

## Benjamin A. Jones

( - 25 Dec 1889)

---

**Jones.** December 25, 1889, Benjamin A. Jones, in the 50th year of his age. Funeral services at Congressional Cemetery this evening at 5 o'clock, March 17, 1890.

*The Evening Star, December 26, 1889*

### **Benjamin A. Jones Missing**

### **It is Feared that He Has Committed Suicide**

### **His Farewell Letter to His Wife--**

### **An Unsuccessful Search for His Body in the Eastern Branch--**

### **A Great Sufferer From Neuralgia**

Friends of Mr. Benjamin A. Jones, a well-known citizen of East Washington, were searching the shores of the Anacostia today for his body without finding it. The reason for the search was the disappearance of Mr. Jones under circumstances that led his family to the conclusion that he had committed suicide. For some time past he had suffered from neuralgia, and his sufferings had been so intense recently that it is thought

### *His Mind Was Affected.*

Yesterday afternoon, Mr. Jones was very quiet and had but little to say to anyone. He wrote a letter, as he said, to Maj. Goodloe, his superior officer at the marine barracks. He said that he would send the letter to Maj. Goodloe if he did not feel well enough this morning to go to his work. Before leaving his home he took from his pockets his watch and chain and other valuables and left them with his Elks pin in his room. Soon after leaving home he was seen to mail the letter in a letter box hanging to a lamp post. Later in the evening he was seen on 8th street southeast, and the last time he was seen he was going in the direction of the river, walking near the marine barracks. His failure to return home last evening alarmed his wife and children, who were unable to account for his absence. They did not know where to go nor what to do. In vain they waited for his return.

### *His Letter to His Wife*

It was shortly after 9 o'clock when the postman came to the door and handed in a letter. On the envelope was written in her husband's handwriting the address of his almost frantic wife. The kind-hearted woman was almost afraid to break the seal of the envelope, for she naturally feared the worst. The letter was written in a shaky hand and conveyed the startling news that when she received it the writer would be dead. There were other statements in the letter which were intended only for the wife to read. Mrs. Jones read the letter and following the advice of her husband she put it in the fire. The sad news thus received had a serious effect on her and today she is in great distress.

### *The Missing Man*

is about forty-nine years old and was nearly six feet high. When he left home he wore a dark overcoat and a slouch hat. He has been connected with the marine corps for nearly twenty years and was an enlisted man until about four years ago. He has been paymaster's clerk under Major Goodloe for a number of years. Mr. Jones was a member of the lodge of Elks and was well and favorably known in East Washington. His family reside at No. 761 7th street southeast, where his mother-in-law, Mrs. Williams, keeps a boarding house. Mrs. Jones was a widow when she married Mr. Jones, her maiden

name and married name being Williams. Her first husband was drowned in the Potomac off the pleasure yacht Ella Treadwell. The police have been notified of Mr. Jones' disappearance and requested to search the river for his body.

*The Evening Star, December 28, 1889*

**Pay Clerk Jones' Case**

**He Is Still Missing and Is Said To Be**

**Short In His Accounts**

**Suspicion Thrown on Him By Discoveries In**

**The Fourth Auditors Office--**

**Maj. Goodloe Says Jones Was All Right--**

**The Police Think He Is Alive**

The police patrol boat was out early this morning dragging for the body of Benjamin A. Jones, who disappeared from his home, No. 701 7th street southeast, Christmas evening, as heretofore mentioned in The Star. Up to this morning no tidings of the missing man had been received by his family. The hat he wore on the evening he disappeared was picked up not far from the arsenal wharf by Captain Bailey of the tug Teuton. Mrs. Jones has no doubt now that her husband carried out the suicidal purpose indicated in the letter she received from him Thursday morning. The letter, the fact of his leaving his jewelry at home and the finding of his hat leaves no doubt in her mind.

