THE WINSLOW VISITOR’S CENTER: A HUBBELL TRADING POST HISTORY

WINSLOW’S HUBBELL TRADING POST & WAREHOUSE
Hubbell’s sons eventually took over the family business from their father. In 1924, Lorenzo Hubbell Jr. purchased the Richardson’s building and merchandise. He established the Hubbell Trading Post and Warehouse in Winslow as the Hubbell’s Santa Fe distribution point in Arizona. (They also had a trading post and warehouse in Gallup, New Mexico.)

In 1926, the section of the transcontinental National Old Trails Highway that passed through downtown Winslow on Second Street became part of the newly commissioned US Route 66. Winslow’s Hubbell Trading Post and Warehouse were now located on the “Main Street of America,” where tourists and townspeople alike patronized businesses along the route. (In 1953, the city council addressed traffic and safety concerns by making Second Street eastbound and Third Street westbound US Route 66.)

The north half of Winslow’s Hubbell Trading Post was the display area, which featured a white, pressed-metal ceiling, light blue walls with gray trim, and a hardwood floor. There Lorenzo Jr. also displayed an art collection that was not for sale, but was intended to generate interest in the role of the trading post in supporting Native arts. The collection included ancient pottery, baskets, Kachina dolls, and paintings, which were on display for Winslow tourists until the mid-1960s.

A wall separated the display area from the warehouse in the south half of the building. The warehouse featured exposed brick walls and ceiling beams; a walk-in cooler to store perishables; a Fairbanks scale to weigh goods; and a 6-by-7-foot Kimball lift — one of the first in Arizona — that moved large bags of wool to the basement to be cleaned, sorted, and repackaged, and then brought them back up to the main floor.

Freight wagons from the reservation unloaded wool, blankets, rugs, and jewelry on the west loading dock. Raw materials were processed in the warehouse and, along with finished goods, were loaded from the east loading dock onto rail cars that moved on a short spur line to the main line. Goods were then shipped to manufacturers and merchants on the East Coast or to the Hubbell’s curio shops in California.

The rug was displayed at the 1939 Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial and in the Arizona Exhibit at the 1948 International Travel and Vacation Show in New York City (above). The Arizona delegation, which was sponsored by the Winslow Chamber of Commerce, included (left to right) Roman Hubbell, Navajo weaver Enoby Yazzie, Hubbell employee Elvadine Jackson, Navajo medicine man Silas Joe, Navajo silversmith Homer Aga, Ni Baad, Navajo sand painter Ishkee Yazzie, and his new bride, Eltun Nez, and Art Green of Marble Canyon Lodge.

Above: The building in 1948, with a Navajo wagon headed toward the west side loading dock.

(Herb and Dorothy McLaughlin Collection, Arizona State University Library, CP MCL 9730)

The rug's design is a combination of abstract horned toads and constellations on the interior surrounded by Ancestral Puebloan images on the border.

In her article, *The Spectacle of Navajo Weaving*, scholar Jennifer McLerran writes that Joe "definitely produced a masterpiece. The evenness of the weave and uniformity of the color are remarkable. The rug’s design elements are varied and complex, and the motifs’ possible cosmological and mythological meanings are intriguing." She describes the rug’s design as a combination of abstract horned toads and constellations on the interior surrounded by Ancestral Puebloan images on the border.

In 1932, during the Great Depression, Lorenzo Hubbell Jr. commissioned the Joe family of Greasewood (near Ganado) to weave “the World’s Largest Navajo Rug.” Lorenzo Jr. hoped it would stimulate both tourism and Navajo rug sales. He planned to periodically display the rug at the Winslow location and to tour it to special events around the nation. Sam Joe added a 1,200-square-foot addition to their home for the oversized loom made of metal pipe. Daughters Emma, Helen, and Mary spent two years hand-carding, spinning, and dyeing wool shorn from almost eighty of their sheep. Julia Joe designed the 26-by-36-foot rug with her daughter, Lillie, worked from sunrise to midnight every day while Hubbell provided their living and working supplies. In 1937, they finally finished weaving the rug, which was the largest Navajo textile ever woven until 1979.

THE WORLD’S LARGEST NAVajo RUG

Above: Julia Joe and daughter Lillie (in the background) at work on the rug. Below: The “World’s Largest Navajo Rug” gets unfurled outside its home at Winslow’s Hubbell Trading Post in 1948. Roman Hubbell is on the far right in the hat. (Herb and Dorothy McLaughlin Collection, Arizona State University Library, CP MCL 9736)