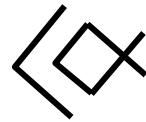


# COX CLAN



## NEWSLETTER

December 2007; Issue No. 33 Founder: Ruth Anna Hicks Editor: Bill Utermohlen, 1916 Windsor Rd, Alexandria VA 22307  
Cox website: <http://members.cox.net/wutermohlen/>

### CAPTAIN BENJAMIN RUE AND THE BATTLE OF VALCOUR ISLAND

(Second in an occasional series about sort-of-famous people to whom we are more-or-less related)

Lake Champlain, lying between New York's Adirondack Mountains and Vermont, is more a fjord than a lake, oriented north and south, pointing in the direction of the glacial ice that retreated from its shores ten thousand years ago. The scars left by the ice are hidden now, the flanking mountains covered with trees that, in the fall, mix the greens of pines with the reds, oranges and yellows of the hardwoods.

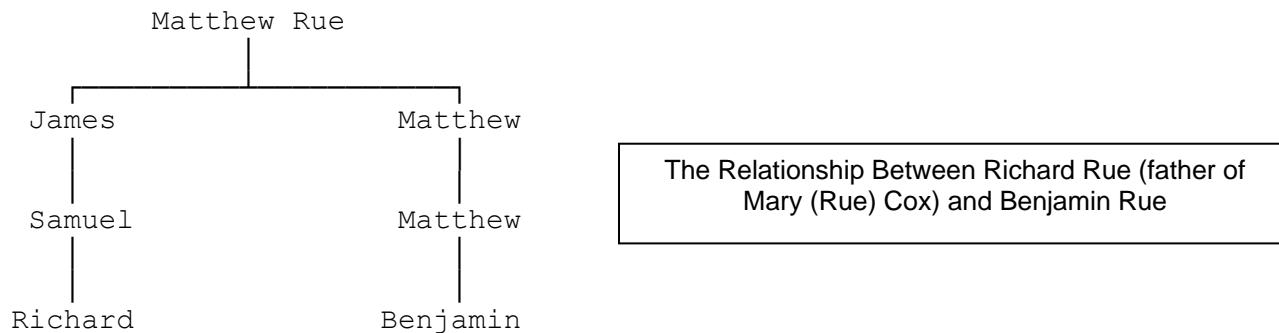
In this landscape, in 1777, one of the most important, and least known, Revolutionary War battles was fought. It was a naval battle, far from the ocean, and it played a major role in turning the tide of the war. Unexpectedly, in the summer of 1935, a relic of this battle was discovered: the gunboat *Philadelphia*, resting on the bottom in 60 feet of water, amazingly well-preserved, with its mast intact. It was raised in one piece, re-emerging from the lake 169 years after it was sunk by the British. It sits today in Washington, D.C., one of the most-prized exhibits of the Smithsonian's American History Museum.

The plaque accompanying the exhibit names its Captain as one Benjamin Rue, but does not tell his story. It is, however, a tale worth telling, one that he no doubt embellished himself, many a night, years after the battle, while entertaining patrons at his tavern in Lebanon, Ohio.

When war broke out in the spring of 1775, Benjamin Rue was 23. He had grown up in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, north of Philadelphia along the Delaware River, and must have acquired experience in boat handling on that river. Two years before, Benjamin had inherited the land left to him by his grandfather Matthew Rue and, in 1774, he was described as a painter and glazier of Bristol township, Bucks County.



By October 1775, the war had begun and Benjamin, with his brother Lewis, was a private in Major McIlvain's Company from Bristol township. By November 20 he had assumed the duties of an orderly sergeant in the Company of Augustine Willet, 1st Regiment (commanded by Col. John Phillip De Haas).



The company remained in Pennsylvania until the end of December, when it departed on the ill-fated invasion of Canada, marching to Montreal. In about April 1776, while still in Canada, Benjamin was appointed to the command of a large New England schooner in the St. Lawrence River. When the army retreated from Canada, Benjamin rejoined his regiment, which was stationed at Ticonderoga (during this period, or on the march to Canada, he may have encountered John Cox, who was serving in Capt. Nelson's Independent Company of Riflemen in the same regiment).

