

From Worthens Family Website

Jehu Cox, Indomitable Pioneer and Empire Builder

By Wayne D. Stout

Jehu Cox embraced Mormonism while the church was passing through its darkest hour. This fact alone stamps the man as one possessing a strong character. Weak men do not join unpopular movements. When Jehu Cox joined the Mormon church in 1838 while residing in the state of Missouri, he did so on principle, not to win fame, for the Mormons were the most unpopular people Missouri had at that time. The saints had already been driven out of Jackson County, and were in 1838 being driven out of the state. Credit for this conversion should be given to Benjamin L. Clapp, a young twenty-three year old missionary--afterwards one of the seven presidents of seventy, who penetrated deep into the Ozark mountains where he found the Cox family and there taught them the gospel. For the first time the Mormon point of view was presented. The Cox's had known the Mormons only by reputation. They were not given an opportunity to compare the two stories. Jehu was a prayerful man, so in asking his Heavenly Father for light, he received a testimony that the message was true. He and his wife, Sarah, were subsequently baptized and joined the main body of the saints as soon as they were located in Illinois.

Jehu Cox was born September 5, 1803, in Knox County, Kentucky. He was the son of Thomas and Rachel Carr Cox who came from Virginia. Jehu's great grandfather, Solomon Cox, originally settled in Pennsylvania by invitation from William Penn. Solomon was born somewhere in Pennsylvania in 1703. *He married Ann Bright.* (To this union were born fifteen children. The youngest, Solomon Cox, Jr., was born in 1745 in the same state. In due time young Solomon married Amy Hussey. From this union ten children were born, five boys and five girls. Soon after marriage this couple moved to Virginia, where Thomas, their third son, was born. Thomas arrived December 5, 1775, the very year the Revolutionary War began. Nothing is known about his family's contacts with the war. How grateful we descendants would be if they had only left a line or two expressing their reaction to the struggle. It may be our own descendants may wonder why we don't give our reaction to the present struggle.

In 1795, twenty year old Thomas married Rachel Carr, daughter of Thomas and Marian Jones Carr. This couple did a lot of moving, finally reaching Knox County, Kentucky, where the hero of this story was born. When Jehu was only three weeks old the family made a long move to Green River, Ohio County, Kentucky,--west central part of the state. Jehu was receiving an early training in the art of pioneering. The family lived in Green River six years, then moved to Salt Creek, Vinton County, Ohio. On the banks of this creek, the map shows a town by the name of Cox which suggests it was named for Thomas Cox who settled there in 1809. In 1815 the family moved on to Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, forty-five miles southwest of Indianapolis, where they remained five years. In 1820, the same year Joseph Smith received his first vision, the Cox family moved to Salt Creek, a rural area twelve miles east of Bloomington. Here the family lost the spirit of moving and settled down for a seven year rest.

In Salt Creek Jehu met his future wife, Sara Pyle, daughter of Edward Gant and Rosannah Mary McMahan Pyle. She was the oldest child in a family of twelve, born July 22, 1807, in Bracken County, Kentucky. Jehu and Sarah were married January 13, 1824. They rented a farm in the same locality where they remained the next four seasons. Where there three children were born; Rosannah, January 23, 1825; Edward, November 22, 1826, and Thomas, April 30, 1827. The two youngest died in infancy. Sarah and Jehu suffered much from sickness while there which influenced the family to seek a more healthful climate.

In December, 1827, the family moved to the banks of the Wabash River, Warren County, Indiana. Warren is in the extreme western part of the state about one hundred miles south of Chicago. The family spent two seasons in farming in this locality. Henderson, their fourth child, was born there, November 6, 1829. In the spring of 1830, about the time the Latter-day Saint Church was organized, the family moved just across the state line to Vermillion River, Vermillion County, Illinois. They did farming work for just one season. A contagious disease took so many of his horses and cattle at Vermillion River that the next season (1831) saw him and his family on the move to seek a more healthful climate. They settled at Greencastle, Putnam County, Indiana, thirty-five miles west of Indianapolis. Here he found health for himself and his stock, but his wife Sara remained in poor health.

