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The Legacy of the Builder: Joseph T. Jones and the Development of Gulfport, Mississippi

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"The South needs a few more Joneses; great men of big wealth who dare to use it, perhaps selfishly, but incidentally to the lasting betterment of the world."[1]

On June 24, 1902, nearly 3,000 people waited patiently in the humid night air of Mississippi's Gulf Coast to listen to a speech by a former Union soldier turned Gilded Age investor. The speaker, Joseph T. Jones, was a relative newcomer to Mississippi who quickly became known for his passion as a "builder."[2] Jones unveiled his plans to enhance Gulfport through a series of economic and civic projects, including the construction of a union railroad station, a bank, a state-of-the-art resort style hotel, a new headquarters for the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad, an electric generating plant, and a beach promenade.[3] While these are merely a sampling of his projects that created a thriving New South city at Gulfport, these improvements also represent Jones's attitude of civic paternalism. The propensity for building reached far beyond his desire to create an economic empire in the New South, as civic improvements to benefit both residents and visitors were also an important part of his long-term plan for the city of Gulfport. After his death, the Jones family worked to shape public spaces to memorialize one of Gulfport's founders and its most important early patron.

This article will serve two distinct but related purposes: the first is to examine Jones's role in the growth and development of Gulfport between 1896 and his death in 1916, with an emphasis on how these actions reoriented spatial geography and

[1] "Harlequin on Gulfport," *Biloxi Daily Herald*, August 8, 1903.

[2] "Influence of a Railroad on the Lumber Trade in Mississippi," *American Lumberman*, No. 1590, November 11, 1905, p. 29.

[3] "Big Things In Store for Gulfport," *Biloxi Herald*, June 26, 1902.

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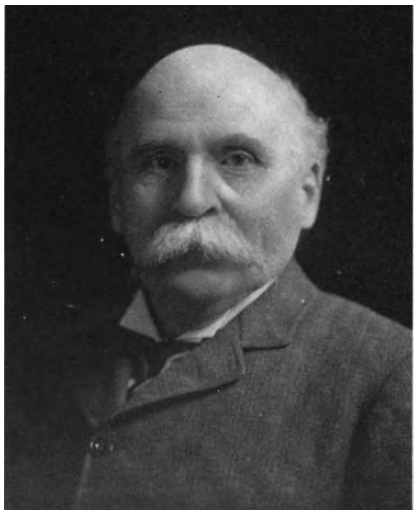
how his sense of civic paternalism impacted the fabric of the city. The second goal of the article will be to examine the Jones legacy as it relates to Mississippi, or in historical terms his memorialization. While on the surface Jones appears to be a typical Gilded Age Industrialist, his unique story of success reveals a complex figure determined to both complete a profitable railway and port and to shape space and place in the nascent coastal city. Rather than walk away from an economically unfavorable enterprise, Jones's stubborn persistence resulted in Gulfport's becoming a regional market town and an international port that during his lifetime dominated the international lumber shipping trade and came to be labeled the "Gateway to Panama." The success of his endeavors reoriented spatial geography on local, state, and regional levels as his improvements spurred economic development. Jones also used his wealth to provide civic amenities to the city. Donations of public lands, the building of a grand promenade, and the establishment of a golf club, yacht club, and a resort hotel with a grand public garden highlighted Jones's interest in civic paternalism. In the aftermath of his death, various parties sought to shape the public memory of "the Grand Old Man of Gulfport" in both literature and via commemoration in the city. While a sketch of Jones's early years are provided here for historical context, this article purposely focuses on his enterprises on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the latter years of his life and the ways in which he is memorialized.

"Captain Jones"

By the time Joseph Jones became a key player in the growth and development of Gulfport he was entering the twilight of a long and successful business career. Born in 1842 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, less than a year before his father, Albanus Jones, perished in a yellow fever epidemic while working as a contractor in Pensacola, Florida. His mother, Jane, remained in Philadelphia, and Joseph spent his youth in that city. Like many of the men of his generation, the Civil War greatly influenced him both mentally and physically. In 1861 at the age of nineteen, Jones enlisted as a private in Company H of the 91st Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers. The regiment experienced the horrors of war first hand, taking part in bloody encounters at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and the Wilderness. The young Jones eventually rose to the rank of first lieutenant and acting captain before being medically discharged for serious wounds to both feet suffered at the Battle of

Cold Harbor on June 2, 1864.[4] Similar to many men of his generation, Jones often chose not to speak about the experiences of war unless prodded, and even then his comments were brief. He chose not to dwell on the conflict but instead put it behind him, in a pattern Gerald Linderman terms "hibernation." The war certainly influenced his political agenda, for like many former Union officers Jones was a staunch supporter of the Republican Party until his death.[5]



Joseph T. Jones, circa 1908. Image from A History of the City of Buffalo.

After a lengthy recuperation at his mother's home in Philadelphia, Jones decided to try his luck in the burgeoning Verango County, Pennsylvania, oilfields. Like many other entrepreneurs of the era, Jones decided to pursue a career drilling in the oil fields due to their close geographic proximity and for the chance to make a solid return on his investment. Less than a decade after its discovery at nearby Titusville, oil was in demand as a source for the production of kerosene heating oil, and small operators could get started with a modest investment. Still walking on crutches, Jones's early attempts at drilling resulted in failure, earning him the nickname "Dry Hole" Jones and saddling him with a $6,000 debt. Not to be deterred, Jones finally struck oil on his thirteenth try in the spring of 1867, with his first working well netting some $90,000 by the winter of the same year. Thus began his career as an oil producer, which would eventually make him one of the largest crude oil producers in the United States and a very wealthy man. On April 20, 1876, along with three other investors, he established the Bradford Oil Company, in which he later purchased a controlling interest in 1879. The same year, Jones married Melodia (Lou) Blackmarr on October 15, 1876. The

[4] Samuel Penniman Bates, *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers*, 1861-65, Volume 3 (Harrisburg, PA: B. Singerly, 1869-1871), 186-233; Michael A. Leeson, *History of the Counties of McKean, Elk and Forest, Pennsylvania* (Chicago, IL: J. H. Beers and Co. Publisher's, 1890), 369-370.

