

Brandywine Crucible Committee

On the Question of the Parents of our  
Common Ancestor, Solomon Cox:  
John Cox, Jr. & Mary Harlan?

Final Report

June 9, 2024

Committee: Connie Birth  
Ladean Bowman  
Steve Taylor  
Zala Koym

The Committee assignment:

“The problem at hand is conflicting and/or uncertain information and conclusions concerning the parentage of Solomon Cox who married Naomi Hussey. Several family paper trail researchers have concluded that the preponderance of evidence indicates that John Cox, Jr., father of the aforementioned Solomon Cox, was married to Mary Harlan as his second wife, who was therefore deemed to be Solomon’s mother. This position has become the conventional wisdom in this extended Cox family. Recent research using DNA and paper trail research by a person previously unknown to Brandywine Crucible, however, has cast doubt on John Cox, Jr.’s marriage to Mary Harlan, instead pointing to Mary Garretson as the wife of John Cox, Jr., and mother of Solomon Cox, wife of Naomi Hussey. There is evidence supporting this conclusion but some uncertainty.”



The Committee's approach:

The committee met initially in early 2024, meeting weekly or bi-weekly through the subsequent months. Each committee member worked individually and brought his/her findings to the group. Our approach was to become immersed in the various written documents—online sources, published books, articles, Ancestry (and other) family trees, i.e., what might be called the “paper trail.”

This report is organized into the following sections:

- I. Significant Sources Review by the Committee -- a list of titles and authors reviewed
  
- II. Brief Summaries of Significant Sources -- key passages are cited; and what we believe to be important conclusions of the author are summarized under the sub-heading “We Should Note.”
  
- III. Our Findings

Key Source #1: *The Cox Family in America*, Henry Miller Cox, 1912

- First widely-read summary of early Coxes in the American colonies
- First researcher to assert Thomas Cox “vintner of London” as the origin of our Cox line in America.
- First to identify one (and only one) John Cox in the Quaker settlements of Brandywine in the early 1700s
- Identifies John Cox’s wife as “Mary \_\_\_\_\_, perhaps the daughter of Moses and Margaret Harlan.” Elsewhere the author expresses further uncertainty about this marriage match: “Nothing is positively known. . . .”
- The author does not cite our Solomon Cox as the child of the John Cox and Mary \_\_\_\_\_ that he identifies here.
- Later researchers identified at least four John Coxes living in this same area at approximately the same time.



Key Source #2: *Joseph Cox, Ancestors and Descendants*, Stanley M. Cox, 1955

- Often-cited source in Cox family research, Stanley Cox is characterized by our own Gary Sutton (who later worked with Stanley Cox to create the revision and updating of this volume) as a “stickler for accuracy”; he would not assert something to be true unless he was quite sure there was evidence to support it.
- Gary Sutton was surprised to learn in recent years that Stanley Cox did not retain the primary sources and records that he relied on to build his genealogy. Consequently, and unfortunately, we can’t be sure which primary sources he relied on, nor can we revisit them to double-check his findings.
- Many critical sections of his writings make heavy use of qualifying phrases: “It is thought,” “This has not been proved,” “It is assumed that. . . .”— all suggesting some uncertainty about his assertions.
- Key finding: “John Cox is identified as spouse of “Mary \_\_\_\_\_ (Harlan?)” However, he seems certain that our ancestor Solomon Cox is the son of this union.

Key Source #3: *Joseph Cox, Ancestors and Descendants*, Stanley M. Cox & Gary Sutton, 1975 (revised and updated version)

Modifications of the 1955 edition:

- John Cox (Jr) is identified as son of John and Rachel Cox.
- John Cox (Jr) is described as “believed to be” husband of Hannah Jenkins, then Mary Harlan. But “there is good reason to believe that she could have been a Garretson.”
- Our ancestor Solomon Cox is identified as a son of John Cox, but the maiden name of his mother Mary is left unspecified.



Key Source #4: *John Cox, Jr. and Mary Harlan*, Ada Stump, 2005

- As the title of this work implies, the central claim is that John Cox (Jr) is the husband of Mary Harlan (daughter of Moses and Margaret Ray Harlan), their marriage occurring in 1735, after the death of Hannah Jenkins Cox, his first wife.
- As to the parentage of our Solomon Cox, we noted an internal inconsistency in the book. On page 192-3, our Solomon is noted as the son of John Cox (Jr) and Mary Harlan. However, on page 57, Mary Harlan is introduced as the wife of John Cox, but only four children are named—Jacob, Eamey, Dinah, and Rebecca—and our Solomon Cox is notably missing.
- As we know, Ada clearly came down on the side of Cox-Harlan as the married parents of our ancestor Solomon Cox. She cites the earlier compilers Henry Miller Cox, Stanley Cox, and Gary Sutton as sources for her work, all of which (we noted earlier) expressed at least hesitation about Harlan as the correct and definite spouse. The question, perhaps now unanswerable after Ada's passing, is what information did Ada access that made her more confident than her earlier sources that Mary Cox was in fact Mary Harlan?

