

HISTORY OF FORT DEFIANCE, 1851-1900

by

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Chapter

I. UNITED STATES-MEXICAN RELATIONS, 1846-1851..... 1

II. THE EFFECT OF FORT DEFIANCE ON UNITED STATES-MEXICAN RELATIONS, 1851-1857..... 14

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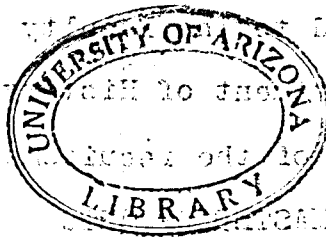
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CHAPTER I

NAVAHO-UNITED STATES RELATIONS 1846-1851

When the United States extended its territory into the Southwest, this nation faced many new problems. Not the least of these was the Indian situation in the region. The three phases of this problem included: (1) keeping peace among the Indian tribes--Apaches, Comanches, Utahs, Navahos,¹ Kiowas and Yumas; (2) not only protecting its citizens but also the newly acquired people of New Mexico from Indian incursions; and (3) halting the Indian attacks on the settlements across the Mexican border. Adding to these difficulties were the topography of the section, the extremes of climate, the type of people who lived in the area, the quarrels between the civil and military authorities and the slow communication between Washington and New Mexico. Another factor which further complicated the management of the Indian tribes was the absence of a definite and consistent Indian policy by the United States.²

¹C. Kluckhohn and D. Leighton, The Navaho, p. xv. The anglicized spelling with an 'h' instead of a 'j' has become standard anthropological usage.

²J. S. Calhoun, The Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun, A. H. Abel, ed., passim. J. F. Rippey, The United States and Mexico, pp. 70-76. Sister Mary Loyola, "American Occupation of New Mexico," New Mexico Historical Review, XIV, No. 2 (April, 1939), pp. 152-199.

Of the 120,000³ Indians brought into the United States by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the number of Navaho was estimated at from seven to fourteen thousand.⁴ This tribe occupied a portion of New Mexico about 12,000 square miles lying between the San Juan River on the north and northeast, the Pueblo of Zuñi on the south, the Moqui villages on the west and the continental divide on the east.⁵ Living in this semi-arid section, Navaho wealth was determined by the extent of their flocks which Bent estimated at 30,000 head of horned cattle, 10,000 head of horses and 500,000 sheep. He further characterized the Navaho as an industrious, warlike tribe that raised enough grain for its own use.⁶ By merely retaliating for the hostile acts committed against them, Backus said the Navaho have been branded as killers by the Mexicans. He also said:

As a nation the Navajoes do not deserve the character given them by the people of New Mexico. From the period of their earliest history, the Mexicans have injured and oppressed them to the extent of their power; and because these Indians have redressed their own wrongs the degenerate Mexicans have represented them as a nation of thieves and assassins.

³ H. H. Bancroft, History of Arizona and New Mexico, p. 459.

⁴ House Executive Document 17 (Report of Charles Bent) 31 Cong. 2nd sess., p. 191.

⁵ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1858, p. 540.

⁶ House Executive Document 17, 31 Cong. 2nd sess., p. 191.

⁷ Major E. Backus, as quoted in H. R. Schoolcraft, Indian Tribes of the United States, IV, p. 211.

The tribe is forced to follow the range for the livelihood of their flocks but the Navaho is not a true nomad.

An outgrowth of this semi-nomadic existence was the peculiarity of their tribal organization which proved a stumbling block in the Navaho relations with the United States. Letherman was shocked to see the lack of government among these Indians:

They have no hereditary chief and none by election. The authority of the chief is merely nominal and against the wishes of a number of his tribe, he is powerless and his authority melts away. Everyone who has a few horses and sheep is a 'headman' and must have his word in the councils.⁸

The amount of wealth determined the influence of a leader but the necessity of obtaining the approval of the masses tempered his authority.⁹ As a result of this system of government, the placing of responsibility for crime and the punishment of criminals was almost impossible. In fact, the Navaho had no penalties for dealing with petty offences in their tribal customs.¹⁰ Not only the difference in mores but the misunderstanding of these customs on the part of the officials of the United States proved a great drawback in dealing with this tribe.¹¹

⁸J. Letherman, "Sketch of the Navajo Tribe of Indians, Territory of New Mexico, Tenth Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution, pp. 283-297.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰E. Backus, loc. cit., p. 211.

¹¹C. Kluckhohn and D. Leighton, op. cit., p. 8-9.

Another characteristic of the Navaho was their belief that they were all-powerful.¹² This idea was probably fostered by the terror and havoc they caused among the citizens of New Mexico and the Pueblo Indians.¹³ The Navaho who considered himself the 'aristocrat of the desert' was respected by the army of the United States. Thorpe, a member of Doniphan's expedition, described the tribe:

They are handsome well-made and in every respect a civilized people being a nation of higher order of being than the mass of their neighbors, the Mexicans.¹⁴

Carrying on their exploits against the Spanish settlements on the Rio Del Norte from Santa Fe to Socorro, few other tribes were as successful in their conflicts with the whites as the Navaho.

When General Kearny entered Santa Fe on August 18, 1846, he stepped into the middle of a bitter controversy between the New Mexicans, the Navaho and the Pueblo Indians.¹⁵ Hatred centuries old had been fostered by the actions of each nation. Their borders had been the scene of continual bloodshed and plunder. To the Navaho the addition of another faction, the United States, did not change the situation and they continued to raid the outlying Mexican villages.

¹² Senate Executive Document 7 (W. H. Emory, Notes of a Military Reconnaissance) 30 Cong. 1st sess., p. 47.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ J. Thorpe, as quoted in J. T. Hughes, Doniphan's Expedition (1847 edition), p. 76.

¹⁵ G. R. Gibson, Journal of a Soldier Under Kearny and Doniphan 1846-1847, p. 198.

One of Kearny's first official acts in New Mexico was issuing a proclamation in which he stated the territory of New Mexico was a part of the United States. He absolved all persons from allegiance to the Republic of Mexico and proclaimed them citizens of the United States.¹⁶ He also promised these new citizens protection against further depredations by their ancient enemies, the Indians.¹⁷ The ease with which the military expected to subdue the Navaho was shown by a letter written to the secretary of war by Doniphan. In this letter, he stated that although he could muster up but limited supplies, this war would be brought to a close within thirty days.¹⁸ Kearny's orders to penetrate the Navaho country were relayed to Colonel Jackson in camp at Cebolleta. Upon receiving the report that the Navaho were willing to make peace and wanted to discuss treaty negotiations with the white men but were afraid to enter the territory, Jackson sent Captain Reid and a group of thirty Missouri volunteers into the Indian country.¹⁹ This adventurous party, guided by

¹⁶ House Executive Document 60 (Kearny's proclamation) 30 Cong. 1st sess., pp. 286-287.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ A. R. Johnston, M. Edwards and P. Ferguson, Marching With the Army of the West, p. 36.

¹⁹ Ibid. F. Lockwood, Pioneer Days in Arizona, pp. 82-83. J. T. Hughes, op. cit., pp. 165-174. H. H. Bancroft, op. cit., p. 42.

Sandoval, a friendly Navaho chief, met Narbonna, the old leader, of the tribe. In council the Navaho agreed to sign a formal treaty with the Americans at Santa Fe. After arranging a rendezvous at Agua Fria, Reid and his party returned to Arizona.²⁰ Unfortunately, the Navaho were dissuaded from attending this meeting by a miscreant as they feared ambush or treachery.²¹

For the purpose of securing peace and better conduct from the Navaho, Doniphan left Santa Fe with an expedition of three hundred men on October 26, 1846. He met Major Gilpin at a predetermined rendezvous about a month later. With the aid of the chief, Sandoval, who acted as messenger, a council was held at Ojo de Oso (Bear Spring) on November 21. At this meeting, it was Doniphan's duty to explain the policy of the United States to the Indians. The custom of treating surrendered people as friends was not understood by the primitive Navaho. Their attitude was clearly expressed by Sarcillos Largo:

Americans you have a strange cause of war against the Navajo...We cannot see why you have cause to quarrel with us fighting the New Mexicans on the west while you do the same on the east...This is our war. We have more right to complain of you for interfering in our war than you have to quarrel with us for continuing a war we had begun long before you got here. If you will act justly you will allow us to settle our own differences.²²

²⁰J. T. Hughes, op. cit., pp. 143-188. "Navaho," *New Mexico*

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., pp. 187-188. *New Mexico*, Vol. 3 (February, 1880), pp. 131-

Indian philosophy was stated again by this wise chief when he said, if the United States really has New Mexico and intends to hold it, the Navaho will cease their depredations. "For we have no cause to quarrel with you and do not desire to have war with so powerful a nation. Let there be peace."²³ As a result of the council, a treaty was signed. The terms included an amity clause between the two people which clearly defined the term "American people" as including the people of New Mexico and the Pueblo Indians. Mutual trade and restoration of prisoners was to be carried on between the several parties.²⁴

This was the first effort of the United States to secure peace with the Navaho by treaty means. The futility of this method was shown by the complete disregard of the terms of the treaties and the continued depredations and plundering by this tribe. The liberal and humanitarian policy was regarded as weakness by the Indians and "the presents which they receive are regarded as bribes to purchase their friendship."²⁵ The Indian attitude was clearly expressed by Calhoun, "The wild Indians of the country have been so much more successful in their robberies since General Kearny took possession of the country, they do not believe we have the

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ F. D. Reeve, "The Government and the Navaho," New Mexico Historical Review, XIV, No. 1 (January, 1939), pp. 82-83.

²⁵ G. Amsden, "The Navaho Exile at Bosque Redondo," New Mexico Historical Review, VIII, No. 1 (January, 1933), pp. 31-50.

power to chastise them."²⁶ The failure of several military expeditions sent into their country only emphasized the contempt which the Navaho felt towards the soldiers of the United States.²⁷ The increasing boldness and continued incursions of the Navaho forced Colonel Washington to military action against them. Led by the Jemez guide, Hosta, with a force of 348 men, he entered the Navaho country by the Chaco Canyon route.²⁸ On August 31, 1849, Washington met the Indians in council. After the meeting Sandoval was explaining the terms of the treaty to about three hundred Navaho. While they were thus assembled, it was discovered that one of the Indians was astride a horse belonging to an officer in Colonel Washington's army. When the Navaho refused to return the stolen property, they were fired upon by the troops. In the resulting foray Narbonna and six other Indian warriors were killed.²⁹

After this incident, Washington and his army marched into the Canyon de Chelley. On September 9, claiming their actions were binding on the whole tribe, two chiefs, Mariano Martinez and Chapatan, came into Washington's camp and signed

²⁶ J. C. Calhoun, op. cit., p. 32.

²⁷ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1858, p. 542.

²⁸ R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, A Short History of the Navajo People, p. 10.

²⁹ Senate Executive Document 64 (J. L. Simpson, Journal of a Military Reconnaissance from Santa Fe, New Mexico to the Navajo Country) 31 Cong. 1st sess., p. 90.

the treaty. Although the motivating influence for this action was the fear of the destruction of the corn crop by the terms of this treaty the status of the Navaho was changed from a politically independent nation to a nation subject to the law and jurisdiction of the United States.³⁰ Proof of this was to be seen when the United States established military posts in the Navaho country and limited the movements of the tribe. As usual the Navaho disregarded the provisions of the treaty and "It was not worth the paper upon which it was written."³¹

Conditions in New Mexico went from bad to worse. The Navaho continued to raid the communities as though no treaty existed. The white population was decreasing, many going to California or returning East. Loss of property due to Indian incursions cannot be accurately determined, but Colonel McCall reported in 1850 that within three months between 15,000 and 20,000 sheep and several hundred cattle, valued at \$114,000 had been carried off. He felt the above figures were a con-

³⁰Ibid. The terms of the treaty as enumerated in C. J. Kappler, ed., Indian Affairs Laws and Treaties, II, p. 583. I. Navaho under jurisdiction of the United States; II. Perpetual peace to exist between the two nations; III. Laws now in force regulating trade to be binding on the Navaho; IV. Navaho to deliver to the United States the murderer or murderers of M. Garcia; V. Captive and stolen property to be delivered to the United States by Oct. 9, 1850; VI. Citizens of the United States committing outrages on the Navaho to be subjected to the penalties of the law; VII. United States citizens to have free passage through the Navaho country; VIII. Military posts and agencies to be established in Navaho country; IX. United States to adjust territorial boundaries.

³¹ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1858, p. 541.

servative estimate. Eighty-three persons had been killed and thirteen captured.³² Traveling on the Santa Fe trail was dangerous, the mails had been robbed, treaties were ignored, the government in the territory was inefficient and the American traders were exerting an evil influence over the Indians.³³

These circumstances finally prompted the government at Washington to pursue a new policy in the ninth military district. As part of the secretary of war's defence program, Sumner, the appointed commandant of New Mexico, was to reorganize the territory "both with a view for a more efficient protection of the country and a dimunition of expenses."³⁴ The old adage 'a new broom sweeps clean' aptly describes the administration of Colonel Sumner. Immediately upon taking command on July 19, 1851, he moved headquarters from Santa Fe to Fort Union and directed the discharge of all civilians employed in the public service in New Mexico.³⁵ His orders were obeyed without delay and within twenty day from their date nearly all the property belonging to the quarter-masters department was transferred from Santa Fe to the site of the

³² Senate Executive Document 26 (Report of Col. McCall) 31 Cong. 2nd sess., p. 5.

³³ J. C. Calhoun, op. cit., passim.

³⁴ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1851, p. 125.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 74.

new depot. All civil employees except three clerks and a principal carpenter were discharged. Because the war department believed the regrouping of forces was necessary in order to equalize the contests with the Indians, five new posts, Fort Union, Fort Conrad, Fort Fillmore, Fort Massachusetts and Fort Defiance were placed on the New Mexico frontier.³⁶ In order to overcome the disadvantages of the heavily mounted cavalry and to minimize the advantages of the Indians, "who are as fleet as deer and at home anywhere,"³⁷ these forts were built in the Indian country.³⁸ Thus, by placing the cavalry within striking distance, shorter expeditions could be made against the Indians while the infantry remained at the post.

In addition to the reorganization of the department, Sumner's orders included a punitive expedition against the Navaho.³⁹ As early as practicable, August 17, 1851, he left Santo Domingo with a large force, including four companies of horse, one of artillery and two of infantry. After halting at the pueblos of Laguna and Zūni, he marched directly into the Navaho country and partly through their most sacred spot,

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ T. Galloway, "Private Letters of a Government Official in the Southwest," Journal of American History, III, p. 549.