[5] Gerald, Linderman, Embattled Courage: *The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 266-275; Lewis Gould, "Party Conflict: Republicans versus Democrats 1877-1901," in *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America* edited by Charles W. Calhoun (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996), 219-220. Gould argues that the Republican Party was strongest in the Northeast in the years after the Civil War.

couple had two children, Joseph Albert and Grace.[6]

By 1883, Jones owned 584 oil wells. In addition to his holdings in Bradford, Jones acquired a large oil operation in Sistersville, West Virginia, in 1891. In the same year, at the request of his wife, the Jones family purchased a substantial home in Buffalo, New York. Soon his business interests extended to western New York, including: real estate near Buffalo, New York, the Pettibone Paper Mill, the Cataract Milling Company, and a controlling interest in the Niagara Gorge Railroad. He also invested in mining entities in the American west and Peru. By 1895 Jones controlled businesses in at least three states, and his net worth was in excess of $2,000,000. Instead of entering a comfortable retirement as he approached his fifty-fifth birthday, the captain was instead contemplating a new business interest far removed from his current holdings: the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad located in south Mississippi. Little did he know that this business investment in Mississippi would result in perhaps the greatest challenge of his life.[7]

Reorienting Geography: The Gulf and Ship Island and the Port at Gulfport

The Mississippi Gulf coast in the mid-1890s consisted of several small towns, including Bay St. Louis, Pass Christian, Mississippi City, Biloxi, and Scranton (Pascagoula). The Louisville and Nashville Railroad already existed as an east-west route linking the seaports of Mobile and New Orleans, but the chartered and unfinished Gulf and Ship Island Railroad sought to provide a north-south linkage of the Gulf Coast with the new regional market town of Hattiesburg and the state capital at Jackson. A connection between the coastal waterways and the interior would provide an international shipping point for a number of products: cotton, corn, and most importantly, the forest products industry. In fact, the antebellum vision for the railroad elucidated the importance of constructing the rail line to funnel Mississippi products via a proposed Mississippi port with its outlet at Ship Island, with the goal of competing with the ports of Mobile and New Orleans. The Gulf and Ship Island was first chartered by the state of Mississippi in 1850 and again in 1856, to secure a sufficient number of investors. In the years leading up to the Civil War, Mississippi simply did not have the resources to complete the line, and

[6] Leeson, 370; Melodia Rowe, *Captain Jones: Biography of a Builder* (Hamilton, Ohio: The Hill-Brown Printing Company, 1942), 39-40, 60-63, 142,155-156.

[7] Western New York Heritage Press, "The Joseph T. Jones Family," http://wnyheritagepress.org/photos_week_2011/joseph_t_jones.htm (accessed September 9, 2011); Neill McElwee, "Joseph T. Jones: Early Oil Region Producer," http://www.oil150.com/essays/2007/02/j-t-jones-early-oil-region-producer (accessed February 27, 2013).

the charter lapsed.[8] The company was resurrected in 1882 under a new state charter with former Confederate general Wirt Adams as president. Later the company stockholders elected a new president, William Harris Hardy. Like Adams, Hardy was a former Confederate army officer turned entrepreneur. He was a key player in the early years of the Gulf and Ship Island and brought direct experience in the funding, building, and construction of a regional rail line to the table. His prior involvement with the completion of the New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad in 1883 with 196 miles of track from New Orleans to Meridian, Mississippi, had proven he had both the vision and the management skills to bring such a project to fruition. His long-term vision included not only new rail lines to extract the valuable timber resources of the region, but also a new city to serve as the southern terminus of the railroad. In 1887, acting on behalf of the Gulf and Ship Island and the advice of civil engineer S. Whinery, Hardy purchased 5,000 acres of mostly vacant land on the Gulf Coast east of Long Beach and west of Biloxi. His hope was to develop a new port city on this parcel of land, which he named Gulfport. The location had the advantage of a natural but shallow channel that allowed vessels to pass between Ship and Cat Island. While this approach was not of sufficient depth for larger ships, with additional dredging it offered the most direct natural route to the coastline. Hardy thus set the stage for the construction of the rail line and offered the hope of a new port city on the Mississippi Gulf.[9]

Contrary to his positive experience with the New Orleans and Northeastern, Hardy, during his tenure as the head of the Gulf and Ship Island encountered a number of difficulties, including the abuse of convict labor during the construction of the road line, the sudden death of two of the railroad's key supporters, and a serious economic depression. Two construction companies, the Union Investment Company and later the Tobey Construction Company, failed to make significant progress on the road between 1887 and the summer of 1892. In August of 1892 the railroad went into receivership, and construction ground to a halt for a period of

[8] *Address of the Commissioners of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad: Delivered at an Adjourned Meeting Held at the City of Jackson, Monday, June 7th, 1858*. (Jackson: Mississippian Steam Power Press Print, 1858), 10-16; "A *Memorial To Congress: For the Request of Lands to Aid the Construction of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad*, December 4, 1871, University of Southern Mississippi Special Collections, McCain Library, Hattiesburg, MS.

[9] Gulf and Ship Island Minute Book, 1887-1907, University of Southern Mississippi Special Collections, McCain Library, Hattiesburg, MS, 87-94; Toney A, Hardy, *No Compromise With Principle: An Autobiography and Biography of William Harris Hardy and the Mississippi He Loved* (New York: American Book-Stratford Press, 1946), 229-243.

almost three years.[10] The Gulf and Ship Island was not the only road that floundered during this time period, which historian John F. Stover has termed a railroad depression, for by 1894 twenty-five percent of all railroads nationwide found themselves in receivership. Stover's research also uncovered another trend: southern railways were increasingly bought and controlled by northern businessmen. The Gulf and Ship Island would follow this pattern.[11]

Joseph T. Jones first became aware of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad in the summer of 1895, when the Olean (New York) based Spencer S. Bullis contacted W. W. Bell, president of the First National Bank of Bradford, attempting to raise investment capital to bring the line out of receivership. Unlike Jones, Bullis's business experience was primarily in eastern timber mills and regional railroads, making him a natural person to sell the venture to potential capitalists. In addition to Jones and Bell, Bullis presented his proposal to form a construction company to take over operations of the railroad and bring it out of receivership to C. P. Collins and C. V. Merrick. His sales pitch worked, and in November of 1895 the five men incorporated the Bradford Construction Company in West Virginia.[12] In August of 1896 the Gulf and Ship Island reorganized with the Bradford Construction Company, and more specifically, Captain Jones, as the major stockholder. On September 7, 1896, Jones became president of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad, a position he would hold until his death in 1916.[13] According to his niece and biographer, Melodia Rowe, "The people of Biloxi and the Gulf Coast heard nothing directly of Captain Jones for several years to come. He was referred to vaguely as "Northern Capital."[14] This would soon change as Jones became more enamored with the Gulfport project and actively participated in affairs at Gulfport.

