HOMER WOOLF
1855-1933

Homer Woolf, the 11th child and 7th son of John Anthony Woolf & Sarah Ann DeVoe, was born in Nephi, Juab, Utah, 12 Oct. 1855. He was one of 3 children born these stalwart pioneers in Nepofo. Harriet, his older sister, born in 1853, not long after the Woolf family had fled from their farm in Mona & established residence in the Nephi Fort for protection against the Indians. Wallace, 12th and last child, was born in Nephi in 1858. Life was hard in Nephi; water was scarce, pests abundant, & encounters with the Indians a continuous threat. All work in the fields, & all work with cattle on the range, had to be undertaken in a manner either to provide time for escape or with a show of strength sufficient to discourage, if not rebuff, surprise attacks. Indians were not the only offenders; hate, mistrust, theft, & even murder were rampant among renegade whites.

Homer’s childhood & youth occurred in a period of great distress & political turmoil in the territory of Utah. The Johnston’s Army episode, the Mountain Meadow Massacre, & years of tension between the Federal Judge & the local people all occurred in Homer’s younger years. Though he was too young to have direct contact with these events, they formed the background against which his life unfolded, giving him a thoughtfulness, caution, self-reliance, & absence of boisterousness or braggadocio common in some youths at his time.

Homer was 7 when the family moved to Hyde Park in Cache Valley. There water was plentiful, the settlement was new, & further removed from the centers of tension. Homer’s older brothers & sisters, Absolom, Sarah Ann, James, & Hannah Eliza had married & left the family hearth. Isaac, the oldest still at home, was 21. John Anthony II, 19, Andrew, 16, Phebe, 11, and Harriet 9. In traveling from Nephi to Cache Valley, driving their cattle & conveying their few earthly belongings in wagons, the younger children learned from the older ones & from their parents the skills acquired by the latter on their former similar treks, especially the long one from Nauvoo to Salt Lake.

In Hyde Park, there was endless toil in establishing a home and farm on virgin soil, but here their industry was rewarded with crops & with adequate, if primitive, shelter. Here Homer could attend school in the winter months & church on Sundays, interspersed with occasional picnics & church socials. He lived in the Hyde Park home with his parents for 18 years until he reached 25 years.

In the meantime, he had met & courted Loila Bates, a beautiful girl, who with her parents were also residents of Hyde Park. After their engagement, they traveled in a wagon to Salt Lake City, a distance of nearly 200 miles by primitive roads, & were married in the Salt Lake Endowment House 23 Dec. 1880.

In the spring of 1883, Homer moved his wife & son to Riverdale, Id. & helped settle that country. On 13 April 1887 Homer was set apart as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Later-day Saints, to go to the Southern States Mission (Virginia). He left his wife with 3 small children to care for. She milked cows, made butter, & gave room and board to the school teacher to support her husband in the mission field. Homer spent most of his time in the hill country of Virginia, among very backward people, & where conditions were very poor. He often told of being served opossum, squirrel, raccoon, & corn bread. He returned home after completing his mission in June 1889.

Loila’s mother had moved to Cardston, Alberta, Canada, so it was Loila’s desire to
move northward to live near her. Canada offered opportunities such as land to be homesteaded, good black soil, and grass “two feet high”. They, with their 4 children, left for Canada in the spring of 1894. For 6 weeks they traveled a treacherous route through rugged, hostile Indian territory. They had to ford swollen, muddy rivers. Thieves would fire their guns at night, trying to stampede the family’s stock in order to steal the animals. At last they arrived at Cardston, in June of 1894. Homer homesteaded & built up a ranch a few miles north of the international boundary line between the United States & Canada. His ranch was near that of his Nephew, John William Woolf, son of John Anthony II, & not far from that of his cousin, Frank Brown, son of Sarah Ann Woolf Brown. Here Homer and Loila raised their family of 8 children, 4 of whom had been born in the United States and 4 in Canada. All of their children made successful marriages & became able & honorable citizens of the Canadian community.

Homer served as a Sunday School Superintendent, Counselor in the Bishopric, and as a High Council member for 20 years. He was a very kind, friendly man & was lovingly called “Uncle Homey” by many.

He suffered a heart attack & quickly passed away on 22 June 1933, the last of the children of John Anthony Woolf and Sarah Ann DeVoe to leave this earth.

Typed into computer 14 Oct. 2002 by Kathleen Jardine Woolf at Idaho Falls, Idaho