

Chapter XII - Northwestern North Carolina - Life of the Author and His Wife

I, Aras B. Cox, was born in Floyd County, Va., January 25, 1816. My parents owned a farm on Beaver Creek, where they enjoyed life in quietude and cheerfulness. I was educated in the common schools of the country, such as it afforded at that time. I attended school, accompanied by my elder sister Elizabeth, when in my sixth and seventh years. William Barton, an old crippled man was my teacher. My parents took much interest in educating their children, as far as they were able. The love manifested, the toils endured, the continual care exercised by the kindest of parents for their family's welfare, will remain embalmed in sacred memory until the faculties of perception fades from this mortal body. I had five brothers, Cloyd, Ross, Jordan, Henry and James, and two sisters, Sarah and Elizabeth. In 1824 my father sold his land and bought other land in the western part of the county. The charms of that lovely home, the large spring of clear, cold water, the surrounding hills, and nearby beautiful pine groves and fine orchard of delicious fruit, with generous, good neighbors, made life worth the living.

I began teaching school when 18 years of age--working on the farm in summer and teaching in winter, studying books at home at night. My mind was seriously impressed in early life with the importance of living religiously.

When but a boy I was working in a field when the wind blew a tree on the horse I was plowing and crushed him to the earth. I narrowly escaped being crushed myself. In early life I made a trip to Indiana, going down the Ohio River on a flat boat, and was caught in a terrible storm above Cincinnati. With great difficulty the boat was saved from sinking and rowed to shore. I felt it was through a divine Providence that I still live.

In 1841, in partnership with a cousin, Asa Bishop bought a farm in Carroll County, Va. We sold our possessions after making one crop--not admiring bachelor life.

In 1841 I began reading medicine under Dr. Mark D. Stoneman, as preceptor, an able physician and esteemed friend.

In the spring of 1842 I took a sad leave of the loved home of my youth and went to Bridle Creek, Grayson County, VA to teach school, when the early settlers of that community had established a state of society where prosperity and happiness were richly enjoyed, and the triumphs of Christian religion are spreading their balmy wings over a fine church edifice, academy of learning and a prosperous people. We spent most of the time of three years here teaching and dealing in livestock, and, when an opportunity afforded, in reading and studying the science of medicine. Our stay with these good people was pleasant, and is remembered as a green plat by a crystal spring beneath a cooling shade where I rested while on life's journey.

I had, previous to this time, sought forgiveness of my sins and regenerating grace, and felt that God gave me peace and pardoned and converted my soul. I went, in company with my esteemed uncle, Rev. Henry Bishop, to New Hope church, in

Montgomery County, Va., and was received into the Methodist Episcopal Church by Rev. Zane Bland, preacher in charge, June 1842, and was licensed as a local preacher, under recommendation of quarterly conference, at Hillsville, Va., by P.E. Thomas K. Catlett, April 1843.

On the 23rd of February 1845, I was married to Phoebe Edwards, whose piety as a faithful, good wife, threw across life's pathway a mellow light of love and joy. We settled in Alleghany County, at that time Ashe County. My wife's father died when she was three years of age. Her widowed mother had been confined by paralysis for several years and could not walk. Our residence was near where my wife could be with her a part of the time until 1851, when Mrs. Jane Edwards, who possessed more than ordinary talents, after a life of Christian precept and example, and unceasing toil in the wise management of business for the welfare of her family and friends, patiently and peacefully passed away in June 1851, and was buried in the family graveyard by the side of her deceased husband, David Edwards, who preceded her to the grave 21 years.

In 1849 I was elected Clerk of the superior court of Ashe County, when Ashe and Alleghany were one county, and in 1853 was reelected to the same office.

I sold my farm in Alleghany County and bought a larger one seven miles east of Jefferson and moved there.

In 1852 my parents left Floyd County, Va., and came to live with us. Mt. Zion was our church and place of membership. In the fall of 1847 I was ordained deacon by the venerable Bishop James O. Andrews at Jonesboro, Tenn., and in 1847 was ordained Elder by Bishop John Early, at Marion, Smyth County, Va. During all these years much of my time was actively employed in practicing medicine and surgery.

In 1861 the unfortunate War Between the States spread its dark cloud over the country. The brightest, purest and best young men entered the Confederate army. I was in the service most of the war as captain and chaplain. The war was a sad calamity. The Southern people honestly believed the principles of the constitution were disregarded and their just rights denied them. But secession was not the proper source of redress. Such conflicts are enough (were such a thing possible) to make the guardian genius of American liberty shed tears of blood. Reconstruction, in many things, did the Southern states great injustice. We suffered a pecuniary loss, the fruits of years of toil and hard labor, from which we never fully recovered.

In the fall of 1869 we moved to Hamburg, Iowa, where I had an extensive practice in medicine, part of the time associated with Dr. Thomas H. Bragg, a graduate of Rush Medical college of Chicago. He was a worthy Christian gentleman. Here, with the help of my son Charles, I farmed for some years.

