

Jones, Hamilton Chamberlain, Jr. ^[1]

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by William R. Pittman, 1988

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Hamilton Chamberlain Jones, Jr. Image courtesy of Histories of the several regiments and battalions from North Carolina, in the great war 1861-'65.

^[2]Hamilton Chamberlain Jones, Jr., lawyer, Confederate officer, and state senator, was born at Como, his family's home near Salisbury, the son of [Hamilton Chamberlain](#) ^[3] and Ann Eliza Henderson Jones. His father, whose parents had immigrated from Wales, was a lawyer, [North Carolina Supreme Court](#) ^[4] reporter, and quoted wit and author. His mother was the daughter of [Revolutionary War](#) ^[5] major [Pleasant Henderson](#) ^[6] and the great-niece of [Governor Alexander Martin](#) ^[7].

Jones was educated at the Ben Sumner School near Salisbury and at [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[8], where he studied law under [Judge W. H. Battle](#) ^[9] and was graduated in the top rank of his class in 1858. He then returned to Salisbury to continue the study of law in his father's office. In 1859 he was licensed in the county courts and a year later was admitted to the bar, remaining in the elder Jones's office to practice.

A determined [Whig](#) ^[10] like his father, Jones ran unsuccessfully for the North Carolina Senate in 1860. The same year he stumped the state for John Bell, the [Whig party](#) ^[10]'s presidential candidate in what was to be the last race for the Whigs. Also like his father, he believed in the Southern states' right to secede but thought that it was unnecessary, and that the problems could be solved within the Union. When it became evident that North Carolina would secede, however, he supported the decision.

Jones was appointed a lieutenant of the Rowan Rifle Guard and was with the guard at the taking of [Fort Johnston](#) ^[11] even before the state's formal secession ordinance and organization of troops for the war. After the state troops were organized, Governor [John W. Ellis](#) ^[12] appointed him a captain of Company K, Fifth North Carolina Regiment, with which he fought in Virginia. While recovering from wounds received at the [Battle of Williamsburg](#) ^[13], Jones was promoted to lieutenant colonel of the Fifty-seventh North Carolina Regiment and later participated in the campaigns of Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg. He was captured at the Rappahannock railroad bridge on 7 Nov. 1863 and taken to Washington, D.C., and later to the prison at Johnson Island on Lake Erie where he participated in a mammoth but unsuccessful attempt to escape. Following his return south in a special prisoner exchange, he was promoted to colonel of the Fifty-seventh Regiment and assumed command on the promotion of former commander Archibald C. Goodwin to brigadier general. Jones was again wounded—this time severely—while leading a charge on Grant's lines at Hare's Hill on 25 Mar. 1865. From these wounds he did not recover until after Lee's surrender. Jones briefly considered joining the continuing struggle west of the Mississippi but, on the advice of friends, decided to renew his allegiance to the Union.

He resumed his law practice in Salisbury until moving to [Charlotte](#) ^[14], where he established a partnership with General Robert D. Johnson in 1867. For a short time he and General Johnson edited the [Charlotte News](#) ^[15], a daily in which they assailed the abuses being inflicted on a South struggling to reconstruct. In 1869 he was appointed to fill an unexpired term in the state senate and was twice reelected. In the senate, he took an active role in the impeachment proceedings that resulted in the conviction and removal of [Governor William W. Holden](#) ^[16]. In 1885 he was appointed U.S. district attorney for the western district of North Carolina by [President Grover Cleveland](#) ^[17], a position he held for one four-year term. After Jones's appointment, General Johnson dissolved their law partnership by moving to Birmingham, Ala. On retiring from his post as district attorney, Jones formed a new partnership with Charles W. Tillet which lasted until his death. While practicing in Charlotte, he participated in nearly every prominent case that was tried in the area.

A Democrat ^[18] following the demise of the Whig party, Jones served for several years as chairman of the Mecklenburg County ^[19] Democratic Executive Committee; he has been credited with helping to make the county a Democratic stronghold.

In 1837 Jones married Sophia Convere Myers ^[20], the daughter of Colonel William R. Myers ^[21], who bore him six children. Known for his tireless service to his church, he was an officer of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Charlotte for twenty-five years. The avid fisherman and hunter's legal prowess and character were revered by his colleagues and the various underprivileged citizens he defended and supported, as evidenced by the many glowing eulogies and memorials that followed his death.

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