

[Fox, John Andrew]

JOHN A. FOX
Sketch and Picture of One of Cuba's Fine Old Gentlemen—
Has an Interesting History
(By J. S. Minard)

About a mile east of the village of Cuba lives the man whose name appears at the head of this sketch. His father's name was James Fox, and his mother's was Dolly Herkimer, whose father was a nephew of Gen. Nicholas Herkimer, the hero of Oriskany, and whose mother was a sister of Gen. Philip Schuyler, a leader of much prominence in the long and arduous struggle of the Colonists for liberty and independence.

This may not perceptibly affect Mr. Fox in any way, yet none of us, were we in Mr. Fox's place, would in relating the history of our lives, make any attempt to conceal the fact; on the contrary, quite likely would be proud to trace our origin to one who was so closely related to such honorably conspicuous characters. All the same, Mr. John A. Fox is a very fine old gentleman, with whom it is an exalted pleasure to converse and of whom many interesting things may be learned of "our grandfather's days."

He was born in the old stone fort in the town of German Flats [Flatts], in the historic old Mohawk Valley, and the 12th day of March 1815, and has therefore got a long start on his 88th year. This old structure, in which occurred the initial event of his life[,] was built by Gen. Herkimer, some years prior to the revolution, for a place of refuge in the event of an incursion of Indians; a place of last resort for defense in case their homes were destroyed, and lives threatened. Mr. Fox was the 4th child and third son of the family. His early years were spent in sight of scenes of thrilling events to the recital of which by the grim old survivors of those times which "tried men's souls," he listened with the greatest interest. In his boyhood days, work of the Erie Canal was being prosecuted, a work which from its proximity to the line, required the razing of the old fort. He well remembers the appearance of the first boat which passed west of German [Flatts] on "Clinton's Ditch," as the canal was frequently called. Seeing it coming he skipped in all haste to the house, exclaiming "mother, mother, there's a house coming on the canal!" It was a line boat, nicely painted, with green blinds to the cabin windows.

Mr. Fox remembers as a lad, the excitement attending the journey of La Fayette [Lafayette] through the state, which was made by a canal packet, at the time considered the most convenient, "up to date," and aristocratic style of traveling. He learned the trade of millwright and carpenter, and worked for some years at the business. While thus engaged he built an overshot wheel for a grist mill at Sharon Springs, Schoharie County, which was thirty-three feet in diameter. It was the largest he ever built or knew of.

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In course of time he made his way to the western part of the state, stopping for a while in Cuba. Here [on] December 25th, 1842, he married Miss Jennett Hubbel. Soon after their marriage the young couple went to the Mohawk country in the neighborhood of his childhood's home, where they resided until 1850, when they came to Friendship, making the journey by canal to Mt. Morris, and by wagon the rest of the way. In the spring of 1851 he bought, and moved onto the place, where he has ever since resided.

While in Friendship, Mr. Fox engaged in teaming. He used to haul lumber from Friendship to Mt. Morris by way of Angelica, Short Tract, Deep Cut, and then by Brooks Grove or the river road. It took them days to make the trip and \$5.00 per thousand feet was the regular price for hauling, and one thousand feet was the average of loads. Teamsters would load back with salt, merchandise, and for a while with rails for the Erie railroad, which was then being built, taking about 2,500 pounds to a load. He also hauled some lumber to Buffalo for a return load, bringing back goods for the merchants. With the prevailing prices for entertainment and horse feed, at the wayside inns, which were for supper, lodging and breakfast, and horses to hay, from 50¢ to 62½¢, he was by hard work, strict economy, and good luck, able to save out a little of it to lay by. There were in those days many Indians living on the reservation this side of Buffalo. Every teamster took along a water pail, oats, and a dinner box. In winter or cold weather, of course, robes and blankets were added.

Mr. Fox has one brother living in the West, but he has not seen him in 30 years. In religious belief Universalist, in politics formerly a democrat but recently a prohibitionist. His habits in regard to liquor have been temperate, never a total abstainer, but never used it in excess.

Illustrative of the change of sentiments, habits and customs, in his day, he relates that on the occasion of the burial of his grand-father, the minister and pall-bearers were all treated with liquor, which was considered as the proper thing, and in very proper form, a practice which would at this late day, excite much comment, some of which would be favorable.

