

WOOLF JOHN ANTHONY 1805-1881  
MS 7028 Church Historical Department  
Letter to Phebe Woolf (his mother)

Spelling and punctuation has not been changed.

Pottawatamie Nation Feb. 19, 1847 Council Bluffs

Dear Mother and Sisters this day finds us enjoying a good degree of health with the exception of little Andrew he is not very well. We think that he is getting teeth. We received a letter from Father Devoe's folks about the 6<sup>th</sup> of Dec. Having several dollars in it, which you wished me to inform P. Young and others. Matters which I have answered in letter dated near the last of Dec. Which I expect will come to hand before this one does, if it does not this will certify that we are in comfortable circumstances, which you will find I more fully described in a former letter which I speak of since I wrote before there has an unhappy circumstances occurred in our family. Little John has had his finger cut off, the middle finger on the left hand. It was not cut completely off, but hung by a little strand (?) underneath the finger the 2 adjoining fingers seemed good Very bad but not serious to come off we rapped up the finger that was nearly off as well as we cold and splintered it but the end busted and I took it off h is finger well it is best off about the first joint from the end Hannah Eliza was cutting some bark from a steak knife John took hold of the bark unperceived by her and she hacked the knife down upon his fingers We were always pleased to hear from you and specially to hear of your good health we are making preparations for to years to California we shall start probably some time in May we expect to cross the mountains in the warm part of the season I have understood from men that have traveled the road that we now are within two days travel of the buffalo country there is plenty of buffalo Men have for sale it is fat and good some think better than the tame cattle I wish that Andrew would send me all the money that he has collected of mine as I am going along journey and I know not what may happen me by the way and I know not how much expence I may be to before I may again get settled upon a farm but when I got settled I expect to have a farm that will be of some account I had in the State of Illinois a splendid which was worth not less than three thousand dollars but by those Whestove" oppression I have been obligated to sell it for the small sum of 700 dollars I had my choice to sell it or to be driven off from it without any recompense this is the way that this people have been treated they must sell for what their enemies please to give them or be driven off from their possessions without any recompense but I have just said much to you concerning those matters more than I wished to there will be a day of reckoning when men will have to account to him who shall judge those who dwell upon the earth in righteousness we are to be judged according to the deeds done while we are in the body think you that man can force me from my possessions and then get down upon their knees and make a good long prayer and be forgiven and if you think so I do not they in the first palace must make things right with me otherwise this wrong stands against them we feel happy and as the Apostle said take joyfully the spreading of our goods you no doubt have heard that after we had pretty much all moved from Nauvoo all but about 100 men and many of them without teams on account of lean provisions and could not well get away just at that time the Mob came with all their force that they thought would be sufficient to frighten those good men and their families from their homes some had a house and lot and if they could have sold it could have got away the mob came in with 1,000 men with 6 cannon and demanded the surrender of the city unconditionally the brethren although few in number refused to deliver the city and themselves and families into their hands the Mob then drew up their

cannon and commenced to fire upon the city the brethren had prepared some cannonballs which they lobbed out of the shaft of an old steamboat which they returned upon the mob then drew up their whole forces and...a general attack with all these forces and a general struggle ensued the battle lasted for several hours I have heard the time but have forgotten but at any rate they commanded the city 7 days in which the mob lost 150 men and the Mormons 3 however the brethren agreed to surrender up the city to the mob provided they would not injure them or their property and give them a chance to dispose of their property and get away which they agreed to do and in two days marched into the city with 1200 men having raised 200 more. If you have received the other letter you find that I wished you to direct your letter to Abraham Boswell and the reason why I did so if you send money direct the letter to him for the post master may open the other letter and say that there was money in it. Direct your letters to Atchison County Austin post office Missouri. The family all send their love

Signed John A. Woolf

(Some of the spelling I changed and spaced sentences.) Typed into computer 10 Oct 2002  
Kathleen J. Woolf in Idaho Falls, Idaho

