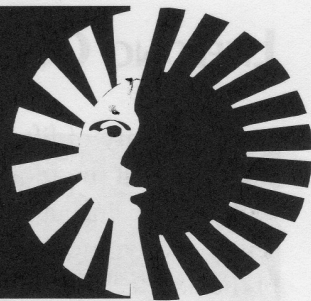


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LIFELONG COMPANIONS: THE PATTON BROTHERS

by Virginia Green

At seven-thirty on the evening of January 12, 1922, the Shrine mosque over the J. C. Penny store on Liberty Street in Salem was the scene of an elaborate banquet for 180 gentlemen, celebrating the fiftieth birthday of their host, Hal Patton. Before the program of speeches and songs began, Hal Patton made a few introductory remarks about his life including the following:

My brother and myself have lived in this city almost fifty years in the same house and have been associated in business in the same room, with the exception of two years, which we spent in Japan in 1884 and 1886.

In these few words their unique lifetime companionship was briefly acknowledged. This unique fraternal relationship would continue for another seven years until the death of the elder brother, Edwin Cooke Patton.

The Cooke-Patton family to which they belonged had already enjoyed a three-generation tradition of "togetherness". The friendship between two Oregon pioneers, their grandfather, Edwin Cooke, and their father, Thomas McFadden Patton, had begun in 1851 when they had been part of wagon train immigration to Oregon. Despite the hardships of the North Platte trail, there was at least one occasion where the Cookes and Mr. Patton had a social afternoon together. He later wrote that at Independence Rock on June 15, a picnic of "Hard Bread, Dried Beef & water" was enjoyed. He noted that along with her parents "Miss Frank Cooke" attended. Frances was fourteen that year, Patton was twenty-two.¹

When the wagon train reached Salt Lake City, Cooke, an Ohio merchant in poor health traveling with his wife Eliza and daughter, stopped over in that Utah city for the winter of 1851-2. Over the next few months, Cooke disposed of the stock of goods he had brought with him and, his health having improved, the family



E.C. Cooke, Hal Patton's
grandfather and Oregon State
Treasurer, 1862-1870.
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Hal D. Patton

came on to Oregon the next summer.

Meanwhile, Patton had continued with the 1851 wagon train beyond Salt Lake City, leaving it further along the way, and completing the journey by walking into Portland. Although he had been a school-teacher, and admitted to the bar in Ohio the year before he left, his first job in Oregon was cleaning out a well. He was pleased to earn eighteen dollars, almost a month's wages as a teacher in Ohio. He traveled on to Dayton where he was hired as clerk in a store for the

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monthly salary of fifty dollars. When the owners of the store sold out, he took the next boat to Salem where he took a job sawing lumber. An opportunity to establish himself as a lawyer took him to Jacksonville, the county seat of the new Jackson County. Within a week he was elected as county judge.

Three years had now passed since Patton had traveled in a wagon train with the Cooke family, but the acquaintance continued. We do not know how often the young couple had met in these years, but on her seventeenth birthday in 1854, Frances Mary Cooke married Thomas McFadden Patton. Eliza, the mother of the bride, insisted that her daughter must not live so far away in Jacksonville, but return to Salem. After one year of marriage, the Pattons moved in with her parents. The two couples lived together for the remainder of their lives.

Their first home was located at the northwest corner of Division and Front Streets with a view of the Willamette River. As later described by Reuben P. Boise at Hal's fiftieth birthday banquet:

One of the handsomest places in town then, I believe, was the old Cooke and Patton home, in which Hal was born. The old fashioned dwelling with its wide verandas was located on North Front Street, beyond Union, overlooking the river, where his father and grandfather could look up and down the stream and see their steamboats as they came and went. The grounds surrounding the home, I used to hear, had been laid out by an Italian landscape gardener. The walks, grass plots, arbors, flower beds, and in a pretty nook Lily Patton's play house that was a thing of architectural beauty, all made a scene long remembered.²

