

George W. Jones

By Maria C. Ward

The following is a continuation of the profiles in *Spritsail* of the founding members and directors of the Board of Trade, which succeeded the Board of Trade and Industry in 1914. The Board of Trade changed its name to the Chamber of Commerce in 1958.

George Washington Jones was a founding member of the Falmouth Board of Trade and Industry in 1896. He became a director of the Falmouth Board of Trade, which succeeded the Board of Trade and Industry in 1914.

George W. Jones was born on March 23, 1857, the son of Benjamin Franklin Jones and Maria Chandler Withington Jones. His father was captain of the whaling bark *Camilla* and a blockade runner in the Civil War. The B. F. Jones Post 207 of the GAR (Grand Army of the Republic, a Union armed forces veterans' organization), formed in 1891, was named after him. Benjamin Jones bought the house we now call the Katharine Lee Bates house in 1865. It was in this house (used by the Congregational Church for housing its minister, at that time Katharine's father) that Katharine Lee Bates was born on August 12, 1859. Reverend Bates died four weeks later; the family stay there was brief. From the age of eight, George grew up in the Katharine Lee Bates house with his parents and sister Kate. (Kate married Dr. James Watson. They built the house at the corner of Main and Locust Streets, later called Watson's Corner.) While George W. Jones later owned the house, an ell was added to the back and the carriage house in the rear was converted to a separate residence. Jones family members owned the property until 1970.

George attended Lawrence Academy, in Falmouth, until age seventeen, when he went to sea. *The Falmouth Enterprise* writes that he spent his entire life in Falmouth except for ten years. What an exciting ten years those were though! He first shipped as an ordinary seaman aboard *Leading Wind*, a speedy clipper ship, Captain F. M. Hinckley of Barnstable. His January 10, 1876 personal logbook says he "scraped decks, set up rigging" and painted. He was paid \$16.00 a month, much of that consumed by the purchase of shipboard necessities.

Leading Wind traveled the world, much of it in the China trade. His logbook lists include an 1876

H. J. Bridge
Decy. 17th 1878

This is to certify that the
bearn. George. Jones served
on board the Ship Genl. McAllen
on her late passage from San
Francisco to New York.
Giving perfect satisfaction the
entire passage and I can cheerfully
recommend him as being well
qualified to fill the position
of and mate on board of any
Merchant-Vessel.

James. Reilly, late Capt-
of Bark. *North Moon*, & Brig
from Malley Jno.

Courtesy Falmouth Historical Society

voyage from Boston to San Francisco, round the Horn, lasting 123 days, followed by 124 days from San Francisco to Antwerp. 1877 brought a 110 day voyage from Antwerp to Hong Kong around the Cape of Good Hope and across the Indian Ocean and then a return to Oregon. George also shipped as mate on *City of Montreal*, a packet in the New York-Liverpool trade.

In all, he circled the world twice. He quipped that though he knew Liverpool and Hong Kong, he knew nothing of Plymouth and Provincetown. He soon made up for that.

There was to be one more sea adventure, however. Carefully preserved with his papers in the Falmouth Historical Society is his long hand-written account of the voyage of *Golden Gate*, built in January, 1879, 19 feet long with a beam of 5 feet 4 inches and draft of 2½ feet. He and a mate, Andy Pryor, sailed this small craft from Beverly, Massachusetts to Le Havre, France in 56 days. His log of that trip documents the trials of the voyage to France and the near disastrous return trip when they were close to starvation and without water for days. It is a tale told in harrowing detail.

Before returning to Falmouth, Mr. Jones went into partnership in a lumber business in Omaha,

Nebraska. Finally in 1885, he took up life in his home town.

The Falmouth Enterprise of September 10, 1936 describes Mr. Jones as “sailor, lumberman, postmaster, insurance agent, dog lover, horse fancier, yachting enthusiast, musician.”



1903 Post Office with G. W. Jones Notary Public/Insurance Office in the right-hand side of the building. Courtesy Falmouth Historical Society.

His civic life began as Mr. Jones worked for and eventually bought the Continental Shoe Store. (The previous owner, Lewis Clarke, then turned his attention to publishing an early forerunner to *The Falmouth Enterprise*, a four-page weekly that was three columns wide and nine inches deep.) An ad in December of 1889 shows the store offering Christmas items of cards, calendars, plush goods and brass novelties. “A silk umbrella is always an acceptable present and in these we carry a full line in gold, silver, and oxidized handles,” the advertisement asserted.