At Greencastle Jehu bought a thirty-acre farm where the family lived the next four years. Three more children were added to their home while there, Sara, February 28, 1832; Mary Jane, September 19, 1833, and Elias, January 15, 1835. Since Sarah's health was so poor there, Jehu was determined to find a land where all the family might enjoy health. The spring of 1835 found the family westward bound. They crossed Illinois and the Mississippi river, then went southwest to Crawford County, Missouri, the heart of the Ozark mountains. Here a healthful climate was found for all the family. While in these mountains three more children were added to the family, Rachel, March 17, 1836; Jehu, June 15, 1837, and most important of all--the writer's grandfather--Isaiah, May 18, 1839.

The year 1838 is the turning point in the history of the Cox family. Previous to that year the family floundered in spiritual darkness. After that year the family began to grow in spiritual intelligence. The cause for this great change was the successful invasion of these mountains by a humble Mormon missionary. He was seeking converts to the most despised sect Missouri had ever known. For five years the Mormons had been driven from county to county and were then, in 1838, about to be exterminated or driven from the state. Jehu was acquainted with these happenings. It took courage to ally himself with a people so unpopular. But Jehu saw beyond the persecutions when he heard the message from the lips of Elder Benjamin L. Clapp. The missionary's testimony carried a conviction of truth. Truth is what Jehu wanted. He was inspired with faith to accept the gospel in its entirety. Once this decision was reached the fear of persecution had no effect upon him.

Jehu was baptized January 12, 1838. His wife joined him by going into the waters of baptism a month later. Little did this couple realize when they made these covenants how

powerful their acts affected the salvation of hundreds of their descendants now living in Utah's stakes of Zion. This was truly a great crisis for the Cox family. Imagine what the history of this family might have been had they not heard and accepted the gospel. The contrast between what his descendants are enjoying here in Utah, blessed with advantages of the gospel, and what it might have been in the Ozarks is too great to compare.

Jehu Cox made rapid progress after accepting the gospel. Soon after baptism he was ordained an Elder by Benjamin L. Clapp and Isaac Allred. Like all true converts, he was soon overcome by a great desire to gather with the saints. At this very hour the saints were being expelled from Missouri, so Jehu had to wait until the church chose a new gathering place. As soon as it was evident that the saints were moving into Illinois, Jehu took his family (November, 1839, to Adams County, south of Quincy, and there rented farm land, where he remained two seasons. It was here that Lucretia was born, December 29, 1841, and was blessed by the famous missionary, Joseph Fielding.

In the spring of 1842 Jehu moved north into Hancock County within three miles of Nauvoo. He rented a farm where he worked for four seasons. On this farm, eleven days before the martyrdom of the prophet Joseph Smith at Carthage, his daughter, Emma, was born. She was the twelfth child.

During these four fateful years in Nauvoo, Jehu neglected to write his reflections of the great momentous events that were taking shape. Little did he realize how interested his descendants would be in the part he played during those critical times. He mentions the birth of his thirteenth child, Nephi, born March 20, 1846. The child's name suggests the influence which the Book of Mormon had with the family. This child died of cold and exposure while the family was traveling westward through Iowa.

The Cox family was the very last of the first groups to leave Nauvoo. They crossed the Mississippi River May 20, 1846. Jehu took his family directly to Mount Pisgah. Here, under the direction of Parley P. Pratt, a settlement had been made. Jehu remained here long enough to plant a field of corn and then moved on to Council Bluffs. On arrival there he found the Mormon Battalion in process of organization. Henderson Cox, a healthy youth of seventeen years, joined Company A and marched off with the Battalion, never to be seen alive by his parents again.

