

OLIVE CARL FOSS WOOLLEY  
(1835 - 1877)

Olive Carl Foss was always considered a beauty. She had dark hair and eyes, an olive complexion and was rather small. She was the youngest of seven children belonging to Calvin Foss and Sarah Brackett Carter of Scarborough, Cumberland, Maine. Unfortunately, her father passed away about a month and a half before she was born. Her mother, Sarah, along with the other children, moved her family back in with Sarah's parents. And that is where Olive was born April 12, 1835, in Scarborough, Maine. She was named after her grandmother, Olive Carl (her father's mother).

Sarah had what was then considered a good education, so while the children were too young to be of any assistance in securing a livelihood, she managed with her work as a teacher and other means to support herself and the kids. She sought to educate her children as well. Sarah never did remarry.

When Olive was only two years old, Wilford Woodruff, an apostle for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came to proselyte in the area along with Jonathan Hale and Milton Holmes. Olive's mother, grandmother, and many other relatives were baptized into the Church. Later, when Olive was older, she was baptized as well. Olive's mother's sister (her Aunt Phebe) had joined the Church earlier, and had moved to Kirtland, Ohio where she married Wilford Woodruff. So Wilford was her uncle when he came preaching. All of her family eventually became Mormons, except for her older brother Ira, who did not accept it.

In 1850, when Olive was about fifteen years old, Wilford Woodruff came back and encouraged the family to join him and 100 other saints on a journey to Utah to be with other members of the church. So Olive's family (except Ira) left Maine for New York, where they were joined by other saints, making in all 209 people. They continued on to Pittsburg where they secured passage to St. Louis. May 1, 1850 they arrived in St Louis.

They took passage on the steamer Sacramento from St. Louis to Council Bluffs. The company rested and prepared. Companies were organized into hundreds, fifties, and tens with a captain over each lot.

Olive's brothers, Calvin and Ezra, drove teams. Seven groups left previous to them. But Wilford Woodruff's group finally headed west June 20 with 44 wagons.

On the ninth of July, four women died (Lucy Johnson, Matilda Hardy, a Sister Snow, and Emily Huntington). Deaths in that year on the plains were frequent and Elder Woodruff's company suffered with the rest. Olive's older sister, Sarah Elizabeth, being absent at school in Portland, Maine when the rest of the family were baptized, received this ordinance in the Platte River July 10, 1850 by Wilford Woodruff.

On the 15th of July a severe thunderstorm arose and Brother Ridge from Staffordshire, England and his oxen were killed by lightning.

The 30th of the month witnessed one of those scenes not uncommon to the plains in the early days of emigration by ox teams. Those who have not seen a stampede can hardly imagine the confusion and dangers involved. Stampedes generally happen without a moment's warning with the cattle running in all directions.

According to a story passed down by the family, on one occasion when they were camped for the night, an Indian chief rode into camp and made numerous threats; but when he saw beautiful fifteen-year-old Olive with her two long black braids hanging past her waist, he promised to leave them unmolested if they would let him take Olive away with him for a wife. He offered his horse, blankets, saddle, and about all he possessed. When Sarah would not sell Olive to the Chief, he became very indignant and said, "White squaw don't know much." After considerable discussion, and the receipt of food and a few other presents, he departed and molested them no more.

The company had some breakdowns and delays. When the saints in Salt Lake heard of the nearing immigrant train, men were sent out to assist them. Among this rescue group, Olive met a young man by the name of Franklin Benjamin Woolley. He was immediately interested in the dark haired, black-eyed girl from Maine and acknowledged to himself, "I'm going to marry that girl some day."

The Woodruff Company with the Fosses officially reached Salt Lake City October 14, 1850.

Olive's family located in the 14th Ward on West Temple Street, number 44 South. They had the next lot south of those owned by Brother Woodruff. Brother Woodruff was always a "true Brother," and spiritual advisor and father to the Foss family.

