

Caleb Calvin Cooper Journal Transcript

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2007.110 Caleb Calvin Cooper Family History Collection: Journal transcription

[Caleb C. Cooper: born March, 1874, married Mary A Cooper Sept 26, 1900; this history written about 1961; died October 1961]

To any one this may concern:

I, C. C. Cooper, have been asked by the (my) children to write down what I can remember about the Coopers for future reference.

I am not a writer by any means, and am at this writing 87 years old and cannot remember as well as I once could and a lot of this dates back well over a hundred years (in fact near 150 years), so some of this data may not be exactly correct as to dates, and then the events may not come along as they happened.

I hope that what I write may be of interest.

I have left several pages for Index. But I will also write an Index to which I can refer while I am writing these items because I may forget what I have written before I finish.

**Elijah Cooper** (*b 1806; died 1850, Frederick, VA*)

The Joshua Cooper family Bible which Pete (Philip C. Cooper) now has will give you data on the Elijah Cooper family, but I don't think it goes into details so I will add something.

He (Elijah Cooper), an Englishman, married a Miss [Mary] Hotzenpillar (German). The above mentioned Bible will give you the details of that union.

When his first wife died, he, Elijah Cooper, married again. (I have forgotten her maiden name). To this union one son was born; his name was Philip Cooper. This second wife outlived him and in due time she got married to a man named Omps. To that union there was born to my knowledge only one son and his name was Ben Omps.

**Philip Cooper**

I know very little of him, only that he married and moved to Byron Illinois which is probably a suburb of Chicago. I have seen him only once when he came east with his oldest son. He had several children, but, I do not know names.

**Jonah Cooper**

Jonah Cooper was the oldest son of Elijah Cooper by his first wife. Therefore he was much older than Joshua. (Neither of them had a middle letter in their name) because there was 8 or 10 children born between them.

I don't know the year but they both (Jonah and Joshua) went to Baltimore in search for work and they both got a job with the Franklyn Davis Nursery Co. and no wonder, for Jonah was near 6 feet tall, raw boned and almost a giant, and Joshua was only about 5 ft 6 or 8 inches high, but what a body he had on him, he was as strong as an ox and didn't know his strength. The Davis Co. sent Jonah to Richmond, VA, where their main nurseries were. Joshua was sent to Surry Co. Virginia, where the company had a large orchard. I would say there was over 1,000 acres in Peach, Apple and Pear trees.

But I will dwell on Joshua later. I don't know how long it was, but, after several years they moved their nurseries to Baltimore and vicinity, but, Jonah did not go with them. He bought some ground. I don't know whether it was the same he had been working on or not. Anyway he started a dairy farm.

Neither do I know just where or when he met Miss Virginia Davis (of White Haven MD). Anyway, they got married, then came the question where would they live. They figured that his holdings in Richmond was worth about \$5,000. They also figured that the Davis farm was worth about \$5,000 and Virginia was the only heir (her father was dead).

The outcome was that he sold his farm in Virginia and built a \$5,000.00 house on a farm that [was] not really his. (The worst step he ever made, for his farm was taken into the city limits of Richmond and in a short time would have sold for a half million dollars.)

It was not long before he saw his mistake.

### **Albina Cooper Richards**

Albina Cooper was the oldest child of Elijah Cooper and married a Mr. Richards and from what I could gather, he was a fine man. They only had one child, a girl Lula by name.

Albina, after her husband's death, stayed on the farm (her husband's). She had a hired man named Mr. Brill.

Lula got a college education and became a School Teacher and was very successful and taught in several states. Saved her money and bought property in every place she taught.

She had the misfortune to stick a rusty nail in her foot and died with lockjaw.

She, Aunt Bina as we all called her, married a man from the west (I forget his name) but he was a widower with several grown sons. And it seems as if it was a bad move for it turned out that all they (the father and sons) wanted was what she had in the way of money. By the way one of the sons was a very shrewd lawyer.

There will be more about him in connection with Joshua Cooper.

### **Ben Omps** [b. 8/18/1831; d. 1/13/1893, Frederick County VA]

Ben Omps was the son of Elijah Cooper's second wife.

All I know of him is that he turned out to be quite shrewd as a business man, for when I first became acquainted with him, he owned considerable property such as some of the following

An apple orchard of well over 1,000 acres on what was called Iron Mountain.

A grist mill of considerable size in which was ground corn, wheat, buckwheat, etc.

And he had so many horses (he told me he had no real idea how many). They were raised on over a dozen farms something like this. On one he would have his brood mares, another one had only weaned colts. Second one year olds, a third 2 years old and so on each farm a different kind or grade.

All of his barns was built (as far as practical) alike, built on a hill side. The barn proper was filled with hay and other kinds of horse feed, below the barn floor was a basement where the horses went in on the lower level and there was a big hay rack that was filled from above.

He had men who visited each farm at least twice a week. His home farm would be hard for me to describe as (I) was there only once and spent a week.

He had 12 children, all girls, and each one had a special job on the farms.

One the oldest was a School Teacher. One would have full charge of the hogs, one the sheep, one the stable and they worked on the farm like men (of course there was no cars, trucks at that time, everything was done by horse power. He called them Fellows and I can tell you it was a smart bunch.

I will refer to this family later.

