

# **LITTLE JOURNEYS**

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Little journeys by Peeter Cooper

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**PEETER COOPER**

**LITTLE  
JOURNEYS**



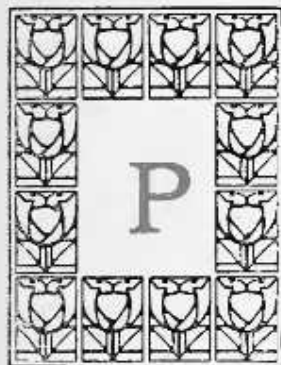
**L**ET our schools teach the nobility of labor, and the beauty of human service, but the superstitions of ages past—never!  
—PETER COOPER, Memorial to the Legislature of New York.





PETER COOPER

## LITTLE JOURNEYS



PETER COOPER was born in New York City in Seventeen Hundred and Ninety-one. He lived to be ninety-two years old, passing out in Eighteen Hundred and Eighty-three ❀ ❀

He was, successively, laborer, clerk, mechanic, inventor, manufacturer, financier, teacher, philanthropist and philosopher.

If Robert Owen was the world's first modern merchant, Peter

Cooper was America's first business man. He seems the first prominent man in the United States to abandon that legal wheeze, "caveat emptor." In fact, he worked for the buyer, and considered the other man's interests before he did his own. He practised the Golden Rule, and made it pay, while the most of us yet regard it as a kind of interesting experiment ❀ ❀

I have said a few oblique things about city-bred boys, and city people in general, but I feel like apologizing for them and doing penance when I think of restless, tireless, eager, brave, honest and manly Peter Cooper.

When that New York City woman, last week, observing a beautiful brass model of an Oliver Plow on my mantel asked me, "What is this musical instrument?" she proved herself not of the Peter Cooper tribe.

She was the other kind—the kind that seeing the pollywogs



## P E T E R C O O P E R

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remarks, "Oh, how lovely—they will all be butterflies next week!" Or, "Which cow is it that gives the buttermilk?" a question that once made Nathan Straus walk on his hands.

¶ Although Peter Cooper was born in New York City and had a home there most of his life, he loved the country, and for many years made Sunday sacred for the woods and fields. Yet as a matter of strictest truth let it be stated that, although Peter Cooper was born in New York City, when he was two years old, like Bill Nye, he persuaded his parents to move.

The family gravitated to the then little village of Peekskill, and here the lad lived until he was seventeen years old.

Next to Benjamin Franklin, Peter Cooper was our all-round, educated American. His perfect health—living to a great age—with sanity and happiness as his portion, proves him to be one who knew the laws of health and also had the will to obey them. He never "retired from business"—if he quit one kind of work it was to take up something more difficult.

¶ He was in the fight to the day of his death; and always he carried the flag further to the front.

He was a Free Thinker at a time when to have thoughts of your own was to be an outcast. His restless mind was no more satisfied with an outworn theology than with an outgrown system of transportation.

His religion was blended with his work and fused with his life.

¶ He built the first railway locomotive in America, and was its engineer, until he taught others how.

He rolled the first iron rails for railroads.

He made the first iron beams for use in constructing fire-

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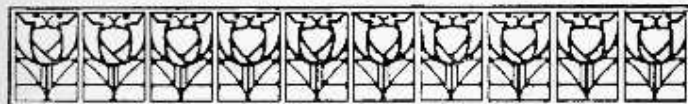
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proof buildings. ¶He was the near and dear friend and adviser of Cyrus W. Field and lent his inventive skill, his genius and his money, to the laying of the Atlantic Cable; and was the President for eighteen years of the Atlantic Cable Company.

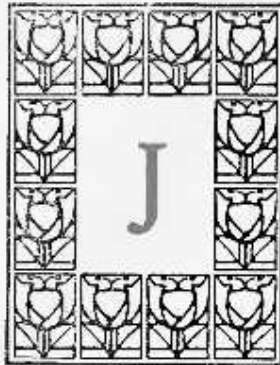
In building and endowing Cooper Union, he outlined a system of education, so beneficent that it attracted the attention of the thinking men of the world. And it is even now serving as a model upon which our entire public-school system will yet be founded—a system that works not for culture, for bric-a-brac purposes, but for character and competence. A what-not education may be impressive but is worthless as collateral. ¶ The achievements of Peter Cooper make the average successful man look like a pigmy.

What the world needs is a few more Peter Coopers—rich men who do not absolve themselves by drawing checks for charity, but who give their lives and inventive skill for human betterment.

Let us catch up with Peter Cooper.



P E T E R C O O P E R



JOHN COOPER, the father of Peter Cooper, was of English stock. He was twenty-one years old in that most unforgettable year, Seventeen Hundred and Seventy-six. At the first call to arms, he enlisted as a minuteman. He fought valiantly through the war, in the field, and in the fortifications surrounding New York City, and came out of Freedom's fight penniless, but with one valuable possession—a wife.

¶ In Seventeen Hundred and Seventy-nine, he had married the daughter of General John Campbell, his commander, who was then stationed at West Point. It was an outrageous thing for a sergeant to do, and I am sorry to say it was absolutely without orders or parental permission. The bride called it a Cooper union.

The Campbells, very properly, were Scotch, and the Scotch have a bad habit of thinking themselves a trifle better than the English. Like the Irish, they regard an Englishman with suspicion. The Scotch swear that they have never been conquered, certainly not by J. Bull, who has always been quite willing to give them anything they ask for.

At the time of his marriage, Sergeant Cooper was engaged in the laudable business of looking after General Campbell's horses, and also making garden for the Campbell family ۞