

Rollen C. Cooper

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Rollen C. Cooper was born in Wash~~new~~ county, Michigan, September 30, 1845. In 1858 he moved to Goodhue, Minnesota, where he remained until 1861. In that year he went to Colorado, where he and his brother T. J. Cooper, engaged in mining for twenty years. Mr. Cooper came to Dakota October 5, 1880. He outfitted at Fargo and drove to his present location by way of Sanborn. He bought about 27,000 acres of railroad land, and in the spring of 1881 began breaking. He employed a large number of men and teams in conducting these farming operations. In 1881 he raised a crop of oats, and in 1882 his first wheat crop.

Mr. Cooper was chiefly instrumental in getting the railroad to come to Cooperstown. The road is a branch of the Northern Pacific, but it was built under the name of the Sanborn, Cooperstown & Turtle Mountain railway. About sixty-five friends and acquaintances of Mr. Cooper's from St. Clair county, Michigan, came in 1881 and 1882 and formed the Cooper settlement, which later became the town of Cooperstown. Of these settlers Mr. Cooper remembers that the families of Brown, Washburn, Barnard, Glass, Langford, Williams, Houghton, Bathie, Hunter, Crane, K. Thompson, Smart, Pinkerton, Stevens, Enger, E. Steir, Dr. Newell and Dr. Kerr came in 1881.

Mr. Cooper was active in the movement to make Cooperstown the county seat. As a vote of the people would be taken on this question on November 7, 1882, the townsite was surveyed in October of that year (On June 16, 1882, the county seat was located at Hope by the county commissioners appointed by the governor, Allen Breed, R. C. Cooper and Wm. A. Glines. On November 7, 1882, Cooperstown was made the county seat, and on June 13, 1883, the county was divided). Mr. Cooper says that the following winter representatives of both the Cooperstown and the Hope interests lobbied at the legislature for the division of the county.

Of late years Mr. Cooper has been selling his land and breaking his large estate into the usual farms. He has now only about 5,000 acres remaining unsold. He still is actively engaged in business in Cooperstown, where he is more contented than anywhere else.

Hon. Rollin C. Cooper, who has represented his district in the house of representatives and in the state senate and who has for more than a third of a century been closely and prominently associated with the agricultural development of Griggs county, his home being now at Cooperstown, was born September 30, 1845, in Washtenaw county, Michigan, a son of Thomas and Caroline Cooper, who were natives of Vermont. Their marriage was celebrated in the Green Mountain state and in 1832 they removed westward to Michigan, casting in their lot with the pioneer settlers, after which the father devoted his attention to farming for many years, contributing in substantial measure to the development of his district. There he reared his family of eleven children.

Rollin C. Cooper, the ninth in order of birth, was a lad of thirteen years when he went to Minnesota, in which state he resided for a few years, but removed to Colorado in 1861. There he engaged in mining and also was successful as an agriculturist. In 1880 he arrived in Griggs county, North Dakota, and the following year settled upon the present site of Cooperstown, which he platted and which was named in honor of himself and his brother, T. J. Cooper. On removing to Griggs county Rollin C. Cooper at once began farming and grain buying and as his intelligently directed labors brought to him success he added to his acreage until he became one of the most extensive landowners and grain buyers of the state, having in all fourteen thousand acres, of which nine thousand acres were under cultivation, mostly devoted to the production of wheat.

In Colorado, in 1870, Mr. Cooper was married to Miss Emma C. Hutchins, a native of Ohio and a daughter of Henry and Ella Hutchins. They had two children who died in infancy and they adopted a daughter, Florence, who passed away at the age of twenty-seven years.

Mr. Cooper is an exemplary member of the Masonic fraternity and has taken the degrees of the Lodge of Perfection of the Scottish Rite. During territorial days he was appointed by Governor Ordway a member of the board of county commissioners of Griggs county and so continued to serve by successive reelections until 1898, doing splendid work in that connection. It is well known that he stood by the state most loyally in the darkest hours of its history, assisting the commonwealth in passing over a period which threatened bankruptcy. He never lost faith, however, and he passed by no opportunity that would enable him to further the best interests of North Dakota. He is an extremely modest man, entirely free from ostentation and display, but the specific office of biography is not to give voice to a man's modest estimate of himself and his accomplishments but rather to leave a perpetual record establishing his position by the consensus of public opinion on the part of his fellows. This opinion was expressed in 1894, when Mr. Cooper was chosen to represent his district in the state legislature, and again four years later, when he was elected a member of the state senate. In the house he was a member of the committee on railroads and several other important committees. His colleagues at that period and his acquaintances through all the long years of his residence in the state have nothing but good to say of Rollin C. Cooper.

