by the hundreds, and the soldiers made those who were left throw the dead bodies into the Pecos. They drifted down past our camp into stagnant pools where we had to get our drinking water.”<sup>39</sup> There is little evidence of other effects of the smallpox outbreak on the Mashgalénde; however, it was the threat of proximate death, disease, and a lack of uncontaminated water in that place that pressed the Mashgalénde to flee. Disease, not the Americans this time, was the antagonist, inadvertently wielding water as a weapon against the Mashgalénde. Availability of pure water, along with safely consumable food, proved to be central to what creates an environment capable of supporting a population’s well-being.

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Sherry Robinson and Eve Ball, *Apache Voices: Their Stories of Survival as Told to Eve Ball* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 123. Ball’s figure of smallpox deaths may seem like too large a percentage of the populace was infected, over twenty percent, but as discussed, contagion’s toll can be massive in close-quarter populations.

<sup>39</sup> Ball, Henn, and Sánchez, *Indeh, an Apache Odyssey*, 202.

## DIGESTIVE HEALTH<sup>40</sup>

The human dependence on potable water makes it a required element of a nourishing environment. Bosque Redondo, notoriously, came up short when it came to water quality, as discussed in nearly every scholarly work on the reservation experiment. “Even the healthiest complained about what the alkali Pecos water did to their digestions,” wrote historian C.L. Sonnichsen.<sup>41</sup> It is unclear whom Sonnichsen considered the healthiest people at Bosque Redondo; American and Native complaints about poor water are plentiful. Although Carleton had already identified the site for the reservation, the officers he sent in 1862 to survey the area tried to change his mind, in part because of the poor quality of the water. Surgeon James McNulty, who was part of the survey board, tested the waters of the Pecos and found “much unhealthy mineral matter.”<sup>42</sup> Diné leader Ganado Mucho complained, “We think the water is unhealthy. So much sulphur and salt.”<sup>43</sup> Big Mouth described it more harshly: “We had to drink the muddy, ill-tasting water from the Pecos. It made us sick; it even made the horses sick.”<sup>44</sup> Trennert found, however, that army personnel dismissed Native

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<sup>40</sup> Although a previous chapter addressed food and water at Bosque Redondo, the discussion did not focus on digestive ailments associated with the poor quality water in the Pecos River or the sickness caused by the rations given to Natives that were not fit to eat. That discussion belongs here, but will be brief to avoid repetition.

<sup>41</sup> Sonnichsen, *The Mescalero Apaches*, 116.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Bailey, *Bosque Redondo; an American Concentration Camp*, 27.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Trennert, *White Man’s Medicine: Government Doctors and the Navajo, 1863-1955*, 29.

<sup>44</sup> Ball, Henn, and Sánchez, *Indeh, an Apache Odyssey*, 202.

complaints of bad water, instead blaming the Natives for illness – but perhaps the promise of material gain motivated their judgments.<sup>45</sup>

Charles Warner, who ran the Fort Sumner hospital in 1865, submitted a statement to the United States Congress to be included in the report, “Condition of the Indian Tribes,” also known as the Doolittle Report for Wisconsin senator James Doolittle, who chaired the committee that ordered the investigation. In his statement, Warner called the water flowing through the Rio Pecos healthy, although he admitted that he was not equipped to test it in any way. Instead, he relied on observation, stating, “The statistics of this post prove that the drinking water is healthy.” He went on to explain that through the first five months of the year, the hospital averaged about 140 patients per month, with only five total deaths.<sup>46</sup> Since more of the people at the reservation were not getting sick or dying, the water must be good to drink, he reasoned. Warner was not the only American living along the Pecos who thought the water was palatable. James Giddings, a farmer and rancher who lived just upstream from Fort Sumner added to the Doolittle report. He testified that since 1853, he had imbibed from the Rio Pecos and its tributary, the Aqua Negra. He admitted that the Aqua Negra’s water was “somewhat diuretic when unmixed with the other waters of the Pecos” because “it runs over some beds of gypsum and is charged with soda and sulphate of lime.” Nevertheless, Giddings opined, since his cattle drank the water and were not ill, “it is undoubtedly healthy.”<sup>47</sup> Captain Bristol, the post commander, said

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<sup>45</sup> Trennert, *White Man’s Medicine: Government Doctors and the Navajo, 1863-1955*, 29.

<sup>46</sup> United States Congress, “Condition of the Indian Tribes,” 342.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

the only complaint about the water was from “two new-comers, who said that it slightly relaxed their bowels for a day or two.”<sup>48</sup> Gwyther echoed Bristol’s report when he addressed Congress, adding that he had seen patients cured from chronic diarrhea when they came to Fort Sumner, insinuating the water had curative properties.<sup>49</sup>

Consider these accounts, however, in light of the purpose for the Doolittle Report. In 1864, Colorado Volunteers attacked a peaceful, sleeping Cheyenne and Arapahoe camp along Sand Creek in Colorado Territory. The attack produced such outrage among Americans over federal Indian policy, it led to a congressional investigation on the state of Indian affairs nationwide.<sup>50</sup> Many of those who testified could certainly have lost status, employment, income from government contracts, or other benefits, had the experiment at Fort Sumner been called off. With their testimony, they were investing in the perseverance of the reservation project. Many local businessmen, for instance, supplied the fort with supplies and American style foodstuffs.

Before their surrender to the Americans, the Diné diet comprised wild fruits, nuts, some wild-caught game meat, corn and beans. Trennert explained that this high fiber, low fat regimen would have reduced maladies caused by poor diet, but that the cycle of feast and famine that accompanies a semi-nomadic

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

<sup>50</sup> See Harry Kelsey, “The Doolittle Report of 1867: Its Preparation and Shortcomings,” *Arizona and the West* 17, no. 2 (1975): 107–20 for a discussion of the Doolittle Report including a description of American sentiment toward Indian Policy at the time and assessment of the report’s usefulness.

lifestyle would have also led to gastrointestinal troubles.<sup>51</sup> The Army supplied foodstuffs to the hungry Navajos with which they were unfamiliar: coffee, wheat flour, baking powder, and bacon. The complaints started early in the Navajo removal project's timeline. Some of the earliest reports of food related illness came from Fort Canby, the first stop and gathering point for the Navajos' Long Walk, near the heart of their homeland. A Diné man remembered, "When the people started eating the strange food, they had diarrhea which caused a lot of deaths among babies, children, old people, and even others."<sup>52</sup> The difficulty was that the Navajo had no knowledge of the safe preparation of the foreign foods.<sup>53</sup> This unfamiliarity did not stop the Americans from procuring these supplies for the prisoners. Historian Peter Iverson recounts the deal the government made with William Howard Moore, who had contracted to supply food to the Mashgalénde at the reservation before the Diné arrived. He produced flour sacks padded with what may have been plaster and pieces of slate to add weight to the delivery. The adulterated food made the Mashgalénde very ill.<sup>54</sup> Diné oral histories are consistent with the theme of unfamiliar foods causing intestinal distress, as discussed in chapter 1. American treatments at Bosque Redondo for

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<sup>51</sup> Trennert, *White Man's Medicine: Government Doctors and the Navajo, 1863-1955*, 3.