Early on, S. S. Bullis was the onsite manager and the face of the project in Gulfport. Jones made his first visit to Gulfport in 1896, and by 1897, he was deeply

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[10] Gulf and Ship Island Minute Book, 132; "The Gulf and Ship Island Railroad Controversy Settled," *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), August 17, 1892. For a broader discussion of the formation of the Gulf and Ship Island, see Gilbert Hoffman, *Steam Whistles in the Piney Woods*, Volume 2 (Dexter, MI: Thomson-Shore, Inc., 2002), 86-89; For an account of the deaths of Jones S. Hamilton, Jr. and Wirt Adams, see "Rich Section Opened," Sandusky *Daily Star*, September 5, 1900; Bradley G. Bond, *Political Culture in the Nineteenth-Century South: Mississippi 1830-1900* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 203-204.

[11] John F. Stover, *The Railroads of the South: A Study in Finance and Control* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 254, 281.

[12] Rowe, *Captain Jones*, 179-182; L. E. Chapin, ed. *Olean, New York "City of Natural Advantages" Its History and Institutions* (Olean, NY: Persons, Sibley and Spaulding, Art Printing House, 1889), n.p.

[13] Gulf and Ship Island Minute Book, 156-158; McElwee, "Joseph T. Jones."

[14] Rowe, *Captain Jones*, 185.

involved in the construction of not only the railroad, but also a proposed deep water harbor to connect the line to international markets. On July 28, 1898, the Mississippi Legislature voted to incorporate the city of Gulfport. By 1900, the railroad reached Jackson, covering a distance of 161 miles and fulfilling its purpose of linking the new city of Gulfport to the state capital.[15] In 1906 Jones constructed a new state-of-the-art combination hotel and railroad station in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to enhance services along the main Gulfport to Jackson route.[16] The rail line immediately impacted the region. Sawmills soon dotted the landscape along the Gulf and Ship Island. A 1905 *American Lumberman* report listed sixty-two sawmills along the main line from Gulfport to Jackson, with cutting capacity ranging from 20,000 to 250,000 board feet per day. Former agricultural laborers, many seeking to escape the sharecropping system, left farms to take wage labor jobs in the new mills.

Jones continued to develop the line by acquiring and expanding two existing spur lines. First, the Columbia, Lumberton and Gulf, acquired in 1900 extended the line westward to Lumberton and Columbia.[17] Jones oversaw the completion from Columbia to the main line of the Gulf and Ship Island at Mendenhall by 1906. In total, this spur line contained just under 105 miles of track. A second spur line, the Laurel and Northwestern, which connected Laurel with Taylorsville and Mize, was purchased in 1899 and extended westward to the Gulf and Ship Island main line at Saratoga. This completed spur was forty-two miles in length and brought the total mileage of the entire Gulf and Ship Island system to 307.56 miles. Each of the spurs allowed for connections with major sawmills, in particular the Camp and Hinton Mill in Lumberton and the Eastman, Gardiner and Company Mill at Laurel, which had daily cutting capacities of 250,000 and 200,000 board feet respectively.[18] Lumber traveled from these mills to Gulfport, where it was loaded on vessels for delivery to foreign ports. For example, the Camp and Hinton mill had contracts in both Europe and Panama during the first decade of the twentieth century.[19]

The completion of the rail route meant access to millions of acres of pine timber; the rails brought timber to the coast, where the harbor provided the key to opening the region to foreign markets. Although a pier existed and some shipping operations began as early as 1897, it took several more years to dredge a deep-water channel seven miles across the Mississippi Sound from Ship Island to the Gulfport

[15] "Rich Section Opened," *Sandusky Daily Star*, September 5, 1900.

[16] New Orleans *Times Picayune*, November 22, 1906.

[17] Gilbert Hoffman, *Steam Whistles in the Piney Woods*, Volume I (Hattiesburg, MS: Longleaf Press, 1998), 196.

[18] "Influence of a Railroad on the Lumber Trade in Mississippi," *American Lumberman*, No. 1590, November 11, 1905, 29-30.

[19] Hoffman, *Steam Whistles in the Piney Woods*, Volume I, 202, 206.

harbor. Jones paid for a majority of the harbor and channel developments out of his own pocket, determined to see Gulfport become a successful and thriving center of transportation.[20] Although estimates vary, Jones spent at least $1,500,000 dredging the channel and developing the port facilities. The federal government at first opposed the project, stipulating in an 1881 report that "no improvement at the locality was desired or needed."[21] By 1899, with Jones assuming a leadership role in dredging the harbor, the federal government finally authorized a $150,000 payment to Jones as general contractor upon completion of the dredging of the ship channel and the harbor. On January 24, 1902, the "Port of Gulfport" officially opened with the roaring approval of over 500 spectators. Since Jones had paid for the development of the harbor with his personal funds and owned the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad, some local businessmen feared limited access would constrain local economic growth. Jones, however, understood the importance of broad access to the port facilities and petitioned to have the port come under federal control. In June 1906, the federal government agreed to take over maintenance of the harbor and channel to Ship Island in a bill signed by President Theodore Roosevelt with a gold pen provided by the Gulfport Business League.[22]

The new port immediately became a beehive of activity. In 1904 some 269 steamships, barks, ships, and schooners cleared the port with a total tonnage of 286,551. A 1906 federal report documented that "These vessels carried 245,000,000 feet of lumber and timber, 93,000 barrels of rosin, and 255,000 gallons of turpentine, the total value of these exports being nearly $4,000,000."[23] While some of these exports came via coastal transport from lumber mills along the Pascagoula and Pearl Rivers, the majority arrived at the docks via the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad. In its most prolific year, 1911, the harbor served as a conduit for 327,520,000 board feet of timber, as well as sizable quantities of cotton and naval stores.[24] The port serviced the growing piney woods region by providing a direct outlet to the Gulf of Mexico and offering a shorter and more efficient alternative to the older established regional port cities of Mobile and New Orleans.

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[20] John Switzer, "History of the Port of Gulfport," *Manifest: Official Quarterly Publication of the Mississippi State Port Authority at Gulfport* Vol. 3, No. 3, Summer 1992, 1-7.

[21] "Anchorage Basin and Channel at Gulfport, Mississippi and Ship Island Pass," *United States House of Representatives Document No. 184*, December 6, 1906; Gulf and Ship Island Minute Book, 217.

[22] "Will Sign With Gold Pen," Biloxi *Daily Herald*, June 13, 1906; "Uncle Sam Now in Control," Biloxi *Daily Herald*, July 11, 1907.

