



**Sarah Ingersoll Cooper** (1835 – 1896) was an American educator, author, evangelist, and civic activist. Mrs. Cooper was a philanthropist and devoted all her time to benevolent work.

She is remembered as both a religious teacher and for her efforts to increase interest in kindergarten. During her lifetime, Sarah served as president of numerous organizations: the National Kindergarten Union; the Woman's Press Association; the Woman's Suffrage Association; and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. She was a member of San Francisco's Century Club of California. While attending the 1893 World's Fair, she delivered 36 separate addresses. In 1894, she was treasurer of the recently formed **General Federation of Woman's Clubs**. She became a convert to equal rights and was president of the Amendment Campaign Committee. Shortly before her death, Cooper stated that she was (or had been) an officer in nineteen charitable societies.

Being abolitionists, Halsey and Sarah Cooper moved north at the start of the Civil War. They settled briefly in Washington, D.C., then moved to Memphis, Tennessee in 1863, where Mr. Cooper was appointed assessor of internal revenue. In Memphis, Sarah was elected president of the Society for the Aid of Refugees and also taught a large Bible class comprised of 100 to 300 soldiers. After the death of a daughter in 1864, Mrs. Cooper began suffering from depression and illness; recuperating for a time in Saint Paul, Minnesota. She recovered when the family moved to San Francisco, California in 1869. She became a staff member of the *Overland Monthly*, working as a proof-reader, essayist, and book reviewer. She also researched and wrote field reports for the U.S. government regarding education in California.

While involved with the Calvary Presbyterian Church in San Francisco, Mrs. Cooper was tried for heresy in 1881, because she could not conscientiously subscribe to the doctrine of infant damnation or everlasting punishment.

In 1882, Mrs. Leland Stanford, a San Francisco socialite, dedicated a large sum toward the establishment of free kindergartens in San Francisco and adjacent towns, in memory of her deceased son. Soon, more memorial kindergartens were endowed. By 1892, 32 kindergartens were under the care of Mrs. Cooper and her daughter, Harriet, and 10,000 children were trained in these schools.

In 1879, Sarah's husband, Halsey Cooper, lost his job as Deputy Surveyor and the family began suffering financial hardship. As a result of the strain, Mr. Cooper eventually committed suicide in 1885.

After attempting to clear her husband's name, Sarah continued her philanthropic career. She taught both the bible school and kindergarten and was involved with women's rights groups.

Sarah's daughter, Harriet had quit her teaching job to assist with the new kindergartens, but she also suffered from bouts of depression, especially after the 1885 death of her father.

In December, 1896, Harriet asphyxiated herself and her mother by turning on the gas, with suicidal intent, after her mother had fallen asleep.

