

presents:

**JACOB HAMBLIN:  
HIS OWN STORY**

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When I began researching some 15 years ago to write a biography of Jacob Hamblin, I sought to separate the man from many myths and legends. I sought primary sources, written in his own hand, but initially found mostly secondary references. From the latter I knew Hamblin had been labeled by some high officials in the hierarchy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the "Mormon Apostle to the Lamanites" (Book of Mormon name for the American Indian). I also found an insightful autobiography edited by James A. Little, first published in 1887, but unfortunately concluding some ten years before Hamblin died.

Thus, I began seeking primary sources, words written with Jacob Hamblin's own pen. I was informed by Mark Hamblin, Kanab, a great-great-grandson of Jacob, that a relative had a copy of an original diary. Family tradition had it that this diary was found in a welltraveled saddle bag, years after Jacob died. These records, among others, provide precious understanding today into the life of a man who dared to humbly believe in a cause greater than himself-- and did more than pay lip service to it. His belief was that the Book of Mormon, published by the LDS Church in 1830, made promises to the Lamanites by which they might live up to the teachings of Jesus Christ, as had their forefathers, and receive the same spiritual blessings. Jacob firmly believed he might in so doing, also broker a peace between white and red man which could spare military warfare and bloodshed on the frontier of southern Utah and northern Arizona in the middle and late 1800s.

In fact, Jacob's diaries and journals are full of entreaties to his pioneer brethren to settle their differences with scripture and friendship rather than musket and knife. There is no way to objectively analyze how many lives he saved in the process right here in Dixie, but it would be considerable by even conservative standards.

Jacob considered it his duty to take the "Good News of the latter days" to every native American within his reach, and there were thousands during the 1800s. Jacob saw the local Piedades, Santa Claras, Navajos, Hopis, all native Americans, as Israelites, not to be treated as savages but as children of God. Duty sometimes led Jacob Hamblin to leave his family for long periods and if there is one valid criticism of Jacob in hindsight, it might be that he wasn't home much to help his wives, within the LDS principle of polygamy in raising their children, which exceeded a dozen by the 1860s.

A harsh question as well: Did he interpret the scriptures, primarily the Book of Mormon, too literally, too optimistically, about how devoted missionary effort might make the Lamanites (or Indians) "blossom as the rose"? After all, by his own admission, he made little progress in gaining converts to the Hopi Indians despite repeated visits. History of this period doesn't record baptizing a single Navajo, that tribe which killed young George A. Smith while a member of Hamblin's missionary party. Give Hamblin credit, however, with achieving a peace with the Navajos in 1874 after they threatened to roast him at the stake. The Indians blamed him for the death of three Navajo braves venturing into Utah to trade for horses and told him that he could go only by promising to deliver to the Navajo Nation 350 Mormon cattle. This Jacob refused to do. Several Navajos asked at that point why this white man who was their prisoner showed no fear. Jacob answered simply, "Why should I be afraid among my friends?" Gie old Navajo summed it up rather succinctly: "Why, you have not a single friend among the entire Navajo Nation." But perhaps we have extolled too many virtues of this man. Let us look at a few of his negatives. Jacob had a bad habit; according to his own admission, he hated yard work. He tells us that one day he tried to stay home and weed the garden but his knee hurt so badly he didn't feel he could be effective. So he jumped on his horse to help settle a dispute with Indians nearly a hundred miles away in Grass Valley, near Antimony, and never mentions feeling ill again. Jacob was also a pacifist, a conscientious objector of his time. He went into many Lamanite "lion's dens" to settle conflicts but refused to take part in any organized military expedition. He was enlisted in one campaign to find the killers of two white settlers at Pipe Spring but he soon became ill and returned home. As Juanita Brooks and other historians record, Jacob was not present at the Mountain Meadows Massacre and being the non-military person he was, it does not seem in his character to have taken part in any of the battles if he had been there during those tragic September days of 1857. My research and conclusions about that

tragedy are included in the book Hamblin and are too lengthy to address here.

Secondary sources tell us Jacob was born in 1819 and died in 1886, with a memorial marker in Alpine, Arizona which includes the phrase "Peacemaker in the camps of the Lamanites." But let us probe together into the pages of Jacob's original writings to learn all we can about what happened in between. We learn that Jacob Vernon Hamblin may well be the most traveled human being in the history of Christian missionary endeavor, including the Apostle Paul. Paul traveled thousands of miles but consider that Jacob made some 10 known treks of approximately 600 or more miles each, round trip, to the Hopi Indians of Craibi, Arizona, alone. This does not count many expeditions to Nevada's Muddy and lyet Indians, north to Great Salt Lake City countless times to confer with church leaders about mission matters and to Mexico where he proselyted natives along the way.