³⁸ J. C. Calhoun, op. cit., p. 419.

³⁹ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1851, p. 125.

the Canyon de Chelley. Of this exploit, Brackett said:

In the Cañon de Chelley, Sumner's dragoons did not gather many laurels, though they did their duty; but the Indians were too wily for them, and lining the sides of the pass, or cañon, they rolled down rocks fired guns and shot arrows at our troops, until they were glad to retrace their steps.⁴⁰

His failure to draw the Indians into a decisive battle let to the ridicule of the people of New Mexico. Greiner wrote to a friend in the East, "The American troops are at war with the Indians and if they were ever to catch them [the Navaho] would give them fits but Colonel Sumner is on his way back from their country without seeing one of them."⁴¹ Sumner admitted in his report that although the expedition was not as decisive as he should have expected, "It was hardly possible to close an Indian war of many years standing by one expedition."⁴²

Probably the only constructive outcome of Sumner's march against the Navaho was the selection of a site for Fort Defiance.⁴³ His choice, Cañon Bonito, was situated in the highlands near the source of the Rio Puerco at the base of the Bonito Hills, a rocky range rising about five

⁴⁰A. G. Brackett, History of the United States Cavalry, p. 129.

⁴¹T. Galloway, op. cit., p. 546.

⁴²J. S. Calhoun, op. cit., p. 418.

⁴³C. Amsden, op. cit., p. 36.

hundred feet above the surrounding tableland.⁴⁴ With a note of awe, Beale described its location, "The post is situated at the mouth of a cleft in the mountains by which the very backbone of the mountains seems to have been cloven down to the level of the plain."⁴⁵ About one half mile long and one hundred yards wide, Cañon Bonito is supplied with water by a small stream. The advisability of locating so important a fort in such a vulnerable position has been questioned by the military, but:

Its position was selected not with any view to defense--no attack being ordinarily dreamed of--but solely with reference to wood, water, grass and shelter from the weather and as a strategic point from which to operate against or hold the Indians in check.⁴⁷

⁴⁴T. Farish, History of Arizona, I, p. 309.

⁴⁵House Executive Document 124 (E. Beale, Report of Superintendent of Wagon Road from Fort Defiance to Colorado River) 35 Cong. 1st sess., pp. 36-37.

⁴⁶Joseph Mansfield, Report of the Secretary of War on the Military Posts in Texas and New Mexico Territory with Drawings and Sketch Maps. Original in National Archives, Washington, D. C. "This post has the disadvantage of being commanded within musketry range by a rocky ridge on the east, but this evil can readily be remedied by the construction in the ridge of two small blockhouses." Captain Bourke in his journal, "Bourke on the Southwest," ed. L. Bloom, New Mexico Historical Review, VIII, No. 1 (January, 1936), p. 81, "The first thing claiming my attention was the wretched position, in a military point of view...of Fort Defiance."

⁴⁷Dick, "Reminiscences of Fort Defiance," Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States, IV, p. 90.

CHAPTER II

THE EFFECT OF FORT DEFIANCE ON NAVAHO-UNITED STATES RELATIONS 1851-1857

As a means of protection against the depredations of the Navaho, Fort Defiance was established on September 18, 1851.¹ Located sixty miles north of Zuni, fifteen miles south of the Canyon de Chelley and fourteen miles from Laguna Negra, all favorite haunts of the Navaho,² this remote frontier post was to exert a great influence on the history of this tribe. Fort Defiance was a 'fort' in name only, having no stockades, trenches, blockhouses or other defensive works and except for its sentries it was as accessible as a 'New England village.'³ The Navaho were not only given free entry into the camp but were also provided with overnight accommodations. Although friendly relations with the tribe existed fear that the soldiers at Fort Defiance would cut them off, reduced the number of Navaho incursions.

¹The date has been variously reported. Post Returns from Defiance for the month of September 1851, state that by Order No. 29 of the Ninth Military District, a new post to be called Fort Defiance was established. Major E. Backus, the first commander of Fort Defiance, writes in H. R. Schoolcraft, Indian Tribes of the United States, IV, pp. 209-210: "On the 7th of September 1851, he Sumner arrived at Canonicito Bonito, and soon after gave orders for the construction of a military post, to be called Fort Defiance."

²T. E. Farish, History of Arizona, I, p. 309.

³Dick, "Reminiscences of Fort Defiance," Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States, IV, p. 90.

Aptly nicknamed 'Hell's Gate' by the soldiers, this post was situated in one of the 'loneliest corners of the United States.'⁴ Actual distances from civilization were accentuated by the almost impassible roads. The heavy snows in winter, the mud during the spring thaws and summer rains and the dust in the dry seasons made travel in this area hazardous. The poor condition of the roads in this section today is described by Kluckhohn:

To gauge correctly the difficulties of travel by either Navahos or whites distances must be measured in terms of bad roads and intervening canyons or other obstacles rather than in terms of miles on a map.⁵

So far removed from the avenues of transportation this post was considered isolated even in the era of slow communication.

Another reason for the nickname was the climate. Weather conditions were marked by extreme temperatures in summer and winter, strong winds and frequent sandstorms.⁶ The severity of the winters was greatly intensified by the altitude and the winds which blew constantly through Cañon Bonito.⁷ Average temperatures of 27.9° F. have little significance when the minimum readings are -26.0° F., -23.0° F., -26.0° F., for December, January and February, the coldest months.⁸

⁴R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, A Short History of the Navajo People, p. 12.

⁵C. Kluckhohn and D. Leighton, The Navaho, p. 14.

⁶D. and M. Coolidge, The Navajo Indians, p. 242.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Climate of Arizona, Table 2, p. 38.

A thermometer placed near the hospital at Fort Defiance during the winter of 1855-56 recorded, "the mercury...below zero four mornings in December, six mornings in February and also on the mornings of the first and second of March."⁹ Adding to the discomforts of this season were the heavy snow. On the other hand the summers were quite pleasant when not exposed to the direct sunlight and the nights were always cool.¹⁰ Due to the low humidity, the sensible temperatures are low even though the thermometer readings for June, July and August are above ninety degrees.¹¹ Rainfall was intermittent and the rigors of the climate at Fort Defiance added to the hardships of the men stationed there.

As a result of the poor roads and climatic conditions, logistics was an important problem faced by the officers at this post. All supplies had to come from Albuquerque, a distance of two hundred miles.¹² Sumner realized the supply problem would be great and took fifty wagons with him in August of 1851 and sent another thirty-six when he returned to headquarters.¹³ In 1853 Albuquerque could be reached by

⁹J. Letherman, "Sketch of the Navajo Tribe of Indians, Territory of New Mexico," Tenth Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution, pp. 283-297.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Climate of Arizona, p. 39.

¹²J. S. Calhoun, The Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun, A. H. Abel, ed., p. 418.

¹³Ibid.

two roads, one via the pueblo of Zūni and the other through Bear Spring. These roads were united at the River Gallo to Curvero, a Mexican village, and thence to the pueblos of Laguna on the Rio Puerco to the Rio Grande del Norte. Trade with the Indians accounted for two food items, corn and peaches. Corn was purchased from the pueblos of Zūni, Laguna and Cubero at about one dollar and thirty cents a bushel. Peaches were bought from the Navaho who grew them in the Canyon de Chelley.¹⁴ Hay for the animals was cut, at first, from the fields within ten miles of the fort but when Letherman was at the post in 1856 he reported that fifty square miles were necessary to feed the animals at Fort Defiance.¹⁵ Despite these conditions the soldiers, it seemed to have been reasonably well supplied with all the necessities. In spite of the physical hardships the men at Fort Defiance were well cared for and well disciplined. The commander at this time, Major Kendrick,¹⁶ was a man of exceptional ability. In his report Colonel Mansfield described

¹⁴J. Mansfield, Report to the Secretary of War on the Military Posts in Texas and New Mexico Territory.

¹⁵J. Letherman, op. cit., p. 286.

¹⁶Post Return from Fort Defiance for Sept. 1852. Major H. L. Kendrick took command of the post Sept. 8, 1852 from Brvt. Lt. Col. Joseph H. Eaton, who commanded the post for about a month, relieving Major E. Backus.

the fort in 1853 as follows:

This post was in a high state of discipline, and every department of it unexceptionable and highly creditable to the distinguished officer Major Kendrick in command. The troops were all in the old uniform no other having been furnished. The arms and equipments of the respective companies were in good serviceable condition. The drills at the Artillery & heavy and light infantry showed that the instruction of the troops was not lost sight of notwithstanding the great labour that had been performed in erecting quarters, etc., in this locality where everything had to be originated.¹⁷

Major Backus, who accompanied Sumner on his campaign against the Navaho, was responsible for the actual building of this post. He lost no time in carrying out the orders given him by Sumner for in less than one year ten sets of officers quarters, consisting of one room eighteen feet square, and five barracks, one hundred feet long and twenty feet wide, for the soldiers were completed. Some of these buildings were of mud and others of pine logs but all were comfortable enough except for occasional leakage during the rainy season. While Backus was in command, the only stone building was the combination guard-house, office and smokehouse.¹⁸ In 1852, when Major Kendrick took charge, he completed the construction of the post.

Similar to the general plan of all military posts of the period, Fort Defiance had an ideal parade ground. The level grassy plain of the Canon Bonito served this purpose and was

¹⁷J. Mansfield, op. cit.

¹⁸Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1851, p. 73.

surrounded by the officers' and enlisted men's quarters, storehouses, stables and other necessary buildings.¹⁹ On the north side, sheltered from the winds were the officers quarters, and facing the east and west sides were the barracks for the enlisted men. The guard-house, storehouses and hospital were located on the south and southeastern sections of the rectangle. Back of the officers quarters in an isolated spot was the building reserved for the Navaho who remained on the post overnight. The stables for the horses, always an important part of frontier life, were behind the officers barracks and a large combination corral and stable was located on the southwest. The sutler's store, the clubhouse of Fort Defiance, was near the entrance to the post. All these buildings were in the shadow of the American flag which was prominently placed in the center of the fort.²⁰

Almost immediately the restraining effect of placing a military post in Cañon Bonito was felt by the Navaho. On October 26, 1851, about a month after the building of the fort had been started, an informal agreement was signed between the Navaho and Major Backus, commandant at Fort Defiance. By the

¹⁹ There is disagreement on the exact measurements of this post. T. E. Farish, *op. cit.*, gives the dimensions as 300 by 300 yards, on page 309. W. H. Davis, *El Gringo*, states the parade was 200 by 300 yards, on page 402. These dimensions correspond to the diagram that accompanies J. Mansfield's Report, *op. cit.* for although there is no scale given, the diagram shows the fort to be approximately 1/3 longer than it is wide.

²⁰ See Appendix I of this paper for a diagram of Fort Defiance. This diagram accompanied the J. Mansfield Report, in 1853.

terms of this compact, the Navaho promised to stop depredations and hostilities against the United States, the pueblos of Tunice and Moqui and the citizens of Mexico. Backus reports, "That from this day to the period of my departure in August 1852, not a hostile act was committed by the Navaho and not a depredation of any magnitude could be traced to their agency."²¹ Even Calhoun, who did not agree with Sumner, admitted, "You have done much in establishing Fort Defiance in the Navajo country for the safety of our citizens."²² In his report to the secretary of war, Sumner enthusiastically stated that the new posts in the country have had the happiest effect and this method is the only way of controlling the Indians.²³

Other evidences of the peaceable attitude of the Navaho were shown by the reports of this period. In 1852, the commissioner of Indian affairs wrote:

The Navajos...have recently manifested a disposition to abandon their predatory habits and seek support in the cultivation of the soil. To this end they are anxious to be furnished with agricultural and other implements of husbandry.²⁴

²¹ Maj. E. Backus, op. cit., p. 210.

²² J. C. Calhoun, op. cit., p. 518.

²³ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1852, p. 26.

²⁴ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1852, p. 299.

Greiner said in his diary that he sent several Navaho to Major Backus to get hoes.²⁵ These actions prove that many of this tribe were beginning to understand and realize the power of the United States. Just as the effect of Fort Defiance was being felt by the Navaho, the government revised its policy in dealing with these Indians. By making them a happy, contented and prosperous people through fostering care and judicious management, the United States felt it would improve relations between the two peoples.²⁶ Much to the amusement of the Indians a group of two hundred headmen were summoned to a council at Jemez for the purpose of making another treaty.²⁷ After great discussion among themselves, the Navaho finally agreed to resign the treaty made by Colonel Washington in 1849, on the grounds that the chiefs who signed this treaty originally were not the legal representatives of the tribe.²⁸ At this conference Sumner spoke firmly to the Indians and told them, "The troops at Fort Defiance would prevent them from raising a single field of grain unless they remained at peace." He might well have not said a word because as was the custom, Calhoun distributed two or three thousand dollars worth of presents to those assembled. Sumner felt the good effect produced by

²⁵ H. H. Abel, "Diary of John Greiner," Old Santa Fe, III, p. 206.

²⁶ J. C. Calhoun, op. cit., p. 434.

²⁷ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1858, p. 541.

²⁸ Ibid.

placing the military in the Navaho country would be sabotaged by this policy of appeasement.²⁹ The program of the army was again challenged by Calhoun when he organized raiding parties of volunteer to fight the Navaho. Calhoun felt the army was ineffective and that the people of New Mexico should be given the opportunity to defend themselves against the Indian incursions. Sumner opposed this plan on the grounds that:

This system of warfare will interfere very much with my measures and do away with all the advantages that I confidently expect to reap from the establishment of Fort Defiance.³⁰

The argument became heated and Sumner threatened to use force to prevent the volunteers from fighting the Indians. Finally the settlement of the dispute was referred to Washington.³¹

Not only disagreements between officials but also the change of authorities altered the policy of the United States. In 1853 the Navaho killed and robbed a Mexican, Roman Martin. Governor Lane made a formal protest and sent Captain Ewell and Henry Dodge, as special emissaries, into the Navaho country to demand the surrender of the murderer.³² Although the Navaho

²⁹ J. C. Calhoun, *op. cit.*, p. 488.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 445.

³¹ F. D. Reeve, "The Government and the Navaho, 1846-1858," *New Mexico Historical Review*, XIV, No. 1 (January, 1939), pp. 82-114.

