

*A life sketch of*

# Russell King Homer and Eliza Williamson Homer

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Russell King Homer was born in Onondaga County, New York, on July 15, 1815 and was a prominent figure among the early pioneers of Utah. In accordance with early Church policy and with the approval of Church authorities, he married four wives who became the mothers of 24 children and 108 grandchildren. Russell King Homer was one of the rugged pioneers of the West, empire builder, community leader, churchman and family man. His devotion to his family, the great love, affection and concern he felt for each member, has been a great influence in preserving family unity.

Russell King Homer's father was Benjamin Cobb Homer who was born June 24, 1777. He began going to sea when a mere boy but was obliged to quit because of his health. He went to western New York to take up farming. While there he met and married Anna Warner of Erie, New York. Anna's great grandmother was a princess of the Cherokee Indian nation. She had 1/8 Indian blood, a fact of which Russell King Homer was very proud. Benjamin and Anna were married and settled on a piece of timberland in Onondaga County, New York. They cleared the land and used the logs to build a house and out buildings for their livestock and chickens. The buildings were chinked and daubed with mud and covered with a heavy coating of brush and dirt to keep out summer heat and winter cold, and provide protection from wild animals and Indians. They had plenty of substantial food, as the woods were full of game and they raised vegetables and corn. They also raised the ordinary domestic animals including sheep to provide wool for Anna to spin and weave into homespun for clothing and bedding. Benjamin was a God fearing Christian man although he never at any time joined any church. He was a Free Mason as were his forefathers. He studied the doctoring of animals and their ills and became

the only veterinarian for miles around. He was always on friendly terms with the Indians, which stood him in good stead, as there were many Indian troubles in that part of the country.

Anna possessed some characteristics, which suggested her Indian ancestry. Her eyes and hair were as black as midnight. She was physically strong, energetic and capable of doing the strenuous work of the pioneer mother of her time. In rearing her family, her duties were so numerous she was required to be active from early morning to late at night every day. They included the shearing of sheep, washing and carding of wool, spinning of yarn and weaving it into cloth or knitting it into stockings and mittens. She was learned far beyond the average woman of her time and taught her family to read and write. She had few books except the family Bible and this they learned to recite almost from cover to cover. She sang to them and taught them songs, ballads and gospel hymns. She told her children tales of early American history, folklore and Indian legends. One of her many self-imposed duties was that of maternity nurse for the scattered neighborhood. Any time of day or night, or any season of the year, she always responded where she was needed. Sometimes she went through narrow trails through the woods in storms or blizzards to attend to someone who needed her.

Anna had a deeply religious nature and was a very devout Methodist. Once every summer she took a vacation to the camp meeting or revival held somewhere in the vicinity of their home in the woods. Eight children were born to Benjamin and Anna in this home in Onondaga County:

Joshua, William Warner, Elizabeth, Aseneth Allen, Russell King, Delania, Julia Caroline and Esther, and their youngest son, Benjamin Thomas, were born in Ridgeway County, New York.

After the birth of their last son, they decided to move to Pennsylvania as they thought it would be a better climate and more populated. They located again on a piece of timberland and began building a new home and planting crops. Benjamin now turned his attention to what he had always wanted to do, the rearing and caring for good horses. He soon had some very fine stock to exhibit at the various county fairs. By a careful selection of stock and honest dealing, he built up a thriving business and a good reputation as an authority on all questions pertaining to

horses.

Russell King Homer, the fifth child of Benjamin and Anna, lived the life of any average pioneer boy. When he was about fifteen years of age, he and some other boys were riding on horseback through the woods. They saw a man coming towards them on horseback. As he approached, they saw he was a very handsome man on a magnificent black horse and his whole appearance was so striking that they were amazed. When the man came even with the boys, he halted and asked for directions. Russell King answered and the stranger then asked, "My boy, what is your name?" He answered, "My name is Russell King Homer." The stranger then said, "My name is Joseph Smith and my boy, you will join the church that has just been organized and go with the Saints to the Rocky Mountains and stand up and bear your testimony to the truthfulness of the everlasting gospel." Russell King had no idea what the stranger was talking about but it made a deep impression upon him and was never forgotten.

In some spots in the locality where the Homers lived, human bones were to be found strewn over the ground. It was supposed these were the bones of Indians killed before the advent of the white man into that part of New York. These bones later became important to Russell King in his conversion to Mormonism.