### **George A. Savedge**

George Savedge lived in Surry County, VA at Alliance P.O. and ran a general country store. You will here more of him in connection with Cobham Wharf. Everyone called him Captain because he was appointed as Captain in the volunteer cavalry they organized at Surry.

I can't remember Captain Savedge's wife's maiden name, only that her given name was Hannah and as fine a woman as could be. They had 6 sons (Nicholas, Henry, Douglas, Joel, Runy). I don't remember the wives of any but Joel and Runy.

Joel married Annie Berryman, the daughter of George Berryman, owner of Cedarfields Farm.

Runy married Virginia Edwards, daughter of Mr. (Ting) Edwards, clerk of Surry County.

Virginia is now Clerk of the County.

I will mention Capt. Savedge in connection with Cobham Wharf.

### **Free or Freeborn Slaves**

To explain how and why these slaves were free I will have to go back in the 1700 era while the country was in the hands of England.

Who ever was King at the time gave away great land grants to the Englishmen who came over here, but, when they began to take possession, they didn't have the whare with all to till the land ore build homes. So, the story goes, they had to sell off their land in sections called Plantations of various sizes from 1,000 acres to a great deal more.

These Plantations were also in the most part sold to Englishmen, real Aristocrats, and they are the first who bought slaves to farm these Plantations. Sometimes they had quite a few for the land had to be cleared from the original forrest. Also, the ladies bought slaves to do their housework.

But from what I can learn there was very few slaves sold, and, they were as a rule treated well and as things progressed there was a surplus, because they were multiplying quite fast. So some of the land owners gave their slaves papers of freedom (the married ones). Also allowed them to build cabins and furnished land for family. The woods was full of small game and some deer. So they were well fixed. All of the children they raised were called Freeborn.

At the time Pop came to Chestnut Farm, with the exceptions of 5 or 6 white men, used these Free Slaves.

They wanted to call Pop Masser, but, he would not have it and told them to call him boss.

From that time on they would do anything for him.

**Joshua Cooper (Pop) (b. 1845)**

Pop was hired by Franklin Davis Nursery Co. of Baltimore. This was about 1860 and he was sent to Chestnut Farm, Surry Co., VA.

He was supposed to be just a helper any place he would fit in, he was water boy for the farm help, he was helper in the kitchen.

There were 5 or 6 white men and one of them was married and she (his wife) was cook. (I will enlarge on this family because they will be mentioned later. His name was Thomas M. Lyons and originally hailed from Lynn Mass, his wife was born near Bacons Castle and before she was married her name was Masoura Illinoise Moody.)

She could not do the cooking and house keeping, so Pop had a lot of helping to do and in a short time took over and did it all, as Mrs. Lyons began to raise quite a large family. She had 3 boys and 3 girls, and it might interest you to know that the youngest girl Somaline was born the same day ([as] I, CCCooper) March 9<sup>th</sup> 1874 and she married a Mr. Cofer and her only son was Clyde Cofer who you know.

Since I began I have some more information. Chestnut Farm was purchased from Susan R. Watkins in 1860 by Franklin Davis and Benjamin F. Wilson, who operated it as Old Dominion Fruit Growing Company.

So you can see that Pop was sent there by Franklyn Davis of Baltimore quite soon after the place was purchased. It seems as if that, from the first that Ben Wilsons (as Pop called him) wife did not like it at Chestnut Farm.

He, Wilson being resident owner had to live there and Mrs. Wilson seemed to be very much out of place there, and, as Pop often told me she did every thing in her power to discourage her husband, in fact did anything she could wheather it was honest or not to cause the enterprise to be a failure, which she finally accomplished and Wilson sold out his share to Davis who lived in Baltimore.

That was the time Davis had to select a man to take Wilsons place.

Pop was selected as Boss of the place, not much to the liking of the older men who were all much older than he.

It was not very far from Chestnut Farm to Bacons Castle the largest store (they had a commissary on the place where the help got their groceries and other necessaties) but they sold other things including strong drink.

It was a custom for pretty near of all the males to go there (Bacons Castle) every Saturday evening and it usually wound up with the most of them, both black and white getting drunk and I suppose that Pop also imbibed but he told me that he never got over loaded, but, one Saturday night on the way home with the crowd, he came to him self when the whole lot of them were staggering down the road each with a bottle of drink, drinking out of each others bottle, both black and white for some had Brandy some had whiskey.

He said to him self, this is the most disgusting thing I ever saw, I will never take another drink (and he did not). In a short time he joined the Methodist Episcople Church (Hebron) at Bacons Castle.

About this time the north and south were locking horns and fighting were all around.

One insident I want to mention here was that Mr. Davis sent a lot of strawberry plants down from Baltimore (Wilsons Albany) was the name of them and a most remarkable berry (Pop told me he had tried for over

twenty (20) years to get some more like them, he could get berries by that name, but the quality was not the same. They were so red they were almost black and very juicy. Still they were quite firm. I will tell you how firm later and taste was unsurpassed.

Now they had to get a market for those berries. By that time all roads leading north (to Petersburg) were blocked. Some places by Southern troops and some places by Northern troops and it was next to impossible to get through.

This was before the day of berry basket[s] as we know it today.

Pop said he had to make quart boxes out of thin lumber, one for each picker, then he made bushle boxes nester style \\_/\_/ end view \\_/\_/ about the same shape on the sides. Those berries were picked in the qt boxes dumped into the bushle boxes loaded on (Four mule) wagon with out springs.