³² A. H. Abel, "Indian Affairs in New Mexico under the Administration of William Carr Lane," *New Mexico Historical Review*, XVI, No. 2 (April, 1941), pp. 189-243.

promised to comply, they did not bring in the murderer because he belonged to an influential family and could not be given up to the United States. Governor Lane immediately sent for Sumner and a campaign was well under way for the punishment of the Navaho.³³

At this time a change of commanders, General Garland replaced Colonel Sumner and Governor Merriwether took over the duties of William C. Lane.³⁴ The new governor met the chiefs in council and extended a general amnesty to all the tribe for all past offenses, including the murder of Martin. This change of policy had great effect on the Navaho, for they believed the troops did not possess the strength to punish them. The situation remained unchanged and the Indians continued to rob as they had before.³⁵

Realizing the importance of impressing the greatness of the United States on the primitive mind, the military was more strict in its relations with the Navaho. When a soldier was killed at Fort Defiance in 1854, it was decided that an example should be made of the tribe. As usual the Indians offered to pay for the dead soldier's life, but this offer was met by a reference to our laws

³³ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1858, pp. 541-542.

³⁴ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1854, p. 380. Governor Merriwether took over his duties on Aug. 18, 1853.

³⁵ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1858, pp. 541-542.

which meant surrender. Seeing that something must be done, the chiefs agreed to surrender the guilty party and a day was set for his execution by hanging. On the appointed day, they brought forth the alleged murderer and hanged him in the presence of the entire post. Major Kendrick believed this action on the part of the Navaho was a major victory because it was the first time the tribe had submitted to the laws of the United States. The person, hanged was proved, several years later, to be a Mexican slave.³⁶

Aside from the above instances, the allotment system was working well. In 1854, as a part of the national policy to establish permanent friendship with the Indians, Congress appropriated \$30,000 for treaties with the Navaho, Apache and Ute Indians. Appointed special commissioner, Governor Merriwether, with the assistance of General Garland was to make the treaty with the Navaho.³⁷ On July 5, 1855, the governor, his son, Davis and two servants left Santa Fe. When they arrived at Fort Defiance, they received a hearty welcome. Garland's party reached the fort on the fourteenth of July and on the next day all were honored by an inspection and drill.³⁸

³⁶ J. P. Dunn, Massacres of the Mountains, pp. 260-261.

³⁷ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1855, p. 71.

³⁸ W. W. Davis, op. cit., pp. 402-406.

In order to protect the pasturage of the fort from the destruction of the Navaho and to allay the suspicion on the part of the Indians, the council was held at Laguna Negra, a spot about fourteen miles from Fort Defiance. Under escort of the dragoons, Merriwether, Garland, Davis and two or three officers from Fort Defiance proceeded to the conference.³⁹ With the usual smoking ritual, the actual meeting started about one o'clock. The 'democratic rabble,' as Davis calls the Navaho, were about two or three thousand. Several acts of insubordination were committed by this tribe during this meeting. After being informed by Agent Dodge that the Indians intended to attack at daybreak, Captain Ewell sent to Fort Defiance for assistance. One of the dragoons in the detachment said at dawn, "We heard a more welcome sound than music; the rumbling of cannon wheels over the solid rock road."⁴⁰ Major Kendrick had sent the entire company of artillery to their aid.⁴¹ Although the civilians heard rumors of this, Davis says they paid little to the warnings and slept soundly during the night.⁴²

On the seventeenth, the Navaho informed Governor Merri-

³⁹W. W. Davis, op. cit., pp. 402-408.

⁴⁰C. Brooks and F. D. Reeve, eds., "James A. Bennett: A Dragoon in New Mexico, 1850-1856," New Mexico Historical Review, XXII, No. 2 (April, 1947), pp. 140-176.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²W. W. Davis, op. cit., p. 408.

wether they were willing to accept the terms offered by the United States. After the choice of a new chief, the terms of the treaty were read and interpreted article by article, and discussed by the conferees. After some discussion, the Navaho chiefs approved the treaty. By signing this agreement the Navaho conceded to fixed boundries for their nation. Other conditions included: (1) the Navaho were to live at peace with the whites and the other Indian tribes; (2) they were to cultivate the soil for a living; and (3) most important of all, they were to surrender the guilty members of the tribe for punishment. As compensation for these concessions, the United States was to pay annuities for twenty years to the tribe.⁴³ Although this treaty was never radified by Congress, this was only incidental because the Navaho felt they had more strength than the "Big Chief Washington" and "the plundering went on just as though the treaty were in full force."⁴⁴

The period from 1856 to 1857 was one of comparative quiet. Conditions changed but little, an occasional robbery and some plundering but no flareups. In 1857 the government issued more annuity goods than at any other time and depredations were discontinued for a short period. The liberality of the government was soon forgotten, "and during the past spring and summer hardly

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴J. Dunn, Op. cit., p. 261.

a week has passed without some theft being reported against them."⁴⁵ The rich men of the tribe were desirous for peace but were unable to check the 'ladrones.'⁴⁶

Application has been made to the present commanding officer at Fort Defiance (Major Kendrick, U. S. Army) by one of the richest men of the nation to have his cattle placed under the protection of the guard which has charge of those belonging to the post on the ground that he could not prevent the people of his own tribe from killing them.⁴⁷

True, the majority of the Navaho were law abiding but their great fault lay in shielding the guilty.

One of the reasons the Navaho were not guided properly was the caliber of the agents sent to aid them. Political influence was the prime requisite for appointment as Indian agent. Greiner stated that he was chosen "because he could sing a good political song."⁴⁸ Well meaning, as he may have been, the entries in his journal plainly indicate he did not understand the Navaho or their problems.⁴⁹ His successor, General Charles M. Baird, was a man of similar character.⁵⁰ In the spring of 1853,

⁴⁵ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1858, p. 542.

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Bad men of the Navaho nation.

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J. Letherman, op. cit., p. 294.

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Senate Report 156 (Report of the Joint Special Committee to Inquire into the Condition of the Indian Tribes) 39 Cong. 2nd sess., p. 328.

⁴⁹

A. H. Abel, "The Journal of John Greiner," Old Santa Fe, III, (July, 1916), pp. 189-243.

⁵⁰

R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., p. 12.

agents were changed again and things began to improve for the Navaho. Captain Henry Linn Dodge, a famous frontier scout, was appointed as their agent. He was well acquainted with the philosophy of the Indians, the country and the rigors of frontier life. His prudent judgment was felt and although depredations were not stopped altogether they were greatly diminished.⁵¹ His decision to live in the midst of their country was revolutionary and the astonishment of the Navaho was shown in the following letter written by Dodge:

Upon my arrival here the Indians expressed much surprise that I should come so far into their country to live, with so small a force. I answered them by exhibiting my commission from the President with the great seal of the United States affixed, appointing me their agent and had the Interpreter to tell them that I was commanded by the governor of the territory and the President of the United States to have the same care of them as if they were my relatives and friends, and that I had not the least fear of them whatsoever, as my intentions were good in every way possible...that they might kill me whenever they found I gave them bad advice...or that I would tear up my commission or send it back to the great man of the United States, that he might send them a man that would live among them and control their actions by good advice and watching over their interests.

All the good men of the tribe welcomed Dodge and assumed responsibility for him and his property. They cautioned him concerning the 'ladrones' and said they hoped he would have a good influence over them.⁵³ Dodge--"Red Shirt" as the

⁵¹ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1858, p. 543.

⁵² Letter written to the Santa Fe Gazette, Jan. 7, 1854 by H. L. Dodge, as quoted in A. Woodward, A Brief History of Navajo Silversmithing, note 13, pp. 13-14.

⁵³ Ibid.

Navaho called him--established his agency on the eastern approach to Washington Pass above Sheep Springs.⁵⁴ Immediately he began the construction of an agency. Realizing the Navaho needed industries and worthwhile pursuits, he brought a blacksmith and a silversmith with him to teach these skills to the tribe.⁵⁵ Because of his open fearlessness and understanding of the Navaho, Dodge exercised great influence over this tribe. He was in the midst of every Navaho activity and his death, three years later at the hands of the Apache Indians,⁵⁶ proved a great loss to them.

For the two year period after his tragic death, the Navaho were without the guiding influence of an agent. No longer was the prudent judgment of Major Kendrick felt at Fort Defiance

⁵⁴R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., p. 12.

⁵⁵A. Woodward, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

⁵⁶R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., p. 13, state that Dodge was killed by the Chiracuhua Apaches on Nov. 15, 1856. An interesting account of his death is found in a letter written by James Webb as quoted in "The Papers of James J. Webb, Santa Fe Merchant 1844-1861," ed. by R. Bieber, Washington University (St. Louis) Studies, Humanistic Series 11 (2) 1924. This letter was written from Santa Fe and dated Nov. 28, 1856. "News has arrived today that Captain Dodge has been taken a prisoner by the Apache Indians. He had gone some 20 miles south of Zuñi hunting, and while out the Indians came upon him and took him prisoner. I think they must have known that he was an officer of the Gov't. or they would have killed him. I have never before heard of these Indians taking a grown man prisoner. He induced a Mexican captive to run away and take the news to Fort Defiance. Dodge was taken on the 19th and the captive arrived at the fort on the 22nd and the news, here, today. The governor has sent to Doct. Steck to send some of the Gila Apaches out to rescue him, by ransom or the best way they can do it. The captive said he had been well treated, and it is presumed they have taken him off in hopes of his being ransomed. He was taken by the "Mogollon Apaches."

as he was relieved of duty. His place was taken by Major Brooks who seemed unable to deal with the Navaho effectively.⁵⁷ To further complicate an explosive situation, the contingent at Fort Defiance was decreased and the Navaho became more daring in committing depredations on the citizens of the Rio Grande. The tension that had existed for eleven years between the Navaho and the United States was to lead to hostilities within a few months.

... post and seal the service of the military, daily in 1850, disputes arose between the Navaho and the army, regarding the grazing fields that were used by the army at the post. The Navaho had been exceptionally severe on the Navaho herders who were pasturing their flocks, and were also the grazing fields of Fort Defiance. While the army claimed the disputed territory as treaty rights, the Navaho based their claims on hereditary ownership. After repeated warnings to stop off the disputed territory by the army, Captain Hiram was sent out with a force of mounted soldiers to enforce compliance to these orders. As a result of this action, Major Hiram's cavalry outran the Navaho and took them. Although Hiram's force was small, the Navaho chief, who was

⁵⁷ Major William T. H. Brooks assumed command of Fort Defiance in November 1857. At this time all but one company had been withdrawn from the fort for an expedition against the Indians on the Gila River. Senate Report 156, 39 Cong. 2nd. sess., p. 491. "General Indian Policy in New Mexico 1848-1880," Arizona Historical Review, VII, No. 3, (July, 1937), pp. 213-

CHAPTER III

SUBDUING THE NAVAHO

With the loss of the judicious management of Major Kendrick and the understanding of agent Dodge, the relations between the Navaho and the troops stationed at Fort Defiance began to deteriorate. Until this time the Navaho had been accustomed to visit the post and seek the advice of the military. Early in 1858, disputes arose between the Navaho and the army, concerning the grazing fields that were used by the cavalry at the post.¹ The dry season had been exceptionally severe and the Navaho, hard-pressed for pasture for their flocks, had encroached on the grazing fields of Fort Defiance. While the army claimed the disputed territory by treaty rights, the Navaho based their claims on hereditary ownership. After repeated warnings to stay off the disputed territory by the army, Captain McLane was sent out with a force of mounted rifles to enforce compliance to these orders. As a result of this sortie, McLane killed seventy animals within the contended area. Although Sarcillos Largo, the great Navaho chief, came to the fort after this incident and asked Major Brooks for an explanation, Brooks assumed the incident closed when the Navaho

¹F. D. Reeve, "Federal Indian Policy in New Mexico 1858-1880," New Mexico Historical Review, XII, No. 3, (July, 1937), pp. 218-269.

University of New Mexico Press, 1937, pp. 208-209.

made no retaliatory measures. The attack on the hay camp on the seventh of July was ignored because no actual damage was done.²

On July 12, 1858, an incident occurred at Fort Defiance which was to precipitate hostilities between the Navaho and the United States. An influential Navaho had difficulty with his wife and according to custom it was necessary for him to murder an outsider. With this purpose in mind, he went to Fort Defiance on the pretext of selling two blankets. After hanging around the fort for several hours, he sold the blankets to a woman who lived at the post. Just as the transaction was completed, Jim, the negro servant of Major Brooks, was passing. At this instant, the Navaho mounted his horse and shot an arrow into the negro's back within thirty yards of the commandant's quarters.³ Whether the shooting occurred for some real or imaginary insult, the slave died four days after he was shot on July 16.⁴

In a council with Sarcillos Largo, on the following day, Brooks demanded the surrender of the assassin. The chief was very evasive and when the commandant pressed him for more definite information he remarked that it was six weeks since the cattle had been killed and no settlement had been made. At this meeting Brooks tried to impress upon Sarcillos Largo

²Ibid.

³Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1858, pp. 305-307.

⁴Ibid, pp. 294-296.

the meaning of a war on his people but, "They have been threatened with punishment so often it has lost its terror."⁵

That Major Brooks anticipated trouble with the Navaho is shown by his request to have the three companies at Fort Defiance reinforced with another company in May of 1858.⁶

In reply to his request, Lieutenant Averell with a company of forty-nine men arrived at Fort Defiance on July 17, just two hours after the first conference with Sarcillos Largo.⁷

Brooks seemed uncertain about the strength of the army and suggested that the Utah Indians be encouraged to repeat their raids on the Navaho as they had inspired the "Navajoes with a dread not to be gotten over."⁸ He patterned his actions

after the course followed by Major Kendrick in the murder of the soldier at the post in 1854. During this period,

he gathered in all the hay that was available and looking ahead to a campaign, he requisitioned more provisions for

the post. He felt a general war against the Navaho was

necessary and recommended that a campaign be started as soon as possible.⁹

⁵ Ibid, pp. 296-297.

⁶ Ibid, p. 288.

⁷ Post Returns from Fort Defiance, July 1858.

⁸ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1858, pp. 304-305.

⁹ Ibid.