One of the near neighbors to the Homers in Onondaga County was the Williamson Family. They had a daughter Eliza born the same year as Russell King. These two were childhood sweethearts and when the Homers went to Pennsylvania, the Williamson Family went with them. In the summer of 1836, Eliza returned to New York to visit old friends. She was gone some months and sent word to her mother that she was homesick and would like to come back to Pennsylvania. Her mother asked Russell King how he would like to go and get her. He replied he did not know of anything he would like better than if he could bring a wife back with him. To this, Mrs. Williamson graciously responded that she did not know of anything she would like better for a Christmas present than to have him for a son in law. Russell King used to tell how he was as proud as a gallant knight of old setting out to rescue his lady fair and bring her back to a home of her own. Before he started, he procured some elegant clothes, a swallow-tailed coat and a fine linen shirt with a frilled bosom, high stovepipe hat, knee

breeches and high top boots.

Russell King and Eliza were married December 20, 1936 at Erie, New York and spent the holidays honeymooning in and around the city. Their first home was a log cabin furnished with a hewn table, stools and bed. There was the family fireplace with big iron pot and bake oven. As there were no matches, the starting of a fire was quite a job and they tried to keep it going at all times. Once Russell King went seven miles on foot through the woods to get a start of fire and carried it home in the iron pot, keeping it alive all the way by occasionally replenishing it. They often had to build fires to keep wild animals away from their clearing, especially when they had young animals around or had killed fresh meat of any kind. Then they had to watch the fire all night to keep it from spreading. They lived in this home several years and their first two children were born there; Elizabeth, who only lived a few days and Edmund, their oldest son.

While living in Pennsylvania, a stranger came along and asked them for a night's lodging. Russell King readily welcomed him and went out to help unhitch and care for the stranger's team of horses. The man took a book from his wagon and said, "I think your name is Homer. Here is a book your friend Martin Harris sent you." As Russell King took the book in his hand, a voice said distinctly in his ear, "That is a history of those bones you used to play with." Surprised, he looked around and could see no one. He was sure it was not the man who gave him the book as he had been looking at him and he had not spoken nor had he seen anyone else. This book was the Book of Mormon. Russell King was deeply impressed by this experience and related it many times in connection with his testimony of the Gospel. The next day he began reading it and the more he read the more interested he became. When he had finished, he was convinced it was the true history of the American Indians and that it contained the fullness of the everlasting Gospel. This he firmly believed to the last day of his life.

He immediately began to get anxious to go to the headquarters of the Mormon Church in Kirtland, Ohio. He began trying to persuade Eliza, her sister and her husband to accompany him. They were not much interested in religion but reluctantly agreed to go. When they arrived in Kirtland, church was in session and Joseph Smith himself was speaking. He mentioned the poverty of the church and said funds were needed immediately. After the meeting, he came

down through the congregation to shake hands. He came near Russell King and Martin Harris introduced them. As the Prophet shook his hand, Russell King left a \$10.00 gold piece in it. The Prophet looked at the money and said, "Mr. Homer, money was never needed worse or put to a better use than this will be. This is indeed 'bread cast upon the waters' and will be returned to you and yours. Neither you nor your family shall ever want for bread." Russell King was so impressed he drank in every word and wished to get baptized before leaving Kirtland, but the others were devout members of the Dutch Church and were quite satisfied with their religion. He returned home without doing anything about joining the church.

In the spring of 1840, Russell King got a bad case of "western fever". He thought they could find better opportunities in the western country so they started west. They lived for some time in Logan County, Illinois, where their two next children were born, Nancy and Anna.

By this time the Mormons had established the city of Nauvoo, Illinois and Russell King was determined to go there. As the family traveled westward, they camped near Springfield, Illinois, where their son William Harrison was born in the covered wagon. Russell King had taken the initial steps in becoming a Free Mason but gave it up soon after meeting the Mormons. He was so thoroughly converted to the Gospel that he persistently urged Eliza to join also, as he didn't want to join without her. She remained faithful to the Dutch Church and insisted she had no wish to change. In the year of 1844, she suffered a severe sick spell and was administered to by Mormon elders after which she rapidly regained her health. This caused her to change her mind about the Mormons and she was baptized and confirmed a member before Russell King. He was baptized in the Nauvoo Temple on March 21, 1844. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that Russell King had been converted for so long and done so much to help the Church that he was worthy to be ordained to the higher Priesthood so he was ordained to an Elder the same day. Later in his life, he said he wished he had held the Aaronic Priesthood if only for a short time as he felt he had missed something.

