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Major Stephen Cooper dies in Yolo County

The death of Major Stephen Cooper which occurred at the Winters residence of his daughter, Mrs. Wolfskill, marks the terminus of a busy and well spent life, and one full of interest to all Californians and pioneers. We have not enough space to give a full account of all his life but only to submit a few of the interesting points.

Stephen Cooper was born in Madison county, Kentucky, March 10th, 1797. At the age of ten his parents moved to Hancock Bottom, St. Charles county, Missouri, and later moved to Boons Lick, Howard county, Kentucky. He served under his father all through the war of 1812.

In 1822, the Major was one of a company of fifteen who opened the Santa Fe trade. In October 1824, he was married to Melinda Tate of Howard county. Six children were born to them, Mrs. Van Winkle, Mrs. Wolfskill, of Winters, Mrs. Calmes of Colusa, Mrs. Roberts, Sarshel Cooper and Thomas Benton Cooper. On January 1st, 1871, after having lived together 47 years, his good wife died at the age of 72 years.

In 1825, Major Cooper was appointed pilot and captain of a company employed by the United States to lay out a road from the border lines of Missouri to Santa Fe, which they did successfully. He served as a scout all through the Black Hawk War.

In 1838, Governor Boggs of Missouri, later of California, a relative of Len Boggs of Woodland, appointed the Major with Col. Boon and Major Berseford as Commissioners, to mark out and locate the north boundary line of the State of Missouri, and in 1839, he was appointed by President Van Buren as agent for the Pottawattame, Ottawa and Chippewa tribes, with headquarters at Council Bluffs.

In 1844, he was elected to the Legislature of Missouri from Holt county. In the spring of 1845, he joined the John C. Fremont expedition to California. The following letter at that time shows the esteem in which he was held.

Washington City, April 22nd, 1845, - Dear Sir: - Col. Benton tells me that you have accepted an appointment in my party, and I am glad to have with me a man for whom he has so high an opinion, as I have no doubt that on this trip we will need men of the best quality and we must try to have no others. - J.C. Fremont, Capt. U.S. Army.

The following spring, Major Cooper organized a party of his own to come to California. It consisted of his own family and 48 ox wagons with families for settlement. He arrived in Yolo County in 1846. He presided over the first meeting called in California by emigrant population for the purpose of nominating parties to be voted into office.

In 1848, he moved to Benicia and was appointed Alcalde (mayor having judicial powers) by Governor Mason and the first case tried by the California Supreme Court was sent up from his Court, his decisions being sustained.

In the fall of 1849, he was interested in laying out the town of Baltimore, now Knight's Landing.

He died May 16th, at the residence of his daughter, Mrs. Wolfskill, aged 93 years, 2 months and 6 days. He will be buried at Colusa next Monday.