He (Pop) drove the wagon him self and succeeded in running the blockade to Petersburg at night. When he got there he scooped the berries up in one of his hand made boxes and sold them at a ready market (the customer furnishing some thing to put them in).

He told me time and again that those berries were still firm but dripping in juice that looked like blood, and he declared that the taste was delicious such as he had never tasted before or since. So much for the Wilson Albiny strawberries.

It was not very many days after that when he with all of the other men on the place were summoned to be at Surry to be mustered into the Southern army the next day.

But when the next day came he was out of the state or well on his way. As soon as it was dark he strolled down to the river, picked up a small boat and headed for Pennsylvania and he stayed for two or three years untill it was safe to come back and the war was over.

Of course after the war every man had to reregister and allege allegence to the north and Pop was chosen, because he was a northern sympathiser as the first register and he had quite a time because of the Auristocrats who had lost their slaves. They marched back and forth before the place whare they had to sign the book and some of them said they would wade through blood before they would sign allegence to the Yankees.

Pop told them sign or they could not eaver vote if they did not. When the night of the first day came and the books were closed for the day he said that several came to him and asked if he thought it was safe to go home alone and offered an escort for him.

He told them he could row his own canoe.

This about closes his story for the time. I will leave this space in case I think of something else.

In the year about 1871 or 2 he married Miss Sarah Malerna Thompson and set up house keeping in a small house on what now is Rout #10 from Norfolk to Richmond. The place was called California and at this place I was born in March 1874. It was also the place whare the horse kicked me on the head before I was two years old.

The next step I remember was when he was living at Jones Wharf, it was at this place that he and Uncle Jonah who was down from Richmond had occasion to row across the James River one cold day to attend to some business. Well that night it turned awfully cold and the whole of James River was frozen from shore to shore in less than a week.

Uncle Jonah went home to Richmond by train from Williamsburg and wrote Mom that the river was frozen and that Pop could not get home until it thawed, but, the river boat being the regular mail route the letter was delayed several days. In the mean time Mom was in a fix, not knowing even if they had gotten across before it froze up, and, even at that age I can remember her going out to the Pier head of the wharf every day leading me by the hand and carrying Cookman in her arms and scan the ice floes that were piling up on Chipooks or Cobham bay house high with timbers and boats scattered about in the heap. She must have been thinking that every boat or piece of timber was the boat or part of the boat Pop had lift in, But, finally she got the letter some way, and was then she was at ease until one night just before dawn Pop came hobbling in with a broken leg. He had ridden a mule across the river and when he was within 20 ft of our shore the mule slipped down and caught his leg under him.

The next real thing I remember was when Ruth was born, and that was in a small 1 ½ story house about 16 by 20 or 24 with a lean to shed for a kitchen at the place where Tom Rowell now lives.

The incidents of what transpired between dates (about 2 years) was something [like] this.

Pop (I think) operated the wharf handling the freight, tending two (2) Government light houses which I will describe later.

The wharf was owned by Mr. Junius Jones, who also owned Pleasant Point and he ran a small store and sold strong drink. Think he got his supply from the steamer that stopped there every day.

About 1878 there was a lumber firm out of New York came down here and bought a tract of timber in what they called Binnses (it was beautiful first growth pine measuring 12 to 16 or more inches on stump straight as an arrow and over 100 ft tall.

They made some sort of bargain in which Jones was to furnish the wharf, build a (tram) or Bogy track. I don't know who was to cut the wood (it was to be cut four (4) ft long and quartered) and deliver to track. But, Pop was to furnish team and hard wood to the wharf some 8 or 9 miles.

The wood was cut panned and dried and some 100 or more cords hauled to the wharf and ranked in yard just in position to run down hill to pier when the vessel came for it, I am not sure but one or more ship loads might have been sent off.

Now to go back track a little.

On Aug 9 1879 Mr. Jones sold Pleasant Point and I suppose Jones Wharf also to Mr. F Younglove with the verbal understanding that the wharf be used to handle the wood shipment.

Mr. Jones and Mr. Younglove seemed to be quite good friends (I don't know whether the fact that Jones sold strong drink had anything to do with it or not but probably did). Any way it seems as if Mrs. Younglove did not enter into the close friendship between the two men.

Mr. Younglove died quite suddenly and even before he was interred Mrs. Younglove met the mule drivers who were hauling wood at the gate where they entered the then Younglove property and refused to let them enter and no manner of persuasion would not change her mind.

Now there must have been some cause for this, for she (Mrs. Younglove) could not gain anything by the deal, for she held out to the last (as there were no written or recorded agreement as to the delivery of wood across the property).

(See the necessity of having such agreements recorded.)

The up shot of it all was that the remainder of the wood (the pretti est lot of wood I ever saw) rotted in the woods whare it was penned.

I don't know who lost or how much they lost, only that Pop lost every thing he had (He was sold out lock, stock & barrell) except a 33 1/3 acre of wood land whare he at once began to build a house (that is whare he is burried).

I suppose he write Mr. Franklyn Davis of his troubles and he wrote him to come to Baltimore and he had a job for him.

He got his house closed in and rinted it to Mr. P. O. Goodrich and moved to Baltimore for two years (that would be 1882 & 1883).

Mr. Davis or Franklyn Davis Nursery Co. as they were known had just leased a farm at a place, Carsville on the B & O RR just four (4) miles out of Baltimore (it was a flag station for passengers on all local trains).

