

Tape #387  
NAVAJO  
Oakee James  
Recorded by Tom Ration  
April, 1969  
Side One

NAVAJO INVOLVEMENT WITH  
AMERICANS AND MEXICANS  
IN THE MID 19TH CENTURY,  
THE WAR BETWEEN U. S.  
AND MEXICO IN 1846.

This is still the story about Oakee James that has continue from the other tape still will continue to this tape again and here is Oakee James again... Navajo girls sold to the Mexican Spanish spent their life in these Spanish home weaving their beautiful blanket with Mexican style and with Mexican pattern. They were not badly treat, they live while other life day of the girl of an American farm except that they got no pay. Sometimes, they married the boy of the family or some other Mexican. There must have been hundreds of Navajo boys or girl growing up in Mexicans' home during the 1800's. They were learning to weave cotton clothing, actually, it was no more than Spanish under-clothing with the upper and left out. Generally, there was a simple V-neck shirt for both man and woman. The man wear muslin coming a little below the knee and split apart right up. The woman had a thin shirt. Both went barefoot. Indian had never had shoes, but on the way from Mexican City to the Pueblo they began to wear these Spanish muslin trousers. They were seen on many old Navajo and can imagine that the custom began long than 100 years ago. Over a cotton

clothes they sewed on a pocket. Often this was in the shape of a serape, which is a blanket which is slit in the middle through which the wearer puts his head. The Spanish master wore the same thing, turtle-neck for blanket were the regular outer clothes for New Mexico and most of them were wove by Navajo

In early days the Spanish had gotten their clothes from the Pueblo and Pueblo blankets (?) were even used as currency. After the reduction however, the Spanish record almost never mention Pueblo weaving. Instead, they talk over and over again about the Navajo who weave the great style and even better than the Spanish. As early as 1790 they had been trading their blanket which were considered the most valuable clothes in all the northern part of New Spain. The Navajo had come a long way from the early days when they take lesson from Pueblo refugees (?). We have to use some guesswork about the date, for no expressment (?) of the Indian Navajo work has come down to us. The earliest known one or date came from cave found with the bones of Navajo who were killed in 1805. We see it start with simple strip of dyed black and white wood, especially like these made by Pueblo people. We see the patterns made more interesting as the strips are gathered in groups. We see color in among the black and

white, for the Spanish brought indigo dye from Mexico. Better than that, they brought ...colored a soft crimson with vegetable (?) dyes. This was the famous . Actually, it was made in England where it was called . It was sold to Spanish in quantity and Spain...in time sent plenty of it to the New World. For gifts and trade was made. And but that was the Indian feeling. They had had very little chance to get these color in the early days before the and gave only promise and take this shape. They must have longed for the bright colors they see in flowers and feathers but cannot copy. When the Spanish first came they sought out the precious cloth, they trade for it heartily! One can imagine how valuable it was when we found sometimes just a little line of red in the whole blanket. For Navajo and Pueblo both the brilliant colors and used the thread as yarn. Perhaps this was because they could not only get small piece or because the pigment came from old garment. There is a tale that these garments were the uniform of Spanish soldier, but very few white fellows ever got to Mexico. The Oregon Indian decide every small piece of red and in consequence took a great forward step in their weaving. At least the Navajo took the step...at first, they got a Pueblo leader move along together, both

stringing with great strength (?), both using indigo and thin line of red. Then came the period after which Pueblo weaving became Navajo weaving move on pretty soon. Pueblo cloth and weaving did not learn to color. The weavers use a number of                      stitch like herring bone and diamond and sometimes they incorporate their wool cloth. The Navajo woman in early days, they did not care much for fancy stitch and did not impress at all. What appealed to her was simple weave in great strips or going into zigzagging and diamonds...(DESCRIPTION INAUDIBLE)...meet a whole background of...(INAUDIBLE)... These yarns were better than any she had ever spin, so Navajo spinning had to improve. In the days when Navajo had                      and their blankets were finer and strength than ever before. In fact, later spoke of them as particularly water tight.

