

A True Story About the Coxes of Texas

The hills and creek bottoms of central Texas were first explored by Thomas Isaac Cox scouting for a company of Spanish soldiers in establishing a fort and mission at *Delucia* Creek and *Arroyo Cavallo* (near Lampasas) in 1756. The area was abundant with buffalo, wild horses, and longhorn cattle, with few predators. Unwelcomed and under constant attack by the local Kiowa people, the small fort was soon abandoned.

American Revolution. Returning during the Revolution in 1780 as a Continental Army captain, serving under Francis Marion, the “Swamp Fox” of the Carolinas who originated modern guerilla warfare, Thomas Cox led five nephews on a mission to capture wild mustangs to equip George Washington with a cavalry to disrupt the superior maneuvering of English army formations, as the British shifted to major attacks in the South. The Cox boys were each able to lead strings of up to 100 wild horses linked together with horsehair ropes, for 81 days straight, running 20 miles a day through more than 1,600 miles of wilderness to arrive in Philadelphia with 316 horses and 48 colts. Cox commanded a second, more successful roundup, returning with 366 horses and 109 colts, before organizing a company of militia.

Thomas Cox returned as an old man in 1803, along with his namesake (Thomas Isaac Cox the younger) and legally rounded up and tamed strings of wild Texas mustangs under contract for the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Thomas operated under a license from an old friend, the young Spanish officer for whom Thomas had originally scouted 47 years earlier, and who became the governor at New Orleans—before Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1810.

Texas Revolution. Twenty-six years later, around the first of March in 1836, the invading Mexican Army closed in on San Antonio and the Alamo fortified by the Texas Republic rebels after their own revolution for independence. The Texans had driven the occupying Mexican soldiers below the Rio Grande as far down as Brownsville, but Santa Ana had responded with a large army.

As the Mexican forces began to encircle San Antonio, a supply wagon was sent up from Goliad, but quickly broke an axle. Over the next four days, Benjamin E. Cox, the son of the younger Thomas Isaac Cox and grandson of Solomon Cox I, ran strings of packed horses carrying corn meal, flour, and beef jerky 90 miles through the Mexican lines to resupply the Alamo. In the final Mexican assault on the fortified mission two days later, all the Texan defenders fought to their death, rather than surrender. The names of fourteen Coxes are listed in the rolls of the Army of the Texas Republic.

There are two linages of Cox patriot families who migrated to Texas after being expelled from their pacifist Quaker congregation in Cane Creek, North Carolina for their “militant activities,” such as running horses, during the Revolution. One family was led by Solomon Cox I (DAR#A027084) (the father of the younger Thomas Isaac Cox), his son Solomon II, and his grandson, Joseph Cox. The other lineage was led by Samuel Cox II (DAR#A205252), Solomon I’s nephew, being the son of his brother Samuel I.



The separation tells a story of romance, disownment, and adventure. Samuel II was first banished by the Cane Creek Congregation of Friends because he fought for their Rights of Liberty, and then Martha, the 17-year-old twin sister of Solomon II, fell in love with Samuel, her courageous cousin who was seven years older. She left the congregation and the protection of her patriot father Solomon I to marry Samuel II and to accompany him on his travels.

Thereafter, the Samuel branch and associated families migrated directly to the west along the horse and native trails they'd learned into the Tennessee and southern Kentucky wilderness, where there were few wagon roads, while the larger Solomon I branch, along with Martha's twin, Solomon II, and his son, Joseph Cox took the longer, but safer wagon routes north through Virginia, and then west through northern Kentucky, and the new states of Ohio, and Missouri.

Exercising the Rights of Liberty, they had fought to defend, the pioneering Cox families set out to explore the new United States, a land almost instantly doubled by the Louisiana Purchase. Three generations of both branches of

Coxes were accompanied by varying numbers of other large extended families in long trains of wagons and horses that planted peaceful settlements and made good marriages along their way.

