



MARY JANE
ROCKHOLD COX

MARY JANE ROCKHOLD COX 1838 - 1925

When they were first married Mary Jane, who was only 16, was so homesick she sometimes sat on a log in their yard and wept for her family. However, she soon had a fine family to care for and was too busy and happy with other pioneers to mind the loneliness. Her children are listed in the story of her husband, John Willis Burton Cox.

They bought land from Margaret Comstock. The deed is dated 15 December 1857. They paid \$500 cash in hand. It was a very large parcel of land. It is the deed to the old Cox Farm. Mary Jane lived on this farm until her death. Uncle Jarrett lived on it until his death. It was finally sold several years after Uncle Jarrett Cox's death in 1937.

The home on this place was built of brick and plastered on the inside and the outside was covered with siding, later stuccoed. There was a lean-to kitchen on the south, a large living room and bedroom on the west downstairs. There were 3 rooms upstairs. Uncle Jarrett, Uncle Porter and Aunt Ellen lived with Mary Jane in the later years. The 3 of them were unmarried.

Mary Jane had her hands full of work from almost the beginning of her married life. Her family grew fast. By 1873 she had eight living children who ranged in age from 16 years to a few months in age. By this time her two oldest girls, Nank and Ellen, must have been efficient helpers. Girls had to assume housekeeping duties at an early age in those days. She was quick of wit. She liked to joke and tried to treat everyone right. But she was quick to tell anyone off that wrongfully treated her.

She, with her husband, tried to raise home-loving, straight-thinking children who believed in God and His righteous power, goodness and mercy. They also taught His punishment for evil.

Each day her husband would read a scripture gem for the day. Then all knelt together while he prayed to God the Father in the name of Jesus, the Son of God. No doubt Mary Jane had her own private time for prayer.

She tells of the time when she was a girl and her grandmother had been declared dead and laid out without clothes on in a cold room, to keep her body from deteriorating before the funeral. She and two of her young girl cousins, all almost grown, were sitting up with their grandmother's body, as was the custom in those days. They had on heavy clothing and were having trouble keeping warm, when a voice spoke up. "Girls, I'm almost freezing to death." Their grandmother had come to life. The frightened girls hustled about as fast as they could to get warm blankets for her and to get her warmed up. They were very excited and scared girls, at first, but they rose to the occasion and met the challenge. Soon they had their grandmother

warm and cozy. I know not how long the old lady lived after this harrowing experience. The other relatives were sitting in a heated room. Imagine their delight and amazement to hear that the old grandmother was alive and freezing.

One time her husband was over west of the Muddy Creek. At about the time he should have been on the road for home a tornado came up suddenly. It uprooted trees and did considerable damage. He was on horseback. When Mary Jane felt there had been sufficient time for him to be home, she started out to find him. When she passed Uncle McPorter's place, Uncle Mac saw her. She told him she was looking for Burt and then went on. When she came to the creek she saw that she would have to cross it on a log. She sat down on the log and scooted across on her behind. When she got across she looked back and there was Uncle McPorter. He stepped on the log and tripped across as confident as a Billy goat. Mary Jane said that she felt ashamed of her timidity. They went on to find Burt. Soon they met him on his horse. A limb from a tree had knocked him from his saddle to the ground, during the storm, breaking one of his legs. He had put his horse beside a fallen tree, got on the tree trunk, (what agony that must have cost him) then worked himself into the saddle. Uncle Mac and Mary Jane walked beside him the rest of the way home.

Mary Jane tells of the time in the summer when it was hot and both the north and south doors to the living room were open. It was almost bedtime and the Cox family were knelt for family prayer. Dad, in the center of the room, was praying when Mary Jane saw a round ball of fire fly at the south door, seem to hover over Burt's head, then sail out the north door and vanish.

I think Mary Jane was awed by this phenomenon. It seemed to her an approval of her husband and his family by God, the Father, Himself. The ball of fire could have hit Burt Cox or set fire to the house. It was a very dramatic experience and after the excitement no doubt thanks were proffered to God for His goodness and mercy.

Dora Brown relates this about Grandmother Cox:

My brothers and sisters and I loved to go to our grandmother's home. I remember her as a very slender, gentle, kindly lady with a lovely smile and a happy, gay laugh. She had black hair, which she wore very plainly pulled back from her face and rolled on the back of her head. Her eyes were black and snapping when she was telling something funny and very deep and tender when she was fixing a cut or bandaging a sore leg.

She always made everyone feel so welcome. Bread and butter at her home tasted better to Maggie and Dora than cake would any place else.

She used to love to show Maggie and Dora her lovely old quilts and an old silk "crazy" patch quilt that had many scraps of silk in it from dresses of my Aunts and Grandmother. We loved to look at everything she had to show us.

She used to let us gather eggs and she would let us climb up in the loft to see the little squabs that were waiting for their mothers. She would always caution us not to bother them or their mother's wouldn't feed them. They had so many pigeons in their barn loft. Dora can remember eating squabs there. She could hardly eat them because they were so cute living. Chickens never affected her that way!

Grandmother and Aunt Ellen always kept the house clean and shining and she worried because she couldn't keep it clean when she became very old. Uncle Jarrett and Uncle Porter tried to keep things clean but they were very poor housekeepers. Maggie and Dora used to sweep the house and dust sometimes. She always made them feel so wanted and big when they helped her.

The memories of big dinners held at Grandmother's is still a bright memory in Dora's mind.

Relatives from all over that 'neck of the woods' would come driving over to Grandmother's. Generally the 'boys', Uncle Jarrett and Uncle Porter, and other men, would 'put up' a big table of wide boards on barrels, out under the lovely shade trees. The children would play 'hide and go seek' until called for dinner. The 'grown-ups' would sit around visiting and the men would generally be telling 'whoppers' translated 'big lies' about hunting, fishing and beeing!! Sometimes they would get into big uproars about politics or religion but they always quieted down for dinner.

The relative and friends of Mary Jane held a big dinner for her on the 26th day of May 1925, on her 87th birthday. She had such a nice time, although she was bedfast, she was bright and chipper and talked to as many as went in the house and sat with her. Dora Cox (Mostert later) went in and sat with her in the afternoon. She says:

I went in and sat down close to her and she had me to sit on the bed. She put her arm around me and hugged me. She said she was proud of me and Maggie. She said for us to always be good girls. She knew that our Daddy and Mother would be proud if they could see us. She said we had a good Daddy and Mother and they loved us. She said, 'I love you, too!' I kissed her and told her that Maggie and I loved her very much and we would try to always be good girls. About that time, after a short talk, someone else came to visit with our dear little Grandmother and I went back outside, not realizing that in just 4 days she would go to her well deserved reward. She was a kind, sweet, gentle person and everyone loved her.

Mary Jane Rockhold Cox passed away on May 30, 1925 in Mercer County, Missouri. She is buried in the old Laughlin Cemetery.

Information taken from "Ramblin Through Life and Times" by Wyona Ivan Cox, "Our Ancestors" by Dora Cox Mostert, and "Your Money's Worth" by Dora Brown.



Mary Viola, Elizabeth Jane, Elwysey Eleanor
John Willis Burton, Virgil Monroe, Mary Jane
The COX Family in 1894



Mary Jane with her 3 Daughters

Mary Viola, Elwysey Eleanor
Nancy Ann, and Mary Jane