Since having the measles at the age of twenty-three, Mr. Fox's health has been uniformly good, never in all that time requiring for himself the services of a physician. Mrs. Fox died July 6, 1899, at the age of 84 years, 6 months and 25 days.

But [only] one child, Antoinette, Mrs. S. K. Ford, was born to them, with whom he lives. He has five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Cuba Patriot, Cuba NY, Thu. 13 Nov 1892

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JOHN A. FOX DIES; ILL FEW MINUTES

End Came Peacefully as Sleep to Cuba's Centenarian
Was in Usual Health Sunday and Read the Papers and Sang Hymns—
Complained Slightly Half Hour Before He Died at 2:45 Monday Morning.

John Andrew Fox, who was a hundred years old on the 12th day of last March, died about quarter to 3 o'clock Monday morning at the home on the East Cuba road where he had lived for many years, occupied with him by his daughter, Mrs. Nettie Ford, and granddaughter and husband, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Rose, with their children.

Mr. Fox's death was so peaceful and so much like passing into sleep, that the exact time is not known even to the members of the household. His final illness, if such it might be called, was but of a few minutes' duration. While up with a child of the household who had earache, his daughter, Mrs. Ford, heard her father stir. She went to him and he said he had some pain around the heart. Mrs. Ford gave him some tonic and in a minute or so he said the pain had disappeared. His daughter made him comfortable, he turned over in bed, put his hand under his head and said he was all right. A few minutes later, on going to see how he was, it was discovered he was dead. He was in exactly the same position as when left, and evidently death had not been accompanied by the slightest struggle.

It was apparent to those about him that Mr. Fox had been failing of late. It was noticeable in his inability to get around as well as formerly. His mind was as bright and he was much interested in everything as usual, but the machinery of the body was wearing out. Sunday, however, he seemed even stronger than usual. He sang hymns, as was his wont, and shaved himself and trimmed his beard. He asked for the Patriot of Friday and read its columns with interest and also looked at the Sunday papers. He retired about 5 o'clock that evening. Sometimes he went to bed even earlier than that, but not often much later.

Just once in nearly 80 years Mr. Fox had a physician called for him, and that time he did not know it until the doctor arrived. Shortly before his hundredth birthday last spring Dr. Young was summoned by the family, as Mr. Fox had contracted a heavy cold. He insisted he didn't need any attention, however, but agreed to take some of the medicine furnished him.

Mr. Fox's funeral was held on Wednesday afternoon at 2 o'clock. The Rev. Cardner, of the Cuba Baptist church, conducted services at the house, and the exercises at the grave were in charge of Cuba lodge of Masons. Persons present from out of town were Mrs. A. A. Foland of Wellsville, L. A. and R. S. Ford, grandsons of Galeton, Pa., and Mrs. Carrie Raught of Olean. Interment was made in Cuba cemetery.

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At the time Mr. Fox reached the century mark, on the 12th of last March, a celebration was held in Cuba under the auspices of the Daughters of the American Revolution. At that time The Patriot printed an extended sketch of his career from the pen of Miss Fannie Pendleton of this place, and we do not feel it necessary at this time to more than again briefly refer to the principal facts in this lengthy and unusual life.

[A recap of his biography from the sketch noted above is omitted here. The sketch continues below.]

The only child of Mr. and Mrs. Fox, Antoinette [Nellie] G. Fox, married S. [Sherman] R. Ford and lives in the old home east of this village with her son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Rose. The grandchildren are:

Bertha Ford, married O. P. Brown of Cuba.

Leslie A. Ford of Galeton, Pa.

Edna A. Ford, married Carl Schermerhorn of Geneva.

Leona A. Ford, married E. W. Rose of Cuba.

Raymond S. Ford of Galeton, Pa.

Mr. Fox has eight great-grandchildren: Howard, Lawrence and Helen Brown, Ethel and Elinor Ford, Harold and Harland Rose, and James Leslie Ford.

Cuba Patriot, Cuba NY, Fri. 8 Oct 1915

Transcribed on 27 Dec 2014 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY