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## Along Navajo Trails

Will Evans, Susan Woods, Robert Mcpherson

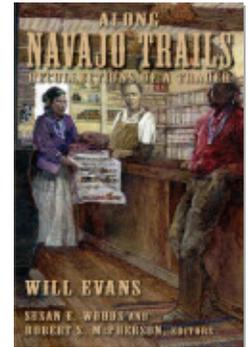
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## Acknowledgments

Those who have traveled unknown trails are familiar with surprise, exhilaration, and occasional disappointment encountered along the way. The evolution of this book has followed such a path, spanning eighty years and three generations of the Evans family to reach its final goal. The time may seem excessive, but the trail has led to something important—the preservation of a piece of Navajo history otherwise forgotten. The path began in the Shiprock area, long before Will Evans put pen to paper. He began his journey through Navajo culture and history in 1898 but did not begin recording experiences until December 17, 1924, when the painted cover of “Navajo Trails: Being a Collection of Stories, Legends and Records of the Navajo People” emerged. Thirty years later he died, leaving his book unpublished except for excerpts in scattered newspaper articles.

Before Evans departed this life on a different trail, he charged his son Richard to see that the manuscript reached the public eye. Richard took the responsibility seriously, retyping the stories on a manual typewriter and photographing Navajo people who had worked with his father to preserve their legacy. Richard, however, never completed the project before he followed Will in death. Richard’s daughter, Susan Evans Woods, next took to the path and invited Bob McPherson to accompany her. And now the final destination has been reached.

Many have assisted during stops along the way. In keeping with the personal, familial nature of the undertaking, we express appreciation to David J. Evans, who urged that the journey of his father and brother Richard reach fruition, while Robert Doyle reminded the family of the value of Will’s collections. Harvard Heath and Brad Westwood accepted this collection on behalf of the Special Collections Department, Brigham Young University, where it is housed today. Liesl Dees and the Farmington Museum, New Mexico, have helped preserve Will’s folk art and have featured it in a four-month exhibition at the museum. Will and Richard would be happy to know that the fruits of their journey now reside where they may benefit future generations.

In preparing this manuscript we are indebted to many for their help. Thanks to Anna and Jimmy Benally and Linda Keams, who assisted in

standardizing Will's spelling of Navajo words, which he attempted phonetically before there was a regularized form. Tom Wells and Russ Taylor shared photographs from the Frank L. Noel Collection, housed at Brigham Young University, while the Noel family graciously gave permission to use them. This cemented ties forged between two trader families, whose friendship began with Will and Frank close to a century ago. Evans, if able, would also express appreciation to William Pennington, with whom he became friends in the mid-1920s. Will served as his guide and interpreter, as the photographer traveled about the Navajo Reservation. Bart Wilsey of the Farmington Museum, Eunice Kahn of the Navajo Tribal Museum, the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff, and the Sharlot Hall Museum of Prescott graciously granted permission to use photographs from their collections. All of these associations with the resulting photographs enrich this book and give faces to otherwise forgotten individuals. A special thanks to John Alley, editor, Utah State University Press, for shepherding the two authors through the brambles of publication.

We express our gratitude also to family members who have assisted either with information or patience. Those in the former category include Richard B. Evans, Alene Evans King, Pamela Evans Whitmer, Juliette Evans Probst, and brother-in-law Allan Whitmer, who has served as an important source for names and events associated with life in the trading posts. In the latter category, we appreciate our spouses and families. Susan's husband, Bob Woods, and sons Aaron and McKay patiently allowed her to become hypnotized by the work and provided editing and digital photography skills. Bob McPherson appreciates the continuing support from his wife, Betsy, and his children as he spends his free time in learning about the Navajo people. This is a gift more precious than gold.

As you, the reader, start down the trail with Evans, we hope you enjoy sharing his view of the world of a trader and the people of his time. Although strenuous efforts have been made to maintain his initial thoughts and voice, just as much effort has been taken to improve the spelling and enhance the style. Any errors that have crept in are unintentional. The authors hope that your journey with Will Evans, trader to the Navajos, enriches your life as much as it has ours.

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# The World of Will Evans

