

Field Trip Report

Navajo Rug Tour

Sept. 6 & 7, 2024

Trip Leader: Bill Postler

Participants: Bill & Jan Postler, Cory Pillen, Jim & Jerri Spellman, Ellen Roberts, Mark & Michelle McKibben, Sandy Rickon, Libby Shafer, Mimi Balduc, Cathy Roberts, Rich & Janet Wheeler.

Description: We began our journey with a visit to the Toh Atin Gallery in Durango and a lecture on Navajo weaving by Jackson Clark II. After lunch at our home, we carpooled to the Crownpoint Rug Auction in Crownpoint NM. We examined the rugs the weavers brought to sell and enjoyed the fun of the auction. A couple of the group members even purchased rugs at the auction. We then spent the night in Gallup.

On Saturday morning we visited Richardson's Trading Post in Gallup and learned something of the history of that post, the practices of pawn shops and their importance to Native peoples, and then looked through their collection of hundreds of new and old Navajo weavings (and jewelry and katsinas and pottery and on and on). From there we traveled north to Toadlena Trading Post (near Newcomb NM). The folks there fed us lunch (Navajo tacos!) and provided a carding and spinning and weaving demonstration with an 88 year old master weaver (Violet Brown) and her 12 year old granddaughter (Jamie – who hopefully represents a new generation of weavers). We enjoyed them as much as we enjoyed the demonstration.

Mark Winter (the owner of Toadlena and one of the leading experts on Saltillo and Navajo weaving in the country) then gave us an overview of weaving in the Southwest and showed a variety of weavings from 1750 to the present. Among the many examples he displayed were one-of-a-kind weavings worth hundreds of thousands of dollars! We also got to see the new exhibit ("Prayers") in the Toadlena museum – which focused on historic Yei and Yei Be Chai rugs. And once again a few of us found treasures that we had to take home with us! We returned to Durango, tired but filled with great memories and a good deal more knowledge about Navajo weaving. Everyone – from long-time collectors to folks

who knew almost nothing about Navajo weavings – said that it was a great experience.

Submitted by Bill Postler