Navajo woman had plenty of chance to weave in these days and plenty of inspiration to do better and better. Their flocks were growing larger so that they had all the wool they want as well as all the meat. Slaves kept the house, giving the rich mistress full time for weaving. Husband took the blanket down to Santa Fe and Albuquerque and then to Mexico. Their work was to the Hopi, east to the Rio Grande and even to the Plains Indians. They brought back more sheep along with...(INAUDIBLE)...and

more slaves to do the work. Some of the time this was result of trade, some times of raiding. For the Navajo in the early 1800's were the most in all New Mexico. The Spanish speaking cilivilize of the New Spain country were certainly affected back to Mexico asking for help. Soon they said they would have no flock left. Hopi and Indians were living in caves before the Navajo came there at every house trying to help themself and aiding theirselves. Navajo warriors had attacked and left hardly anyone alive. Some said that they still have the buckskin belt which they took from the Hopi at that time. In fact the man of the mountain were at very peak of the . How could they know that a stranger power was to come and throw them down to the

It was 1846 and the United States had declare war on Mexico. It was hard what the two country were like in these days before the railroad came west great part of the American continent were unexplored. Instead of 48 states there were 29 and only 4 of them were west of the Mississippi River. The utmost city toward the west was St. Louis and beyond that were the pioneer farms and Mississippi, that little town of Independence, Missouri was the stopping-off-place from which an explorer start into the unknown west. Beyond Independence stretch mile

of prairie country where the buffalo roam and where  
Choctaw or Comanche Indian might among travellers  
and them. Still there was many adventurous  
American who had made the strip. Even since 1832 trader  
had been talking about chance of what they call  
Santa Fe Trail. This cross the prairie into Colorado and  
and climb over the Raton Pass to Taos. Then it went  
through Las Vegas, up to Santa Fe as the highway goes now.  
Modern people who drive this route into can  
hardly picture that man over the  
plains. Then they climb among rocks where men fell over  
cliff and later where the covered wagon stop. However,  
a 13 year old boy who made this trip with the trader never  
forget the excitement. That boy's name was Kit Carson.  
American trader had to pay a great deal of duty because  
they could bring their machine-made , their  
bullets and knives and guns into the Mexican town at  
Santa Fe. Still, the expense was worthwhile for the town  
could pay high price in silver from the rich mine of  
Mexico. These people of the nature in the adobe built  
town were spoiled from modern machine-made goods. For  
years they had gotten the stocks and to find  
and even Mexico City. To the rest...they  
live in houses and use Indian and  
blanket. Today Santa Fe has a state house with

and stretch of cement floor...state building. It has handsome public school, church school and an Indian school which has as many people as a whole town of Spanish day. In 1847, however, Santa Fe was a little adobe town of twisting, unpaved street and a one story government palace with dirt floor. Still, it was the capitol of New Mexico, one of the state of Mexico Republic. This Republic was a great area which spread over quite an area. Beginning at the Rio Grande it was claim most of what we call the Southwest today and most

New Mexico west of the Rio Grande, then Arizona, California, Nebraska, Utah and Colorado...these are the states' names today. In 1846 there was just two province. The boundary of California was much as it is now and all the rest was New Mexico. Probably the Spanish government at Santa Fe never dreamed of seeing the northern country he was supposed to rule. He kept some order along the Rio Grande from Taos to Albuquerque. And there were a few groups of person in what we call Arizona. As for the desert and mountain to the north, they were an unknown country where the only white man were a few trapper. Mexico claimed it much as we now claim part of the adjacent continent without keeping anyone there to tend to it. Indeed, it was hard enough to tend to the little civilize shacks along the Rio Grande. Governor had

