

SAMPLE HISTORY: Individuals

NOTE: This sample history, comprised of fictional information, represents in format, scope of content, documentation and length the type of narrative history required for a historical marker application. It is presented as a general guide for developing a narrative of an individual.

CHESTER T. JONES 1831-1891

I. CONTEXT

Progressive leadership influenced the early development of the town of Turnbuckle and chartered its course in history. When confronted by adversity by the common transitional phases that all emerging communities must address, individuals came forth to provide the critical decision-making, the sound planning and even the calculated risks essential for sustained growth. In that regard, no person was more instrumental in Turnbuckle's development than Chester T. Jones. An active business leader and an unrelenting advocate of the city's promise and potential, he symbolized the spirit that characterized Turnbuckle's early history. His tireless efforts on behalf of his beloved community not only influenced its initial successes but helped set the agenda for its future growth.

II. OVERVIEW

Born in Grant, Tennessee, on August 14, 1831, Chester T. Jones was the son of Michael and Lucy (Mason) Jones. His family later lived in Louisiana before moving to Post Oak County in 1842. Near present-day Royville, Michael Jones established a dry goods store. About 1847, he moved the business eight miles southwest to the Riparian River and reopened his store on the town square in Turnbuckle.¹

Chester T. Jones worked in his father's store until 1849, when he went to New Orleans to attempt his own hand at business. He stayed with family friends Mr. and Mrs. H.L. Myers initially. Over the next four years, Jones did many odd jobs, including river guide, ditch digger and doctor's assistant. He returned to Turnbuckle in 1853 and took over his father's business after Michael Jones passed away in 1855.²

In 1861, Chester T. Jones left to join the Confederate Army. However, a foot impairment that he suffered in childhood led the Confederacy to send Jones home. For the duration of the war, he continued to run the dry goods store. On March 22, 1863, he married Daisy Judith Long (1839-1928) of Millerstown.³

Despite the adversities of Reconstruction, Turnbuckle developed steadily after the Civil War and Jones figured prominently into that important transformation. Indicative of his leadership and public service was his role in a group organized to establish a college in the city. Known initially as Turnbuckle College, the institution was formally chartered by the Texas Legislature in the 1870s as Middle Texas College. Jones also helped initiate the local Chautauqua organization, which brought renowned speakers and entertainers to Turnbuckle. Of his many civic contributions, Jones was particularly proud of his role in organizing the town's volunteer fire department, which he directed for the first 20 years of its existence, from 1870 to 1890.⁴

In business, Jones was in the forefront of economic development. A charter director and later president of the Turnbuckle Railroad Corporation, he oversaw establishment of the town's first rail line in the 1870s. Linking up with an existing line at Millerstown, the new commercial artery proved vital to Turnbuckle's continued growth.⁵ In the early 1880s, Jones sold his business to the firm of Smith and Wayne and opened a private bank. In 1892, his financial institution became Turnbuckle National Bank and he became its first president. Jones also initiated a water works, which he eventually sold to the city, and a feed and seed business that shipped locally grown produce to widespread markets. He was also a founding member of the chamber of commerce formed in 1888.⁶

Jones was active in real estate and, over the years, amassed sizeable holdings throughout the county, but particularly in the vicinity of Turnbuckle and Marionville. Jones believed Marionville, like Turnbuckle, held great economic potential and he planned eventually to link the two by rail. To aid in the development of Marionville, he donated land for the construction of the community high school and also conveyed property to the Marionville Baptist Church.⁷

The Jones family home, located at 334 Lanier Street in Turnbuckle, still stands. There, Chester T. and Daisy raised two children: a son, Randall L. Jones, and a daughter, Josephine, later the wife of Daniel Rogerson.⁸ By 1890, Jones turned his attention toward the railroad project linking Turnbuckle and Marionville. He passed away on January 30, 1891, before the right of way was finalized.⁹ He and Daisy (d. 1928) are buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Turnbuckle.

III. SIGNIFICANCE

As a legacy to Chester T. Jones, the Marionville railroad link was completed in 1892, influencing even greater economic growth for Turnbuckle well into the 20th century. Jones' leadership and projects within the community of Turnbuckle helped a small town grow into an important city. As a leading merchant, founding member of the chamber of commerce, founder of the local college, coordinator of Chautauqua programs and organizer of the fire department, Jones contributed significantly to the 19th century development of Turnbuckle. His business interests included a bank, waterworks, and most importantly, the Turnbuckle Railroad Corporation, which linked Turnbuckle to neighboring cities and ensured its continued economic success. No other individual in the late 1800s contributed more to the growth of this city. His impact continues to be felt more than a century after his death.

VI. DOCUMENTATION

¹ Prater, Elihu. *Beyond the Rim: A History of Early Post Oak County*. Jergenson: Post Oak County Historical Commission, 1978, p. 104; *Post Oak Express* (Turnbuckle), February 1, 1891.

² *Post Oak Express*, February 1, 1891.

³ Wilson, John R., editor. *Texana History*. Crosbyton: Blanco Canyon Press, 1989, p. 502; Genealogical information written in family Bible, now in possession of Chester T. Jones's descendant, Mrs. Emma Smith of Turnbuckle.

⁴ Chester T. Jones papers, Turnbuckle Public Library, folder 4-2.

⁵ Post Oak County Deed Records, County Clerk's Office, Post Oak County Courthouse, Turnbuckle, Texas: 15/73 (railroad charter), 15/159 and 32/180.

⁶ Post Oak County Deed Records: 32/468; Prater, p. 159; *Texana History*, p. 527; *Post Oak Express*, February 2, 1891.

⁷ Post Oak County Deed Records: 56/88 and 62/504.

⁸ *Post Oak Express*, February 2, 1891.

⁹ *Post Oak Express*, February 2, 1891