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in Trennert, *White Man's Medicine: Government Doctors and the Navajo, 1863-1955*, 25.

<sup>53</sup> See Lake Valley Navajo School and Title VII Bilingual Staff, *Oral History Stories of the Long Walk = Hwéeldi Baa Hané* (Crownpoint, NM: Lake Valley Navajo School, 1991), 29. Annabelle Benally, among other Diné, shared memories passed down from the imprisonment era describing how new American foods were mis-prepared or underprepared leading to sickness. See chapter one for more examples.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Iverson, *Diné : A History of the Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 59.



such maladies seem to have been nonexistent or undocumented. The Diné, however, often used the local flora to treat such aggravations.<sup>55</sup>

Although the Mashgalénde spent considerable time in captivity at Bosque Redondo, the Diné were there longer and remained during the years when suffering from disease and hunger was greatest. The Mashgalénde, too, certainly dealt with sickness on the reservation, ranging from contaminated food to impure water. Their propensity to isolate themselves from Americans, as compared to the Diné, may have aided their resistance to suffering from contagion, especially when it came to STDs like syphilis. However, it would be a mistake to diminish their distress. They, too, agonized from arrest and being held against their will – prisoners in a foreign land. However, their survival strategy was different from that of the Diné.

Both groups learned to adapt to the new environment for the sake of addressing disease while in captivity, but the Diné acted remarkably. They took advantage of American hospitals and current medical science, sometimes. However, they also continued to employ Native healers while in captivity. The Diné understood health as being a state of harmony with the supernatural and used ritual healing to restore that harmony, sometimes while concurrently seeking care from the reservation hospital. Although the army initially saw this as a challenge to their authority, its attitudes eventually relaxed.

Smallpox, syphilis, and intestinal disorders were among the afflictions that ravaged the prison camp, affecting Native prisoners and American overseers alike. On July 4, 1865, Fort Sumner's hospital was set aside for the exclusive care

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<sup>55</sup> This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.

of Americans. The Army supposed that fraternization and close quarters with Natives had jeopardized the their of officers and men. Treatment of Indians moved away from the center of the reservation to a new hospital with just nine small rooms near the Cebolleta band of Navajo's settlement.<sup>56</sup> Somehow, Americans with an interest in the project's continuation never questioned, or often ferociously defended, the notion that Bosque Redondo was a healthy place in the face of thousands of dying captives – even when hundreds of Diné bodies, smallpox victims, floated through the reservation on the Rio Pecos. Natives, however, had a very different perspective. Those scarred bodies floating in the river were a signal that the land was no longer sufficiently robust to support them. The flight of the Mashgalénde from Bosque Redondo was a testament to how mistaken General Carleton was about the fitness of the land to support the nine thousand captives on the reservation.

The physical environment fundamentally influences how people see the world around them. As evident at Bosque Redondo, the spaces they inhabit affect how people negotiate health care. The Mashgalénde understood the relationship between place and health. They chose to flee the reservation when smallpox threatened the wellbeing of the land and its ability to carry them securely. The Diné also had an understanding of whether spaces were healthy. They had learned to avoid places where people died, perhaps indicating that they understood some aspects of contagion before Americans did. When the Diné realized that patients often did not leave the hospital at Hwéeldi alive, they no longer patronized the facility in great numbers. Gwyther, it seems, was confused

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<sup>56</sup> Bailey, *Bosque Redondo: an American Concentration Camp*, 88.

about the environment's effect on well-being, yet he was impressively vocal about it. Even after treating thousands of Native patients for disease, he told Congress that Bosque Redondo was "the healthiest place I ever lived in."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> United States Congress, "Condition of the Indian Tribes," 339.

### Chapter 3: Material Exchange and Place

John Beyale, Sr. from Lake Valley, New Mexico, said his paternal great-grandfather Gish' néétíní (Carrying a Cane) was among the Diné who met with members of the United States' Peace Commission created to settle conflicts with Indians in the summer of 1867. By then more than eight thousand Diné had been confined to the forty square miles set aside at Hwéeldi for almost four years after being removed from their homelands. "It has always been the white men and the Mexicans fighting for the land," Beyale explained. He knew from the stories of Hwéeldi that he heard growing up, some that his great-grandfather had passed down, that land had always been important. Beyale understood, however, that what makes land important is not its soil, minerals, or flora, but the human experience that gives all people a sense of place – and belonging to place. Beyale said, "I do not know the exact place of the Hajíí' náí (Navajo emergence). I was told that it is near the La Plata Mountains in Colorado. I have asked my children to take me to the Hajíí' náí while I can still see. I want to see the place where the Navajos emerged from the earth."<sup>1</sup>

It is with this same conceptualization of the importance of place that we can consider the Native experience at Hwéeldi as a setting of great significance because of the incorporation of newly available things and ideas, which created a modified material culture among the inhabitants. The adaptation of new tools,

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<sup>1</sup> Lake Valley Navajo School and Title VII Bilingual Staff, *Oral History Stories of the Long Walk = Hwéeldi Baa Hané* (Crownpoint, NM: Lake Valley Navajo School, 1991), 41–42.

building techniques, and textiles by prisoners at the reservation changed their relationships with each other, their food, and the physical landscape around them from that point forward. While there must certainly have been alterations in material culture among the Americans stationed at and working around the reservation, the acclimatization Natives endured in that unfamiliar space is paramount because adaptation was a proven strategy for survival in the Southwest.