[23] "Anchorage Basin and Channel at Gulfport, Mississippi and Ship Island Pass," *United States House of Representatives Document No. 184*, December 6, 1906

[24] Gulfport *Daily Herald*, September 26, 1912.

In the fashion of Gilded Age businessman, Joseph Jones constructed a transportation empire based in Gulfport that stretched its tendrils into the Mississippi piney woods. Jones's actions reveal his level of personal interest in the growth and development of the city: by March of 1901, he had bought out all of his partners in the railroad and shipping operations and become the sole owner of the Gulf and Ship Island and its Gulfport operations. Since he had earlier purged the company of the few remaining native southerners, he was left in total control of the line. Unlike William Harris Hardy, Jones had the money and the capital to sustain a railroad corporation and build a port to open the pine belt of Mississippi to international markets. He also joined a growing number of northern businessman who either directly or indirectly controlled railroad operations in the south.[25] A contemporary of the two put the economic impact of Jones's actions more bluntly: "Wm. H. Hardy, now our honored Circuit Judge, did all in his power, others did the same, but without Jones nothing was ever finished."[26]

Shaping the City: Civic and Business Ventures

By 1901, Jones traveled to Gulfport regularly and spent at least part of the year there. Although Mrs. Jones remained rooted in Buffalo, she occasionally accompanied Jones on his trips south, but the captain preferred the coastal climate during the winter months. His interest in the success of the Gulf Coast seemed to his peers to be an intense infatuation. While industrial profit was certainly at the center of Jones's plans, he also pursued substantial civic improvements. On June 24, 1902, Jones dramatically laid out plans for an improved port city in front of an estimated crowd of 3,000 people, which included Mississippi Governor A. H. Longino and other federal, state, and local politicians. His plans included a lavish hotel and a sturdy, modern railroad office building on the point of land just north of the Gulfport Harbor. Also included was a union station for the city, a new bank building, an electric generating plant, and a promenade for pubic enjoyment. This meeting also involved a call for removal of the county seat from Mississippi City to Gulfport, a move which the citizens of the county supported and that officially occurred one year later in 1903.[27] This meeting, organized and promoted primarily by Jones, showed his inclination to shape place and space in the growing town and

[25] Stover, *Railroads of the South*, 275-284.

[26] John H. Lang, *History of Harrison County, Mississippi* (Gulfport, MS: The Dixie Press, 1936), 179. This portion of his reminiscences of life was written on October 1, 1907, and later included in his monograph.

[27] "Big Things In Store for Gulfport," *Biloxi Herald*, June 26, 1902.

Great Southern Hotel, Gulfport, Mississippi. Circa 1913.

highlighted his vision of melding business ventures with improvements benefiting the general public.

Jones's plans quickly unfolded, and by the end of July, work was under way on the new railroad office building. Despite a brief wage strike by brick masons, the project proceeded rapidly, and by October 1902 the third floor of the structure was under construction.[28] The three-story, $100,000 Gulf and Ship Island Office Building opened in March of 1903. The Renaissance Revival edifice contained Jones's personal office and served as the center of operations for the railroad. The adjacent Great Southern Hotel with its sweeping, unobstructed views of the Gulf, opened in July of the same year.[29] Designed by noted New Orleans architect Thomas Sully, the combined complex was the crown jewel of Jones's facilities in Gulfport.[30] Between the two structures, elegant landscaping created a park-like atmosphere for the enjoyment of citizens and visitors alike. Constructed with southern pine and cypress, the Great Southern Hotel offered visitors 250 rooms with modern amenities such as full electric service and hot and cold baths. In 1905, a journalist for the *American Lumberman* described the new hotel:

> "The siding is rough sawed and bevel stock treated to a coat of creosote, subsequently painted a dark green. The outside trim is made entirely of cypress and painted white. The interior trim is largely of cypress. The dining room, whose ceiling is supported by heavy built up columns, is finished to resemble Flemish oak and the resemblance is close." [31]

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[28] Biloxi Daily Herald, August 1, 1902; Biloxi *Daily Herald*, October 3, 1902; Biloxi *Daily Herald*, October 16, 1902.

[29] "Great Southern Hotel," *Biloxi Herald*, July 25, 1903.

[30] S. Frederick Starr, *Southern Comfort: The Garden District of New Orleans* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 230. Sully also designed the Hotel Hattiesburg for Jones.

[31] "Influence of a Railroad on the Lumber Trade of Mississippi," American Lumberman, 29; Biloxi *Daily Herald*, May 15, 1903.

A boardwalk extended from the hotel to the nearby beach. A mile-long pier connected the Great Southern to the newly formed Gulfport Yacht Club, and guests could either walk the pier or take a tram out to the club. Jones was a key player in developing the yacht club, of which he was elected commodore. From the pier, launches offered trips to the nearby coastal islands for beach excursions and "surf bathing."[32] The hotel was designed to attract first-class clientele and hopefully winter season customers from colder northern climates. By 1913 Jackson newspaperman Fred Sullens rated the hotel as one of the finest resorts in the south.[33] To Jones the hotel was not only a business venture, but also a family home. The Jones family often occupied a five-room private suite while in residence on the coast.

In early 1902, Jones signed on as one of the original stockholders of the First National Bank of Gulfport, capitalized at $100,000. True to his word in his June 1902 address, Jones erected a block of commercial buildings north of the Gulf and Ship Island terminals. At the corner of 13th Street and 26th Avenue, the Beaux Arts style bank anchored the block and served as one of the main financial centers of the fledgling town.[34] In addition to this building, he collaborated with E. A. Durham to construct four new stores on 26th Avenue between 13th and 14th Streets.[35] The new brick buildings stood in stark contrast to the poorly constructed wood-frame buildings that characterized Gulfport's early existence. Jones's intention was clear: to have a first-class city one must have first-class facilities.[36]

Part of Jones's plan involved relocation of the Harrison County seat of government from Mississippi City to Gulfport. Jones in particular pointed to the need for a suitable county courthouse. To this end, he offered title to thirteen lots worth some $8,000 on which to erect a new center of government.[37] This move, however, was not without controversy. On November 11, 1903, the heirs of John Martin filed a lawsuit which challenged not only the validity of the ownership of the land donated for the courthouse, but also much of the land that comprised downtown Gulfport. The suit intimated that John Martin had in fact purchased a parcel of land, which included that deeded for the courthouse, at a public land sale on October 28, 1839. The suit further alleged that Martin died in 1848 without selling the land, and that based on those grounds the property still belonged to the Martin heirs.

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[32] Flora K. Scheib, *History of the Southern Yacht Club* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1986), 475-477.