In the summer of 1776 it was obvious that the British, once they gathered their forces, might reverse the route the Americans had taken into Canada, thrusting south along the Richelieu River, Lake Champlain, Lake George and the Hudson River to New York City, splitting New England off from the rest of the colonies and striking a potentially mortal blow to the new country that declared its independence that summer. Nearly the whole route was by water, by far the easiest way to move men and equipment.

In June, the Continental Congress ordered the army "to build, with all expedition, as many gallies and armed vessels as . . . shall be sufficient to make us indisputably masters of the lakes Champlain and George." The construction took place at the south end of Lake Champlain, at Skeneborough (now Whitehall), where two sawmills and an iron forge were located.

The man in charge was Benedict Arnold, one of the most capable officers of the American Army. Arnold had already gained a substantial reputation, having been one of the commanding officers at the taking of Fort Ticonderoga and having organized and very nearly carried off the capture of Quebec by a wilderness route through the Maine backwoods. His years as a merchant sea captain now qualified him to lead the naval effort on Lake Champlain.

The work was encumbered by many difficulties, including the lack of competent carpenters and naval stores. Nonetheless, Arnold drove the construction to completion, ever aware that failing to complete the boats prior to the appearance of a British fleet would make the American position untenable. After two months, four 72-foot gallies



and eight 54-foot gondolas, including the *Philadelphia*, of which Benjamin Rue was made Captain, were completed.

After mounting three carriage guns, a 12-pounder in bow and two 9-pounders amidships, as well as eight swivel guns, the *Philadelphia*'s armament was complete. The gondolas were flat-bottomed gun platforms. The *Philadelphia* had a crew of 44, few of them with any nautical experience and none with experience of naval combat. She had a square-rigged mainsail and topsail, and thus could sail before the wind, but was reduced to a rowing galley in many wind conditions. The deepest part of the midships was four feet below the rail, so there was no below decks. The men were out in the weather at all times.

Arnold patrolled the Lake, awaiting the completion of the British fleet. At the end of August, he made a show of force at the north end of the Lake, in view of the British, and then fell back a few miles. By mid-September, his intelligence efforts began to reveal that the British fleet was formidable, including a ship capable of carrying 20 guns. This dictated a defensive strategy and, on September 30, he positioned his fleet behind Valcour Island, near the western shore and about a third of the way down the Lake. From this position, the Americans could not be seen from the north. Once the British obtained a north wind, they would sail past the Island and then have to beat up into the wind to attack the Americans. Because the British boats were not of equal ability into the wind, Arnold hoped to attack them piecemeal. It was a good plan. The Americans waited in their boats. They could not put parties ashore due to the presence of Indians friendly to the British and built pine and cedar fascines to protect themselves from sniper fire.



The American line at Valcour Island, as drawn by a British officer. The *Philadelphia* is fifth from the right.

On October 11 a cold north wind arose and the British were sighted from a lookout at the north end of Valcour Island. The plan worked well at the beginning, the two largest British boats were well south of the Island before the Americans were discovered and were unable to beat back north for many hours. The first British schooner to reach the Americans, the *Carleton*, did damage, but was unsupported and nearly sunk before she was limped away. As more British ships got into position, their superior firepower and more experienced gunners turned the tide. The Americans suffered great damage to boats and substantial loss of men. Arnold's dispatch mentioned that: "The *Philadelphia* was hulled in so many places that she sunk in about one hour after the engagement was over." The British were unable to force a surrender before nightfall, however, and in the night the Americans snuck past the British line and sailed and rowed up the lake as fast as they could manage. By dawn, they had made seven miles, but two of the gondolas were so badly damaged that they had to be sunk. On the second day of the chase, the British caught what was left of the American fleet. It was soon a rout, but Arnold and about 200 survivors made their way back to Crown Point on foot.

The British had a complete tactical victory, but a strategic defeat of the first order. It was now October 14 and they abandoned all thought of trying to take Fort Ticonderoga before winter. By the next year, the

Americans were better prepared and the British General Burgoyne suffered his disastrous defeat at Saratoga, which brought the French into the war on the side of the Americans. Had the British started up Lake Champlain a month earlier in 1776, they would almost certainly have been able to take the whole water route to the Hudson River. Arnold's fleet, however, was enough of a threat that they waited until their bigger boats were complete, guaranteeing them clear superiority.

