

4. Parents of James Harding Jones

I never knew my paternal grandparents since my grandmother, Eula Viola West Jones, died in 1929, two years before I was born. My grandfather, James Armstrong Jones died in 1907 when my father was only 10 years old. My father rarely ever talked about his parents or his childhood and so my knowledge of them is derived mainly from a few letters that were saved in the family Bible, obituaries in the local newspapers and photographs. These documents are presented below.



Eula Viola West Jones

Eula Viola West Jones (December 7, 1864 – December 1, 1929)

My Grandmother, Eula V. West, a daughter of John D. West and Margaret Ann Kersh West, was born in Goshen Springs, Rankin County, Mississippi, a little town northeast of Jackson on the east side of the Pearl river, near the end of the Civil War. She was first married to Means Johnston in May 1884 at Shell Mound, LeFlore County, Mississippi. Two children were born of

that marriage: Means Johnston and Ida McGhee Johnston. Becoming a widow in 1891 with two small children, she married James Armstrong Jones two years later in 1893. J. A. Jones had been a close friend of Means Johnston. Early references spell her first name “Ula” but I prefer to use the later spelling, “Eula.” Four children were born of the second marriage: Florence Lee Jones, James Harding Jones (my father), Yerger West Jones and Edna Eloise Jones.

A lovely description of Eula Viola Jones was written by her older daughter, Ida McGhee Johnston Warren at the time of her mother’s death.

“Mother was said to be the most beautiful girl in Leflore County. Her loveliest qualities, as I remember them, were the fact that she loved her friends. She never spoke ill of anyone. She was the most ambitious and self-sacrificing Mother I have ever known. She was extremely proud of the accomplishments of her children. She inspired them early in life with determination to get a college education. She was a great Christian. She loved flowers and grew beautiful roses. Her favorite being a yellow climbing Marshall Neill Rose and a red Climbing Meter. She also loved her Cape Jasmine bush and her Chrysanthemums. She was buried in the family plot in Greenwood, Mississippi.”

Death Notice December 1, 1929. Commercial Appeal, Memphis Tennessee.

“MRS. EULA JONES IS DEAD TODAY
Mrs. Eula V. Jones died at her home in Schlater (Mississippi) last night, after an illness of several days. She was sixty-five years of age. Mrs. Jones was a life-long resident of Leflore County and admired and loved by all who knew her. She is survived by two sons, Hon. Means Johnston of Greenwood, Mississippi and James H. Jones of Spring Hill, Tenn., and two daughters, Mrs. Dalton Warren of Sparta, N. C., and Miss Eloise Jones of Schlater. Funeral services will be held at the Baptist church at Schlater at ten o’clock tomorrow morning, and interment will follow at the Odd Fellows cemetery at Greenwood. Dr. W. R. Cooper of Drew, assisted by Rev. Madison Flowers of Schlater will conduct the funeral services.”

The same announcement of her death appeared in the Greenwood, Mississippi newspaper. The following letter was written by a close friend of the family, Dr. W. D. Wilson, to my father who was on the faculty of the Branham and Hughes Military Academy in Spring Hill, Tennessee.

Schlater, Mississippi, December 27, 1929

“Mr. and Mrs. Jim Jones
Spring Hill, Tenn.

My dear Friends,

I thank you more than mere words can portray for the thoughtful Christmas remembrance. But in the acceptance, I have a feeling of unworthiness. The sweet spirit of gratitude (so rare these days) prompted your gift – which I really feel that you consider my needs before my deserving and that I am the debtor and owe the debt of gratitude for the bond of friendship that existed between your Mother and myself and every member of our entire families. By her charming face, kind words, and gentle handclasp, she has often driven the clouds of disappointment and despair from my care-worn brow and let the sun shine in. Her loftiest ambition was to see her children useful men and women. To this end no sacrifice to her was too great. Her sweetest pleasures were their triumph. To me she was ever true, faithful and loyal and sincere and I shall ever prize and treasure her friendship as a jewel the strong acids of misfortune and adversity could not dim.