Key Source #5: *We Are the Branches*, Les Sutton, 2008

- Well-known to Brandywine Crucible, Les leans clearly toward the Harlan connection: “. . . Hannah [Jenkins] died and in about 1735 John [Cox] Jr married Mary Harlan. Some researchers think that John’s second wife as a Garretson; however most believe she was Mary Harlan.”
- A concluding sentence to the above paragraph meshed with our committee’s sentiment on the matter: “With so many John Coxes and the clipped way the Quaker records were written, it is easy to become confused.” Amen, Brother!

**We turn now to less well-known but credible sources which the committee also consulted:**



Other Source #6: *Cox Family Outline*, Elizabeth Berry Buffa, 1977

- Citing sources such as early family researchers Eldon Cox, Wayne Stout, and Stanley Cox, Ms. Buffa steers a different course while identifying the parents of our Solomon Cox: “John Cox and Mary \_\_\_\_\_. Married around 1713. (She may have been Mary Garretson, sister of Casparus Garretson and daughter of Jan Garretson, but (per Eldon Cox) there is no certain proof of this.”
- Of interest, this author is the first to identify the eldest child of this marriage as none other than John Cox (Jr) who marries Mary Harlan in 1735; and the youngest child of this marriage is our Solomon Cox who marries Naomi Hussey. On this view, Solomon is not the son of Cox-Harlan, but the brother of John Cox and brother-in-law of Mary Harlan.
- Buffa then notes children of John Cox Jr and Mary Harlan as: Jacob Cox, Dinah Cox, and Rebecca Cox—all of whom are named in their grandfather Moses Harlan’s will

The committee also took solace from the following observations by family genealogist Eldon Cox, included in Ms. Buffa’s volume:

Other Source #6: *Cox Family Outline*, Elizabeth Berry Buffa, 1977

Per Eldon Cox:

- Confusion exists on the early history of this Cox family due to scarcity of early records and to the number of people by the same name in Chester Co., PA before, say 1740.
- There were at least 3 and possibly 5 or 6 by the name of John Cox.
- There were at least 2 by the name of Thomas Cox.
- There were at least 2 by the name of Richard Cox.
- There is no general agreement as to which belonged to our Cox family and which entries in the records pertain to them. There is even less agreement as to their children. . . .
- There is no book that includes anything like a complete record of this Cox family during those early years.



Other Source #7: *Six Columbiana County, OH Pioneer Families, Vol 5*, William Brooke Fetters, 1998

Author Fetters has written a six-volume review of his primary ancestral lines, Volume 5 of which focuses on the Garretson family that settled in Brandywine valley. The Cox family is discussed extensively, but only because it is at several marital junctions connected to the Garretsons, who are Fetters primary focus.

- Fetters makes a strong, well-supported argument for the John Cox-married to-Mary Garretson hypothesis; although he leaves room for alternate interpretations of the facts and records he cites: *“There is no proof . . . that [John Cox’s wife, Mary, was Garretson], or that one of Jan and Ann Garretson’s daughters was named Mary.* The major arguments in favor of the hypothesis involve opportunity and naming patterns. The opportunity for John to marry a Garretson, of course, existed because John’s sister [Ann] married Casparus Garretson about the same time that John also married. Therefore, if Casparus had a sister, John certainly was acquainted with her. Furthermore, there was a strong tendency at that time for parents to name the first two children of each sex after their grandparents. Thus, in the honor of his parents, Casparus named his first son John and his second daughter Ann. Similarly, John and Mary Cox named their first son John and their second daughter Ann, . . . evidence in support of the hypothesis that Mary’s parents were named John [Jan] and Ann.”

