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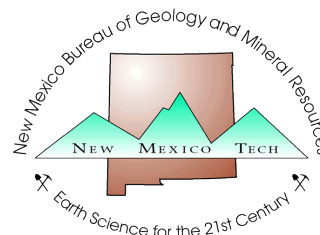
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Fayette A. Jones, mining engineer— a profile in diversity

by Candace L. Holts, Associate Editor, New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, Socorro, NM

Professor Jones is a self-made man in the true American meaning of the word . . . [He] is first of all, a practical man, who believes in a strenuous life; this coupled with his scientific attainments and versatility, strict integrity and a genial nature, make him a prominent example for the youngsters of New Mexico.

—Santa Fe *New Mexican*
April 19, 1902

Fayette Alexander Jones, a man of many talents, led an extraordinary life marked by an astonishing array of vocations, ventures, and adventures. A mining engineer, he served as third and seventh president of the New Mexico School of Mines—the only person to hold the office more than once. The above excerpt is but one from the many articles proclaiming his virtues and diversity. As part-time editor, author, and lecturer, he had ample opportunity to keep his name in the public eye—opportunity he was not inclined to overlook.

Jones was born on a farm 9 mi southeast of Independence, Missouri, on August 1, 1859 to Elizabeth Gray Jones, a close relative of the Lee family of Virginia; and Martin O. Jones, a descendant of the Puritans. Martin helped settle Jackson County, Missouri in 1848, and served briefly with the Union Army during the Civil War. The war touched the entire family in 1863, when Martin was forced to abandon his farm during guerrilla warfare along the state border. Although Fayette was only 4 years old at that time, he later wrote that the “. . . destruction, desolation, death and despair are as vivid today as they were [then]. . . .” (Twitchell, 1917).

He had little early education, “consisting of what a country school could afford to impart” (Twitchell, 1917). Before entering college, he worked in a flour mill for 2 years in Blue Springs, Missouri, as engineer, bookkeeper, and assistant miller. Two years later the mill’s financial agent absconded with a large sum of money, ruining the owners (one of whom was Martin Jones) and thereby ending Fayette’s job (Santa Fe *New Mexican*, 1902).

In 1880 Fayette entered the Missouri State University, which he attended for 2 years. He supported himself at the time by working at the university agricultural farm for 10 cents an hour. In 1882 he quit

college for financial reasons and married Agnes Almyra Cairns, daughter of a Missouri farmer. Over the next few years, three children were born: a son, Elston; a daughter, Theta Phi; and a second son, Frank (Twitchell, 1917).

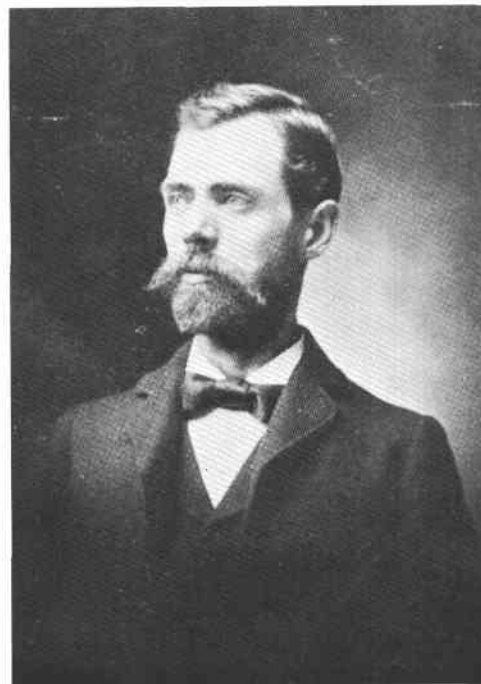
In 1883 Jones accepted a job teaching in a country school and also the position of city engineer for Independence, a post he held until 1889. In addition, from 1884-88, he held two other positions: deputy county surveyor for Jackson County and assistant road and bridge commissioner. This simultaneous wearing of several hats was characteristic of his entire life (Twitchell, 1917).

Fayette became a college student again in 1889, enrolling at the Missouri State School of Mines at Rolla. During his second year, he was offered the opportunity to support his young family by serving as assistant professor of engineering and mathematics. In 1892 he graduated first in his class, with degrees in both civil and mining engineering. Awaiting him was a job with the Union Mining Company in Phoenix, Arizona—and his first trip to the Southwest (Santa Fe *New Mexican*, 1902).

