

Les Sutton's note: These were the notes Nita wrote out for her 2009 Brandywine presentation. She barely used them, but instead spoke from her memory and her heart. Her presentation was precious, informative and hilarious!

NOTES FOR COX REUNION, LAMPASAS, TEXAS. May, 2009
(Nita Firmin)

I LOVE the Chillicothe Cox's. They are a Motley Collection yet bound together by their innate sense of decency, honesty, droll humor and a definite sense of pride in their immediate and extended families as their as their forefathers.

My grandfather, William Alonzo, born 1848, could have known Joseph. At least old Joseph was alive until my grandfather was 8 years old. The only oral history I recall hearing about Joseph was that he was not much into farming but into hunting—furnishing meat and honey for his family, before his family moved into his cabin.

Joseph apparently went on long hunting trips in the area and on one occasion, he returned to see smoke coming out his chimney and horses milling around his yard. Seems a group of Indians were using his cabin to get warm and rest their horses. Not sure how they communicated but apparently no bloodshed.

Have also heard that his wife, Amy, taught her children and grand-children in that cabin, which was not large. Any neighbors who wished to come were also welcome to come and learn. I take great pride in the fact that Joseph and Amy could read and write. In their era, more Americans could not read than could. Old Joseph said of my great grandfather, Andrew Cox, that he didn't know why he chose to live in this Old worn-out country. After 150 more years, Livingston County is still not worn out, but will admit the Bears and Panthers are gone. When Joseph and Amy sold their land in 1851, she signed with an "X". Does that mean that she could NOT read and write or did she not want to ride a horse or in a buggy 4 miles or more to town to sign? We'll probably never know.

Don't know much about my great grandfather, Andrew Baker Cox. He was born in 1828 and died in 1871 at the age of 43. My grandfather's Lonzo's obituary says he moved to Texas when he was 9 years old and lived there for 3 years—that should be from about 1857 to 1860. Andrew & family were in the 1860 Livingston County census. A letter to Isom from Joseph written in 1856 says he hasn't heard from Andy since he left with Doctor Ireland so Andy must have been there checking it out Must have been a difficult decision to make for

Andy. He had three brothers here in Missouri; Abel, Isom and William and his sister, Mary Cox Lile. But his parents and other siblings were in Texas.

I brought several folders -one on each of the four sons of Joseph who fathered the Chillicothe COXES". Also on Andrew's son, John H. Cox who was only 10 when Andy died and who Stanley didn't have much on. He was married several times and moved around in Missouri and Arkansas, making it difficult to research and particularly when Stanley and Gary were researching before computers. Also I brought a folder on John H. Cox's son. His name was Charles W- Cox but called "Dick", because there were too many Charles Cox's in our neighborhood already according to Isom and family.

John H. first married his second cousin, a grand-daughter of Isom, named Harriett Gibbons. She had one daughter, Harriett, and son, Sterling, then she had Chas. W. who was only a few months old, when she was killed by lightning. John could not take care of two toddlers and a baby so he brought the baby to Isom He was not Isom's present wife's grand-child but they did what they could. Sterl Cox's in-laws (Wm. And Eugenia Knaus) cared for him and later Sterl and Charles (Isom's twin sons) kept him. He stayed with us some and worked in the coal mines. I did not know his name was NOT Dick until he died.

His remarkable accomplishments were done with little formal education. He started teaching, bypassing a test and receiving a "Teaching Certificate". He went to California and while working with and teaching problem boys in Alameda, California, schools, he was inducted in the Navy. He came out with the rank of Captain (just short of an Admiral). He retired from the Faculty at Stanford University.

Another folder I brought is on Wm L. Cox who remained in the Chillicothe Area. He was a real "Wheeler" and "Dealer". His cousins call him Brigham. Not sure why—maybe from Brigham Young or perhaps they were saying "Brigand" which is a Pirate. Mostly they just chuckled and shook their heads. When someone mentioned him, Loved to watch the Cox shoulders shake when they chuckled. And they seemed to enjoy hearing about his latest but avoided him as much as possible. He was grandson of Abel. When he was young, he must have read it in the back of a nickel magazine or made it up that A wealthy person named Cox had died in Philadelphia with no heirs. He was sure they were our family so he collected from everyone he could to pay his expenses and headed for Philadelphia. Guess He really lived it up but had little information to report.

Another folder, I brought was just pictures of my family and my cousins with whom I grew up. We were all so close. Would be together almost every Sunday. Of course, sometimes my niece and nephew were also in the picture. My niece, Maxine, was a year older than me which made me born an Aunt. Harold was a year younger than me. Out of 24 first cousins only 5 are living and 3 of them are older than I am. Catherine is 89, Ruby 90 and her sister 94. The baby is Donald, age 82, of Michigan, brother of Catherine and Howard (Earl). My nieces and nephews are first cousins and they barely know each other. Doubt if they will have any contact after I am gone, unless it's accidental. Our Cox Reunions are falling apart. We will try this year and possibly the 50th. All my nieces and nephews are busy, busy people.