Some might envision Jacob as seen in the exquisite portrait of him hanging in the Jacob Lake Lodge enroute to the north rim of the Grand Canyon. Or enjoy the bronze sculpture of him by Mont Crosland handing the Navajo chief Hastele a Book of Mormon. Or the grand portrait by Del Parson of Jacob negotiating with the Navajos, hanging in the Dixie College Library. Or read of his seemingly Herculean accomplishments in books and magazines of the early 1900s. Yet he was also ignored in many respects, not even mentioned in the World Book Encyclopedia, although it has much to say about other Indian negotiators such as Daniel Boone and Kit Carson. One must wonder out loud why northern Arizona never named anything after the man responsible for colonization of approximately a third of that state. Or why there is no annual trail ride from St. George to Pipe Spring, which route Jacob's

party traveled so heavily, or why not an annual trail ride from Kanab to House Rock Valley across the Kaibab forest? For that matter, Jacob's trail taken dozens of times is not even marked on maps of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management or the U.S. Forest Service, although a party of travelers who made a one-time-only expedition across the land in 1776 is well marked.

As we probe, let us look for these answers: Why was he so effective in gaining converts among the Native Americans while many around him failed? How was it he managed to bring peace to the frontier for so many years before it was accomplished in other parts of the West outside his sphere of influence? For example, in central and southern Arizona some Indians and whites killed each other on sight almost into the 1900s. How is it he managed to visit hostile Indian tribes for 30 years without so much as a scratch while settlers around him like James Whitmore, Robert McIntyre and three members of the Berry family along the Utah-Arizona border failed to escape the wrath of marauding Navajos and Paiutes? Just how, in his own words, did Jacob manage so many narrow escapes with hostile aborigines when his peers did not?

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But Jacob tells in his diary wherein he derived the remarkable courage to stand up to an angry Navajo Nation. Hamblin says he was sent by Brigham Young to help colonize Tooele, west of Great Salt Lake City and while there made his first encounter with the western natives. He and his peers were sent by local ecclesiastical authority to kill thieving Goshute Indians, but found their guns would not work properly. The Indians seemed to be having the same trouble shooting their arrows. Jacob tells in his own handwriting how he escaped death at the hands of a Goshute: "I met one of them and he begged for mercy. I thought it would be a neglect of duty if I let him pas but my gun mist fire as quick as thought he threw an arrow at me but fortunately, it struck the guard of my gun." Two more arrows passed near by.

Since they couldn't effectively kill one another, the two sides made a truce. Jacob concluded, as he put it, that "God must have a youse for the Lamanite." He decided that God was sending him a message: as long as he did not shed the blood of a Lamanite, they could not shed his. It was to be the guiding light of his life when he transferred as a missionary to the New Harmony/ Santa Clara region in 1854. If the Lord had a "youse" for the Indian, who was he to harm one of God's children? If he, Jacob, does not shed their blood, they cannot shed his. For Jacob, it was as simple as that.

That was the understanding he carried with him into the Navajo Nation in 1874. His friends, including Bishop Levi Stewart of Kanab, warned him that he was riding to certain death. As Hamblin put it, his life would be temporarily spared by the Navajos if he promised to return to them in 25 days for final judgment at their hands. They would check But perhaps we have extolled too many virtues of this man. Let us look at a few of his negatives. Jacob had a bad habit; according to his own admission, he hated yard work. He tells us that one day he tried to stay homeout his statement that it was not Mormons who had killed the three braves. When Jacob returns home, his diaries and journals contain some of the richest literature known to mankind as he explains to friends and family that yes, he is safe now but no, he must keep his promise. He must return to the council and be acquitted by that body.

But let's start in Jacob's diaries with his early life, his conversion to the Mormon Church and marriage to his first wife, Lucinda. What impact did they have on who he later became? To rely on primary sources to find answers, however, one must learn to be something of a language sleuth. When first encountering Jacob's diaries, I could scarcely decipher his writing. Some was smeared. Hamblin's penmanship appeared so ornate

on first glance that it seemed formidable. Hamblin's word selection reminded me of the "Middle English" style of Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, first encountered in my freshman English year at the University of Utah. In time, I learned to envision Jacob writing beneath a pinyon pine on Buckskin Mountain...or maybe beside a sage bough on Hurricane Mesa, and began to find greater understanding. It is a euphoric feeling to know you are reading the original writing, that you have lost nothing through another's translation. But there are hurdles to overcome. Hamblin, like others of his era, included no periods at the end of sentences and he had a maddening way of capitalizing almost every "s" as if it began a new sentence. Usually it did not. But one learns, after initial struggle, where one sentence ends and another begins.

