The First Peoples of the Southwestern Colorado Plateau

The Athabaskans, hunter-gatherer ancestors of the Navajo people, likely came to the area from northern Canada in the 1400s. By the 1700s Navajos, or Diné (the people), were building wooden homes called hogans, growing crops, tending sheep, and trading with others on the Colorado Plateau. In the winter of 1864, the federal government forced nearly 9,000 Navajos on the “Long Walk” to desolate Fort Sumner at Bosque Redondo, New Mexico. Over 2,500 died from starvation and exposure, and more died from deplorable conditions at the fort. The survivors returned four years later to the newly established Navajo Reservation. The Navajo Nation, which borders Winslow to the north, is now the largest tribal entity in the United States in both area and population.

The Hopi People

Ancestral Puebloans, ancestors of the Hopi, populated the area from A.D. 200 through 1600. The Homol’ovi villages (the Hopi word for “place of the small buttes”) northeast of present-day Winslow were at peak activity in the 1300s. Inhabitants mastered growing corn in the high desert. They likely traded cotton for pottery with the Pueblo villages on the mesas to the north. They likely migrated to those mesas along the Palatkwapi Trail at the end of the 14th century. The land they left behind now constitutes Homolovi State Park. The federal government established the Hopi Reservation to the north in 1882.

The Navajo People

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