However, Beyale admits that the often-ugly story of cultural exchange does not begin with the establishment of the reservation for the Diné and Mashgalénde along the Rio Pecos in eastern New Mexico in 1863. He explained:

The battle over land started a long time ago with different tribes such as the Comanches, Blackfeet, Utes and Mescalero Apaches and with white people and Mexicans. To this day, the struggle for land continues. Hastóí yée (our elders) have said that one of the reasons the Navajos were called “thieves” is that different groups of people stole horses, cattle, and sheep from each other.<sup>2</sup>

Raiding among tribes and colonial settlers had been an established way of life in the American Southwest for centuries. Comanches, Apaches, and Navajos are probably best known for this subsistence practice, but Spanish, Mexican, and American colonizers took part as well. But raiding was not always about land, as Beyale observed.

In the Southwest raiding was a survival strategy, but it was also a means of cultural exchange, whether by slave trading and adoption, stealing sheep and horses, or taking supplies, such as tools or weapons. These material objects, the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 41.

things of everyday life, change the ways people interact with their environments. Imagine how foodways would change, for instance, with the introduction of ovens for baking, when previously there had only been flat stone griddles on which to make bread. Long established lifeways were upset because of the convergence of multiple peoples in such a confined space, but mostly because of the new hierarchy of social structures that forced Native prisoners to succumb to American ideas of propriety with respect to relationships with the land.

Clashes among the Natives in the region persisted long before the mid-nineteenth century. Conflict between Natives and European colonizers had been ongoing since the Spaniards entered what they called Northern New Spain in the late 1530s. This story, however, concerns the Diné, the Mashgalénde, and the Americans, who took the region by force from Mexico in 1846 and codified their colonization with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Article VIII of the treaty created a new American citizenry of former Mexicans; they were promised protection from Indian “depredations” against themselves or their property.<sup>3</sup> The Army would defend Americans’ rights, but the Army also had other goals in New Mexico.

There is little doubt that American settlement in the region was the intended outcome of the Mexican-American War, and the United States had already decided to dedicate its military to the colonial thrust. However, the allure of easily acquired mineral wealth in California, Nevada, and Colorado drew immigrants from the American East and around the world for over a decade after

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<sup>3</sup> See “Avalon Project - Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; February 2, 1848,” accessed April 22, 2016, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/guadhida.asp#art2](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/guadhida.asp#art2). for a transcript of the original document.

the war's end. Yet mining was not limited to these other western regions. Throughout the century miners had achieved limited success unearthing silver in New Mexico. As the miners and traders entered the Territory, they brought rare and unknown objects with them, creating a broader market and demand for goods from more industrialized locales. This desire for modern goods was a major attraction among the Southwest Indian people, adding to the pressures of the raiding economy, just as growing sheep flocks had pushed the Navajo into a spiral of subsistence raiding because they had to keep moving to avoid retribution from their victims.<sup>4</sup>

Complaints from American citizens who encountered Indian raids on their farms, livestock, homes, and families compelled the United States to address the Indian raiders themselves, regardless of the bilateral nature of the violence between Natives and Americans. General Carleton imagined a reservation for the Navajos and Mescaleros that would transform them into Pueblo-like Indians who lived in settled villages and permanent houses, and who farmed and ranched for their subsistence.<sup>5</sup> For this plan to work, the captives at Bosque Redondo would have to become familiar with American goods and customs, much like the Pueblo

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<sup>4</sup> James F. Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 323; Lake Valley Navajo School and Title VII Bilingual Staff, *Oral History Stories of the Long Walk = Hwéeldi Baa Hané*, 17. Brooks's data on sheep herd size and raiding complements Diné stories of the raiding economy and lifestyle, illustrating the necessity to remain mobile in order to avoid retributive violence from victims of raids.

<sup>5</sup> See Lynn R. Bailey, *Bosque Redondo; an American Concentration Camp* (Pasadena, California: Socio-Technical Books, 1970); James Henry Carleton, "To the People of New Mexico;" 1864, <http://www.archive.org/details/topeopleofnewmex00carl> for discussion of Carleton's vision and how planning oversights, corruption, weather, and other natural forces worked against him.

people who had lived in close proximity to Spanish, Mexican, and, finally, American colonists, for centuries.

By winter's end in 1864, about five thousand Diné had gathered around Fort Sumner, along with more than four hundred Mashgalénde who had come about a year earlier, after the California Column had established the site under Carleton's orders. The soldiers and Mashgalénde provided the labor for building the initial reservation facilities. The Natives probably learned how to fashion mud into adobe bricks while building the fort's facilities. The Diné pitched in as their numbers grew and more construction became necessary.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 9. It appears that Natives are participating in Fort Sumner's construction while soldiers stand guard. "Fort Sumner Construction," Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico, accessed July 26, [econtent.unm.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/Bunting/id/21/rec/1282016](http://econtent.unm.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/Bunting/id/21/rec/1282016)

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<sup>6</sup> John Carey Cremony, *Life Among the Apaches* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 199; Bailey, *Bosque Redondo; an American Concentration Camp*, 59–60; C. L. Sonnichsen, *The Mescalero Apaches*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), 116. Cremony implied that the California Volunteers, his outfit, provided all of the labor for building the fort, but other accounts counter that. It is much more likely that Natives did participate.



The land by the Pecos was physically different from the high desert of the Colorado Plateau, the center of Dinétah; it was also distinct from the Sacramento and Capitan Mountains and the twelve-thousand-foot-high peaks of Hendebekeya. In order for the large captive population to survive by the Pecos, the U.S. would have to teach Natives to employ American style agriculture, with American produced tools, which ostensibly would enable them to cultivate great quantities of food in the modest space. The only alternative was for the United States to import sustenance from outside the reservation at a monumental expense. The cost was so high that it would ultimately be prohibitive to the maintenance of the reservation, let alone serve as one of the main factors ensuring Native hunger, disease, squalor, and loss of life. Among the goods imported, however, were implements that could have eased the anguish on the reservation had the environment been more accommodating. The changes in material culture among the Diné were more pronounced than those of the Mashgalénde, likely because the Diné internment lasted three times longer than the Mashgalénde imprisonment. When the Diné adopted these goods, they also learned how to use them, borrowing this from the Americans living at the fort.

