

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XV

2-26-93

No. 4

## DR. DOROTHY O. COOPER

A Tribute



*"What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly,  
to love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?"*  
--The Prophet Micah

Shakespeare through one of his plays speaks as follows: "By medicine life may be prolonged, yet death will seize the doctor too". So it was on January 27, 1993 that Dr. Dorothy O. Cooper of Albion passed away.

Few women locally, if any, have ever touched the lives of so many people as "Doctor Dorothy" as she was affectionally known. She was a gallant presence in the birthing room, beacon of hope to both the afflicted and neurotic and sympathetic intermediary for those entering death's portal. She did justly, she loved mercy and she always walked with a humble spirit. Her life was exemplary, a legacy her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren can be extremely proud of. Most people who remember her, saw her as a physician who always put patient before payment. But there was another side, that of a loving and caring mother and grandmother - sure and steadfast. Not many people have ever gained the height of esteem and respect that Dr. Dorothy O. Cooper enjoyed from both family, friends and the greater community of Orleans County.

Her granddaughters, Jan Downey and Dorothy Distefano wrote as follows: "Grandma was the daughter of two very brave individuals, Rose Belle Katz, of Libau, Germany, and Max Ollswang, from a small town in Russia, who met on a ship bound for freedom. Upon arriving in America, and meeting all the necessary requirements, they were sent to Sag Harbor, Long Island to work in a silver factory. Married and dissatisfied with factory work, they left Sag Harbor and settled in Amagansett, Long Island, where Max opened his own men's store. Grandma was born several years later.

"From Grandma's own notes; Birth certificates were made out by the doctor at his home - on evenings - after long, busy days. What he didn't remember he made up. Hence my birth certificate reads Dora E. Ollswang. The doctor said it was a long process to change a certificate and Dora was prettier than Dorothy so forget it - 'but my parents named me Dorothy and Dorothy it remained.'

"Graduating from high school at 16 years old, Grandma entered The Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania. She graduated 4-years later and after a year of internship, she was an M.D. Her first job was at the Western House of Refuge in Albion, New York (presently known as the Women's Correctional Facility). In Albion she met and married Dr. David G. Cooper. They practiced medicine

together in their home for over 40 years.

"During this time, they cared for people regardless of the ability to pay for their services. Many times they would receive fruits, vegetables, baked goods, and once even a live goat in lieu of payment. After Grandpa's death, all of his patients' bills were thrown away. Grandma continued to practice medicine for 24 years after her husband's death.

"From this marriage 3 children were born: Robert Grant, who died of pneumonia at 1 year, Ann, and Richard. Grandma has 6 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren. She touched all of our lives in very special ways."

As a footnote to this I would mention that Dr. Cooper's birth certificate indicates she was born on April 21, 1894. She married Dr. David Gordon Cooper on June 22, 1919. He died suddenly in late December 1959 and was buried on his birthday January 2, 1960. On November 9, 1969 the Dr. David Gordon Cooper Memorial wing was dedicated in his honor at the former Arnold Gregory Memorial Hospital.

"Dr. Dorothy" finally retired from her practice in 1983 after spending over 66 years in the medical profession. Quite an accomplishment indeed, something few professionals achieve in any field of endeavor.

I remember "Dr. Dorothy" as she and Dr. David Cooper appeared in this photo taken in the mid to late 1950's. I recall that she was always extremely well dressed, never ostentatious but always very tasteful and tailored in appearance. She was therefore not only professional in her job performance but she looked professional. I also recall that her own personalized note paper had a very plain and clever design on it which was simply her initials - DOC

### *What My Gramma Meant To Me*

*My Gramma is gone and now I miss her,  
I'll never get to hug and kiss her.*

*Which makes me feel kind of sad,  
And in a way a little mad.*

*I miss my Gramma very much,  
I miss her love and tender touch.*

*There couldn't have been a nicer trooper  
Than my Gramma Dorothy Cooper.*

*Jessica Downey, age 10  
Great Granddaughter of Dr. Cooper*