Henderson made the long historical march across the southwest, up the coast of California, and was discharged from the service along with the rest of his companions. Henderson was near Captain Sutter's mill at the time of the gold discovery, January 24, 1848, and participated actively in the rush that followed. Henderson had obtained a sizeable bag of gold dust at the time his company left for Utah. Late in June, 1848, these sturdy fighters were near the summit of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Captain Browett took Daniel Allen and Henderson in advance of the main body to explore a suitable route over the top. The third night out while camping some friendly acting Indians came into their camp and asked to be permitted to remain for the night. Unaware of treachery the white men retired to their beds in confidence that their visitors meant no harm. After they

had fallen asleep the Indians suddenly attacked in force, killing and stripping them of all their clothing, and leaving them buried in a shallow grave. Twenty days later their bodies were discovered by their companions who found no bags of gold dust near their bodies. Since that day the spot has been aptly named Tragedy Springs. June 27, the day the massacre is believed to have taken place, was the fourth anniversary of the Prophet's martyrdom.

Little did the parents of Henderson realize what had befallen their son on that fatal day. They had been traveling forty-nine days since leaving Council Bluffs so were probably at the half-way mark when he met his fate. They could not possibly have learned of the tragedy until their arrival in Salt Lake.

Meanwhile in Council Bluffs, after the exodus of the Battalion, Jehu and family spent the next ten months in Winter Quarters as best they could. In the early spring of 1847 Jehu moved his family across the Missouri River and up some seven miles to the Campbell farm and there he planted a crop. While working on that farm, Joshua was born, but died the same day. The family remained on that farm until April 28, 1848, then moved back to Winter Quarters to make final preparations for the trek to the Rockies. The Cox family was assigned to travel in Heber C. Kimball's company. The great journey began May 18, 1848. After the company had been traveling for ten days President Kimball appointed Jehu as captain of one of the units. Some days later, June 15, a tragedy overtook the family. Little six-year old Lucretia was run over by a wagon and killed. The company was stopped and a very simple funeral was held. Much sympathy was expressed to the family by friends and speakers at the service. The journey was continued westward without incident, the company arriving in the valley September 24, 1848.

September was a critical time to arrive in a new country. Their food supply was running low. Winter was coming on without even a home to live in. Nine small poorly clothed children were entirely dependent upon these sturdy parents for their existence. The pioneers who preceded them to the valley had suffered severe losses due to the grasshoppers so the food supply looked none too bright for the advancing winter. In spite of these adverse conditions, Jehu and family managed to live through that first winter.

By the spring of 1849 Salt Lake City had become too populous for a frontiersman like Jehu Cox. Seeking a fresh country to conquer, Jehu moved south and settled on the south bank of Little Cottonwood Creek, known today as Union. He built a home and commenced farming. His fifteenth child, Martha, was born there August 2, 1849, giving him ten children to support. Not long after his arrival in Union other settlers joined him as neighbors. A branch was organized with Silas Richards as presiding Elder. January 18, 1851, Jehu was ordained a Seventy under the hands of Benjamin L. Clapp (the same who had baptized him in 1838), and Daniel D. Hunt. July 5, 1851, his sixteenth and last child was born, but died the same day. July 13 following, Union had so increased in population that a ward organization was effected with Silas Richards as bishop and Jehu Cox as his first Counselor. On the same day he was ordained a High Priest under the hands of Edward Hunter, Willard Snow and Daniel Spencer.

Little Cottonwood was changed to Union in 1854. It was that year the Indians became very hostile. Community minded Jehu contributed ten acres to the town as a site to build a fort for protection against the Indians. Around this site the pioneers built a wall twelve feet high. The entire community moved into this enclosure where they remained until the troubles with the Indians were over.

