



Image of Hogback Trading Post, ca. 1890. *Photo by John Hippenmeyer / Farmington Museum Collection, 1987.12.19.*



The Round Rock Trading Post, owned by Stephen Aldrich and Henry Chee Dodge. A Diné man is standing next to Raymond and Gertrude Aldrich, with a little dog. *From the Aldrich Family Photo Collection. Part of the Trading Post Project.*

di- : up, above, where there is no surface
né or ni- : down, below, where there is a surface

diné : from where there is no surface to where there is a surface; often simply translated as "the people"

TRADING POSTS AND THE DINÉ



Diné woman shearing a pair of sheep to prep their wool to weave, ca. 1917-1919. *Photograph courtesy Diné Health Foundation/Sage Memorial Hospital Archives.*



Diné hogan, 1905. *Photo by Edward S. Curtis.*

- Upon returning to Dinétah in 1868 from the Long Walk, a new trading post system began to emerge within the Southwest.
- Traders of these new trading posts dealt with a small group of wholesalers at the edge of the Southwest who dealt with a few much larger dealers and manufacturers in cities in the east.
- Traditionally, the Diné people raised livestock, farmed, hunted, and gathered from what was available in the environment for their own consumption and traded what wasn't consumed with relatives in a large clan network (k'e). They often traded with other tribes including the Utes, Hopis, and Zunis. The Diné developed a keen ability to raise livestock after goats and churro sheep were introduced to the Southwest by the Spaniards centuries before. In fact, they were such good shepherds that by 1930 they were caring for more than 700,000 sheep. This and the astonishing talents of Diné artisans (weavers, silversmiths, sandpainters, etc.) would help the trading post system rise as a prominent force in the Southwestern region.

TRADITIONAL ECONOMY HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



Diné raise the sheep which supply wool from which they weave blankets and rugs. Southern Diné Agency, 1933. *Department of the Interior. Bureau of Indian Affairs.*

- Accelerated growth and expansion of livestock populations were in the best interest of both traders and Commission of Indian Affairs agents.
 - Federal agents could report back to Washington D.C. that the Diné were quickly becoming productive pastoralists, successfully progressing the assimilation of an Indigenous people.
 - Traders personal livelihoods depended directly on the volume of trade created by the Diné. More wool and more blankets meant more money on the frontier; this prospect also attracted other settlers to become traders and into this rapidly growing market.
 - Both advocated rapid expansion rather than sustained yield over an extended period of time.
- The social and cultural world in which the Diné lived encouraged them to own more livestock while real, tangible, valuable rewards incentivized the possession of more rather than fewer livestock. As such, they (livestock) became a fundamental part of Diné culture and economy.
- As early as 1883, traders bought more than 1.3 million pounds of Diné wool, 300,000 pelts, 100,000 goat hides.
- This culminated in the Livestock Reduction of 1934, a program that would be imposed upon on the Diné people by the United States government. This was heavily opposed by Diné people as well as traders.



Diné leader Hoskininni, left, and his family stand in front of the Wetherill and Colville Trading Post in Oljato, Utah, in 1906. Hoskininni governed the Monument Valley area, and is renowned for evading the military in the 1860s and keeping his family from the “Long Walk” to Fort Sumner, N.M.
Accessed at <https://www.the-journal.com/articles/wetherills-history-depicts-friendly-relations-with-natives/>

- Many early traders were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints who migrated along existed footpaths into Dinétah from surrounding areas and included several notable family names like Burnham, Foutz, Tanner, McGee, Wheeler, Ashcroft, Bloomfield, Lee, etc.
- However, key figures in the earliest days of the trading posts were non-Mormon and included notable figures like Thomas Keam, John Lorenzo Hubbell, the Wetherills, and the Babbitt Brothers.
- The emergence of the trading post system marked a profound shift in Diné culture as it introduced an opening for a new economic system to seep into the everyday experience of the Diné. Diné would now have access to goods and services that made day-to-day life a bit easier, but it also meant that the Diné would have to learn to navigate a system that would slowly assimilate the Diné people into the emerging capitalist systems of the world.
- At the height of the trading post system, it's suggested that ~10,000 Diné households were each producing small quantities of wool, handicrafts, livestock, and other products to trade for mass-produced goods at up to about 150 trading posts scattered among Diné, Zuni, Hopi, and Ute lands.

