

Biography of JOHN ANTHONY WOOLF JR.

Typed by Kathleen J. Woolf Oct. 2002

A tradition handed down through generations of the "Woolf" family is to the effect their first ancestor to come to America was John Anthony Woolf, or as believed by some, Anthony Woolf, who was born Nov. 11, 1761 in Mainz, Hessen, Germany. When a young man he was forced to serve in the German Army as a Hessian Soldier and was brought to America to fight with the British, against the American forces in the Revolutionary War. After arriving he had trouble with his officer, so he deserted the British and joined the Americans and changed his name to "Woolf"

This information was given by Orilla Woolf Ashcroft, who upon the death of her mother, was taken and reared by her grandfather, John A. Woolf Jr. and his good wife, Sarah Ann Devoe and from whom she heard it related many times. Phebe A. Woolf England has the same story written in her family record. She also had been told it when, as a young girl, she would go and help do the washing for her grandmother, Sarah Ann Woolf.

The following is taken from a letter written by another John Anthony Woolf of 2757 Sedgwick Ave., New York City, N. Y., dated 11th Nov. 1950. This relative is a descendant of James Woolf, also a son of our first American Ancestor.

"We have the same story about him as you mentioned in your last paragraph, but with plenty of frills added. One was that in deserting he swam the Harlem River in full uniform, under fire, and landed on the Devoe farm with a bullet in his knapsack. As a youngster I broke into the old Woolf farm house shortly before it was demolished, looking for that knapsack and his sword. Our version had him an officer in the American Army before the end of the war. At the end of the war Lewis Morris, signer of the Declaration of Independence, brought him to his (Lewis Morris') 3000 acre farm or estate in Morrisania. He gave him employment and later assisted him to buy a farm."

He married Phebe Weeks, born May 27, 1765 in New York City, Westchester Co., New York and to them were born the following sons and daughters: Elizabeth, Ann, Abigail, Sarah, James, Hannah, Andrew and John Anthony, who was the youngest and who is the subject of this biography.

John Anthony Jr. was born 131 July 1805 at Westchester Co., New York. And on 30 April 1814 a daughter of John and Sarah Weeks Devoe of Pelham, Westchester Co., New York.

He was an excellent shoemaker and made white silk and satin shoes for the aristocrats of New York. He made one pair as part of Sarah Ann's wedding outfit. At times, before a big ball was coming off, he would have to work very hard to complete the ordered shoes, often working all night without sleep except for a snatch or two while on his work bench. In order to keep from sleeping over-time, he would place his hammer under his side so that in a short time it would start to hurt and wake him up.

In 1841 he and his wife joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Later-day Saints. He was baptized by C. Wesley Wardle 20 July 1841 and 1842 he was made president of the branch of New Rochelle, N. Y. During the time they lived in New York they had six children as follows: Absalom, Sarah Ann, James, Hannah, Eliza, Isaac and John Anthony 3rd. Joining with other members of the church, John with his wife and 6 children moved to Nauvoo, Illinois, where he obtained a farm joining that of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Here the baby, John Anthony, was taken seriously ill. Coming to the door one day, the Prophet said, "I see you have a very sick child." He went in and administered to the baby promising him that he would get well and then sent for a nurse to take of him.

John Anthony and the Prophet often rode together in the same buggy and entered their horses in the same races. On two occasions he loaned money to the Prophet and felt that it was a privilege to do so. Prior to his last imprisonment and martyrdom, he came to John Anthony and asked for a loan of \$500 and when the Prophet asked what security he wanted, John Anthony said, "None, your word is all I ask." The Prophet then turned to Willard Richards, who had accompanied him, and said "Brother Richards, if I do not live to pay Brother Woolf back, I want you to see that he gets his money." The Prophet was martyred soon afterward and the debt was cancelled.

At the expulsion of the Saints from Nauvoo, John Anthony took his wife and children, who numbered 7 then, and moved to Winter Quarters where they spent the winter in a log shack. The hardships of the winter caused disease to spread and all the family, except two, suffered chills & fever.