A second conference with Sarcillos Largo and Herrero was held at Fort Defiance on July 21. The Navaho chiefs regarded the murder from their standpoint and offered the payment of five thousand sheep as attonement for the murderer.¹⁰ This offer was flatly rejected by the adamant Brooks who gave the Indians twenty days to bring in the assassin. Largo said he would make an effort to surrender the murderer but because he was a man of influence and had fled from his home, the chief felt it would be difficult.¹¹

Although General Garland, the commandant of the Ninth Military District, did not approve of Major Brooks's actions he realized the importance of enforcing the demands once made. He, therefore, sent Captain McLane and a small force to Fort Defiance. While en route, Captain McLane, accompanied by Navaho agent, Yost, a small force of twelve men and Blas Lucero's guides, attacked a small group of friendly Navahos at Bear Spring. The result of the premature skirmish on August 29 was the killing of six or eight Navaho, the capture of twenty-five ponies and a number of blankets.¹² Although this attack was accomplished before the time for the delivery of the murderer it had no effect on the relations with the

¹⁰ Congressional Globe, 39 cong., 1st sess., Pt. 2, p. 1487.

¹¹ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1858, pp. 305-307.

¹² Ibid.

Navaho as the army had to continue the course set by Brooks or loose face. Several days after this incident, Juan Lucero, a Navaho chief, came to the fort and inquired to see if the injury done to the Navaho at Bear Spring would be compensation for the murder of the negro slave. The answer was the same-- only the surrender of the murderer would satisfy the authorities of the United States.¹³

Meanwhile reinforcements had arrived at Fort Defiance. The post now had a force of four hundred and thirty men under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Dixon S. Miles.¹⁴ As a defense and necessary preparation for taking the field, Miles built a block-house on the hill east of the post, thus eradication one of the glaring faults in the physical location of Fort Defiance.¹⁵

Realizing that the Americans were preparing for war, the Navaho determined that something must be done. Sarcillos Largo promised the surrender to the murderer and on September 8, the body of the assassin was brought into the fort. All who had seen the offender viewed the body and agreed that instead of the assassin it was the body of a Mexican captive who had often visited the post. Colonel Miles refused to meet with the chiefs in council, after this subterfuge, but Brooks

¹³ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1858, pp. 305-307.

¹⁴ J. P. Dunn, Massacres of the Mountains, pp. 264-265.

¹⁵ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1858, pp. 307-309.

who attended the conference returned from the gathering with the information that the chiefs had reasserted the fact that this was the body of the murderer.¹⁶

From September to December of 1858, Fort Defiance was the scene of great activity. As a supply depot and a base of operations, this post was the center of the Second Navaho Campaign. Soldiers were coming and going. Many expeditions left the fort but three main columns were sent against the unruly Navaho. On September 9, the day after the fiasco, Colonel Miles left Fort Defiance with a group of 309 men composed of three companies of mounted rifles, two of infantry and Captain Blas Lucero's spies and guides.¹⁷ He led his army into the very midst of the Navaho and entered the Canyon de Chelley returning to the fort on the fifteenth. The inauspicious results of this scout were, "The killing of six Indians, not a doubt but many were wounded, capturing four or five horses, six women and children and the old man and between five and six thousand sheep!"¹⁸

From September 29 to October 2, Miles led another large column from Fort Defiance in an eastern direction with the purpose of bringing about a battle with the Navaho. After a short

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Post Returns from Fort Defiance, September, 1858.

¹⁸ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1858, pp. 309-313.

but uneventful march, Captain Lindsay gave chase and battle to Kay-a-tans band to which the murderer belonged. Although this scout was not successful in bringing about a general engagement it succeeded in killing ten Indians, capturing all of Kay-a-tana's equipage, eighty horses and 6,500 sheep. In this foray, two of Captain Lindsay's men were killed and one wounded.¹⁹

The second column of the Navaho expedition consisted of four hundred men under the command of Major Backus, the builder of Fort Defiance. The various units of this party were to meet at Jemez on the fifteenth of October and commence a forty day scout terminating at Fort Defiance. His orders read, "You will use the greatest possible exertion to destroy and drive from that part of the country every vestige of this troublesome tribe."²⁰ Leaving Albuquerque on the nineteenth of October with his column of four hundred men, he marched 349 miles in thirty days in the Navaho country and according to his report, he only succeeded in killing four Navaho and capturing thirty-five horses, two hundred and seventy-eight goats and twenty-two sheep. This fruitless march was closed when Backus learned of the truce that existed between Colonel Miles and the Navaho.²¹

¹⁹ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1858, pp. 309-313.

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 320-321.

²¹ A. B. Bender, "Frontier Defense in the Territory of New Mexico, 1853-1861," New Mexico Historical Review, IX, No. 4 (October, 1934), pp. 345-373.

During the month of October many expeditions into the Navaho country left Fort Defiance. Leaving the Indians no time to rest, Brooks left the post on the fourth, with a large number of men and escorted several convoys to the mouth of the Gallo. He then circled back to Fort Defiance on the eleventh through Chusea Valley and Laguna Negra. On this march, he reported one battle with the Navaho. As a result of this battle, it was estimated that twenty-five were killed or badly wounded. Captain Lindsay and Lieutenant Howland, both led expeditions but no general battle could be fought.²²

While the troops were busy out in the country looking for them, the Navaho boldly attacked the post herd on October 17, just as it passed through Cañon Bonito. A band of three hundred mounted Navaho concealed in the cañon ambushed the guard of fifteen mounted rifles of "I" company and ten infantry. The Indians succeeded in killing two soldiers and in wounding five. Except for three horses and about sixty-two mules, the herd was saved.²³

On the eighteenth of October, a day after the raid, Miles left Fort Defiance with a force of about two hundred and fifty men, sixty Zuñians and twenty Mexican spies and guides. After an ineffective five day scout, Miles returned

²² Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1858, pp. 263-280.

²³ Post Returns from Fort Defiance, October 1858.

to the fort with one hundred horses and five head of cattle. He managed to burn Mannellita's camp and to kill one Indian. The Zunians proved a great disappointment to Miles but they suffered the only loss on the march, two wounded.²⁴

Meanwhile the divided responsibility of the civil and military authorities again interfered with the unified policy of the United States toward the Navaho. Collins, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, was in the unpleasant position of disagreeing not only with the actions of Major Brooks but also those of the Navaho agent, Samuel M. Yost. Although he felt war was unavoidable, he believed the military should have consulted him before the demands were made.²⁵ Whereas, Yost was sent into the Navaho country with specific orders to bring about peace, he acted as an interested spectator during the McLane attack on the Navaho at Bear Spring. Piqued by the fact that no official quarters were provided for the agent at Fort Defiance, he turned over the responsibility of Indian management to the army and returned to Santa Fe. Collins ordered him back to Fort Defiance and stated a good agent would have prevented the outbreak of war.²⁶

He had not been at the fort but for a short time when

²⁴ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1858, pp. 324-326.

²⁵ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1858, p. 586.

²⁶ F. D. Reeve, "The Federal Indian Policy in New Mexico, 1858-1880," New Mexico Historical Review, XII, No. 3 (July, 1937), p. 225.

he initiated a premature peace move. On November 20, Miles signed a thirty day armistice with the Navaho. Collins believed that the Indians had not been properly chastised, but fearing further bungling of the situation by Yost, he participated in peace negotiations with the tribe.²⁷

Fort Defiance was the scene of the peace conference on December 25, 1858. Bonneville and Collins met with the Navaho headmen and another worthless treaty was signed. The cause of the controversy was not mentioned in the final agreement but certain concessions were extracted from the tribe. The Navaho agreed to the establishment of an eastern boundary for their reservation; to the restoration of property taken since August 15; and to the releasing of all Mexican and Pueblo captives. The military were given the right to establish posts in the Navaho country and these posts were to have the right to grazing and farm lands for their own use. The troops were also given the right to make reprisals if indemnities were not paid. Attempting to develop a sense of collective responsibility for the actions of the tribe Collins and Bonneville impressed the need of a leader upon the Navaho headmen. Heeding this advice, the Navaho selected Huerero Miles as their chief and agreed to acknowledge him as their leader. With the adjourning of this conference, the

²⁷ Ibid.

delegates hoped for peaceful relations with the tribe.

Several changes in personnel had taken place at Fort Defiance. Major Simonson had been appointed commandant and Major Alexander Baker had been assigned the post of Navaho agent.²⁸ During the spring of 1859, Baker and Simonson invited the Navaho to a council at Fort Defiance. This conference was held outside the fort as the headmen refused to attend. On July 15, 1859, the headmen refused to attend the first two meetings scheduled to be held in Fort Defiance. At this meeting the Navaho refused to sign any agreement which demanded the return of all property stolen since December 1858 as they were wary of papers they could not read.²⁹

Just as Baker was beginning to understand the Navaho and their country, he was replaced by Silas F. Kendrick. An opinionated man, Kendrick was very annoyed because he had no quarters. On September 25, he held a conference with the Navaho at Laguna Negra. At this council the Navaho expressed the belief that the treaty of December 25, 1858 was unfair in that it required them to pay for the depredations of the tribe but no compensation was made to the Navaho by the Mexicans or Pueblos who committed incursions against them. According to the military, this was fair and just but Kendrick was adamant and would consider no Navaho claims. He gave the tribe thirty days to make restitution

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 231-232.

²⁹ Many Navaho were displeased with the treaty of 1858 and refused to sign anything they could not read.

or else he would turn the situation over to the army.³⁰

During this period, Bonneville felt he could more accurately plan a successful campaign against the Navaho if he knew more about the topography of the country and the strength of the tribe. Therefore, Fort Defiance became the base from which many exploratory expeditions were dispatched. On July 18, 1859, two large scouting parties left Fort Defiance.³¹ One of these was commanded by Major Shepherd and marched in the direction of the Moqui villages, south and southwest of Fort Defiance. In his report, Shepherd said of this 265 mile march:

This expedition traversed a section of the country never before attempted...demonstrating the possibility of troops going to the remotest haunts of the Indian; also in having discovered the Pueblo Grande, so near this post and heretofore unknown and where a number of³² Indians must have been during the past severe winter.

The troops returned to the post on the third of August with vivid descriptions of the country and particularly of the customs of the five Moqui villages which they visited.³³

The second column leaving Fort Defiance on July 18, was composed of Captain Walker's and Lieutenant DuBois's companies of infantry. This party was to explore the

³⁰ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1859, pp. 341-343.

³¹ Post Returns from Fort Defiance, July 1859.

³² Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1859, pp. 325-327.

³³ J. V. DuBois, Campaigns in the West, p. 98.

country northwest of Fort Defiance and the Canyon de Chelley. They reached the entrance of the canyon on the twentieth and were met by a party of Navaho who tried to dissuade them from entering the chasm.³⁴ While encamped, Captain Walker seized several of the "principal chiefs in camp both to prevent their efforts being used to keep us from exploration and as hostages for the good conduct of these so-called friendly Indians."³⁵ After a thrilling two day march through the canyon, the expedition marched into the San Juan River country up to the Arroyo Colorado back to the Palo Negro and La Joya. When Captain Walker returned on August 2, he refuted the current idea that the canyon could afford a refuge for the Indians with their numerous flocks and herds in a long war with the United States.³⁶ Following orders from Santa Fe, these scouts continued. Two important marches into the Indian country left the post on September 5.³⁷ The first led by Shepherd reconnoitered about 317 miles to the southeast of Fort Defiance in the San Mateo Mountains. On his return he reported that the

³⁴ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1859, pp. 316-323.

³⁵ J. DuBois, op. cit., p. 95.

³⁶ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1859, pp. 316-323.

³⁷ Post Returns from Fort Defiance, July 1859.

Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1859, pp. 316-323.

³⁸ J. DuBois, op. cit., p. 95. Post Returns from Fort Defiance, September 1859.

country was rough but practicable for all kinds of troops.³⁸

The second column under the command of Walker struck out in the western section of this area and the Puerta Limita, the western extremity of the Mesa de la Vaca, in the vicinity of the Moqui villages, was the farthest point reached. Walker stated on his return that this section of the country was so cut up by canyons that it could conceal all the stock in the Navaho country.³⁹

Later in the month Captain Schroeder and his company marched from the post. Showing the contempt the Indians had for the troops, a small band of Navaho marched into Schroeder's camp "with their bow string and their arrows between their fingers." Orders prohibited an attack and these Indians, who had committed outrages in Albuquerque, escaped punishment. After marching a distance of 127 miles, and accomplishing nothing, this scout returned to Fort Defiance on the first of October.⁴⁰

During this period friction between the military and the civil authorities developed at Fort Defiance. As the agents changed so frequently, the military officers were given greater control over the Navaho. Shepherd's orders on taking command were that he should recognize agents as the

³⁸ J. DuBois, op. cit., p. 98.

³⁹ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1859, pp. 350-354.

⁴⁰ J. DuBois, op. cit., p. 98. Post Returns from Fort Defiance, September 1859.

officials to whom the Navaho should look for guidance. All matters concerning the treaty should be taken care of by the agent but in his absence the military were to secure redress.⁴¹ Kendrick, the agent for the Navaho, insisted that war be made on the tribe as the Navaho had not met their treaty obligations. The military emphasized the fact that a large majority of the tribe were peaceful and the treaty of December 1858 was not fair to the Navaho as it provided for no legal adjudication of the claims of the Mexicans and Pueblo Indians.⁴² Believing that war would convert ten thousand self-sustaining people into robbers, obliged to live by stealing or charity, the military hesitated to go into the field. But while this bickering was going on the Tunichey Navaho raided the Mexican villages and Major Shepherd was instructed to lead a column against these Indians. On October 14, 1859, Shepherd wrote to headquarters giving his reasons for opposing this campaign and the consequences of making a foray against the Zuni-Cha Navaho.⁴³

At this time the command of the post and the tactics against the Navaho were changed. Major Ruff, the new commandant, immediately ordered another scout against the

⁴¹ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1859, pp. 311-327.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Letter written to headquarters from Fort Defiance on January 17, 1860 by Major Shepherd. Original found in the National Archives, Washington, D. C.

Tunicha Valley Indians.⁴⁴ The entire post was put into service, Major Shepherd, who did not approve of this campaign,⁴⁵ was in command. Including the sixty mounted rifles under the leadership of DuBois, the column consisted of 277 men.

In his journal DuBois said of this foolhardy expedition:

This time some Indians will be killed, for it is the intention of Colonel Bonneville no doubt to bring on a war. His order says kill four or five at least of this tribe as a punishment for their depredations. One cannot fight one band of Navajos without fighting all but he thinks differently. Nous verrons.⁴⁶

This party left the post on the first of November and after marching one hundred and ninety-four miles, they managed to kill three Indians and capture about six hundred sheep.⁴⁷

Immediately, after they had returned from this sortie, the whole outside force left the post. Shepherd described their departure as looking somewhat "like the wicked fleeing & perhaps the Navajos had drawn this conclusion."⁴⁸ At any rate, they attacked the post the day after they left and drove off eighty-five head of sheep.⁴⁹ As a retaliatory

⁴⁴ Major Charles J. Ruff, assumed command of Fort Defiance on October 26, 1859. Post Returns from Fort Defiance for October 1859.