EMERGENCE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



Image of Diné under guard at Fort Sumner, ca. 1864.



Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe, Locomotive No. 1550 with Tender., 1940. *Image by Everett L. DeGolyer. DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University.*

While most Diné held a deep desire to return to traditional life ways upon returning to Dinétah from Bosque Redondo at Fort Sumner, NM, several new developments thwarted these attempts:

- The loss of livestock before and after internment delayed, if not, prohibited restoration
- Reestablishment of military posts inside post-1868 Dinétah helped forestall rebellion and increased the appeal of the region to non-indigenous settlers.
- Encroachment by non-indigenous settlers into the edges of Dinétah barred many Diné families from much of the former homeland
- The transcontinental railroad (Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway) built in 1881 across the southern part of Dinétah, drew more non-indigenous folk to the region. These settlers often took control of prime agricultural lands along the San Juan, Colorado, and Animas Rivers.

RETURNING HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



Inside Monument Valley Trading Post. Harry trading with Sally Laughter and Daughter, ca. 1950-1970. *Photo by Joseph Meunch. NAU Cline Library. Colorado Plateau Digital Archives*

Functions of a trading post.

- Trading of a wide variety of goods
- Banking services (unsecured credit, credit saturation, and secured credit)
- Post office services
- Pawn services
- Butcher services
- General shelter
- Animal husbandry, ranching, etc.
- Marketing and advertising services (rugs, blankets, jewelry, livestock, etc.)
- Transportation services (wagon trips, freighting, etc.)
- Traveler stations services (wagon maintenance and repair, fuel stations, etc.)