Russell King and Eliza both embraced the Gospel with firm conviction and remained steadfast and faithful as long as they lived. They cast their lot with the Saints for better or worse and cooperated in every way to further the cause of the Church. After the death of the Prophet

Joseph Smith, they joined in the exodus from Nauvoo. They went into Iowa as far as Garden Grove where they planted crops for those who would follow. They then went on to the Missouri River and stopped among the Pottawattamie Indians. These Indians were friendly and gave them corn, beans, melons and other food. Russell King left his family there and went to Missouri to work, husking corn to get supplies for his own family and others whose fathers and husbands had gone with the Mormon Battalion. He husked corn and cut cordwood and received corn for his pay.

When the Pioneers of 1847 were preparing to leave for the west, Russell King took his teams, wagons and supplies for himself and a neighbor Almon Williams and went to headquarters prepared to go with the Saints. They were much longer getting ready than first expected. After two weeks of waiting, Pres. Heber C. Kimball came to Russell King and said, "Brother Homer, you are just the man we need to stay here and look after the Church cattle. Your family is sick and need you, so you better let Bro. Williams take your outfit across and you stay here. We want you to inspect every animal that starts across and make sure it is able to stand the trip." This plan was followed. Russell King took over the management of the Church cattle and supervised the outfitting of all emigrants during the next two years. Many emigrants did not have sufficient money to buy proper outfits but he managed to find ways for them to travel or sold them cattle and supplies on credit. He also established a ferry across the Missouri River for carrying passengers and freight. It consisted of flat boats propelled by oars and was the only means of crossing for several years.

In this business, he became personally acquainted with many people and handled quite large sums of money. Once just after a large company had left a friendly Indian informed him there was a plot to rob him. He filled a money belt with several pounds of gold and swam the Missouri River in the dark of night with the money. In his later life in Utah, it was a source of great joy to him to meet people with whom he had dealt in this business. Many came and thanked him and expressed their appreciation for the good turns he had done them by selling them sound cattle that were able to stand the hard trip. When he settled in Clarkston, Bishop Jardine of the ward met Russell King and remarked, "Why, Brother Homer, you are the man who sold us the cattle that brought us across the plains. I had worked in the coalmines in

Scotland all my life and had just come to America. I hardly knew a cow from a horse and could so easily have been duped but that yoke of cattle served us well for the trip and for many years afterward.”

Russell King and Eliza next moved to a small village on the bank of the Missouri River where they started a mercantile business and traded with emigrants, Indians, trappers and hunters. They also kept the post office. Russell King had acquired the services of a hired man, a faithful Indian whom they called Kudjo. He was very devoted to Russell King. Kudjo’s job was to herd the church’s cattle. One day when he was herding the cattle, two white men jumped out from behind a tree and grabbed his horse by the bit. Kudjo put his arms around the horse’s neck and put up a terrific fight to keep the horse. He told the men, “This is Homer’s horse and you can’t have him, even if you take everything of mine.” He held onto the horse’s neck while they tried by every means to make him let go. They took the saddle, bridle and even Kudjo’s clothing but he still hung on to the horse. It was cold and snow lay on the ground, but late that night Kudjo brought the horse home without even a rope on it.

While living here, two more daughters were born to Russell King and Eliza, Lovisa Matilda and Julia Caroline.

On January 24, 1849, Shadrach Roundy, Russell King Homer, Jedediah M. Grant, G.D. Grant and J.S. Fullmer organized a company for the purpose of carrying persons and goods from the Missouri River to Sutter’s Fort in California. This company was called the Great Salt Lake Carrying Company. This company was in business for some years during the California gold rush. In the spring of 1849, Russell King signed a contract to haul freight for merchants who were to open the first general merchandise store in Salt Lake City. He loaded seven prairie schooners with goods and took a crew of eight men, one of them his brother Ben. They left early in the spring expecting to return to Iowa in the fall. All of the teams and wagons belonged to Russell King and when he had finished his business in Salt Lake City, he sold them there and returned by saddle pony and pack mule.

On this return trip he shared the company of several church people including Orson Hyde who was starting on his first mission to Palestine and Orson Pratt who was going to New

York on church business. They got caught somewhere in Nebraska in a terrible blizzard and Russell King caught a severe cold which developed into pneumonia. He lay very ill for several days and finally arrived at his home after winter had set in. He and his brother had started out with eight horses and finally reached the Missouri River with one horse on account of the bad storms.