headquarters in the Governor Palace where once the Pueblo Indian had design the Spanish and it took four room. We had a meeting of civilize citizens who came to beg him to make the Indian stop raiding. Then he would consult with Navajo, Apache and Ute, making present of handsome costume and silver bridle that he gave them to keep the Palace. He had almost no soldier to help him and that he had his with letter of Mexican City. People Spanish convention. The letter had to be carried south of horse and mailed back and sometime they never arrive. When they arrive it was unlikely that another one could bother with the problem of far-off New Mexico, for the big new republic was having its trouble as most new nation did. Only 10 years before, Texas had broken away and decided to be an independent country. Then in 1845 it has joined the United States. Mexico began to fear that the United States of the north want ever more Mexican Territory. And that was the truth, the United States wants to even its boundary line. It want free trade with Santa Fe without the danger of high duties and arrest which always trouble the trade that had been request that New Mexico should sell some of her wild northern land, but Mexico had refused. The Governor and the few rich and educated people along about this. This true Mexican tending the sheep, I'm sure scarcely realize



there was any country on the American continent but their own. Most of them had never seen an American from the East. If they happen to be in Taos or Santa Fe and meet the wild looking traders and trappers with their buckskin clothes and their big , they considered that these were crazy man who did not matter. The Indian know even less than them. The idea that there were white man from far across the plains were like a fairy story. They had a tale that the man who live in that direction had ear down to their ankle and that use these as blanket. To this day, one of the Navajo name for white American is these who sheet on their ears. Such was the condition in the remote desert (?) of New Mexico

When war break out it start over the Texas but both nation were on either to fight. Soon American army had march across the Rio Grande in another land. All this was far away from New Mexico. Yet it was New Mexico which was going to feel the greatest change. She was going to see Blue Coat soldier for the first time and they were going to stay. President Polk had decided that there must be an overland army to march across the plain and down through New Mexico to Mexico City or California. The United States in these days had only a thin regular army which was being mostly to fight Plains Indian. There was no law and more regiment

were needed. The state organize a company of volunteer. These men elected their own officer and often march out to fight in the early . The Governor was supposed to give them uniform, guns and supply but if trouble developed too far they often had to do without. This happen to the Missouri volunteer, for Missouri, a state on the border of the wild West was quick to organize a regiment. The government was setting up an army of the West with General , a regular army man, in charge. He had some regiment of calvalry and engineer which a long train of ox cart to carry supply. They were going to march across the plain along the Santa Fe Trail and through the dangerous country of Mexico, but he need more men. their shirt and their high boots came trampling in to form a regular regiment. They elected a Missouri name campaign journey which they finally took became known as Expedition. and his men really did march all the way across the plain in the summer of 1846. It was an exciting moment when they saw the mountain of New Mexico. When they came to the grain country... and when sent word to Governor that he should surrender, Las Vegas surrender peacefully and make a speech he was to make so often. He had not come to do any harm to New Mexico. Its people would now be citizens

of the United States and would have all the rights they had before, living in peace and practicing their religions. The same thing happen at Santa Fe. The men had been sure there would be a fight at Colorado Pass where but Governor had decided to leave town. There was no fight and before anyone knows it, New Mexico was American. A stamp issued in 1946, the hundredth anniversary of this event, shows Crumley, a horse back in front of the Governor Palace, the American flag on a flagpole above him.

What could the Indian make of this change in affair. Even many New Mexico had little idea of what had happen. Still the and it would be fine to make, to have peace in the country again. Crumley promised, as his government was later to do, that there should be no more fighting and that the Indian could be kept in order. So white New Mexico from the town up and down the Rio Grande came up submission. They told the general how they were losing their flock and even their children to the raiding Indian. He realized that if this country were to be part of the United States, such discord must stop, so a call went out to all the Indians to come in and sign treaties of peace. The Pueblo were only too delighted. For years they been asking for help against the Navajo. They often one should be that was not primary

idea of peace so he explained that it was best there should be no fighting at all. Perhaps the Pueblo wondered whether the wild Navajo would really accept this. However, some of the Apache did and did the Ute. At least they promised to be peaceful. They had seen the guns and cannon which the white man brought. We do not hear much about the

from the Navajo but we do hear about raiders taking sheep from the Rio Grande rancher. Even while Crumley was in Santa Fe it begin to look as though dealing with the Indian could not be such a quiet matter. Yet Cramer had done all he expect to. Now he had order to go on to California where more trouble was brewing. He turned to the colonel of the Missouri volunteers and ordered him to get hold of the Navajo leader and make peace with them. So, the first white American who the Navajo met were the bordertown boy from Missouri. First of all they had to find the Navajo. They really came to Santa Fe, which they call . If you travel into the wild American land of mesa, you might never see the earth-covered hogan among the sand hill. Now the sheep which they .