Other Source #7: *Six Columbiana County, OH Pioneer Families, Vol 5*, William Brooke Fetters, 1998

- “A major reason for skepticism concerning the hypothesis that Mary was a Garretson is that Cornelius Garretson’s 1765 will mentions several offspring of each of his two brothers, but none of any sister. While there were many close associations between the Casparus Garretson and John Cox families over a period of many years, they can be explained simply by the fact that John Cox and Ann (Cox) Garretson were siblings. *Nevertheless, . . . (1) Mary may have been Casparus’s sister, (2) John undoubtedly was Ann (Cox) Garretson’s brother, and (3) two of John and Mary’s sons married daughters of Casparus and Ann.*”
- Regardless of Fetters’ argument about whether John Cox Sr. actually married Mary Garretson, he seems convinced that his son John Cox Jr. did in fact marry Mary Harlan. Fetters’ list of John Cox Sr.’s children begins with John Cox Jr. and ends with our Solomon Cox (h/o Naomi Hussey). *By this analysis, our Solomon is the son of John Cox Sr and wife Mary, perhaps Garretson, or perhaps another surname, but not Harlan. Instead, Solomon’s brother John Cox Jr is the spouse of Mary Harlan.*



Other Source #8: *The Cox Family: My Line with Allied Families*, LaVonne S. Oertel, 2008

- This is another researcher who has the John Cox born circa 1688 as husband of Mary Garretson, and then cites them as parents of a second John Cox who marries Mary Harlan. Her line does not descend from these families, which likely explains why she does not include the children of John Cox and Mary Harlan in her compilation. Our Solomon Cox is not mentioned in this volume.
- However, this is a very well-researched genealogy, and she presents a strong case for this tree:

First Generation: William Cox – born 1657 Gloucestershire, Eng; died c 1742 in New Castle, Delaware; spouse Amy \_\_\_\_.

Children: Richard Cox – married Elizabeth Scarlett

**John Cox – married Mary Garretson**

Ann Cox – married Casparius Garretson

William Cox

Thomas Cox – married 1) Elizabeth Fincher, 2) Mary Cooke

Amy Cox

Other Source #8: *The Cox Family: My Line with Allied Families*, LaVonne S. Oertel, 2008

- Second Generation: John Cox (William) – born c 1688 New Castle Co., Delaware; d c 1753 York Co., PA; spouse Mary Garretson.

- Their children:

**John Cox – b c 1714 Chester Co., PA; married Mary Harlan**

William Cox – b c 1716 Chester Co., PA; married Naomi Garretson

Benjamin Cox – b c 1718

Ann Cox – b c 1723 Chester Co., PA; married William E. Ruddick

Samuel Cox – b c 1725; married Hannah Wierman

Sarah Cox – b c 1727; married Nicholas Wierman

Amy Cox – b 27 Sep 1729; married William Wierman

Thomas Cox – b 1733



Other Source #9: *Letter to Brandywine Crucible*, Alan Cox, 2023

- Alan's bottom line: John Cox Sr is the husband of Mary Garretson, and their son John Cox Jr (who married Mary Harlan) is a brother of Solomon Cox, husband of Naomi Hussey. "This view seems to fit better with the small amount of available records we know of. In the end, I'm hoping the DNA analysis will all sort this out . . . and we can adjust our trees accordingly."
- Of note, Alan's letter also cites an old family source asserting the correctness of the John Cox-married-to-Mary Garretson hypothesis:

***"Delia Garretson Cox, in 1869, documented her interview with her father-in-law Jeremiah Cox (1790-1880), the grandson of Benjamin Cox and Martha Garretson Cox. She indicated that Benjamin is son of John Cox and Mary Garretson."***

Other Source #10: *Find-A-Grave Pages*, Claudia Davenport-Sullivan, 2023

In the past two years, Claudia has performed extensive work in sorting out the various Coxes who settled in the Brandywine area. She has relied almost exclusively on primary sources (deeds, wills, censuses, Quaker records), making her work particularly credible. The committee made the effort to reach her directly for an interview or conversation but without success. Nonetheless the results of a lot of her work is found on the Find-A-Grave pages for John Cox, Mary Garretson, and other related family members. A sampling of that work follows:



Other Source #10: *Find-A-Grave Pages*, Claudia Davenport-Sullivan, 2023

In the past two years, Claudia has performed extensive work in sorting out the various Coxes who settled in the Brandywine area. She has relied almost exclusively on primary sources (deeds, wills, censuses, Quaker records), making her work particularly credible. The committee made the effort to reach her directly for an interview or conversation but without success. Nonetheless the results of a lot of her work is found on the Find-A-Grave pages for John Cox, Mary Garretson, and other related family members. A sampling of that work follows:

- FAG Page for Mary Garretson: b 1690, daughter of Jan and Ann Garretson; she married John Cox circa 1713. John and Mary Garretson Cox had eight children of whom the first was:

John Cox – married Mary Harlan, 1735, New Garden Mtg, Chester Co PA

- FAG Page for John Cox (Sr): b 1684, Delaware; son of William Cox; married Mary Garretson

Note: This John Cox is not to be confused with John Cox husband of Rachel (possibly Embree Carr), nor is he to be confused with John Cox b 24 Sep 1675, son of Thomas and Christian Cox. These are three separate John Coxes from three separate Cox families, and there are existing records that confirm this.