On 27 October 1776, Benjamin received permission from General Gates to return home. Benjamin and Capt. Wingate Newman raised a company of artillery in November 1776 and, with that company, were engaged in the Battles of Trenton and Princeton on 2 & 3 January 1777. His company was discharged after the battles and Benjamin returned to Philadelphia.

On 1 April 1777, Benjamin was appointed Captain of a public armed vessel (the *Firebrand*) in the River Delaware, where his crew included Joshua Rue, probably brother of Richard Rue. Benjamin's pension application says that he continued with that command to the close of the war, which appears to mean until British had secured control of the Delaware as far as Philadelphia, as he resigned his commission on 1 February 1778. For the rest of his life, Benjamin was frequently referred to as Capt. Benjamin Rue.

TICONDEROGA, October 27th, 1776.

THESE ARE TO CERTIFY That the bearer, *Benjamin Rue*, late commander of  
a Gondola, in the service of the United States, on Lake Champlain, has behaved himself as an  
Officer and a Gentleman, and deserves the esteem and applause of his Country for his good  
conduct and bravery in the late engagement against the Enemy's Fleet.

B. ARNOLD, B. Genl.

To those Whom it may Concern.

IId Qrs TICONDEROGA, October 27th, 1776.

THESE ARE TO CERTIFY that the bearer, *Capt'n BENJAMIN RUE*, late  
commander of a Gondola, on Lake Champlain, in the service of the United States, has leave  
from the Honorable Major General Gates, commanding the Northern Army, in these parts,  
to depart this Camp and return to his residence, &c.

By the General's Command,

P. HUGHES, Aide Camp.

To all Officers, Civil and Military, of the United  
States, and others whom these may Concern.}

Capt. Benjamin settled south of Philadelphia, in Chester County, where he asserted title to some islands in the Delaware River that had been formerly the property of Joseph Galloway, a British sympathizer. In 1780 and 1781, Benjamin and his brother Lewis were listed as light horsemen in the Chester County militia. In 1800, the Philadelphia quarantine hospital was moved to his island and he briefly ran a tavern. He moved to Philadelphia not long afterwards, where he was a grocer and Inspector of Butter for the City. About 1806, he removed to Warren County, Ohio, where he was associated with a number of taverns, including the "Crossed Keys" at Fort Ancient, the "Golden Lamb" in Lebanon and the "Indian Chief." He died in 1823. Many years later a payroll of one of his ships and other military records turned up in Texas, in a desk that had been in the family of his daughter Catherine (Rue) Ferguson for many years.

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The above account owes a great deal to information forwarded by Helen Tucker of Seattle in 1992. For those with an interest in Arnold's campaign on Lake Champlain, I highly recommend both the novel *Rabble in Arms* by Kenneth Roberts (which erroneously refers to Captain Rice, based on an early historian's misreading of the name Rue) and James L. Nelson's recent book: *Benedict Arnold's Navy*. For those with a specific interest in the *Philadelphia*, see Philip K. Lundeberg's article: *Microcosm of Revolution (The Gondola "Philadelphia")* in The Bulletin of The American Society of Gun Collectors (1978) and John R. Bratten's *The Gondola Philadelphia & the Battle of Lake Champlain* (2002). A replica of the *Philadelphia* is at the Lake Champlain Historical Museum at Vergennes, Vermont. See <http://www.lcmm.org/index.htm>; <http://www.historiclakes.org/Valcour/philly.htm>.

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#### FAMILY UPDATES:

Jordyn Ann Vanschoiack, b. 31 Jan 2006, dau of Toby & Lisa Vanschoiack of Wymore, NE  
Aric James Henry, b. 1 Dec 2007, Killeen, Texas, son of Mark & Rachael Henry

Jocelyn Towner Graf m. Kwan Wu Yu, 20 Jul 2006, Seoul, South Korea  
Rebecca Marie Welsch m. Matthew Dale Steuk, 25 Aug 2007, Seward, NE  
Alexander Edward Kelvin Vanderlip m. Rachel Thum, 2 Sep 2007; living in London