Mr. Jones was appointed Falmouth Postmaster in 1889 by President Benjamin Harrison. He was reappointed by Presidents Cleveland, McKinley, T. Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson, Harding, and Coolidge, Democrats and Republicans alike, until Mr. Jones retired in 1927. His salary in 1901 was \$1500.00. He framed all documents of his appointments and hung them next to the pictures of the appointing presidents in his various offices for the rest of his life.

The post office annual business increased from \$1,739.00 in 1889 when it was considered a fourth class office, to third class in 1903, to second class in 1915, until 1926 saw \$20,000.00 in business.

Clarence J. Anderson, a Falmouth native born in 1912, recalls the mail's arrival in the early '20s in "A Falmouth Boyhood" in *The Book of Falmouth*. The train whistle at North Falmouth was the first signal. Then the West Falmouth station whistle sent him on his way to the post office.



George W. Jones in postmaster/insurance office with walls picturing his seagoing life and presidential appointments.
Courtesy Falmouth Historical Society.

“For adults, gathering at the post office to pick up mail was also a social event. One could meet everyone and exchange news while waiting for the mail ... brought by truck from the railroad station to the post office. Delivery took place at 8 P.M. sharp, six days a week. George Jones, the postmaster, would call out the names and box numbers: ‘Mail for the Andersons, Box 186,’ and so on. When you heard your number called out, you went to your box to get it. Even when you didn’t hear your name, you waited hopefully till George opened the windows and said ‘That’s it!’ If no mail had come for you, the walk home through winter darkness was in a mood of disappointment.”

Mr. Jones opened his insurance agency in 1892.



He was still writing policies from the office in his home on Palmer Avenue at the time of his death in 1936. His wife continued the agency which was recognized for its 50th anniversary in an April 3, 1942, *Enterprise* article which noted, “His office remains where he left it in the corner of the... home which bears the hospitable sign over the piazza, ‘Come Aboard’.”



Palmer Avenue home of G. W. Jones with major piazza, later enclosed for an office. Jones on the left greeting a visitor and son Chandler on the right. Courtesy Falmouth Historical Society.

His semi-public life was also noteworthy. Music played an important part in Mr. Jones' life, often documented in the account books he diligently kept. In 1898 he recorded being paid \$3.00 as an accompanist for a concert and \$81.00 by the First Congregational Church as music director. (He was a member of the church choir for thirty years.) Also noted are sums for music lessons, piano lessons, and organ playing. Careful bookkeeping included expenses of \$111.93 to the New England Conservatory, probably for sheet music, and \$141.23 for clothes in 1899.

Mr. Jones was often invited to sing at events around Massachusetts. In 1900 The Parsonage in Maynard invited him to sing "The Coat My Grandfather Used to Wear" and "Rocked in the Billow of the Deep." Ye Olde Tyme Concerte and Dance program of 1924 featured "Nabor George Washington Jones of ye village of Suckanessett" who "will beat time for ye fingers." Because of his love for the sea and to preserve the musical folklore of the country, he wrote down the sea chanteys and ballads from his days of long voyages. At a reception in 1935 for the Sons of Union Veterans at Legion Hall "songs and sea chanties by George W. Jones, accompanied by Mrs. Jones, featured the entertainment program ..."



G. W. Jones (right) and Edward Thompson, a summer West Falmouth resident, U. S. Consul to Yucatan who lectured on his discovery of Mayan ruins.

Courtesy Falmouth Historical Society.

He served the town in a great many capacities. He worked on the Falmouth Bicentennial in 1886. He was chief Marshall of the 1907 Tercentenary Committee for the celebration of Gosnold's landing. He chaired the committee that determined Deacon's Pond should be opened to the Sound to become Falmouth Harbor. He was a member of the Public Safety Committee during World War I and led the Liberty Loan Drive. He was Falmouth's representative of the Middleboro Cooperative Bank. (It was for the care of that position and his growing insurance business that he resigned his postmastership in April of 1927.)



Familiar Faces.

Mr. Jones held the town's number one dog license for over forty years. His first dog, Bob, an English Llewellyn setter, is even pictured in *Falmouth By-the-Sea*, the 1896 celebratory book, along with an inset picture of Mr. Jones, entitled "Familiar Faces."

Bob was followed by Bo'sun and then three Chesapeake retrievers all named Bozie. The first Bozie was known for carrying the mail for a decade to Mr. Jones' office like a trusted postal employee. When Mr. Jones was the warrant officer in Falmouth, the last Bozie was said to recognize the footsteps of every policeman who made a late night call at his master's house, welcoming them all. But should a stranger approach the door, the dog would rouse the whole family with his barking.

True to his nautical background, Mr. Jones was a devotee of the America's Cup races, attending one