



**Navajo Health Foundation /Sage Memorial Hospital**  
P.O. Box 457, Ganado, AZ 86505 (928) - 755 4500

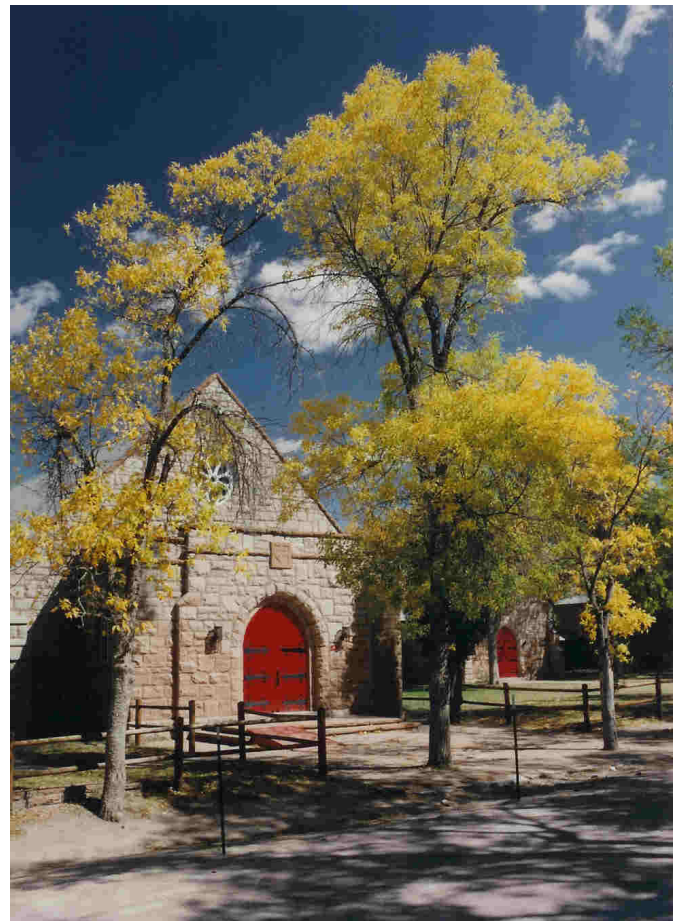
In the spring of 1901, an expeditionary party representing the Presbyterian National Board of Home Missions set out from Flagstaff to locate a desirable site for a mission to the Navajo Indians. Unlike other tribes in the Southwest, the Navajo did not live in large settlements but in small, nomadic, family-oriented camps, dispersed over a vast area. For this reason, the location for a mission had to be chosen carefully.

When the party arrived at the Hubbell Trading Post, they took note of the flowing water, arable land and availability of building materials. Moreover, they were impressed by John Lorenzo Hubbell's warm welcome and by his friendly and respectful relationship with local Navajos. The trading post was a hub for trade and a popular meeting place. Later that year, Charles Bierkemper and his wife, Alice, arrived as the first missionaries.

Mr. Bierkemper, with the help of an interpreter, Tom Morgan, and the Navajo workmen built the "Old Manse" by 1903. This adobe house served as the Bierkemper home, a meeting hall and a classroom for the day school started by Alice Bierkemper. Soon a school building and dormitories were built, and teachers and a principal hired. By 1906, Charles Bierkemper completed construction of the first Ganado Mission Church.

Dr. James Kennedy, who established the first hospital here in 1911, would fill his pockets with medicine and walk for miles over the desert to care for the sick. He was the first bilagaana (white) doctor most his patients had seen. In 1920, Reverend Fred Mitchell became Ganado Mission's first superintendent. He had years of previous experience and could speak Navajo fluently. Under his leadership, the mission programs greatly expanded.

### **Ganado Presbyterian Church**



Dr. Clarence Salsbury founded the first nursing school for Native Americans at the mission in Ganado. The school trained women from more than twenty tribes and several foreign countries. The institution was accredited by the State of Arizona and its graduates were highly regarded in their field. In the early 1930's, Dr. Salsbury was also responsible for the design and construction of the Sage Memorial Hospital (now Poncel Hall). Through the work of Dr. Salsbury and his wife, Cora, Ganado Mission was transformed from a desert outpost into a nationally recognized institution, attracting visitors such as Dr. W. Mayo of Mayo Clinic Foundation fame. The Presbytery of Grand Canyon continues to own the property and buildings, leasing them to the Navajo Health Foundation / Sage Memorial Hospital.

## Poncel Hall



## Sage Memorial Hospital - Main Entrance



Today, the Navajo Health Foundation /Sage Memorial Hospital with the all-Navajo Board of Directors, operates the 45-bed hospital as well as medical, dental and field clinics.

Adapted from "Hozhoni Rider" Newsletter by Cheryl Schou and Hozhoni Staff.