

# George Brigham Hobbs

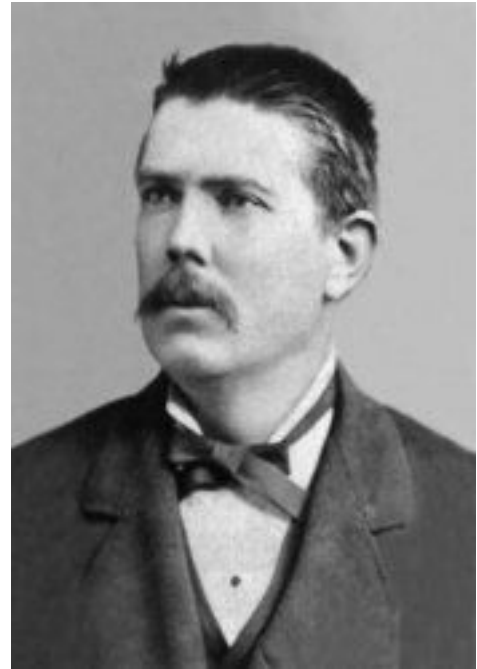
**Born:** February 22, 1856, in Hershams, Sussex, England

**Died:** November 19, 1921

**Marriage:** Julia Broadhead, October 18, 1883

**Father:** William Down Hobbs

**Mother:** Mary Ann Pope



## **A Key Member:**

George Hobbs played a pivotal role in the Hole-in-the-Rock expedition, and authored the only known accounts of the four scouts who pressed on ahead of the main company of pioneers to find a passable route.<sup>i</sup>

## **Childhood**

Born 22 February 1856, he was the eighth of nine children born to William Down Hobbs and Mary Ann Pope. At the time of his birth, his family resided in Hershams, Sussex, England, but following their conversion to the LDS faith, they emigrated to Utah.<sup>ii</sup> They were then sent to help colonize Parowan, Utah, where they built a small home.

## **Called to the San Juan Mission**

At the age of twenty-three, Hobbs was called to be part of the original San Juan Mission exploring party that set out in April 1879 to find a suitable spot for settlement. His sister, Elizabeth Harriman, and brother-in-law Henry Harrison Harriman, with their four children, were also part of the original exploration company. However, they remained at Montezuma, the place chosen for settlement, with a few other members of the company while the rest, including Hobbs, made the return trip to Paragonah.

Not long after, Hobbs embarked again for Montezuma with the main body of pioneers, who headed southeast through Escalante in the hope of finding a short-cut through the region. He was chosen with three other men – William W. Hutchings, Kumen Jones, and George Lewis – to find a place where the expedition could reasonably cross the Colorado River and build a road eastward. For just over a week, the four men searched for such a place, but returned with a negative report. They had seen the Hole-in-the-

Rock, but tried to find a passable route upstream from it. Though they were able to cross the river, they were not convinced that it would be feasible for the entire company to do so at that place and build a suitable road eastward from it<sup>iii</sup>.

### **Hole-in-the-Rock Advocate**

Yet shortly thereafter, a second party of explorers, which included Hobbs, revisited the area and probed the Hole-in-the-Rock more closely as an alternate crossing place. After doing so, most of the men, with the exception of Hobbs, were convinced that no wagon road could be made through such rough country. Hobbs “reluctantly” shared his opinion with the main company of pioneers at their Sunday meeting, a few days after the second exploring party returned. He did not like being in “arbitrary opposition to the judgment” of his fellow explorers, but he “thought it was possible to make a road through the broken country between the Colorado and the San Juan river and reach Fort Montezuma on the San Juan.”<sup>iv</sup> After prayer and deliberation, Silas S. Smith, leader of the San Juan Mission, made the decision to press forward through the Hole-in-the-Rock.

### **The Four Scouts / Salvation Knoll**

A rough trail down the canyon was then made in order to allow a small scouting party to discover more about the country that lay between the Hole and Ft. Montezuma. Once again, George Hobbs was chosen to be part of this exploratory group. In company with George Morrell, George Sevy, and Lemuel Redd, he set out with eight days worth of food in his pack on 17 December 1879. In later years, Hobbs was the only one of the four to put their experiences in writing, and so it is upon his recollections that any history of what transpired on their journey is based.

