



John Jordan Cooper with wife and two youngest children c1887

JOHN JORDAN COOPER

May 20, 1820 – Jan. 11, 1892

John Jordan Cooper was born in Georgia but during his early years moved, with his family, into the Florida Territory in the 1830s. He moved twice more before finally settling in 1856, next to a basin off the Blackwater River, in Santa Rosa County, Florida. John and his wife Louisa raised their ten children at the Homestead and over time the basin was officially named Cooper Basin.

John was born May 20, 1820, in Pulaski County, Georgia. His father, Washington Arnold Cooper, was born circa 1798 in Georgia and his mother Nancy was born circa 1792 in South Carolina. Based on the 1830 Federal Census for Thomas County, Georgia, Washington and Nancy had three sons and one daughter. John Jordan Cooper was the firstborn, followed by his sister and two younger brothers. Between 1830 and 1836, Washington moved his family from Thomas County, Georgia, to Jackson County, Florida. Recorded in the 1840 Federal Census for Jackson County, Florida, are John, his parents, and his sister; no record is listed for his two younger brothers. It is unknown where the two younger son where. They may have died or were staying with other relatives.

In 1845, Florida was admitted as a state and consequently compiled a voters' registration list. W. A. Cooper (Washington A. Cooper) is listed as a registered voter for the precinct headquartered at John William's house in Roguetown community, Jackson County, Florida. In 1848, Holmes County was formed from portions of Jackson and Walton Counties. It is possible that Washington did not move his family but that the county boundaries changed around them, for in the 1850 Federal Census for Holmes County it is recorded that John was a twenty-six-year-old farmer born in Georgia. Also listed were his father, Washington A. Cooper, as a fifty-two-year-old millwright born in Georgia and his mother, Nancy Cooper, as a fifty-eight-year-old born in South Carolina.

Sometime during this time John met Louisa Slay, a young girl who lived just across the county line in Washington County, Florida. Louisa was born

February 12, 1835, in Henry County, Alabama. She was the sixth of ten children born to William Slay from North Carolina and Selimea Thompson Slay from South Carolina. It is not known when or where John and Louisa met but their families lived in close proximity to each other so it is possible that they met at a church meeting or some other social event. John married Louisa sometime in 1851 when Louisa was sixteen years old and John was thirty-one. Their first child, Henry Moses (Mose) Cooper, was born February 14, 1852, in Holmes County, Florida. Between 1852 and 1855, John and Louisa either moved their family or were staying with Louisa's parents because John and Louisa's second child, William Erasmus Cooper, was born December 21, 1855, in Washington County, Florida.

In the spring of 1856, John and his family moved by horse and wagon to Santa Rosa County, a weeklong journey. In May of 1856, John and his family settled next to a basin off the Blackwater River, which today is named Cooper Basin. Their Homestead encompassed the eastern portion of the calm water in the basin, which was ideal for floating their harvested trees up or down the river to the various sawmills along its banks. During that year, John and his father built, on their Homestead, a large house, a stable, a crib, and a blacksmith shop. They had farmed as much as forty acres during one year. The old Cooper Cemetery is located near the eastern border of the homestead property and the old stagecoach line cut through the southern part of his property.

John Jordan Cooper was farmer and timber man. The only time that he served in the military was in the US Army during the Indian Wars; he did not serve on either side during the Civil War and based on documentation was loyal to the Union. After the Civil War, he had a prominent role in the Reconstruction Government in Santa Rosa County. On September 25, 1867, John Jordan Cooper registered to vote in Santa Rosa County. He was voter #23 and his father, Washington A. Cooper, was voter #22. In 1867, John Jordan Cooper received a gubernatorial appointment to the Reconstruction Government in Santa Rosa County. This appointment was only awarded to loyal U.S. citizens who could prove that they had not been involved with the Confederate rebels. John was re-elected to the post of Commissioner in the Reconstruction Government when his term expired on November 2, 1868, and elected a third time on February 8, 1872. On September 1, 1874, John Jordan Cooper was re-appointed by the Governor of Florida to the Santa Rosa County Reconstruction Government and then was either re-elected or possibly re-appointed to the Reconstruction Government on August 25, 1876. With the end of Reconstruction in Florida, John Jordan Cooper was removed from office on January 8, 1877, along with other prominent white Republicans: John A. McDuffie, William W. Potter, and Hannibal Rowe. In 1879, John and Louisa's tenth and last child, Joseph Franklin Cooper, was born. Of the ten children born to John and Louisa between 1852 and 1879, the last eight were born and raised at the Cooper Basin Homestead. Their children's names were: Henry Moses Cooper, 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. John and his family were devout members of the Mt. Olivet Branch of the Reformed Latter Day Saints Church in Santa Rosa County, Florida. John was

also one of the elders and an ordained minister of the church.

John died during the flu epidemic of 1892, as did one of his sons, two grandsons, two daughters-in-law, and his mother-in-law Selimea Thompson Slay. John's final resting-place is in the old Cooper Cemetery near Cooper Basin, east of Milton, Florida.

Compiled by: Miles Davis Cooper, GG grandson of John Jordan Cooper.

Updated November 2002