Mrs. Porter's copy

Rollin C. Cooper

1845

Rollin C. Cooper was born in Lima Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan on a farm where he remained until 13 years of age when he joined his brother, Thomas J. Cooper in Red Wing, Goodhue County, Minnesota where he attended school. His parents, Thomas and Caroline (Baker) Cooper were married in Vermont and in 1838 moved to Washtenaw County, Michigan. In 1861, the two brothers left by mule team to Colorado, then known only as "Pike's Peak"--stopped at Canon City and from there went into the mining sections of Park County, Colorado where they remained two years.

In the autumn of 1863 they bought some oxen and went to Omaha, Nebraska, returning 3 months later with supplies for ^{the} mining section. In 1864 he returned to the valley and with another brother Henry H. Cooper engaged in small farming operations in El Paso County, Colorado until '66 or '68 at which time the brothers went into the hardware and tin business in Pueblo, Colorado. In 1870, R. C. Cooper married Emma C. Hutchin in El Paso County, Colorado where her father was a merchant. A few years later he and his brother, T. J. Cooper returned to the business of mining and freighting at Leadville, Colorado where there was a "Mining Rush". They struck ¹pay gravel in "Little Chief" and other mines and became rich quick. The two brothers transferred their business interests to Chicago. Oct. 5, 1880, R. C. Cooper came to Dakota Territory. He out-fitted at Fargo, North Dakota and drove to Griggs County by way of Banborn. He and his brother bought 27000 acres of railroad land ^{and} in the spring of 1881 began breaking. He employed a large number of men and teams in conducting these farming operations on his ^{sonanza} farm as it was later called. In 1881 he raised a crop of oats and in 1882 his first wheat crop.

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While R. C. Cooper was the manager of the great wheat farming operations, T. J. Cooper took an active interest in the business and though living in Chicago, visited Cooperstown as often as he could.

R. C. Cooper was appointed by Gov. Ordway to serve on the first board of County Commissioners in Griggs County. R. C. Cooper served in 1894 as a Representative and in 1898 as a Senator. Mr. Cooper was chiefly instrumental in getting the railroad (Sanborn, Cooperstown and Turtle Mountain Railroad) which later was purchased by the Northern Pacific R. R.) to Cooperstown and to make Cooperstown the county seat. (The ranch house on the Cooper ranch can be seen from N. D. I between Hannaford and Cooperstown about miles North of Hannaford) R. C. Cooper platted Cooperstown and became a "bonanza" farmer.

The two brothers, Rollin C. Cooper and Thomas J. Cooper were the founders of Cooperstown and were prominently associated with every venture in the early history of Griggs County.

After some years, T. J. Cooper withdrew from the business and went into the Alaskan gold fields while Rollin C. Cooper continued in the farming business of Griggs County until 1913 when he sold practically all his holdings and retired from active business. Since that time he has maintained a winter home in St. Petersburg, Florida and during the past four years has spent all his time in Florida. (He is 91 years old now.)

To the forceful character and dynamic personality of R. C. Cooper. Griggs County and Cooperstown are indebted to their prosperity.

When his magnificent outfit camped in Griggs County, there was not a settler on its prairie and but four men living in the timber upon the river. No settler ever left the Cooper ranch empty-handed.

R.C. COOPER

The Cooper families in 1890-1891 became active in the establishment of church, school and social life in the community. An active W.C.T.U. organization was organized in March 1893, mainly by the efforts of Mrs. R.C. Cooper. (This organization is still active at Cooperstown.

Mrs. R.C. Cooper died at Cooperstown in October 1929. An adopted daughter passed away in 1911 at the age of 27 years.

As far as possible Mr. Cooper hired other settlers, who were struggling to get along, on his ranch. Many of the settlers still say after fifty years, with pride, "I worked on the Cooper ranch."

The city of Cooperstown is located on part of the holdings of the Cooper Bros.

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