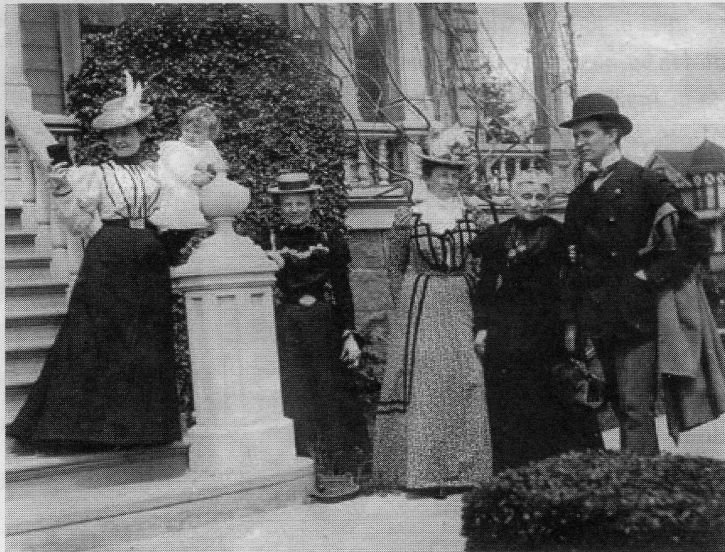
In this home were born four of the Patton's five children: Lillian, in 1858; Flora, who died as an infant in 1862; Edwin Cooke³, in 1868; and Harry David (Hal), in 1872. Hal later told the story that his first memory was of his older sister crying because he was a boy baby instead of a little girl to replace the sister she had lost.

The elder Patton, father of this family of children, had gone into the office of the U.S. Superintendent of Indian Affairs and was chief clerk for two years. He joined the People's Transportation Company (a Willamette River steamboat line), in which his father-in-law was a large shareholder, and became Secretary. He became Chief House Clerk of the Oregon legislature in 1860 and by 1872 he had won his campaign to become a member of the legislature. Colonel E. Hofer later described his appearance:

Mostly he appeared in a Prince Albert suit and wore a flower in his buttonhole, held his head up and walked straight, and it was a splendid sight to see him in action on the streets of our city.⁴

The grandfather, Edwin Cooke, was a supporter of Salem's best known institutions: he was one of the largest contributors to the fund for the erection of Waller Hall at Willamette University and the First Methodist Church.

At the state level, he became Oregon's second state treasurer in 1862, serving until 1870. In 1871, at the expiration of his term, Cooke and his wife toured Europe, accompanied by Joseph S. Smith, a former Oregon Congressman, and his wife. Upon his return to Salem, he purchased a book and stationery store on State Street and began building a new home for the family. For \$1500, he had purchased the northwest corner lot at Summer and Court Streets from Octavious Pringle, another Salem pioneer. The Victorian house included a full basement, three floors and fourth floor cupola. It was from this square room with windows on all four sides that young Luella, the daughter of Cooke Patton, and her family watched the passage of Haley's Comet in 1908. Originally the kitchen was in a corner of the basement with the rest of the space there used to store the cords of wood for fuel. On the first floor were the sitting room (later the Japanese



From left to right: Luella Patton's mother with Luella, two lady friends, Luella's great-grandmother, Eliza Cooke, and her uncle, Hal Patton, in 1899.

— Courtesy of Luella Patton

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room), a master bedroom and bath and the breakfast room. On the other side of the hall was a parlor, dining room and later the kitchen. On the second floor were six bedrooms and one bath. Third floor had two large rooms (one serving as a library) and a little one, leading up into the cupola.

Considered the finest home in Salem, an invitation to the dedication of the Cooke-Patton house on December 8, 1873 was a prized memento. As a newspaper article later reported,

Everybody who was anybody was there. The names of the guest list made up a complete directory of Salem's old time Four Hundred together with the officialdom of the state and federal government resident here.

The article also mentions the number of great social events including an annual New Year reception.⁵ Unfortunately, there were sad occasions as well. Another son, Roy was born in 1875 and lived only one year and Grandfather Edwin Cooke died there in 1879. In the following year, however, there was a celebration when Lillian was married to J.D. Cully.

T. McF. Patton's account book, rescued from the attic before the house was razed in 1938, showed that in 1878 the annual expenses for this household of two adults and four children amounted to \$328.54: the family could live well on this expenditure. The gas bill for April was 50 cents, a round trip to Albany was \$3 (whether it was by steamboat or train was not noted), two and a half hours work by the plumber was \$4.50, Chinese labor for five days was \$7.75, and Mrs. Donaldson was paid \$13.75 for making a silk dress. Expenses for the boys were noted: Hal's tooth was pulled for 50 cents and "jenes" cost 25 cents. Every parent will recognize the complexities of the entry on July 13. Mr. Patton took one son to a minstrel show, paid the other 50 cents to stay home, and then took both to the circus that night with an admission charge of \$1.50.⁶

From the remarks of Cooke Patton on the occasion of his brother's fiftieth birthday banquet, the brothers grew up almost constantly in each others' company, even sleep-



The Patton Block east of Ladd and Bush Bank on State Street, 1886.

