

# Esther Cooper, Area Civil Rights Leader, Dies at 88

Funeral services will be held at 11:30 a.m. tomorrow for Mrs. Esther I. Cooper, 88, a longtime Arlington civil rights leader, who died unexpectedly of cardiac arrest Saturday at her home, 500 S. Veitch St. She came to that house as a bride 56 years ago.

Mrs. Cooper, president emeritus and lifetime member of the Arlington branch of the National Assn. for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), was a founder and first president of the Arlington branch of the NAACP in 1940.

She was president of the Arlington branch of the NAACP 13 years. In 1956 she was honored with a lifetime membership in the organization. Again in 1965 Mrs. Cooper was honored at the 25th anniversary of the Arlington branch of the NAACP.

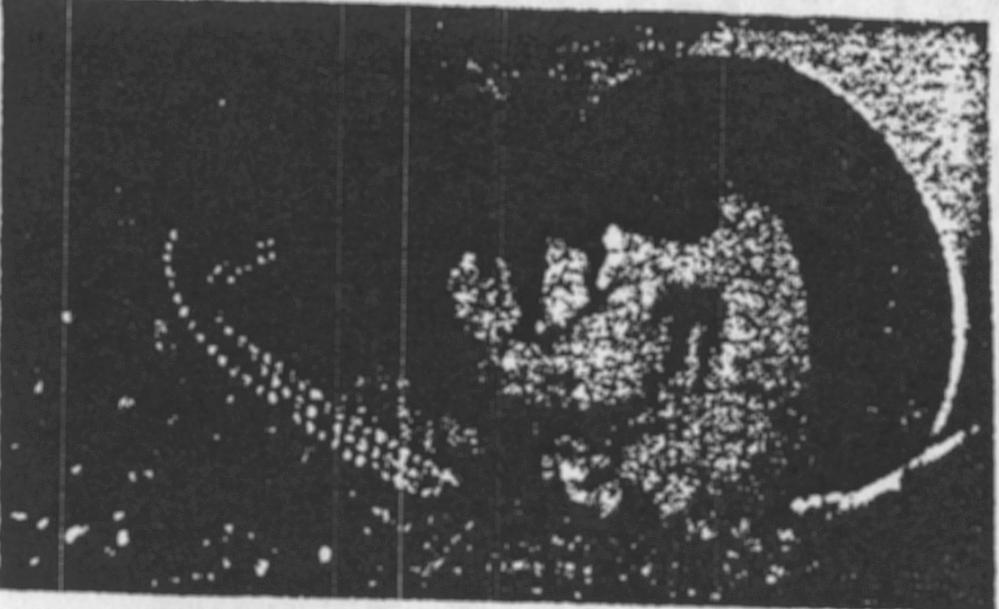
Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Mrs.

Cooper's first job was working for the late State Rep. Harry Smith of Cleveland, first Negro member of the Ohio legislature. She edited a newspaper, The Gazette, published by Rep. Smith. He introduced the first anti-lynching bill in the Ohio State legislature.

She later worked a year as secretary to Newark H. Burroughs of Louisville, Ky., who became president of the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington. Miss Burroughs then was president of the auxiliary to the National Baptist Convention. After she married and was living in Arlington, Mrs. Cooper taught business subjects at the National Training School for Women and Girls.

In 1913 Mrs. Cooper accepted a civil service appointment in Washington as a secretary in the Forest

(See ESTHER, Page 2)



MRS. ESTHER I. COOPER

# Esther Cooper Dies

(Continued from Page 1)

Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Secretaries were described as "typewriters" at that time, a title almost as awkward as the machines they operated.

In Washington Mrs. Cooper met Army Lt. George P. Cooper, who was stationed at Fort Myer. They were married Sept. 10, 1913, and moved to the Veitch Street home where Mrs. Cooper lived until her death. Lt. Cooper, who was retired from the Army while at Fort Myer, died in 1936.

Mrs. Cooper joined St. John's Baptist Church in Arlington in 1914, where she was active until recent years. The Rev. James H. Pair, minister of St. John's when she became a member of the congregation, will officiate at her funeral services.

She was a past president of the Kemper School PTA; for many years president of the Young People's Union of St. John's Baptist Church, a charter member of the Arlington Council of Church Women and a member of the American Legion Auxiliary to Doris Miller Post No. 194.

Mrs. Cooper was one of the first members of the Citizens Committee for School Improvement and the Community Council for Social Progress. She also was a founder of Arlington County for Better Schools.

She was an organizer of the Jenny Dean Community Center Association, Inc., which was instrumental in purchasing a tract of land to be the site of the Veterans Memorial Branch of the Ar-

lington YMCA.

Mrs. Cooper was the first Negro representative to the United Church Women's organization. She served many years as second vice president of the Lott Carey Foreign Mission Society, an organization helping students continue their higher education.

She taught many young people who needed remedial help in basic skills and typewriting and shorthand in her home. She frequently helped them early in the morning before they reported for work. In 1934-1935, during the depression, she taught business subjects in the Arlington County Schools' adult education program under the Federal Education Rehabilitation Act.

Mrs. Cooper ran for Democratic committeewoman from Arlington precinct, losing by a slim margin. She worked at the polls through the presidential elections of 1964.

She also worked in community health fund drives, including the Heart Fund and the Muscular Dystrophy Fund.

Mrs. Cooper is survived by three daughters, Miss Kathryn Cooper of the home, Mrs. Esther Jackson of Brooklyn, N.J. and Mrs. Pauline Moss of Landover, Md.

Friends may call at St. John's Baptist Church from 4 to 10 p.m. today, where the funeral services will be held. The Rev. Pair will be assisted by the Rev. Eugene Pearson, pastor of St. John's. Interment will be at Arlington National Cemetery. Arrangements are by Chinn's Funeral Home of Arlington.