JACK OF ALL TRADE(S) HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

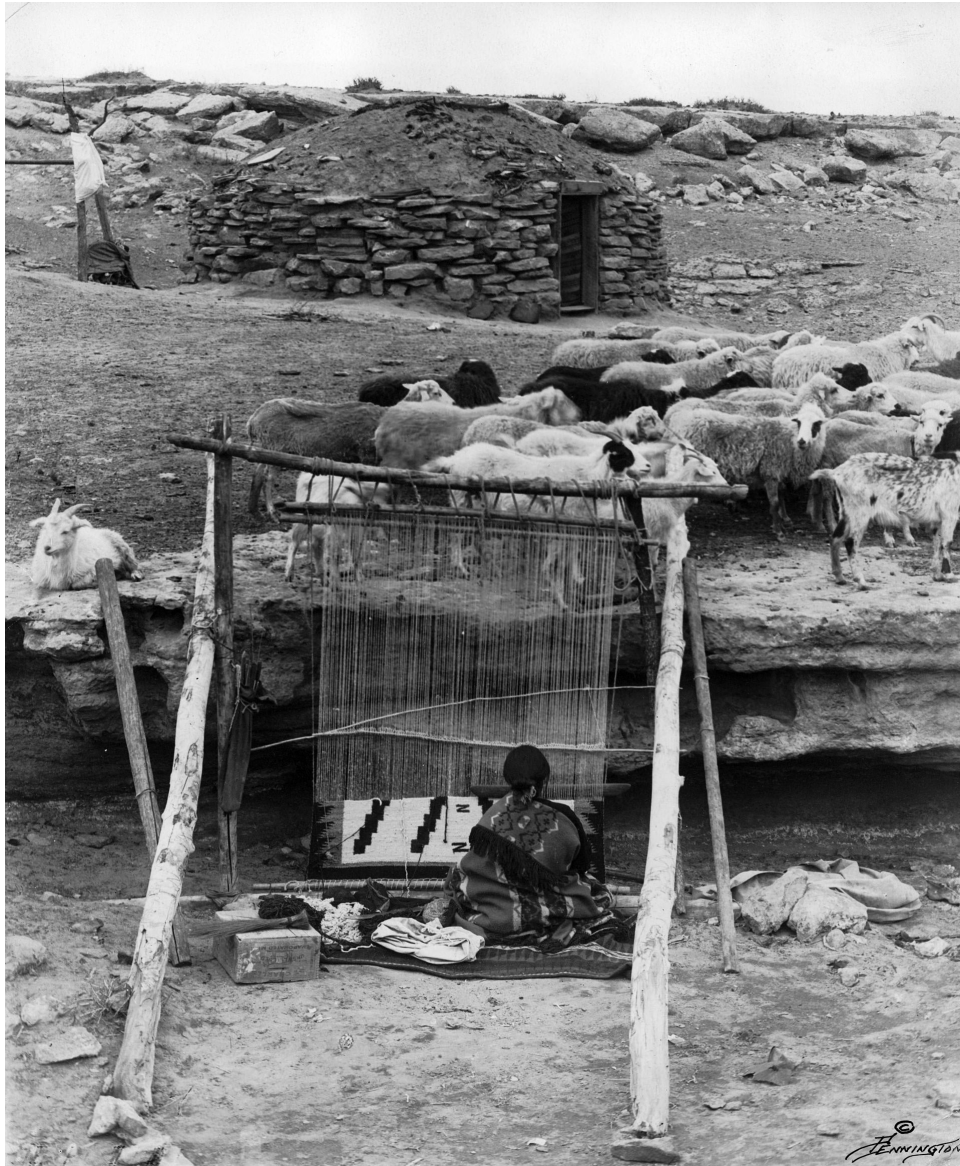


Image of a Diné woman weaving at her loom, ca. 1904-1932. Photo by William M. Pennington/Denver Public Library Special Collections.

Early trade.

- Trading was primarily based on barter, pawn, and cash.
- Traded products included seasonal wool, livestock, hides, pelts, weaving, guns, jewelry, and piñon nuts. It would expand to offer a wide variety of items including canned goods, ranching supplies, livestock feed, gasoline, lamb meat, beef, etc.
- Until WWI the main “products” were woven rugs and blankets, already famous and widely traded throughout the region since long before 1868.
- Since Diné people did not have direct knowledge of “market” prices, the trader was often in control of prices (goods sold and items valued), in other words Diné held little to no leverage in trades.
- Most Diné could not deal with another trader other than the one nearest their community, leading to market monopolies.
- Churro wool rated by U.S. textile manufacturers as low-grade carpet wool, unprotected by tariffs that supported prices of higher grades, leading to vast competition.
- Woven rugs and blankets added a tremendous amount of value to wool, however only the traders and wholesalers seemed to benefit from this added value.
- Silver jewelry became highly profitable market as more tourists arrived via railroad
- Sometimes cash was used but many Diné did not trust paper money and preferred coins. Some traders substituted coin-like disks negotiable only at the store that issued them.
- There was a significant markup on all available merchandise until the 1950s.
- In essence, traders bought low and sold high. However, they also tended to develop a considerable relationship with the people and land of the communities in which they were located.
- Traders sought the consent of Diné communities to settle and develop a trading post and in some cases were even asked to come and offered a building from which they could trade.



Diné wagons at the Hubbell Trading Post, 1910. Accessed at <https://www.legendsofamerica.com/az-hubbell/>

Credit.

- Much of Dinétah was allocating goods not used for personal consumption to the trading posts allowing the traders to saturate a booming market for Diné made goods.
- Traders favored unsecured credit against seasonal wool and livestock as well as extending unsecured credit to a what family's wool/livestock output could normally repay, this was referred to as credit saturation.
- Traders favored unsecured credit and credit saturation to guarantee a certain volume of trade and cut competition.

Credit and Diné Traders.

- Wholesalers were often reluctant to extend credit to Diné to assist in their own trading post entrepreneurship (generosity among k'e may have been among the reasons).
- Diné that freighted for either wholesalers or traders were paid in merchandise, and presumably used what merchandise they did not consume for their own posts.



Hastiin Klah seated to the left of a Sandpainting weaving outside of the Toadlena Trading Post. Accessed at <https://weavinginbeauty.com/its-all-about-the-rugs/a-round-sandpainting-rug-by-marie-b-yazzie-and-an-encounter-with-hastiin-klah>

Related enterprises of traders.

- Early traders were often not very prosperous
- Traders that either controlled clusters of trading posts or developed other accompanying enterprises (ranching, tourist services, traveler stations, and direct marketing of weaving, etc.) often found higher degrees of success.
- Traders sold (and may continue to sell) artifacts from archaeological sites as well as ceremonial sites

Wholesaler competition.

- While wholesalers could dominated entire regional markets, they often couldn't market every Diné product that traders offered.
- Traders dealt with wholesalers that specialized in certain goods, and therefore a wholesaler's trade area often overlapped with that of others.
- Wholesalers demanded partial cash payments on accounts especially during economic downturns.