In the spring of 1852, Russell King received word that his father had passed away in Pennsylvania and that he had been named executor of the estate. He felt this matter needed his personal attention so he sold out all of his holdings in Iowa and moved his family by team back to Pennsylvania. On February 1, 1853, a son was born to them in the old family home and they named him Benjamin Cobb Homer.

After the estate was settled, they returned by taking passage on a steamboat to Cleveland, Ohio where they bought teams to travel back to Iowa. Upon their arrival, Russell King took up a homestead on Pigeon Creek, thirteen miles north of Council Bluff. After proving up on this homestead, they moved into Crescent City and opened a real estate office and hotel. The hotel was called the Homer House and soon became well known as Eliza was a good cook and so famous for her pies and doughnuts. Many of their patrons were Indians and on several occasions such heavy storms came up and it was not safe for them to return to their homes by canoe. Eliza would ask them to stay all night and while she took her children in her room, the dining room and kitchen floors were covered with drunken Indians in their blankets. Often there was no white man around the place but she was not afraid. She used to say that she had no reason to be afraid, as the Indians knew she was their friend and any one of them would have defended her against danger.

The Homer House entertained all missionaries free of charge and during the winter of 1857-58, all missionaries were called home because of the Johnston's Army episode. Fifty of them sat down at the Homer table at one time without being asked for their keep. Sixteen of them were too late to go with the last company to Utah and stayed with the Homers all winter. Eliza did their laundry, mending and darning besides keeping and boarding them all winter. During the time spent at the Homer House, two more daughters were born Mary Ann and



Rosetta Katherine. Eliza's mother who had returned with them from Pennsylvania passed away there and their little daughter Julia Caroline died also.

Russell King continued in the freighting and ferry business leaving the management of the store and hotel to the others in the family. They tried to assist anyone anxious to get to Utah and in spite of all they did for others, they prospered and became well off. One of Russell King's sayings was, "You will not lose anything by helping a person who is putting forth an honest effort to help himself."

In the summer of 1858, an independent company of emigrants and returning missionaries was organized to go to Salt Lake City with Russell King as captain. They left for Utah on July 3, 1858. The Homer family was well equipped for camping. They had tents, a camp stove, a light spring wagon and three additional wagons loaded with their effects and two loaded with merchandise they were freighting for merchants in Utah.

They also drove with them a bunch of loose stock consisting of horses, mules and cattle. The rest of their company was mostly from Denmark. They made good time all the way and saw hundreds of loaded wagons hauling supplies for Johnston's Army.

One of the boys, William H. who was 12 years of age at the time, recorded in his diary the following:

"On one occasion we seemed about to meet our fate at the hands of Sioux Indians on the warpath. Decked out in their war paint and feathers, a band of these fierce looking fellows swooped down upon us about four o'clock in the afternoon, circling around our wagon train. Captain Homer, understanding the situation, called all the teams to a halt and sent out a man with a white flag to meet them. They kept coming closer whooping and yelling until they were quite close to the man with the flag. Suddenly, their chieftain held up his hand and they all stopped. He came forward alone on a beautiful white pony; he spoke to the man with the flag and after a brief conversation asked to talk to the big white chief. After very impressive preparations, Father went out to meet the Indian chief, who demanded great quantities of flour, sugar, tobacco and beef cattle. After some time spent in parlaying, they agreed to settle for a

much smaller amount and various trinkets, beads, mirrors, bandanna handkerchiefs, etc. The chief, very gratified then said, "I see you are peaceful travelers wishing to pass through our country and we will make a dance in your honor", which they did. The chief took Father aside and said, "There are hostile tribes of Indians ahead watching for wagon trains and if the great white chief so desires, we will go along to protect your company. This offer was gladly accepted and the chief kept his word and that was the last of our Indian troubles."

They traveled as fast as their teams could stand and made what was considered very good time all the way. On October 7, 1858 they arrived in Salt Lake City. In the Journal Histories in the Church Historian's Office the following item is found:

"Captain Russell Homer landed in Salt Lake City with a train of wagons, October 7, 1858." Upon their arrival in Utah, many friends came to greet them, bid them welcome and offered assistance, among them many of the people they had helped across the plains.

