THE HUBBELL FAMILY EMPIRE

John Lorenzo Hubbell was born in Pajarito, New Mexico, in 1853 to James Hubbell of Connecticut and Juliana Gutierrez of New Mexico. By his early twenties, he had clerked at a Mormon trading post in Kanab, Utah Territory; worked as an interpreter at Fort Defiance; and clerked at the Fort Wingate trading post in New Mexico Territory. Armed with his experiences, he opened his first trading post in 1876 in partnership with C.N. Cotton, at Ganado Lake on the Navajo Reservation.

In 1879, Hubbell married Lina Rabi (right; 1865-1913) of Cebollita, New Mexico. Around that time, Hubbell acquired another nearby trading post, which became the best known of the Hubbell posts as well as the family homestead for over eighty years. There the Hubbells raised their four children: Barbara (top left; 1881-1965), Adela (top right; 1880-1938), Lorenzo Jr. (center; 1883-1942), and Roman (bottom; 1891-1957).

Hubbell ran the operation while Hubbell served as a sheriff in Apache County and in the Arizona Territorial House of Representatives, where he was a successful advocate for statehood (1912), women’s right to vote (1912), and prohibition (1915). In the 1895, Hubbell became sole owner of the Ganado post and began to expand operations. He built a trading empire with sons Lorenzo Jr. and Roman that ultimately included over thirty trading posts on or near the Navajo and Hopi Reservations, freight and mail lines, farm and ranch properties, a tour operation, curio shops, and trading posts/warehouses in Gallup, New Mexico, and Winslow, Arizona.

A smart and compassionate businessman, Hubbell – “Don Lorenzo” to Mexican Americans and Naakaii Saini (Old Mexican) or Náakʼee Siniiłii (Eyeglasses) to the Navajo – was considered a true friend to the Navajo and spoke their language fluently. He promoted their artwork by encouraging Navajo weavers to create styles and colors that would appeal to tourists, and by bringing Mexican silversmiths to Ganado to advise the Navajo men. The Hubbells were also known for their hospitality and hosted many visitors – including notables such as President Theodore Roosevelt, anthropologist Dr. Jesse Walter Fewkes, and artist Maynard Dixon – to their Ganado home, where they displayed their extensive collection of Southwestern and Native arts. Hubbell died in 1930 and was buried on Hubbell Hill overlooking the trading post and homestead.

Roman’s wife, Dorothy, sold the property to the National Park Service in 1967 to “preserve and protect the post and its environs for the benefit and enjoyment of the public” (Public Law 89-10 (NPS, Hubbell Trading Post NHS; HUTR 4711)).

THE HUBBELL TRADING POST NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

The Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site is one of the few traditional posts still open to the public as a house museum.

Below: Artist Craig Winslow came to town in 2017 during his cross-country Light Capsules project. He recreated the Richardsons’ sign – still barely visible on the Hubbell building – using digital light projection. (Courtesy of Stephen Pauken)

TRADING POSTS IN WINSLOW

The railroads brought permanent settlement to northern Arizona Territory along the 35th parallel, just south of the Navajo Reservation. The Atlantic & Pacific Railroad laid out the new Winslow townsite in late 1880, and the first train arrived one year later. In 1887, the Atchison, Topka and Santa Fe Railroad (Santa Fe) bought the Atlantic & Pacific and transferred division headquarters from Gallup to Winslow.

The influx of employees transformed the boomtown into a major city along the principal rail line to the West Coast.

By shipping manufactured goods to and Native-made goods from the territory at a reasonable cost, the Santa Fe provided the critical link between trading posts and national markets. Their primary shipping point was Gallup, and their secondary points included Holbrook, Winslow, Flagstaff, and Williams. Winslow’s location as a Santa Fe shipping point contributed to its growth and diversified its economic base as well as its population, with residents of European, Native, Latino, African, and Asian heritage.

RICHARDSON’S TRADING POST IN WINSLOW

By the time Arizona became the 48th state in 1912, Winslow had a population nearing 4,000 and was called “the metropolis of Northern Arizona.” Brothers Claude D. and Hubert Richardson owned several trading posts on the Navajo Reservation, dealing in sheep and wool, cattle and hides, hay and grain, saddle blankets and Navajo rugs, and Indian curios. They needed a railroad shipping point for their goods, so they came to Winslow in 1916. They built a wholesale store and supply house on the north side of Second Street.

In 1917, the Richardsons leased land from the Santa Fe and contracted with Von Rose to construct the building now known as the Hubbell Trading Post, across Second Street from their original location and just north of the Santa Fe rail line. They built a 5,000-square-foot rectangular structure atop a full basement with a concrete floor. The eighteen-inch Moenkopi sandstone foundation was built five feet into the ground, and the walls were built of red brick with lime mortar.