*A Reported Shortage*

Meanwhile a new element has appeared in the case by a report that Jones was short in his accounts. He was clerk to Maj. Goodloe, paymaster at the Marine barracks. The amount said to have been unaccounted for, so far as the investigation has gone, is about \$3,000. Suspicion has been directed against the missing man by his disappearance and the discovery at the Treasury department almost simultaneously of what appears to have been a systematic attempt at fraud. A clerk in the fourth auditor's office observed the regularity of certain erasures on the rolls of marines paid at the Brooklyn navy yard, and to the large number of alleged enlistments of men in the service from San Francisco, whose term of service had expired. Inquiry showed that the enlistments were not in San Francisco at all, but in New York. The law allows payment to enlisted men when discharged of a sum sufficient to defray their expenses to the place where they enlisted. Thus by alleging that the men discharged at Brooklyn were enlisted at San Francisco the allowance to each man would be about \$133. So far only the Brooklyn navy yard rolls for one year have been examined and some \$3,000 is discovered on these rolls to have been fraudulently obtained.

When Auditor Whitaker was asked about the alleged frauds by a Star reporter that Major Goodloe's weekly statement of cash balances for last week has not been received. This statement is usually made out each Saturday and forwarded to the Navy department whence it is sent to the Treasury for verification. Up to last Saturday the accounts had been regular in coming in and were found to be correct.

*Major Goodloe Thinks Mr. Jones' Accounts Are All Right*

Mr. Jones, as heretofore published in The Star, was paymaster's clerk under Major Goodloe at the marine barracks. Major Goodloe told a Star reporter this afternoon that he had not yet examined Jones' accounts, but he was positive that they would be found all right. He said he did not see how Mr. Jones could have taken any money unless it was a very few dollars and then the money would be missed at once. The major said that Mr. Jones was an excellent clerk, having held positions in the surgeon

general's office, the Navy department and other offices. He was in the war and has been an enlisted man for a number of years. He does not think that Jones has committed suicide.

#### *A Splash in the Water*

John Rick and William Campbell, who reside at 6th and B streets s.e., were crossing the navy-yard bridge Christmas night, on their way to Uniontown, when they heard a splash, such as would be made by a man going overboard. It was then about 9 o'clock. When they arrived at the house of George Frederick, in Uniontown, they told him what they had heard while crossing the bridge. Mr. Frederick, told them that it was probably a fish and they thought no more of the matter until they heard of Mr. Jones' disappearance.

#### *Incredulous Policemen*

The police do not believe that Jones drowned himself, although his hat has been found in the water and the splash was heard Christmas night. So far as the finding of the hat is concerned, they say that that indicates nothing, as a man intending to disappear and leave the impression that he was drowned, would do just such a thing as to throw his hat overboard or leave his clothes on the river bank.

#### *The Fruitless Search For The Body*

The police boat has been searching the Eastern branch all day for Jones' body, but up to 2:30 o'clock without success. A number of small boats containing friends of the missing man were also out, but their search was also fruitless.

Mr. Jones was a man of nervous temperament and was easily excited. He has suffered from neuralgia and catarrh of the stomach for several years, and it is said had been

#### *In The Habit of Using Morphine.*

Some of his friends think that he had been using morphine on Christmas day and that he has wandered off into the woods. Mrs. Jones is an invalid and the disappearance of her husband it is said had made her condition serious. Concerning the finding of the hat it was stated this afternoon that Mrs. Jones has not yet seen it, although it was stated this morning that it had been positively identified as the hat of the missing man by other persons.

*The Evening Star, December 30, 1889*

#### **Jones Falsified Payrolls**

#### **Major Goodloe's Accounts Suspended**

#### **At The Treasury**

#### **He Will Have To Make Good the \$2,600**

#### **Involved In The Transactions Of His Pay**

#### **Clerk--Meanwhile The Unavailing Search**

#### **For The Body Of Jones Goes On**

If Pay Clerk Benjamin A. Jones put in an appearance at Maj. Goodloe's office this afternoon one of the first conundrums which the major would insist upon having answered would be "Where are the \$2,700?"

In that inquiry is the real cases, it is believed, of Mr. Jones' prolonged absence. His accounts show him to be a defaulter and when the numerous petty pilferings have been added up the figures will be very near the sum mentioned. The investigation of the pay rolls which have passed through Mr. Jones' hands during the two years he was employed by the paymaster was completed yesterday by Mr. Owen, an expert accountant in the fourth auditor's office, and there is now no reason for anyone asking why

Jones disappeared. Good naturedly reticent over the matter is Major Goodloe. His first duty in this matter is to the Navy department and this afternoon he transmitted to Secretary Tracy a statement of the fact that the ten days' leave granted Benjamin A. Jones was up on Thursday last and that Mr. Jones has not even yet returned to the office. The report probably contains brief information as to the financial hole which Mr. Jones left behind him.

