

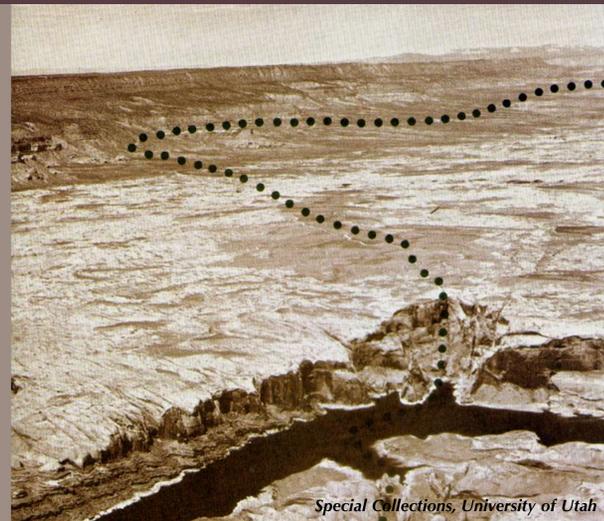
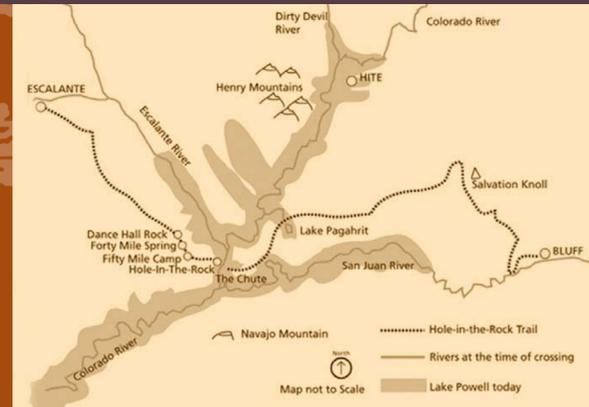
The Longest Shortcut Hole-in-the-Rock Trail

“Before we left our homes we were told that the country had been explored, and that the road was feasible. But now we found that someone had been mistaken.”

—Samuel Rowley, member of the Hole-in-the-Rock Expedition (San Juan Mission)

Not There Yet

Though the pioneers had overcome immense obstacles to reach the Colorado River, huge challenges still lay ahead. A maze of canyons stretched before them, requiring two more months of grueling travel. By April 6, 1880, worn out and anxious to plant crops, they stopped 18 miles short of their destination of Montezuma and settled the community of Bluff. Their journey, planned to last six weeks, had taken nearly six months.



Dance Hall Rock

In late November 1879, the wagon train stopped at Fortymile Spring for several weeks while men built the road to the canyon rim and on to the river. During the long layover, the pioneers kept spirits up with dances at this sandstone amphitheater, known as Dance Hall Rock, now a National Historic Site.

One Wild Wagon Trip to Remember

In March 1879, Mormons from Cedar City were called by their church to settle the San Juan River basin in southeastern Utah. Since no direct wagon routes connected the two regions, leaders of the San Juan Mission decided to create a shortcut. That fall, 234 men, women, and children set out in 83 wagons loaded with their worldly possessions. From Escalante, they traveled

southeast, building a road through increasingly rough terrain. When they finally glimpsed the Colorado River, it lay 1,800 feet below them. Undeterred, they set about blasting a trail down a steep crevice. On January 26, 1880, the first wagon descended the 25-45 percent grade of the Hole-in-the-Rock. By February 1, all 83 wagons had reached the river safely.

Indian ricegrass (Achnatherum hymenoides)