#### TOOLS AND COOKWARE

The Diné acquired new tools, cookware, and cooking techniques at Hwéeldi. Several possible explanations for their success include: knowledge of

previously unknown implements and cooking methods, increased availability of manufactured goods to remote parts of the Southwest, or exposure to new ways of understanding peoples' relationships with foodstuffs. A combination of these elements probably contributed to the shift, but the net result was clear – the years they spent away from home were transformative for the Diné and their tools for work and food preparation were irrevocably altered.

The Diné were put to work in the fields almost upon arrival, harvesting crops that the Mashgalénde had sowed. Americans wanted them to become farmers, after all. The agrarian project began right away, following the issuance of the standard American farm tools. The Diné were generally unfamiliar with the new metal instruments, even though they had been in contact with Europeans and other outsiders for hundreds of years. “They were still using the pointed wooden sticks and the deer’s shoulder bone of the olden days,” anthropologist Ruth Underhill explained. “As for the plow, that should have been a miracle as great as the miracle of sheep or horses.” These new tools would enable them to dig the “mother ditch,” the main irrigation canal that diverted water from the Rio Pecos through Hwéeldi. And from the main canal, they created several small spurs that carried water to the Indians’ farms, which were also cultivated with the new apparatus.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ruth Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!: A History of the Largest Indian Tribe in the United States* (Lawrence, KS: United States Indian Service, 1953), 171.

Diné living around Ramah, New Mexico, south of Gallup, probably did not farm until they returned from Bosque Redondo.<sup>8</sup> By then, they knew how to use American farming tools and were replicating them as best they could. The digging stick was giving way to the metal hoe, but American made tools were still expensive, even in this barter economy. Further, American goods were sold far away from remote Indian settlements. Anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn describes how the Diné made their own hoes, first from long leg bones of deer or other animals, and later from juniper, oak, or greasewood. They were two or three feet long. Franciscans had reported seeing these kinds of hoes in the Southwest, but only among the Zuni and Hopi, not the Diné. Kluckhohn went on to say that the Diné did not differentiate between the shovel and the hoe, adopting both around the same time and using them in nearly the same way, even using one name for both implements – *le'z be' xalka' dí* (with which dirt is scooped).<sup>9</sup> Perhaps most striking, though, is that even though the Navajo had encountered agricultural tools like the hoe and the shovel, they were not “farmers” until after they were forced to use the Americans’ metal tools along the Pecos River.

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<sup>8</sup> The Diné population is so spread out that it was inevitable that when their borders were negotiated that some bands would be excluded from the central homeland. See figure 2 for a map showing the disconnected “satellite” reservations.

<sup>9</sup> See Kluckhohn, *Navaho Material Culture*, 66–68, for an overview of Navajo use of the hoe, including swinging it like a sickle to cut down weeds.

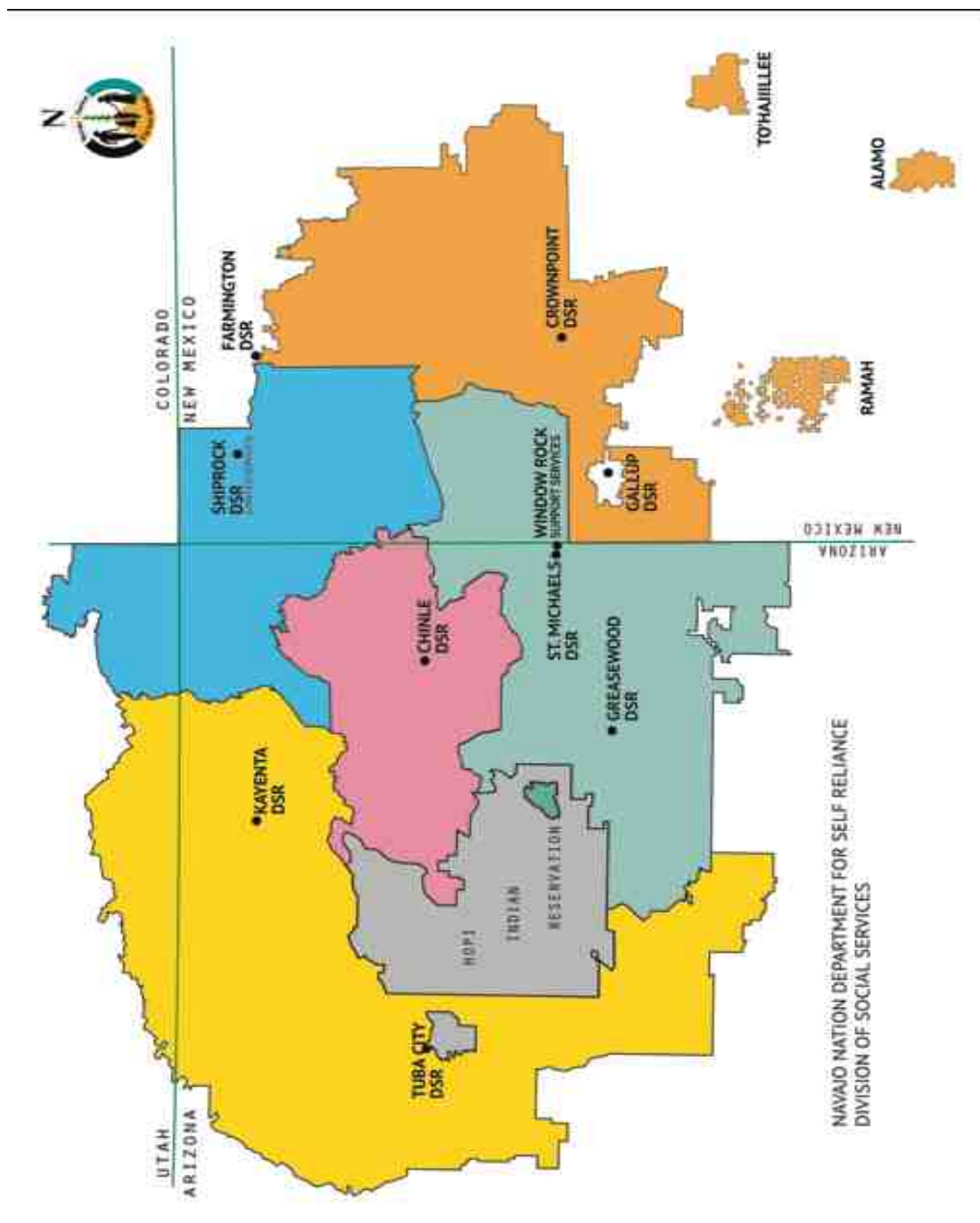


Figure 10. This map shows the 2016 borders of the Navajo Nation, however, it highlights the southeastern communities in New Mexico that are disconnected from the greater Diné homeland. Diné from Ramah and Alamo, in the southeast, appear in this chapter. Their easternmost location meant that they had more frequent interactions with Americans and probably also with Pueblo and Apache Indians. Navajo Nation Department of Self Reliance, “Map of Navajo Nation,” accessed July 20, 2016, <http://www.nnpsr.navajo-nsn.gov/Services.aspx>



