

Jones, Richard ^[1]

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by H. G. Jones, 1988

1784–1860

Richard Jones, farmer, miller, and legislator, was born in Virginia but moved to Caswell County ^[2], N.C., where he married Mary Ann ("Polley") Foster in 1811. Beginning with his wife's inherited farm on Moon Creek in present-day Locust Hill Township, Jones gradually enlarged his landholdings until he had accumulated 1,350 acres. His slaveholdings, however, apparently never exceeded ten. In addition to farming, he built and operated a water-powered gristmill, later known as "Page's Mill." Though addressed as "Captain," his title was probably honorary.

A Democrat ^[3], Jones was elected to the North Carolina House of Commons from Caswell County in 1846 and 1848. His votes generally reflected his partisanship on the issues dividing Democrats and Whigs ^[4], and his influence appears not to have been great. He usually voted against internal improvements ^[5] legislation, but he supported the construction of a school for the deaf and blind.

Jones became vocal in connection with a resolution introduced early in 1847 regarding the War with Mexico ^[6]. The resolution provided for an appropriation to equip and pay the expenses of a regiment of North Carolina volunteers, but its preamble reflected the Whig view that "by the action of the Executive and the subsequent sanction of Congress, this Republic is involved in a Foreign War." The Democrats attempted to remove this offending clause but were defeated by a party-line vote. They then sought to vote separately on the preamble and the resolution, but the chair ruled the question indivisible. When the resolution and its preamble came up for a decision, Jones and eighteen others voted in the negative on the second reading. The next day Jones, Wiatt Moye, and Elias Barnes submitted a resolution calling for the journal to be amended to show that, though they were recorded as voting against the measure, they were in fact in favor of the resolution but opposed the "untrue" preamble. They lost 60 to 51, but the introduction of their resolution assured its inclusion in the journal.

On the question of slavery, Jones strongly supported the traditional Southern stand. When, early in 1849, a series of resolutions was introduced denying the right of Congress to legislate on the subject of slavery in the territories, Jones supported six of the seven. He opposed the seventh resolution (substituted on motion of Edward Stanly ^[7]) condemning all policies that threatened to weaken the Union. Interestingly, Jones voted against postponing indefinitely a bill that would have allowed a free man of color, Hillory Coor, to emancipate his wife, son, and two daughters.

An active member of Lick Fork Primitive Baptist Church, Jones was often sent by the church as a messenger to various Baptist associations. After the death of his first wife in 1852, he married two years later Elizabeth S. L. Johnson, an Edgecombe County ^[8] widow. His ten children, all by Mary Ann Jones, were Eliza Ann, John Edward, James Washington, Henry M., David A., Martha Jane, Thomas Jefferson, Mary, Fannie A., and Richard, Jr. Jones was buried next to his wife on his home tract near Watlington's store.

References:

"Captain Richard Jones," *The Heritage of Caswell County* (1985) ^[9].

Journal of the House of Commons (1846–47, 1848–49).

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