[33] Biloxi *Daily Herald*, January 22, 1903; "A Fine Hotel and a Good Manager," *Gulfport Daily Herald*, October 30, 1913.

[34] Biloxi *Daily Herald*, February 5, 1902.

[35] Ibid., January 31, 1903.

[36] *Gulfport Record*, July 9, 1904.

[37] "Big Things In Store for Gulfport," Biloxi Daily Herald, June 2, 1902.

The court case dragged on for roughly six years, eventually reaching the United States Supreme Court. The court ruled in favor of Jones and the Harrison County Board of Supervisors.[38]

At least in the eyes of the Harrison County Board of Supervisors, the outcome of the case was never in doubt, as they moved to accept the deed from Jones and authorized construction of a new courthouse on the land he donated. Jones transferred the land to the county on June 4, 1902. Harrison County residents summarily voted to move the county seat to Gulfport from Mississippi City, and the county lost no time in erecting a suitable seat of county government. Designed by Andrew J. Bryan, a highly acclaimed New Orleans architect who designed a number of southern courthouses, and constructed by the M. T. Lewman and Company, the new courthouse building was state of the art in design. A number of Bryan's masterpieces, like the courthouse in Gulfport, incorporated neoclassical design features. The Louisville, Kentucky, based Lewman firm was likewise a regional firm which oversaw construction on the Bryan project. The new courthouse opened on November 9, 1903. Citizens of the late 19th and early 20th century viewed the courthouse as an expression of public pride, and indeed the construction of a new courthouse was in itself an architectural statement about their belief in progress, modernity, and their faith in future growth of the city. Although he did not control the building or the design of the courthouse, by donating the land Jones had nudged the board of supervisors to relocate the county seat and assured that Gulfport would be the new administrative center of Harrison County.[39]

To encourage interurban travel, Jones developed an electric interurban rail line connecting Biloxi, Gulfport, and Pass Christian under the auspices of the Gulfport and Mississippi Gulf Coast Traction Company. Organized with capital of $1 million dollars in the spring of 1905, it included a new $150,000 electric generating plant for the city of Gulfport.[40] In July 1905, Jones purchased the Biloxi Electric Railway and Traction Company for $200,000, a deal which consolidated his hold on both the trolley systems and electric power generating plants in Harrison County's

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[38] *W. O. Rogers, Jr., Ellen G. M. Rogers, John B. Martin, et al. v. Joseph T. Jones, the County of Harrison, et. al*. 214 U.S. 196. United States Supreme Court decision rendered May 24, 1909.

[39] *Municipal Journal and Public Works*, V. 13, N. 6 (July-December 1902), 26; Charles Sullivan, *The Mississippi Gulf Coast: Portrait of a People* (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, 1985), 113, 115; Wilber Caldwell, *The Courthouse and the Depot: The Architecture of Hope in an Age of Despair* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), ix, 2-5, 152, 259, 576.

40 "Gulf Coast Traction Line," Biloxi *Daily Herald*, March 30, 1905; "Huge Power House for the Gulf Coast Electric Railroad," *Biloxi Daily Herald*, June 5, 1905.

coastal towns.[41] Jones's primary goal was the establishment of a trolley line that would stretch from Biloxi to Gulfport, but speculative newspaper accounts suggest that Jones planned an interurban line, which would eventually stretch eastward to Pascagoula and perhaps Mobile. While the eastward connection never materialized, the line eventually did extend westward to Pass Christian, but for once Jones's plans were thwarted; he would not be able to build the trolley line along the beachfront. Instead, the trolley line in Pass Christian ran behind beachfront homes gracing the waterfront. His building and acquisition of electric plants in conjunction with the trolley lines also laid the foundation of the modern day Mississippi Power Company.[42]

Jones's philanthropy extended beyond the gift of a parcel for a county courthouse. He also provided land for the erection of local churches for both white and African-American congregations. Racial segregation was the rule of law in the early 20th century South, and Gulfport was no exception. While blacks represented an important part of the community, and a crucial part of the local labor force, the city itself was spatially segregated. Jones, a former Union soldier, certainly recognized the freedom of African-Americans, but he also conformed to Southern racial practices and segregation laws. Jones employed a number of African-Americans in his numerous business ventures in Mississippi, but they were engaged mainly in menial labor positions. In 1906, an African Methodist Episcopal church formed in Gulfport, and the congregation likely appealed to Jones for help, for in 1907 he donated the land for the Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church. While Jones's action showed that his benevolence extended to the local African-American community which constituted a growing part of the city's population, he also made certain that his gift of land maintained spatial segregation in the city.[43]

In February of 1909, Jones suffered either a stroke or a nervous breakdown, which limited his involvement in his business endeavors. The severity of his illness and the extent to which it affected him long-term is difficult to determine, but a report

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[41] "Electric Plant Sold to Jones," *Biloxi Daily Herald,* July 7, 1905.

[42] "Syzygy of Trolley Line," Biloxi *Daily Herald*, May 29, 1906; "Electric Line is Probable," Biloxi *Daily Herald*, March 15, 1906; Frank A. Brooks, Jr., "Along the Line of the Gulfport and Mississippi Coast Traction Company," Gulfport *Daily Herald*, September 26, 1912; Frank A. Brooks, Jr., "Traveling By Trolley in Mississippi," *Southern Traction*, September 1983, 15-24; Rowe, *Captain Jones*, 239.

[43] *Phillip Thomas Tucker, Father of the Tuskegee Airmen: John C. Robinson* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2012), 3; Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Containing Principally the Biographies of the Men and Women, Both Ministers and Laymen, Whose Labors during a Hundred Years, Helped Make the A. M. E. Church What It Is* (Philadelphia, PA: Book Concern of the AME Church, 1916), 314-315.

in the Biloxi *Daily Herald* termed it a "nervous breakdown caused by long pressure of business."[44] His biographer, Melodia Rowe, termed it "a slight apoplectic stroke" but also referred to it as a "complete nervous breakdown."[45] Jones left Gulfport on a special invalid train and spent nearly four months recovering in New York and Virginia before departing for Europe for further treatment. A direr picture of the captain's health circulated in 1910, which described him as an "invalid" unable to oversee the daily operation of the company. While this last assessment was likely speculation, nevertheless Jones was in poor health for the final seven years of his life.[46] His son Albert, better known as Bert, initially played a key role in Gulfport. During 1909 and 1910, he oversaw daily operations of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad. In addition to serving as a vice president of the railroad company, Bert was instrumental in the development of the Great Southern Golf Club.[47] He was clearly the successor to his father's business interests, but sadly, his leadership of the company was brief. He died from complications of malaria on Christmas day of 1910. After Bert's death, the elder Jones re-engaged as the prime decision maker for the Gulf and Ship Island, but his physical condition limited his ability to work the long hours necessary to retain a tight grip on the company. His daughter Grace stepped in at least once in 1916 to mediate a dispute at the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad and keep the line operating, hoping to resolve the issue to protect her father's health.[48]

Memorializing the "Builder"

Jones continued to oversee many of his coastal operations until his death on December 6, 1916, in Buffalo, New York. His interment was in Forrest Park Cemetery in Buffalo, in the Jones Mausoleum on the grounds. At a memorial service in Gulfport, W. G. Evans provided this apt eulogy of Jones:

> "Capt. Jones is gone and a veil of sadness has been drawn over the city and the entire community and indeed over the state. All we can do is cherish his memory, for it can be truthfully said that he has been a benefactor to South Mississippi and the entire state.