It was quite a large farm with large house and several big Red Barns. The object was to grow young fruit trees. The first year 1882 practically the whole place was planted in young stock, by that I mean seedlings about 8 to 12 in high of Pear, Apple, & Peach & some Cherry.

The second year all of these young trees had to be budded with buds from the desired varieties and then the very careful and exacting work began. Every variety had to be marked with plain stobs and as a precaution in case a stob was distroyed in any way or the name faded or blotted.

All of the fields had to be catalogued begining on one side stating how many rows of each varieties and in cause of small lots, how many hundred or thousands of each kind. This was very essential because he would not sell any tree he could not guarantee the name of. Such mixed trees had to be burned.

In the process Pop became an expert in budding (they did no grafting), in fact he had complete charge of the whole farm. In the process of budding it generaly took two men and a boy, the boy going a head with a hoe about 4 inches wide (the trees were about 6 in apart) and raking dirt away from seedling. After he had done the raking he had to come back and rub each seedling off with his hand, so it would be ready for the budder. The budder came next, he carried scions or limbs or twigs from which he cut his buds (they had to be carried in a damp cloth to keep them from drying out, the budder had a special knife with a blade like this /\_\_\_\_\_/ . Generaly stationary but sometimes they would close like a pocket knife. This was his method. He made a cross on the front side of the stalk as they called them. He flipped up the corners and shoved the bud in from the top (every stalk had to be growing or it could not be budded). The buds were cut some thing like this His knife had to be sharp as a brier so as to make a clean cut. The front of the bud looked some thing like this. It cut upward but not cut off. After the upward cut which took some wood, a cross cut was made and the bark only was pealed off leaving the wood on the scion. This in turn was placed in the cross cut of the stalk and shoved down. The bud was approximately an inch long.

After the budder came the ties. He used a piece of raffia about a foot or 14 in long according to the size of the stalk. He began at the bottom wrapping tight all but the eye or the bud (the dirt was then pulled back around the stalk). This stayed like that for two weeks, if it had not taken as they called it, by that time it never would. So you see it was a very particular job also expensive if not done right.

You see all trees that were not groing and could not be budded. Also those budded and did not take was a total loss, for if things went well there should not be enough to bother with.

Now for some of the incidents at Carsville

There was ditch that crossed the place (some 8 or 10 ft wide and generally with quite a bit of water in it). We boys, Cookman and I, often played along its banks. Now there were some large willow trees also growing along the banks and we often climbed them as boys will. One day we were up one of the largest ones and of course trying to see how far we could get out on the limbs and just as we were about at our limit just passed a dead snag and directly over the water. We herd a terrible humming and buzzing and looked back to find that snag covered with great big bumble bees and more coming (they had a nest in the heart of the tree and we were trespassing).

They began to sting and we began to hollow and Pop who were not so far away yelled turn loose and drop and we did just that for the bees lost us but we got one of [the] best duckings you ever saw. Of course Pop was there to drag us out, but, as it was, in less than an hour we were swelled up every where the bees could get in a sting.

We went to school at a small school house on the main road from Baltimore to Washington, which was about ¼ mile from Carsville. Our trouble was we were aliens to those tough dutch boys who also went to school there. They treated us like little dogs and we could do little about it. It got so bad that Pop had to go see the teacher. Now he was named Mr. Mitchell and lived in Washington and transmuted on train that passed our place about 5:30 and could be flagged. So he told Pop if we would wait for him he would come along with us, so that ended that trouble.

About this time Pops job [at] Carsville was about finished and we were ready to return to Surry. So our house hold effects were shipped so as cargo on a ship going up James River and the family was going by steamer (Old Bay Line). When we got to the dock in Baltimore we were told that James River was frozen and we would not be able to get through that way. So we went back to Carsville and waited a week or more in the bare house using straw or canvass for a bed. Finally ~~Pop decided to go to Washington and get a train.~~ No (I beg your pardon) He decided to take B & O which passed there every day and got as far as Richmond. There found that James River was open and had no trouble finishing our trip, but, it was a long time before the sailing ship with our house hold goods got through.

In the mean time Mr. P.O. Goodrich who had rented Pops unfinished house, had his home near enough done so he could vacate. So we could come in. So that brought us up to January 1884.

From that time things moved along slowly, Pop working on his home mostly by him self. This will be the first time he will settle down to really live. Here to fore he has lived only two years at any one place.

As I stated this 33 1/3 acres was in woods, and the job now was to get it cleared and planted. He not only did this and ditched it, he also built quite a large barn which served also as a stable for the horses and cows. All of this he did mostly by him self. Almost as fast as he cleared land he planted it in fruit trees. By the time he got the place well started he planted apple and peach seed and raised his own seedlings and started a sizable nursery of his own. He manage to seed practicaly all of the trees he could grow.

Claremont in the northern part of the county was being settled by northern and western people and they were always a reday market for good young fruit trees (he did a good business at this). In the mean time he took the agency for the Singer Sewing Machine Co which he kept for many years. That was his main occupation coupled with huckstering. (He raised his own vegetables, fruits, etc. for which he had a ready sale at Dendron head quarters for the big saw mill which cut timber in all of the surrounding counties.

Aside from all of this he was always in public office of some sort. He was Justice of the Peace for several years.