⁴⁵ Letter written to headquarters by Major Shepherd on January 17, 1860.

⁴⁶ J. DuBois, op. cit., p. 101.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Letter written to headquarters by Major Shepherd on January 17, 1860.

⁴⁹ J. DuBois, op. cit., p. 102.

measure Lieutenant Whipple and agent Kendrick left the fort in pursuit of the Indians, with a detachment of 148 men. They located a band of Navaho in the Tunicha Mountains and seized as many sheep as had been stolen from the fort.⁵⁰

As shepherd prophesied, the attack on the Tunicha Navaho resulted in open warfare. On the seventeenth of January 1860, the Navaho attacked not only the beef herd at the grazing camp eight miles from the post but also a wood party and a lumber party in the mountains. They were unsuccessful in the attack on the beef herd but surprised the men in the wood party and killed three soldiers. In the attack on the lumber party, one soldier was wounded and another killed. As a result of these attacks, the government lost six oxen and sixteen mules.⁵¹ Their success in these raids encouraged the Navaho to further activities. Becoming bolder they made several attacks on the supply trains and other attempts were made to subdue the cattle guard.⁵²

The climax of the Navaho audacity was the attack by two or three thousand warriors on Fort Defiance. Their well-planned and well-timed assault began at dawn on April 30, 1860, when the post was garrisoned by a small force of about

⁵⁰ Secretary of Interior, Annual Report, 1860, p. 199.

⁵¹ Letter written to headquarters by Major Shepherd on January 17, 1860.

⁵²

Post Returns from Fort Defiance, January and February 1860.

138 officers and men of the Third Infantry.⁵³ A graphic picture of the activities of this eventful morning was given by Major Shepherd:

The attack was made shortly after the moon went down and about four o'clock in the morning fully half an hour before the break of day and was executed with considerable sagacity and skill, being on three sides. The enemy got possession of the hill on the east side of the post which rises like a wall overlooking the post and is within short firing distance. They also took possession of the ravine on the southwest corner of the garrison where are the corrals and magazine, and the third and more important point of attack was the west side and northwest corner of the post where they took possession of the garden fences and the wood piles. In all three of these points of attack the enemy were enabled to approach in the night undiscovered, and the peculiar and extraordinary location of the post offers these facilities.⁵⁴

The post was alerted by the sound of the war whoop and the long roll. In the battle which ensued, the post was besieged for two hours. After a passive and monotonous defence the attack was repulsed. Considering the disparity in numbers, the loss to the fort personnel was trifling--Private Sylvester Johnson of Company "C" was killed and Corporal Joseph McCourt and Private Johnson, of the same company, were wounded.⁵⁵ Indian casualties were difficult to determine

⁵³ Dick, "Reminiscences of Fort Defiance, New Mexico, 1860," Journal of Military Institutions of the United States, IV, p. 90.

⁵⁴ Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1860, pp. 51-63.

⁵⁵ Ibid. Post Returns from Fort Defiance, April 1860. Dick, op. cit., p. 90.

due to the Navaho custom of carrying away their wounded but their losses must have been heavy as they left two of their dead on the battlefield.⁵⁶ The troops were unable to make pursuit because no cavalry was stationed at the post at this time. Despite elaborate preparations, Canby was unable to launch an expedition. After a lapse of six months, Washington finally decided to organize another punitive campaign against the Navaho. Fauntleroy, the new commander of the Department of New Mexico,⁵⁷ hoped to put a large expedition in their country fast enough to surprise the Navaho and destroy their flocks and be able to withdraw before the cold weather.⁵⁸ Again Fort Defiance became a 'bee-hive' of activity. Colonel Canby, the commander of this expedition, had a large force composed of nine companies of the Fifth Infantry and six companies of Mounted Rifles and about sixty spies and guides. Converging on Fort Defiance on October 1, the orders of the expedition commanded that three columns be formed; one led by Canby, another by Sibly, and the third by McLaws.⁵⁹ In addition

⁵⁶Dick, op. cit., p. 90.

⁵⁷Colonel Thomas T. Fauntleroy succeeded Colonel Bonneville on October 15, 1859.

⁵⁸Secretary of War, Annual Report, 1860, p. 60.

⁵⁹Post Returns from Fort Defiance, October 1860.

these troops were aided by a large force of volunteer, including Pueblo and Ute Indians.

Leaving Fort Defiance from the sixth to the twelfth of October, this contingent of 3,000 troops criss-crossed the Navaho country. Despite elaborate preparations, Canby accomplished little except the destruction of a large number of Navaho cattle. After an unsuccessful campaign of four months, the Navaho, who were becoming excellent diplomats, sued for peace and were granted an armistice. By the terms of this agreement, the peace party promised to make war on the ladrones, to remain west of Fauntleroy and as soon as possible to settle in fixed communities.⁶⁰

When this fort that was equipped to handle approximately 250 was expanded to over 1,500 men, housing became quite a problem. As usual 'American ingenuity' solved this difficulty. Dugouts were built "half below ground and half above." Dubois described them:

Mine is 8 feet by 10 feet & 7 1/2 feet high, 3 feet below ground, a fireplace in it and altogether very comfortable. The men have built huts in the same way. I have completed a large stable in the same way.⁶¹

Although these facilities were make-shift, they were adequate.

⁶⁰ F. D. Reeve, op. cit., pp. 245-246.

⁶¹ J. DuBois, op. cit., p. 96.

The men stationed at Fort Defiance were described by Shepherd as "cheerful and prompt in their courage" but seemed glad to get to get away when their enlistment was over.⁶¹ Due not only to the harassing duty but also to the isolated position of the post. Of the social life, DuBois, in his journal remarked:

The post itself seems entirely shut out from civilization. It is very lonely in itself and requires a large society to make it endurable. No hunting, fishing, billiards or social intercourse except among the batchelors at the sutler's store and in the batchelors' messes.⁶²

The center of amusement was the sutler's store which everyone visited in the morning--some for a few minutes and others to pass the day. To DuBois life was so boring that even the visit of the acting inspector general, which required drills, reviews, and other official duties was considered a welcome change.⁶³

All the men stationed at Fort Defiance did not share DuBois's attitude:

Ah! Well! Those were the jolly days, after all, and many a man seeing this, will recall the old and long abandoned post, kind and genial John Webber, the sutler, the frolics we enjoyed there out of the world, the "Tub Mill," the camps of "dug outs" when expeditions were made up, troops, arriving and departing, Capt. D. of the Rifles and "G" Company's coons, and the pranks played on good-natured "Jack Lindsay" of the Rifles, and Captain Hatch's protegee "Sunday"--a youth of three feet nothing, absolutely lawless and whom, if in a mischievous mood, we all dreaded to meet, more than all his male relations in the field; and the final exist⁶⁴ of the small "Sunday" simultaneously with a new suit.

⁶¹Letter written by Maj. Shepherd, on Jan. 17, 1860.

⁶²J. DuBois, op. cit., pp. 94, 99.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Dick, op. cit., p. 92.

Entertainment and amusement at this post had to be invented by the men stationed there but like all soldiers they could make a joke out of anything and enjoy themselves under very adverse conditions.

In spite of the unsettled conditions in this area, all troops were removed from Fort Defiance on April 25, 1861.⁶⁵ In fact all troops were withdrawn except two units which were stationed at Fort Fauntleroy.⁶⁶ For the next two years the unrestrained Navaho committed extensive depredations. In 1863, however, a new phase of the "American personality" was revealed to the Navaho when they began to deal with General Carleton and Kit Carson.⁶⁷ When Canby was relieved by Carleton, the Navaho chiefs dutifully called on him with the express purpose of obtaining a new treaty. His reply to them was typical of his attitude:

I told them that they could have no peace until they would give other guarantees than their word that the peace would be kept; to go home and tell their people so; that we had no faith in their promises that if they did not return we should know they had chosen the alternative war; that in this event the consequences rested on them.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Post Returns from Fort Defiance, April 1861.

⁶⁶ R. E. Twitchell, The Leading Facts of New Mexican History, II, p. 320.

⁶⁷ General James H. Carleton assumed command of the Department of New Mexico on September 18, 1862.

⁶⁸ Senate Report 156, 39 Cong. 2nd sess., p. 103.

the Navaho were stunned by this reversal of policy but as usual, they did not heed his warning.

He reiterated his ultimatum through the commander of Fort Wingate and gave the Navaho until July 20 to submit peaceably. True to his word, the active campaign against the tribe began on that date. As a field general, Carleton had Kit Carson, a man who understood the Indian, his philosophy and his method of warfare. During this campaign, his troops:

waged war against the property of the Indians, killing their sheep and horses, cutting down their peach orchards and destroying their fields of corn, and wheat, beans and squashes until in all the Navajo country scarce the bleat of a sheep or the neigh of a horse was heard.⁶⁹

Although there were no great battle or victories from a military standpoint, Carson's 'scorched earth' policy finally proved to the Navaho that they must yield or be exterminated. Fort Defiance was used during this campaign merely as a transfer station for the movement of prisoners from Fort Canby,⁷⁰

⁶⁹A. H. Thompson, *The Country and Customs of the Navajo Indians*, a manuscript of a speech written for the Travel Club, Washington, D. C., 1890. Original in the New York Public Library, N. Y.

⁷⁰The exact location of Fort Canby is unknown. R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, *op. cit.*, p. 22 state that Fort Defiance was renamed Fort Canby in 1863. Dr. G. Salsbury to R. Mangiante, May 11, 1950, stated, Chee Dodge told him that Kit Carson's headquarters were located at Kinlichee. W. L. Joerg, Chief Archivist of the National Archives, Washington, D. C., to R. Mangiante, June 7, 1950, stated: "An examination of the records fails to disclose the exact location of Fort Canby, New Mexico." *Senate Report 156*, 39 Cong. 2nd sess., p. 115 Letter written by Gen Carleton to Capt. Walker stated: "You will see the new fort, Fort Canby, will be at Pueblo Colorado about 28 miles southwest of old Fort Defiance."

Kit Carson's camp to the Bosque Redondo.⁷¹

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⁷¹E. L. Sabin, op. cit., pp. 846-899. The appendix of this book gives all the important correspondence and reports of both Carleton and Carson. Senate Report 156, 39 Cong. 2 sess., passim.

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CHAPTER IV

BEGINNINGS OF THE NAVAHO RESERVATION AND THE ACTIVITIES AT FORT DEFIANCE 1864-1880.

After their defeat by Carson in 1864, the Navaho were forced to leave their homeland and go to the reservation set aside for them at Bosque Redondo. Carelton had formulated this isolation policy and by July 23, 1864, seven thousand three hundred and fifty-three Navaho were either at Bosque Redondo or on their way.¹ In this way all but two thousand of this proud tribe submitted to the 'white man's will.' Proclaimed as a reservation by President Lincoln on January 15, 1864, this site was an unfortunate one for the Navaho suffered from the lack of wood, alkali water and poor soil. While they were detained at Bosque Redondo, the Navaho suffered greatly and were the victims of hunger, cold, sickness, drought and many other disasters. An area of forty square miles, approximately one hundred and eighty miles from Santa Fe, this spot was the exact antithesis of the Navaho country and the people were homesick for their rugged land and the Canyon de Chelley.²

¹ Senate Report 156, 39 Cong. 2nd sess., p. 189.

² R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, A Short History of the Navajo People, pp. 24-30. C. Amsden, "The Navaho Exile at Bosque Redondo," New Mexico Historical Review, VIII, No. 1 (January 1933), pp. 31-50.

Again the Navaho became the victims of the divided responsibility between the military and the civil authorities and this tended to make a bad situation worse. In 1861, Collins favored the policy of placing the Navaho on the reservation and was willing to aid Carleton in his plan to develop the Bosque Redondo,³ but Steck, his successor, violently objected to this project. In fact, he was so opposed to this scheme that he would not help Carleton feed the Navaho although they suffered from hunger. Instead, he went to Washington to air his views and made so much fuss that a joint committee of Congress was sent to New Mexico to investigate the situation.⁴

Carleton's plan to make farmers out of the Navaho seemed doomed to failure. Not only did the Navaho not like the transition but the soldiers felt it was not their duty to police a reservation. To add to these difficulties, nature seemed determined to see this project fail. Since their transfer to this region, the Navaho labored dilligently but they did not raise a good crop from 1864 to 1867. The failures were due

³ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1861, p. 165.

⁴ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1864, pp. 183-187.

to insects, drought, flood or unseasonable cold. The situation became so bad and the Navaho so demoralized that they would not plant any crop in 1868.⁵ Amsden summarized the Bosque Redondo incident and its effect on the Navaho as follows:

Bosque Redondo was a moral holocaust as devastating to Navaho civilization as were the barbarian invasions of the dark ages to ours...its greatest result was the destruction of a remarkable people's morale.⁶

As part of Grant's "Quaker policy" toward the Indians, a peace commissioner was sent to Fort Sumner to investigate the situation. In May 1868, General Sherman and Colonel Tappan, reached New Mexico and after making certain that this tribe could not be self-supporting or satisfied at Bosque Redondo Sherman made a treaty with this tribe that enabled them to return to their homeland.⁷

At this point the Navaho were willing to agree to anything in order to leave Bosque Redondo. Briefly the provisions of the treaty that has been the basis for negotiations between the Navaho and the United States since 1868 were:⁸ (1) peace and friendship should exist between the Navaho and the whites;

⁵ Senate Report 156, 39 Cong. 2nd sess., passim. T. E. Farish, History of Arizona, II, pp. 174-180.

⁶ C. Amsden, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

⁷ D. and M. Coolidge, The Navajo Indians, pp. 28-30.

⁸ This treaty was confirmed by the Senate July, 1868 and proclaimed by President Johnson, August 12, 1868.