Traders' extended families.

Trader profits and investments.

- Traders took in Diné goods to balance debts to major wholesaler for merchandise, including personal and familial consumption. However, profits were marginal even as late as the 1950s even with significant markups.
- Wholesale and retail prices were considerably different (markup) and were taken as wages and used to cover trader subsistence.
- Traders often invested in other enterprises and structural additions to trading posts. They also invested in housing for themselves in places beyond the Dinétah and in other misc. enterprises like uranium mining, etc.
- Members of large, multigenerational trader families now have large commercial and financial holdings

The Navajo Trading post of Will Evans, situated out on the New Mexico desert near the famous Shiprock.



December, 1937

A trading post owned by Will Evans in Shiprock, 1937. *Farmington Museum Foundation/ Farmington Museum collection, 1989.17.22*

Primary stakeholders.

Diné, Traders (western settlers), Wholesalers (often large eastern companies), Commissioner of Indian Affairs Agents, United States Military

1. Traders were bound by debt to a particular Wholesaler. Traders lived among Diné communities and spoke a version of the Diné Language, posing a threat to Agent authority because of their role in assimilation. Traders would often use their power and influence over communities to sway public opinion. An example uncludes John L. Hubbell refusing to extend credit to Dinés unless they took a firm stand against the Livestock Reduction.
2. Diné were bound to a particular Trader and their practices, but they also served as the foundation of the trading system and its main source of profits. They were both consumer and producer. Therefore, it was in the best interest of Traders to treat the Diné well. Diné also worked as employees, freighters, and builders. However, as traders they were limited by, most obviously, a lack of access to capital and education.
3. Agents wished to assimilate Diné into a version of mainstream U.S. rural life by controlling education content, land-use policies, etc. which often meant regulating the activities of both the Traders and the Diné.
4. Military leaders sought to contain the Diné with the reservation boundaries and maintain them with rations supplied by military contractors



Diné Weaver, ca. 1907. Photograph by Edward S. Curtis. American Memory Collections. United States Library of Congress's National Digital Library Program. encurt.cp01034.



J. B. Moore and Weaver at Crystal Trading Post with Diné Rug, ca. 1911. 1911 Catalog for Crystal Trading House Diné blankets

Weavers and traders.

- In certain areas, traders played a significant role in promoting particular regional styles. Examples include:
 - Traders George Bloomfield (Two Gray Hills Trading Post) and Ed Davies (Toadlena Trading Post) and renowned Diné weavers Daisy Taugelchee and Bessie Manygoats are credited with the creation and subsequent popularization of the famous *Two Gray Hills-Toadlena*, a style with traditional patterns that uses natural, undyed wool.
 - Cozy McSparron of Chinle, Bill and Sallie Lippincott of Wide Ruins, and several others helped to promote the use of vegetable dyes - these styles would inevitably be named after their respective trading post.
 - *Teec Nos Pos*, a colorful style with very extensive patterns
 - *Ganado-Klagetoh*, first promoted by Don Lorenzo Hubbell, at the Hubbell Trading Post in Ganado, AZ
 - *Crystal*, first promoted by John B. Moore of the Crystal Trading Post
 - Bruce Burnham of Sanders, AZ, was the first to promote a style called *Newlands*.
 - There are dozens of other styles and this list is by no means comprehensive.



Trader and Diné woman at Waterflow Trading Post, ca. 1950-1960. Accessed at <https://www.woodscanyon.net/Diné/Economy/Trading-Post-Era.html#>

Language.

- Early traders often had Diné wives so their children would eventually become bilingual (Henry "Chee" Dodge is a testament to this)
- Early Traders and the Diné communicated by using:
 - rudimentary sign language
 - learned language through a “point-and-talk” method.
 - simplified Spanish that had been picked up from Diné who escaped enslavement by Mexicans
- A few traders eventually became fluent while others spoke in “trader Diné” or “baby talk”, which would later become a formal language using simplified Diné.
- Diné, at first, learned the names of or created new, descriptive words for essential items typically found in trading posts.
- Diné who worked at trading posts or attended missionary schools and/or boarding schools became fluent enough in English to communicate with traders as well as operate their own trading posts.