Jacob's wording was also what one might call oblique. Rather than saying he found food along the trail and ate it, he says that the "Starving missionaries Stumbled across a vegetable garden grown by some local Indians and we appropriated it to our use." Instead of saying he ate something growing on a bush and got sick, he writes in his journal that "I Soon became Satisfied that I had been poisoned."

I found it helped to read Hamblin phonetically, filling in the missing vowels, paying no attention to capitalization, affixing the periods as I went, sometimes shutting my eyes, placing my mind where Jacob wandered during the middle and late 1800s. Only then could I fully appreciate the rich language and depth of thought Jacob meant to communicate with us in the year 1998. Putting myself in his place, the words now leapt out as if written the day before.

Hamblin wrote in a rhetorical way which would irritate a modern Associated Press writer trained to say up front who, what, when, where, why and how. Thus, it requires a little Sherlock Holmes in us to determine what the veteran missionary Jacob Hamblin was trying to communicate. I will shortly provide some examples.

It should be said that after reading over the original words of Hamblin, I found a typescript "translation" of Jacob's words in the Brigham Young University Special Collections room. There are others in the LDS Church Archives in Salt Lake City. But there was just nothing like seeing it in Jacob's own handwriting. I found myself reveling in his precise words. For example, there is the "Money Dream." In this, Jacob wrote that he had a dream one snowy night on Buckskin Mountain that his wife "needed a Dollar very mutch." In the dream he discovered a gold coin in his pocket. Upon his awakening, he says, "I know thiS to be of the Lord It means good..I hav written this bcawS I know it has meaning. It comforted my hart." (Periods supplied by this author.)

Now, what does this tell us about Jacob Hamblin? To me it means he was off doing the Lord's errand, which he did rather frequently. He was worried about the material welfare of his family, which some of the Hamblin neighbors often said they were also prone to wonder about, but Jacob knew the Lord would take care of his family's needs while he was on the Lord's errands. The value of original sources, with no translator in between, is that we can each decide what it means to us.

But back to Lucinda. Qie historian says that Jacob's first wife refused to go along with him in his conversion to Mormonism and finally tells him when he insists on joining the Saints in the Great Salt Lake Valley:

"All right, take your Mormon brats and get out." The same historian, a secondary source, says, "They had been extremely happy, except for having to move so often, thus upsetting their plans for a permanent home." From Jacob's diaries and journals, however, we get a totally different point of view. Deciphering Hamblin's writing, we fairly shout out "Eureka, I have found it!" for he tells us that he regarded his marriage to Lucinda a major mistake almost before the ink was dry on the marriage certificate and perhaps a message for all young couriers today that he "should have listened to the advice of his parents." His diary reads thusly: "The Third of oct 1839 I mared Mrs. Lucinda Taylor young and little experience as was mySelf this was contrary to the feelings of my parence when the marriage ceremony was over I felt condemnedfor what I had don I wouldgive all I possessed if I could have been fred thus was I pead for my disobedience in that I had no joy in the wife I had taken." This from page 4 of what the book Hamblin describes as the "Journals and Letters of Jaocb Hamblin."

Jacob tells us how he would yield to God only, not mammon, and therefore, leaves Lucinda and their comfortable home behind. He takes the four children, with his now converted parents, and hurries in the year 1859 to join the Saints in their Zion in the Rocky Mountains. But he halts enrout in Iowa to marry Rachel Henderson. He says he was told to do so by the Spirit. His journal reads: "I found this woman was of a mild, jentle disposition...! have hadpeaSe at home or in my family ever Since I have lived with this kind effction companion. I hav taSted the bitter. I know well how to appreciate the Sweet." Somehow, these words would not have the same profound meaning for me if written secondhand.

Another insight: in his usual humble fashion, Jacob wrote, "I have nothing very eSential to write ConSerning my past life...my education was very limited, altho I was taught to reSpect my parents and reverence the god of heaven." These two sentences in his own handwriting tell us volumes about the man Jacob Hamblin. Think how different our world would be today if everyone subscribed to these words of this man.

Here are some other "Hamblinisms" from his diaries and journals. In crossing the plains, June 14, 1850: "18 miles crosed Salt Creek campt in the Pawnee Territory...wood and water scarce Stood guard." After describing how many died of the "colery": "This was truly a mournful Scene...women and children mourning for their Husbands and Childrin...oblige to lev them on the plaines, burying them as desent as we could."