[44] Biloxi *Daily Herald*, March 26, 1909.
[45] Rowe, *Captain Jones*, 248-249.
[46] "Will a Struggle Follow for G. and S. I.?," Gulfport *Daily Herald*, December 28, 1910.
[47] "Meeting of the County Club," Biloxi *Daily Herald*, September 10, 1909.
[48] "Miss Grace Jones Said to Have Settled Strike," Gulfport *Daily Herald*, March 24, 1916.

> When another man like Capt. Jones will do for Mississippi what he has done, no one can foresee."[49]

His wife and daughter shared equally in his estate, which the *New York Times* estimated to be worth "$35,000,000 in 1916.[50] In 1919, a court agreement gave his wife Melodia Jones control of the holdings in the northern states, while daughter Grace E. Jones Stewart gained the Mississippi portion of the Jones empire.[51] Grace continued to be involved in the economic and civic life of Gulfport and served as the president of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad from 1919-1925. In the latter year, she sold the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad to the Illinois Central, a competing national line, which had long coveted the linkage to the port of Gulfport. The Illinois Central system officially took over the route on July 1, 1925.[52] On Saturday, July 11 of the same year, the city hosted a large group of Illinois Central executives at the Great Southern Hotel. This occasion was one of both reflection on the accomplishments of Joseph T. Jones and of the promise the infusion of new capital would bring to the city. At the banquet, the president of the Illinois Central system praised Joseph T. Jones's many accomplishments and asked the question "Where is the monument that the people of Gulfport should have built to the memory of Captain Jones?"[53]

To some Gulfport residents, the question was a prescient one. Even before his death, at least one newspaper account singled out the entire city of Gulfport as a "monument to individual enterprise, the creation of one man- Joseph T. Jones of Buffalo."[54] Calls for a permanent memorial to Jones began the day after his death when local residents, led by the superintendent of Beauvoir, Elnathan Tartt, initiated the plea for a suitable monument to memorialize Jones.[55] Former Gulfport Mayor John Lang contended in his reminiscences that while "Captain Jones monument is the railroad, channel, harbor, hotel, upon which he spent millions" some suitable memorial should be constructed.[56] Taking up the call to action, Lang's wife in 1925 worked to establish a Jones Memorial fund through the American Legion, but despite a substantial fundraising campaign in the local papers, no memorial came of the effort. The community would have to wait for another decade before

[49] "Eulogies for Capt. J. T. Jones," Gulfport *Daily Herald*, December 11, 1916.
[50] "Woman May Head Railway," *New York Times*, December 8, 1916.
[51] "Estate of Late J. T. Jones Divided," Gulfport *Daily Herald*, March 5, 1919.
[52] Gulfport *Daily Herald*, July 1, 1925.
[53] "Illinois Central Head Honored Banquet Guest," Biloxi *Daily Herald*, July 13, 1925.
[54] Biloxi *Daily Herald*, April 2, 1909.
[55] "Biloxians Believe Monument Should be Erected to Capt. Jones Memory," Gulfport *Daily Herald*, December 7, 1916.
[56] Lang, *History of Harrison County, Mississippi*, 221.

an official monument to Jones materialized.[57]

In subsequent years, memorials to Jones, all of which worked to shape his public memory, followed three distinct patterns. The first was through literature that anchored his place in coastal history and placed his life in context of the Mississippi Gulf Coast and her other great men. A second method of memorialization was the creation of living memorials, or memorial spaces dedicated to Jones while also functioning as public spaces. The third method was the most traditional: the construction of a physical monument, which honors the co-founder of Gulfport. Each shaped the public memory of Jones in subtle ways and created associative memories with his legacy and the city of Gulfport.

Literature, and in particular biographical treatment of a subject, can be a powerful tool in shaping public memory. During his lifetime, biographical accounts, likely prepared in close cooperation with Jones, circulated in a variety of publications. These often contained the same basic information on his life distilled into a brief sketch or vignette.[58] By the late 1930s many of those who knew Jones personally were in the twilight of their lives. One popular method of commemorating notable figures of the time was through historical biography. Some twenty years after his death, the Jones family published a detailed full-length biography of their patriarch. Authored by his niece, Melodia Blackmarr Rowe, *Captain Jones: Biography of a Builder* is a well-written, thorough account of Jones's life; while objective it is not a critical study of his life, nor was it intended to be. It also stands as the only full-length biography of Jones. As a member of the family, Rowe had access to many of Jones's personal papers on which to base the account.[59] The broader goal of the work, however, was to remember Jones's exploits via a credible account of his life and to place him in historical context for a younger generation. This work certainly succeeded in its effort, as it remains on the library shelves of at least thirty-three major libraries.[60]

Chapters in two monographs, the 1940 work *Men of Spine*

[57] "Fund Started by Mrs. Lang," Biloxi *Daily Herald*, July 20, 1925.

[58] For example, see *A History of the City of Buffalo: Its Men and Institutions* (Buffalo, NY: *Buffalo Evening News*, 1908), 184-185.

[59] Rowe, *Captain Jones*.

[60] A search of Worldcat.org on November 20, 2013, reveals holdings by thirty-three libraries.

> *in Mississippi* by Clayton Rand and the 1951 work *Gulf Coast Country* by Hodding Carter and Anthony Ragusin, also served to celebrate Jones as an integral part of Gulf Coast history. Both of the works paint the picture of a man driven to build a new city and see it succeed. These posthumous recollections not only salute Jones as a "builder," but offer positive reinforcement of his efforts in Gulfport. Readers are left in awe of Jones by these largely salutary biographical sketches. Neither offer new information on Jones's life, but both hail him as one of the most important historical figures of the early twentieth century. Still, these literary memorials served to remind a younger generation of Jones's exploits and solidified his importance as one of the founding fathers of Gulfport.[61] More importantly, these works mark the last wave of literature to focus on Jones's life and works. After 1942, his literary legacy is sparse at best.

