

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



NPS History Collection

## NPS Women Cartes de Visite Collection



*Gertrude S. Cooper, 1940. (Courtesy of the National Archives).*

**Gertrude S. Cooper**

**Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site**

**Superintendent, 1940-1945**

- Born Gertrude Sturgis on June 20, 1889 in Boston, Massachusetts.
- Widowed with three children in 1938.
- Appointed superintendent of Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site on July 16, 1940, making her the NPS's first woman superintendent.
- That designation is sometimes contested as she was appointed by her former neighbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, rather than through the NPS but she was the first woman to hold that title (as Jessie Foote Jack was a custodian, not a superintendent).
- As superintendent, she managed the mansion, its furnishings, and 200 acres of gardens.
- Promoted guided tours of the mansion without barriers, so visitors would feel what it was like to live in the mansion.
- Maintained a close working relationship with President Roosevelt, often taking her issues directly to him instead of NPS managers.
- Left the NPS in 1945, shortly after Roosevelt's death.
- Later worked as director at Greenwich House in New York City.
- Moved around the country working with different youth groups at churches and schools.
- Spent time in Mexico.
- Died on December 18, 1977 in Chester, Connecticut.

*This research was made possible in part by a grant from the National Park Foundation.*