Figure 11. A Diné man from Keam's Canyon digs with a hoe made from an animal's scapula. Kluckhohn, Hill, and Kluckhohn, *Navaho Material Culture*, 67

Agricultural tools were not the only new additions to Navajo material culture during their detention at Hwéeldi. One of Kluckhohn's informants, an unknown man from Fort Defiance, said the Diné had not seen *cina`ba`s* (horse drawn wagons) prior to the construction of Fort Defiance about a decade before the Long Walk. The informant said they had always used pack animals to haul belongings while traveling.<sup>10</sup> Even in the 1850s, it is unlikely that many Navajo had contact with wagons or the fort itself. That would change when the Army rounded them up in 1863 for the journey to their new reservation home.

The Diné had baked corn bread on *céte`s* (rock cookers), which were simple flat stones placed over fires. They would eventually use *biki`te`si* (metal

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

cookers), when they became available from outside traders.<sup>11</sup> According to Kluckhohn's informant from Chinle, Arizona, the Navajo did not have an enclosed oven prior to encountering them at Bosque Redondo. Soon after the Long Walk, it became common for Diné to use a Spanish style bá'h biyan (bread house), much like the hornos common in New Mexican homes at the time. The man said they were first used for baking "green corn," but eventually they became bread ovens, too.<sup>12</sup> It is surprising that Navajo exposure to Spanish and Mexican people did not encourage adoption of earthen ovens, but, such an apparatus may have been prohibitive to a mobile people such as the Diné.



Figure 12. An unidentified Navajo woman bakes in an earthen oven, much like the Spanish horno that was common in New Mexico. Kluckhohn, Hill, and Kluckhohn, *Navaho Material Culture*, 133

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 133; Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!*, 88-89. Underhill dedicates an entire chapter, pages 86-93, to the Spanish influence on the Diné, also discussing the Mashgalénde and Pueblo peoples.

Ethnologist Susan Kent describes the evolution of what she called “traditional, semi-traditional, and semi-nontraditional Navajo families.”<sup>13</sup> She used this framework to help understand how Diné have adopted lifeways from other cultures, such as Americans, after living in close contact with soldiers and their families at Hwéeldi. Kent found that the Diné had objects that were multifunctional, such as spoons, knives, and clothing that had multiple uses. She also found that the Diné did not think of implements and their uses as gendered to the extent that Americans did.<sup>14</sup> Kent explained that the gendering of household and work tools changed with exposure to European and especially American cultures. The Diné’s relocation to a fixed homeland at Hwéeldi, and then within the fixed borders of Dinétah after their release from Hwéeldi, is likely responsible for the shift. Kent explains, “Sedentism permits, among other things, the accumulation of sex-specific and monofunctional objects, whereas mobility restricts the number of objects one can possess by the amount one is able to transport and/or cache.”<sup>15</sup> The newly adopted understanding of the nature of diverse tools and other objects, therefore, is directly related to the relationship the Diné people had with their homes. After their defeat by the U.S. Army and their move to Bosque Redondo the Native relationship with home changed, even in the way their buildings were constructed.

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<sup>13</sup> Susan Kent, “The Differentiation of Navajo Culture, Behavior, and Material Culture: A Comparative Study in Culture Change,” *Ethnology* 22, no. 1 (1983): 86.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

## BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

The first winter at Bosque Redondo was disorganized. The Army permitted the Mashgalénde and Diné to camp wherever they pleased within the reservation bounds, but the Natives were responsible for building their own domiciles – wickiups and hogans – with the sparse resources available. As the modest forest quickly depleted, this proved increasingly difficult. When tents that Carleton had ordered for them arrived, they proved unusable as they had been previously repurposed, cut apart, and were no longer suitable shelter.<sup>16</sup> Despite setbacks, Carleton stuck to his plan. In March 1863, Carleton wrote to his commander, the Adjutant General of the U.S. Army, “My purpose is to have them fed and kept there under surveillance – to have them plant a crop this year- to have them, in short, become what is called in this country – a pueblo.”<sup>17</sup> He even designed a plan for villages like the Pueblos that were located along the Rio Grande, with a central plaza and farm plots worked by individuals. But Carleton’s goal was unrealistic. “To convert Navajos and Apaches into Pueblo Indians is like an alchemist trying to change iron to gold,” Lynn Bailey reflected.<sup>18</sup> The captives resisted Carleton’s idea. Although the Navajo and Mescalero did make some adobe mud-brick buildings, those who used them were largely the Americans at the fort. American and Native labor built the hospital, officers’ quarters, storerooms, a commissary, a guardhouse, and stables in 1863 alone.<sup>19</sup> It was not

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<sup>16</sup> Bailey, *Bosque Redondo; an American Concentration Camp*, 61.

<sup>17</sup> Carleton to Thomas in Lawrence C Kelly, *Navajo Roundup: Selected Correspondence of Kit Carson’s Expedition against the Navajo, 1863-1865* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing, 1970), 16.

<sup>18</sup> Bailey, *Bosque Redondo; an American Concentration Camp*, 63.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 59–60.



long before Kit Carson, the middleman between Carleton and the reservation, sought to allow the Diné to return to their hogans. Carleton conceded, but ordered that the shelters be arranged in straight rows along the Acequia Madre and facing into a plaza, similar to an Indian Pueblo. Again, the Diné resisted. When the Diné moved their hogans into smaller familial groups around the reservation the soldiers found it untenable to enforce Carleton's plan.<sup>20</sup>

Annie Succo from White Rock, New Mexico, retold the Long Walk story of suffering she had heard from her maternal great-grandmother. "They did not have a home to live in at Hwéeldi," she said, "just a small hut in the ground like a prairie dog or rabbit home."<sup>21</sup> This depiction is in line with ethnologists' description of Diné housing during the captivity, and long before. It is likely Succo was unknowingly comparing the descriptions she had heard to a more modern home. However, hogan construction itself changed after the Bosque Redondo era.