June 26, 27, 1850: "15 miles mud an drain...My wife violently attcted with the Colery about three oclock in the morning. I praydfor hur and anointed hur in the name of the Lord..Coledon Brs. Pectal and Hill to admin-ster She was relived immediately met the mail from Salt Lake Valley."

"We camped near the Santa Clara nere 5 or 6 lodges of the Piedes they mutch pleased..one young Squaw Said hur Mother was very Sick and wanted we Should talk to the Lord for hur one of thare ministers was there Singin so that he would pity the Sick woman and drive the evle Spirit away which was trying to kill hur She was quite jealous of me and told me to go away the woman was worse so they sent for us we went and laid our hands on her head and She was instantly heled they was all amased to see her get up and ask for Some thing to eat. they said she had not eaten anything for three days

On the watch for marauding horse thieves: "All well no Navajos seen yet."

"They [Piedes] were harvesting wheat...which they thrust against the ground..[trying] to knock the dirt from it." Jacob lent them a knife.

Watching the Tonaquints sell their children: "I Saw the tears fall from the eyes of the three girls about 10 or 12 years old. The Girls Father and Mother criyd to See them go but they had nothing to eat and it would be beter for the childrin than to Stay and Starve. I felt hart sick to see them dr aged from their homes to be Slaves..." Hamblin said he did all he could to "amelyerate the condicion of this miserable people." We see by this phrase that Jacob did not merely symphathize with the Indians. He tried to lift them up from a difficult way of life.

"I have many times had my feelings hurt to See the cold indiference with which the [Lamanite] elders hav been treated by some of the Southern sellers." This included times when Jacob fought verbally with his settler peers to give the Indians as much irrigation water as received by the whites for their own crops.

At one point a Piede tried to intimidate Hamblin. He implied the Piedes would kill the Mormons. Walker [Ute chief] would help. He "would come and kill all the Mormons in Harmony." Says Hamblin: "I told him he lied. If the Piedes had killed one of the Mormons, they would all be Shot. I told him I had no bread to Spare [but] gave him Some matches...we Shook hands and parted with better feelingS than when we met."

Upon the Piedes fighting for their wives. One maiden being bantied about asked for Jacob to pull her away from harm and as he did so, found himself embroiled in Indian custom. He says, "One of the waryers presented himself ...I was glad to get out it with a brused face. They draged her over the river...one of them caught the other by the hair." Hamblin said some of the women being fought over had blood on their faces, mud in their mouths and eyes.

At one point, Jacob kicked a brave he was fighting and quickly learned he had broken Paiute protocol. Jacob was told sternly it was against Indian rules to kick. But he did manage to get the chiefs to promise to stop this practice of fighting for their wives as "I would not Stay with his people if they didn't stop such conduct. He [the chief] said that was the way they got their Women. Jacob says, "You want I should write good to the Mormon chief [Brigham Young] about you? 'Ch yes,' he said." Jacob warned, "I write truth...." Next morning the chief said that "he and his principal men counceled on it that night and he did not want me to say anything about what had been don. They was a Shaimed of themselves...! began to gain influence among them."

Jacob wouldn't score many points with today's chambers of commerce. When guiding Major John Wesley Powell into potentially hostile Indian country, it was the major who named the Grand Canyon and Mt. Trumbell and almost any other geographical feature on the horizon, perhaps with more funding from Congress in mind for future explorations. Hamblin seemed willing to let Powell take all the glory, as if he, Major Powell, discovered everything first. As a matter of fact, Hamblin's diaries and journals never claim to do anything first or best, or

name anything, or even describe the wonders of nature, although once he got out of character by using the word "Sublime" in his wanderings. Travelogues were for others like Major Powell.

It required later historians, secondary sources, to document that Jacob was the first white man to travel completely around the Grand Canyon, first to cross the Colorado River at Lee's Ferry, first to see the spectacular, tropic-like waterfalls of Havasupai Canyon, promising never to say anything about them. I've seen those wonders myself and I don't know how he could keep the secret...except that he promised to. Today, ironically, the main reason these falls are known to the world is via brochures put out by the natives who live there.

In Jacob's autobiography is outlined how Hamblin escaped death at the hands of hostile Navajo judges. How hostile were they? We know from other histories such as Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* that a majority of Navajos at that time had signed a treaty allowing them to return home from the hated Bosque Redondo in New Mexico. But many rebels had not signed the treaty and deeply resented it. What better way to express that resentment than to kill another white man which had, they believed, caused the death of three Navajo braves?