Anne Lodge, stepmother of Susan (Lodge) Backs, Diane (Lodge) Hamman & Scott Lodge,  
d. 29 Oct 2007 at Geneseo, Illinois

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#### COX BOOK BY ANY OTHER NAME

For convenience, we have been calling the family book, the Cox family book. However, it is also the Knight, Freeland, Kirby, Hickman, Thomas, Pike, Henderson, Morton, Walker, Johnson, Ziegler, Baker, Vanderwalker, Fowler, Milligan, Scott, Murphy, Bell, Strader, Mikesell, Merideth, Amerman, Biggs, Coons, Brown, Gordon, Howland and Lawson family book, to name some of the surnames that entered the family in the first four generations. Other large branches from later generations include the Broadfoot, Cooper, Dirrim, Freeman, Greene, Hawkins, Logsdon, McAlister, McLaughlin, Moore, Peterson, Skelton, Smith, Sparbel, Stewart, Vanderlip, Wildermuth, and Williams families.

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#### CHRISTMAS GIFT COPIES AVAILABLE (*is there anyone in your family who would enjoy a copy?*)

#### ORDER FORM

for *Descendants of John Cox of Abington, Indiana and Joseph Cox of Hampton, Illinois*

I would like to order \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the book at \$60 per copy \_\_\_\_\_

Please ship my copy to: Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you want an autograph? Y N Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mail with payment to: **William J. Utermohlen, 1916 Windsor Road, Alexandria, VA 22307**

## AN INTERVIEW WITH RUTH ANNA HICKS, FOUNDING EDITOR OF THE COX CLAN NEWSLETTER

Ruth Anna (Martin) Hicks dedicated her most recent genealogical book, *Descendants of John Cox of Abington, Indiana and Joseph Cox of Hampton Illinois*, to her Uncle Clay Cox, who she credits with having sparked her interest in her family background. Clay (1893-1968) grew up in Burchard, Nebraska, a son of Sam and Ellen (Patterson) Cox. After his father died in 1925, Clay moved to Chicago, where he became a juvenile shoe salesman at Marshall Field's. In the 1930s, he became interested in genealogy and frequented the Newberry Library. Living in Illinois also made it possible for him to get to know members of the Cox and Patterson families still living in Rock Island and Henry counties. His findings were summarized in notebook-sized letters to his brother Orson in Denver that Ruth Anna transcribed after she began pursuing genealogy actively in the 1960s.



In June 1969, Ruth Anna published a booklet genealogy of the Cox family: *Descendants of John and Catharine Cull Cox of Wayne County, Indiana*. By that time, she had begun an active correspondence with a number of family members. In about 1970, she began to make a couple trips a year from her home in Lincoln, Nebraska to Illinois and Iowa, often accompanied by her husband's mother, who had formerly lived in Illinois. One of her first trips was to visit cemeteries in Page County, Iowa with her Aunt Anna Martin.

Asked about her favorite ancestor, Ruth Anna replies: "Who in the family doesn't like Richard Rue?," referring to the Indian captive and early settler of Wayne County, Indiana, who was the father of Mary (Rue) Cox. Among her prized possessions is a chest of drawers that was acquired by the Patterson family when they lived on a farm straddling the border between Massachusetts and New York. The chest of drawers made the trip to Illinois and later came with Sam and Ellen (Patterson) Cox on their move to Nebraska after their marriage in 1879. She also has large pictures, still in the old, deep frames, of John Washington and Juliett (Williamson) Cox and Franklin and Eliza (Stitt) Patterson, the parents of Sam and Ellen.

Ruth Anna has a number of genealogical publications to her credit. She published a set of transcriptions of the cemeteries of Pawnee County, Nebraska, including that of Burchard, in 1978. She also prepared an every-name index to an 1889 county history: *Portrait and Biographical Album of Johnson and Pawnee Counties, Nebraska*. In 1979, she published *Descendants of Andrew Patterson 1659-1746*, eventually selling out a press run of 300 copies. This book included photographs, an every-name index, and a number of interesting letters written to Ellen (Patterson) Cox from her younger sisters in Illinois. For about five years, beginning in the late 1980s, she was the editor of *Nebraska Ancestree*, the quarterly publication of the Nebraska State Genealogical Society, of which Ruth Anna has been an officer.

