



No image of Henry Moses Cooper located yet.

## **HENRY MOSES COOPER**

**Feb. 14, 1852 - Dec. 10, 1920**

Henry Moses Cooper was the first of ten children born of John Jordan Cooper and Louisa Slay Cooper. He was born in Holmes County, Florida, on a cold day in winter, February 14, 1852. Known throughout his life simply by the name of Mose, his siblings were William Erasmus Cooper, John Robinson Cooper, James Fountain Cooper, Michael Raleigh Cooper, Daniel Jordan Cooper, Selimea Cooper, Thomas W. S. Cooper, Susannah Demerah Cooper, and Joseph Franklin Cooper.

During the spring of 1856, four-year-old Mose, his parents, younger brother William Erasmus Cooper, and grandfather, Washington Arnold Cooper, moved from Washington County, Florida, to settle next to a basin off the Blackwater River in Santa Rosa County, Florida.

On July 3, 1872, Mose married Elizabeth Reed in Santa Rosa County, Florida. Mose and Elizabeth had five children during the twenty years of their marriage; their names were Henry, Thomas Franklin, Melissa, Sally, Vinie Louisa, and Jordan. When the flu epidemic of 1892 ran through Santa Rosa, Elizabeth and their first son Henry were among the first family members to die. Others who died during this epidemic were his father, John Jordan Cooper; his brother William; his brother John's wife, Dorah Bloodworth Cooper; a nephew, Johny Cooper; and his grandmother Selimea Thompson Slay.

Mose had built his home next to the river and kept to himself after Elizabeth died. His life changed in 1894 when he began to court a widow by the name of Louisa S. Boniford. Mose and Louisa married on January 31, 1895, in Santa Rosa County, Florida. A year later Mose and Louisa had their first child, Archie Moses Cooper, born on January 26, 1896. Their second and last child, a girl named Belle, was born in December of 1898.

Mose was a very strong man from years of working in the timber industry. His arms were enormous from cutting and hauling trees down into Cooper Basin

where they would be floated down river to one of the sawmills for processing. Mose spent much of his time rowing his boat up and down the Cooper Basin. Because of his strength, it was common to see Mose extend his arms with the oars and in one swift movement pull the oars back to send the boat rocketing through the water.

Henry Moses Cooper lived to the age of sixty-eight and died of natural causes on December 10, 1920. Found in his boat on the Cooper Basin by his daughter Belle, Mose had died of a heart attack. He is buried between his son Tom and his daughter Vinie in the old Cooper Cemetery, east of Milton, Florida.

For many years after Mose died there could be seen, during twilight, a mysterious sphere of light that would float up and down Cooper Basin where Mose had often rowed his boat. It gave chills to many people who witnessed the phenomenon, and it was commonly believed that the light might be the spirit of Mose still rowing up and down the basin. The mysterious sphere of light stopped appearing after Mose's youngest daughter, Belle, died.

*Compiled by: Miles Davis Cooper, great grandnephew of Henry Moses Cooper.  
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