

X B COX, SR., A REAL MAN
By X B Cox Jr. 2008

X B (M) Cox was born May 11, 1880, the first child of James Christopher Cox and Josephine Savannah Miller Cox, in Bell County, Texas. Other children from this marriage were Boyd Rosborough Cox, Samuel Cox and Dove Ellen Cox.

Soon after Dove Ellen was born J. C. Cox and Josephine S. Cox divorced and Josephine and her four children moved to McCullough County where her family lived.

X B was named for Major X B Saunders, a Bell County Civil War veteran. X B was called "the little Major" or just "Major" until after his marriage to Lula Myrtle Teague. She did not like "Major" and she shortened it to Mage.

He was from then on called Mage, signed his checks M. Cox and the telephone directory listed their number X B (M) Cox.

Many years after his death we found, in the book "The History of Bell County", that Major Saunders full name had been Xenophon Boone Saunders. I suppose that X B's parents did not know Major Saunders' full name at the time their baby son was born.

In 1898 X B rode horseback from Brady to West Texas, spending his first night in Knickerbocker, . He said there were three gates to open on the way here and the grass was tall enough to touch the stirrups of his saddle. He moved on to Sherwood, where he did ranch work, mostly on the Fayette Tankersley Ranch.

Some time before marrying Myrtle, X B went to North Dakota and worked on a ranch. He spent most of the winter cutting fence posts and/or cutting ice from the lake or river and storing it for the ranch use the next summer.

After returning to Sherwood he spent time homesteading a tract of ranch land southwest of Mertzon. The land later became a part of the Tankersley Ranch holdings.

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After being injured in a horse accident he was unable to cowboy for sometime. He then became a chuck wagon cook and earned a reputation as being a very good cook. He was called on many times to lead the cooking team for large barbeque gatherings, both in Mertzon and in San Angelo.

X B met Lula Myrtle Teague at Sherwood and they were married December 31, 1907. Two sons were born to this union, Donald D. Cox on 9 February 1909 and X B Cox, Jr. on 12 February 1915. Donald died in July 2006 and is buried in Fairmount Cemetery, San Angelo, .

X B opened a saddle, harness, leather business but thirty days after their marriage the building burned down and they lost everything. He then went into fence building and freighting. He drove wagons back and forth between Sherwood and San Angelo and from Sherwood to Ozona. He acquired 48 mules, burros and horses.

In addition to the wagons, he began moving houses. In 1909-1910 the railroad came out west and by-passed Sherwood because it was on the opposite side of the river. As a result a town grew up along the railroad, named Mertzon, and much of Sherwood moved across the river. X B moved many of the buildings, including the hotel, a church and several houses.

His fence building included one contract of 100 miles in Crockett County. He was working enough men to build one mile per day. The men were paid \$1.00 a day plus board or \$1.50 a day and they boarded themselves.

Myrtle would prepare food inside an early day mobile home, which X B had built on a wagon frame. It was furnished with a wood stove for cooking and a small bedroom for themselves.

Later, X B got the franchise to build concrete block water storage tanks and had a very successful business.

In 1916-18 he built the first brick home in Mertzon and began to operate a motion picture show. One of the old church buildings he had moved from Sherwood was placed on a lot west of the brick house and became the theatre. Also, during this time he bought some sheep and ran them in the area.

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In 1920 he was hired to be foreman on the W. M. Noelke Ranch, 10 miles south of Mertzon. He was allowed to run his sheep there, as well as be foreman on the 45 section ranch.

In 1923 he purchased a farm 5 miles south of San Angelo and received ownership and moved on the property 1 January 1929. After farming two years, he was offered a job with the City Water Department, which was owned by the West Texas Utilities Co. He took the job, which was to supervise the laying of a 12 inch water line from the water plant on the south side of the city up Oaks Street to a water tank on 14th St. When that job was completed, another line was laid to Van Buren St. on the west side of town. All ditches were dug by pick and shovel.

X B and Myrtle bought a house and three vacant lots on Washington Drive and lived there until 1930. Donald had been working for a dry cleaner and X B was tired of the WTU job, so they decided to return to the farm.

The farming consisted of farm, grain and then into vegetable gardening. The house on Washington Drive was rented out. A gasoline service station had been built on the corner lot and a small garage built at the rear. X B had men farming the vegetable garden from time to time and at one time two Japanese men did the job until one of them died and the other one went back to California. They were the best gardeners we ever had.

In 1936 there was a terrible flood that came down the river and through the field and took out all the cotton and vegetables.

About this time the City of San Angelo took the water department back from WTU and they decided we could no longer pump water from the river, as that provided the city supply. They purchased 140 acres, of the 160 acres which comprised the original farm, and removed the water pumps. They then sold the farm back to us at a much reduced price. During this time X B was able to buy about 140 additional acres, which was pasture land, joining the original farm on the north. This was cleared and put into cultivation.

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In 1946 Donald and X B bought a small ranch in southwest Glasscock County. There was no building on the property, so they moved two small storage buildings at the farm and then two rooms from the main house at the farm were also taken to the ranch. No one stayed at the ranch more than five or six days at a time while new fences were built, water wells and water storage tanks were built. X B deeded his half of the ranch to Donald's two children to become effective at his death. In 1951 the first oil well was drilled, with more to follow over the years. After operating the ranch for several years it was leased to the Postmaster in Garden City.

In the early 1950s X B sold the original 140 acres of the 160 acres. Soon after that the Texas Department of Transportation came through with a road now know as Loop 306. Luckily it came between the property sold and the property to the north.

In 1955 X B and Myrtle deeded the farm to Donald and X B, Jr.

Donald had married in 1939 and built a home on the farm. He and his wife lived there until both were deceased. They are buried on the Cox plot at Fairmount Cemetery.

In 1986 Donald and X B, Jr. divided the farm in half, with X B, Jr. getting the north half and Donald got the south half.

X B died in November of 1968 and is buried in Fairmount Cemetery in San Angelo, Texas.