#### *What They Say at the Treasury Department*

At the Treasury department Auditor Whitaker said that the investigation was closed so far as he was concerned. Jones' manipulations had given Major Goodloe fictitious credits for various amounts--in all about \$2,600--and to this extent the major's accounts would be suspended until deposits were made to cover the overdrawn total.

The manner in which Jones, it is charged, falsified the pay rolls was fully described in Saturday's Star, and there is now little question as to Jones' criminality. One of the most interestingly peculiar things in connection with the fraud is the fact that the defaulter had marked with an asterisk in pencil each of the items which he had raised. The crookedness has been going on almost from the beginning of Jones' connection with the marine corps pay office. Previous to his engagement therein he was a clerk in the office of the commandant at the navy yard, and while there built up for himself a first-class reputation of efficiency and integrity.

#### *Jones' Habits*

The fact was developed this morning by a Star reporter that Jones was addicted to gambling in a minor way. The bartender at Coxen's saloon, opposite the marine barracks, said it was not an uncommon thing for regular frequenters of the house to play cards and he had frequently seen Jones take a hand. At another saloon it was stated that Jones occasionally played cribbage there, in fact played there on Christmas night, and remarked before leaving (at about 8 o'clock). "This is the last game of 'crib' I'll ever play." On being asked to explain his utterance he modified it by saying, "well, it's the last I'll play tonight anyhow."

Information as to Jones' habits is difficult of access. The proprietors of those saloons frequented by him are very unanimously "out" when a reporter makes inquiry as to their whereabouts and those who are temporarily in charge of the liquors and the free lunches declare with strange and loudly accentuated positiveness that they were not on duty either on Christmas night or on the evening before. In a vague way they remember that there once used to be a Benjamin A. Jones, but beyond that they never go; their memory fails them at all critical points. Somebody has been telling them that silence is golden, and they are evidently engaged in dumb efforts to extract the metal.

#### *Mrs. Jones Thinks Her Husband Drowned Himself*

Mrs. Jones still is firmly fixed in the belief that her husband has drowned himself. He stated in the note which she received, and the probabilities are that there was more in that brief letter than has been made public. Only two persons besides the man who wrote it have seen that note--Mrs. Jones and Frank Schwartz, the Anhauser-Busch agent in this city. Presumably the letter was destroyed. Mr. Schwartz was not in his office today when a Star reporter called, so the rumor that the note was still in his possession could not be verified or upset.

The hat which was found near the arsenal by Capt. Bailey of the tug Teuton is in the possession of Mrs. Jones, and so is the other hat which it was intimated had been worn by the fugitive in his flight while the other piece of head gear was left to indicate suicide. Lots of people are very skeptical as to the suicide theory.

### *A Man That Two Boys Saw In The Woods*

No official notice has been received by the police of alleged wrong doing on the part of Pay Clerk Jones. His stepson called at police headquarters this morning to give the police what he thought was a clue to the whereabouts of Mr. Jones. He told Inspector Swindells that a boy named Gallagher and a companion were in the neighborhood of Bennings Friday gunning. While passing through the woods they saw a man with a full bear lying on the ground. Thinking the man was dead they were afraid to touch him and went on through the woods. After a short time they returned and the man was still there. Again they left and later in the day came across the man again. This time he was sitting up with his hands to his head as though he was suffering pain. Mr. Williams, the stepson, could not tell where Gallagher was to be found, but promised to find out something more about it and let the police know.

### *Still Searching The River For Jones' Body*

The police boat was out on the branch yesterday searching for Mr. Jones' body. Large hooks were used and almost every inch of the branch in that locality was searched without success and the harbormaster gave up the search for a bad job. He does not think that Mr. Jones' body is in the water.

*The Evening Star, December 31, 1889*

### **No Clue to B.A. Jones**

### **The Whereabouts and Fate of the Missing**

### **Pay Clerk Still a Mystery**

The closest investigation by the police and by relatives of the missing man has failed to develop any clue to the whereabouts of Benjamin A. Jones, ex-clerk to Paymaster Goodloe of the Marine corps. The supply of rumors and theories, too, has been exceedingly small. Without having any apparent ground on which to base such a conclusion the police declare most emphatically that Jones did not commit suicide, and the old "salts" who man the police boat are more than satisfied that he has not followed the legendary McGinty on his chilly journey to the bottom of the "say."