When the 1832 Blackhawk War in Illinois threatened to spread into Missouri, Joseph Cox, a county judge, was elected to command the local militia regiment with the rank of Colonel to defend the border. Investigating depredations on settlers blamed on Native Americans, his militia identified and captured a criminal white gang that preyed on outlying areas.

First to arrive in Bell County was Fleming Trigg Cox the grandson of the adventurers Samuel II and Martha, being the son of Samuel III. Fleming was scouting a wagon trail from Kentucky through central Texas as an alternate southern route to California. The plan was to gather, graze, and trail cattle and to move wagon trains down below the bottoms of the West Texas rivers, with easier crossings, and then break out through El Paso and across Arizona into Southern California.

According to legend, when Fleming's wagon broke an axle at South Nolan Creek, and he didn't have a spare, he stopped and staked out the land, instead of cutting a crooked post oak tree, and sawing, shaping, and curing straight replacement parts.



In his old age, Joseph Cox undertook one last migration from Missouri down through Arkansas into the hill country of Central Texas first explored by Thomas Cox almost a century before. His fifth son, Hiram Washington Cox, the family maverick, had earlier ranged out alone into West Texas away from family ties to gather and tend cattle instead of farming. Joseph's eleventh and youngest

daughter, Nica Jane sat beside him on their way down to farm and hunt the rich creek bottoms, where Joseph claimed 600 acres of land in Bell County in 1851. Joseph was also accompanied on the wagon train by his father, Solomon II who settled in Livingston County, where he is buried.

With the arrival of Nica Jane Cox aged 19, and her introduction to Fleming's spirited son, Samuel Hampton Cox aged 22, and their marriage in 1853, the two separated Cox families were reunited by these now distant cousins. Nonetheless, Joseph Cox was not pleased to have another daughter of the Solomons marry a Samuel, and it is said Nica Jane was not welcome in the home when her father was in residence—until after her first “fine young boy” was born. Joseph Cox died in 1869 while visiting relatives in Lampasas County, where he was buried.

In the Civil War, Samuel Hampton Cox left Nica Jane and his family to ride with Terry's Texas Rangers, being among the last operationally effective military units of the Confederacy to surrender. Each of the original 1,170 volunteer rangers who mustered for Samuel's Eighth Cavalry Regiment in 1861 was required to present himself with a shotgun and/or carbine, a Colt revolver, or two, a Bowie knife, and a saddle, bridle, and blanket. Most volunteers arrived on their own mount, some brought spares, and others brought strings of horses tended by their own slaves. (It appears most slaves remained and may have even assisted in battles by quickly servicing remounts and reprovisioning, when escape to the north by horse was easily possible—as they all had families back home in Texas.)

The Regiment organizer, Benjamin Franklin Terry was a wealthy railroad builder and planter from Sugar Land near Houston, which he constructed and operated with an industrial labor force of enslaved people. Terry, an avid

political successionist, was appointed as a Confederate colonel by General Longstreet to establish a cavalry force on the western front. Terry formed and quickly led his new Regiment to its first victory, an attack on federal forces at Woodsonville, Kentucky on December 17, 1861, during which he was mortally wounded.

Fighting on horseback for the next four years, with no common uniform except a Lone Star on their cap or hat, under a succession of fallen leaders, the Regiment operated as shock troops for the Confederacy throughout the western and southern states.

Of Ranger tactics, it was said that, irrespective of the odds in every battle fought against the Federals, the Rangers “did not have quit in them,” and “once in a fight, they were not there to take prisoners.” The Rangers of Texas are generally considered to have been one of the most effective fighting units ever fielded by either side of the conflict, having remained continually and consistently on the attack throughout their “War Against Northern Aggression,” to its end.



Terry's Rangers engaged in 275 battles, as they aggressively defended the northeastern land borders of Texas against any potential Federal invasions. Raiding and

scouting under the command of the Army of Tennessee, the Rangers harassed the flanks of General Sherman, as he drove his larger army across Georgia to Atlanta, and then north through South Carolina. At the end, Sherman was into central North Carolina striking hard toward Virginia and combining Union forces and supply lines with General Grant.

