

**Merchant James C. Jones
and Some History of Clanton's "Block 10A"
By Derric Scott
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From newspaper research and information from the Facebook group "U know u lived in CLANTON as a kid," and other sources.

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Merchant James C. Jones And Some History of Clanton's "Block 10A"

James C. Jones was one of the fundamental and influential building block citizens of Clanton at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. He was a popular merchant for over two decades.

He and his wife Sophia were active members of the Clanton Methodist Church (which would later become the Clanton First United Methodist Church). They were important threads in the social fabric of the town. For most of J. C.'s life, the Methodist Church was the original wood-frame building (at the same location as the present one). The current Church building was completed in 1924.

J. C. was born in the "Yellow Leaf" community, near Jumbo northeast of Clanton, on December 22nd, 1873 into a farming family. His mother was from the Mullins family in the Jumbo community. By 1900 he was 26 years old, boarding in Clanton with W. I. Mullins, and working as a salesman. Later in 1900, he also married into the Mullins family by wedding Sophia Leah Mullins.



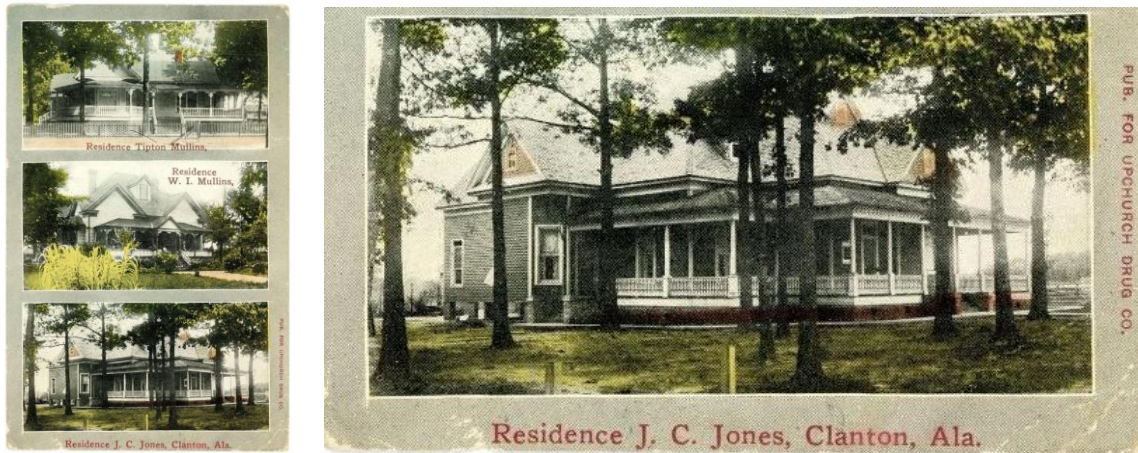
1901 Photo of W. I. "Bill" Mullins' store (Mullins seated), NE corner of 2nd Ave N and 7th. J. C. Jones expanded.
(Names in photo, L-R: Dock Ayers, J. Watts Moore, W. I. "Bill" Mullins (seated), John Will Davis, James C. Jones, Crit Jones)

By 1910, they have had one child who did not survive; they would have no other children to survive.

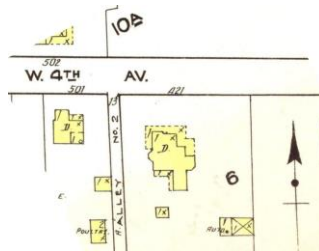
By the first of January, 1903, J. C. opens his own mercantile store, running an ad saying, "I have just opened a full line of Dry Goods, Notions, Shoes, Hats and Fresh Fancy Groceries. Come and look at my line before purchasing elsewhere." It seems that J. C. Jones' store was the brick building on Main Street (2nd Avenue North) next to the E. M. Pinckard Co. store. This store was originally built by Tipton Mullins and much later housed Levine's.

In the spring of 1906, J. C. and Sophia decided to build a new one story wood-frame home on the south side of 4th Avenue North, west of Clanton near what is now 12th Street. This new house was one of three featured on a postcard made for Upchurch Drug Co. around 1908. The other two houses were owned by W. I. Mullins and Tipton Mullins respectively. It is visible on the 1917 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

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Circa 1908 Postcard for Upchurch Drug Co. and enlarged snippet showing J. C. Jones second house.



