

Edmiston Cox
1809-1861

George Parker preserved the following story. It was a handwritten "manuscript." Marie Witcher identified the writer Mary Cox, daughter of Edmiston Cox. I cannot find a connection to "our" Solomon Cox, (Pedigree follows the last page) but it provides a fascinating history of the Peters Colony and Little Elm, which many of our ancestors did pass through.

Bertram, Burnet County, Texas
Aug. 1, 1913

I was born about 6 miles northwest of Van Buren, Crawford Co., Arkansas Nov. 21, 1844, on a newly settled place in a single room log cabin. It was near the line of the Indian Territory and many crimes were committed along the line, supposedly by white men, outlaws thinking it would be laid on Indians. Some of these crimes were committed by men of mixed blood also, and the lawless whites and bad mixed bloods worked together and so it made things uncomfortable for peaceable people.

Father had been to Texas twice before I was borne. I do not know the date of his first visit, but have heard him say he passed Mr. Dugan's house and saw the Indian's head sticking on the fence stake of the field fence that Miss Kate Dugan cut off with a broad axe after he was killed in her father's lot. Thus to keep her word after her brother was killed by Indians. That was that she would cut off the head of the first Indian she got a chance at, and this was her first chance.

The history of the Dugan fight is written in the History of Fannin County, by Colonel or Judge Simpson as he was called in that part of the state at the time he wrote. I was brought up within four miles of Judge Simpson's home but strange to say, never was inside his house.

I came with my parents to Texas an infant in the fall of 1846. Father had made his second trip to Texas and spent some two years in the old unfortunate Peters Colony, sharing the privations and dangers of such a life and went home in the Spring of 1843, after the Indian raid in which Dr. Caulder was killed in sight of Jonathen Allen's house, which place is now the town of Allen in Collin County.

My father was Edmiston Cox. He and his uncle Burwell Cox of Cane Hill Arkansas raised a company, therefor the purpose of joining Peters' Colony and had about 30 men, some of his younger brothers among the number. Their old claims are well known now in Denton County. Father's claim cornered near a big spring on Little Elm Creek and their claims were spread out between the two Elms. There was Edmiston Cox, Burwell Cox, Senior, Burwell Cox junior, Anderson Cox, and I think, John Cox. Father was an agent and had a lot of their duplicate certificates and I have some of

them yet. There was John D. Black, Elihve Picket, ____ Fisher, J. K. Nowelon and oh! I can't recall all the names I found among them. I was offered \$20.00 each for these certificates after Denison in Grayson County was built up. A man came there and advertised for them and that he or his partners would pay that much for them. Why did I not sell them? Friends and fellow Texans, I thought if they were worth anything to them, they might be worth more to the owners or their descendants, if they could be found; besides, they were my witnesses to the fact that my father had a claim in Texas of 6040 acres of land which would have been patented to him in a few months, had not the Indian raid prevented their staying there those few months. They aimed to go back, certainly, but father was taken sick with the disease that caused his death. It was caused by the exposures to which he was subjected in camp and other frontier privations through the severe Texas winter in the rude fort.

Those certificates are still my witnesses that father was an agent in Peters Colony, and the agents were entitled to premium lands farther west, and in as much as my father settled men who kept their homes, I would like to know why he did not get his premium. His name is signed to all the papers I have.

I would have disdained to sell those duplicates, though it was during the days of reconstruction after the war between the states and I needed money, because I could not bear the idea of making money out of the misfortunes of others. That is another reason.

But to go back to the first part of my story. When father started out calling for men, he said he would not do things by halves, so he would don the Peters' Colony uniform, which was a la Davy Crockett throughout. His was made by mother's hands entirely. The suit of brown jeans, spun and woven by her hands and every seam stitched by her fingers, and a coonskin cap with a buckskin pouch for ammunition, etc with a powder horn attached. But he balked at the Bowie knife, as did others. A compromise was made between the common butcher knife and jack knife, which hung in a leather scabbard to the side of the pouch. He kept his outfit for some years after coming to Texas to stay, and wore it occasionally to hunt deer in. I remember how it looked, I thought horrible. I remember seeing a few others dressed in that same garb. Mother said she tried to persuade him out of wearing that suit, and protested against the making of it, but he said if she did not make it someone else would, so she went to work on it.