#### JOHN ANTHONY WOOLF AND SARAH ANN DEVOE

John Anthony Woolf was born 31 July 1805 in Westchester County, New York. John was the 8<sup>th</sup> and youngest child of Anthony Woolf and Phebe Weeks. His father, Anthony Woolf, was a naturalized Hessian Soldier, his mother Phebe Weeks, was American born. Few intimate details are known of John's early life. Much can be deduced, however, from the nature of his environment and his attitude and work in later life. His father became an extensive landowner and prosperous farmer. Westchester County at the time was essentially a rural community; nearby New York City provided a ready market for rural commodities such as grain and beef. The city was near enough to the Woolf home in Pelham to permit, if not to require, frequent visits to the city for business or cultural reasons. Here, one saw in the spacious harbor the ships of all trading nations, and on its wharfs sailors from many foreign lands. Merchandise from the manufacturing centers of Europe and Asia were brought here to exchange for the raw products of fabulous, free America. John's father, with the advantages of his European background, had made friends in high places; Among those friends were those who had been active in the recent Revolutionary War.

Having been raised on a farm, in a farming community, it is to be assumed that John was well trained in the practical methods of farming and stock raising. But also, doubtless under the influence of his prudent German-born father, he acquired a trade. He became a shoemaker of great skill, catering particularly to the trade of the well-to-do in the city of New York. Shoes in those days, like suits of clothing, were made to order, rather than selected from well-stocked shelves containing shoes standardized in length, width, and quality. L Thus, John was not only acquainted with the hard labor of the farm, but knew the skill of a fine trade and enjoyed the acquaintance of men in commerce, banking, and manufacturing at a time when all Americans were imbued with a fervent nationalism, a great passion for liberty, and optimism for the future of America.

On 30 April 1831, at the age of 26, John married Sarah Ann DeVoe, the lovely daughter

of a former French Huguenot family which had fled France to avoid religious persecution, and had greatly prospered in America. This young couple had much in common. The families of each had suffered European inhumanities. John's father had been illegally inducted and forced to serve in the Germany Army. Sarah Ann's family had left a beloved home land and had chosen a strange new untamed country in order to maintain their religious conviction. Both families had not only found freedom in the new land, but had prospered also. In addition, the time in which they lived bred courage and idealism. Nationalism ran high following the Revolutionary War. Liberty was on every tongue and a great optimism gave spur to action.

By 1843, John Anthony and Sarah Ann were the parents of 6 healthy children, Absalom, the oldest, was 11, John Anthony II, the youngest was born 27 Feb. Of that year. Though not wealthy, they had not wanted, in fact they had done well, having learned the lessons of thrift and frugality from their respective prosperous parents. In the year 1841, John Anthony and Sarah Ann had listened to the teachings of the Mormon missionaries. In Mormonism, Sarah Ann saw the ideals which her forefathers had fostered for generations. Her ancestors had been devout followers of Jesus Christ as taught by the holy scriptures, but they did not accept the churches that attempted to speak in his name. In Mormonism, she found restored that which had been lost in existing churches through departures from the simple scriptures. Sarah Ann's religious nature is manifest in the names given their first five sons: Absalom, James, Isaac, John and Andrew. She accepted the teachings of Mormonism with all the deep religious devotion of her Huguenot forefathers.

John Anthony, being a little older, coming from a less religious background, and perhaps being more aware of the impact on their future lives of accepting the new religion, took a little longer to accept, but once having accepted, never turned back. They were baptized in 1841 and at once began planning their future as active members of their new-found faith. They planned to close that happy chapter of their lives in Westchester and join the body of the Saints in Nauvoo, Illinois, at their earliest convenience. During 1842, John served as president of the New Rochelle Branch of the Church. In 1843 they, with their 6 children, departed from their home and friends of childhood and set out on the long journey to Nauvoo.

