

## Elijah Cox

Elijah Cox was born in Mackinaw, Michigan on September 25, 1842. His parents were slaves in Mississippi who escaped to the north before Cox was born. His military service began during the Civil War as the personal servant to Captain George Madison of the 6th Illinois Cavalry. After the war, Cox returned to Michigan and became an apprentice carpenter. He disliked carpentry so much that he signed on as a sailor on a ship on the Great Lakes. In 1870, Cox decided it was time for another career change and rejoined the Army.

On July 1, 1870, Elijah Cox enlisted in Detroit, Michigan and was placed in Company **S** of the 25th Infantry Regiment. He was five feet and two inches tall and listed his previous occupation as a musician. Cox spent almost a year in the Army, and was wounded during an engagement with a band of Indians between Forts Davis and Quitman. He was discharged by Special Order on June 30, 1871, at Fort Bliss, Texas. Cox never served at Fort Concho, but after his discharge he made San Angelo his home.

Elijah Cox was better known as "Old Cox," working as a cook, carpenter, buffalo hunter, musician, bartender, and entertainer. He had natural musical talent and played the fiddle and guitar. He had his first music lesson while listening to a cowboy being taught to play the guitar. Cox learned to play the guitar better than the cowboy who was so frustrated that he gave the guitar to Cox. Cox soon moved on to the fiddle and for many years played at different dance halls and saloons throughout the area.

Elijah Cox served with William "Dead" Ellis. They were both in the 25th Infantry Regiment but in different companies. Cox gave a first-hand account of the "Dead" Ellis incident. After this, Cox was "a little skittish to be around Ellis."

Cox was a well-known figure in San Angelo. He recorded three songs; "Whoa Mule," "Miss Lucy Neale," and "Those Agonizing Cruel Slavery Days." He was a colorful old man and liked by all that knew him.

On January 20, 1941, Elijah Cox died at the age of 98 years old. He had seen San Angelo grow from a wild frontier town to a thriving community. On January 22, 1941, services were held at his residence at 601 Tarver and he was buried at Fairmount Cemetery. Finally, on November 11, 1993 a government headstone was installed on his grave.