According to Hobbs, they became lost in freezing winter storms, and after having exhausted their food supply, found themselves sorely discouraged and frustrated. At this point, Hobbs knelt in prayer and then climbed “a small mound” in hopes of discovering which direction they should go. This place became known as “Salvation Knoll,” for from its summit Hobbs recognized the Blue Mountains about 10 miles off. Hope was again restored, and the men rallied their strength to press forward to the north. However, after traveling that way for three more days without food, Hobbs carved his name and the date in the rocks of a small canyon, fearing that he might not make it back alive. The next day, however, they chanced upon the cabin of the Harris family, who fed the weary, wet and famished travelers. Hobbs recalled the torture of smelling meat frying in the pan, and then eating twenty-two biscuits without restraint.

The next day the four scouts continued their journey up the San Juan and finally reached the Harrimans, Davises and Harvey Dunton at Fr. Montezuma. The settlers were nearly out of food, but estimated they could last another sixty days. After staying with them a couple of days, the four scouts, along with Dunton, began the return trip to the Hole-in-the-Rock, promising to return with additional food and supplies in two months’ time. Hobbs made good on this promise, and after accomplishing his return to the Hole, set out again for Montezuma with five mules laden down with provisions.<sup>v</sup> He

reached the families when they only had one pint of wheat left to eat.<sup>vi</sup> Following a twenty-day stay with the Harrimans and Davises, Hobbs set out again to rejoin the main wagon train. He eventually found them, and on his way was spared any harm from a hostile band of Indians who were believed responsible for the White River massacre. He was with the pioneer company as it reached Bluff shortly thereafter, and recalled the disappointment many of the settlers felt at seeing the landscape.<sup>vii</sup>

### Moved to Nephi

Like many of the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers, Hobbs did not stay permanently in either Bluff or Montezuma. Instead, he soon relocated to Nephi, Utah, where he met Julia Broadhead. They were married in the Salt Lake Endowment House on 18 October 1883. They became the parents of eleven children – an impressive family that included triplets and two sets of twins. Hobbs made a living as a carpenter and contractor in order to provide for his large family, and was well-esteemed within his community. He passed away 19 November 1921.<sup>viii</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> As noted in David E. Miller, *Hole-in-the-Rock: An Epic in the Colonization of the Great American West* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1966), 84-97. Miller reprints Hobbs' account that he dictated to L.D.S. Church Assistant Historian Andrew H. Jenson in 1917. The full account is contained in San Juan Stake History. Miller ascertains that this account was altered, however, and edited by Dr. Elden Black in his "Mormon Trails to Bluff," (*Utah Magazine*, February through April, 1941) and should not be attributed directly to Hobbs. The second account authored fully by Hobbs was published in the *Deseret Semi-Weekly News*, 29 December 1919, 6.

<sup>ii</sup> The exact year young George Brigham Hobbs left England is unclear. Jennie Hobbs writes that George's sisters Emma, Mary and Tryphena emigrated to Utah in 1863, with the rest of the family following two years later (1865). However, the life-sketch written of him in *The Saga of San Juan* states that George was "seven years old" when he emigrated, which would have been 1863. See Jennie (?) Hobbs, "Biography of George Brigham Hobbs, Pioneer, Came to Utah in 1865," Daughters of the Utah Pioneers; Cornelia Adams Perkins, Marian Gardner Nielsen, and Lenora Butt Jones, *Saga of San Juan* (Monticello, Utah; San Juan County Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1957), 311 .

<sup>iii</sup> Miller, 56-64.

<sup>iv</sup> Andrew Jenson as author of San Juan Stake History in Miller, 63-64. In contrast, Jennie Hobbs, lists George Hobbs as one of four men (George Savy, Lemuel Redd, and George Morrill being the others) who advocated building a road through the "Hole." See Jennie Hobbs, 2. Nevertheless, this information is questionable as it relates to when Sevy and Redd arrived at Hole-in-the Rock. As quoted in Miller's work, Andrew Jenson states they arrived at the Hole with a group a settlers shortly after a crude trail down the Hole had been finished. See Miller, 85 and 97, Note 3.

<sup>v</sup> A letter written by Lizzie Decker to her parents from Fifty-mile camp states, "George Hobbs came back and is making pack saddles to take grubm to Harrimans: he is going to take five mules." As transcribed in Miller, 81.

<sup>vi</sup> See "George B. Hobb's Account of Exploration From Hole-in-the-Rock to Montezuma and Return," in Miller, 85-97; Jennie Hobbs quotes extensively from a "verbatim" account "personally dictated" to Andrew Jenson that details Hobbs' return to Montezuma.

<sup>vii</sup> Jennie Hobbs, 7-8.

<sup>viii</sup> Perkins, 311; Jennie Hobbs, 8-9.