When the Republicans were in power he was as a rule Postmaster at Surry C.H. and when the Democrats were in power he had no trouble to get a mail rout, generally from Surry to Smithfield.

I will mention some of his sayings and doings.

Once there was a full grown bull that was trespass in some way and no one else seemed to be able to do anything with it, so Pop took a hand. He managed to get a good hand holt on the bulls tail and the fun began. The animal bolted for the woods, and from reports the chasted about a half hour and when it ended the bull was on the ground with Pop still holding the tail but, the story goes that all the clothes he had left was the collar band of his shirt.

Then one time Pop herd a comotion out around the chicken house which was some distance from the house with a five foot wire fence around it but there was an apple tree beside the fence. Pop went out in a hurry, grabbed hold of a limb of the tree and volted over and landed on a man in the dark and quite a scuffle ensued, for the man of course wanted to get away unrecognized and Pop did not want him to. Of course, Pop won out, it was a colored man who lived about a half mile away named Reddick Robinson. He was supposed to be one of the upper tens among the colored people. He had rung the necks of 8 nice fat hens and had them in a sack. What did Pop do with him, proscute him, no, he let him off by makeing [him] pay 50 cts each for the hens and promising never to steal from any one ever again. If he did and Pop herd of it he would proscute him. Any way we got chicken to eat and Reddick did not.

Once when Mom and Winfred were down to Pops for a visit (Winfred was quite a good sized boy he thought so any way). When Saturday afternoon came Pop gave Winfred a nickle and told him to go to town (Surry) and have a good time.

And then there was the time Pop got his hand cut off in fodder cutter.

The cutter was in the barn loft and it was run by a belt to a gasoline engine in the rear of the barn. It was a rainy day and we had fun at it (cutting fodder) several hours and was about done and ready to stop when Uncle Bill Matthews came up and wanted to see how the cutter worked. The last bunch of corn stalks were gone and the only thing he could find left was a bunch of hay. So he, Pop, put the hay on the table of the cutter and began to feed it to the blades (all of the time they were talking). The hay being short and timber would not feed readily and he got his fingers too close to cutters and they grabbed his hand and began to chop it off an inch at the time. I ran for the string we had to stop the engine. Budd Minns (colored man) threw the belt from the pulley, but of course neither stopped the momentum of the cutter, but Pop did the trick by striking the leaver that controlled the feed (with his other hand). By that time he arm was just (13) inches shorter. Still his wrist was clamped between the rollers and we were prizing with crow bar to release, when Pop thought of what we had all forgot in the commotion, the reverse feed leaver. As soon as he was free he began to give orders. (All during the amputation he had not raised his voice in any way.) To one he said hitch a horse to buggy and get me to the doctor. To another he said tie a string as tight as you can around my arm above the elbo. His first command had been go get the doctor and before he was out of sight is when he said hitch horse to buggy I can get to doctor before he can get to me. He ordered a bucket of water. By that time buggy was ready and he was in it. He jammed his injured hand in the water.

Before he got off he turned to me and said don't forget about carrying those grapes to meet the boat, don't be late. (What a nerve) The doctor had to almost force him to take a day off and not use that arm.

Then there was the time he cut a 3 in gash in his leg. (That was after I had come to Maryland.) He told Ruth to get a needle and thread and sew it up. She refused, said she could not, he said I guess you are not so bad off you can't thread the needle are you. I will do it my self and he did and with one hand.

In Pops huckstering he managed to pick up quite a lot of eggs in trade which he shipped. Now this was before we had the card board eggs crates. The crates were made of pine lumber and was quite bungle some, so Pop shipped his in bbls generally sugar barrels because they were larger. Eggs were pocaked in oats or cut hay and to show you how good he packed them, one day he was late getting to the wharf (Scotland) and the bogy had left the shore and he had to roll his barrels of eggs all of the way to the pier head several hundred yards, but he never broke an egg.

### The Thompson Farm and Family

You will note on my make shift of a map that the Thompson Farm was quite large, several hundred maybe a thousand acres.

The house which was quite large was situated on a hill nearly or quite a mile from the rout which was then the stage coach rout from Norfolk to Richmond. Now it is Rout #10 on all maps. I am going to try to draw a diagraph of the yards.

Swine pens	This is a yard that	Barns		
Barns	everything entered	Shelters	All of the out buildings	You must remember
Barns		Stables	were of logs	that there [were] no
Meat House		More stables		automobiles, tractors
		Carriage house		or any motors of
				any kind
House	Porch	Front yard	.	Approach
				to yard

(The dots are large wild locust trees)

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Route # 10

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Now as to how all of this Farm or Plantation was cared for – ploughed (by hand), planted, harvested, I do not know. But I am convinced that they must have had slaves, for eaven in my day these women that served and worked around the house and I think they were slaves that had rather stay and work than leave.

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There was one I will mention because I personally knew her. She was about the age of Uncle Bobs (as we called him) boys. A nice looking girl. She was the daughter of one women who stayed there (Dilsey was her name). She lived, ate, and played around with the boys as there was no girls untill she was in her teens and one day Uncle Bob said to Pop, Quote Josh I hate to do it, for she is just as one of us here, but it is not right to keep her here on account of her age and fear of sectional trouble later. So I will have to find her a good home some whare (and he did untill she growed up and married). Now if there were women slaves there must have been men also to help do all of that work.

