

My Grandfather Solomon Babbet Cox

by Morris Dean Cox

Solomon Babbet Cox, Son of Jarvis Porter Cox and Sarah G. (Sally) Cox/Cox . He was their third son born 25 June 1850 Harrison County Missouri. I have no personal knowledge of him because he passed away before I was born. There have been a few stories told about him by my father and oldest brother as well as other family members. Most of the stories are about his alleged association with Jesse and Frank James. I have read several non-fiction books on the James Gang. No where in any of them was there a mention of my grandfather by his given name Babbet or Bab, short for Babbet or Babe supposedly used by the gang because of his age (early or mid teens). The following stories are in no particular sequence except for when I remember them.

This story came about when Granddad was operating a cotton Gin in the north western part of Texas, the location is not material to the story.

One day during cotton picking time a large number of cotton filled wagons were lined up to be ginned. Suddenly some part of the machinery broke down and it was taking the Gin crew a long time to get it fixed. While they were waiting the farmers gathered around the office where my Granddad was to be near-by when the repairs were done.. As usual they began telling stories and finally one of them said he almost got a shot at Jesse James. Well all ears perked up and they wanted to hear the story.. He said it all happened in Missouri during the Civil War while he was in the military.. They had been marching since sun-up that day and it was late in the afternoon when their commander called a halt and ordered the tents set-up for the night. It was at the edge of this mid-size town where they could get some supplies before continuing their march. During the tent set-up they heard a commotion in town on Main Street, gun shots, people running and screaming and shouting that it was the James Gang robbing the Bank. So the soldiers grabbed their guns ran into town to help stop the robbery and capture the James's. This farmer said when he got close enough to the bank he saw Jesse's horse fall. It had been shot. So he said he went down on one knee and had a bead on Jesse when all of a sudden here came this kid on a big gray horse and Jesse swung up behind the kid. He said he shot anyway but missed. The kid, Jesse and the gang rode out of town. Now the James's were known for having the very best and fastest horses. By the time a posse could be assembled the gang was long gone. When the farmer finished his story the others were asking questions and commenting about it for a time. When they quieted down about it my Granddad asked the farmer if he got a good look at the kid and did he recognize him? The farmer said "No, all I saw of the kid was his back." Granddad asked, "Do you want to know who the kid was?" and of course the farmer said "yes". That's when Granddad looked him in the eye and said "I was that kid.". The farmer got up, said not a word to anyone walked out to his wagon climbed up on it and drove his team and load of cotton off to another gin and never returned to Granddad's gin. Now as far as I know the story could be true or it could be that Granddad was just pulling the guy's leg. He was known to pull a prank now and again.

I am not sure when my Great-Grandparents Jarvis Porter and Sarah (Sally) Cox decided to make the migration from Missouri to Texas. I believe it was between 1865 and 1875. Anyway it was at the urging of G-Grandma Sally's sister Martha that prompted them to go to Texas. Other Cox relatives were in Texas, some of them had been there since 1850. Of course their younger children including my Grandfather made the move also. It is not known if G-Grandfather Jarvis made the trip with the family or stayed in Missouri. The only thing heard of his status after the 1860 census is that he died and was buried under a tree in Missouri. Also there is no mention of my Grandfather's oldest sibling and only sister Emily J. after the 1860 census.

After their arrival in Texas they first went to Belton in Bell Co. Texas, then on to Comanche Co., and last to Hamilton Co. and remained there. Sometime after their arrival in Texas it was reported that they had been seen in the company of the James's, I don't know which county but a Sheriff paid a visit and questioned G-Grandma Sally about it. Of course she denied it and firmly informed him that she was not the kind of lady who would associate with the likes of the James's.

Now, it is known that the James gang from time to time did escort families from Missouri through the Oklahoma territory into Texas. At the time Oklahoma was unsettled and considered to be Indian Territory.

My Granddad met my Grand mother Lucinda Narcissus Browning in Bell county and they were married in Belton on 15 August 1876. It is probable that they moved with or followed the family from Bell county to Hamilton county or to Comanche county and settled in the small town of Indian Gap, for that is where my father and some if not all of his siblings were born..

From this point I don't remember any talk about what Granddad did to provide for his family. But I do know this, when the money got low and there was no prospect of earning more, Granddad would saddle his horse and take a pack horse or mule and ride off telling no one where he was going or how long he would be gone. When he returned home which would maybe be as soon as a couple of weeks or as long as five or six weeks. He would always have enough money to tide them over for several months. My brother Edwin told me that Granddad told him about a cave in north east Oklahoma where the James's hid a lot of their loot. That may or may not be accurate because Edwin was only about five years old when Granddad died.

Another story I remember, and I think this happened in Oklahoma sometime after 1916 or in the early 1920's. After my oldest sister Athalie was born in 1915 my Father and Mother went up into the eastern part of Oklahoma where Mother's brother John C Whitehurst was working for the Humble Oil Co. I am not sure if my Grandparents and my Dad's siblings were already in Oklahoma or if they followed later . Anyway sometime during this period a Traveling Show came into the area and it's story line was about the James Gang. and their bank and train robberies. One of the characters in the show was named Babe Cox, he was played by a teen age boy.. Two of my Uncles James Sylvester and Samuel Hampton went to see it to check on the rumor that a boy in the show was playing Babe Cox. After Uncle Ves and Uncle Sam confronted the show manager about the name, that it was their fathers nick name when he was young and that they should not use that name in a show about the James Gang. The show closed and

moved on the next day. It is not known if the show closed for good or they changed the name or what but that show never returned to that area again. Uncle Ves told me this story himself when I was about 9 or 10 years old. I also heard virtually the same story years later.

I mentioned that Granddad had a mischievous side. My father told me that he also had a temper.. Now Granddad was not a big man, he was about 5' 7" tall and probably weighed no more than 140 lbs. at his heaviest. My father said that the last fight Granddad had he was so blind that he couldn't see the man he was fighting.

Another thing worth mentioning is about Grandma Lucinda Narcissus. I don't know if Granddad knew this when he met her or even when they married.. But I know that she told him at some point that she was half Native American Indian. My Dad also said that they had proof enough to lay claim to Oklahoma Indian Tribal oil royalties . They could have been set for life but Granddad was too proud to let it be known she was Indian and that he might be called a "Squaw-man.." It is evident he loved her and she him for they stayed together for some 48 years until his death in 1924.

To be continued? Maybe. If more comes to light.