In the spring of 1847 the family left Winter Quarters and journeyed westward with the Saints in Capt. Edward Hunter's Co. John Anthony was a member of the first ten (Henry I. Doremus, Captain), the 2nd 50 (Jacob Foutz, Captain), and 2nd hundred (Edward Hunter, Captain with Jacob Foutz and Joseph Horne associate captains of 50's). Families comprising the first ten were: Jacob Foutz, Jacob F. Secrist, Henry I. Doremus, Samuel Merrill, William Scearce, Leonard Stump, Isaac Leany, John Anthony Woolf, William Laney & Abraham Boswell. (This information was given to Ada E. Morell personally by Church Historian Andrew Jensen in 1934.)

John Anthony sold his farm to get the money to fit himself out to cross the plains. He had 4 wagons with 2 yoke of oxen on each of the 3 wagons and a span of horses on the other. The last one was driven by Sister Woolf.

One evening while they were camping on the Platte River, a great herd of buffalo came down on the opposite side. Captain Hunter ordered the men to fire on them, but their guns had no effect, so they loaded the big cannon. When the cannon opened fire the buffaloes turned and ran along the river bank. Had they crossed over they would have demolished the camp.

The company arrived in Salt Lake City Oct. 6, 1847. As soon as possible John Anthony built an adobe house in the old fort. He also helped to clear away the sagebrush

and built houses for others. By killing their work oxen, they had enough meat for the winter. The family stayed in Salt Lake City for about 5 years. Brother Woolf was then called by Brigham Young to go and help settle Iron Co.

He went there early in the spring of 1852 and built a house, planted and raised a crop of grain. Due to prairie dogs and other pests, he harvested but 40 bushel, this he cut with his shoe knife. He then returned to Salt Lake to get his family, but they were destined NOT to return to Iron Co.

They started on their journey, but one night, while they were camping on the bank of the Jordan River, they turned the cattle out to feed, and thieves drove them more than 30 miles away. The 2 older sons, Absalom and James were sent to hunt them. They went without bedding and were gone 2 weeks. Upon their return they told the following: At night they held their horses and used their saddles for pillows. The coyotes were so thick and came so near that the boys could hear their teeth snapping. Had they not held onto the horses, the coyotes would have chewed the lariats and let them go. This delay, together with winter setting in and Sarah Ann's poor health, made it necessary that they remain and build a home on the Provo River for the winter. Here they suffered a great many hardships.

In the Spring they moved as far south as what is now called Mona. Here they remained at the request of Pres. Young. They built a comfortable home, acquired a farm, and a choice herd of cattle and sheep. The Indians stole most of the cattle and sheep and became so troublesome that they were again advised to move. This time to Nephi, where they would be safer for the winter. Before the furniture could be removed, the Indians broke into the house and used it as a look-out from which they shot at people as they passed. They demolished the furniture and ripped open the feather beds, scattering feathers everywhere. John Anthony finally tore down his house to keep the Indians from using it as a place of ambush. Many times when the Indians opened fire on the men, the women would take their children and run to the meeting house. When they were safe inside, the men would surround it to protect them.

On Sunday, old Batice, brother of Walker, the Indian Chief, came to the meeting house unaware by the people, and gave a great war whoop. He had 6 or 7 warriors stationed near the door and told the people to come on out, but instead one of the men told him to tell his warriors to go away or they would kill him right there. This frightened them and they went away and were never seen again.

John Anthony Woolf was ordained as Pres. Of the 19th Quorum of Seventy of Nephi in 1855. His home in Nephi was built in the old fort with the corrals in the center. This did not suffice to keep the Indians out so the inhabitants built a wall around the houses. This wall was a mile square and 12 feet high, with 2 gates, one in the north and one in the south connected by a street running through the center of the city. While here they witnessed all of the Indian troubles, including the Walker War.

The Indians had killed four men . They were on their way to Salt Lake to sell their grain. They then sent a runner to the remainder of their small company (7 Indians) to tell them not to go into town if they valued their lives, but by the time the runner had reached there, the Indians had already gone into town and had been killed. John Anthony took one squaw with a boy who was 9 years old, home with him, gave them their supper and put them in the shanty for the night. In the morning they were gone as he expected.

Their family was now becoming numerous and as water was scarce in Nephi, John A. and Sarah Ann decided to move northward. In the spring of 1861 they arrived in Cache Valley and settled in the little town of Hyde Park. Here they became actively engaged in helping pioneer this country and subdue the Indians, as well as helping to supply the civic and religious needs of the fast growing population. In the year 1863 a combination meeting house and school house was built of logs. Thomas Slight was the first school teacher. They also had a public corral where all the stock of the settlers was kept at night, and guarded as a precaution against the marauding Indians. During the day the cattle were driven to the foothills to graze. In 1864 some forty families had settled there.