The last major battle of the Civil War was fought at the end of March 1865 at Bentonville, North Carolina (less than 100 miles from Cane Creek, the origin of the Cox family migrations). Over several days of fierce fighting, the far superior Federal army under Sherman defeated a final series of repeated attacks by the remaining western Confederate forces under the command of General Joseph E. Johnston (including the Rangers, who suffered major losses, including three officers) in a desperate Confederate effort to block Sherman from connecting with Grant.

With the surrender of the Army of Tennessee at Bentonville, followed days later by Lee's surrender of the Army of Virginia, Samuel Cox's Eighth Cavalry Regiment stood down, and less than 300 of the 1,170 volunteer Rangers rode home (some of whom were likely accompanied by their surviving slaves, under quite different relationships).

During that war, Nica Jane's lone wolf older brother, Washington Cox and his ranch cowboys and cattle trail pioneers had broadly ranged out of Erath and Hopkins counties in defense of the West Texas frontier (once the Federal Army abandoned its western line of forts and retreated to the north). When the Confederate government failed to organize or field a defense of its frontier borders, Wash Cox and his cowboys reacted aggressively against raids by Native American tribes, renegades, and rustlers, pushing them across the border into wild New Mexico Territory.

Having learned and improved the aggressive horseback ambush and attack tactics of the Comanche and Apache Native Americans, Wash and his western rangers stopped short of reciprocal scalping (even though bounties had been paid by Texas as late as 1841 for the scalps of Comanches killed along the Llano River), or branding dead cattle rustlers, although there were rumors.

The holiday of Juneteenth joyously celebrated by the families of formerly enslaved Americans of African descent, commemorates not only the formal surrender of Texas on June 19, 1865, the last Confederate state to do so, but it exposes the immediate freeing of 400,000 enslaved People in Texas (whose numbers engaged in industrial and agricultural labor had doubled, as the war was fought in other states).

Moreover, Juneteenth is powerfully significant for all People, for it marks the end of the chattel slavery shamefully supported by the laws of the United States. The “freeing” having occurred a long century after the “founding ‘slave-owning’ fathers” legalized a crime against the liberty of humanity in their Constitution, that was derived from the foundational Declaration of Independence made by all the People.



That original premise of inherent, retained Rights of Liberty by every Person remains as the soul and strength of the Nation, being the source of its Constitution and laws: *“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all*

men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Emerging from the Civil War, and correcting the latent constitutional defect that caused it, the People, including those previously enslaved, reaffirmed their original Declaration of Independence by all the People of the United States, and they enshrined their Rights of Liberty in the Fourteenth Amendment to their Constitution.

Following the surrender, the Federals were able to cross Texas and to reoccupy the western forts. Washington Cox began to relocate his ranch headquarters, and his entire “outfit” of 30,000 head of **COX**-branded cattle, moving wagons 800 miles across roadless New Mexico Territory into far northwest San Juan County, up to “four corners” where Colorado, Utah, and Arizona meet. There he built the first ranch house at Cedar Hill in the wilderness on the east face of the Rockies, near where he is buried, along the original northwestern border of the Republic of Texas.



Unlike all other states of the Confederacy, the interior of Texas was unscarred by battle, and although its coast had been blockaded, all attempts at naval landings were

repelled. Samuel Cox mustered out of the Rangers and rode 1,300 miles across a devastated South to Nolanville and his wife Nica Jane Cox. Life for them was mostly unchanged, as their homes, stock, and crops were safe and intact. They hung up their weapons and they quietly raised 13 children, as Sam served as a justice of the peace.