The trip to Illinois was made partly by canal boat and partly by river boat. The Woolf Family arrived in Nauvoo in the spring of 1843. "Nauvoo the Beautiful," or "Nauvoo, the City of the Saints" was the home of the prophet Joseph Smith; it was already the largest city in Illinois and rapidly growing—a city where righteousness was to abound, and the blessings of the Lord were to be made manifest in abundance. Missionaries were going out and missionaries were returning. Saints were arriving from England and from the Eastern States. The temple was under construction, and new organizations were being formed as needed to perform the functions of a rapidly-growing church and a rapidly-growing city. There was much for the Woolf family to do. A temporary home must be found, a farm purchased and cultivated, new contacts and acquaintances made, and church work done. All this fortunately left little time for John and Sarah Ann to brook over the dear friends and scenes of childhood they had left far behind or to nurse the deep hurt in their hearts over the estrangement that had sprung up between them and their beloved close relatives on the occasion of their joining the church of their choice.

The spring of 1843 found Nauvoo in perhaps its most enjoyable era. The efforts of the Missourians to harass the Saints in Illinois had borne little fruit, and the Illinois persecutions had not yet matured. John Anthony purchased a lovely farm 2 miles east of the city, thus preserving the pattern of a rural home, but near a city where its commercial and cultural advantages could be

obtained. What pleased John and Sarah even more was the fact that their farm adjoined that of the Prophet Joseph, with whom they became intimately acquainted and whose humanity, simplicity, and intelligence as a friend seemed wholly compatible with his profile as a prophet.

Unfortunately, this taste of heaven on earth was not to last. The Illinois persecution burst into flame and the prophet was murdered on the 27 June 1844. The perpetrators temporarily fled for cover, while the city and people fell into a depth of gloom seldom experienced on this earth. However, the gloom was short-lived. The prophet had not only foretold his death, but had provided for his succession. The temple was completed, persecution was renewed, and by agreement, to avoid bloodshed, the saints started leaving Nauvoo in Feb. 1844 by crossing the Mississippi and turning to the vast uncharted wilderness in the West. Andrew, the 7<sup>th</sup> child of John Anthony and Sarah Ann, was born in Nauvoo on Feb. 15 of that bitter year. As soon thereafter as possible, the Woolf Family also crossed the Mississippi with their wagons and oxen, to be swallowed up, as far as the then settled part of America was concerned or be merged with the coyotes, buffalo and Indians beyond the setting sun. Winter found them at the Missouri River, where at Winter Quarters John built a log house to shelter his wife and 7 precious children. They spent a difficult winter plagued with chills and fever, but their lives were preserved. They were able, as so many were not, to resume their journey in the spring. They continued westward with the Edmund Hunter Co., arriving in Salt Lake City, 6 Oct. 1847.

John built an adobe house in the old fort to house his family, and assisted others with their building. They survived the winter by eating the oxen that had pulled their belongings across the plains. They remained in Salt Lake 5 years, after which time they were called by Brigham Young to help settle Iron Co. In the early spring of 1852, John Anthony left for Iron County, where he planted crops and built a house. Due to pests and other adverse conditions, he harvested only 44 bushels of grain. Nevertheless, he returned to Salt Lake for his family in the autumn. At an early encampment on the Jordan River on the return journey with his family, thieves drove away their cattle. So much time was lost in finding and retrieving them that it was impossible to reach Iron Co. Before the winter storms, so John built a house for the winter on the Provo River. But now Indian trouble broke out; Indians stole most of the cattle and sheep. On advice from others, John moved his family to Nephi, returning only to tear down his house, which the Indians were using as a cover from which to shoot at passerby.

