



EYE DAZZLER

In the 1870s, trading posts were established on the Navajo reservation. Weavers could now buy packaged synthetic dyes and commercially manufactured yarns. Produced in Germantown, Pennsylvania, these three- and four-ply yarns added brilliant colors to the weavers' palette and allowed for expanded styles over and above the more sedate "Chiefs' Blankets." Brilliant reds, greens, yellows, blues and their variants were woven into pieces that borrowed from the elaborate serrate diamond patterns of Mexican Saltillo serapes. The brightness of color and stunning designs led to the name "Eye-Dazzlers."

Neither blankets nor rugs in their weight and texture, eye-dazzlers were popular with trading posts and tourist buyers. Because of their popularity among non-Native American buyers, Navajo weavers switched from making wearing blankets to producing floor rugs and wall hangings in the new style. This new demand most likely saved the Navajo weaving tradition from extinction as it breathed life and money into what had become a repetitive, non-profitable enterprise.

The transition to a more consumer-driven production was not immediate. Germantown weaving extended well into the 20th century and improved over time in both balance and pattern.