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Bethinking of Old Orleans

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MEET
VIRGINIA W. COOPER
HISTORIAN, TOWN OF YATES
and
HISTORIAN, VILLAGE OF LYNDONVILLE

Virginia Cooper, Historian for both the Town of Yates and Village of Lyndonville pursues an active role in compiling historical data for her area of Orleans County. Mrs. Cooper who was born in Yates Center, has lived in the Town of Yates her entire life and now resides in a house she moved to in 1945 on West Avenue in Lyndonville. She is a descendant of Benjamin Barry who settled on the Alps Road in Yates way back in 1816. Indeed, a very early settler in this region. In fact, at that time Yates was part of Ridgeway, not having been formed until 1822. Virginia Cooper's maternal grandfather was Rev. John G. Wirth a Baptist minister who came from Minnesota in the early 1900's to serve the Yates Baptist Church. Her parents were Theodore and Martha Barry Wirth. Virginia is a graduate of Lyndonville High School and was married to the late Benjamin Cooper. Her children are Jerald, Randall and Christine.

Virginia Cooper says "I'm interested in lots of things, it keeps me young." But she also says "The history business is my big interest now". The Lyndonville historian's position was created in 1955. In 1979 Mayor Fred Large appointed Mrs. Cooper to succeed Josie Gracy as historian. The same year, Supervisor George Bane appointed her Town Historian to assume the duties of Janice Register. She has had an interest in history for some time but started taking an active part as a result of the Bi-Centennial. Out of the 1976 Centennials Corporation grew the Yates Historical Society of which she is a charter member. She was also the first President of that group serving two and a half years. She maintains a well-organized filing system with various topics and headings to which she adds clippings daily from the Journal-Register and Lockport paper. The files also include census and cemetery records which she relies on greatly for all the genealogical questions she receives.

Also in her archives are all the original copies of the Lyndonville Enterprise 1906 - 1964. However, a microfilm copy exists in the Mary Smith Memorial Library in Lyndonville.

Recently the Yates Historical Society has purchased a large show case for the Village Hall which Mrs. Cooper uses for changing exhibits relating to Yates or Lyndonville history. Right now for the Christmas Season a collection of antique toys is displayed. Mrs. Cooper hopes that town's people will share their artifacts on a loan basis for displays in this locked cabinet. She is also appreciative of historical items which people may wish to give to her for the Town or Village archives.

As an historian she has occasionally written a column entitled "Olden Days in Yates" which has appeared in the Medina paper. She has also presented a paper on Yates history to the Daughters of American Colonists and has written a short history of Yates for a Lyndonville School publication. Currently Mrs. Cooper is attempting to initiate enough interest at the town level to have three abandoned cemeteries cleaned up. These include the Beecher cemetery on Petrie Road, the Greenman Cemetery on the Greenman Road and the Lott Cemetery on the Angling Road. She indicates that several very early and small cemeteries have been plowed up in years past and that she hopes these three can be cleaned up and made to look more respectable.

Aside from her historian's duties, Mrs. Cooper keeps busy as a seamstress and piano teacher. For many years she was a musician for O.E.S. She is a frequent attendee of the Lyndonville Nutrifare program and served on the advisory committee to get it going in Yates.