The first physical memorial to Jones took the shape of a living memorial. In 1935 Grace Jones Stewart donated a parcel of land adjacent to the Great Southern Hotel and the port of Gulfport for the express purpose of creating a public park and small craft harbor.[62] The small craft harbor served as a memorial to her brother, Bert, while the land-based park bore the name of her father: Joseph T. Jones Memorial Park. The original stipulations for the gift of land required that the site be used for public purposes or be returned to the family, thus creating a responsibility on the part of the city to uphold the civic use of the public space. An extensive $405,000 project, supported by funds from the Sea Wall Commission, the Public Works Administration, and the city of Gulfport and Harrison County, reshaped an area described as "unsightly marsh" into a first-rate public park and small craft harbor. In historical terms, the choice of a living memorial was in step with national trends. During the early part of the century, sculptures and memorials were important commemorations of memorable figures. After World War I, however, parks, public buildings, and other spaces of public interaction became the primary method of shaping the public memory of historical figures. These spaces merged public use and public remembrance and were attractive to funding agencies for this reason.[63] Thus, the living memorial of a gulf front park was a fitting memorial for

[61] Hodding Carter and Anthony Ragusin, *Gulf Coast Country*, Chapter XI; Clayton Rand, *Men of Spine In Mississippi* (Gulfport, MS: Dixie Press, 1940), 263-266.

[62] New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, May 16, 1937.

[63] Andrew M. Shanken, "Planning Memory: Public Memorials in the United States During World War II," *The Art Bulletin*, V. 84, N. 1 (March 2002), 130-133.

the civically-minded Jones.

Jones Park was not the only living memorial in Gulfport. Adjacent to and north of Jones Park between 21st and 20th Avenues was the Gulfport Chautauqua grounds. This site originally housed a Chautauqua building, and the Jones family donated the land to the city in 1929. Like Jones Park, the deed stipulated that the parcel be used for public purposes. In 1964, the city transferred ownership of the site to the Harrison County Board of Supervisors. In 1966, the city of Gulfport erected a new library building on the Chautauqua site, which survived Hurricane Camille in 1969 only to be heavily damaged by Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005. Despite a dedicated lobbying effort in 2008-2009 on the part of local citizens, which included several Jones relatives, due to the site's proximity to the Gulf the city decided to build the new Gulfport Library at an alternate site further inland. Descendants of the Jones family helped form the group "We the People" and vigorously lobbied for the old library to be refurbished and utilized as a community center or some other public building, in line with the agreement to use the space for public good. In April of 2014, the Harrison County Board of Supervisors put on hold an earlier plan to demolish the building, in hope of saving the building and once again utilizing it for the betterment of the public. This shattered living memorial, while it does not carry the Jones name, is a landscape associated with Jones and his civic spirit of education and lifelong learning. The extended Jones family continues to strive to find an adaptive reuse for this site that would be in line with its public mission.[64]

Ironically, an actual physical monument in the form of a traditional statue was the last to come to fruition. The monument as memorial movement reached its pinnacle in the first two decades of the 20th century. It was common to honor men of Jones's era, particularly those associated with the Civil War, by construction of a marker, statue, or other physical monument. Paul Shackel argues that during this time period commemoration was a method by which to honor great men and the "glory of industry and capitalism."[65] The dedication of a permanent monument to Jones on January 18, 1942, finally answered the calls to create a suitable memorial in his honor. Located on the former Chautauqua grounds, the combined statue and base serve as a legacy to Jones, who many referred to as the "Grand Old Man" of Gulfport or alternately as in the title of his biography, simply a "builder."[66] Designed

[64] Gwen K. Jones, "Demolition of Historic Building on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina." MA thesis, University of Georgia, 2011, 86-97. Jones's thesis contains an excellent overview of the opposing points of view in this still ongoing debate.

[65] Paul A. Shackel, *Memory in Black and White: Race, Commemoration, and the Post-Bellum Landscape* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003), 193.

[66] Rowe, *Captain Jones*.

by Charles Keck, the elegant Georgia marble base with its appropriate engravings of a schooner at full sail and a steam-powered railroad engine with smoke billowing from its stack are topped with a statue of Jones, who dressed in his customary three-piece suit is facing southward toward the Gulf of Mexico. During the 20th century, the Jones statue escaped damage from numerous hurricanes. Hurricane Katrina, however, toppled Jones from his base, and the monument survived the storm only to be removed for repair by the Harrison County Board of Supervisors on October 29, 2008.[67] Although there was some concern over the fate of the statue by Jones's relatives and the group "We the People," the Harrison County Board of Supervisors voted in March 2009 to pay for refurbishment of the statue and base. This traditional memorial of Jones, which was restored in 2010 to a position along the harbor in Jones Park, is the most visible reminder of the man and his accomplishments at Gulfport.

Conclusion: How can the historian evaluate the Jones legacy?

As outlined in this article, three themes are evident in Joseph T. Jones's career in south Mississippi. First, his economic impact on the region created a spatial shift, which resulted in the formation of new towns and centers of population, drastically altering the landscape of the coast and southeastern Mississippi. Second, while the trajectory of Jones's life places him in the company of the Gilded Age elite, in Gulfport he also had a strong interest in civic paternalism, or in other words fatherly guidance in matters civic for the betterment of the citizens and the community at large. Third, his memorialization in literature and via the built environment shaped memory after his death.

A long-term result of the construction of the Gulf and Ship Island railroad and the port of Gulfport was the spatial transformation of the region. Prior to the railroad construction boom of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a handful of small towns dotted the landscape of south Mississippi. The most important communities included county seats and small trading towns, mostly located on the banks of the Pearl and Pascagoula Rivers and their tributaries. Until the arrival of the railroad, these rivers offered the best method of transporting trade goods to regional markets. The coming of the railroad immediately influenced the human geography of the region. New "railroad" towns such as Gulfport, Hattiesburg, and Laurel quickly supplanted the older, more established towns of Columbia, Augusta, and Pass

[67] "Jones' Descendants Upset About Removal of Statue's Base," Biloxi *Sun Herald*, October 29, 2009; Harrison County Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes, March 9, 2009.