Other Source #11: *Margie Romine's Response to Committee Questions*, Margie Romine, 2024

Question 1: As we reviewed Claudia Davenport's notes, particularly on Find-A-Grave, she has the Cox line in question starting with William and wife Rebecca \_\_\_\_, followed by their son John Cox who married Mary Garretson, and that couple's son John Cox Jr who married Mary Harlan. Does Claudia believe that our Solomon (husband of Naomi) is the son of John and Mary Harlan Cox? Or does she share the belief of some that Solomon is a son of John and Mary Garretson Cox, and therefore a brother of the John Cox who married Mary Harlan?

*Right now in Claudia's tree she has not guessed at the parents of Solomon. She lists the following individuals as the children of John Cox and Mary Garretson:*

***John Cox – husband of Mary Harlan***

*William Cox – husband of Naomi Garretson*

*Ann Cox – wife of William Ruddick*

*Benjamin Cox – husband of Martha Garretson*

*Samuel Cox – husband of Hannah Wierman*

*Sarah Cox – wife of Nicholas Wierman*

*Emey Cox – wife of William Wierman*

*Thomas Cox – husband of Martha Jenkins*



Other Source #11: *Margie Romine's Response to Committee Questions*, Margie Romine, 2024

Question 2: Our first question seems especially significant since if Mary Harlan's husband is a brother of our Solomon, then presumably our lineage doesn't actually intersect with the Harlan line.

*I agree with you about the significance of this if true. Personally, I do not think we descend from the Harlan line. If Solomon was born to Mary Harlan before 1749 when Mary's father (Moses Harlan) died, then Solomon should have been listed in Moses Harlan's will. Instead, he states that Mary has only one male heir, Jacob Cox.*

Question 3: On a related point, is there any DNA-evidentiary support for either the Harlan or the Garretson connection with our Cox ancestors? Or is that more of a "paper documentation" question?

*Determining whether a Harlan or Garretson is in our direct line is out of reach for autosomal testing. We would need someone that has John Cox as a 4<sup>th</sup> great-grandfather. Right now we are doing good to find people that have him as a 5<sup>th</sup> great-grandfather. Garretson is even harder to prove since so many Garretsons have married into our line.*

## The Committee's Findings:

- While the Cox-Harlan hypothesis has long been popular with Brandywine Crucible researchers and members, there are at least two reasons to question it:
  1. The earliest researchers (Henry Miller Cox, Stanley M. Cox, Gary Sutton, et al. left the surname of John's wife Mary as "unknown," or qualified their use of the Harlan name with "it is possible," "some believe," etc.
  2. We are unable to find the primary sources used by these authors to support the Harlan view.
- Margie Romine has helped us understand that DNA evidence is not available to settle this question. We were hopeful that the "argument" between various researchers on the paper trail could be settled by something more definitive and certain, like DNA findings. This is simply not the case.