Snippet from the Clanton 1917 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing J. C. Jones' first house.

Meanwhile, progress continues! In May of 1908, J. C. and other merchants on the block (E. M. Pinckard and Bryant McKee) had pavement sidewalks installed.

J. C. Jones partnered with another merchant, W. A. Kemp, at the end of 1909 and changed the name of the store to J. C. Jones & Co. They worked together for about a year before W. A. Kemp sold his share to Ross Mullins. The J. C. Jones & Co. store continued for over a decade.

Around 1915 another of the leading merchants in town, Mr. E. M. Pinckard, decided to leave Clanton and sell his home and property. He owned practically all of the city block enclosed by 7th Street, 1st Avenue North, and 6th Street (what is today the Police Station, Regions Bank, and more). J. C. and Sophia purchased this home and property.

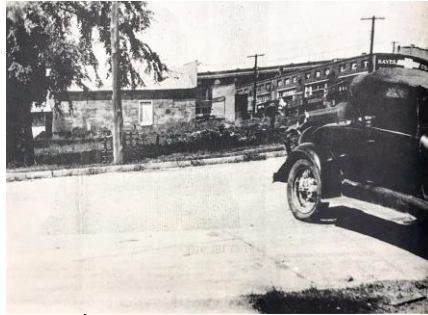
An aside... sadly, the wood-frame house that J. C. and Sophia originally built on 4th Avenue North burned down on November 20, 1922. It was owned by J. A. Nivens at that time.

By the end of 1924, J. C. Jones decided to retire and do some traveling. The Alred Mercantile Co. bought the J. C. Jones & Co. business from him. Later in August of 1925, one of the first automobile service stations was built and opened on the corner of 7th Street and 1st Avenue on J. C.'s property. It was leased from J. C. by J. P. Lawrence and was run by L. E. "Dief" Diefenderfer (originally from Thorsby). Dief was very experienced with automobiles and had worked at the Ford dealership for years. This was said to be the first and only station between Birmingham and Montgomery at the time.

Back in Clanton from his travels, J. C. soon felt the urge to open a new store. This time he renovated an older wood-frame building on his 1st Avenue property just beside Dief's Service Station. The old wooden building (built by Judge Callen) was one of Clanton's original storefronts on 2nd Avenue North. It was

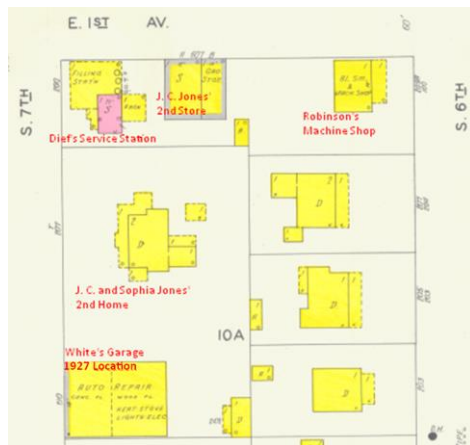
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subsequently moved twice, finally ending up on 1st Avenue. In January 1926 it was announced that J. C. Jones was opening a new store beside Dief's Service Station.



Pre-1935 photo from 6th St. showing wooden 2nd store and empty new PO lot (also Hayes Chevy, old PO, & Exchange Hotel).

J. C. continued to improve his property and in 1927 he renovated the old Pinckard warehouse building on 7th Street south of his home. He leased it to White's Garage, which previously was sharing a building with Robinson's Machine Shop on the corner of 6th Street and 1st Avenue (also J. C.'s property). Robinson's Machine Shop took over the whole space upon White's Garage's move. All these businesses can be clearly seen on the 1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.



Snippet of Clanton 1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

J. C.'s new store was simply called "J. C. Jones" and was very successful for several years, right up until tragedy struck in March of 1930. J. C. died suddenly, after a stroke, at the age of 57. His assistant of many years at the store, Mr. Cleve Armstrong, ran the store until Jones' brother-in-law, Mr. W. Z. Hodges, took over. Mr. Hodges continued to run the store for another year or two. Mr. Armstrong became the manager of the A & P Store in July of 1930.