— Marion County Historical Society

ing in the same bed until, as Cooke said, "Hal took up most of the bed." Hal tried to copy his big brother: crying for suspenders because Cooke had a pair, begging for cigarettes when Cooke smoked, even insisting that Cooke give him a haircut after the older boy got one at the barber shop. Following his older brother and a friend as they walked across the high trestle of the Southern Pacific, Hal was unable to get off the tracks as quickly as the other boys when a signal announced a train's approach. Cooke pushed Hal onto a small plank that stuck out from the track. The cow-catcher knocked Hal off into a bush, but the train obligingly stopped and carried the boys home. In a more serious accident, Hal followed Cooke out to a field behind Willamette University where target practice with a toy gun was planned: Hal was holding the barrel when the gun went off, leaving a permanent scar on his hand. One summer afternoon the boys were tempted to steal watermelons, but were interrupted by a lady in a nearby house. The boys hid, but were sighted by "One Arm Brown." They ran home only to be confronted there by Sheriff John Minto who took out his handcuffs, scaring the boys and making their sister cry. They promised to be good in the future and so

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escaped what they thought might be a term in jail. They attended school together. Their first class was in the residence of their teacher, Clara B. Meacham.⁷ They both later attended Salem's public schools.

In 1884, when the brothers were fifteen and eleven, their father was appointed United States Consul at Kobe, Japan, where he served for two years. Young Cooke's copy-book, now in the possession of his daughter, Luella Charlton, reveals that the brothers were constant companions during their adventure abroad. On July 12, 1885, fourteen-year old Cooke wrote to his grandmother in Salem:

I have not written you a letter for a long time on account of Hal writing so often. The hot weather has come at last and papa is having a tailor make us two pairs of suits each out of Japanese cotton cloth. We received those beautiful ties you sent and thank you very much for them. Yesterday I purchased my watch back from Hal for \$5.00. Hal is now \$31.00 on interest and I have \$12.00 also on interest.

He remarks that the cook makes ice cream twice a week "and Hal and I enjoy it very much." They were sorry to hear that General Grant had died. "I think I had better tell you about the festival at Nako San," he continues. A description of the celebration follows. In another letter he says that he and Hal usually ride in a double Jenrikiska⁸ and "have lots of fun." They are, at that time, "on vacation but are still going to our French school and get a few lessons at home to pass the time. Every evening (except Sunday) we go bathing in the sea and enjoy it very much because it is so warm." He concludes that they expect to take more trips and may find something interesting to write about. The letter ends formally, "I remain, Yours Affectionate, E. Cooke Patton."⁹

Their father's assignment in Japan ended after only two years. Their mother was ill. Frances Cooke Patton died in 1886, the year of their return to Salem. Her obituary mentioned her youthful attendance at Willamette University, her membership in the First Congregational Church, and

her leadership in the Orphan's Aid Society. Of her life in Salem, the newspaper recalls that:

here were concentrated all the hallowed associations of her life - home, mother, children and companions. All the relief human skill could afford was hers, but to without avail: for death marked her for its own.¹⁰

Cooke was seventeen when his mother died and his years of youthful adventure and travel were behind him. He went to work in the family book and stationery store. His brother would soon follow him in this business.

The elder Mr. Patton's death four years later in 1892 was noted not only for the passing of this outstanding businessman and civic leader, but because it occurred in connection with the funeral of another well-known Salem personality. Mr. Patton was

serving as a pall bearer for Obed Dickinson, the former first minister of Salem's First Congregational Church, when he became ill during the funeral. Patton was hurried to a doctor's office where he died of heart failure a few hours later. His obituary noted his membership in Salem's First Congregational Church "almost since its inception, and during the greater part of the time has been superintendent of that Sunday school".¹¹ A stained glass window in the church is dedicated to his memory.

In the following November, young Cooke Patton married Leah Orsella Guiss at her parents' home in Woodburn in the presence of a few close friends and rela-

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From left to right: Luella's grandmother Frances and grandfather, Tom Mc. Patton, Edwin Patton (standing), Hal Patton at his father's knee, and an unidentified Japanese, in 1885-86.

Courtesy of Luella Patton

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tives. A newspaper article reported that "many valuable and beautiful presents were presented to the couple" and that they would spend their three-week honeymoon in San Francisco.¹² With exception of a short residence in another house a few blocks away, the young couple made their home in the family house at Summer and Court Streets. Their only child, daughter Luella Charlton, was born there and remembers growing up in this historic Salem mansion. An 1899 photograph (perhaps by Cooke Patton) records a scene on the front steps which includes Luella as a toddler in her mother's arms, two lady friends, Hal Patton, and Eliza Cooke, Luella's great-grandmother, who lived until 1900.