At the Union mine, Jones was successful in laying the longest pipeline—14 mi—in the Arizona Territory. While working on the pipeline, he and his co-workers were attacked by the infamous Apache warrior, “the Kid.” The party, said Jones, “narrowly escaped death” (Santa Fe *New Mexican*, 1902).

In the fall of 1893, he donned one of his former hats to become chief of a railroad surveying party. The arduous task of this crew was to survey a line from Maxwell City, New Mexico, west through Cimarron Canyon to Elizabethtown, over Taos Pass to Taos, and from Taos to the Rio Grande. The economic crash of late 1893 prevented completion of this project, although the group was successful in making a preliminary survey (Santa Fe *New Mexican*, 1902).

Jones spent much of the next 2 years as chief of engineers for an expedition crossing the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Upon his return, the family moved back to Missouri, where he had been appointed U.S. assayer in charge of foreign ores for the Port of Kansas City. In the spring of



FAYETTE A. JONES.

1896, he also became a chemist for the Missouri Geological Survey (Twitchell, 1917).

The family moved back to the Southwest in the summer of 1898, for Jones had been hired as Director of the New Mexico School of Mines in Socorro. As third director of the 11-year-old school (Christiansen, 1964), he initiated various academic programs and began the first directed athletic program by coaching the school baseball team. These years comprised a period of substantial growth for the school. In 1901 he also became field assistant for the U.S. Geological Survey; a position he held until 1906 (Twitchell, 1917).

In 1902 the Nashville College of Law chose to recognize Professor Jones by awarding him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. The letter from the college’s President Farr began enthusiastically: “. . . I have the honor to inform you that the Honorary degree of Doctor of Laws has been conferred upon you . . . and if you could feel the unostentatious ecstasy which pervades the recesses of my heart in rejoicing in your happiness, I am sure you would say, ‘It is well’ ” (Farr, 1902). The newly titled “Dr.” Jones was pleased to accept the honor (and remit the requisite 10 dollars). He used the title frequently for the rest of his life.

After leaving the New Mexico School of Mines in 1902, Jones moved his family to Albuquerque. This move was the most practical approach to continuing both his

position with the U.S. Geological Survey and his private consulting. In addition, he had investments in a farm and other property in Missouri, and in a western mining company. Correspondence housed in the New Mexico State Records and Archives shows his extensive interests in mining companies and landholding over the years.

In 1903 Governor Miguel A. Otero appointed him to the New Mexico Board of Exposition Managers for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis World's Fair, 1904. The board was made up of three Democrats, including Jones, and four Republicans (Santa Fe *New Mexican*, 1903). Jones, chairman of the Committee on Mines, has been given credit for the superb display of New Mexico minerals at the fair.

One of the outstanding accomplishments of Fayette Jones's career was his book, *New Mexico mines and minerals*—the first comprehensive record of mineral resources in the New Mexico Territory—prepared for the 1904 World's Fair. Jones tried to contact everyone who could possibly contribute to such a study: In return, he received letters, photographs, ore samples, water analyses, pamphlets, and the memoirs of miners who had made New Mexico's 1880's mining boom a reality. He incorporated the information into his book and preserved much of the correspondence he received. Accuracy of the book is questionable in some cases: Jones, after all, was bent on promoting his consulting business, and the New Mexico Bureau of Immigration (the publisher) was eager to reach potential residents of New Mexico. While *New Mexico mines and minerals* was produced partly as promotional tourist and immigrant literature, the book is still considered the first definitive work on the subject.

For the next 2 years Jones acted as statistician of the U.S. Mint for precious metals of New Mexico (Twitchell, 1917). He continued to consult for mining companies, and advised and assisted clients with mining investments. Jones, widely known and trusted by investors, acquired substantial property and stock holdings in return for providing new companies with investors. During this period he also wrote articles for the *Engineering and Mining Journal*, *Mining Science*, *Mining World*, and the New Mexico Bureau of Immigration. In recognition of his many accomplishments in the field of mining, in 1906 he was elected New Mexico vice president for the International Miners' Association (Knight, 1972).

In 1908 he was hired as a geologist by

the Colorado, Columbus, and Mexican Railway. The same year he also founded and edited a magazine, *South-Western Mines*.