### The Family

Now as to how all of this Farm or Plantation was cared for – ploughed (by hand) – I do not know. But I am convinced that they must have had slaves for eaven in my day there women that served the and worked around the house and I think they were slaves that had rather stay and work than leave.

### Wm H. Thompson, Sr.

I don't remember his wife or when she died. The old gentleman was ploughing in the field one day when there was a severe electrical storm. When the storm came up he unhitched the horse from the plough by unfastening the home string as was the custom in those days and stripping the harness off and went for shelter. After the storm was

over and the sun was shining he returned to the field, and as he stooped to pick up the harness from the plough beam there was a crash of thunder and simultaneously lightning which killed him instantly, also the horse.

The remainder:

Susan married R.C. Downer

Patsy “ Tom Bennett

Sarah “ Joshua Cooper

Maggy “ Tom Matthews

Robt. C.

Wm Jr. killed in war

### **Robt C. Thompson**

Uncle Bob to me, I did not know his wife or her name.

They had two sons, Robt A and Wm (Billy). Uncle Bob was the sole custodium of the farm and wheather any of the others got any financial benefit from the estate is a closed book to me.

He farmed the place as long as he lived and I am not sure but I am understand[ing] that Robt A (he died early) and Billie inherited it, I am not sure. Billy built a house on the road just north of the home place. He, Uncle Bob, seemed to be one of the leading men in the community.

### **Susan Thompson**

Aunt Sue to me. She went to New York State, I think it was to Poukipsee. Any way it was in Ulster County during the war and got a job of miliner and did very well.

It seams as if Seven (7) Sons all in one family, fell in love with her at one time, and of the seven, Richard C. Downer (Uncle Richard to me) turned out her favorate and she married him, and there was so much strife that Uncle Richard and Aunt Sue came to Surry Co. for refuge.

Uncle Richard got work with Mr. Nicholas Savedge, the owner of Fair View plantation much more than a thousand acres in size. At his death he willed him (Uncle Richard) several hundred acres of land with house and out buildings all of logs. You will learn more of him another heading. They had no children.

### **Patsy Thompson & Thomas Bennett**

(Aunt Patty to me) married a fine looking man by the name of Thomas Bennett. They had two (2) girls and (3) three boys.

Tom Bennett owned quite a sizable farm just across the road from [where] Tom Rowell now lives. He was the neatest farmer I ever saw and very successful. His fences were always in good shape and well built. His rows in the field was the straitest, his horses the slickest. In fact every thing was as neat as a pin.

The children I think as they came were Lilly, she married a Mr. Downer (Uncle Richards nephew); Jack, I don't think he married; Lucy. she married Ben Seward; Bob – he married a Miss Seward; Frank – don't know wheather he married.

As the years passed he (Tom Bennett) got restless and wanted to live in town. So he went to Surry and purchased a liquor store (one of the worst things he could have done).

From that time things began to change, his farm ran down and, worst of all, his disposition. He would come home nearly [every] evening under the influence of drink, family life was totally disrupted, he insisted on eating at the table by him self and had to be waited on like a king. If what was served him did not suit his fancy he gave it a toss out of the window, and a lot of stuff like that. Some times he would get his shot gun and clear the house be it day or night, rain or shine, and the family had to hide out of doors in the barn, stable or sometimes the fodder stack in the field.

When one of his sprees was over, he would take [his] wife in the buggy (there were no cars in those days) and they would drive all over the neighbourhood and she would tell every one how nice a man Tommy was, how good he treated her and the children. Now she did this at his comand eaven while every one knew it was a lie.

It went on from bad to worse untill one night they brought him home dead or they thought he was. They got the neighbours over (Pop was one of them). They shaved and shrouded him and went home for the night, but low and behold, before morning Tommy began to wiggle his toes and they had him on their hands for several more years and those years were years of drunken revelry before he was shrouded for good.

I think one thing should be mentioned here. I don't think there is any doubt but what his son Robert or (Bob) was conceived while he, Tommy, was under the controll of strong drink, for, he never walked as other people, but, in all his play as a boy and work as a man, he staggered or reeled all the time.

### **Maggy Thompson**

Aunt Maggy to me. She married William Matthews and there were (4) children, 2 girls and 2 boys, Lena, Mamie, Earnest, Bob. I can't remember who any of them married.

Uncle Bill was a farmer but never owned a farm of his own. He farmed for several years on the Thompson farm. He was not very prosperous. When he had money they lived in splendor. When they had none they lived on sow belly (the cheapest of meat) and corn pone.

I know because I tried it, but I will mention it else whare.

### **C C Cooper** (*Caleb Coleman Cooper; son of Joshua Cooper; b. 3/9/1874; d. 10/1961*)

About every thing of interest before my teens were mentioned along with Pop.

As mentioned Pops doings, he was as a rule Postmaster at Surry when the Republicans were in power and had a mail rt of some sort when the Democrats were in and I was the one that did the major part of the work.

Take the Post Office. Pop was to give or pay for my board and give me 50% of the reciepts.

Surry was a 4<sup>th</sup> class office and the sallerys depended on how much buisness we did. We got 100% of the cancellation, not how many stamps we sold, but, how many letters were mailed and canceled. Then we got so much for each postle note (we don't have them now) or money order we sold. Surry was on the S S & S RR and we had one outgoing mail and one incoming mail each day.