Olive was always well groomed. She loved beauty, culture, and order. Because Olive and her sisters were all school teachers, she obtained a splendid education for those early pioneer days. She was popular among the young people of her set. But though she and Franklin B. Woolley lived in different wards, Franklin never forgot the little dark-eyed girl he had met in the immigrant train. Soon a sincere friendship developed between them, which later flowered into a romance well known in Salt Lake City's early history. Benjamin Franklin's cousin, Della Woolley Eardley, said of him, "He was the outstanding Woolley boy in looks and accomplishments." Della also claimed that much of the courtship of Franklin and Olive was done at Samuel Woolley's home. Franklin B. Woolley and Olive C. Foss were married February 11, 1857 in the Salt Lake City Endowment House. They had a son in the first year, which they named after Franklin. Then they had another son, Edwin, named for Franklin's father. Unfortunately, Edwin died as a baby in 1859. Ida Foss was born January 10, 1861. Franklin's father, Edwin D. Woolley, was engaged in so many enterprises, such as framing, merchandising, doing missionary work, making trips east for merchandise, company clerkship, newspaper and telegraph work, and acting as private business secretary to Brigham

Young, that he kept Franklin busy helping him with his own interests. This was wonderful training for him and was really a liberal education itself, but Franklin never missed an opportunity to go to school. Soon Franklin owned a nice home, comfortably furnished, a small farm, and he had steady employment as tithing clerk in the general church tithing office.

When Brigham Young called men and their wives to go to the St. George or Dixie area, Franklin was included. They sold everything and moved south in the spring of 1861 to Duncan's Retreat, now known as Virgin City. Franklin Jr. was about 4-1/2 and Ida was still a baby. They had no house to go to and didn't bring tents. They just piled everything in a covered wagon with bedding and a limited amount of food. It rained constantly for nearly 40 days"making the red, sticky mud nearly knee deep.

Imagine cooking over a campfire, making beds in a wagon box, etc. under such wet conditions! Eventually, they moved to St. George where they built a lovely, two-story, house made of adobe. He also built a barn, planted fruits and grapevines, a vegetable garden, and some flowers on his lot. Later he bought four lots in the northwest part of town known as the Sand Lots and planted apple, pear, and peach trees as well as grapes. He owned several teams of horses and mules, and necessary wagons and equipment and kept them busy freighting. He opened the St. George tithing office and was tithing clerk for several years.

Olive and Franklin had five more children for a total of eight"Jedediah, Samuel, Ezra, Eva, and Effie Dean. Unfortunately, Samuel and Eva died as babies.

April 9, 1868 Franklin entered into plural marriage with 19-year-old Artimesia Snow, the daughter of Erastus and Artimesia Snow. We are not sure what this was like for Olive. Olive's mother never married again, so Olive never had to live in a polygamist home. These type of marriages were all around her, but trying to live it oneself is a different matter. It may have been that accepting Artimesia into the home was like adopting another daughter. Olive was 14 years her senior.

In 1868, at the instigation of Erastus Snow, the St. George Co-op Store was organized and Franklin B. Woolley became a heavy stockholder. He also held a large block of stock in the Z.C.M.I. of Salt Lake City and also in the "Factory" at Washington of Washington County, a factory erected to weave cloth made of Dixie cotton and woolen cloth. The wool was obtained from sheep raised by the Dixie Pioneers. Later, tailors were also employed to make men's suits. Franklin was commissioned to go to California for merchandise for the co-op in February 1869. A company was organized to take teams and wagons.

Unfortunately, on the way home, a mule wandered off. When Franklin scoured the area on his own to try to find it, some Indians (who were on a rampage over an unjust killing of one of their own men) took out their revenge on the nearest white man they could find, which just happened to be Franklin. His brother, Edwin, who went in search of him, found his emaciated body. After talking to people in the vicinity, Edwin came to the conclusion that Franklin was an unfortunate victim of circumstance. Edwin had the sad task of bringing Franklin home to his family. (For more information on the particulars of this event, see Franklin's life story.) When the first teams came home, they were met by large groups of people and children.

Franklin's children rushed up to the wagon asking for their daddy, expecting to be taken into the wagon for a ride home, where Franklin's wives, Olive and Artimesia, were preparing a big dinner in honor of the return of their husband. Sadly, one of the teamsters said to Ida, then eight years old, "Your Dad didn't come home this trip." So the children rushed home and told their mother that daddy hadn't come home. Franklin's death was a terrible shock to Olive, and since she was not allowed to see the deteriorating body, it took her a long time to accept the fact that her husband was gone. The family tells that Olive set a place for him at the table until she died.

Olive and Franklin were known for their generosity, especially their charity and kindness to the Indians. The Indians really liked them. Olive's granddaughter, Ida, states: "No St. George Indian would ever have killed grandfather. They loved him too well."

Olive was left a widow with five children at the age of 33. Her oldest was 12 and her youngest was less than a year. But she tried not to become discouraged. She was determined to make a good home for her family and give them a good education. Franklin left her with a good home and team, and many investments in land, fruit trees, a factory, a store, and a co-op.