Undoubtedly one of the highlights of his life took place the following year: He joined an expedition planning to explore Tiburon Island, off the west coast of the Mexican mainland. The group hoped to find gold deposits and other mineral wealth. Several parties had previously attempted the trip, and some lives had been lost. One group died of thirst (with the exception of one man), and another party was shipwrecked near Tiburon (Jones, 1910). Among the known hazards were the reportedly savage Seri Indians. The Socorro *Chieftain* (1909) reported that "These Indians, it is claimed, are cannibals and of a very low order of the genus homo. They practically belong to the stone age. . . ." The trip was originally organized by a group of six men from Bisbee, Arizona. Correspondence from the group spokesman, James Johnston (1909), suggests that contrary to the report in the Socorro *Chieftain*, Jones had *not* "received an urgent invitation to accompany" the group, but rather had simply been accepted in the same manner as any other applicant; however, after Jones began to publicize the expedition, people wrote to ask *his* permission to join the party. Accounts of the forthcoming excursion appeared in such newspapers as the Chicago *Daily News* and the New York *Herald*. Requests to join Professor Jones were numerous.

Although the original plan was to have 15 to 20 men in the party, ultimately only 8 journeyed to Tiburon. Permits for arms were obtained through the American Consul at Hermosillo, because the Seri Indians were evidently not only cannibals but, according to Johnston, "dirty, thriftless and sneaky"! The party left Arizona for Guaymas in mid-October of 1909. From Guaymas, they carried full provisions for about a month's stay on the island. The Mexican government provided them an escort of 50 Mexican soldiers, and they sailed to Tiburon. By early December, rumors of death had begun. A Kansas City newspaper gave an El Paso dateline for this item (Cunningham, 1909):

Missing for a month on the cannibal Island of Tiburon in the Gulf of California, eight Arizona men and fifty Mexican soldiers are believed to have met the same fate as Prof. Thomas Grindell, who was killed on the island several years ago while leading an exploring party. The island . . . is inhabited by the cannibal Seri Indians, a remnant of renegades driven from the mainland. . . . Americans . . . are preparing to ask

Governor Torres of Sonora to send a rescue party. . . .

In late December all eight explorers returned. They were disappointed, not having found gold mines, but on the other hand, neither had they been eaten by the "cannibals." Jones reported that the Grindell party had not been murdered—rather, they had died of thirst in the Sonoran desert. He also pointed out that, in over 5 weeks on the island, his party had not seen a single Indian. On the mainland, however, they had seen several Seris—all friendly and eager to trade their bows and arrows for food and clothing. Jones and his party inferred from their observations that the Seris lived on Tiburon only during the turtle season, between May and July (Jones, 1910).

Further, he declared there were no mineral resources on Tiburon itself (Jones, 1910):

Nothing of value in minerals was found and the unanimous verdict of the party pronounced the island practically destitute of mineral wealth. Thus, the supposed golden treasure of the island is now a shattered dream and the spell of enchantment that once surrounded it has been forever broken by the Jones expedition.

As restless as ever, Jones then went to Oregon to practice mining engineering in 1910 and 1911. He also accepted the post of chief of the geological and mineralogical explorations through central British Columbia, to help develop the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (Twitchell, 1917).

The next new role for Professor Jones came with his appointment to the New Mexico School of Mines Board of Regents in April 1913 (a short appointment indeed, for in July he was again selected as president of the school). He had "attained a United States-wide reputation as an explorer and educator" (*Independence Examiner*, 1913); news of his appointment was greeted with considerable interest throughout the Southwest. The Board of Regents had fought over this election, with Jones's primary enemy being C. T. Brown (Torres, 1913; Jones, 1913a, b, and c). Brown, a major mine operator in Socorro County and a leading benefactor of the school over the years, served on the Board of Regents from 1899 to 1922, with a conspicuous absence from 1913-17; not coincidentally, the years of Fayette Jones's second presidency (Christiansen, 1964).

Prior to the election, Jones's letters reflect both his personal ambitions and his growing concern for the welfare of the

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school: In a letter written only a few days before the election, he stated “. . . no one realizes better than myself the great and thankless task entailed in building up an institution of learning in which the public has lost interest and confidence.” He had some very positive ideas to improve the situation (Jones, 1913d):

It is my plan to have every newspaper in the state—at most every one of its issues—to have something to say about the school and its work in developing the mineral resources of the state. . . . We will invade every mining camp in the state and rub up against those engaged in the business of mining. We will find new mineral species and describe them and set the scientific press at work all over the country. . . . Everybody must get busy, it will be catching.

