

Jones, Thomas McKissick ^[1]

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16 Dec. 1816–13 Mar. 1892

Thomas McKissick Jones, lawyer, judge, legislator, Confederate ^[2] congressman, and enslaver, was born in Person County ^[3], the son of Wilson and Rebecca McKissick Jones. When Thomas was an infant, the family moved to Pulaski, Tenn., where he attended local schools and Wittenburg Academy. In 1831 he entered the University of Alabama ^[4], remaining until 1833 when he transferred to the University of Virginia ^[5]. Returning to Pulaski in 1835, he read law for a year and on 14 June 1836 enlisted in the First Tennessee Mounted Volunteers. He also began to practice law and became interested in several business ventures. From 1842 to 1855 he was a director of a regional turnpike company; in 1855, a director and eventually president of the Nashville and Decatur Railroad; and a director of two local banks. By 1860, he enslaved fifty-four people and owned other property which totally valued at \$91,500.

Jones was often mayor of Pulaski and on occasion was a member of the General Assembly ^[6]; in 1847 he was a member of the Tennessee Senate. He was also a delegate to the Democratic National Conventions of 1856, 1860 (Charleston), and 1880. In 1861 Jones was a representative from Tennessee to the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States where he served on the committees for Flag and Seal and Naval Affairs. In the congress he spoke in opposition to martial law and demonstrated an interest in the welfare of soldiers. He was not a candidate for reelection. When Federal troops captured Pulaski in 1863, Jones was taken prisoner and sent to Nashville. Governor Andrew Johnson ^[7] paroled him, however, on condition that he not communicate with members of the Confederate Congress or Confederate military commanders. After the war he resumed his law practice. In 1866 his son, Calvin, was one of six men who met in Jones's law office to organize the Ku Klux Klan ^[8].

In 1870 Jones was a delegate to the Tennessee Constitutional Convention. Interested in judicial questions, he urged that judges and chancellors be appointed by the governor so as to remove the judiciary from politics. In 1872 Jones was appointed for ten months as a judge of the Court of Arbitration for Middle Tennessee. At various times he also served as a special judge on the Tennessee Supreme Court.

On 25 Dec. 1838 Jones married Marietta Perkins and they became the the parents of nine children: Calvin, Charles P., Thomas Wilson, Hume Field, Harriet, Edmund S., Lucy Anne, Lee Walthal, and Nicholas Tate. His second wife was Anne Perkins Wood, but they had no children. For twenty years Jones was a vestryman in the Episcopal church ^[9]. In 1843 he joined the Masons ^[10] and became Master Mason, Royal Arch Mason, and Knight Templar. He was buried in Maplewood Cemetery, Pulaski.

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