Went out at 7 AM, came in about 1 PM. This train made connection with the Norfolk and Western RR at Wakefield VA. We also had a star rout that went to Smithfield VA leaving at 5:30 AM and getting back any time from 6 to 7 PM.

Also there was a star rout that left in the afternoon as soon as the incoming mail from Wakefield was sorted that went where we lived and Alliance High Gates and to Bacons Castle and return.

I had several experiences while working there. One was the time the mail carrier to Smithfield returned two successive days saying the ice was so bad he could not go through. Only served two post offices out of the five and the Rt.

Pop told him the mail must go through. After quite a lengthy discussion, Pop said I will bet Cale (that is me) can carry it through ice or no ice. Now Whit Dewell who was the regular Driver always drove two kitten mules. They were really small, but all live and as full of the old nick as could be. I decided to go through if it took a week, for 1 dollar per day (a dollar was a lot of money in those days) he (Whit) to furnish the team. I said I would try it on mule back. Whit said neither mule had ever been ridden and were not rough shod (that means they had only smooth shoes with no corks. I said I will try one today and you get that other rough shod for the next trip.

We had at the Post Office a horse back mail sack, it a two small sacks fastened together and stroped to the back of the saddle. With the accumulation of mail I was only to carry first class mail (letters) the first day.

Now it was really cold ice every where, had had a snow then rain and then a big freeze.

This was sort of special occasion and there was quite a crowd out to see [it] off. It [took] three or four men to get that mail bag stroped on. As cold as it was I decided to dress very skimpy for I could fore see all the exercise I needed. When every [thing] was ready I made one big jump and I was in the saddle and the mule was off, jumping and (so the bystanders told me later) kicking strait back with both feet at every jump. I was covering ground, everything went well for about five miles to the first run (Surface Creek). My mule had quieted down by then and refused to walk on the ice. I reasoned I would have to work some trick on the mule. So I retraced back around the corner of the woods and came back this time on a run and he could not stop and made a jump. Slid about ½ way across and down we went on the ice (as I said he was slick shod). By the time the mule got up he was on the wrong side of the run for me, and finally I had to make a detour, but I got across and my mule was getting pretty tame by then, only stubborn. At about fifteen miles we came to the big run where Whit could go no further. This run was so large and so much water. It was only frozen on the edges. I knew I could not get that mule in that water so I made a detour where I [found] a bridge over the deepest water. I had no more trouble that day. On the return trip my mule was so worn out he did most any thing I said. I got back to Surry before 5 P.M. a good two hours ahead of schedule. (But if I ever earned a dollar I earned it that day.) Whit Dewell still said he had another dollar for me to carry the mail another day. By this time weather had moderated and another mule rough shod so he could walk on ice. By the way the last mule had some sence and didn't cause me any trouble. By that time the news got out that I was carrying the mail for 1 dollar a day. So the mail carrier offered me a dollar to carry the mail to Bacons Castle and back. By the way the last day I carried mail to Smithfield it snowed al day and we had over a foot of snow. That is why the other carrier wanted me to go to Bacons Castle. The snow was so deep at High Gates I rode right up on the store porch. I was getting rich. I had 4 dollars and got my pay from the Post Office too. So much for carrying the mail.

No, I had one more experiences. One day the lock to the mail-bag was not securely locked at one of the Post Offices (I don't remember which one) and I lost the lock. So I didn't know what else to do, so I bought a lock for 25 cts (a lot of money in those days) and had each post master to lock bag with it and seal the key in an official Post Office envelop. When I got to the next office I produced the key, the Post Master unlocked bag, took out his mail and relocked bag. This went along OK until I got to Smithfield. There the P.M. (He didn't like me any way) reported me to department in Washington, but they only praised what I did, and after that he liked me less.

About this time (1898) I got acquainted with a very nice girl in Salisbury Md, only thing about her, I didn't like her name. So I proceded at once to see what I could do about it. In the course of time I persuaded her to

change her name from Mary A. Fooks to Mary A. Cooper, and Sept 26<sup>th</sup>, 1900 we were married and went to Surry Va to live.

In the mean time I had bought 13 acres of land from (Uncle) Richard C. Downer.

There was a saw mill on the place and he only charged me for 13 acres @ 10.00 per acre, because the mill sight and saw dust pile covered about 1 acre. This land was just across the road from where Pop then lived (Tom Rowell later bought it because it was situated between the farms of Charley Rowell and Willie Hargrave, both of which he inherited).

Also about this time I settled down to Pump driving and carpenter work, because for this sort of work prices were soaring. A good carpenter (like me) could get 1.00 per day. Work was so plentiful I took on a partner (the dumbest boy as far as education was concerned) I ever saw, but when it came to labor (real back aching work for me) he was a marvel. He told me, you do the planning and paper work. I will do the lifting and he did just that. His name was Felix Goodrich. I did the contracting as well as secured all day work for the two of us and we shared 50-50. We gave such good results that we never got to work for more than 4 or 5 men, namely Charley C. Gowallney, Richard C. Downer, Geo. A. Savedge, Geo R Berryman [and] Tom Judkins, and our work was lined up, some 6 or 8 months ahead (we insisted on doing contract pump driving in the mean time.)

Some of the heaviest work we did was for Charley Gowallney.