Hal also departed the family home for a short time after his first marriage in 1896 to Ella Breyman. However he too returned, living on the second floor, remodeled into separate quarters with living room, dining room, kitchen and three bedrooms. Luella Charlton remembers that this first wife "broke his heart" when she left the marriage – and Salem – to pursue a career as an actress. His second marriage in 1911 to Nellie Lucia ended with her death. Luella recalls visiting with Nellie on the second floor balcony where canvas curtains had been hung for the invalid's comfort. Hal's third marriage was to Edith Tidcomb in 1914. Since the couple was not able to have children of their own, they adopted an infant girl whose mother had died at its birth. A short time later, the father came to Hal and his wife and asked them to take his older daughter as well.¹³

In 1908, Cooke and Hal began a related enterprise, taking advantage of the then-current popularity of picture post cards. Their Patton Postcard Company was located at 320 State Street in a narrow space between their bookstore and the Ladd-Bush bank. The main floor housed the Patton Postcard Hall, a gallery with walls covered in displays of an estimated 5000 colorful cards stretching from floor to



The E. N. Cook residence on Court St., 1887. — Marion County Historical Society

ceiling for retail business, mostly selling at two for a nickel. The wholesale mail order business was conducted upstairs. After an initial few years of tremendous success, the business faced tough competition from larger, less artistic postcard companies in Portland and San Francisco. The Postcard Hall closed and the brothers resumed their interest in the Patton Book and Stationery Store.¹⁴

The brothers did have individual interests. Cooke was a talented and popular magician. On one occasion he assisted a local dentist by hypnotizing a patient at his request to reduce pain. Cooke produced shows of hypnotism and magic in local schools and churches. He was a member of the Society of International Brotherhood of Magicians, the Woodmen of the World, United Artisans, the Elks and the Kiwanis Club.

Hal was active in local and state Republican politics, serving on the City Council and for two terms as State Senator. He was a charter member of the Cherrians and served as King Bing of that order. He took part in various Masonic organizations, the Elks and Foresters.

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Like his brother Cooke, he was interested in local entertainment. From 1898 to its closing in April of 1900, the brothers managed the Reed Opera House. During the last performance, The Great Barlow Minstrels, Hal made a farewell speech between acts. Cooke Patton later wrote an article entitled "Early Theatrical History of Salem" in which he recalls their show business experiences. Luella also remembers attending performances at Shield's Park and believes the brothers had an interest in this outdoor theatre as well¹⁵.

On January 13, 1922, an article by Frank Davey, in the Capitol Journal was entitled "Fiftieth Anniversary of Hal D. Patton Novel in Its Observance". The evening was described as being the:

most unique and successful social event held in this part of the world, it being new in its plan, with probability and scarcely a possibility of repeating it, for as the toastmaster said in his opening talk, when the "Good nights" were spoken last night and the doors closed on that gathering, never again could the same crowd be assembled. It was a gathering of the male friends and associates with whom the host has grown up during his fifty years of life. Many of whom were residents of Salem before Hal appeared on the scene.

The guest list was "decidedly democratic" the article says.

From Governor to janitor, from judge to bailiff, the lawyer, doctor, preacher, farmer, mechanic, merchant and laborer all mingled in a happy jumble of equality, each ready to slap each other on the back and pass the compliments of the evening without fear or formality, so that every moment of the event, from the first greeting of the genial host at the head of the stairs to the last shout of farewell about the midnight hour was filled with unalloyed pleasure, the only regret being that so many were separating never to meet again this side of the divide.

The small book containing that evening's speeches, toasts and songs, along with recollections of Salem life in even earlier years, was published by Hal Patton ten years later. It is an invaluable source for Salem historians and a sentimental souvenir of a gentler period in American life