The reaching Texas and going in to the wilderness. The work of selecting and surveying claims, building cabins, digging wells was all laborious, and troublesome, and the dread of Indian attacks kept them in a nervous strain continually. Mother said papa said he was going to Texas to settle, so being young and inexperienced, thought best to send a good load of household goods ahead, so she packed box after box for that big ox wagon to carry away, none of which she ever saw again, except a large double woven coverlet, such as now sells at princely sums for rugs and door hangings

among the aesthetic; (and a little sauce skillet); one smothering iron. Only what papa took for his own bedding when he went home. A large box of real good bed clothing, one of books, a large looking class, dishes, cooking utensils, etc. You see, when they reached Texas some of the men backed out at the fearful aspect and turned for home, yet the state had young heroes dropped around without means of support, and so father and his uncle put out word that they would support all that would come to them and so their little fort was soon filled. And out came mother's quilts, blankets and coverlets to make beds for "the boys" on the cold hard ground. You see everything fitted together so nicely. The settler wanted protection, "the boys" wanted a support and there it was.

And now comes the horrible story. The story that has been repeated at every attempt to settle the country with the white races from the time the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth until now. They had built a double log house for a fort and supplies running low on account of the recruits coming in. Father set out for Bonham the nearest place from which anything could be obtained. He had two men, I think, with him. They were with the ox wagon and he was on horseback. As they neared home on the last night they expected to be out, they were afraid to stop and cook supper for fear the Indians would see their fire and attack them. So they traveled all night, aiming to reach Johnathan Allen's for their breakfast where they had been before and at whose board, many a lonely wayfarer had found succor. They reached Mr. Allen's at sunup but found not a soul. Breakfast was on the table, but only a few plates had been helped. The fire had been put out and the wood and fireplace was wet, the doors were all open, everything pointing to the true state of affairs. They had been run off by Indians. They had sat down to eat when the alarm was given, and they had made for the fort (Bird's Fort) that was not far away. They, the Indians, killed Dr. Caulder in sight of the house and left his corpse to pursue the fleeing family. But not till late in the day did father learn that he had passed that corpse and learn of the trail of blood that flowed all over the settler's country.

Peters' Colony was about broken up, and many left. Father went home that evening from Allen's and found the men all barred up, scared nearly out of their wits. They had only lately stockaded their little fort. The Indians had surrounded it but feared to attack it, so crept off into the woods and lay low. All the next day the little band kept watch through newly made portholes but nothing stirred till in the afternoon a lone Indian came out in the open glade in sight of the fort, then another and another, and others till there was some hundred or hundreds bunched up in full view of the port-holes.

Then hearts fluttered and became weak. Who knows the thoughts of those inside, barred by all kinds of props were the doors and the men took turns watching at the portholes of the stockade with rifles in hand. The ladders were inside which gave them some hopes of safety. The Indians pow-wowed, gesticulated, and cast longing eyes at the enclosure until sundown, then all took one direction and the glade was soon cleared. What a breath of freedom filled each heart! What rejoicing and giving thanks issued from each manly heart! For their start at sundown meant an all night march,

they knew, for by this time they had learned much concerning Indian tactics. It only meant they were going home to their camp on the Trinity for reinforcements. But there was one night's rest at the fort. One meal was eaten in peace and quiet, and they viewed another beautiful sunrise, and then held a consultation themselves. They sent some young men into Collin County for corn for their teams and the settlers would not let them have it. They said, "git away from there. The Indians will come back and kill you all." So there it was!

I heard father say the Indians could not have run him away then, but if they could not get corn, they must go. Their spring crops were all up, their cabins built and wells dug. I have heard men say who have seen it long since that the spring at the forks or junction of Little Elm and Big Elm where father's claim cornered was strong enough to turn a mill and a woman living near Leahanon in Collin County told me there was a cotton gin there.

Why did the convention that framed the last constitution of Texas give it against the Peters' Colony claimants concerning their rights. At anytime after the Indians were driven from the counties that were organized out of Robertson Land District they could have obtained certificates, but the new constitution cut them out. Well, but I learn there is talk of a new constitution for Texas, for the purpose of changing some things that are unjust. Will they overlook this unjust decision again?

Father had to go to take Mrs. Dr. Caulder home and he and his younger brother started first early in the spring. Mrs. Caulder was the widow of the man killed at Johnathan Allen's place, and was left out there without kith or kin, among strangers in a strange and dangerous place. Her home was in the Cherokee nation, and this was her only way to get back at that time. Most of the other men stayed till in May. When they left, their corn was knee high and prospects were promising.

Father was taken very sick after reaching home and was never a well man again, though he had till in the year 1861 improved his place in Fannin County by hiring the hardest work done. But to go back.

When father moved to his last place in Arkansas near Van Buren, he was told he had a bad neighbor in the person of one Smith, but he was settling such a good place he(re) and getting such a bargain in the land that he let the warning pass unheeded. Being a very peaceable man himself, he had not much fears of others. So he settled there in about two miles of the Indian Territory. The line, it was said, was crossed back and forth by outlaws; one doing bad deeds on one side of it escaping to the other side to evade the laws that did not suit them in some instances. People murdered or robbed and it would be laid on Indians, and so forth.