When we moved to the Tom Lyons farm from Prince George County first time we built a home for Sawyer. The mill arrived on wagons (we had no gasoline cars or trucks then). Friday P.M. it was set up right in the middle of a very large tract of timber. On Saturday, Sunday the sawyer and family arrived with their belongings on wagons. By 4 A.M. Monday the men were sawing down trees and mill was sawing great trees in to framing & inch bds. Before sun set Monday P.M. Felix and I had the house for the sawyer and family of 6 ready to move in.

You say how did we do it, this is how.

We, Felix and I only drove the nails. We had every peace of framing put in place by some one else. The under pinning was by logs squared cut to length and leveled by some one else. Sills were placed butt on no scarf, every peace of timber was cut by cross cut saw with a brick at each end.

Siding was perpendicular sawed before they were put up, windows and doors were cut out after.

Roofing was 1 in bds from 12 to 14 inch wide, cut to length with joist brokers. No rafters. Big timbers laid 3 ft apart horizontal took their place.

You see house was only for the one stand of timber.

Then we had to build a combined barn and stable for 24 mules, 2 horses and 3 or more cows, but this was put up in good shape as a permanent structer.

Then had to enlarge home that was there temporarily until we could build a new home for him.

His family consisted of He and Wife, two sons, Charles Jr. and Tom. Also a girl he raised Mattie Savedge.

They set a pretty big table. You see 5 in his family, & Felix & I (carpenters always ate their dinner where they worked) (it was an insult to carry a dinner pail when you went to work where any lived) besides this 7 all of the white men that worked in mill or on farm, sometimes a dozen or more, all ate at the same table. When she cooked cabbage which was three or times a week they cooked a joint, eather a ham or sholder. Mrs. Gwaltney and Matty did al of the cooking.

Now that cabbage was good. The meat wasn't wasted for it also was good and all was eaten.

We, Felix and I, worked there nearly eighteen months.

Now a few words about Felix. He was over six feet tall with broad shoulders and really able bodded. He always made his hammer and hatchet handles, because he said the boughten ones was too short he lost a lot of power. He could nail from 12 to 16 higher than I could because his arms was so long. He was so ignorant that at school his teacher asked him what was the capitol of Virginia, he replied James River. Then she asked him where James River was, he said it was every where he had been.

One day he told the teacher he saw a blood Red Yellow bird on his way to school that morning.

The next big job we got was with Tom Judkins. He had cut his own framing for large barn over 12 months ahead and stacked it up in indoors and it was the twistedest stuff you ever saw and if the siding had been up and down we would never have gotten the sides straight, but, we were lucky in having good 5/8 x 6 inch siding, being so narrow and lopping it one inch gave us a good chance to straighten it as we went up.

Then there were six or seven other barns to shingle, all with home made (Rived) shingles as a rule only 4 inches wide.

When we were done (in those days you seldom settled for a job until it was finished unless it ran over a month) he said Caleb do you know why I gave you that job. You remember that last year you shingled a small milk house for my mother when you began. You only used about 8 inches of the shingles, saving the butts to finish at the top of the roof. If you had throwed away that 25 cts worth of shingles, you would not have gotten this job.

Now for a job at Geo A Savedges, It was before the time of the peanut pickers (or thrashers) and peanuts had to be picked from the vines by hand and when a man had as many peanuts as Geo. Savedge (several hundred acres) it was impossible to get them off before the tops of the shocks would get damaged. So he gave me the job of building a shed to store them in. Now this shed had to be of considerable size (the first one was 48 ft by 1200 ft, 12 ft high at the sides and had to [be] built something like this. All uprights were planted in the ground. We built one section at the time, 48 ft wide by 12 ft long

*Post Script*

*Caleb's sons: Philip (Pete) C. Cooper; Director of Public Works, Salisbury MD 1950-1978*

*Rear Admiral Joshua Winfred Cooper; b. 11/25/06 Surry VA; d. 2/21/98 Salisbury MD*

*Dr. William C. Cooper, Orlando, FL*

*Caleb's daughter: Charlotte Cooper Young, College Park MD*

*Caleb's sister: Ruth Dearth, Surry, VA*

### **James River (map of)**

These remarks could not very well be written without the map of James River to show the connections of different places on its banks.

This will only concern the shores between Point Pleasant (just above Grays Creek) to Hog Island or Loins Creek the boulder between Surry Co and Isle of White Co. All of which is in Surry Co VA.

First, James is one of the crookedest River I ever heard of in going from New Port News to Richmond. You will of necessity sail to every point on the compass.

You will notice if you draw a straight line from the two points mentioned above, it will cross the southern point of Jamestown Island.

The main chanel hugged the point of what was then the Peninsular jutting out of the lower point of the Island.

Just at this point was a Red buoy in the day and a red light by night. (I mention this here because it will be mentioned later in connection with Jones Wharf and Pops stay at that place.

You will note there is a very large Bay (Cobham or Chipook Bay) between Chestnut Farm and Hog Island and when the river froze in winter as it often did then, when the ice broke up in the spring and there was a strong wind from the north, the ice would bank or pile up in the bay. Some times as high as 100 ft or more.

So it was next to impossible to keep a wharf or pier in the river on Chestnut nut farm or Mt Ivy farm.

Jones Wharf was the nearest a steamer could get to these farms on account of shol water. But Chestnut Farm also Mt Ivy had small packs of wharfs. Sail boats could handle produce of any kind.