Moses U. Payne, a local preacher, member of the M.E.Church South, was much of wealth and deep piety. Soon after our arrival at Hamburg, Mr. Payne, having much land on Mission River bottom, brought his family there to live, and assisted us in

Organizing the first class in the Methodist church in that part of southwestern Iowa and northwestern Missouri--the corner of the states joining. The good people of that rich farming country helped us build in Hamburg a fine church. Rev. M. U. Payne gave \$500.00 toward building the church. The church edifice cost \$2,700. Dr. Miller, professor in Howard Female College, Fayetteville, Mo., preached the dedicatory sermon to a large and attentive congregation. Rev. O. Howell was our first Presiding Elder and Rev. John S. Rooker was preacher in charge for the conference year. I traveled as a supply on the new circuit, of Rock Port, St. Joseph district Mission Conference one year. During our year's service we added some new appointments, making a four weeks' circuit with fifteen preaching stations. It is pleasant to recollect our associations with the good people of that country. Granville H. Cox and worthy family moved from Virginia to Atchison County, Mo., and did much for the church. He and his good Christian wife have gone to reap a rich reward in the better world.

In the spring of 1881, while we were living on Mission River Bottom, in Atchison County, Mo., a great flood came and the river spread from seven to ten miles wide. We lost fencing and other property and the land washed over and partly ruined. We left there in 1882 and moved to Madison County, Neb. sold our property there, and, in company with our three sons, Edward, Charles and Albert, moved to Blaine County in 1885, and located homes on Buffalo Flats. In these changes of homes in different states the Lord was very good to us amid scenes of danger, sickness and death.

In the practice of medicine, traveling in extremely cold weather almost continually, chilling the blood in my eyes produced cataract. I was totally blind from 1888 to 1891. During these three years my wife read a chapter from the Bible regularly each night, and we would have family prayer. In June Dr. Gifford of Omaha, extracted the discolored crystalline lens from my right eye. With magnifying glasses I now can read and write. Dr. Gifford is a distinguished oculist, and one of earth's noblest and best men, whose superior genius and skill has made many hearts glad.

Our son, Edward M. Cox, and family live in Oregon. The letters from their children give evidence of Christian instruction and religious influence. Dr. C. B. Cox and family live in Brewster, Blaine County, Neb., and are examples of industry, economy and perseverance.

Our oldest son was born on the 18th day of December 1847, professed religion when but a boy, was a good, quiet boy at home and at school. He was a drummer at the camp of instruction of the Confederate army, at Raleigh, when 13 years of age. He was attending school in Alleghany County when attacked with diphtheria, and, after suffering patiently for several weeks; he died on the 11th day of March 1864.

Albert S.S A. Cox, our youngest son, a student in Marion Sims' College of Medicine, St. Louis, Mo., died on the 22nd day of January 1891. His death was a sad loss to his aged parents. He was a good boy and died in full assurance of a happy home in heaven.

Our oldest child and only daughter, Mary Jane, was born Jan. the 13th 1846, professed religion when eight years of age, joined the Methodist Church South, was one of its most faithful members, and a warm advocate of and faithful worker in Sunday school. She was happily married to Solomon V. Cox, her now bereaved husband, Oct. the 9th, 1865. Her life was spent doing well. She possessed an extraordinary capacity for business. Her unceasing toil and kind care of her family her social friendship and genial kindness to friends and neighbors will not soon be forgotten.

After suffering patiently, with great resignation, on the 7th day of August, 1899, her spirit took its flight from its earthly tenement to join loved ones where the blessed Savior said, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also."

Phoebe E. Cox was born in Alleghany County, NC, April 2nd, 1825, the daughter of David and Jane Edwards. Her father died when she was three years of age. The pious counsel of a godly mother impressed her young mind with the importance of religion, and, when but a girl, she professed religion in a camp-meeting held at Wilson Camp-Ground, Grayson County, Va., and joined the Methodist Church in which she lived a devoted member until her death.

On the 23rd day of February 1846, she was united in marriage to Aras B. Cox and settled in Alleghany County. Our church membership was at Mt. Zion, afterwards removed to Ashe County and united in a class at a school house near where Liberty Academy now stands.

During the unfortunate War Between the States she passed through many sad trials and hardships with pecuniary loss. In 1869 the family, composed of Mrs. Cox, her husband and three sons, moved to Hamburg, Iowa, leaving their only daughter, Mary Jane, wife of Solomon V. Cox in North Carolina. In 1882, she, with husband and two sons, removed to Madison County, Neb., remaining there three years and then move to Blaine County, Neb., and located homes on Buffalo Flats. There was no church here, but the St. Louis advocate, as she often remarked, filled the place of Southern Methodist preaching.

In October 1892, she received a shock of paralysis and remained in feeble health until the 6th days of the following October, she was attacked with strangulated hernia. The best medical skill was called to afford relief but in vain. The sainted wife and mother, the kind-hearted neighbor, and faithful member of the church lingered until Wednesday morning, the 11th day of October, 1893, when the spirit left its earthly house to assume its glorified state and to join loved ones in praise and adoration of her Savior forever.

During her suffering no words of murmur were heard. She told her husband not to weep, that they would not be separated long. She often spoke of the satisfaction it afforded her in visiting on her husband when he was blind. Her husband had donated a lot on their homestead for a cemetery, where her body rests beside that of her son, Albert

(who died while a student at Marion Sims' College of Medicine) to await the summons of the resurrection morn.