But father went on and settled near, quite near the "bad neighbor", moved his wife and two children, the colored woman and her two children, all, into a one room log cabin

for the whites, and a one room log cabin, called the smoke house, for the blacks, aiming to keep on improving, when someone from Texas brought the call and fair offer of land in the then fast settling Republic. Then he left off improving, got one of his young brothers to stay with wife and children and marshaled his band--and was gone.

I have heard a woman who, with her father's family from Illinois, fell in with father and his comrades when they reached the banks of Red River. No one lived there, and there was not a ferry boat to be seen, only several dug out canoes and there was no prospects of them being able to cross over with all those wagons and teams. She saw the whole crowd stood awed to silence. It was about noon, and some preparations were made for dinner, everyone's wits at work. What shall we do? came from different directions among the crowd. This woman was Mrs. Dr. Rogers, who lived a few miles from us in old Fannin County and was there some years after I left there. She was only a young girl when this company met at those swollen banks. She said it came into her head that they might unload, and lash two canoes together and roll the wagons a wheel (or a side) in a boat and then the teams, and then the goods. This was done and the tedious work took the crowd til night to get on Texas soil. But they were happy, and camped there till day.

As before mentioned, father was sick all summer and, was never well again, but sometime that second spring, after he reached home the sad, and diabolical plot and murder of lawyer Campbell took place near our home, though two families lived nearer than we did. It was only 1/2 mile of our house and father and mother heard the gun fire that killed or partly killed him, for he was knocked from his horse with a rock; and our colored women saw the neighbor leading his horse with the saddle and saddle pockets on round the back of our field up into a mountain, where the tracks were traced and the things found next day (in a cave), and the horse trailed around the other side of our house where he met father and mother on Sunday evening as they walked to a neighbor's house. There had been a hard struggle between the man and his assailant, but he was found dead and his body wedged under a tree root in the bank of the creek. His money was all gone but his costly watch being engraved was left on his person. He was in that country collecting money for the eastern merchants and the plotters knew the hour he started. He was going home on horseback, but had mailed money to his employers, which the plotters also got. The whole thing would read like a "tale that is told" if I should write it all as my father and mother told it to me. How a young lady was sent with a man and woman who were going back east and were suspicioned. How she detected the money when the man and woman asked her to let them have the room a little while at Cincinnati and she peeped through the key hole and saw the woman take the money out that was stitched in the false lining of her corset and give it to her husband and watched him leave the house from some other angle, then how she went bravely to the landlord of the hotel and begging his protection, told him the whole story, gave him the number of the bills, which she had with her, the amount and all. How the man was followed by the officers out in the city

of Cincinnati where he was passing off the money and was brought back in chains in less than three hours after leaving the hotel, to face his accuser with his awed wife. I say it reads like a tale, but has nothing to do with the history of Texas, so I desist, and leave that subject.

But father stayed till after the trial, though the jury would not take the colored woman's evidence because she was a Negro.

After all of this I was in my mother's arms as she was returning from a visit to a sick neighbor, when a masked man by the roadside ordered her to stop and light off her horse, which she refused to do, saying I know you sir. He threw mud all over her and the horse, and myself besides.

That fall the Ross party and the Ridge party in the Territory had one of their big rackets and the Ridge party were driven out. Some of them came over the line and bought father's place and he once more made ready to come to Texas. He collected some sixty head of cattle which mother and a young cousin of his named James Morrow, and a large light collared, spotted dog drove all the way to Texas. What for? to have them all die the next spring with Spanish fever, except a pink two year old heifer from which to start another herd.

I remember when we reached our destination though only one year old. Then all is blank again till grandpa Cox came with the youngest of father's sisters, and the Negroes. I had missed my nurse girl, Tempy, so much since leaving her behind that I was overjoyed, and she found me before she stopped to speak to anyone else. Then all is blank again till we moved into our new house.

The Indians had full possession of their claims on the frontier then, and his brother whom he left in Texas two years before had married and settled in Fannin County. As papa could not go to his claim, he stopped there, and his brother gave him a claim he had there and he bought a certificate and laid it on that 320 acre tract.

