

John Jones the Architect: Selected Records
By Douglas H. Shepard, 2017

John Jones (1805 - 1852) was a well known architect/carpenter/joiner in northern Chautauqua County, having built several significant structures in the area. The following are a few of the readily available records that indicate how busy Jones was in the area between Westfield and Fredonia in Chautauqua County.

The Bishop's Transcripts for Llanycil (Bala, Wales) listed the baptism of John Jones, son of Thomas and Susannah Jones of Bala, on 13 February 1803. John's brother William, a joiner, was baptized on 10 June 1804, and his brother David, a carpenter, was baptized on 11 November 1815. However, the John Jones obituary in *The Fredonia Censor* 14 December 1852 stated that he was in his 47th year when he died, *i.e.* that he was born about 1806. This was repeated in his biographical sketch in the 1881 county atlas. The family monument in Fredonia's Forest Hill Cemetery lists the birth year of John Jones as 1805.

The 1852 obituary stated that John Jones came to the U.S. in 1824, and to Westfield in 1829. The 1830 census of Westfield included John Jones. However, the biographical sketch in the 1881 atlas stated that he married Mary Breese of New York City in August 1830, and "in 1833 removed to Westfield."

According to the 1830 census, there were already two people in the John Jones household in Westfield: a male between the ages of 20 and 30, and a female between the ages of 20 and 30. Their home appears to have been near the residence of Henry Abell, and a little further from that of Austin Smith, who was formerly a principal at the Fredonia Academy and was by 1830 a lawyer in Westfield.

On 16 June 1831, John Jones bought land from Benjamin Evans. The cost was \$22, and the 1.5-acre parcel was located in the town of Westfield, described as follows: Beginning in the center of the Portage Road at the Southeast corner of land owned by Joseph White, Jr. at the distance of thirty chains forty three links South thirty four degrees East from a stone in the Northwest corner of land owned by John Brewer, Jr.; thence along the center of the road two chains; thence South fifty six degrees West seven chains fifty links to a post; thence North forty three degrees West to a post, the corner of White's land; thence along White's land North fifty six degrees East seven chains fifty links to beginning.

The First Presbyterian Church of Westfield, a brick structure, was built by John Jones. He began construction in December 1831 and completed it in 1832, according to the Centennial History of the church. About this time, his first child, Samuel Breese Jones was born. New York City Death Records listed "abt. 1831" for Samuel's birth date.

On 16 February 1832, John Jones' applied for citizenship by means of an "Oath of Intention," also called "First Papers." In a testimonial of 11 February 1834, Lyman Redington of Westfield swore that he knew John Jones well, and that John Jones had resided in Westfield four years. On 15 February 1835, Abram Dixon gave his oath that John Jones was a good man and should

become citizen. On 15 October 1835, John Jones took his "Oath of Allegiance," and became a citizen.

On 21 October 1835 John Jones and Mary of Westfield sold the 1831 parcel to Asa Farnsworth for \$1600. They agreed to give possession 1 April next. John Jones seems to have next moved on to Dunkirk. However, on 1 October 1838 James McClurg of Philadelphia sold to John Jones of Dunkirk for \$100 a 4-acre parcel in the village of Westfield. It was part of Lot 17-4-14, described as follows: Beginning at a corner of land articulated to E. Dean and in the center of a two rod road; running in road South 56° West 6.27 to a post, corner of land of James Measer, Sr.; thence on said land North 34° West 6.24; North 53-1/2° East 6.27 to a corner of Dean's land; thence on said land South 34° East 6.52 to beginning.

John Jones seems to have also been buying land and building structures in the Fredonia area by this time. The Assessment roll for the town of Pomfret in 1838 listed John Jones with a 1/20th-acre parcel in lot 14-6-12, which was assessed at \$300. On 8 April 1839, Henry C. Frisbee sold a ¼-acre lot on Eagle Street to John Jones for \$200. On 4 June 1839, John Jones and Mrs. Mary Jones became members of the Fredonia Presbyterian Church, according to the church records.

On 17 July 1839, John Jones bought from James Mullett for \$100 a parcel on the southwest side of Canadaway Creek and on the northwest side of the Erie road. The parcel had been shown as Lot 6 on a map by Samuel Berry for Daniel Warren, and was described as "25 feet in front and rear, 45 feet deep from road and at right angles to it, and formerly owned by Orris Crosby now by C. I. Orton, northwardly by lot called Howe lot, being same premises conveyed to Samuel Warren by Nathaniel Burt (Philadelphia) 4-18-1836."

John Jones was recorded as living in Fredonia on 5 November 1839, when he paid \$1100 to Conrad Van Curen and Catherine his wife of Fredonia for the undivided ½ interest in a parcel in Lot 14-6-12, described as beginning at the South line of Lot 14 11.03 East from the Southwest corner of the lot; thence North 27° East 9.00 chains; South 63° East 4.00; North 27° East 2.12; North 63° West 0.68; North 27° East 0.38; North 63° West 3.32; North 27° East 0.75; North 4.50 to bank of Canadaway Creek; North 83° West 3.09; North 75° West 3.09; North 38° West 5.35; South 37° West 8.38; to Turner Road (today's Chestnut Street); South 31° 30' East along the northerly boundaries of Turner Road 16.06 to the beginning.

The total was recorded as 15 acres, excepting 1.5 acres formerly belonging to Lot L. Colgrove and Aaron Ward, on which they had erected a distillery, excepting 0.25 acres of Charles Burrett, and excepting a portion previously conveyed to Benjamin Patton, part of which was then in the possession of Providence L. Sheppard and part in the possession of Chauncey Tucker. The intent of the deed was stated to convey the undivided ½ interest in the premises deeded to Orris Crosby by Thomas Warren on 5-30-1825, except for the piece to Patton, and the described parcel was to have been the same premises conveyed by Crosby 3-30-1836 to Charles J. Orton and Daniel W. Douglass, an equal undivided ½ interest of which was conveyed lately by Orton to the Van Curen.

The Assessment roll for Pomfret in 1839 listed John Jones with 4-1/2 acres in 14-6-12, assessed at \$350, and this appears to have been the West Hill lot where he built his Greek Revival

mansion. In 1839, John Jones also acquired a parcel on Eagle Street from Henry C. Frisbee, and in 1845, John Jones conveyed a parcel on Eagle Street to Robert Wolfers. In 1847, Jones estimated a cost for an addition to the Trinity Church, but the Church chose a different architect. In 1849, the same Church retained John Jones as the carpenter for the same or a new addition. In 1850, John Jones constructed a large addition to the front of the Fredonia Academy building on Church Street. He was killed on site in 1852, during the construction of the Baptist church in Fredonia. His sons completed the project. According to the *Censor* of 7 October 1908, the John Jones home on West Main Street seems to have remained in the name of his family until that year.

The above records represent only a few of the construction projects undertaken by John Jones during his tenure in the north county. Besides building his own house in Fredonia, he was known to have built many others there, including the three Risley mansions on Garden Street (Risley Street), the Stoddard house on Eagle Street, the Forbes/Cushing house on Mechanic Street (Forest Place), the Grant/Richmond house on East Main Street, the Abell/Higgins/Webster/Hooker house on Central Avenue, the Johnson House inn on Park Street, and the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches on the Barker Common. In Westfield, John Jones was known to have built for himself the mansion on Portage Street, which was later known as the Governor Seward/Governor Patterson home.