



James Fenimore Cooper

September 15, 1789 - September 14, 1851

Cooperstown, New York

James Fenimore Cooper, the novelist who gave American fiction its first durable frontier myth in the Leatherstocking tales, died in Cooperstown, New York, on September 14, 1851 - one day short of his sixty-second birthday. The village that bore his family's name had watched him leave for navy and Europe and return as a quarrelsome celebrity who still insisted the lake and the woods were the true measure of the Republic.

Born in Burlington, New Jersey, on September 15, 1789, and raised in the Otsego settlement his father founded, Cooper turned from midshipman and gentleman farmer into the author of *The Spy*, *The Pioneers*, and *The Last of the Mohicans*. Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook became international figures even as Cooper's later social novels and lawsuits made him a controversial neighbor. He wrote against demagoguery and for a stern idea of American manners; readers abroad often loved the forests more than the sermons.

Illness closed the last months at home. Friends and family gathered in a house that had seen drafts of a national literature written by a man who never stopped arguing with his audience. He died before the Civil War remade the country his novels had already half-invented as wilderness romance.

He died in Cooperstown on September 14, 1851. The lake remained; the arguments about who owned the American story only grew louder.

Cooper's gift was to make landscape feel like character - fog on Glimmerglass, a rifle's patience, a moral code that could not quite survive settlement. Later writers corrected his Indians and his politics; fewer escaped his plot grammar. This memorial keeps the death date on the village green where baseball would later claim another

American myth, so Cooperstown's quietest claim is still literary.

Services

Died in Cooperstown, New York, September 14, 1851. Novelist of the Leatherstocking tales; buried at Christ Churchyard, Cooperstown.

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