Christian.[68] Both Wolfgang Schivelbusch and Richard White argue that railroads changed the United States in the latter half of the 19th century by shortening the time it took to travel between two points. Barbara Young Welke summed up the process in her 2001 work *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law and the Railroad Revolution, 1865-1920*: "Railroads knit America's "island communities" into a nation. They re-created space."[69] This spatial shift spurred an era of town building unmatched in Mississippi history. For south Mississippi, railroad building was mainly a post-Civil War phenomenon. Jones clearly envisioned a different type of South than the one he fought to subdue during the Civil War. No longer a land of lazy agricultural villages separated by rough wagon roads and muddy rivers, the region instead transformed into one of industrial towns and villages connected by iron and steel. A staunch believer in modernization, Jones staked his personal fortune on developing an industrial economy in the region. It is unclear if Jones ever embraced the term "new south," but his vision certainly created one on the coastal plains and piney woods of Mississippi. While it is well documented that these changes did not immediately revolutionize life in south Mississippi, they did initiate the process of change that would lead to greater industrialization of the region and allow it to forge closer economic ties to the rest of the nation.[70]

While Jones held a paternalistic civic vision for Gulfport evidenced by the breadth of his improvements in the city, he also sought to exert paternal control over the economy, politics, and environment of the city. He steadfastly believed that civic improvements enhanced the regional economy and encouraged urban development. Public piers, electric generating plants, and parks provided amenities to the majority of Gulfport's citizens. Providing quality services via his varied business interests created high levels of customer satisfaction and further stimulated the local

[68] Kenneth W. Noe, Southwest Virginia's Railroad: *Modernization and the Sectional Crisis* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 58-64. Noe documents a similar pattern in Southwest Virginia.

[69] Barbara Young Welke, *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law and the Railroad Revolution, 1865-1920* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 250; Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), xxix; Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press,1977), 33-35.

[70] C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1951). See V and XI for discussions of industrialization and the nature of the colonial economy in the South. Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). See chapters three and five for a discussion of the development of towns and industry in the New South.

Joseph T. Jones Statue, photograph by author.

economy. [71]While he staunchly promoted open economic competition, perhaps influenced by an 1870s conflict with John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company over use of the corporation's pipelines to deliver oil from the well to the manufacturer, Jones also worked to create a system by which he controlled the Gulf and Ship Island, the Gulf Coast Traction Company, and indirectly, the Port of Gulfport. He imitated the Gilded Age elite in his efforts to control economic power via control of the regional transportation network.[72] Jones chose to spend his hard-earned fortune to build a first class network of which both he and the community could be proud. Both the railroad and the port became a magnet for lawsuits, which cost Jones hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees and court settlements. Like any corporate leader, he worked to minimize these losses whenever possible, but the constant barrage of court cases in the public eye likely contributed to the perception that Jones was merely a wealthy Yankee come south for economic gain.[73] Jones, instead, viewed these lawsuits as a necessary evil and yet another obstacle to be overcome in his quest to modernize south Mississippi.

While he never served in political office, Jones understood the importance of legislation that would serve to support his agenda, as evidenced in the call to move the county seat to Gulfport and his disdain of the anti-corporate climate in the state. Jones's biographer, Melodia Rowe, offers this account of the relationship:

> "Governor Vardaman was particularly antagonistic. His laws were not unfriendly to capital but his appeal to the rabble for political purposes was outrageous. His picture of Captain Jones was of a bloated and unprincipled capitalist, smoking dollar cigars, eating five-dollar beefsteaks, while milking Mississippi dry, buying off

[71] "Influence of a Railroad on the Lumber Trade of Mississippi," *American Lumberman*, 29.

[72] Glenn Porter, "Industrialization and the Rise of Big Business" in *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996), 10-15.

[73] David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 143-146.

> its officers and controlling its policies. The Captain publically and emphatically denied these charges and challenged Vardaman to cite a single instance in which he or his railroad attempted to control the legislature or elect a man to office."[74]

This account also illustrates the perils of writing life histories, for despite the captain's claims, he did use politics to his advantage, most notably in his effort to secure federal control of the port of Gulfport. Still, Rowe sought to shape the memory of Jones in a way that would complement and perpetuate a positive historical image.

Jones waged a constant battle for control of the environment. Whether building a railroad across ninety-seven miles of pine hills and river bottoms or dredging the unpredictable Mississippi Sound, he worked to impose his vision onto the landscape. Hurricanes, tropical storms, and tidal surges worked to destroy his work. Still Jones managed to harness technology to build an empire on what had been an empty piece of coastline in the mid-1870s. The importance of his achievement lies in the continued existence, some 110 years later, of the port that he established with his personal resources. While many of his landmark buildings no longer stand, the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad Building and the original First National Bank of Gulfport Building remain, even after the devastation of major Hurricanes Camille in 1969 and Katrina in 2005.

While the public's opinion of Jones during his lifetime is debatable, in particular because of his association with Gilded Age businessman and the accompanying negative connotations, the public image of him after 1916 is strongly positive.[75] In part due to the efforts of the Jones family to continue his civic donations and to use them as tools of memory, many Gulfport residents are familiar with the Jones name and his contributions to the city. Like other older hotels, the Great Southern declined and was demolished in the 1950s. The landscaped grounds are also long gone, but the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad Building remains as a living testament to the legacy of Joseph T. Jones, the builder. Likewise, the destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent rebuilding effort refocused public attention on the revitalization of his statue and of Jones Park. A recent $35 million dollar project created a splash pad, children's playground, greenspace, a large pavilion, and an amphitheater. The concept is for Jones Park to become Mississippi's front porch on the Gulf, a use of which the "Builder" would likely be proud.

An enemy in war, Jones became an "adopted" citizen of Mississippi as he worked

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[74] Rowe, *Captain Jones*, 47-54.

[75] Charles W. Calhoun, "Introduction" in *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of* Modern America (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996), xi.

to build the city of Gulfport. This transformation is no small feat for a man who contradicted the new south in political leanings and sectional differences. Jones expressed his passion for the coast to John Lang:

> "Lang, it is my disposition to improve, to build, I never tear down. I want to build up this coast into one large city. See how God has placed it facing the south, so that we get all the cooling winds! Think what it would be if we faced east or west, getting the glare of the sun in our face in the morning or evening. See what splendid water we get from the artesian wells; this is a place for a large city."[76]

Jones not only succeeded in his work of city building at Gulfport, but he left his imprint more broadly on south Mississippi. Thanks to the repair and replacement of his memorial after Hurricane Katrina, one hundred years after his death, Jones is still standing watch over his city, facing southward as if surveying the park that bears his name.

[76] Lang, History of Harrison County, Mississippi, 221.