They rented a house in the 17th Ward for that first winter. In the spring, Russell King bought a home in the 2nd Ward and moved into it. It was necessary for him to make another trip to Iowa to dispose of the last of his property there so he took his oldest son Edmund with him. During that summer Eliza's last child, Russell King Jr., was born. On his return trip, Russell King bought some more supplies for his family including a large full sized mirror, some silk for Eliza, a dress each for Nancy, Anna and Lovisa, together with some lace window curtains, fine linen tablecloths, a china dinner set, some sugar and tea and a beautiful Brussels carpet. All of these things were certainly rare luxuries for that time and place and Eliza always took great pride in them.

The Mormon Church did sanction polygamy for those who were considered worthy to live in plural marriage, but a man had to be a clean living man in full fellowship and good standing in the Church, as well as financially able to provide for the extra members of his family. He must also be willing to accept the responsibilities with such marriages. Russell King filled all of these requirements and was advised to marry in polygamy in accordance with the teachings of the Church. Soon after getting settled in Salt Lake City, he married Mary Anderson and Eliza Thornton.

Russell King lost no time in beginning to pioneer new districts in northern Utah and southern Idaho. He took a place at Peoria and served as the first justice of the peace there. He then took some land in the Gentile Valley. He and another man were the first white men to settle there. It was so isolated and the snow fell so deep that they were snowed in for months at a time so Russell King moved his family away. He also settled a place at Three-Mile Creek just south of Brigham City and established the family home with Eliza Thornton and her family there. He also pioneered at Swan Lake and Eliza Thornton's family lived there for about three years. When she gave birth to her sixth child the snow was so deep it was impossible to get a doctor to her and she developed pneumonia and passed away, leaving the baby and five other children. Russell King then took this group of small children to make their home with Eliza at Three-Mile Creek. When they arrived, Eliza kissed each child and gave them a good warm supper and a cozy warm bed. Although she was not their natural mother, Eliza was called "Mother Homer" by these children and was a mother to them in every respect. She took this family of motherless children to her bosom and treated them just like her own. No one could tell from any word or conduct of hers that they were not exactly the same as her natural children. She was not given to making a fuss over anybody however her attitude was that Russell King's burdens were her burdens and his children were her children.

Russell King set out to find a place where he could get the family all together and be near them all. He found at Clarkston just what he had been looking for; a good market for draft horses. A few years before this move to Clarkston in 1874, Russell King had married his fourth and last wife, Mary Prianna Petty Hillman. The Homers were all one big happy family there in Clarkston, free to go back and forth among one another.

Russell King was quite interested in mining as a sideline. Meanwhile, he kept acquiring more land and more cattle and buying and selling horses and experimenting in dry farming. He sent to New Zealand for a sample of hard winter or fall wheat, just a small package of four pounds. It matured all right and he nursed it along and gradually let others have the seed. The raising of this fall wheat has become one of the principal industries in that part of the country and Russell King considered that one of the real achievements of his lifetime. He also spent a great deal of money trying out new types of machinery. In addition to his many other interests,

he, like his father before him, was the physician and surgeon, bone setter and veterinarian for those living near him.

The Homer house was the gathering place for the young people of Clarkston. They would come early in the evening, play games, sing and dance and be home early. Eliza would not allow card playing nor allow anyone to stay late but she enjoyed seeing the young people have a good time and didn't mind at all the noise of the fun and frolic which went on most every evening in their home.

The Homer house in Clarkston was the typical western farm home of the time with cows, horses, chickens and all the usual farm animals. They had a well for water and what a thrill it was when Russell King brought home a nice new rope with a bucket on each end with a pulley arrangement to draw water from the well. They thought that was the last word in modern conveniences. They had a well filled cellar with apples, potatoes and vegetables in the winter months and the back kitchen with cured meats, hams, bacon, corned beef, mincemeat, pickled pork and lard, a barrel of salted cucumbers, a box of homemade tallow candles, the barrel of sauerkraut, and cookies and doughnuts. Their beds were entirely homemade with quilts made of pieced strips of the best parts of worn out clothing. Their blankets were of wool, which were washed, carded, spun and woven by hand. The pillows likewise were made by hand with feathers from the wild game and chickens. Rag rugs were the carpeting for most floors. Soap was made from grease scraps and lye taken from wood ashes. Butter, bread and other foods were homemade in the good old-fashioned way. Russell King would take wheat to the mill and wait for it to be ground into flour. Eliza used to make hats for the entire family from cloth or straw which she braided herself. She would bleach or color it. She also made home spun yarn and colored it with homemade dyes. She made black with log wood, yellow with onion peel, orange with copperas, pink with aniline, blue with indigo, and red with madder. She also made starch with grated raw potatoes. They had no modern plumbing and no steam heat, refrigeration or even screens yet it was a comfortable home provided with such a richness of life as is known in few homes of today.