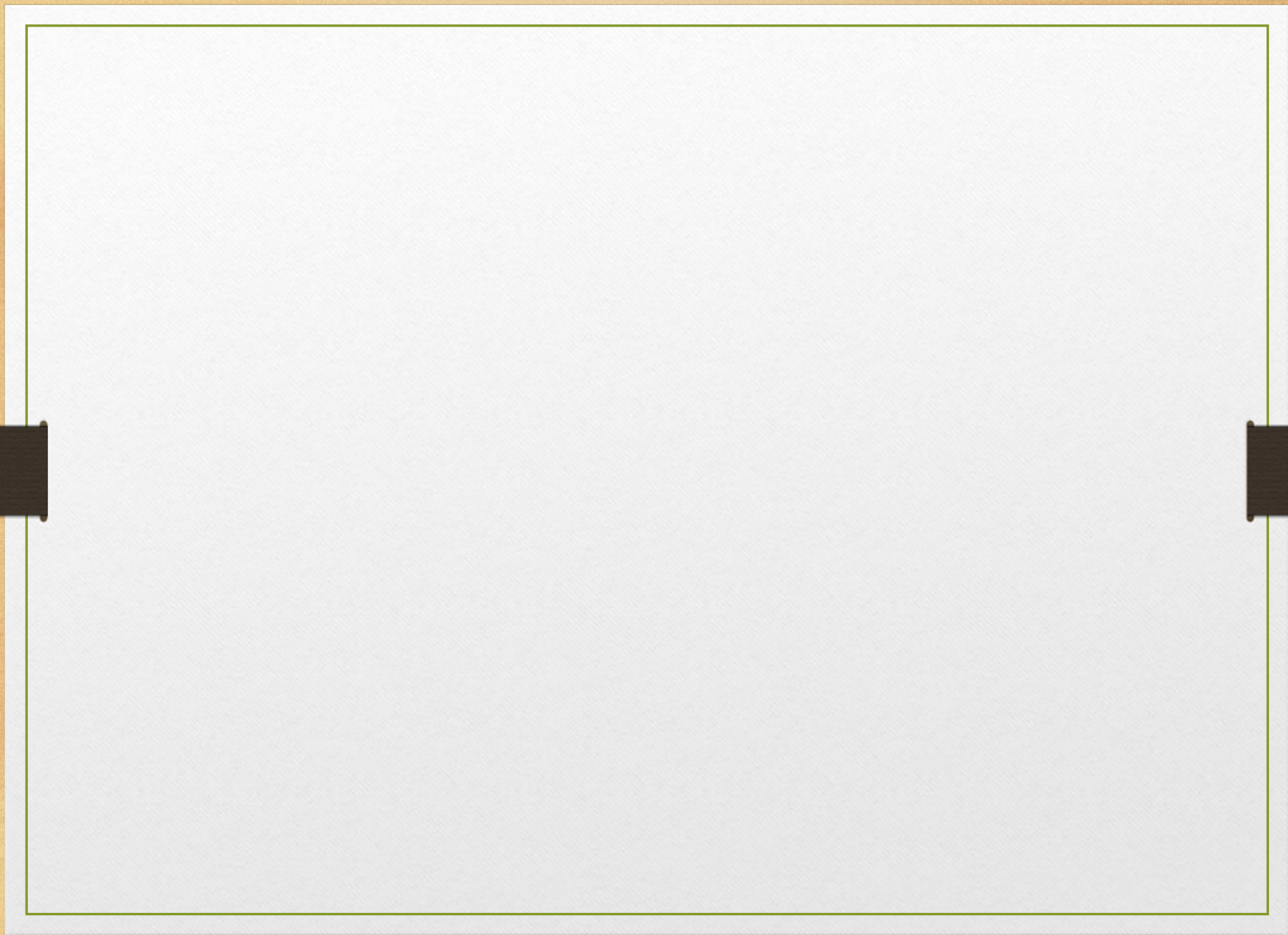
## The Committee's Findings:

- We began our committee work with the BC Board directive to explore whether John Cox Jr may have married Mary Garretson (instead of Mary Harlan) and that the Cox-Garretson pair may therefore be the parents of our Solomon Cox (wife of Naomi Hussey).
- We were somewhat surprised to find support for this interpretation of the marital facts: It is quite possible that John Cox Senior was in fact the husband of Mary Garretson, and that their first-born son John Cox Junior married Mary Harlan.
- Those finding support for this view have left our Solomon's parentage unsettled: 1) He may be the son of John Cox Sr and Mary Garretson (perhaps the youngest son), and therefore a brother of John Cox Jr who married Mary Harlan; 2) He may be the oldest son of John Cox Jr and Mary Harlan; or 3) He may be the son of an as-yet-undetermined Cox [one conjecture is that John Cox Sr and Mary Garretson's son Benjamin married Martha Garretson (1<sup>st</sup> cousins), and they are the parents of our Solomon Cox

## The Committee's Findings:

- The questions are interrelated but distinct: Who did John Cox Sr marry? And, who are the parents of Solomon Cox?
- Our Bottom Line: The BC board's charge to the committee includes this direction: "A split finding is acceptable (meaning that neither position can be 100% proved or disproved)." We are convinced that, as of right now, neither position can be 100% proved or disproved. However, we have chosen to allow each committee member to state his/her individual confidence levels (expressed as a percentage, or "betting odds") relative to the respective hypotheses. So, we have arrived at a "split finding."





## The Committee's Findings:

Steve: 80% support for the Garretson hypothesis, i.e., John Cox is husband of Mary Garretson, and likely they are parents of Solomon Cox (h/o Naomi Hussey)

Ladean: Unfortunately, and despite all we can do to search for absolute certainty, we do not have fact. Based on the evidence we've reviewed, I'll go with the 80% confidence figure for the Cox-Garretson hypothesis. That is my vote and statement.



## The Committee's Findings:

Connie:

Zala: In researching the parents of our Solomon Cox and his wife, Naomi "Amy" Hussey, I found repeated documentation that the parents of Solomon Cox were John Cox, Jr. and Mary Harlan Cox, John's 2<sup>nd</sup> wife. This ancestor's line may never be proven 100%, but I am thankful to know as much as we do about our early ancestors, and learn how they persevered to survive and grow our heritage.