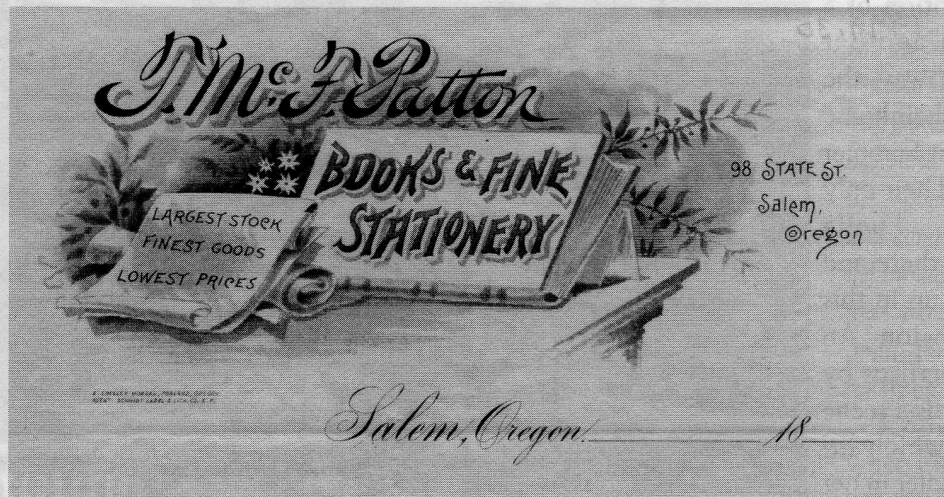
for many local families whose fathers or grandfathers were a part of that event.

The Patton brothers' personal and business partnership continued for seven more years after that night. But in 1929 the Salem newspaper announced

the death of Cooke Patton with the heading "Popular Salem Man Passed Away Suddenly at Jubilee Dinner". He had been performing at Hubbard Mineral Springs sanatorium when a heart attack struck. His second wife, Sadie, was with him. Hal was summoned from Salem, but did not arrive before his brother's death. Another family tragedy followed almost immediately. When their sister Lillian was informed of her brother's death the next morning, she too suffered a heart attack and died. After a Hood River funeral service attended by her family and friends, a joint funeral for Lillian and her brother Cooke was conducted in Salem at the First Congregational Church.¹⁶

Less than five years later, Hal also died of heart failure.¹⁷ He passed away in the home where he had shared a lifetime with his brother. The Patton house survived the brothers by only three years. It was razed in 1938 when the state buildings were extended onto the residential neighborhood of many fine old Salem homes. The Oregon State Library is now located on that site.

With their passing from Salem, the generation that had known them and their family could truly say that an era had passed. Their grandfather and father had been among the earliest civic leaders of the rough pioneer village that became the city of Salem. Cooke and Hal were born with talents that could have taken them to careers on a larger



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stage, but they choose to remain in Salem and contribute to the life of the town their family had helped create. The Patton brothers, and Cooke's daughter, Luella Charlton, are typical of many Salem families who, through several generations, have continued to contribute to the city that is their hometown. ☀

About the Author: Virginia Green is a long-time member of the Marion County Historical Society and a frequent contributor to Historic Marion. She wishes to especially acknowledge the assistance of Luella Patton in the research for this article.

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- 3 Thomas and Frances Patton's first son, E. Cooke Patton, was known as Cooke, the surname of his grandfather, Edwin Cooke.
- 4 *Hal Patton's Fiftieth Anniversary*, p. 50.
- 5 Quoted in R.J. Hendricks, "Bits for Breakfast", *Capitol Journal*, 1937
- 6 Ben Maxwell, "Pioneer Bookkeeping Shows Living Costs 70 Years Ago", *Capitol Journal*, p. 16, February 10, 1951.
- 7 *Hal Patton's Fiftieth Anniversary*, pp. 77-78.
- 8 The jinricksha (man-power-vehicle) was the Oriental version of a taxi, introduced in Japan only a few years before Cooke wrote this letter. The light, two-wheeled, hooded cart, usually for one passenger, had shafts extending to the front. The power was supplied by a man who stood between the shafts, grasping one in each hand, racing along the street as quickly as he could.
- 9 Copy Book of E. C. Patton, 1885. Used with permission of Luella Carlton.
- 10 *History of the Pacific Northwest - Oregon and Washington, Biographical Sketches* (Portland: North Pacific History Co., 1889), "Mrs. Frances N. Patton," p. 515.
- 11 "T. M/F Patton Dead", *Weekly Oregon Statesman*, December 2, 1892.
- 12 From a McCully scrapbook, undated, newspaper unknown.
- 13 The daughters were Marie and Jeanne.
- 14 "Patton Brothers", "Picture Postcards", *Marion County History*, Vol XV (1985-1986), p. 143
- 15 Luella Charlton remembers this as a lot east of Commercial, perhaps at Center Street. Entrance was down several steps and seats were provided. She attended at least one performance there as a child and remembers a little boy dancing on the stage.
- 16 "Sudden Stroke Causes Death," *Capitol Journal*, December 28, 1929; "Two Pattons Have Funeral Rites Monday", *Capitol Journal*, December 29, 1929.
- 17 "Patton Called by Death", *Capitol Journal*, July 24, 1934