The following paragraphs were copied from an article printed in the Jim Bridger Centennial edition of "The Logan Journal" in 1924.

"The early settlers of Cache Valley had only small animals for riding and driving purposes; horses similar to the Indian "Cayuses" or ponies seen today. In these days all heavy work in the fields or canyons and on the highways was done with oxen. A horse weighing a thousand pounds was considered extremely large. It was not long, however, before members increased and the breed began to improve. The settlers purchased animals from traders who came through the valley with bands of horses. Before long draft horses began to displace the oxen on the farms.

The first stallion of worthy mention in the valley was the Woolf horse owned by John A. Woolf of Hyde Park. Some emigrants passing through Bear Lake Valley about 1860 were forced to dispose of one of their mares on account of lameness. The owner sold her to a Dr. Ellis of Bear Lake, stating that she had been bred to an exceptionally fine stallion. When the mare foaled a horse colt, Dr. Ellis raised it and having much confidence in Mr. Woolf's ability as horseman, turned the young stallion over to him as caretaker. Later Woolf purchased it and it became known as the Woolf horse or Sampson. The horse proved to be an outstanding individual and developed into a very potent size of draft animals. He was, without question, the most valuable stallion in the valley for a number of years and produced many fine draft horses. His was mostly roan in color and were short and stocky with plenty of action, in fact, the blood of some of the best grade draft stock in Cache Valley today can be traced back to this animal. It has also been said that John A Hambleton brought a stallion from him from Nauvoo for breeding fine horses."

From a written history of Hyde Park, we learn that "By July 1860 sixteen families were settled near the Springs and Apostle Ezra T. Benson, then president of the Stake

with Peter Maughan, the acting Bishop, organized a settlement and named it Hyde Park, out of respect to William Hyde, who was called to act as Bishop, but was not ordained to the office until Oct. 27, 1872. Patterson D. Griffith and Simpson M. Mollen were chosen first and second counselors with Brother Wm. England as Ward Clerk”

In the spring of 1861 John A. Woolf and family settled here, and later he was chosen to succeed Patterson D. Griffith, who through press of business was released. Simpson H. Mollen was chosen first counselor and John A. Woolf second counselor.

He was also Justice of the Peace of Hyde Park. Here again his trade, that of a shoemaker, was put to good use as he supplied most of the townspeople with shoes for many years. His granddaughter Orilla, said that many times at night she would hold the candle, while he made tiny wooden pegs with which to tack the soles on.

Being a farmer and stock raiser, he provided a good living for his family. He always had a good garden and kept vegetables fresh for the winter by storing them in a pit. He built a smokehouse, where he did an excellent job of curing meat. Thus his storehouse was kept filled. He was kind and forgiving almost to a fault and those in need were never sent away from his door empty handed.

He was a faithful pioneer and a real Latter-day saint. Being deeply religious he read his Bible everyday. In stature he was short and slender, wore a beard and quite long hair. He died of pneumonia Monday 7 Nov. 1881 at the age of 76. He was buried in the Hyde Park Cemetery.

His children were:

1. Absalom born 4 Feb 1832 at Pelham, Westchester, New York.
2. Sarah Ann born 2 July 1834 at Pelham, Westchester, New York.
3. James, born 22 July 1836 at Pelham, Westchester, New York.
4. Hannah Eliza born 5 Nov 1838 at Pelham, Westchester, New York.
5. Isaac born 9 Feb 1841 at Pelham, Westchester, New York.
6. John Anthony born 27 Feb 1843 at Pelham, Westchester, New York.
7. Andrew born 15 Feb 1846 at Nauvoo, Illinois.
8. William Henry born 2 Nov 1846 at Salt Lake City, Utah
9. Phebe Elizabeth born 23 Jan 1851 at Salt Lake City, Utah.
10. Harriet born 11 Oct 1853 at Nephi, Utah.
11. Homer born 10 Oct 1855 at Nephi, Utah.
12. Wallace born 21 Mar 1858 at Nephi, Utah.

NOTE; This biography was compiled and written in 1935 by Phylis Ashcroft (Scholes), and Mildred Daines from information given to them by their Aunts Orilla Woolf Ashcroft, and Phebe Woolf Gibson, as well as other living members of the family.