(2) the limits of the reservation were defined⁹ (3) the United States agreed to provide certain buildings and provisions were made for the agent and his duties to the tribe; (4) heads of families and persons over 18, not the head of a family, were to receive 160 acres and 80 acres respectively for use as farms; (5) the United States promised to erect a schoolhouse for every thirty children who could be persuaded to attend school and the Navaho pledged themselves to compel their children to attend school; (6) those Navaho who became farmers were to receive seeds and agricultural implements worth \$100 the first year and \$25 for the next two years; and each Navaho was to receive \$5 worth of annuity goods for a period of ten years; and the tribe was to receive \$10 worth of articles for each member engaged in agricultural or mechanical pursuits; (7) Navaho relinquished the right to occupy any territory outside their reservation but were allowed to hunt on land that bordered the reserve; (8) an appropriation of \$150,000 was to be used to buy goats and sheep and needed supplies and for the removal of the tribe to their homeland. This agreement was signed by the Navaho chiefs and the peace commissioners on July 1, 1868.¹⁰

⁹C. J. Kappler, ed., Indian Laws and Treaties, II, p. 1016. The United States agrees that the following district of country to wit: bounded on the north latitude by 37° of latitude. South by an east and west line passing through the site of old Fort Defiance in Cañon Bonito, east by parallel of longitude, which if prolonged south would pass through old Fort Lyon or the Ojo de Oso, Bear Spring and west by a parallel of longitude about 109° west of Greenwich provided it embraces the outlet of the Canyon de Chelley which canyon is to be all included in the reservation

Anxious to leave this barren place, the Navaho began the 'long walk' back to their beloved Canyon de Chelley. Under the supervision of the army, they left Bosque Redondo on June 18, 1868.¹¹ On the twenty-third of July, they arrived at Fort Wingate and they were no longer under the control of the army.¹²

When they reached their native land the problems of the tribe were not automatically solved. The episode at Bosque Redondo had been devastating from both a moral and material sense. It was estimated that when the Navaho reached Fort Wingate, they had less than one-half animal per person.¹³ Rations were never regular and during the winter of 1868-1869 there were times when the Navaho had to live off the country.¹⁴

Immediately upon his arrival at Fort Wingate, Dodd explored the reservation for a site for the agency.¹⁵ After a general inspection of the area, he decided that the site of old Fort Defiance was the most suitable as the "walls of the buildings are sound and only need the addition of doors and windows."¹⁶

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 1015-1019.

¹¹ R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., p. 33.

¹² Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1868, p. 164.

¹³ Ibid, p. 165.

¹⁴ R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., p. 36.

¹⁵ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1868, p. 165.

¹⁶ T. Dodd, Report to the Indian Commissioner, August 8, 1868. Original in the National Archives, Washington, D. C.

¹⁷ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1870, p. 104.

Dodd felt he would save money for the government by repairing the old buildings. In addition to making every effort to repair the old adobe structures by putting in windows, replacing roofs and restoring the walls, several other buildings were erected, especially a large combination slaughter house and corral.¹⁷

The initial mistake of attempting to repair the old buildings was shown in the subsequent reports of the agents. Not a year passed that the agent did not make some comment about the dilapidated condition of the buildings or the poor living quarters at the fort. In 1870 Bennett complained of the condition of the buildings and claimed they were almost impossible to keep in repair.¹⁸ Miller in 1871 reiterated Bennett's sentiments when he wrote:

It would be better to construct new buildings as the money expended in repairing the old one would soon amount to more than the cost of new.¹⁹

The steady decline of the housing conditions of the fort

was shown eight years later:

The hovels (it would be a misnomer to call them houses) occupied at present for agency purposes with their dirt walls, dirt floors and dirt roofs were built by the army for use as a military post upward of 25 years ago and for a long time have been in a miserably dilapidated condition, dark, damp and unhealthy.²⁰

¹⁷ R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., p. 36.

¹⁸ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1870, p. 148.

¹⁹ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1871, p. 337.

²⁰ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1878, p. 108.

The steady decline and ruinous condition of the buildings at Fort Defiance is proof of Dodd's lack of insight when he tried to save government money by attempting to mend the old buildings.

One of the first adobes revamped at Fort Defiance was the traders store. Since bargaining has always been an important phase of Navaho culture, the traders were and are today one of the most important people on the reservation. His store is the center of Navaho social activity and serves the same purpose as the rural country store. All the local gossip, such as births, deaths, marriages and other news of importance to the Navaho are discussed. The trader is not merely a store-keeper but his duties may include those of a banker, interpreter, family consultant, undertaker, doctor or anything else that may come up to take his attention. Usually he does his business on a barter basis taking his pay in sheep, wool, pelts, blankets or pinion nuts.²¹

At Fort Defiance, the trading post was located in an old adobe at the west end of the plaza. The first trader was a man named Leonard who was characteristically called "Long Whiskers" by the Navaho. Later this store was taken over by Thomas Kean and in 1876 he was reported as the only trader on the reservation.²² By 1871 the Navaho traded his

²¹D. and M. Coolidge, op. cit., pp. 66-69. C. Kluckhohn and D. Leighton, The Navaho, pp. 38-39.

²²R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

wool and received in return, calico, muslin, yarn, brass and other items.²³ Although these stores were under government supervision, the prosperity of the trader depended on the economic condition of the tribe.

One of the most difficult provisions of the treaty of 1868 for both the Navaho and the United States to comply with was Article VI. This article stipulated that for every thirty children between the ages of six and sixteen, a schoolhouse and a teacher shall be provided by the United States; whereas the Navaho agreed to compel their children to attend these schools.²⁴ For twelve years the authorities attempted to establish a day school on the reservation. Charity Gaston, the first teacher, faced almost unsurmountable difficulties. Arriving at Fort Defiance on October 12, 1869, she was unable to start school for two months because no room was available. In December and January, the average school attendance was twenty-two but it dropped sharply in February, the Navaho planting season. From April to August, classes were not held because the rooms were needed for the sub-agent. Not only did she face insufficient housing and other deficiencies at the agency but also the indifference of the Navaho, who was reluctant to send his children to school

²³Walter Dyk, A Navaho Autobiography, pp. 5-6.

²⁴Supra.

The Indians did not understand books or their attraction for the white man. They felt their children should be out with the flocks and sent only the slaves and scrubs to school.²⁵

Undaunted by these setbacks,²⁶ Charity Gaston, Now Mr. Manuel, opened her school on the fifteenth of August 1870, for the second school year. During this year the attendance twenty-three pupils. Facing a constantly changing body of students, she attempted to teach the Navaho reading, writing, printing and mental arithmetic. Her most successful subject was sewing and her student succeeded in making 24 dresses, 33 shirts, and 4 sacques.²⁷ Her efforts were aided by the missionaries but in spite of their diligence, the school proved a failure and was abandoned.²⁸ In 1873, Army believed "there is not one Indian on the reservation that can read and not one who can speak a dozen words of English."²⁹

From the years 1875 to 1880, feeble efforts were made to educate the Navaho. An instructor in farming was added to the agency staff but although this was a step in the right direction, the agent reported in the same year that illiteracy was due to lack of facilities and interest. After many appeals

²⁵ R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., p. 38.

²⁶ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1870, pp. 153-4.

²⁷ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1871, pp. 375-6.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1873, p. 272.

Congress appropriated funds for the construction of a boarding school at Fort Defiance. Work on this building was begun in 1879.

During this period the Presbyterian Church started a mission at the fort. From 1869 to 1872, Reverend Roberts and his wife attempted to establish a church and school for the Navaho but they failed to convert this tribe.³⁰ Their failure was due to their lack of knowledge of the Navaho or their language. They reached Santa Fe in November of 1869 and went immediately to Fort Defiance. Their experiences are adequately described by the Board of Indian Commissioners:

Mr. Roberts, missionary of the old school Presbyterian Board, had a school commenced among them at Fort Defiance and reported them uncommonly bright and promising but the vagabonds of the tribe stole his chickens, milked his cow, threatened his kitchen by burglariously breaking in at night and kept Mrs. Roberts on the rack of anxiety daily.³¹

Aiding Miss Gaston in her school two hours a day, Roberts prepared to start the missionary work. He started his school on December 6, 1870 with fourteen pupils.³² Great impetus to this religious work was expected from the selection of agent J. H. Miller, who received his appointment

³⁰ Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, Thirty-Second Annual Report, p. 11.

³¹ Board of Indian Commissioners, Annual Report, 1869, p. 49.

³² Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, Thirty-Third Annual Report, pp. 11-12.

from the Presbyterian Church.³⁴ In his report Miller said, "Both Presbyterian missionaries are making little progress because of the difficulty of the language and the prejudice of the Indian."³⁵ Finally Roberts was transferred and the Reverend John Manuel and his wife took over the mission. Unable to report any progress made in the spiritual conversion of the Navaho, the Presbyterians with regret and with the hope they would make more progress in the future abandoned the project.³⁶

Policing the reservation became a great problem for the agent. This duty was complicated by many factors among them the large number of Navaho, their semi-nomadic existence, the poor roads and transportation system on the reservation, the great distances between points on the reserve and the topography of this area. On the seventeenth of November 1869, Bennett reported giving extra rations to ninety-four sub-captains with instructions to "assist their chiefs in controlling and exerting an influence over their people."³⁷ With the aid of these scouts and the military at Fort Wingate, the agent was able to keep order on reservation. In 1872, Keam organized the first police force. This band of one hundred

³⁴ L. F. Schmeckbier, The Office of Indian Affairs, p. 54. "Grant was only able to break the power of the politicians in regard to the Indian agent by delegating their nomination to the several religious organizations interested in mission work."

³⁵ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1871, p. 379.

³⁶ Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, Thirty-Fifth Annual Report, p. 19.

³⁷ Commissioner of Indian Affairs Report, 1872, p. 304.

picked Navaho were to act as a company of mounted police. Although disbanded by an act of Congress, the agent continued to make use of picked men to keep order on the reservation.

Prior to the time the Navaho were sent to Bosque Redondo they were a self-sufficient and self-reliant people but after contact with white civilization they became very ration conscious.³⁸ According to the treaty of 1868 the Navaho were to receive certain allotments from the United States for a period of ten years.³⁹ These provisions were in payment for the lands ceded to the United States and to encourage agricultural pursuits among the Navaho. The first "hand-out" was supervised by Captain Bennett, it was divided into two periods, one group received their rations on October 2 and the other on October 16. At the time Bennett issued three sheep to every Navaho he described the appreciation of the tribe:

I have never seen such anxiety and gratitude displayed than shown by these people during this issue. I think they realize the magnitude of the gift, and are reaping the full benefit thereof, as they are not killing any, but have large additions to their flocks.⁴⁰

Over eight thousand one hundred and eighty-one received their allotments on the first issue.

From 1869 to 1874, the crops planted by the Navaho failed for one reason or another and the Indians need aid from the United States. Although this tribe worked hard and planted

³⁸ R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., p. 36.

³⁹ Supra.

⁴⁰ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1870, p. 367.

faithfully, the crop for 1871 was killed by drought. Congressional aid was sought and gained to the amount of seventy-five thousand dollars but not a penny of this money could be drawn to help the Indians because the authorization had been improperly worded. To relieve the wants of these people, Pope, the Superintendent of Indians Affairs for New Mexico, was compelled to purchase food on the open market and to requisition food from the quartermaster at Fort Wingate.⁴¹ In 1873, the seed for the spring arrived in the fall and the Army requested an appropriation to aid these people. Insisting that the Navaho give their names and other data needed by the agent, Irvine stopped all distribution of the ration to those who refused to comply. Up until this time, 1877, the Indian had relied on custom and refused to reveal his name. When the Navaho realized Irvine was determined all but a few chiefs submitted and received their allotments.⁴² The improved conditions in the Navaho country were shown in the report of Pyle:

Whether the treaty now about to expire is or is not renewed no one need fear that the Navajoes will give serious trouble. They have too much at stake in their immense herds of sheep, goats, horses and cattle, and their hundreds of thousands of grain in the field and the cache to hazard it in war with a powerful nation. Since their experience at Bosque Redondo, they want no more war.⁴³

⁴¹ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1871, p. 367.

⁴² Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1877, p. 1159.

⁴³ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1878, p. 108.

Estimating the number of sheep owned by the Navaho at 700,000 and the number of horses, mules and cattle at 50,000 in 1880, this tribe had progressed from being an almost penniless people to a prosperous community.⁴⁴

From the time this tribe had returned from the Bosque Redondo, they had not obeyed the treaty regulation that limited their movements to the actual reservation. Prior to 1868, the Navaho had roamed over a vast territory in the Southwest limited only by the power of their enemies.⁴⁵ From the date of the "long walk" the number of this tribe had increased from approximately 8,000 to 11,868.⁴⁶ They needed more land and as there was plenty of desert the government decided to give it to them. During this period the reservation was increased twice by executive order. The first addition was made in 1878, it added a strip between the northern line of Arizona parallel 110° of west longitude, parallel 36° of north latitude, and the western line of the reservation. The second supplement was made on January 6, 1880, this included a strip fifteen miles wide along the eastern side of the reservation and one six miles wide along the southern line.⁴⁷ By these orders approximately 3,422,000 acres had been added to the reserve.

⁴⁴ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, p.385.

⁴⁵ D. and Mc Coolidge, op. cit., pp. 253-254.

⁴⁶ T. E. Farish, op. cit., p. 181.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Although the Navaho were determined to remain peace with the United States, two episodes of discord with their agents stand out clearly during this period. In the first instance, agent Army attempted to reform the reservation and the Navaho. Immediately upon taking office, he discharged two of the foremost advisers of the Navaho, DuBois and Keam.⁴⁸ These "squaw men" were a power to be reckoned with and often had greater power than the agent. He did not confine his reforming activities to the agency but extended them to Fort Wingate:

My efforts to have the squaws who were co-habiting with soldiers removed from Fort Wingate...To have the whisky sellers punished--and the bad white men who had formerly been employed at the agency and continue to live with squaws, gave the latter some assistance of some military officers at Fort Wingate and prejudiced other against me and thus enable the "squaw men" to form a combination to drive me from the agency with the hope that they might again be employed.⁴⁹

He gained the distrust of the Navaho by his vagueness and suspicious acts, which although not proved may have been embezzlement.⁵⁰ The climax of the situation came when Army left the reservation with a band of Indians in 1875. While he was away, on September 3, his family and the female employees of

⁴⁸ F. D. Reeve, "The Federal Indian Policy in New Mexico, 1858-1880," New Mexico Historical Review, XIII, No. 1 (January, 1939), pp. 14-62.

⁴⁹ Army to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Oct. 14, 1875.