With best wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year. Yours Sincerely, Dr. W. D. Wilson”

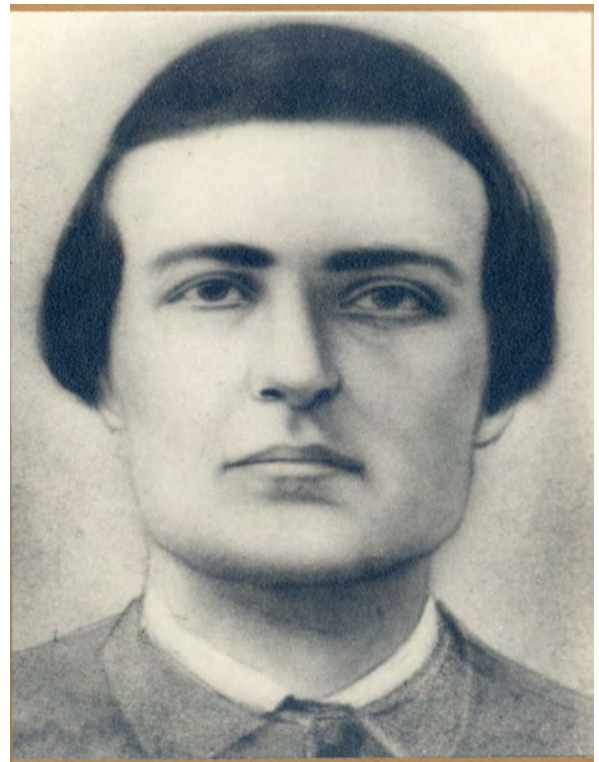
Note by James Harding Jones: “Mrs. Wilson was a devoted friend of Sister Annie Johnston.

P.S. I had sent Dr. Wilson a 2.5 ounce gold piece as a Christmas present from Spring Hill, Tennessee when I was teaching at the Branham and Hughes Military Academy.”

I have no knowledge of Eula Viola West Jones’ father, John D. West, nor of her first husband, Means Johnston. But photographs of them, saved by my father, are shown below.



James D. West



Means Johnston



James Armstrong Jones

James Armstrong Jones

(February 6, 1846 – November 22, 1907)

My Grandfather, James Armstrong Jones, grew corn and cotton on his farm three miles northeast of Sunny Side. I assume it was a small farm since the family was not wealthy. But it did operate its own blacksmith shop and commissary and provided adequate support for the family. James A. Jones enjoyed singing in the Baptist church in nearby Schlater and this is perhaps where I inherited the love of singing, a grand Welsh tradition. James A. Jones served as a deacon in the Baptist church. Being eighteen when the southern states seceded from the Union, he joined the Army of the Confederacy. His place of birth was in Brooksville, Mississippi east of Greenwood near the Alabama border. I don't know what brought James A. Jones to Sunny Side but fortunately he came, made a long friendship with Means Johnston and then married his widow, Eula Viola West Johnston. The four children of this marriage were Florence Lee Jones (1887-1895), James Harding Jones (1897-1988), Yerger West Jones (January 7 – December 5, 1902) and Edna Eloise Jones Curtis (1904-1953).

Twenty-eight days before his death which was believed to have been caused by stomach cancer, James A. Jones wrote the following letter to his wife from a place near Sunny Side where he had gone for treatment.

Durant, Mississippi
October 26, 1907

"My dear Wife,

"Yours of the 20th handed me this morning. I think I have received all of your letters up to the present. I have just finished my dinner and am now writing you so as to get my letter off in the evening mail. I will first write what I think you want to hear most that I am continuing to improve. I feel more like my natural self today than since I left home. If I continue to improve in this way I believe that the Dr. will let me come home next week. Tomorrow is Sunday. I want to go to church and Sabbath S. I went to the barbershop, had a shave and warm bath, put on some clean clothes and I feel considerably refreshed. Frank Jones passed by here a day or two ago carrying Ben to Biloxi. Memphis Drs. said all he needed was a change and rest. Mr. Langley saw Frank and told me about it. Tell Eloise Daddy would be glad if she could come to see him. He would be a proud old dad. Tell Jim he is the man of the house while father is away. I don't know anything to write that is of interest, so I will close with love and kisses for all.

"Love for Bettie & family as ever

"Your Husband,

"J. A. Jones"

The following death notice appeared in the local newspaper:

"Mr. J. A. Jones, one of Sunny Side's splendid citizens, died at his home near that place week before last. Mr. Jones was an honest gentleman, a devoted husband and father, and his death is a loss to the citizenship of LeFlore County. The Commonwealth extend sympathy to the family in their bereavement."