A man was told of the wild region which was the Navajo hideout and where few white man ever went. He decided to sent 3 parties to this region at different point. Even so, they might never have found the Navajo

except that one party . One of that group who the Navajo call in Navajo. We had already heard of these people who settled south of Mt. Taylor. Soon after the Pueblo Rebellion there to be at Cancito. Where the other Navajo move, they were left close to the Spanish settlement and close to the Pueblo. Little by little they had became more like these people than like . Often they had an escort and interpret for the Spanish. Now we were ready to do the same for American.

The leader man of these Navajo was Sandoval, a name which would appear often in these story. Sandoval was approached by Captain to hear one detachment of the Missouri. Yes, he said, he knew where the Navajo leader were. He could even going to home and find out whether they could meet the American. He reported that the Navajo did not like to leave their hill until they knew more about these things which did not...the American came to them. The Missouri boy got the idea and kept for the trip with thirty men. An adventurous trip, they had climbed up over the tallest Chuska Mountain. They had to lead the supply train, always afraid that these would fall over the cliff, losing the little food and blanket they had brought. They wondered too, if arrows would not fly from behind the

rocks. However, Sandoval sent up smoke signal announcing peace. Little by little, Navajo came to join the party. They were all on horseback and they may have look where we see riding working in stripe blanket, belt around the waist. Most of them were moccassin of deerskin which reach to the ankle. Many were already wearing

from the Mexicans or the Pueblos. A few had tight pants of the Spanish gentlemen stripe down the side and even with silver buttons. They invite the Americans to a ceremony to be held nearby in the hill. We should like to know which of the Navajo ceremony this was, but the report of the Missouri boy say only that there was plenty of to eat and that white man and red man dance all night to the song of drums and . Now the American had been work of them to the big man, , who keep his flocks in the hiding in the hills. His name is a Spanish one taken from one of the military officer of former days. He must have had an Indian name too, which is not given in the history. He was a leader of the Eastern Navajo and his daughter had marry a young warrior who later became a Navajo warrior. Texan son-in-law, the Navajo calls the young man, in this time. White call him Manuelito.

The were inviting the American to come

and meet him. They take a vote and these Missourian were not mad, they let their officer decide for them. All want to go on so they climb into the mountains for the first real conference between American and Navajo. It was a place on the platter (?) where a stream flow out under a big cottonwood tree. Here thousand of sheep were grazing, a black one kept separated from the white. Navajo need plenty of black lamb to give wool for the weaving.

, an old man of 80 was carried into the meeting on a little lying on his back. The Missourian was impressed by his low voice, quiet manner. They asked him to come out from his mountain and sign a peace treaty with Colonel Bear Springs which be a good place. consent he said already a rich man and perhaps he was glad to have protection from his field and his flock. He promised to come to Bear Spring where Fort Wingate is now. And finally, he came with 500 more Navajo. They must have been a mighty fine sight as they gallop up to the army camp, their striped blanket showing through a cloud of dust. Sandoval came with them and also other two leading man. One was known as McKann, a rich man of the Eastern Navajo of whom we hear very little more. This was . This young man later became a greater and peace leader. He is

one of the famous name in Navajo history. This meeting at Bear Springs meant a great change for the Navajo than other guest. They were being asked to give up the whole way of life. For at least 100 years the Tribe had lived by war and stealing just as the Plains Indian did, just as the people of the nation had done before government was settled. Most white had given up that ways of life long ago. Now they were trying to bring their 19th century custom to a land which still had the .