Portrait of Henry Chee Dodge, a Diné man of mixed ancestry who served as an interpreter for the US Army, ca. 1880-1890. Image by Ben Wittick. Place of the Governors Photo Archives.

Diné trading-post workers and owners.

- In the early 1900's, a large number of freighters seemed to have been Diné, but documentation is scarce.
- Klara Kelley and Harris Francis identified over 100 Diné who managed or owned trading posts, half between 1880s and ca. 1950 and the other half between 1950-1980
- The biggest barriers to Diné becoming traders included the reluctance of wholesalers to extend credit and a lack of education.
- Most early Diné traders were those who either went to school or were the child of a Bilagaana person (most often a Bilagaana man).
- Diné traders started their own post through the following methods:
 - belonged to families with a lot of cattle, which was sold and used to fund a new store
 - received Diné Nation assistance in the 1930s in the co-ops or through low-interest loans
 - worked with a Bilagaana trader, became a manager, and started their own posts
 - used wages earned outside of the Diné Nation
- Diné-owned posts were prone to fail due to a lack of capital, inexperience, and extending too much credit, especially to family member.
- Since 1980, some Diné have taken over posts where previous Bilagaana owners did not renew (or simply abandoned) the lease, but the community wished to keep it open. Unfortunately, many of these have struggled to stay open.



The Red Rock Trading Post is featured in this 1932 photograph. *Photo by Laura Gilpin/ Farmington Museum collection, 1989.17.55*

Trading post regulations.

- Regulations came in several waves through the 20th century and often targeted licensing and leasing on Diné land, sales of liquor, firearms, ammunition, gambling, payment methods, federal reporting, livestock/ranching, pawn and credit practices, legal jurisdiction, imitation “Indian Arts”, donations of money or goods to religious ceremonies, etc.
 - Early Regulations
 - “New Deal” Regulations
 - Post-World War II Regulations
 - General push for reform in the system with demands for regulation and greater accountability. In response, traders became more defensive and resentful of the government while resisting efforts to regulate fully how they did business.
 - Traders successfully persuaded the Commission of Indian Affairs to nullify the a 1948 resolution passed by the Tribal Council that would place price controls on goods, increase rent through a gross sales tax, and requirements for much more extensive bookkeeping, however revisions in 1955 were passed and maintained
 - Long Range Rehabilitation Act of 1950
 - Diné Nation creates a trading committee in 1950
 - Diné Nation gains federal approval for a modest but much more substantial body of regulations in the trading business.
 - Regulations of the 1970s
 - In 1973 the Federal Trade Commission began investigating the exploitative credit and pawn practices employed by trading posts with the results appearing in the *Federal Register* in 1975.
 - Soon after, the Diné Nation and federal government began working on reforms that covered the Diné, Hopi, Zuni, reservations.



A group of people gathered in front of the Hogback Trading Post. *Photo by John Hippenmeyer/Farmington Museum collection, 1987.12.20*

United Indian Traders Association

- Traders sought to protect their enterprises and the markets that they thrived in by forming the United Traders Association (UITA).
- Their stated purpose was to enhance the market for Diné weaving, silversmithing, and other artistic creations, especially by protecting it from imitators.
- Leaders of the UITA vocalized objections of federal support of Diné acquisition of trading posts as well as price control policies.
- Now defunct.



Oljato Trading Post in 1938. *Photo from the Division of State History's historic photo collection.*

- **A few contributing factors to the decline of the trading post system after the 1930s:**
 - Stock reduction program, when the U.S. government forced the Diné to sell 40-50% of all livestock [~1930s], reducing simultaneously the profits of Traders as well as the monetary income of Diné
 - World War II and postwar oil, gas, uranium, and (later) coal developments in the region created other employment opportunities as well as cash that did not first go through Traders.
 - Steady expansion of federal, Diné Nation, state, and local governments led to several rounds of market regulations.
 - Diné communities accused trading-posts of profiteering through overpricing, exploitative credit and pawn practices, unsanitary facilities, among others leading to a harsh critique of trading post practices through local hearings and published reports by the Federal Trade Commission and US Civil Rights Commission.
 - Funding for road improvements and other Dinétah infrastructure were provided by the federal government. [~1950s and 1960s]
 - Automobiles became accessible and proliferated in the region (cheii's pick-up truck).
 - Diné began taking their money from monthly payments to border towns, where goods and services were greater in quantity and cheaper in value.
 - Emergence of chain stores like Thriftway, Safeway, K-Mart, Wal-Mart, etc.
 - Many traders sold out to Thriftway (a chain of convenience-based stores in Farmington, NM) or closed [~1980]
 - 25-year leases distributed in 1955 began expiring in 1980 and lease renewal required investments in "building modernization"



Hatch Trading Post, San Juan County, 1939.