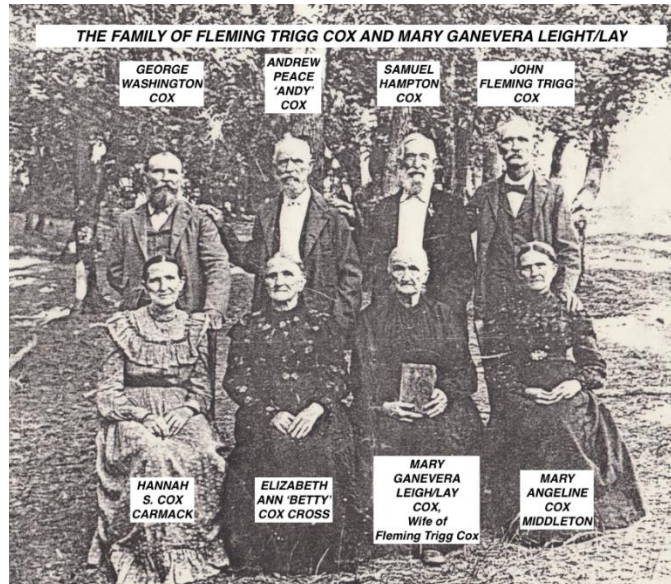
Nica Jane and Samuel Hampton Cox

With basic Quaker beliefs in peace and the better qualities of all people, moderated by the necessity of defending their liberty and beliefs, the Coxes did not own or work slaves, nor did they unnecessarily associate with those who did; however, by living independently on the fruit and bounty of the land of Texas, and when they rode to defend it and their Rights of Liberty, they followed the

creed of its Rangers: “Say what you mean and mean what you say;” and “Defend the ground upon which you stand.”



Fleming Trigg Cox is buried on Pleasant Hill in the community cemetery in Nolanville, Texas he dedicated from the land he had staked. His widow, Mary “Polly” Cox and seven of their 12 children, including Samuel Hampton, are shown at a family gathering prior to her death in 1907.



Samuel Hampton and Nica Jane Cox are also buried nearby on Pleasant Hill alongside their son, Christopher Columbus Alonzo (C. Lonnie) Cox.



The Cox Family in America (including the Mormon pioneers who branched off from Missouri to migrate west to Utah) is one of the oldest, largest, related families in the United States, most of whom share a gentle Quaker ancestry tradition of quiet community service in resolving problems, avoiding disputes, and repairing the roads. Having always lived on the land without slaves, the family defended not the horrible institution, which they abhorred, but they protected their land and people from external threat during the Civil War and as always, with a ferocity of tactics and purpose that punishes and deters all aggression.

The Coxes ended the war with an honorable peace, and, with their responsibilities met and duty fulfilled, they were at ease with themselves, and the arms they had to bear in defense of their inherent Rights of Liberty. It was their reluctance to bear arms, rather than their prowess when forced to do so, that helps define the meaning of “Texas Brave.”

The wife of the patriot patriarch Solomon Cox I was Naomi “Amy” Hussey, and their descendants in the Solomon branch, including Nica Jane, can trace her royal lineage back through the Plantagenets and the Magna Carta, to William the Conqueror. The motto on the Cox Family Crest is “Go forth and find someone worthy to be brought into the family.”

July 18, 2023, Copyright © William John (Billy Jack) Cox, is the great grandson of Nica Jane and Samuel Hampton Cox. His grandfather was “C. Lonnie” Cox, who died when he was two. Called Billy Jack in Texas, William John was the eleventh, and now last surviving child of Samuel Hubert Cox and Minnie Irene Oswalt-Cox. (The photographed axle is from his Grandfather Oswalt’s wagon, which was pulled by a team of mules up the caprock to farm dryland cotton on the Plains.)

The author retains his mineral rights in the subsurface of the Cox family farm in Lubbock County where he was raised, which enables him to write as a Texan, if not to vote. The story of his adventures since leaving Texas in 1957 as a 16-year-old runaway orphan, ward of the court, enroute to military school in New Mexico, and his professional life since, can be accessed at <https://williamjohncox.com/Biography.pdf>.