After winning one particular battle at a regents' meeting, local photographer and regent Joseph E. Smith warned Jones to remain wary: “The hydra-headed monster,” said Smith, “will die hard—look out for a sting in the dark” (Smith, 1913).

Jones's opinion of the situation after the election was expressed in a forthright manner: To Magdalena businessman W. M. Borrowdale, another School of Mines Regent: “Hundreds of congratulations have come to me. . . . You have succeeded [by hiring Jones] in ‘busting’ the most iniquitous political catapult and trust that has ever had its grip fastened on the people.” To Governor McDonald: “I built the institution up once and I now find conditions there worse than in the beginning. . . .”

From 1913-16 Jones was a mining commissioner for the New Mexico Board of Exposition Managers for the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. Still president of the New Mexico School of Mines, he viewed this as yet another prime opportunity to publicize the school.

In 1915 Jones initiated the New Mexico Mineral Resources Survey, a forerunner of the New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources. Previously, he had tried to get state support for a geological survey, but was unsuccessful. His publication, *The mineral resources of New Mexico* (essentially a shortened revision of his 1904 *New Mexico mines and minerals*), was published by the Survey in 1915 as Bulletin 1. This book and the two that followed helped promote the School of Mines. No financial support was provided by the state, making the publication of these three books a significant accomplishment (Christiansen, 1964). The New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral

Resources, finally established in 1927, owes much to these early efforts.

In 1916-17 the school also published *The Gold Pan*. Fayette Jones was founder, general editor, and manager of the periodical; faculty members and students worked together to make it more than just a college newspaper: *The Gold Pan* was circulated widely throughout New Mexico's mining camps (Christiansen, 1964). At the time, Jones was also superintendent of the Department of Mines and Minerals for the New Mexico State Fair—thereby effecting additional publicity for the School of Mines.

By 1916, Jones, again in the grasp of restlessness and eager for new challenges, inquired about possible exploration parties to Peru, Chile, and China. Although he had not found a new position yet—apart from his usual consulting—he resigned the presidency of the New Mexico School of Mines in the summer of 1917 (Ashcroft, 1972).

Still concerned that the state had no bureau of mines, he continued to push for legislative action in 1917-18, during which time he compiled the state mining laws (Ashcroft, 1972). In 1918 he served as mineral examiner for the U.S. Land Office in Albuquerque; a position followed by more years as an Albuquerque consultant.

The Depression of the early 1930's caused Jones severe economic hardship. He owned property in several places, including Albuquerque and Missouri, but no one could or would buy land at the time—especially undeveloped land. Scraping together the property-tax money was difficult at best. He also had outstanding loans, some long overdue, and his creditors did not want to wait, for they too had unpaid bills. With his own old age financially insecure, Jones worked feverishly in behalf of the Townsend Plan, a proposed forerunner of the Social Security act. He belonged to more than one Townsend Club and wrote many letters to federal and state officials to gain support for the proposal.

Fayette Jones died on April 4, 1936, having lived almost 77 years of an exceptionally full life. A man of many accomplishments, he served as editor, author, lecturer, bookkeeper, assistant miller, farm worker, country schoolteacher, city engineer, county surveyor, assistant road and bridge commissioner, student, assistant professor, civil engineer, mining engineer, miner, assayer, chemist, geologist, college president, baseball coach, private consultant, explorer, political lobbyist, researcher, statistician, mineralogist, college regent, mineral examiner,

financial manager, organizer, and—perhaps most significantly—promoter.

The minerals industry in New Mexico might not be quite what it is today without the past influence of Fayette Alexander Jones. His comprehensive book on early mining camps and New Mexico geology, his fight for a state bureau of mines, his establishment of the New Mexico Mineral Resources Survey, his many efforts on behalf of the New Mexico School of Mines and his correspondence with many of New Mexico's miners—all contributed an insight into an exciting and productive period in New Mexico history. In a state that continues to rely heavily on its mining and minerals industries, Fayette Jones has left an indelible mark.

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