The trading post Bullpen in 1949, clerk Pete Balcomb waiting on Slim Tahe (Hastin Besh'ii'aahe Biye), the man in the leather jacket who is facing the camera. Except for a change of products on the shelves, the Bullpen still looks like this. *Mullarky Photo Studio, Gallup, New Mexico. HUTR Neg. RP-188.*

Architecture and infrastructure.

- The earliest trading posts were typically small, one-story, rectangular buildings with:
 - *Vertical elements*: constructed of adobe bricks, locally available stone, or upright wood planks; structural cedar posts were also commonly used as columns
 - *Horizontal elements*: timber poles/earth; as trading grew, more prosperous trading posts constructed carpentered gables roofs.
 - Trading post/ranches of Thomas Keam and J.L. Hubbell were exceptions in their architectural composition.
- Programmatically, trading posts were typically composed of:
 - One to two rooms for storage and living quarters.
 - A "Bullpen" - a trade area with three fortress-like counters around three sides of a room, often with a weapon stowed away underneath a counter.
 - A "Sales Area" - merchandise displays, i.e., shelves on the wall and hung from the ceiling.
 - Shallow wells - most trading posts were located near water sources.
 - A "Privy" - a toilet located in a small shed outside a house or other building.
 - A woodstove, or fireplace - most trading posts used wood and coal for heating and cooking.
 - "Gas Pumps" - after the 1920s many posts bought early gas pumps to sell gasoline.
 - Many, if not all, trading posts lacked electricity before Delco home-generating plants became available in the 1920s.
- Many structures in the 1930s and later exhibited what became stereotypical "Pueblo Revival" architectural style with stuccoed exteriors, carpentered porticos across their facades, and parapets hiding carpentered flat or gently sloping roofs.
- Post-WWII, concrete masonry units (CMU's) became a common wall material.



Round Rock Trading Post in Round Rock, AZ

A



Valley Trading Post in Waterflow, NM.

B



Hubbell Trading Post in Ganado Arizona. *Photograph by Ben Pepelka.*

C



Toadlena Trading Post and Weaving Museum in Newcomb, NM.

D

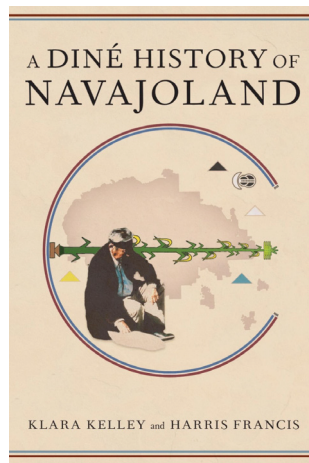
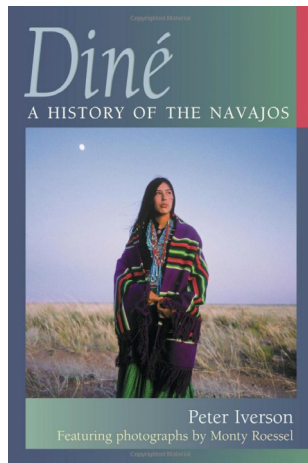
Today, there appears to be four distinct types of trading posts:

- A. Trading posts that have been closed and abandoned (and in many cases vandalized or destroyed completely) as a result of external socioeconomic influences.
- B. Trading posts that continue to offer goods and services most commonly used by the surrounding community. These trading posts offer a wide variety of goods for sale (*Wal-Mart, Sr.'s*) and are typically stocked with essential items in addition to items commonly used by the surrounding community(-ies).
- C. Trading posts that focus on tourism, a “Historic” nature, and/or the “Indian Arts and Artifacts”. These trading posts are typically stocked with novelty items and "Indian Arts and Artifacts"
- D. Trading Posts that function like and incorporate programmatic elements of types "B" and "C".

TRADING POSTS TODAY



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