About ten years before his death, Russell King bought a light spring wagon or buggy.

He drove around the country a great deal, always taking a load of his family with him. His children were the envy of the other children as they got to travel around so much. His was the only buggy in town that could be borrowed on any terms, so it was used every day. Not only did Russell King loan the buggy, but most everything else on the place. He used to say that “no” was the hardest word in the English language for him to say. Everyone knew that “Dad Homer” had a bark worse than his bite. Anything that anyone asked of either Russell King or Eliza they usually got. She would even lend the last loaf of bread in the house and then make biscuits for her own family.

Russell King was the typical pioneer, usually dressed in the true western style of high topped boots, red and black checked flannel shirt, pants and vest and Stetson hat. He had a plain business suit, which he wore for church and very special occasions. He had bright blue eyes that expressed deep understanding or flashed fire, as the occasion demanded. His friendly smile was an invitation to friendship. He had a great fondness and affection for children; his own and everyone else’s. The shyest child soon found himself seated upon his knee and all his troubles vanished. He was fond of kissing those he loved but with all his loving kindness and consideration for his family, he insisted on propriety in all things. His temper was of the flash variety, quickly come and quickly gone, but if by hasty word or action he hurt anyone’s feelings, he was quick to apologize and make amends. His ready kiss with a gentle pat of approval was sufficient reward for any service.

In the evenings, the family would gather around him and sing the songs his Mother had taught him and all the hymns, both Mormon and Methodist. One daughter, Rachel Maretta, remembered that he taught her a ballad of 18 verses when she was only four years old.

As his children married and settled nearby, Russell King made it a habit to see those who lived in town every day. If they did not come home, he went to see them, if only for a few minutes. Those of his children who lived farther away he would see enough to know first hand how they were getting along.

Eliza was of an entirely different disposition; most of the time she was very serious and stern in her demeanor. She ran her household industriously and methodically, assigning tasks,

which were to be done in a prompt orderly fashion. The clock regulated her life. Mealtime never varied; breakfast at 6:00 a.m., dinner at 12:00 noon, and supper at 6:00 in the evening. Though all were welcome, everyone regardless of name or station was expected to be at the table on time. She did not use slang or show emotion of any kind. She showed the same courtesy and respect to the humble tramp as she did to the highest personage. She had an unusual sense of justice and fair play for everyone, always seeing to it that the underdog was protected. She dressed plainly; her dresses were all made after one pattern with a tight waist, long sleeves and full skirt. She always wore a black lace headdress, only removing it when she combed her hair or put on her bonnet. For dress occasions and church, she wore a black satin dress with white collar and cuffs, an elegant black satin bonnet with just a touch of white and wide black satin streamers and an Irish paisley shawl. She had small dainty feet and hands and wore black kid gloves and shoes. She was generous and hospitable with all children who visited in her home and saw that they were made welcome.

Her son, William H., recalled, "About two years before her death while Mother was visiting at our home in Logan, an old friend came to our house to see her. They were certainly happy to see each other and had a nice visit. As he left the house, he shook Mother's hand and with tears in his eyes, he said to her, 'Sister Homer, I do wish to thank you again for your kindness to me when I was a poor, hungry child. We were poor Danish immigrants living in part of your house because we were too poor to pay rent and you took us in. Every day you gave me one of your big fat biscuits covered with butter. I fancy I can see them yet. I will never forget how good they tasted.'" This is merely an incident, which throws some light on her nature."

Russell King's daughter Rachel Margretta remembered, "We children were expected to be home for dinner the minute Sunday School was out. Mother was so strict about keeping the Sabbath Day that I was tempted to run away and play, which I did. It was dark when I started home, thinking of disobeying Mother. I became conscious of the fact that I had practically ruined my new shoes by playing in the wet and mud. I went through much mental agony and tried to clean my shoes and muster up the courage to face Mother. As I entered the room, she sat reading by the fires. She slowly looked over to me and said, 'There's a piece of chicken left

from dinner that I saved for you' and resumed her reading. After I choked the chicken down, I asked Mother what could be done about my shoes. She replied, 'You will just have to stay home from the dance and everything else for a week'. That awful week at last came to an end and I think Mother was about as relieved as I was. When she made a promise, pleasant or unpleasant, she kept her word and Father backed her up.

