



Charles Robinson Cooper, first child of James Fountain Cooper

CHARLES ROBINSON COOPER

Dec. 17, 1880 – Apr. 15, 1945

Charlie was born in Harold, Florida on December 17, 1880. He was the first child of eleven children born of James Fountain Cooper and Lucyann Missouri Levins Cooper.

Charlie's siblings were George Washington born 1882, James Urwin born 1884, Lorina born 1886, John Jordan born 1889, Bessie Elizabeth born 1891, Thomas David born 1893, Arlie Olevia born 1896, Susie Idell born 1898, Andrew Jackson born 1901, and Leila Agnes born 1904.

On September 22, 1909 Charlie married a high spirited young red head by the name of Mary Ann Matthew's. Her parents were Isham Burl Matthew's and Ellen Morrell Matthew's. Isham and his family were from Beinville Parish, Louisiana but had moved to Santa Rosa County around 1877 and homesteaded land in Harold, Florida.

Charlie and Mary had three children: Clara Evelyn Cooper, born February 28, 1910, Marshall Fisher Cooper, born September 17, 1912 and Milledge Lushington (Bill) Cooper, born November 7, 1914.

Charlie got his start in business with his first cousin and brother-in-law, Floyd M. Cooper, Sr. by salvaging deadheads on the Black Water River. Deadheads were Logs destine for the sawmills on BlackWater River that became mired in the mud and sandbars before reaching their destination. The law of salvage granted ownership to anyone that freed the logs. Like his father he was a successful businessman. Sometime between 1910 and 1913 Charlie owned a store in Holt, Florida with the name Charlie Cooper's General Store. Over the years Charlie owned and operated several stores in Holt, Florida and Flomaton, Alabama. He also owned a restaurant / dancehall at Robinson Point in the late teens and early twenties.

Charlie In order to provide the lifestyle he wanted for his family required that he spend a considerable amount of time monitoring his businesses and investments. Meanwhile his young wife liked to go out by herself to dance and

raise Cain. When the impulse to go out and party came over her, and Charlie wasn't home, she would lock the three children in the closet so they wouldn't mess-up her precious house. Charlie it is assumed, was very upset by they way his wife treated their children, when he wasn't present, and the fact that she squandered his hard earned money. It has been said that he was a true gentleman, however there was a point when for the children's best interest he decided to divorce his wife. Around 1920, there was a lengthy and expensive divorce which ended with the courts giving total custody of the children to their father, Charlie. Because his wife had squandered his money and the costly court fees it almost broke Charlie financially.

One day while Charlie was at work, Mary, his X-wife, kidnapped the three children and put them on a train to Louisiana. When they pulled into New Orleans, Clara, the oldest child, remembered that her mother stuck her head out the window and yelled to a street vender pushing a food cart. She bought some tamales for herself and the children. Clara said that the tamales were the only food that her mother had given the three children on their trip to Louisiana.

Clara recalled that they arrived at a ranch somewhere in Louisiana where she recalled seeing cowboys and horses. Shortly after they had arrived, the Sheriff of Santa Rosa County called and ordered Mary to return the children to Florida. Instead she place the three children in a Catholic Orphanage where they stayed until their father arrived to retrieve them. Trying to raise the three children by himself and recover from the severe fanancial loss, caused by his wife, was more than he could handle. He had no other alternative but to ask his sister Lorina (Renee) and Floyd, to take and raise his daughter Clara Evelyn Cooper. Charlie's sons, Marshall Fisher Cooper and Milledge Lushington (Bill) Cooper went to live with their grandparents James Fountain Cooper and Lucyann Missouri Levins Cooper.

Charlie stayed with his sister, Lorina, and her family frequently during the early 1920s. On February 7, 1923, in Crestview, Florida, Charlie married his second wife, Mrs. Maggie Ida Helms Melvin. In 1928 Charlie and Maggie contracted typhoid fever when they were living down at the bowel of Blackwater River where Fisher's Mill was located. One of the treatments for typhoid fever in those days was to put heated stones or bricks next to the legs. During these treatments one of Charlie's legs was burned and never fully healed. Callie Dora Cooper recalled bathing her Uncle Charlie's bad leg on occasion, when he stayed with them, and applying, "Texas Star Liniment", which was his favorite liniment. She said that his leg would improve when he stayed with them and she had the opportunity to treat it for him, but when he had been away for a while, he would return with a sore leg. Everyone loved Charlie's second wife, Ida, and thought they were perfect for each other. Unfortunately Ida didn't recover from the typhoid fever and died on October 28, 1928. Her final resting-place is in the Miller Bluff Cemetery.

On December 23, 1936 Charlie married his third wife Viola Taylor. Viola was a widow that he met from Flomaton, Alabama. It is believed that her maiden name had been Spencer. She had three children: Lovina, Harvey and Barnard. Charlie owned three stores in Flomaton that were located side by side like a present day strip mall. It's uncertain what took place during those years other than his marriage to his third wife ended in divorce sometime in the late 1930s.

During the late thirties and early forties Charlie periodically stayed with his sister Bessie's family and his brother Tom's family. Charlie died of a stroke in his sleep, April 15, 1945 while he was visiting with his brother Tom and his family. Charlie's final resting-place is next to his father, James Fountain Cooper, in the Holt Cemetery, Holt, Florida.

*Compiled By: Miles Davis Cooper, grandson of Charles Robinson Cooper.
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