ETHEL WOOLF BALLS  
1883-1975

Ethel Woolf was born 17 Nov. 1883, in Hyde Park, Cache County, Utah, a daughter of John Anthony Woolf II and Celia Ann Hatch. Her mother was the 2nd wife of John Anthony. Ethel, along with her 3 other sisters, Katherine, Bertie and Eva, attended Primary, Sunday School and elementary school all in the same rock building. Mary Ann Grant was her first school teacher.

When she was a young girl she had many of the dreaded childhood diseases—mumps, measles, whooping cough, and was also a victim of the real smallpox, which impaired her hearing all her days.

When she was 17 years old March 1902, she went to Cardston, Alberta, Canada, to work in the post office for her father, who was postmaster at the time. He had moved his first family up there earlier. She stayed one year, but was so homesick she could not eat or sleep, so she returned home. It took 3 long days to make the trip by sleigh, train, and coach. She arrived in Hyde Park 2 March 1903.

In the spring of 1905, her mother sold the little home in Hyde Park and moved to the Second Ward in Logan. Ethel did not live there long because she and Alma Balls were engaged. They were married in the Logan Temple 7 June 1905, and she moved back to Hyde Park 12 June 1905, to live in a 2 room adobe house built by Alma’s grandfather, John Balls.

In 1911, they left for Metropolis, Nevada, with some furniture, 4 horses, 3 cows and their children. Lew was then 3 1/2, Idonna, was 2, and Dueard, 19 months. Alma’s tent was the first pitched out there in the tall sagebrush and sand. There were 10 LDS families who homesteaded on these prairie lands. It was genuine, hard pioneering for 5 years; clearing the land of sagebrush and building canals to get the water from canyon springs proved to be quite a chore. They built a one-room schoolhouse where all 6 grades were taught (about 12 or 13 children). They also built a church house for winter and a bowery for summer entertainments. The wind blew constantly; needless to say, the sand was whipped into the tent houses and the tar, paper was blown from the roofs.

The men fixed iron railroad ties together to drag the huge sage bushes down, which were as tall as the white-top buggies. The sage would be naked into long rows and burned. Torches were made for the children to carry from row to row. Ethel drove 4 head of horses to help rail this brush, spending many, many long days in the hot sun, sand, wood ticks and wind. The sage brush was burned for fuel and warmth and made a real hot fire.

A well had to be dug for water, but the water wasn’t good. The government finally issued a proclamation for a right-of-way on their land to build a pipe line, piping water from Trout Creek into town just 5 miles away. This was good. They could have hydrants tapped on to this line—one by the barn and one by the tent.

Hundreds of wild, white-faced, horned cattle were corralled at Alma’s for their branding before being shipped from Wells to all parts of the country.

Ethel and her sister, Katherine, would drive a horse and buggy into Wells to get supplies, taking the 2 smallest children and wiring a case of eggs on the back to travel 12 miles. The road was full of chuckholes and ruts and both women would be aching and exhausted after a day like this. It was not long until a small church, a schoolhouse, post office, store and barber shop were built in Metropolis. The families all worked hard to make them function in the proper order. A large, beautiful hotel was built with a glass floor and a ballroom; Alma was the dance director.
In 1912, Ethel was sustained secretary in the Relief Society in Nevada. They had to travel by wagon for 5 miles into town for all their Church activities and the Saturday night dances. A 5 piece orchestra would come from Salt Lake City and play from 8 p.m. until midnight for $12. They enjoyed many get togethers as all the families were so friendly & united in all that transpired.

Each year they were getting further behind on their homesteads, however. The Pacific Reclamation Co. Went broke. The seasons were hot and dry and the dam they had built was almost dry. The squirrels and jack rabbits would clean their fields almost bare in one night. They became very discouraged with so much hard work and little progress, so left Metropolis by train on 10 Nov. 1915. John A. Woolf, Ethel’s father, met them at the depot with a small hand sleigh which came in very handy for a suitcase and the baby Clin (who had been born in Nevada) to ride on. They moved to the William Ball ranch 2 miles north and east of Hyde Park in the early spring. Alma and his brother, Parley, rented the ranch from their father; but soon Parley moved to Amalga, and Alma was handling the farm. There were 8 acres of fruit trees and 40 acres of grain, hay and pasture.

The happiest days of their lives were spent here under the eastern foothills. They spent 19 years there without any modern conveniences. Here 2 more children were born, Celia and Shirley. They worked hard and taught their 6 children, Lew, Idonna, Dueard, Clin, Celia and Shirley, how to work, pray and live humbly. Shiry was the only child born in a hospital; the rest were all born at home with help of a midwife. The 2 Burgess families were their closest and only neighbors. They loved their friendship and shared alike in their farm work, friendship and happiness. They moved from the ranch into Hyde Park in 1934, renting a place while their new home was built. The children were all married then except Celia and Shirley.

Alma died 19 Aug 1959. Ethel was always very active in the Church and served in nearly every capacity in all the auxiliaries. She attained the special honor of receiving the “Stake Honorary Golden Gleaner” award. She wrote thousands of letters to servicemen and missionaries of her town and Cache Valley. She was widely known for her outstanding hospitality. Everyone loved her. She was always a dramatic & interesting storyteller, thrilling all who came to listen. Children loved to hear the faith-promoting, true stories of her pioneer life, of her profound faith in the gospel, and her sincere belief in the power of prayer and the priesthood. Indeed, she was a devoted, industrious, valiant, lovable, prayerful & noble woman all the days of her life.

In the last year she lived at 194 N. First East in Hyde Park. At the age of 89 years and 3 months (when this sketch was originally prepared) she was confined to her bed with constant & special nursing care. Her families surrounded her with comfort & love as she neared the end of her life. She died 10 Jan. 1975, at 91 years, of causes incident to age. She was survived by her sons and daughters: Idonna Balls Leishman of Logan; Duard Calir Balls and Clin Anthony Balls, of Hyde Park; Celia Ann Balls Hawkes, of Las Vegas, Nev.; and Shirley Ethel Balls Haslam, of Bountiful, Ut. She then had 26 grandchildren, 61 great grandchildren and 1 great great grandchild. Her families loved and adored her for the beautiful exemplary life she set for them to follow.

Typed into the computer 27 Oct. 2002 by Kathleen Jardine Woolf Idaho Falls, Idaho
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