John Anthony built a new home for his family within the fort in Nephi and lived there during the years 1856-60 inclusive. Indian troubles and drought sapped their strength and discounted their efforts. In 1855 John was set apart as a Pres. Of the 19 Quorum of Seventies. While the family was hard-pressed materially, they were blessed spiritually and enjoyed unity and good health. In March 1858, their youngest child, Wallace, was born; he was their 12<sup>th</sup>. Because the family was now so large and the material rewards of their labor insufficient to maintain their family (because of Indian trouble, drought, and pests), they moved North in 1861 to Cache Valley, settling in the community which became known as Hyde Park, named after its first bishop and leading citizen, William Hyde. There was virgin land here, a plentiful water supply, and while there were some Indian problems, they were less consuming of the settlers' time

John Anthony and Sara Ann started all over again, as they had done so many times before, to build a home for themselves and their children. It was now just 20 years since they had joined the Church in New York. They were 20 years older and 20 years wiser, poorer in goods of this earth but blessed with a family of healthy, able and obedient children. Herein was their

treasure. Because of the children, the Lord had not let them labor those 20 years in vain.

Farming requires back-breaking labor even on a cultivated farm. It is much more difficult on a new farm where sagebrush has to be removed, fences built to keep the owner's cattle in and stray cattle out, ditches surveyed and excavated, head gates installed, the land plowed, leveled, cultivated, seeded and irrigated. A farm house has to be built, corrals made, barns and sheds erected and a garden plot prepared and seeded. John and Sarah Ann, with their children, some of whom were now old enough and experienced enough to help, faced this colossal task with courage and with as much vigor as their age would permit. Within a few years, they had another home, a flowing well, barns, pens and pastures, horses and cattle. John introduced a new breed of horses into the community known as the Woolf Stock, a medium-sized horse of great strength and good action what was ideal as an all purpose horse on western farms and ranches.

The family was expert and ingenious in making the most of what could be raised on the land or be had in the local area. They made soap and lye from wood ashes, molasses from red beets; they carded and spun wool, and from the yarn made knitted clothing and stockings. From cow and horse hides they made ropes, bridles, harnesses, and, of course, shoes. John was a reliable source of shoes wherever he lived. His granddaughter, Orilla, tells of having many times held a candle for him at night after a hard day's work while he cut miniature wooden pegs for tacking on the soles of shoes. They made preserves and jam from berries, from small fruits, and even from vegetables. They maintained a good vegetable cellar and made a smokehouse, where they could smoke dry meats. By their ingenuity and labor they always seemed to manage to have some food on hand. The needy were never turned away empty-handed. Their house was a beehive of activity and a gathering place for their children and their children's friends.

John was spared to enjoy his new home for 20 years. He died 7 Nov. 1881 at 76 years—50 years after his marriage, and 40 years after joining the church. Sarah Ann lived to age of 90. She passed away 19 March 1905.

More than a century has passed since this courageous couple in middle age faced up to the task of building a home for their family on virgin land. This process held no surprises for them. They had built themselves homes on the Mississippi and on the Missouri, in Salt Lake City and Iron County, on the Provo River, at Mona and in Nephi. In commencing anew in Cache Valley, they were no longer young in body but were young in heart. Love of their children, love of the gospel, love of each other, love of God, and love of mankind kept them young. It left them no place to stop, it kept them going.

John Anthony Woolf and Sarah Ann DeVoe were a couple who, while still young, left prosperity for principle and set an example of obedience, dedication to a cause, ingenuity and courage in difficulty, frugality, and endurance that inspires and unites their descendants, gives them a feeling of belonging to each other, a desire to do their best under all circumstances, and to so live their lives as to justify their noble parents in the choice they made when they entered the waters of baptism in Westchester County in the year 1841.

Typed into the computer 11 Oct. 2002 by Kathleen Jardine Woolf, Idaho Falls, Idaho.

Material taken from the John Anthony Woolf book published 1986. A tremendous book about these noble people. Our thanks to the ones who worked so hard on the book, who are gone now.