The new U. S. Post Office was built on J. C.'s property on the corner of 1st Avenue North and 6th Street in 1935. Today, that building is the Clanton Police Station. The old wood-frame store beside Dief's Service Station was replaced by a brick building in August 1935, originally rented by Dr. Lawrence for his office.

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Early 1970s aerial photo shows 7th St view of Deif's Service Station, brick building and Post Office, and J. C. Jones 2nd home



Early 1970s photo shows 1st Ave view of front of 1935 U. S. Post Office and brick building which replaced J. C. Jones' store.

For several more decades Sophia remained very active in the Clanton social scene and visited her family in Jumbo and Birmingham often. She continued to live in the house on 7th Street until her death in 1955. Both she and J. C. are buried in the Clanton Cemetery.

An interesting tidbit: Sophia's sister, Ruth Kate Mullins, married Jacob Shepard (they moved out of Clanton). They had a daughter named Kate Shepard, who married Hogan Jackson. Kate and Hogan Jackson then had a daughter whom they named Kate... Kate Jackson would become a very successful actress in big TV series hits like *Dark Shadows* and *Charlies' Angels*! Ruth Kate Mullins Shepard later married Hoyt Taylor and eventually moved in with her sister in the house on 7th Street and lived there almost until her death in 1987. As a child, in the 1960s and 1970s, Kate Jackson often visited her grandmother in the house on 7th Street in Clanton.

The grand old house on 7th Street, the old Service Station, and the brick building beside it were all torn down prior to or during the building of the new Regions bank location in the late 1980s or 1990.

References

Union Banner, many small items in many issues. Too many to list.

Facebook groups "*U know u lived in CLANTON as a kid,*" "*WE GREW UP IN CLANTON, ALABAMA*" and others.

Thomas Blalock's tireless research in old newspapers and Internet archives.

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Appendix I

Union Banner, February 9th, 1928 Who's Who in Clanton Series James C. Jones

The secret of success is constancy to purpose according to Disraeli, an English novelist of a couple of generations ago. This thought so tersely expressed by the Writer will be accepted as an axiom for many generations to come.

It may be that this thought, together with many others that light the way on the road to success, influenced our townsman Mr. J. C. Jones several generations ago, for it has been proven time and time again by scientists that one's history begins a hundred years or more before one's birth.

Be that as it may, truly constancy to the purpose of the attainment of success unquestionably has characterized the subject of this sketch. Mr. Jones' success as a merchant is the fulfillment of his boyhood dreams, for as a tiny lad it was his ambition to become a merchant and throughout his youth he worked with that thought in view, and today we find him as one of Clanton's most popular merchants so acknowledged by his many customers all over the county who have stood by him for years in his business activities.

Mr. Jones is the son of Mr. William W. Jones and Eliza Mullins Jones. He was born at Yellow Leaf, December 1873. Mr. Jones received his first schooling in the County School and later he attended the McMorries Academy in Clanton.

In keeping with his ambition Mr. Jones became a clerk for W. I. Mullins in 1897 where he worked until 1907, at which time he established his own business in the Mullins building which was built especially for him. The style of the firm will be remembered as J. C. Jones and Company. In 1913 Mr. Jones formed a partnership with the late Ross Mullins who was beloved all over the county. Messrs. Jones and Mullins operated their general merchandise business in the building known as the P. D. Wilson building and under the name of the Clanton Mercantile Company. Their business became one of the most successful general merchandise stores ever known in Chilton County. They did advancing business on a large-scale and bought cotton, and on the whole their establishment proved to be quite an asset to this county.

On October 31, 1900, Mr. Jones married his lovely wife who was before her marriage Miss Sophia Mullins, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Mullins, who also lived at Yellow Leaf. Mr. and Mrs. Jones both mean a great deal to Clanton and their love for their town is demonstrated by the interest they show in all the enterprises of the town. Mr. Jones is a steward of the Methodist Church and Mrs. Jones is an active worker in that church.

In 1924 Mr. Jones retired from business and he spent some time traveling but his energetic nature would not stand for much rest, and a few years ago he went back into business on First Avenue, the name of the firm being J. C. Jones, and again Mr. Jones is enjoying a splendid business, having reestablished his popularity as a merchant. He is being assisted by one of Clanton's former merchants, Mr. G. C. Armstrong.