Up to the Long Walk, most Navajo built conical hogans on a frame of interlocked forked poles, usually juniper, pine, or piñon. They enclosed the frame with smaller tree branches and covered it with mud. Inside diameters of these hogans were usually six feet or less and rarely over five feet high. While this design was most common, construction practices did vary by region within Dinétah.<sup>22</sup> For instance, near the eastern community of Alamo, New Mexico, there are remains of stone hogans built against cliff walls and covered with

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 64–65.

<sup>21</sup> Lake Valley Navajo School and Title VII Bilingual Staff, *Oral History Stories of the Long Walk = Hwéeldi Baa Hané*, 113.

<sup>22</sup> Kluckhohn, Hill, and Kluckhohn, *Navaho Material Culture*, 154; Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!* 41–44.

poles.<sup>23</sup> Poly-sided hogans with horizontally stacked log walls and pitched roofs required axes and crosscut saws and a wagon that could haul in the lumber. The earth was dug down where the walls would meet the ground to add stability to the structure. The Diné could not construct these more complex and larger domiciles without access to American resources – after Bosque Redondo.<sup>24</sup> As discussed earlier, the exposure and access to iron tools revolutionized Native lifeways, ranging from the construction of physical dwellings to the ways lives changed in response to new implements and ideas adopted on the reservation.

Ethnologist Susan Kent also explores how the transformation of Navajo homes over time affected further aspects of culture: gender and the use of space. She explained that “traditional Navajos” had a strict, gendered use of space, but those rules usually applied only to the space within the hogan. She demonstrates that the southeast quadrant of the hogan was the male dominated area: “He ate, repaired objects, made tools like leather quirts, and slept on his sheepskin bed there.” Women governed the northern portion of the hogan where “they wove baskets, slept, cooked, and performed a variety of activities.” The circular Hogan has gendered divisions because it represents the gendered circular cosmology of the Diné. The incorporation of American beds, wood burning stoves, and other furnishings, not readily available to the Natives before imprisonment at Hwéeldi,

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<sup>23</sup> Kluckhohn, Hill, and Kluckhohn, *Navaho Material Culture*, 143. See the map, figure 2, for the location of the “satellite” village of Alamo.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 146; Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!* 270–71. See Underhill for images of all of the different housing types, with descriptions of the construction processes.

brought Navajo families together for sitting, consuming meals, and also became places to talk.<sup>25</sup>



Figure 13. Forked-pole conical hogans were typical among the Diné before internment at Hwéeldi. “Navajo Man Sitting in Front of His Hogan, ca.1900: California Historical Society Collection, 1860-1960,” accessed April 29, 2016, <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll65/id/17055>

The home is among the most personal of spaces, especially when people construct their own home. The adoption of American tools and modified building techniques illustrates that even within the most private Diné lifeways, what goes on inside the home was malleable. The adaptation to new building styles and uses of indoor space happened in concert with a public and visible change among the People. Their weaving and clothing, informed by American styles, textiles, and markets, transformed as well.

<sup>25</sup> Kent, “The Differentiation of Navajo Culture, Behavior, and Material Culture,” 83–85; Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!*, 41–53.

## TEXTILES

The Diné had adapted clothing styles and materials well before the 1860s. Underhill describes previous migratory patterns, noting that clans had to modify their lifeways in response to the availability of resources in particular places. This occurred when they migrated south, away from the mountains and the flora and fauna that had clothed them in the past. Evidence shows that the Diné had historically been mountain people, before they moved into the high desert of the Colorado Plateau, perhaps as early as 1100 A.D.<sup>26</sup> Underhill explains, “They noticed what was being worn by the people around them, learned where to get the materials and did likewise.” She goes on to say that Diné clans in different regions dressed in ways that complemented their environments. They made skirts from pounded yucca leaves in the northwest deserts, clothing woven from the stringy inner bark of juniper trees in the high desert, and closer to Dinétah’s central mountains they sometimes covered themselves with the skins of elk and deer.<sup>27</sup>

Like other immigrants, the Diné have a history of adapting to their environment and contributing to an exchange of material culture. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Diné had become excellent weavers of wool – better

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<sup>26</sup> Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!* 32–39; Peter. Iverson, *Diné : A History of the Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 7–26. Iverson shares the Diné origin story to illustrate their belief that they emerged near the current homeland, but also cites archeological evidence that shows a gradual entrance and cultural formation in the region hundreds of years before the Spanish first documented them in 1626.

<sup>27</sup> Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!* 49.

than the Spaniards who had more experience in the art.<sup>28</sup> Navajo sheep flocks increased in number so that they were known to provide trade textiles to Spanish colonies, which helped to support the fiber arts in the region. The well-known image of a Navajo with tall leather boots, pants with silver buttons marching up the legs, and a red cloth tied around the forehead was adopted from Natives who visited Santa Fe. Spanish governors often treated influential Indians to the showy attire. The look caught on and spread across Dinétah.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 14. Diné Chief Hástiin Dághá (Barboncito) posed for a photo around 1865, accessed May 3, 2016, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chief\\_Barboncito.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chief_Barboncito.jpg)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 110; Iverson, *Diné*, 32. Also, see Chapter 1 for a description of the Navajo sheep herding economy, its growth, and its implications for relations with New Mexicans and other nearby Native communities.

<sup>29</sup> Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!* 113.

The Diné's ability to adopt techniques and materials and to demonstrate such mastery with them in a relatively short time, might have reduced the suffering at Hwéeldi, but it also shaped the weaving patterns and clothing styles that they would fashion after their imprisonment. Iverson posited, "Even in this place the Diné looked at the clothing worn by Anglo women at the fort and thought about how it might be adapted for use back home, if they ever saw that home again."<sup>30</sup> When they did return to Dinétah the weavers would create new patterns and clothing styles that spread, eventually becoming as ubiquitous as the earlier modes of dress.