JOHN ANTHONY WOOLF, PATRIARCH, born 27 Feb. 1843 in Pelham, West Chester Co., New York. Son of John Anthony Woolf and Sarah Ann Devoe, and they emigrated to Nauvoo shortly after his birth. They were driven out with the rest of the Saints in 1846, wintered in Council Bluffs and crossed the plains in 1847, arriving in Salt Lake City in Nov. In 1852 the family moved to and settled at Willow Creek, Juab Co., going to Nephi about 2 years later on account of Indian troubles. They helped build a wall around the town and remained there 9 years, going to Hyde Park, Cache County, in the spring of 1861. There the subject hereof became acquainted with Mary L. Hyde and was married to her 31 Dec. 1866. In 1871 he went on a short mission to New York. He has filled a number of positions of honor and trust, among them is Superintendent of Sunday Schools.

In 1876 he became the husband of Celia Hatch. In the same year he filled a mission to the Western States, laboring in Iowa and Nebraska, where he baptized 14 persons into the church. Returning he was appointed 2<sup>nd</sup> counselor to Bishop Daines of Hyde Park and in 1887 went to Canada. In 1888 he was ordained Bishop of Cardston Ward by Apostle Francis M. Lyman, which position was held nearly 7 years, after which he became counselor to Pres. Charles O. Card of Alberta Stake, this position being held until 1899, when he was ordained a Patriarch by Apostle John W. Taylor. He has held the office of mayor of Cardston 2 terms and been postmaster 4 years, positions in which he gave general satisfaction.

Information taken from Vol. 2, No. 2, page 17 of Biographical Encyclopedia  
Typed into the computer by Kathleen Jardine Woolf 11 Oct 2002 Idaho Falls, Idaho

A copy of the Indenture of the sale of the farm of John A. Woolf and Sarah Ann his wife.  
#7656 Woolf to Elliot Recorded 18 March 1846

This indenture made and entered into this 28 Feb. In the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty six, between John A. Woolf and Sarah Ann his wife of the County of Hancock and State of Illinois, of the one part, and Daniel Elliot of the County of Adams and State aforesaid, of the other part. Witnesseth that the said John A. Woolf and Sarah Ann his wife for and in consideration of the sum of seven hundred dollars to them in hand paid. The receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged do hereby grant bargain sell convey and confirm unto the said Daniel Elliot his heirs and assigns forever all that tract or parcel of land situate and being in the County of Hancock in the State of Illinois Viz: the South East quarter of section four (4) of Township six North in Range eight West of the fourth principle Meridian containing one hundred and sixty acres. Together with all and Singular the appertinances there unto belonging or in any wise appertaining. To Have and to Hold the above described premises unto the said Daniel Elliot his heirs and assigns forever. And the said John A. Woolf and Sarah Ann his wife their heirs and assigns the aforesaid premises unto the said Daniel Elliot his heirs and assigns against the claim or claims of all and every person whosoever do and will warrant and forever by these presents defend. In testimony whereof the said John A. Woolf and Sarah Ann his wife of the first part have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year above written.

Signed Sealed and delivered in presents of John A. Woolf (LS) and Sarah Ann Woolf (LS)

Typed into computer 11 Oct 2002 by Kathleen Jardine Woolf Idaho Falls, Id.

John A. Woolf and Sarah Ann DeVoe

State of Illinois Hancock Co. Oct.

Be it remembered that on this 17 day of March A. D. 1846 personally came before me, George W. Thatcher, Clerk of the Co. Commission Court of said county, Benjamin Hill and Mary his wife, who are personally known by me to be the persons described in and who executed the foregoing deed of conveyance and did severally acknowledge that they executed the same for the uses and purposes therein mentioned. And the said Mary Hill having been by me made acquainted with the contents of said deed and examined separate and apart from the husband acknowledged that she executed the same fully voluntarily and without compulsion of her husband.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of said court at my office in Carthage this day and year above written.

Signed George W. Thatcher Clerk

By B. Horn Deputy

Austin Mo. March 11

Mrs. Phebe Woolf 10

Manoir of Fordham West Farms

West Chester County

State of New York

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