In 1855, his oldest living son, Elias, married Martha Richards, daughter of the bishop. Union had become too populous for frontiersman, Jehu Cox, so early in 1859 Jehu and his two married sons and families all moved south in search of new worlds to conquer. They stopped long enough in Mt. Pleasant to permit young Isaiah Junior to be born (he was the first white child born there) and then moved north to North Bend, afterwards named Fairview. In this wild and open country the Coxes felt right at home. The farm site which Jehu chose later became the identical place where the Co-op and tithing office stood. In this free and open country Jehu and sons took to farming and sheep raising as a young duck takes to water. In the spring of 1860 the Saints in North Bend were organized as a branch, with James A. Jones as presiding Elder and Jehu Cox, one of his counselors. June 30, 1861, there was born to Jehu a very important grand daughter, Julia, third child of Isaiah and Henrietta. She is important also since she is the writer's mother. Very soon after her birth, Isaiah was called by Brigham Young to help settle St. George. Fairview lost an empire builder when Isaiah moved to Dixie.

Indian troubles seem to have followed Jehu. In 1864 the Indians began their depredations in San Pete County. Jehu's boys were one day herding sheep when they were attacked by a party of Indians. The boys thoroughly frightened, ran home for help. Meanwhile the Indians made off with the sheep. Jehu and son, Elias, well armed dashed after their sheep. When the Indians saw them coming, they fled in terror. This incident might well be called the beginning of the Blackhawk war. Previous to this incident, his son-in-law, David Jones, was killed by the red men. The war was soon on in all its fury. Jehu and sons saw plenty of action in this struggle. By April, 1866, the situation had become so serious the men of Fairview moved their families to Mt. Pleasant, while they built a high fort wall around Fairview. In August they returned their families to houses they had built within the enclosure where they all lived until the war was over. Meanwhile Jones had been replaced by Andrew Peterson, who also chose Jehu as counselor. In 1866 Peterson was replaced by Amasa Tucker when the branch was reorganized as a ward. Amasa also chose Jehu as a counselor. Jehu remained in this position until 1877.

In May, 1874, a branch of the United Order was organized at Fairview. The officers elected were: Bishop Amasa Tucker, First Vice President; Jehu Cox, Second Vice President, and Phillip Hurst, Secretary. When Bishop Tucker was released in 1877, Jehu Cox was made president of the High Priests Quorum.

For twenty-five years Jehu had served the church as a bishop's counselor--there is no greater service done for humanity than is carried on by a bishopric. Temporal salvation for the living is indeed noble, thought Jehu, but the spiritual salvation of his related dead was more noble. Accordingly, he left his home in the fall of 1877 and went to St. George

to spend the winter with his son Isaiah and do temple work for the hosts of dead ancestors who were crying for his help. He was then seventy-three years old. His youngest child was twenty-eight and no longer dependent so he felt he had earned a much needed vacation. In St. George he spent an enjoyable season visiting his children and performing the work for his dead. He did all the endowment and sealings for his known ancestors and returned to Fairview in 1878 a much happier, and spiritually a much richer man.

The following is a direct quote from his journal: "I, Jehu Cox have attended to the sealing ordinance for my grandfather and grandmother Solomon Cox and Amy Hussey; and my father and mother, Thomas Cox and Rachel Carr Cox ; and my uncle Samuel Cox and Martha Cox and have been baptized for my brother, Solomon Cox , and my uncle, Solomon Cox, and uncle Absolum Cox ,and uncle Christopher Cox, and uncle Stephen Cox ,and my grandfather, Thomas Carr, and uncle Benjamin Carr, and uncle Thomas Carr."

In 1879 his eldest son, Elias, and family moved to Emery County and was there appointed the first bishop of Huntington Ward, October, 1879.

Little is know of the remaining years of Jehu's life. At the age of seventy-four he was in no position to pioneer a new country. He lived to a ripe old age and died in Fairview, December 26, 1893. In 1940, it is estimated that he has one thousand descendants centered mostly in Utah

Jehu believed in polygamy. October 5, 1857, while living in Union he married Ann Catherine Cofer, but there were no children. Nothing more is know about Ann.

Sarah, his first wife, died in Fairview, August 25, 1891.