"In 1855 the best weavers used bayeta, Saxony, and had-spun yarns," Iverson noted. "By 1880 many of the best weavers were using, almost exclusively, commercial American Synthetic-dyed three- and four-ply Germantown yarn."<sup>31</sup> While it is difficult to determine exactly which new styles and materials the Diné first detected while encamped along the Rio Pecos, we can proclaim for certain that the years of internment at Hwéeldi and directly after the Long Walk brought a period of change for textile production and use among the Diné. Kate Kent identifies weavings created from 1650 to 1865 as belonging to the "Classic period." The Diné had crafted clothing made primarily from woven wool that they processed themselves, and they had relied on tiered patterns similar to the pottery designs of the time. Kent argued that Pueblo people's clothing styles heavily influenced the Diné clothing styles of the period. The Diné had learned to

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<sup>30</sup> Iverson, *Diné*, 52.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

replicate the Pueblo-style upright weaving looms and color palette using indigo to dye wool blue, yellow and brown with plant dyes, and red with cochineal.

Changes in the designs emerged in the 1860s, however.<sup>32</sup>

The “Transition period,” which stretched from about 1865 to the end of the nineteenth century, witnessed new designs and materials. During these years Diné weavers were no longer creating goods for just their own people, they were also selling to new markets, which included American traders and Pueblo Indians, whose weavers could not keep up with demand.<sup>33</sup> During the late nineteenth century, the weavers introduced new colors and patterns, such as Spanish Saltillo and intricate center medallion designs. The mantas, or large shawls wrapped around the body as a dress or draped over the shoulders, probably came to the Americas with the Spaniards and the Diné had been wearing them for centuries. In the classic period, the weavers created mantas that were usually plain black or white with red bands across the top and bottom. From the time of captivity at Hwéeldi, they crafted mantas that were more colorful because they had access to new dyes and new contrasting design bands. The same evolution of pattern and color affected serapes after the beginning of internment.

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<sup>32</sup> See Kate Peck Kent, *Navajo Weaving: Three Centuries of Change* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1985), 49–66; Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!* 147–49. See Kent for a description of classic period weaving materials and practice, including images of popular patterns. Underhill generally concurs, but includes the entire Bosque Redondo period in what she calls “the high point in Navaho weaving.”

<sup>33</sup> Kent, *Navajo Weaving*, 67; Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!* 220–23. Underhill explains the creation of the market for trade rugs through the early twentieth century.



Figure 15. This Navajo Manta, ca. 1865, shows the introduction of new colors and patterns that infiltrate weavings in the early Transition period.

“Woman’s Fancy Manta - Navajo Weaving at Arizona State Museum,” accessed April 25, 2016, [http://www.statemuseum.arizona.edu/exhibits/navajoweave/historic/blankets/e-2859\\_dtl.shtml](http://www.statemuseum.arizona.edu/exhibits/navajoweave/historic/blankets/e-2859_dtl.shtml)

Blanket dresses, which consisted of long pieces of cloth tied at the shoulders and secured with a belt, became more formal wear for women through the Transition period. Women reserved these dresses for special occasions, while their typical daily clothing shifted to the long skirt with cotton shirt.<sup>34</sup> Underhill described young girls’ dresses and men’s shirts as often “decorated with a black circle enclosing the words PILLSBURY’S BEST,” since flour sacks were just the right size and shape to be easily transformed into clothing.<sup>35</sup> Diné women at Fort Sumner probably saw American women wearing skirts with blouses for day-to-day activities. Given their history in adaptation and adoption of clothing styles to fit environmental demands, it is reasonable to conclude that the transition away from blanket dresses marked another pragmatic choice for Diné women, which probably reflected the availability of cotton cloth at the fort. Underhill describes how the Diné at Hwéeldi would “appear in gray army blankets instead of the black-and-white striped ones of their own weaving.” She was uncertain, however,

<sup>34</sup> Kent, *Navajo Weaving*, 68; Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!*, 195.

<sup>35</sup> Underhill, *Here Come the Navaho!*, 195.



whether Diné women had enough contact with American women to adopt their clothing styles.<sup>36</sup> The evolution of Diné women's dress in the Long Walk era illustrates how place and environment affect material culture. The exposure to American fashion and newly available materials, and access to new markets for more traditional weaving transformed the textiles created at Bosque Redondo and upon the Diné's return home.



Figure 16. Female Diné prisoners at Bosque Redondo transitioned away from wearing blanket dresses like this once exposed to new fashions at materials at Fort Sumner. "The Belle of the Navajos," Palace of the Governors Photo Archives, New Mexico History Museum, Santa Fe, accessed July 20, 2016. <http://econtent.unm.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/acpa/id/4586/rec/86>

The Mashgalénde and Diné learned about suffering at Bosque Redondo. Many died after surrendering, even before reaching Hwéeldi. Upon arrival, there was little to eat, they discovered the water was bad, and that disease spread rampantly. More than one thousand of the Diné who had walked into Hwéeldi

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 174.

died there. However, the Indians did gain a bit of benefit from their time in captivity. They learned how to take advantage of modern technologies in farming, cooking, and transportation; they adopted new ways to build homes; they introduced new methods of weaving, dyeing fabric, and working with new textiles; and they adapted American clothing styles into their established wardrobe. This cultural exchange was dependent on place. Bosque Redondo's remoteness and its dual use as a military fort and reservation created a unique physical and social environment that cultivated exchange. Without the removal, it is likely that most of the Diné would have retreated farther into the remote reaches of Dinétah, a tactic that many Diné did adopt, to avoid incoming Americans and their armies. Their war with Americans could have been protracted, and could have led to a strikingly different outcome for both sides.

Cultural exchange was not a new experience for the Diné and Mashgalénde at Bosque Redondo. They had been borrowing from the Pueblos, the Spanish, and the Mexicans long before the Americans came. Proximity and space mattered in their world. They would borrow from whichever group was most accessible.

