


**Book Review: ‘Looking for Dan’**

**The Puzzling Life of a Frontier Character: Daniel Dubois**

John Lewis Taylor, the author of this book issued in 2012, spent many years as a teacher and principal southwest of Gallup: at Chichiltah/Jones Ranch BIA school. As he was married into the Navajo community he was fascinated by the many stories he would hear of a frontiersman and fellow Navajo ‘brother-in-law,’ who used to reside in the area: Daniel Dubois. So, upon retirement he began to collect information and eventually produce a small but extremely informative book in which he brings to life the less than famous, but dashing Dubois.

Taylor does an exceptional job of using a wide variety of sources to shed some light on the long exciting life of a frontier personality; he avoids making easy conclusions on the conflicting versions of Dubois childhood provided by Dubois and the many people with whom he came in contact.

The mystery is the reader’s to solve.

Dubois did live on in the memory numerous descendants in the area. He was wealthy not in money or particularly land, although he did have a ranch, but in the lives of the many people he influenced or helped create.

Dubois first came to Santa Fe back in 1851 after reportedly being born on a plantation by New

Orleans to Santiago Dubois, an immigrant from France and Margaret Donovan, an Ireland native. He was a large handsome man with a facility of languages.

He may have had a difference of opinion with his slave owning father on the subject of slavery.

He next surfaced among the Apache where, he later told Andrew Vanderwagen, the missionary to the Zuni, he had an Apache wife and children.

According to his grandson, Dan Garduno, being around the Apache “was the only way to live” in Dubois’s opinion. He later served as a dispatch rider for the U.S. Army at Ft. Defiance.

When the civil war began in 1861, Dubois was living among the Utes of Colorado. He then shipped as sailor, out of California, and made his way to the eastern U.S. where he enlisted in 1863 in the Ohio Volunteers of the U. S. Army under the name of Dennis Donovan. His unit lost 25 soldiers to disease and exposure. He was discharged with his unit later that year and then entered the U.S. Navy as a stoker on the USS Princeton. He served on the ocean as part of the picket duty as the Navy blockaded the Confederate fleet.

After the civil war Dubois travelled back to Ute territory and worked for Lucien Maxwell in Northern New Mexico on the largest ranch in the state. While there, he met the youngest daughter of the Navajo Chief Manuelito, Rosa. Rosa was a servant of the Maxwell family who had been captured as a child in a slave raid, probably by a hostile tribe, and purchased by Hispanic settlers. The word describing these stolen children is – Genizaro. He and Rosa had three children.

Eventually, after their children were born Dubois went to Lucien Maxwell and informed him that he and Rosa were leaving and that slavery in New Mexico was illegal. Dubois and Rosa then departed.

Sometimes a man is defined not only by his friends, but by his enemies. At one point he met the well regarded agent to the Navajo, Thomas Keam, who had come to the Navajo reservation while in the army and learned the language. He later married Asdzaan Liba, a Navajo woman.

Both Keam and Dubois were attacked and Keam was removed as agent by the mission group, which was earlier appointed to reform the Indian Service, the Presbyterian Board.

A new agent, William Arny was appointed.

The author Taylor quotes historian Raymond Locke described the new agent: "(Arny) had serious flaws in his character, he was a self-righteous bigot … none too honest … the worst agent the Navajo ever had to contend with."

A delegation of Navajo was soon on the way to Washington to petition Ulysses S. Grant, the president, for the removal of Arny. When the delegation was unsuccessful, the Navajo took control of the Agency.

Arny accused Dubois of advocating among the Navajo for the reinstatement of Keam's and Arny's removal. He also accused Dubois of being drunk and defiant at the agency building and refusing to leave when asked.

Arny resigned.

Rosa and Dubois eventually settled on a ranch south of St. Johns. While there the irrepressible Dubois was involved in many skirmishes and disputes.

Once while Dubois was out on posse duty following a raiding party of Apache from Mexico, his 16-year-old daughter had shown that she picked up his courageous outlook.

She left to watch the ranch with her mother Rosa and the granddaughter of Chief Manualito grabbed a rifle and went on the roof and began firing at a group of attacking Apache.

Dubois came riding up to the ranch in the midst of the fracas and all was soon under control.

Taylor's extensive research also utilizes the knowledge of Dubois' local descendants to reveal the true Dubois, but he does leave final judgment on Dubois' life to the reader.

Dubois died at age 91 in a Veteran's Home in California during the 1920's. He may not have achieved fame but led a full life.