

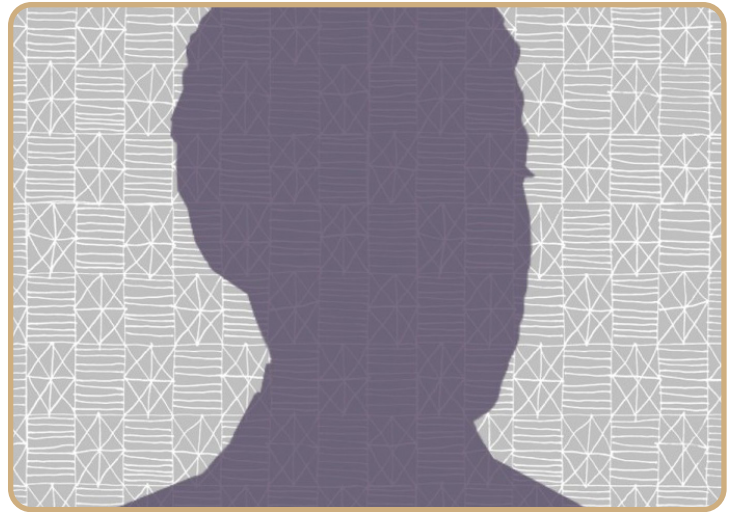
# Albert Cooper

**Author:** Emily Jones Hudson, Story Catcher

**Places:** Richmond, Virginia; Fordham, New York; Gravesend, New York; San Francisco and Sacramento, California

**Birth:** 1850 **Death:** December 20, 1898

**Professions:** Jockey, Trainer, Owner



## Birth, Childhood, Family

Albert Cooper was born during enslavement in Richmond, Virginia in 1850 to Albert and Edias Cooper.<sup>1</sup> He married Emma A. Hodge in 1892; they did not have any children.<sup>2</sup>

## Jockey Experience

Cooper's apprenticeship as a jockey spanned eighteen months for:

- Calvin Green of Fordham, New York
- Colonel David McDaniel of Princeton, New Jersey.

Cooper's jockey career included riding Julina, Oakland, Lady Blessland and Blackbird. Blackbird won the 1867 Paterson Hurdle Race and 1868 Hoboken Hurdle Race.

## Trainer Experience

Cooper became a successful trainer for a number of prominent horse owners, including:

- Joseph Donohue (Sheepshead Bay, Long Island)
- John O'Donnell (New York, New York)
- Secretary J. E. Brewster (Washington Park, Chicago, Illinois)
- Elias Jackson "Lucky" Baldwin (San Francisco, California)
- Theodore Winter (Winters, California)
- The Hough Brothers
- Senator George Hearst (Sheepshead Bay, Long Island)
- James Ben Ali Haggin (Sacramento, California and Lexington, Kentucky).<sup>3</sup>

Cooper achieved his greatest success working eleven years from 1878 to 1889 with the California mining king, E. J. "Lucky" Baldwin. Many of the horses he trained during this time were high earning winners, such as:

- Clara D.
- Fallen Lead
- Los Angeles
- Mollie McCarty
- Silver Cloud
- Volante

The latter two Thoroughbreds won the American Derby in 1885 and 1886.

During the two years he worked with the Hough Brothers', Cooper trained Kentucky-bred Burlington. The horse was considered the best three-year-old during 1890, winning the Belmont Stakes, Brooklyn Derby and the Great Tidal Stakes.<sup>4</sup>

During his tenure with Senator George Hearst, Cooper was the second trainer for Hearst's horse Tournament who had forty-nine starts.<sup>5</sup> After Senator Hearst's death in 1891 Cooper bought several horses and opened his own stable.<sup>6</sup>

Jack F. Keene and son Foxhall P. Keene, of New York, made Cooper an offer to train their horses in 1891; he accepted and sold his stable. During his time with the Keenes, Cooper sent two-year-old Chiswick to the finish line in the Great Trial Stakes. After two years with the Keenes, Cooper opened a public training stable.<sup>7</sup>

## Derby Winning Legacy

Albert Cooper became one of the most prolific trainers of his era. He worked for owners in Western and Eastern states, while many of his contemporaries worked with owners in Southern states.

Cooper was found sick at his home in Gravesend by Frank Clarke, Superintendent of the Sheepshead Bay track. Clarke convinced Cooper to go to the hospital, but he did not recover. Albert Cooper died December 20, 1898 at the St. Catherine's Hospital in Brooklyn, New York. He died of Bright's Disease with liver and heart complications. He was buried in Gravesend Cemetery.<sup>8</sup> His legacy is being the first African American trainer with back-to-back American Derby wins in 1885 and 1886.

## Sources

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Death Certificate: Albert Cooper."

<sup>2</sup>Index to New York City Marriages, 1866–1937. Albert Cooper and Emma A. Hodge."

<sup>3</sup>Weeks, *The American Turf*, 356

<sup>4</sup>Weeks

<sup>5</sup>Buck

<sup>6</sup>Weeks

<sup>7</sup>Weeks

<sup>8</sup>"Albert Cooper Died."