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Navaho Trading Days

Elizabeth Compton Hegemann

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Albuquerque

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INTRODUCTION

AS AN OLD FRIEND, I was delighted when Mrs. Elizabeth Hegemann of Albuquerque asked if I would prepare an introduction for her book, *Navaho Trading Days*. She predicated this desire on my long and intimate knowledge of and friendly relations with the Navaho Indians, comprehensive acquaintance with their vast Reservation, a majority of Reservation trading posts and white traders who had operated them since 1908. I warmly appreciated her invitation, and consented.

Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Clay Compton, was born March 20, 1897, on Indian Hill, a suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio. Her maternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles G. Gove, were well known in Southern California and parts of the Southwest. She attended Miss Doherty's College Preparatory School in Cincinnati, spending many of her summers in Southern California.

On one of her annual trips to Grand Canyon, Elizabeth met Mike Harrison of the National Park Service. They were married in September 1925, residing in government quarters on the South Rim. I had known Mike for about two years prior to marriage; I first met his charming wife there about a year later. Both were much interested in Indians and had established very friendly relations with the Hopi, Navaho, and Supai working there or living in the South Rim area. Later they began motoring over the pioneer Navahopi road to the Western Navaho and Hopi Reservations—Elizabeth frequently, Mike when office duty permitted—to attend Navaho and Hopi ceremonies and dances, visit all trading posts enroute, and collect from traders and Indians, examples of Indian arts and crafts they especially desired to possess. Following their separation in 1928, Elizabeth made her home in Tuba City, primary trading and Indian Agency center of the Western Navaho Reservation, where she would be nearer her cherished Navaho and Hopi friends and their related trading posts.

In May 1929, the late Harry Rorick and Elizabeth were married. Before the end of that year they were preparing to purchase jointly the isolated Shonto Trading Post which they acquired and operated very successfully for the next ten years as a team, sharing equally in all related

Navaho Agency administration, supervisory and technical personnel, and to inaugurate, Reservation-wide, the physical developments and control programs which so completely altered prior conditions and the old days of primitive atmosphere and isolation which prevailed over most of the Reservation.

Elizabeth Hegemann's experience as a Navaho trader spans this period of transition and changing conditions. She makes manifest her keen sense of affection and respect for Navaho and Hopi Indians and their cultures; the charm and glamor of the untouched Northwestern Navaho Reservation, as well as the implications of the transition. Her creed of dealing with the Navahos of the Shonto community is exemplary of best trader traditions. She delightfully commingles in her detailed story of trading and Grand Canyon days, the incidents and personalities that enhance interest. Many of these related incidents brought back memories to me of the people and places of those times that I used to know, and the events which transpired there. In synthesis, *Navaho Trading Days* is an outstanding record of her experience at Grand Canyon and on the Navaho Reservation.

Pictorially to illustrate and thus promote better understanding of the Navaho Country, Navaho and Hopi ways of life and related phases of her *Navaho Trading Days*, Mrs. Hegemann has selected and incorporated in her book, 318 captioned photographs taken by her. These are of particular interest in this context and of great documentary and historical value.

Until 1928 she used a 1919 3A or postcard-size Eastman Kodak, from then on a 3¼ x 4¼ Graflex. Subsequently, to insure greater permanence, she made new negatives of these photographs on 35 mm. film, Plus X Panchromatic, using an Exakta Model VX-IIa mounted on a Rowi copying stand. The enlarger used was a Leitz Focomat 1C, with a 5 cm. Elmar lens.

To the end that materials she had personally collected over the years shall be permanently available for public exhibition, enjoyment and benefit, or for related research purposes, Elizabeth Compton Hegemann has given:

Her entire collection of primitive Navaho jewelry assembled between 1916 and 1935 and comprehensively catalogued in detail by her; and a small collection inherited from her Grandfather Gove, of Southern California Mission Indian baskets bought near Pala, California in 1886, to Mission San Antonio, Jolon, California.

Her specimens of old Rio Grande tin work (over forty in all), assembled since 1948 from the Mary Austin - Frank Applegate - Fred

Harvey Company collections, have been given to the Southwest Museum of Los Angeles and to the Harwood Foundation of the University of New Mexico, in Taos.

The forty-nine old Hopi kachinas of the Bradfield-Vierra-McGill collection which she had acquired, were given by her in 1961 to the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff.

About eight hundred original photographs, none larger than post-card size, taken by her between 1916 and 1936 in Arizona, New Mexico, and Southern California, she presented to the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

JESSE L. NUSBAUM

Santa Fe, New Mexico

January, 1962

[PUBLISHER'S NOTE. Elizabeth Compton Hegemann died on April 8, 1962, after a long illness. Shortly before her death she approved page-proofs for this book, as well as the captions and order of photographs. During the last two years of her life, she performed the heroic task of making for the engraver's use her own new negatives and prints from her old photographs. During the process she invented darkroom techniques which solved some of the problems created by the condition of the early prints. Because these photographs are presented as historical documents, no attempt was made to retouch or disguise flaws in the originals. At the same time she prepared captions for the photographs, drawing upon notes, engaging in elaborate correspondence to ascertain names, dates and other facts, constantly aided by her remarkable memory. She also wrote the narrative text, which she looked upon as a highly personal document of recollections, rather than as a piece of scholarship. The editors have catered to Mrs. Hegemann's personal preferences in such matters as the spelling of place names and Indian words, and she was well aware that some of these have been changed by history or standardized by scholars.—*Roland Dickey.*]