⁵⁰ F. D. Reeve, op. cit., p. 40.

the agency were forced to leave the reservation. Even though aid was solicited from Fort Wingate, Army's troublesome meddling in the military affairs had gained the animosity of the officials and this party was given no protection. Conditions became so bad that the doctor at Fort Defiance warned:

The Indians have ordered off all the Navajo employees and say you shall not stay here any longer. Do not come without at least a company of soldiers and you should have more...If you come without soldiers I think your life and that of your family will be in danger.⁵¹

Feeling that discretion was the better part of valor and, "knowing that three former Navajo agents shot by the Indians are buried on the Navajo reservation," Army resigned. As the Navaho resented him so much and were so against him, his resignation was accepted.⁵²

The other incident of Indian trouble with their agent at Fort Defiance was quite similar to the Army affair. In 1880 Eastman became the agent for the Navaho, he was another person who felt it was his duty to improve the world. Having difficulty with everyone with whom he came in contact, he complained to Washington, "The 'Indian ring and traders circle' here---as I am satisfactorily informed have no use for an agent they cannot control!"⁵³ On May 4, 1880, he wrote Washington that the trader, Anson A. Damon, refused to marry his Navaho

⁵¹W. Whitney to W. F. Army, Oct. 19, 1875. Original in National Archives, Washington, D. C.

⁵²F. D. Reeve, op. cit., p. 41.

⁵³G. Eastman to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Jan. 5, 1880. Original in National Archives, Washington, D. C.

wife legally as he believed the Indian ceremony was sufficient. He, too, made the error of criticising the army for not putting his official correspondence in a penalty envelop. On April 15, Eastman left Fort Defiance for the East to purchase supplies on the open market. As soon as he left, the physician and the teachers in charge of the boarding school secretly departed from the agency.⁵⁴

The remainder of the staff valiently tried to keep the work of the agency going. Eastman's clerk, Joseph Sutherland, was left in charge and felt it was his duty to reorganize the staff in such a way that the greater part of the work would be accomplished. In this effort he was aided by the farmer, his wife, the missionary and the assistant farmer. He wrote to Eastman:

What few are left of us will do our utmost to assist and cooperate with you in your earnest, faithful and honest efforts to improve the Navajos and endeavor to do our respective duties, irrespectively of any outside conflicting interests or influences.⁵⁵

The Navaho admitted their braves had acted badly but they claimed it was due to bad advice and outside influences, the many Indian tribes, the Utes and Apaches, and the Mormans.

They also blamed the situation on the fact they had no good

⁵⁴ J. Sutherland to G. Eastman, June 1, 1880. The original found in the National Archives, Washington, D. C.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

adviser to guide them.⁵⁶ Finally after many meetings with the Navaho, Colonel Buell expressed his opinion of the situation:

Before having this council, I believed as General Pope expressed himself 'that their trouble with their agent had no significance beyond the man himself' now I am of a very different opinion their dislike for their agent, Mr. Eastman, has grown as I believe, to an intense hatred and what with the influence of the Apaches, Southern Utes and Mormons and the apparent attempt of the government to force Mr. Eastman on them, has produced a reckless indifference to say the least, as to what their young men would do, or what might be the result.⁵⁷

At this meeting, the Navaho pleaded for the appointment of Thomas Keam as their agent.

The military took control of the agency at Fort Defiance on June 12, 1880. Again, Captain Bennett, "Big Stomack," to the Navaho, assumed responsibility for the tribe. Due to the general dissatisfaction of their agent and the reports of the Utes and Apaches, he reported that he found the Navaho very excited and unsettled.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Report written by Col. Buell on the conference held with the Navaho at Fort Defiance on June 13, 1880. This report is dated June 16, 1880 and is written from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Original in National Archives, Washington, D. C.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ F. T. Bennett, Monthly Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated Aug. 8, 1880. Original in National Archives, Washington, D. C.

CHAPTER V

ACCULTERATION

The period from 1880 to 1900 has been characterized as one of education and progress. Reluctance of the Navaho to accept "white man's culture" can be attributed to two factors: (1) the inept policy of the government in regard to the Indians; and (2) the class of people he had observed on the frontier. Primarily the Indian resented the attempts of the whites to superimpose their culture on him. It was only natural for a proud and intelligent tribe like the Navaho to oppose a civilization which demanded the surrender of its most dear traditions.¹ When the Navaho, described as "the most independent, self-reliant Indian we have,"² was shown the advantages of white civilization even the most conservative accepted it voluntarily. Another reason for their unwillingness to embrace the "American culture" was the fact that on the frontier they saw only its uncouth and rough side and none of its more attractive aspects. The Navaho, naturally conservative, had to be convinced before he would acquiesce to a change in his ancestral culture.

¹L. B. Priest, Uncle Sam's Stepchildren, pp. 132-154.

²Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1883, p. 123.

³L. B. Priest, op. cit., pp. 132-154.

Realizing the need for the change in mores and also the importance of the Navaho understanding "white culture" the treaty of 1868 made provision for the education of the children of the tribe.⁴ Little progress was made prior to the completion of the boarding school in 1883. For efforts to educate the Navaho were harassed by the inadequacy of housing, the unhealthy and unsanitary building; the lack of facilities was one reason the Navaho were unwilling to send their children to school. Classes were intermittent and dependent on the caprice of the agent, the school teachers or any other circumstances that might arise. No attempt was made to understand the Navaho or to adapt the school to his needs. Describing the first reservation school as an "orphan asylum," John Collier wrote:

As for the school they represent the historical maladjustment of the Indian service in its most extreme form. Here is a wild Navaho boy or girl. Since babyhood he has coped with the rigors and breathed the air of the glorious plateau... Suddenly he--or she-- is snatched away to a life of heartbreak, imprisoned in a vast institution of lockstep.⁵

Many parents were reluctant to send their children to school as the guiding principle of early Indian education was assimilation and when the children returned home, they were unused and unfit for the life of the reservation.⁶

⁴Supra.

⁵J. Collier, "Fate of the Navajos," Sunset, LII (January 1924), pp. 11-13.

⁶C. Kluckhohn and D. Leighton, op. cit., p. 88.

With the opening of the new building in 1883¹² a new policy for the Indian school seemed to be inaugurated. The Kendall contract was not renewed and the agent was given authority over both the school and its personnel. Riordan, complained no industrial education was going on although the purpose of the school was to teach the Navaho industrial arts. Disgusted with conditions in the school, he finally dismissed the matron, Mrs. Logan for gross incompetency:

When a blanket Indian came into our school today and took one of our pupils out for the purpose of cleaning him up I could stand it no longer. I felt it a damnable disgrace to me and to the government that such a thing was possible. The Indian was dead right.¹³

When Riordan took over control of the school, there were about 104 children enrolled in school. About 30 of these were of school age, the rest were octogenarians and infants and "the school was more like a hospital or infirmary than the name implies."¹⁴ Riordan corrected many of these in-

¹²H. Welch, Report of a Visit to the Navajo, Pueblo and Hualapais Indians of New Mexico and Arizona, p. 16 describes the school as follows: "The government boarding school for Indian children is a large stone building three stories in height, with dormitories capable of accommodating between 50 and 75 scholars. The building was finished by a former agent of the Navajos, and seems to have been designed by him as a stronghold in the event of trouble with the Indians, quite as much as for the purpose for which it was nominally erected. Bullet proof shutters were provided for the windows in case of attack. These rest peacefully in the cellar, never having been brought into requisition.

¹³D. Riordan to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, April 23, 1884. Original in Fort Defiance Letter Book for 1884, found in the library of the Pioneer Society of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz.

¹⁴H. Welch, op. cit., p. 16.

justices but although all the facilities were available for a good school --one that would be a credit to the government-- without the cooperation of the employees no great success could be attained.¹⁵

For the next few years the school had little success. In 1887 Congress passed the compulsory school attendance act but as usual the Navaho ignored its provisions. In 1890, Vandever boasts that he was the first agent to fill the schoolhouse.¹⁶ He became so overconfident that he sent 31 children to the Grand Junction School in Colorado without the parents consent.¹⁷ This incident made the Navaho suspicious and they lost interest in education. Another over-conscientious agent, Shipley, made an expedition to Round Rock "to obtain about 30 children for the school," in an attempt to enforce the compulsory school law.¹⁸ Black Horse, the Navaho chief, in this area, captured Shipley and released him after the soldiers arrived from Fort Wingate. Wounded in the fracas, Shipley left Fort Defiance after a second attack and warning by the Indians.¹⁹

Not until Lieutenant Plummer's appointment as agent was the school accepted by the Navaho. With the aide of the

¹⁵ D. Riordan to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, April 1884. Letter Book of Fort Defiance.

¹⁶ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1890, p. 164.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1892, p. 156.

¹⁹ R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., p. 51.

Indian Rights Association he raised money to take the Navaho chiefs to the World's Columbian Fair in Chicago. So impressed were these headmen by the wonders they saw that even the most conservative, Black Horse, realized the importance of education, and escorted his oldest son to school.²⁰ Although the education of the Navaho was progressing and Plummer had initiated great improvements in the schoolhouse, conditions were still far from perfect.²¹ Meserve, in 1894, clearly stated the inadequacy of the Navaho educational program when he said:

It is the sheerest folly to attempt to solve the problem by educating some two or three hundred children when there are at least four thousand of school age who ought to be in school.²²

Although little change in the school situation at Fort Defiance was seen after this period, greater emphasis was placed on the industrial education of the Navaho.²³ By the use of this type of training, Neel, the superintendent of the school, hoped to stress the use of the English language.²⁴

²⁰ M. K. Sniffin, The Record of Thirty Years, p. 6.

²¹ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1894, p. 110. "In the school--bathing facilities for 100 children consist of 2 tanks without connections and where to give them all a weekly bath on the same day it is necessary to bathe several reliefs in the same water and the mattresses in use in the boys dormitory give forth such a stench that it is disgusting."

²² C. F. Meserve, A Tour of Observation Among Indians and Indian Schools in Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Kansas, p. 7.

²³ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1890, p. 160.

Another means of introducing the "American" culture to the Navaho was the establishment of churches and missions in the land of the people. The pioneers in this movement were the Presbyterians and the Methodists. Greatly hindered in their efforts because of the language difficulty, they persistently continued working with this tribe. In 1891, the Reverend Wilton conducted services in the schoolhouse at Fort Defiance.²⁴ Conducting a small mission in the San Juan Valley, Mrs. Mary Eldridge succeeded in her conscientious and untiring devotion to her duty to gain the confidence of the Navaho. She was appointed field matron and with an assistant was able to teach the Navaho women weaving, cooking and other arts.²⁵

In 1895, the Women's Auxiliary of the Episcopal Church started building a hospital about one mile from Fort Defiance.²⁶ Miss E. Thackera, the superintendent, gained great favor among the Navaho by successfully amputating the arm of one of her patients. Her work was curtailed by the lack of sufficient personnel.²⁷ During the period from 1895-99, there occurred on the Navaho reservation a great influx of missions. Many other churches started work in this area,

²⁴ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1891, p. 310.

²⁵ Board of Indian Commissioners, Annual Report, 1899, p. 13.

²⁶ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1895, p. 118.

²⁷ F. E. Leupp, Notes of a Summer Tour, p. 22.

the Roman Catholic Church at St. Michaels, the Christian Reformed Church at Little Water School and the Methodists at Two Gray Hills.²⁸

One of the most potent factors in the progress of the Navaho and his acceptance of new ideas is the agent's personality and his attitude toward them. They see the administration and the ways of the white man through him. If they have confidence in him, they will take his advice and accept his judgment. "He is the Indians best and most effective friend or his deadliest enemy."²⁹ The two outstanding agents of this period were Denis T. Riordan and Lieutenant E. Plummer. Realizing the importance of an agent that would consider their interests, the Navaho chiefs offered Riordan one thousand dollars (to be paid out of the annuity goods) to remain on the reservation.³⁰ Plummer on the other hand, was a strong man who was interested in the Navaho and had a firm manner with them. Under the leadership of these men the Navaho prospered and were contented.³¹

²⁸ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1899, p. 158.

²⁹ H. Welsh, Eighth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Indian Rights Association, pp. 20-21.

³⁰ S. E. Marshall to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Apr. 22, 1884. Fort Defiance Letter Book.

³¹ R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., pp. 50-52.

Although unaware of the situation, the Navaho were victims of the "spoils system." Between 1878 and 1893, eight men held the position of agent at Fort Defiance and none remained more than two years.³² Welsh wrote that civil service reform "is indeed a necessity to the Indian service if that service is to be lifted out of its present inefficient condition and made to accomplish the will of the good people of the country."³³ By 1896 one-fourth of the positions of the Indian service had been placed under civil service regulations.³⁴ An understanding of this chaotic condition is fundamental to the recognition of the problems faced by the Navaho at this time. No agent stayed long enough either to formulate a clear cut policy or if formulated to carry it out. He was unable to leave an impression on the Navaho and every new policy was uprooted before it had a chance to prove its worth.³⁵

Wretched housing conditions did not improve appreciably during this period. Agent Riordan asked why the government doesn't give the agent as good accommodations as it gives a

³² D. and M. Coolidge, op. cit., pp. 258-259.

³³ H. Welsh, "Civil Service Reform in the Indian Service," Good Government, XIII, (October 15, 1893), pp. 41-43.

³⁴ D. and M. Coolidge, op. cit., pp. 258-261.

³⁵ Ibid.

mule at Fort Wingate?³⁶ He complained that the buildings were not only unhealthy but unsafe. In 1888 the government spent twenty-six hundred dollars to repair the buildings at Fort Defiance but this could not have been very effective for five years later, Plummer wondered if the buildings that were occupied by the agent and the white employees were superior to the hogan.³⁷ The deplorable housing conditions was one of the main reasons it was difficult for the Indian service to employ qualified personnel.

On returning to his home-land in 1868, the Navaho found the reservation to be merely the core of their traditional lands. Not only were the tribal lands reduced but the population had doubled from 1868 to 1888.³⁸ Several additions were made to the reservation but obviously the Navaho needed more grazing land and every year the headmen came into Fort Defiance pleading for an extension of their lands. Those that the reservation could not support squatted on public lands and it was reported that approximately one-third to one-half of the Navaho were living off the reservation.³⁹ Realizing that the white homesteaders were coming very close

³⁶ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1883, p. 122.

³⁷ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1893, p. 110.

³⁸ D. and M. Coolidge, op. cit., pp. 252-254.

³⁹ Ibid.

to the Navaho tribal lands the forward-looking agents requested an extension of the boundaries of the reservation. They reasoned that if the tribal lands were enlarged, the Navaho would not have to leave the reservation for grazing land and contact with the whites would be reduced to a minimum.