You are all American citizen now, said ,

Mexican and Indian alike. That means you must not fight among yourself. You want your to settle down peacefully. That was a great jump for the Indian to take. This seems strange to us. We had been fighting the Mexican long before he came. Now he had conquered them because he had better arms, but that is just what we want to do. Why do you interfere in our war? Let us settle our own difference. That was common sense as far as we went. Still, the time for disorder in New Mexico was close. American was a modern country which could not allow war and stealing in one corner of it. It was time for the Navajo to make a change in their way of life. All people have sooner or later make this change from fighting and hunting to . It was never been easy, some groups have died out in the attempt, some have



just became discouragement. The Navajo came to witness, but the change took time. We now have followed them through 20 years when a few men from time to time see the route that must be taken. Other were built. Today the white man are going through some trouble as they try to understand that war must stop all over the world. They are taking longer to learn this lesson than the Navajo took. It should not be hard to understand why even when some Navajo present peace and other keep pulling back toward the old way. McGuckin and his man promise peace. A treaty was signed with his man and these of Sandoval... (INAUDIBLE)... Manuelito, a broken (?) son-in-law, did not sign. Probably he was not even there, for Manuelito wanted nothing to do with peace treaty. He was a man of war and in the next years he was a Navajo at war and treaty. and his men march on to Mexico. No sooner had they gone than their loyalty and their habit in a few weeks and there was what the Mexican had been asked to do. Most of them did not understand these new people from across the plains with their new way of doing things, nor did the American understand them... Every group--American, Mexican, Navajo and Pueblo had worked out its own way of living. Even though its own was right...know how to explain things sensibly to the others, now understand that they must learn how to understand each

other and make compromises if they were to live peacefully.

It was the Spanish New Mexico who start trouble, for some of them at Taos decided they were sorry they had surrendered so quickly. They got the Taos Indian to help them in the revolt. They kill and scalp (?) the American Governor whom Cramer (?) had appoint. This was Governor Ben, he lived at Taos and his Mexican wife was a sister of Kit Carson's wife. Kit was by now a famous hunter

whom the Indian call the .

He was not at Taos, but the people there still tell how his wife and her sister got their way out through the wall of an adobe house...while the Indians were outside and the governor lay dead in the next room. The Navajo heard of this. None of them spoke English in these days and hardly any know Spanish. None could read, they had no way of knowing the truth of the situation as Navajos can now. They thought perhaps American were going . Perhaps, said the leader in Mexico, Manuelito was right in saying that these Eastern stranger make no good through the country. It look as though .

In the next three years they send the American army back to New Mexico make twelve expedition against the Navajo. None had any effect. The Navajo know well how to hide when soldier were coming and how to scare the flock so none could be found. It was going to take more

than a small troop of soldier riding in full sight against the mesa. The \_\_\_\_\_ and the time for roaming was over. The United States had now appoint new governor for New Mexico. He had an Indian agent to assist him in charge of the Indian Tribe, Ute, Apache, and Navajo and Pueblo. These two men, Colonel Washington and Agent \_\_\_\_\_ decided to make trip to the Navajo and ask them for peace. If the two people could not understand each other's way a little better, perhaps something might have come to this, but each group had its own idea of what was right and could not imagine that other might think differently. The white man still found Navajo country very distress (?). So, they ask for help from the army Navajo. Sandoval went with them and so did a number of Zuni scout. The Zuni were now good friends with the white man and only too ready to help fight the Navajo if necessary. They went through Jemez and Coyote Canyon to the point between Toadlena and Two Grey Hills where McGuckin had his fill. No Navajo came out to meet them as they march. As soon as crowd of them were galloping ahead with the Pueblo and in a cloud of dust McGuckin came out to meet them riding a horse. Though he was now very old in dealing with the Navajo story says that his son-in-law Manuelito, was there too and perhaps what happened that day had a great effect on Manuelito feeling

toward the white. Colonel Washington went through a speech which so many American had made. He spoke in English which was then put into Spanish and finally into Navajo. There was no trained interpreter then and we wondered where Sandoval knew how to explain what the United States was and why there was an Indian agent. Still the Navajo understood that the Colonel meant to be friendly and that he want warring to stop. McGuckin said he could done his best. He had brought 130 animals which he knew the Navajo had taken. He could not always control his young men but if more were stolen he could make great for less out of his own flock. There was a great deal to promise. The white man of course, did not know that there were many band of Navajo and that all might not agree. The Navajo perhaps did not understood that the white man really meant them to give up running. If they did that how could they live? They probably thought this was just a short peace while they tried them out.