My grandfather, Lonzo, died when I was 2 mo. old, so the only grandparent I knew was his wife, Liza. She was wonderful but was only 14 when married Lonzo and outgrew him as you can tell by their photos. My grandfather was the smallest of his family and my father was the smallest of his family of 4 brothers. The youngest brother, Earl, was 6 ft or more. My grandparents weren't related but my grandfather's sister married grandmother's brother, Jaba Beasley also her nephew, Charles Rosebrough married another of Lonzo's sisters. Andrew's widow married Joseph Wolfskill and they moved to Sonoma County, Calif. Her daughters went with her. The Lile's (Mary Cox Lile) moved to Sonoma later. My grandparents made at least 2 trips to California to visit.

Most of the Chillicothe Coxes die of cancer and many of those who did not die from it, had fought it. We come in all sizes and shapes. I was born from older parents and regret not knowing them when they were young and vibrant and had their own teeth and hair other than white. Think the older members of my family had more fun but my folks were fine even if they were older.

Won't go into my personal life much. Brought some stuff about Chillicothe and a copy of several things I wrote on request as Genealogy Society wanted to put out a book on "Growing up in Chillicothe in the 20's and 30's" Later they asked me to write about the high school and the business college. Think they are filed in the Genealogy Room at the Library. Two of my classmates out of 118 that I asked to write came up with short ones. They even had a questionnaire but nothing helped

Do want to say something about the Cox Family in general and I guess my parents in particular. My father ran the coal mines. When they filled with water, he started farming. The land was not very good so he rented a large farm in Grundy County. We were flooded there and lost our cattle, hogs, sheep and

neighbors livestock which they brought because the flood had never reached this farm before.

I was born in Grundy County. My grandfather died when I was 2 mos old so we moved back to his farm and Grandma Cox moved in with us. A few weeks after I was 7, we moved to Chillicothe. My Dad had been building barns and doing carpentry which seemed to be better than farming at that time. It was fine for a short time, then came the depression. The banks closed and took all of our cash, my grandmother's cash—even my brother who was 12 or 13 lost a Christmas Account. Think that bothered my father most. My Dad had no work. The depression kept people from building or even keeping up their Homes. If the roof leaked, they would get up there themselves and "daffy-duck" them with anything that didn't have holes in it. If a window broke or fell out, they would cover it with cardboard or stuff rags in it. Chillicothe was not pretty then. We had it really rough. The town finally got in a Shipment of "Commodities". My mother was thrilled. We would have something more to eat My Dad cried and said "I can't do that—I'm a Cox and I am supposed to provide for my family. That is welfare!" My mother didn't have very kind words for the Cox Pride and I didn't understand it either until I was much, much, much older. I understand my father, too. He came from this line of "doers" and here he is. We survived. We did any work we could find- my mother, my Dad, my brothers and me.

The town and everything was so different, then came the drought (several years). Grass wouldn't grow— Some weeds flourished and if they weren't poisonous, we ate them. The grass crunched. Then the leaping tobacco-spitting grasshoppers blackened the sky and ate any green stuff. It had looked promising in the spring and the crops were looking pretty good but in one day, the beautiful crops would be almost even with the ground It was unbelievable!! We had several years of such catastrophes. And it took a lot out of us. Farmers were setting fire to their barns or any insured buildings because they were so in need of cash. One of our friends, Had an insurance agency and the home office put out notice that if a barn burned, they would replace it, but not give the farmers cash. He hired Dad to replace the barns so we breathed well again.

I decided I was going to manage to go to college and after that it was the bright lights for me Okay, I have been there and done that and now I am back and feel that Cox pride in my bones and in my Heart. I am so proud of my parents and my brothers and sisters and all my relatives. They truly are special. Chillicothe is also special. I am so happy to be here and happy to be with all of you today.

My father always told us "Behave yourself wherever you go because you represent this family".

Forgot to tell you, some of my cousins are truly musical geniuses, some are mediocre in that capacity, I fail to qualify at all mere. John Cornelius Cox, son of Abel, and one of the Seftons made their own violins or fiddles but couldn't figure out how to sell them. Come back to Missouri anytime you can. We're friendly. My cooking and cleaning days are over but we have 29 restaurants in our area

If you have any questions and we have time left, I will try and answer anything I can. But I have a poem I would like to read if I can. It was part of the Memorial Service for my youngest brother at the Veterans' Home. It came from the "Central Conference of Rabbis."

Thanks so much for having me

In the rising of the sun and it's going down, WE REMEMBER THEM
In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter, WE REMEMBER THEM
In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring, WE REMEMBER THEM
In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer, WE REMEMBER THEM
In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn, WE REMEMBER THEM
In the beginning of my year and when it ends, WE REMEMBER THEM
When we are weary and in my need of strength, WE REMEMBER THEM
When we are lost and sick at heart, WE REMEMBER THEM
When we have joys we yearn to share, WE REMEMBER THEM.
So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now a part of us, AS WE REMEMBER THEM.

Lois Juanita Cox Firmin