Chester Hambleton Woolf, son of Utah Pioneers Absalom and Lucy Ann Hambleton Woolf, was born 26 April 1873, at Hyde Park, Cache County, Utah. His grandfather, John Anthony Woolf, was among the first to settle in Hyde Park.

Of necessity they became farmers, in order to produce the food required by their families and farm animals. Most of them had only small animals for riding and driving purposes, while the heavy work in the fields or canyons was done with oxen. Later on, they were able to buy work animals from people who came through the Valley with bands of horses. John A. Woolf owned the first stallion worthy of mention in the Valley. It was known as “The Woolf Horse,” and from it many fine draft horses were produced. They were mostly roan in color and were rather small and stocky. Chet’s father, Absalom, like his father, also was a dealer in fine horses; it was not unusual to see him with several men in the barnyard buying, selling or trading horses.

Chester (or Chet as he was most often called), having grown to young manhood in this environment, also learned to admire and love horses. When he was 18 or 19 years old, he hitched one of his father’s fancy trotting horses to a cart and went driving around town, proud to be showing off such a fine animal, but not realizing that he was overdoing it. When absalom learned what was going on, he started out to find his son and the cart and horse. When he did find them, the horse was in a lather of sweat. Absalom, who was usually very calm and had never been heard to swear, was so angry when he saw the horse that he did swear at Chet and told him, “Get that horse home before I take a whip to you.” Shocked and embarrassed to think that he had caused his father to say this, Chet shortly afterward left home and went to Cardston, Canada, where some of his relatives and former townspeople had gone.

Before long he had bought himself a good riding pony, a buggy horse and a team of good work horses and had gone to work for the owners of some large cattle ranches. Later he was able to go into business for himself and was a typical western cowboy. His horses were well cared for and groomed until their hides shown like velvet. He was an imposing and well-known figure as he rode erect and proud in his saddle. He usually wore a large black cowboy hat, for which he would pay as much as $25, which was a lot of money in those days.

While in Cardston, he met and married Mary Ann Wilcox on 19 Dec. 1894. She was born 16 Sept. 1875, in Lewiston, Utah. She also was very fond of horses and would often help Chet catch and break wild ones. She often made the remark that it was a wonder that every bone in her body hadn’t been broken.

About 3 years after their marriage she gave birth to the first of her 6 daughters. After that she settled down and lived the life of a normal, loving wife and homemaker.

Among many interesting experiences which Chet had was this one he used to relate:

One day during the late fall, as the weather was getting cold with snow and blizzards settling in, he saddled up “Old Blue,” his riding pony, and rode out to look after and round up his cattle for the winter. After having done so, and as he was riding toward home with his head bent against the storm of falling snow and wind, he let the horse have his way as to the route they should take. Suddenly the horse snorted and stopped. As Chet looked up, he saw something ghost-like moving back and forth a hundred or two feet ahead of him. He was no coward, but he was so startled that he said the hair on the nape of his neck actually stood out. He pulled out his six-shooter and filled all 6 chambers. Thus armed, he urged the horse forward so he could have
it out with Mr. Ghost. He called out, “What do you want?” Receiving no answer from the still-rocking object ahead of him, he decided to have a showdown. He dismounted and with his gun cocked he slowly led “Old Blue” toward Mr. Ghost, which proved to be an old white cow licking her newborn calf.

Chet and his wife, May (as she was commonly called), lived in Canada until after their third daughter was born in 1901 and then moved to LaGrande, Oregon. While there, and after he had been away from his childhood home for 21 years, he went and paid a visit to his folks in and around Hyde Park.

In LaGrande he purchased a small farm and kept 4 horses, a cow, some pigs and chickens and always a dog or 2 of which he was especially fond. He would say, “You may kick my pants, but not my dog.” Although LaGrande was in a great sawmill country, there were a number of large ranches at which Chet worked during the winter hauling hay to the cattle, etc.

During the time that they resided in LaGrande, 3 more fine daughters were born to them. The daughters then included: Ida Lorene, born 8 Nov. 1897; Pearl, born 31 Oct 1899; Mable, born 7 Nov 1901; Nona, born 29 Feb. 1904; and Mary Evelyn, born 7 Aug. 1915.

They next moved to Idaho, where they remained for about 5 years before going to Longview, Wash. Here he helped build up the town by grading and hauling dirt with his wagon and work horses. Chet made friends with and loved children. He would often stop and pick them up for a ride in his wagon, sometimes starting out at such a fast pace that the older ones would have to run to catch up, which they considered great fun.

Another of Chet’s hobbies was raising a vegetable garden and beautiful flowers during the summer. He also learned to play the organ without ever taking a lesson, and enjoyed playing it while singing the current popular songs.

Chet passed away 14 June 1930 at the age of 58 and was buried in Longview, Wash. 2 years after Chet’s death, Mary Ann married Ernest Finney and they continued to live in Longview. Mr. Finney passed away 7 Oct. 1943, after which Mary Ann sold the home and moved to Kelso, Wash., near her daughter, Evelyn. Mary Ann died 11 Oct. 1961, in a nursing home.