HANNAH ELLIZA WOOLF BROWN
1838-1927

Hannah Eliza Woolf, 4th child and second daughter of John Anthony and Sarah Ann Devoe Woolf, was born 5 Nov. 1838, in Pelham, Westchester, New York. She was only 3 years old when her parents accepted the Gospel and joined the Church. When she was 5 years old, the family boarded the boat on the Hudson River for a long trip by water to Nauvoo, Illinois. Although she was still very young, she remembered quite well many of the trials and persecutions endured at Nauvoo. Speaking of these times she said. “The mob was marching through the streets all night, playing their music and beating their drums. I remember one night Father and the menfolks were out watching: Mother had some neighbor women come in to stay with her, and they sat up all night. They put us children to bed with our clothes on so we would be ready to go if driven”

She remember Winter Quarters, and one event in particular. She said, “I was baptized by my father when I was 8 years old at Winter Quarters in the Hiland Grove, where we wintered.”

The trek across the plains to 9 year old Hannah probably seemed more of an exciting adventure than it did to the older folks, She spoke with considerable affection of the 2 oxen named “Grey Back”, and “Tow Head”, which pulled the wagon she helped drive. She remembered the good meetings on Sunday, and the real sociable, good times on the trek. She was not very well impressed with her first view of the Valley, however. In her autobiography she states, “It was a dismal looking place. All we could see was sagebrush, sunflowers, a few segos, and Indians. The people ate the roots of the thistles and cooked the tops for greens. One little boy said, “Mama, I don’t like the thistles, they prick my mouth.”

She said, “We camped in the southwest corner of the Old Fort where Father made adobes and built a 2 roomed house. The roof was made of willows and wild grass and then dirt was thrown on that. We had dirt floors.” She continues, “After I was 10 years old I was put to work in various ways carding and spinning, braiding wheat straw and sewing hats for both men and women, and doing housework. In 1858, I gleaned and thrashed 10 bushels of wheat. Wheat was 2 dollars a bushel at that time.”

“After we were settled in our new home we found that our clothing was getting scarce, so Mother cut up the wagon covers and made shirts and dresses of them; then she made buckskin pants all around for the menfolks.” Supplies continues to dwindle. “Mother would make Johnny cake and cut it up and each could have just one piece and no more–at one time we were 6 weeks without bread.”

I was married to Homer Brown in 1856 12 Oct. By Brigham Young in his office, and afterward sealed in the Endowment House. After I was married, I with my husband and family moved to Nephi and bought a farm. He followed farming until 1862, when he let his farm out to Sam Linton, returned to Salt Lake and took his father’s farm on shares. We lived there until 1881 and then moved out to Taylorsville.”

Hannah Eliza became the mother of 14 children, 10 of whom lived to maturity. In 1905 her husband passed away after being badly injured by a bull. She continued to live in Taylorsville until about 1914, when she sold her 85 acre farm in the Bennion Ward and bought a little piece of land on her daughter’s place at Thomas, Idaho, so that she could be near some of her children. She then was about 76 years old, her children had all married and left home except Claude, her youngest son, who had crippled feet and never married. He was very kind to his mother and would help her with the heavy work around the house as well as tend the garden.
Erwin Brown Evans, a grandson who lived next door to her in Thomas, relates, “Grandmother was always very active and energetic; even during the last summer of her life, although she was almost 90 years old, she insisted on doing most of her housework, as well as some hoeing in her garden. During the later years, she would occasionally stumble and fall. Although this never seemed to do her much physical damage, it would ruffle her temper and she would exclaim, “Plague take it,” and get up spluttering about like a little old hen because of her inability to move as nimbly as she did when a young girl.” In a letter to her daughter, Ethel, she once wrote, “I am not making much butter this summer, I sell 10 pounds a week at 25 cents a pound.”

She passed away 3 Dec 1927 in her little home at Thomas at the age of 89 (just a month short of her 90th birthday), having lived to be older than any of her brothers and sisters. She was buried in the Thomas Cemetery. She was preceded in death by 8 of her 14 children. She died as she had lived, true to the faith and valiant in the truth. Her testimony, in her own words from her autobiography states, “I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet and that Brigham Young was his successor. I have a strong testimony to bear to the truthfulness of this work. I have had many testimonies that it is true and the everlasting gospel.”

Information from book  JOHN ANTHONY WOOLF FAMILY  Publ. 1986
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