Jacob was too modest to give us the complete story. He might have been a better communicator if not so reticent about his accomplishments. At least he does include a version written by the Smith brothers, with local mining interests, who accompanied Hamblin to meet the Navajo Nation. The Smiths wrote in a Pioche, Nevada newspaper that they had never seen such courage as displayed by Hamblin. IDS Church historian

James Bleak also provides further light on Hamblin's coolness under pressure.

Thus, I do not want to cast aspersions on the value of secondary sources. They often clarify important issues the original writer does not tell us. In this case, doing so might make it appear he was bragging. If he had done a little of the latter, he might be as well known today as Boone and Carson, those heroes of the dime novels. But it would be as a negotiator, one who sat and ate around many Indian campfires rather than fighting those who built them.

Actually, Jacob does brag occasionally, once in saying how he found Fish Lake in one day while a brother taking a different route required two. He also writes of outdoing Indian medicine men in healing the sick.

Other than Lucinda and the early courtship with Rachel, if it can be called that (for Hamblin can scarcely be called a romantic), he says nothing about his domestic life. He writes almost entirely of church mission matters. If it was not church duty, it was not mentioned. This is a shame in many respects for clearly, he could not have proceeded on so many "missions of duty" without the support of faithful wives Rachel, Priscilla and Louisa. The documentation is there in both the BYU and LDS Church Archive libraries that Jacob married Ellen, a Paiute maiden. But Jacob says nothing about Ellen in his diaries and only mentions her once in his autobiography, when the Navajos would let him go free if he would turn his wife over to the belligerents. Jacob says, paraphrasing, that whatever the odds, he would rather die like a man than live like a dog.

Most of the domestic data about his family is gleaned from LDS records and from historian Pearson Corbett's lengthy interviews with relatives in the 1940s and '50s. But where his innermost insights are given, nothing does it like hearing directly from Jacob Hamblin.

Not all of Hamblin's journal entries are earth-shattering remnants of history. One gives a pioneer remedy for blood poisoning and tapeworm: For blood poisoning, "Use hyposulfate of Soda..for killing tape worm take 6 ous pumagranite bark."

As a linguistic aside, Hamblin is not consistent in the spelling of the word "pearents" or "parence." In some of his writings he spells "Santa Clara" three different ways. But we don't want to be too critical. Spelling appears to be somewhat adventurous and creative even in the time of William Shakepeare.

But Jacob's richest thoughts, in my opinion, are often presented in teaching the gospel of peace to the Indians, including the Santa Clara and Piede tribes who lived almost where we now sit. Much work was required to make the desert liveable and Jacob put the Indians to work in helping win it over. But he sought always their spiritual welfare, a thing which he felt his mission president predecessor ignored.

And after a terrible flood, the settlers and Indians of this region had to start over again before the area became as habitable as we find it today. Much can be learned by visiting Hamblin's second home in Santa Clara, now an LDS visitors center on the west edge of town. I would invite all

to pay a visit there. An interesting item on display is Jacob's saddle, probably one of many, a major tool in disseminating his message of the restored gospel to the Lamanite. For some 30 years he was in that saddle trying to carry the Mormon concept of Christianity to the natives. He was from the beginning aware that the ways of the Indians who inhabited these lands from Harmony on the north to Grand Canyon on the south were not like those of the white settlers. The Indians held that sky and land and water belonged to all in common. Now came these paleface pioneers, and like pioneers everywhere, produced a piece of paper saying they owned a given pasture or spring. Even Jacob Hamblin "leased" Mountain Meadows for pasturage. The Indians could not comprehend it. The white man made no attempt to claim he owned a piece of the sky. How could anyone own the land and water underneath it?

It required a man like Jacob Hamblin to explain the aborigines' point of view to incoming pioneers. Many of these new settlers failed to see how they had impacted the lives of the local natives. Jacob's diary says that the white men turned their cattle out onto the adjacent grasslands but failed to realize that the natives depended on that grass, even though owning no horses or cattle. They needed it to sustain themselves via a harvest of weed seeds and grasshoppers. When we palefaces took away their livelihood, the Indians raided the settlers' villages to find food.

Jacob took the view the settlers had, indeed, imposed upon the region's native inhabitants, acceptable so long as they did what God sent them to do, improve the lives physically, intellectually and, spiritually of all with whom they came in contact. While the settlers often sought to retaliate by raising military forces to dispense with the mischief-makers, Jacob

insisted the two factions could get along peaceably if they but understood one another. Hamblin eventually proved correct.

Jacob's success in bringing about this understanding undoubtedly saved many lives in Dixie, both Indian and white. His insight and skill in understanding differences between the various races, cultures and ethnic groups could be better acquired by us all. It would seem to serve this world well if there were more Jacob Hamblins.