

## **Living in West Texas in the Dust Bowl Years**

By Missy Cox Jones

My parents were William Cornelius Cox and Minnie Steward Cox. Daddy was a farmer and a very good one, very hard working. In the very early 1920's, his brother Joe Cox and his wife, Malinda (Linnie) Barker Cox moved to West Texas.

In about 1924, Daddy had heard from Uncle Joe about how good the crops were in West Texas and decided to move out there and try his hand at West Texas farming.

My brother Wilburn, born in 1915, and my sister, Geneva, born in 1919, were the only two children that Daddy and Mama had at that time. My brother Wilburn told me about the move to West Texas. He said Daddy rented a box car for \$ 77.00, and loaded the livestock and furniture on it and had it shipped to West Texas, probably to where Uncle Joe and Aunt Linnie were living. I never thought to ask them how they traveled themselves.

We have tax receipts showing them to be living in Knott, Ackerly, Stanton and 24 miles from Big Spring, Texas.

Daddy said that land out there would promise less and produce more than any he had ever seen. Daddy's money crop was cotton, and they raised lots of milo maize, sudan and other row crops. Wilburn said that Daddy would have the land ready for planting, and when it rained he planted more corn, peas and beans. It was nothing for them to have 400 to 500 jars and cans of vegetables put up for the winter.

For a number of years things went really well. They were doing well, and when the depression hit, it probably didn't affect them as much as city people. For one thing, they lived in the country, and raised their own vegetables, had cows for milk and butter, chickens for fryers and fat hens for hen and dressing and eggs, and fat hogs to butcher for their meat.

Then the drought came and the Dust Bowl years. I was born in 1930, and when I was just a small girl, some of my earliest memories are seeing the dust and sand blowing outside, and hearing the wind howling around the corner of the house. My mama said their house was pretty tight, but there was no way you could keep all of the dirt out of the house. She said one time that two young men came and wanted work. She said they were nice and clean, and Daddy hired them to help him on the farm. They lived at the house and Mama did the cooking for them. She said when she set the table for a meal; she would turn the plates upside down at the places, to keep the dirt from getting on the plate. She said one time that the dishes were passed around the table and one of the boys forgot to turn his plate over. And, he helped himself to chicken and dumplings on an upside down plate.

Daddy and Wilburn and Geneva talked about how hard they all worked, heading maize on a sled into a big wagon, and picking cotton and taking it to the gin, and that during the early 1930's, you could not give away anything you raised.

So, Daddy decided they would come back to Comanche County. My grandfather, Cornelius Nicholas Cox had passed away in 1929, but his place between Comanche and Gustine still belonged to the family. Wilburn said that Daddy sent two nephews in Comanche, Willis Steward and Hilton Burks \$ 20.00 to ride the bus from Comanche to Big Spring. Daddy had a Chevrolet truck, with a flat bed on the back, and they loaded the furniture on the truck, Willis and Hilton drove it back to Comanche county and left it at Grandpa Cox's place where Daddy's brother, Hill Cox and his wife Ola lived.

Then, Daddy started farming again, but that is another story.