Some people are endowed with many talents and Mr. Jones is one of the fortunate; besides having attained success as a merchant, he is one of Clanton's most prominent holders of real estate.

Mr. Jones has a large family connection in this county. His sisters, Mesdames W. Z. Hodges, A. S. Prince, and Irene Raspberry reside in Clanton, and a fourth sister, Mrs. W. E. Mauk, makes her home in Birmingham. His two brothers, Mr. Oscar Jones and Mr. Claude Jones, are citizens of Clanton.

As a businessman, as a citizen, and as a friend Mr. Jones holds an exalted place in his community, and his friends are numbered by those who know him.

Just as previously mentioned citizens foresee a bright future for Clanton, just so Mr. Jones, also a farsighted citizen, believes the future holds great things in store for Clanton.

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Appendix II

Union Banner, August 8th, 1907 The Man on the Corner Some of the Sights He Saw, and Some He Saw Not.

Come, stranger, with me, and let me introduce to you some of our leading merchants. A walk down Clanton's main street, and meeting some of our leading citizens will interest you.

B. E. Jones' is the first store we will stop at. Bass, as he is generally known to his friends and intimates, is a genial whole-souled fellow, who will gladly serve you with anything in the way of general merchandise. Laugh and grow fat is his motto, and he lives up to it.

J. H. Shepherd, manager of the firm of Cannon & Sons, is here for business, and if a square deal will make business, you can depend upon getting it here. Just now, he is making a specialty of shoes by the car load, and you know that whatever you buy here is of A. I. quality.

C. R. Mullin's specialty is insurance. He represents some of the best companies on earth, and if he can't interest you in insurance it's a pity. Likewise he deals in sewing machines, pianos and organs, and somehow or other he is bound to make music.

Step in here at the Florence Drug Store, where Dr. P. I. Hopkins dispenses the medicines that make you well. The Doctor has a wide general practice and is a general favorite with the public of Chilton county.

E. M. Pinckard, of the big general store, is so well known to the people of Chilton county, that it seems almost superfluous to introduce him to anyone. Always smiling and pleasant, he buys more cotton than any other firm in Chilton, and as to selling goods, well, I suppose he can tell you more about that than I can.

J. C. Jones is a whole team by himself, a product of Chilton county he knows what the people want, and, knowing, gives it to them. He believes in a fair deal to everyone, and has by doing so built up a fine trade.

Harmon Headley, of the firm of Headley and Bro., is big and busy. While he is a big man, he is not too big to attend to your wants, however small, and will just as soon wait upon you for a small order as a big one.

Let us cross the street and visit the Clanton Furniture Co., where T. L. Carter will show us the finest stock of furniture that has ever been seen in Chilton county, not to forget the special 5 and 10 cent counters. Mr. Carter has a splendid assortment of furniture and is doing a big business.

Well just for a moment, we will step into the Post-office, and greet the postmaster, F. O. Dudley, always obliging and accommodating.

The Peoples Savings Bank, where W. T. Callen is Cashier, and J. A. Thomas his assistant, is too well and favorably known to the people to need any introduction, save to strangers. Anything you need in their line of business will be gladly attended to.

Then we come to the Clanton Bank. Dr. E. A. Matthews is the presiding genius, ably seconded by E. B. Deason. If you want to borrow money, or have cash to invest, call upon them and get reliable information. "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

E. E. Upchurch, of the Upchurch Drug Co., is a popular young man, a pharmacist who can be depended upon to fix your prescriptions just as the Doctor directs. Then for jewelry and the other et ceteras of his business he has a fine assortment.

Abe Kanter, but everyone knows Abe, of W. Kanter & Bro., the original and only Abe. For ladies' goods there is no better place to deal between Montgomery and Birmingham, and Abe is so polite the ladies always appreciate it.

Who doesn't know Spigener & Jones, the hardware people? W. D. Spigener is quiet and always ready for business, while his partner, C. F. Jones, is the model of elegance and politeness. Any iron pot purchased of Mr. Jones assumes at once the elegance of a silver vessel.