Shortly after Franklin's death, Brigham Young presented Olive with a splendid team of mules. With the animals and wagons, she and her 12-year-old son, Franklin, freighted produce, molasses, fruit and other products between St. George and Salt Lake City. On each trip north she purchased goods for the St. George Co-op and drew her dividends in sugar, spices, cloth, shoes, candy, rice, nuts, Christmas toys, etc. and freighted them back to St. George. She arranged one of her upstairs rooms as a store room and made a large chest with compartments to hold her commodities.

Olive, like most New Englanders, was a splendid weaver and she wove enough Jean cloth and sold it to buy 2-1/2 acres of land on the Santa Clara Creek. She built a small house on the sand lots and hired a Swiss man to care for her orchards and vineyards. Then she dried apples and pears and pickled grapes and sold them up north.

She had one of the first organs in St. George and Ida was taught music by one of their neighbors becoming the organist for the 3rd Ward. Olive did beautiful handwork and made lovely baby dresses for her grandchildren. They were a yard long with ruffles of embroidery, rows of tucks, insertions, and yokes. The sewing looked like machine work. However, Olive had most of her personal sewing done by Anna Ivins, mother of Apostle Antone Ivins.

Olive bought a white marble monument for Franklin and one for herself just like it. She kept hers ready for the future. Her home was a model of neatness. Her walls were all plastered and papered. She had "States" carpets on her parlor floors and homemade carpets on the other floors. Her kitchen was white washed and had built-in cabinets. Her furniture was mostly heavy walnut; her wood was done in oak graining by Brother Milne, who was an expert grainer. She built a rock wall around her property about 2-1/2 feet high and 1-1/2 feet thick. Franklin had planned this wall, so she could not rest until it was completed according to his plans. Olive furnished one room upstairs for a playroom for her children. Here Ida and Effie had a real cook stove that would burn real wood chips. They also had tables and cupboards made by Gordon Woolley. They had dolls, doll buggies, and play dishes. She always encouraged her children to bring their friends home to play.

John G. McQuarrie, who grew up in the neighborhood said to Ida's daughter, "Your grandmother was known for her gentle breeding, and refinement, her good taste in dress, her good grooming, her well-supplied table, and her love and sympathetic understanding of young people. I was always trying to think up excuses to take me into her home, because it was so neat and nice. She always had cookies or something for me, and she was never too busy to talk with me."

Olive had many special friends. Among them were Brigham Young, Erastus Snow, Daniel Duncan McArthur, Israel Ivins, James G. Bleak, Rassie W. Snow, James Andrus, Walter Dodge, and Brother and Sister Townsend. Olive's husband and James G. Bleak used to be like brothers. After Franklin's death, Brother Bleak was always a good friend and wise counselor to Olive. Her children always loved and respected him as a father.

The question might be asked, "Whatever happened to Artimesia, Franklin's second wife?" She lived with Olive and her children for several years. She did not have any children by Franklin. Artimesia is found on the 1870 Census living with the Woolleys in St. George. April 16, 1873 she became a plural wife of Daniel Seegmiller. His first wife, Ellen, died in 1879 and Artimesia raised Ellen's seven children who were between the ages of thirteen and two. Daniel Seegmiller had a third wife, named Emma, as well who gave him five children. In the 1880 Census Daniel and Artimesia were living in St. George. But in 1900 Artimesia was living as a widow in Kanab of Kane County, Utah. She was a widow for 25 years before she died.

In March 1876 Olive brought her family to Salt Lake City to go to school. Frank, Jr. and Ida attended Miss Cook's school for a short time and then attended the University of Deseret. Jed and Ezra worked as errand boys for the Z.C.M.I. and attended school part time.

In April 1877 Olive was suddenly taken ill and passed away. She was buried in Salt Lake City. When school was out in the spring, Frank Jr. took the family back to St. George. He then returned to retrieve his mother's body and had her buried in St. George beside her husband.

At the time of Olive's death, Frank was 19, Ida 16, Jed 14, Ezra 11, and Effie 8. Frank and Ida never returned to school, but stayed home and acted as parents to the younger children. Frank and the other boys ran the farm and kept the teams busy managing with what little income they had. Ida kept house for them all for eight years until she was married in 1883. Their industry is a tribute to them and their upbringing by Olive. She set a good example for them of fortitude and can truly be called one of the great Pioneer women of Utah's history.

Compiled by Alexis Beckstead, wife of David B. Beckstead (a direct descendant). Information came from the History of Olive Foss Woolley written by Ida Matilda McArthur Snow (granddaughter), Census Records, and life stories of Olive's siblings and mother.