Papa built a low double long cabin with a wide entry between the rooms, and when one room and the entry was covered, and a stick chimney built as high as the mantle place, we moved in. Father spent the first day working on the fireplace, filling it in with rock and black mud, but the next day a genuine Texas norther was up and to be able to work on the upper part of the chimney a tent cloth was stretched across the north side of the entry and a fire made on the ground in the center of the floor, and there the cooking was done. Mother placed two chairs side by side, spread a blanket over them and sat me and my older sister on them and drew the blanket around us and we sat there most of the day, our feet close enough to the fire to keep them warm. She drew her spinning wheel upon another side and went to spinning wool rolls. The collared woman did the cooking. By and by the wind rose higher and it began to sleet and papa began to pity poor old Prince, the sick horse, then mother sat her wheel aside

and Prince was tied in one corner under the same shelter. The next day we had fire in the fireplace and papa put in sleepers for a floor. We climbed over the sleeper a day or two, then some men came with puncheons and put in a floor, and soon papa made some bed scaffolds, cut out a window and put up a mantle, which held all of mama's dishes for sometime.

By the next winter, the other room was covered over. The roofs were made of rived out four foot boards, held on with slats fastened to the laths with wooden pins. Nails were so costly, they were used only for fastening boards inside over the openings between logs and so forth. Chinks were put in at the outside and the little openings filled with mortar made of clay.

When the other room was made warm mother put down a carpet, on the bare ground and we boarded the schoolteacher part of the time. He stayed around with the patrons. I don't think anyone charged him board, they were too glad to have him there. His name was William Cowden. He was on his way home from the Mexican war, had been mustered out at San Antonio and was trying to make his way through Texas as best he could, on to Kentucky, I think where he had friends. When he came I heard him tell that the war was over, and about some of the battles and that was my first to hear about the Alamo and old Santa Anna, but I was too young to understand. Mother said he was very intelligent. He was very young, only 22 or 23. Had run out of means traveling and stopped to teach school to get money to pay his way farther on his way. Strange to tell, I saw an account of this man's death in the St Louis Republic some eight or ten years ago. The paper said "An old soldier and prominent citizen of Pana, Illinois". I clipped the piece out and sent it to my sister, Margaret A. Cox Lewis of Litchfield Illinois. She had attended his school in the little log shantie, the first one taught in that community, and how she did regret that she did not know he lived so close to her, only 50 miles. She said she would have visited him even in his last days and talked over old times in Texas.

The place where the little schoolhouse stood is now about overspread with graves. Schoolhouse after schoolhouse was built about there on a 10 acre tract deeded by Thomas Lindsey for a schoolhouse and graveyard.

I remember when there was only one grave there. There was an old lady buried there next Mrs. McMinamy. Hers was the first funeral I remember of attending. I did not understand death and when I saw that coffin and was told about the cold, still and stiff body within my feelings could not be described. The two graves were near a large bois d'arc tree.

I lived on the place my father settled near there 45 years and got most of my education there. We had some good teachers too and some that were not good. And the old graveyard kept filling and filling with the remains of our old neighbors. Then along came the iron horse and built up a town close to the cemetery, which town, Randolph, kept

filling with strangers and old residents kept learning and dying till last summer I visited the graveyard only, for I was told I could find no friends that I knew there, and the old house that I and my brothers and sisters were raised up in was gone and replaced by another. I was in an automobile as I passed the eastern end of the old field and looked across to where a high ridge yet not in cultivation loomed up on top of which stood papa's old Pilot tree in years ago and cast my eyes over the spot where the little double log cabin that was our first habitation in Texas, and thought of the big double elm tree in front of the entry all long gone. I did not drop a tear. The fence and road over which I passed and the old gate even were in the same place. The gate posts looked to be the same, but the fence was of wire, whereas it was once of slippery elm poles, next of rails, next bois d'arc pickets. So I saw the only natural looking side of my old home, and I felt just as I often have when I was dreaming and seemed to be flying. The automobile seemed to have wings, and the view soon passed. It is just as well.

At the cemetery I could hardly find my father's and mother's graves. The silent and lone city has spread so since I left there 22 years ago, but their modest white mansions of stone were finally reached and behold neglect was visible everywhere. The graves of my dead was overgrown with weeds and so were many others. There was only the stump of the old bois d'arc where the first graves were and of the whole place showed to have passed into the hands of strangers.

But why grieve. Peace to these ashes. I will be sleeping the "sleep that knows no waking" e'er many more years roll round. No waking till the resurrection's morn. And then we shall see what we shall see.

I understand this little sketch will be placed in company with others among the archives to be consulted in years to come to give light to future generations when they become reminiscent and are seeking the truth so I here state that every(thing) written is truth as it was told to a very observing and understanding child, and it was repeated when I was older. I remember much of this and can never forget it. So dear Texans who are to follow, to those now in infancy, and those yet unborn, if by any means my writings should be preserved, when you are reading the incidents, and so forth here related, may you be able to say with a poet who wrote on another subject once:

We are living, we are dwelling
In a grand and glorious time,
In an age on ages telling
To be living is sublime.

See my poem "In Peter's Colony" in "Texas' Side ____ (text missing)
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