### *A Worthless Clue*

Jones' stepson, young Williams, spent the greater part of yesterday in the vicinity of Bennings looking up a clue which promised well for a time. Gallagher, one of the two boys who said, as stated in The Star yesterday, that they saw a man who answered the description of Jones in the Eastern Branch marshes on Friday afternoon was at Jones' late residence this morning and was shown a photograph of the absent one. The boy was very dubious as to whether or not the man he saw resembled the picture, but he said he was sure that the fellow he saw in the marsh had red whiskers. That was proof to Mrs. Jones that the man was not her husband. Gallagher was given car fare to ride to police headquarters so that he might tell Lieut. Swindells what he thought he knew, but at 3 o'clock this afternoon he had not arrived.

Young Williams would have continued his search today, but he was quite sick.

Mrs. Williams, Jones' mother-in-law, is dubious in her belief as to whether Jones is dead or alive.

### *Liberal In His Cups*

Men who were in the habit of associating with Jones in his hours of relaxation say that it was not uncommon thing for that person to spend \$5 or \$6 in the course of the evening. He had a favorite brand of beer and insisted on having the crowd drink it with him quite frequently.

*The Evening Star, March 17, 1890, p. 8*

### **Drowned in Eastern Branch**

#### **The Body of the Missing Pay Clerk, Benj. A. Jones, Found and Identified**

The indictment found some weeks ago by the grand jury against Benjamin A. Jones, the defaulting clerk of Paymaster Goodloe, will soon be nolle prossed on a suggestion of the death of the defendant. The badly decomposed body of the missing man was discovered yesterday morning in the Eastern Branch near the end of the Baltimore and Potomac railroad bridge, not far from Bennings, by Capt. Smith, the yard master at Bennings, who notified Sergeant Mulhail. A telephone message was at once sent to Sergeant McCathran at the substation in Uniontown. The corpse was taken from the mud in the branch and conveyed to the morgue in the ninth precinct patrol wagon. At the morgue the body was stripped of its clothing and placed on the table, to be kept there for identification.

#### *The Remains Identified*

The body was badly disfigured and the clothing was so muddy that the color of the goods could hardly be distinguished.. The articles taken from the pockets of the clothing and a stud taken from the shirt bosom dispelled all doubt as to the identity of the body and afforded proof positive that the remains were those of the missing pay clerk. Among the articles found in the pockets were a pair of eye-glasses, a pocket comb, 40 cents and an advertising match safe that was distributed during the Knights Templar conclave last October.

Mr. Frank Schwartz, an intimate friend of Jones, was satisfied after viewing the articles mentioned that the body was that of his friend.

This morning Mrs. Jones and her son visited Lieut. Kelly's station and identified the study and other articles taken from the clothing. Mrs. Jones' son viewed the body and further satisfied himself that it was that of his stepfather.

#### *Jones' Disappearance on Christmas Day*

The missing paymaster's clerk southeast, on Christmas day. He had been suffering from neuralgia during the day and in the afternoon he wrote a letter to his wife before leaving home. He mailed the letter almost within sight of his own home and was afterward seen in a restaurant on 8th street near the marine barracks. He was last seen going in the direction of the Anacostia bridge. That was after dark and that was the last time he was seen alive. Between 8 and 9 o'clock that night three men on their way across the bridge heard a splash, but, on account of the darkness, they could not see whether the body of a person arose to the surface or not. They paid no attention to the sound, but two or three days afterward, when they learned that Jones was missing, recalled the circumstances. The failure of Jones to return home that night greatly distressed his wife and when she received the letter the next morning she was fully convinced that her husband had jumped overboard, for he wrote:

"When this letter reaches you I will be cold and stiff in the Potomac, dead."

The splash heard near the bridge that night was undoubtedly made by Jones' jumping from the bridge. The next morning Jones' slouch hat was picked up off the arsenal pint by the captain of a tug boat.

Prior to his disappearance his honesty had never been questioned, but his accounts were soon afterward examined and found to be more than \$3,000 short.

#### *Certificate of Death By Suicide*

This morning Coroner Patterson investigated the case and gave a certificate of death by suicide. In looking over the clothing taken from the dead man's body a cuff was found with Jones' name written upon it.