

Jones, Edmund ^[1]

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by Joe O'Neal Long, 1988

15 Apr. 1848–25 Feb. 1920

Edmund Jones, soldier, attorney, and public servant, was born into a life of ease on his father's plantation, Clover Hill, situated about six miles north of [Lenoir](#) ^[2] in [Caldwell County](#) ^[3]. The family name has long been associated with the settlement of the upper [Yadkin](#) ^[4] Valley and the development of a stable government there. He was the son of Sophia C. Davenport and Edmund Walter Jones, who spent his entire life at Clover Hill. Both his grandfathers, General Edmund Jones and Colonel William Davenport, were military heroes and men of distinction and honor in the area.

Jones's early background of luxury and refinement provided him with many advantages, including the best of scholastic training. After attending [Bingham Military School](#) ^[5], he entered [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[6] but left in 1864, at age sixteen, to enlist as a private in Company F, Forty-first North Carolina Infantry, of the Confederate Army. Before he was seventeen Jones took part in the siege of Petersburg. Later he participated in General Wade Hampton's Raid, in which 2,500 cattle were captured from Ulysses Grant and brought behind Confederate lines. He remained with his brigade during the final stages of the [Civil War](#) ^[7], never missing a day of duty. Late in the conflict, Jones was engaged in the fighting on the road to Appomattox. He was a member of the force of thirty to forty men who made their way through the Northern lines to carry to President Jefferson Davis the first official notice that General Robert E. Lee was going to surrender. Jones then reported to General P. G. T. Beauregard, and was told to go home and await further orders. His three brothers also served the Confederate cause: Colonel John T. Jones was killed at the Battle of the Wilderness on 6 May 1864, Captain Walter T. Jones was mortally wounded at Gettysburg, and Captain William Davenport Jones, a member of General Collet Leventhorpe's staff, was also wounded.

After the war Edmund Jones reentered The University of North Carolina; he was enrolled from 1865 to 1868 but did not graduate. (The university subsequently awarded him the A.B. degree in 1911.) In 1868 he entered the law department of the University of Virginia, where he studied under John B. Minor. He then returned to Clover Hill in Caldwell County to farm and to start a political career.

In 1870, at age twenty-two, Jones was elected to the [General Assembly](#) ^[8]. Serving from 1870 to 1872, he was a member of the legislature during the impeachment of Governor William W. Holden. In 1879 he served another term in the house. In 1881, Jones read law under Colonel George W. Folk, took the required examination, and was licensed to practice. He opened a law office at Lenoir and quickly rose to prominence in his profession, assuming a leadership role in the bar of western North Carolina. In 1885 Jones was appointed by President Grover Cleveland to the post of chief of the Customs Division of the Treasury Department, where he served until 1889. When offered the position again in 1893, he declined it, as acceptance would have meant giving up his legal career. In the same year, he served a third term in the North Carolina House of Representatives.

In April 1898, at the outbreak of the [Spanish-American War](#) ^[9], Jones mustered Company C of the Second North Carolina Volunteer Infantry, U.S. Army. He was captain of the company until it was dissolved at the end of the war. During the conflict he was in command of Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Fla. There he organized a military prison, which was continued after the war.

In 1916 Jones was a candidate in the [Democratic](#) ^[10] primary for the office of attorney general. He finished second but did not demand a second run-off to which he was entitled.

On 29 Oct. 1872 Jones married Eugenia Lewis in [Raleigh](#) ^[11], her hometown. The daughter of Major A. M. Lewis, she died leaving four children: Augustus, Edmund, Eugene Patterson, and Sarah D. Jones later married Martha Snell Scott, a native of Caldwell County. He was a lifelong Episcopalian.

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