Then something happen which showed the two groups were far from understand each other. One of the Navajo was riding a horse which had been stolen from the Mexican and that ordinarily the owner could never have try to get it back, but could simply have gone against the Navajo Tribe to steal some of their horse. It was a game that two people play and thought it was a trace (?) of uncivilized

group. They both understood it. However, now Mexican had the protection of the United States cavalry. He asked to have the horse returned. The Navajo were amazed of course. They said that the horse been stolen but that was long ago and it had change hands many times. It have even been roded back to the rural village where the first owner live and he had claim it to the Navajo to look

. But to Colonel Washington it was simply disorderly the law, he did not know how land law there was in New Mexico. Sight (?) the horse, he cried. Then somehow disorderly began and some soldier fired a shot. It was the most thing that could have happen. Only one man was killed but that was now broken often that there was little hope of understanding between the two. It could have taken Colonel Wasghinton a long time to explain that, that that settle part of the country where he live... There was one law for all and that it forbidden still. The Navajo had never heard of such a thing and they might have had trouble making him see that. Of course, they did not steal among themself but the Mexican were enemies, and anything he did to them was allowable. They had never heard of laws which appeal to all man equally. There was no time to explanation, the Navajo whirling (?) their horse and galloping away. Most of them were enemies to the white of life, especially so

was the tall Manuelito. There was Nabonco's (?) son-in-law. After this, no one could get him to meet with the white nor to sign a treaty. He want a war. The white man rode into Canyon de Chelly. No Navajo attack them for the Navajo had too much common sense to ride straight headon soldier. They wait their time to make more ruins. In Canyon de Chelly wait the head man who were committed on this side of the mountain. These were from the San Juan River and Mariano. These men was been given to Mariano Lake... An American overcoat which perhaps he received as a gift over his headband had been . Mariano and had heard about the shooting. They wanted to stall the white man off until they could make plans so they promise to give up stealing stock...if they could find it and they could give up the captured slaves. This life was not so easy for the slave had learn Navajo ways and many of them enjoying the life.

had one with him who was Mexican boy taken from Santa Fe. The boy refused to go home, he did not even ask about his relatives. The Navajo felt that now they need not keep treaty with the American. They went on with their business as usual and between 1847 and 1850 they stole over 12,000 mule, 7,000 horses, 31,000 cattle, 460,000 sheep. These were from the Rio Grande village where the United States marshall keep a court. No one

knows how were taken from remote part of the country.

It is true that there were some Navajo leader who still talking peace and tried to keep the people quiet. One of these were Ganado, Ganado Mexico and many cattle, rich man after whom Ganado is named. He had a hogan for each of his many wife while his scout graze for miles ahead to . Of course, he want no trouble with whites. Down there was lone Indian who had made the speech to . The Chief was progressive man who seen that times were changing and want the Navajo to change with them. He dress like a Spanish in black cloth, knee britches and wool stocking. His britches were with woven...a silver buckle...and one of the Navajo name him was Many Button. Many Buttons had friend among the American and the Pueblos and he was always getting, trying to get them and the Navajo to understand each other. He know that all was harming themself by so much fighting. No one listening to him, each thought his own group was right and all the other were wrong. It was going to take hard lesson to make them understand. There were some Navajo now who spent all their time in fighting. Before, man had gone out only when they need horse and sheep to give them a start in land. Now they felt everyone was against them. They night lose their herd anyday and soon their life. So, it was better to

grab all things could then stand ready to fight for it. These fight such case talking as long area in Ganado. They gathered around the war leader who dash around the country, hiding and fighting. Most fierce of these was the tall, handsome Manuelito son-in-law. Manuelito, the old report said, was over six feet tall. He did not wear cloth...

END OF TAPE