Her interest in the Cox family deepened after she developed a friendship through correspondence with Eleanor (Vanderwalker) Antes, a descendant of Sarah Catharine (Cox) Kirby. Eleanor organized a Vanderwalker family reunion in Phoenix, Arizona in 1982, which Ruth Anna attended, even though the only other attendees she knew were Eleanor and her husband. Then, in 1985, Christine Cox Lage revived the Cox Reunions in the Quad Cities. Ruth Anna was nominated as the family Historian and began gathering the information that eventually culminated in the family book she and Bill Utermohlen published in 2007.

Ruth Anna began publishing a *Cox Clan Newsletter* in 1989, mostly at her own cost. The Newsletter has since always been distributed free to what became a large mailing list and has done much to generate interest in and recognition of the family background. She produced about 30 semi-annual issues, eventually retiring from the editorship in 2006 after a fall forced her to spend a number of months recovering her health. The issues through 2005 are available in pdf format at:  
<http://members.cox.net/soccergirl2313/>.

While Ruth Anna turned 80 in January 2007, she remains interested in genealogy. She mentions that her great-grandmother was a Reeve. When a Reeve ancestor's grave had to be moved, it was discovered that he had had red hair, which Ruth Anna found interesting, in that her Aunt Anna had red hair and she herself had red tints in her hair. Recently, she has been able to identify, with the assistance of a researcher, a further two generations of her Martin ancestry.

Ruth Anna's genealogical career has been distinguished and anyone with an interest in the Cox family background owes her a considerable debt.

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#### FAMILY BOOK REVIEWED IN *THE AMERICAN GENEALOGIST*

The Cox family book was reviewed in the January 2007 issue of *The American Genealogist* (actually mailed in October 2007). *The American Genealogist* is perhaps the most widely-respected scholarly genealogical journal. The review is reprinted below by permission.

#### ***Descendants of John Cox of Abington, Indiana, and Joseph Cox of Hampton, Illinois, by Ruth Anna Hicks and William Jerome Utermohlen . . .***

This large and impressive volume is one of the best genealogies to come across my desk recently. Both authors are TAG subscribers, and Bill Utermohlen is known for his excellent published articles.

The authors have not yet been able to trace the parentage of John Cox, a Revolutionary soldier of Abington, Ind.; they do, however, provide all the evidence they have been able to obtain, largely from early family tradition and 19<sup>th</sup>-century local histories, much of it contradictory. They have now achieved a probable breakthrough by comparing Y-chromosomes of male-line descendants of John Cox with those of male-line descendants of Peter1 Larsson Cock, a 17<sup>th</sup>-century immigrant to New Sweden (later part of Delaware); the chromosomes match, and the compilers present a hypothetical line of descent from Peter Larsson Cock to the Revolutionary soldier. We should mention, however, that, while the chromosomal match makes descent from this Cock immigrant likely, the same match would be found if the Revolutionary soldier descended from Peter Larsson's father, paternal grandfather, or more distant male-line ancestor. (The distinguished expert on New Sweden, Peter Stebbins Craig, FASG, provided assistance on Peter1 Larsson Cock and his family).

This work is completely documented by keyed "sources" at the end of each family group, including discussion of discrepancies. It is heavily illustrated, though, as is too frequently the case with published digital photographs, they are not so sharp as one would like.

This is an excellent genealogy, both for itself and as a model for other works.

--Reviewed by David L. Greene, *Editor*

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**Thanks very much** to those who have contributed toward the Newsletter this year: Michael Cox, Tom G. Cox, George Thoresen, Jean Walgren & Suzanne Williamson, Carolyn Knight, Martha Linstrom, Doris Freeman, Wes Funk and a number of people who forwarded contributions to Ruth Anna.



The top photos are of Samuel Kirby and his wife Sarah Catherine Cox (Cox Book, #18). The bottom left photo is of Mary (Cox) Freeland (#17). All are courtesy of Ruth Anna Hicks and originally received from Eleanor (Vanderwalker) Antes. The picture at lower right is of Bill Cox (presumably, #127iv, b. 1896), apparently taken in about 1912 or 1913. It was forwarded by Eva Cammel.