One of the solutions to the Navaho land problem was irrigation. If the land held by the tribe could be made more productive and could support more animals, the Navaho would have no reason to live off the reservation. Riordan was one of the first agents to plead for the development of a system of water control in this area.⁴⁰ At this time there were fifty-six water developments on the Navaho reservation, fifty-two pumps for stock, three windmills and one irrigation dam.⁴¹

The first action taken by Congress was in 1886 when it appropriated twenty-five thousand dollars for irrigation projects. This money was spent on Washington Pass, Eighteen Mile Spring, Chinlee Valley and Fort Defiance.⁴² After an extensive water survey by Lieutenant Stotzenberger in 1888,⁴³ and another by the army in 1892, Congress allotted forty

⁴⁰ D. Riordan to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Feb. 4, 1884. Letter Book of Fort Defiance.

⁴¹ R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., p. 48.

⁴² Ibid, p. 50.

⁴³ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1889, p. 257.

thousand dollars for irrigation on this reservation, and to this sum was added twenty thousand dollars of unexpended Indian office money.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, this money was practically wasted as the engineer in charge of the project was unfamiliar with the climatic conditions of the semi-arid regions.⁴⁵ Due to his lack of knowledge of the problems involved, the ditches and other works he built were washed out when the exceptional droughts broke in 1895 and 1896.⁴⁶ George Buttler, his successor, a thoroughly competent man, completed ditches on Wheatfield Creek, Defiance Creek and Carrizo Creek.⁴⁷ Going to the opposite extreme, he was criticised for making these structures unnecessarily substantial.⁴⁸ Another dry season in 1900 practically neutralized the effects of the irrigation projects except in the San Juan Valley.⁴⁹

In addition to the money expended on irrigation, seven

⁴⁴ D. and M. Coolidge, op. cit., p. 254.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Board of Indian Commissioners, Annual Report, 1895, p. 26-7.

⁴⁷ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1887, p. 174.

⁴⁸ F. Leupp, op. cit., p. 21.

⁴⁹ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1900, p. 193.

ral additions were made to the reservation during this period. In 1884 the area known as the Piute strip was affixed to the Navaho lands.⁵⁰ At the same time an area near the San Juan was withdrawn and opened to white settlement. So great was the Navaho opposition to the loss of this good grazing land that trouble threatened. A special representative was sent to Fort Defiance from Washington to investigate the situation. By his recommendation the disputed territory was restored to the reservation and trouble was averted.⁵¹

Despite the efforts of the federal government to relieve the congestion and to extend the limits of the tribal lands, the encroachment of the whites on Indian land was the great problem that faced the agents at Fort Defiance. Greatest offender was the Santa Fe Railroad which runs through the Navaho reservation. As was customary, every other section of land was given to the railroad. On these sections, forty miles long and a mile wide, many Navaho families had lived or grazed their sheep their sheep for years.⁵² In lieu of these excellent grasslands other property, not as

⁵⁰R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., p. 50.

⁵¹Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1886, p. 204.

⁵²C. Kluckhohn and D. Leighton, op. cit., p. 11.

desirable as that ceded, was added to the reservation. The Navaho had possessed the newly acquired land for nearly two hundred years and could not feel they had been justly compensated.⁵³

Other violations of the Navaho territory were direct settlements of the whites on the reservation. One source of difficulty was the Mormon settlement at Moencopi. In ignorance these people had settled on some of the finest Navaho grazing lands in the area around Tuba City.⁵⁴ Agitation over ownership culminated in the killing of a Mormon, Lot Smith. This dispute was peaceably settled when the government purchased the Mormon holdings and presented the strip to the Navaho.⁵⁵

In 1888 another incident occurred in the San Juan region. At this time white settlers, poachers on the Navaho land, had to be forcibly evicted by the troops from Fort Wingate. In order to keep them from returning, six Navaho police were stationed in the area.⁵⁶ The situation became so bad that in 1900, the Board of Indian Commissioners reported that "the encroachment of the whites on Navaho interests

⁵³ R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., p. 41.

⁵⁴ Board of Indian Commissioners, Annual Report, 1900, p. 95.

⁵⁵ R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., p. 52. Lot Smith was killed in 1892. In 1903 the government purchased the Mormon holdings and turned the property over to the Indian department.

⁵⁶ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1888, p. 193.

if not checked will reduce the tribe to want in a few years."⁵⁷

Conflicts with the whites were not confined to the reservation proper but extended to the public domain. The Navaho had used certain grazing lands adjacent to the reserve for centuries and had squatters rights to these pastures. Cowboys, sheepmen and cattlemen disputed their rights and forcibly drove the Navaho off these tracts of land. A notorious instance of this occurred in 1897 when a peaceful group of sixteen families of Navaho were attacked by a number of whites, led by the sheriff of the county. During this fracas and on the way to the reservation the Navaho lost many sheep. Many incidents of this type occurred and friction between the whites and the Indians continued over the grazing lands on the periphery of the reservation.⁵⁸

The whites did not only covet the grazing lands of the reservation but also the possible mineral resources in the Carrizo Mountains. In 1889 and 1900, Vandever had to deal with two incidents of prospecting parties illegally entering the reserve. In the first instance they were forcibly evicted by the troops. Hearing that the agent was going to be away from the agency on business, a group of these same

⁵⁷ D. and M. Coolidge, op. cit., p. 255.

⁵⁸ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1889, p. 165.

entered the Navaho country in search of minerals. This time, they were surrounded by a group of one hundred Navaho⁵⁹ and brought to the agent. To forestall any further trouble with miners in this area, a commission met at Fort Wingate in 1892 and started for the Carrizo Mountains. After a thorough search of that region it was found to be barren of any metallic wealth.⁶⁰

Contacts with the whites, always a disrupting influence when two cultures clash, were increased when the railroad crossed the reservation in 1880. Among the other evils introduced to the Navaho was the drinking of whiskey. The craving for licquor and intoxicants became so great that it was a real problem to the agents at Fort Defiance. In his report of 1881 Eastman deplored the practice,⁶¹ and Meserve reported that the unscrupulous traders on the outlying sections of the reservation or on the outskirts of it were supplying the Navaho with whiskey.⁶² Although many of the Navaho realized the evils of alcohol, no one would be an informer because he feared the wrath of his neighbors. In 1897 Congress passed a law making it illegal to sell whiskey to the Indians but failed to provide any money for enforcement.⁶³

⁶⁰ H. Welsh, Eighth Annual Report of the Indian Rights Association, pp. 24-25.

⁶¹ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1881, p. 138.

⁶² C. Meserve, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

⁶³ D. and M. Coolidge, op. cit., p. 258.

A great many of the problems caused by the conflicts of the whites and the Navaho were settled by the Navaho police. This organization displayed great responsibility and initiative and helped the agent to keep order on the reservation. Considering the size of the Navaho lands and the number of the tribe, fifteen police seems inadequate but not until the Indians came in contact with the whites, was its number increased to twenty-five.⁶⁴

To further aid the agent in keeping order on the reservation and to illiminate some of the petty details of his job, a court of Indian offenses was organized. Composed of three men, this court met once a month to try the Navaho for offenses against the tribe. In case of disagreement the defendent had the right to appeal his case, but few cases were ever referred to the agent.⁶⁵

At the beginning of this period, the Navaho were very prosperous, their flocks had increased and they had grown good crops. As always the Navaho were dependent on the bounties of nature for their economic well-being. Many

⁶⁴ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1889, p. 259. In his report Vandever, the Navaho agent, states the leader of the Navaho police is now a Navaho instead of a white.

⁶⁵ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1892, p. 209. D. Shipley states, "The court ...relieved me of considerable business, which in the majority of cases can better performed by them than by the agent."

factors, such as the amount of rainfall or the severity of the winter climate determined the economic status of these people. Farming and irrigation facilities on the reservation were such that they could support themselves only when the elements were favorable. The Navaho economy fluctuates from year to year. During the prosperous years the Navaho need no help but in time of drought or other disaster they need aid and the agents continued to plead for the relief of these people.

Following cycles, the good years seem to be restricted to a two year period. In 1881 and 1882, the Navaho enjoyed prosperity but conditions became so bad in 1883 that Rior-dan the agent spent eight hundred dollars of his own money to relieve the suffering among the Navaho. From 1885 to 1887, the elements were kind and the Indians enjoyed good times but the drought from 1890 to 1896 caused great hardships and distress.⁶⁶ In addition to the unfavorable climate, the price of wool decreased and the demand for sheep pelts diminished. Again for the two year period from 1896 to 1898 the Navaho thrived but this prosperity was short-lived as 1899 was a severe year and in that winter many sheep were lost. It was estimated that about twenty per

⁶⁶ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1880-1900. R. Van Valkenburg and J. McPhee, op. cit., passim.

cent of the sheep either were frozen or starved. As trouble followed this tribe the next year was exceptionally dry and the whole nation suffered.⁶⁷

During the hard times, the Navaho women kept the tribe alive by their work at the loom. The Navaho blanket had always been in demand and the encouragement given the women by the traders increased the importance of this industry. In 1880, Bennett reported that 100,000 pounds of wool had been used in the manufacture of blankets.⁶⁷ Continuing to grow in significance, seven years later the agent Patterson reported:

An important item of manufacture is the Navajo blanket. There were made during the year about 2,700 blankets of large and small pattern, ranging in price from \$1 to \$100 each. Fully two-thirds of this number were sold and traded for goods.⁶⁸

The industry became so important by 1900 that the blankets shipped out during that year were valued at fifty thousand dollars.⁶⁹

Other means were used to bolster the Navaho economy. By encouraging the Indians to raise hay for the agency horses, the agents were able to keep all the money expended for this purpose by the federal government on the reservation. Over two hundred dollars was earned by the Navaho

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1887, p. 172.

⁶⁹Ibid., 1899, p. 157.

in one year for hauling items for the agency and the traders.⁷⁰ Many Navaho were employed by the railroad and earned their living off the reservation. In spite of these measures, most of the Navaho in 1900 continued to live on a sub-standard level.

Coolidge called this period "waiting on Congress" and noted that the Navaho learned individual white men might be trusted but far off Washington "rarely if ever fulfilled his promises." By 1900, the Navaho people continue to observe their old customs and live in the same way as their ancestors. They had tripled their numbers and were just self-supporting. A "beneficient" congress had given them very little--the government had increased the size of the reserve, developed an inadequate system of irrigation and established one school at Fort Defiance. Few understood or spoke English and little effort was made by the tribe to learn "white man's ways!" They continued to plot along making the best of conditions as they existed.⁷¹

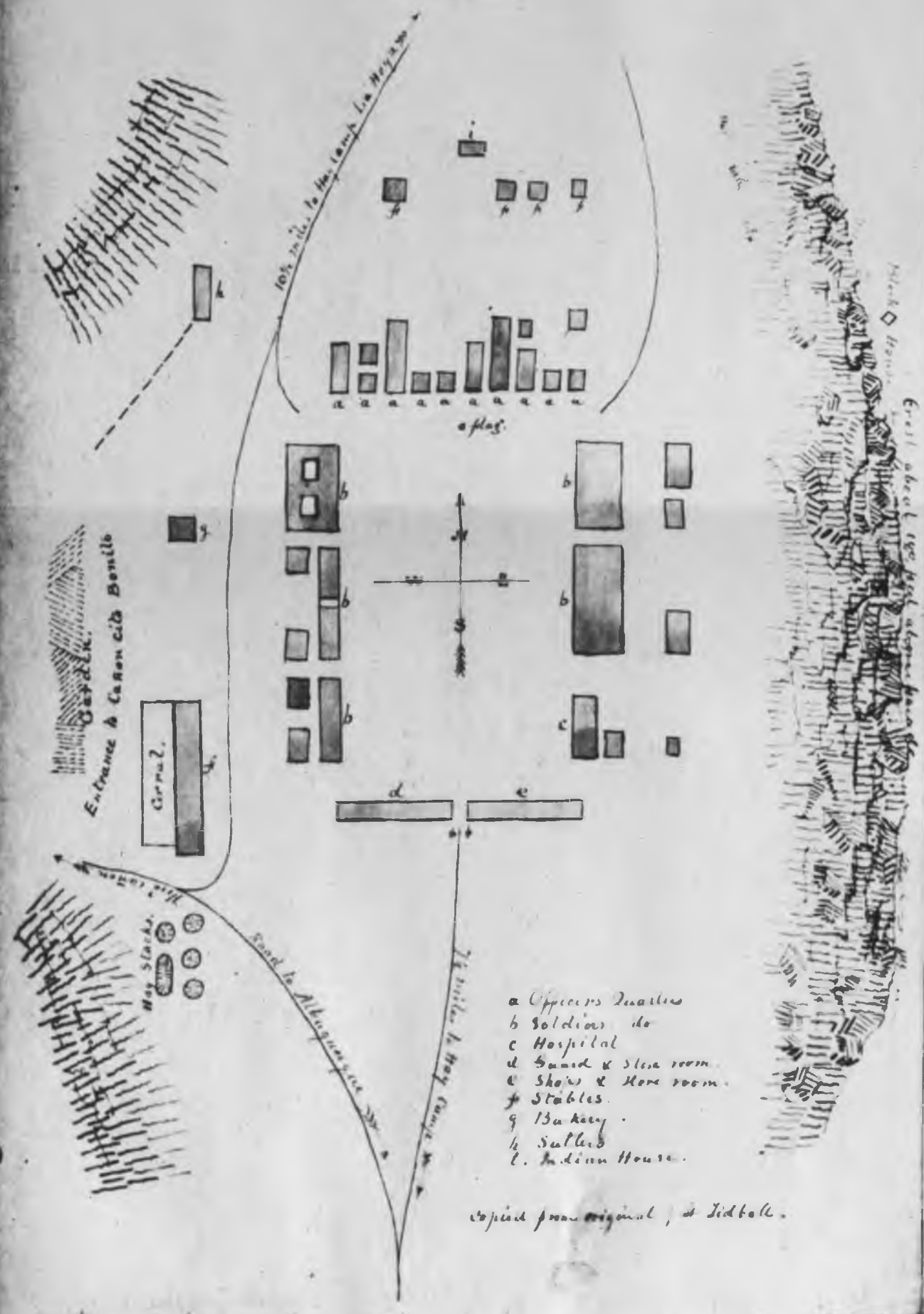
In 1900 Fort Defiance began to lose its prominent place in Navaho affairs. Other agencies were developed by the government at Tuba City, Window Rock and other sections on the reservation. Fort Defiance became a sub-agency and Window Rock became the center of Navaho activities.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 1886, p. 302.

⁷¹ D. and M. Coolidge, op. cit., passim.

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Fort Defiance.



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