Eliza Williamson Homer's home was always headquarters for the whole family. Russell King made it his headquarters for his business and other activities and every member of the Homer family, including his other wives and their children called Eliza "Mother Homer". All came home to her when sick or weary or having a burden they needed to share or a confidence they did not wish betrayed. She seemed to never tire of serving those she loved.

She was very fond of rhymes and stories and used to spend the long winter evenings by the fire knitting, darning or doing other family chores while telling them to the children. Promptly at ten minutes to 9:00 p.m. every evening, she got up, put away her work, checked to see if there was water in the bucket and kindling for the fire, wound the clock, put out the cat and was in bed at exactly 9:00 p.m.

Russell King and Eliza always enjoyed attending Church. They were honest and conscientious tithe payers and donated to every worthy cause. When the old rock meeting house in Clarkston, Utah was completed, the bishop came to the Homer house very much worried because the apostle Moses Thatcher had sent word he would be coming the following Sunday to dedicate it and there was still \$200.00 owing on the building. The bishop told Russell King he was the only man in town who could help with such a sum of money. Russell King told the bishop he did not have that amount of money handy but that he could take a yoke of oxen and use them. The men who had the money coming were willing to take the oxen and so the debt was paid and the dedication took place on time.

About 1884, Russell King was driving along in his buggy when he unexpectedly drove into a deep ditch and was thrown out onto his head and shoulders. He suffered a great shock and concussion and fractured both shoulder blades. He never fully recovered from the effects of this accident. He lived for a few years but his health gradually declined. During the last winter

of his life (1890), he arranged his business affairs and made provisions for his two remaining wives to live comfortably. About the first of February 1890, the old family doctor came to see him and said, "There is no one thing that I can put my finger on which ails him; he has just burned the candle at both ends too long."

At the close of his life, Russell King talked a great deal about his early life and experiences and repeated conversations he had had with Church leaders. On the day of his death, he related a dream he had early in his life about being in a boat on the Missouri River with the Prophet Joseph Smith floating downstream. The Prophet had said to him, "There is no standing still in Mormonism, if you don't paddle upstream you will surely drift downstream". The effect of this dream had been very important upon his life. He had always felt he did not dare refuse to do anything he was called upon to do by the proper authority and was extremely thankful he had never done so.

On February 12, 1890, he passed peacefully away at his home in Clarkston. The next year, Eliza sold her property there and went to live in Rigby, Idaho near her son King and daughter Mary. For several years she maintained her own home there for herself and her brother John. When her children visited her there, she was content and happy. She enjoyed doing fancy work especially netting, which she gave away as fast as she made it. After living at Rigby for about 15 years, she found it too burdensome to keep up her home and went to St. Anthony with her daughter Lovisa. Her greatest satisfaction was getting the family together for a reunion. The first one was held in Rigby in October of 1900 and from then on every year as long as she lived. Although she was the head of the family and was treated like a queen, she was the same modest retiring person she had always been. She always made a welcoming speech at the reunions concerning her noble sons and daughters, which of course meant the entire family.

On June 11, 1912, Eliza was at Blackfoot, Idaho with her daughter Rosetta. Her oldest son Edmund came to spend his 74th birthday with her. She said to him, "Edmund, I want you to ask the Lord to take me home, I am so tired and I want to rest." Edmund responded that he just couldn't do it. She then said to him, "No, if you can't do that, just dedicate me to the Lord."



This was done and a few hours after that, she lay down to take a rest and peacefully passed away in her sleep at age 97.

Russell King's daughter Rachel Maretta recalled, "Mother (Eliza) Homer was the one person of whom I have never heard an unkind word or criticism spoken. She truly was one of the noble ones of the earth. While she sought no honors or acclaim she quietly clothed the naked and fed the poor. She was loved and honored as few people have been. She walked with dignity and grace the path of duty as she saw it, letting nothing turn her from it. Of her goodness and true worth, the half will never be told."

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*Taken from "Homer Family History" by Rachel Maretta Homer Crockett - Salt Lake City, Utah 1942*