## CONCLUSION

Although the Bosque Redondo experience shaped the culture of the Diné people going forward, it is important to keep in mind that several thousand Diné avoided capture. They likely moved north and west, into Dinétah lands that Americans deemed too remote or dangerous to explore, or onto the homelands of other tribes such as the Chiricahua Apaches in southern Arizona.<sup>153</sup> More than one hundred of the Mashgalénde evaded capture as well, hiding in Hendebekeya or joining Mangas Coloradas' band of Gila Apaches.<sup>154</sup> The total numbers of Bosque Redondo prisoners is uncertain because head counts were never consistent on the reservation. Natives would routinely come and go from the grounds without notice, but most government documents show between 8,000 and 9,000 Diné and about 425 Mashgalénde captives lived there.<sup>155</sup> It is reasonable to estimate that 70 to 80 percent of the entire Diné population in the 1860s was imprisoned at Bosque Redondo. A great percentage of today's Diné

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<sup>153</sup> Robert A. Roessel, "Navajo History, 1850-1923," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Southwest*, ed. William C. Stuetevant, vol. 10 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 514.

<sup>154</sup> Paul Andrew Hutton, *The Apache Wars : The Hunt for Geronimo, the Apache Kid, and the Captive Boy Who Started the Longest War in American History* (New York: Crown, 2016), 85.

<sup>155</sup> Carson and Carleton cite the Mashgalénde figure in correspondence, often repeated in secondary literature. The Diné figure is more complicated because of the ease with which Diné came and went from Hwéeldi. Lynn Bailey showed 9,022 Diné captives in her book, *The Long Walk; a History of the Navajo Wars, 1846-68* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1964), 214.

people have ancestors who struggled through the Long Walk, and historical trauma still touches those whose relatives evaded capture.

In 2006, Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart talked to the *Tribal College Journal* about historical trauma. She said symptoms include “survivor guilt, trauma, anger, depression, and sadness. It also involves self-destructive behavior with alcohol and substance abuse, suicidal thoughts and gestures, anxiety, low self-esteem, difficulty recognizing and expressing emotions, somatic (physical) symptoms, and high mortality rates.”<sup>156</sup> Unquestionably, these conditions are pervasive across Indian country and are likely a result of the trauma Natives faced, even generations ago. Among the first steps taken to addressing physical and mental health among Native peoples should be to gain some understanding of the root causes of the suffering. Trauma can be transmitted to future generations when settler-colonial projects, such as the Bosque Redondo, “negate the possibility of self-determination: parents’ diminished hopes and expectations are transmitted to their children, and further reinforced by colonial education systems, disrupting processes of social and culture reproduction.”<sup>157</sup> The Long Walk experience damaged Diné social structures and endangered the potential for a mutually beneficial relationship in the future. Robert Trennert has discussed the disastrous state of health at Dinétah at the beginning of the twentieth century. The federal government attempted to intervene to control the spread of tuberculosis, trachoma, influenza, and even smallpox again in 1917, but the Diné

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<sup>156</sup> Tina Deschenie, “Historical Trauma: Holocaust Victims, American Indians Recovering from Abuses of the Past,” *Tribal College Journal* 17, no. 3 (2006): 8.

<sup>157</sup> Krista Maxwell, “Historicizing Historical Trauma Theory: Troubling the Trans-Generational Transmission Paradigm,” *Transcultural Psychiatry* 51, no. 3 (June 1, 2014): 410.

resisted treatment, certainly in part because they no longer trusted Americans after previous offenses.<sup>158</sup>

Historian Dan Flores writes that there is a current battle between American mindsets. One he describes as a “Christian worldview that appears to regard itself as outside nature, with the natural world as superfluous,” and another he calls bioregionalism, which encourages followers to “embrace a community sense of place based on the natural world.”<sup>159</sup> It is problematic that Flores consistently refers to the “back to nature” lifestyle that he depicts as “going native.” However, the sentiment, although too broad on its face, suggests that Natives, as seen here with the Diné and Mashgalénde, had learned to live within their particular natural environments – the places they called home. By calling for a dedication to citizenship of the local environment, Flores has illuminated the meaning of Yi-Fu Tuan’s idea of place – it is intimate, and where we experience life, it is sacred. Historian Margaret Connell-Szasz explains that origin stories and ritual sanctified Natives’ relationship with their land.<sup>160</sup> Forced removal, then, was especially profane.

Native lifeways were upset when the Mashgalénde and the Diné relocated to the reservation at Fort Sumner. They had been citizens of their local environments, building intimate knowledge of the land over time. The move to a

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<sup>158</sup> Robert A. Trennert, *White Man’s Medicine: Government Doctors and the Navajo, 1863-1955*, 1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 95–138.

<sup>159</sup> Dan L. Flores, *Horizontal Yellow : Nature and History in the Near Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 174.

<sup>160</sup> Margaret Connell-Szasz, “Cultural Encounters: Native People, New Mexico, and the United States, 1848-1948,” in *Telling New Mexico: A New History*, ed. Marta Weigle, Frances Levine, and Louise Stiver (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2009), 195.

new space, however, turned their world on its head. The most essential elements needed to sustain people, water and food, were of questionable quality and often unfamiliar to the prisoners. At the Bosque Redondo, new illnesses struck hard because of the dense living arrangement along the Pecos. Further, Natives negotiated new and old systems of medical treatment, while grasping for survival and holding tight to their culture. The material things around them changed, too. They adopted European style tools, types of construction and ideas about use of space, and they even adapted new patterns and colors into their textiles. The Mashgalénde and the Diné had been adapting to changing environments for centuries. But the intensity of the incarceration of the 1860s marked a new standard for adaptation.

Just as the Bosque Redondo story has multiple starting points – whether scouting New Mexico in the 1850s for Carleton, the 1862 fight ending in Dog Canyon for the Mashgalénde, or the late 1863 war against Kit Carson for the Diné, the story has multiple ends as well. The Mashgalénde snuck away in the night in November 1865. Returning to their beloved Sacramento and Sierra Blanca Mountains, for some time they would live mostly as they had before their capture. Carleton's service in New Mexico ended in 1867. In that year he was removed from command of the Department of New Mexico and sent to Texas, where he died a few years later. The demise of the Bosque Redondo experiment came shortly after. In the spring of 1868 the United States negotiated a treaty with Navajo leaders. This major victory for the Diné led directly to the closing of the reservation and perhaps inadvertently offered recognition to a sovereign Navajo nation. That was not the end of the Long Walk for the Diné though. They

were returning to their homeland, a wounded people, but going to a familiar place where they had intimate knowledge of the landscape and where they knew how to thrive. However, before the Diné could start to heal, they had to walk home.

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