



Sisters Anna H. Jones and Dr. Sophia B. Jones came to Monrovia in the 1910s and are buried at Live Oak Memorial Park. Photo of Anna from Black Archives of Mid-America. Photo of Sophia from Jones family.

SEARCHING FOR BLACK MECCAS: THE JONES FAMILY

In the tumultuous years for African Americans in the 19th and early 20th centuries, some made concerted searches for better places to practice their professions, to raise families, and to be. These journeys had many chapters. The incomparable Jones family came to Monrovia in the 1910s, and a hundred years later, the Anna H. Jones Club continues to change lives with scholarships to students in our community.

Other African American Settlers in Monrovia¹

Monrovia became one designation for African Americans. Once-enslaved John Isaac Wesley Fisher came to Monrovia as early as 1876. In 1886, his employer, Lucky Baldwin, commissioned him to bring a large group of African Americans to Monrovia/ Duarte from Bennettsville, South Carolina. The Carolina group of extended kin included Reverend Henry and Mary Hollins, Benjamin and Catty Hollins Morris, and John B. and Adeline Morris Adams. They founded the Shiloh AME Zion Church on Huntington Drive and Canyon. The Jones family would also be members of this congregation.

Monrovia's Second Baptist Church was organized in 1902. The first pastor was Lt. Colonel Allen Allensworth, the Army's highest-ranking African American at his retirement in 1906. Allensworth's big dream was to establish a self-sufficient, all-Black rural community – and he did in Tulare County in 1908. Unfortunately, Allensworth met with a fatal motorcycle crash in Monrovia in 1914.

¹ From Susie Ling's previous project entitled "History of African Americans in Monrovia, California" dated April 2015 and based on 25 oral histories plus research of local sources. This article is written by Susie Ling and submitted in April 2025.



Neighborhood Treasure in front of Second Baptist Church, 2018. Artwork by Ron Husband, a recipient of the Anna H. Jones Scholarship. Source: <http://www.gemcityimages.com/2018/03/lieutenant-colonel-allen-allenworth.html>

Monrovia was a destination of the African American Great Migration. Many Southern African Americans preferred Philadelphia, Harlem, Detroit, Pittsburg and Chicago. But a steady stream came to Monrovia, mostly originating near Prentiss, Mississippi. The Gadburys came near 1925. Jessica Blount Springfield Valentine, who came in 1935, mentioned that her parents were part of the “Mississippi Negro Network.”

Julian Parker and his family came to Monrovia from Oklahoma in 1933. Oklahoma had been a haven for Blacks leaving the South - until the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. After the Civil War to 1920, African Americans created more than fifty identifiable towns and settlements in Oklahoma as they could secure land in Indian Territory. Parker's stepfather was a Pullman Porter, a group well documented in helping African American families travel across the United States – such as from Oklahoma to Monrovia.

The Incomparable Jones Family²

Now, we know another chapter in Monrovia's history in the story of the Jones family. Siblings Anna, Dr. Sophia, Emily and George all lived out their remaining years near 1301 Shamrock in Monrovia - after making their marks in cities throughout the U.S. and in Canada.

The family story goes back several generations to great-grandfather Charles Jones – and extends into present day Monrovia.

Charles (1759-1941) was captured from Africa as a child and sold as a slave to George Jaffrey of Raleigh, North Carolina. Charles' son, Allen Jones (1794-1877), became an exceptional blacksmith and gunsmith. Near 1829, Allen was able to purchase his own freedom as well as the freedom of his wife, Temperance "Polly" Josephson Craven (1794-1856); three of their sons; and his father, Charles. Allen strongly believed in education and with other freedmen, built a school for Black children only to have it burned down three times.³ Allen attended an anti-slavery convention in New York and upon his return to Raleigh, he was bitterly whipped by an angry mob in October of 1842.⁴ In March of 1843, Allen took his family by covered wagon to Ohio, a free state. The Jones were accompanied by the families of John Land and John Copeland.⁵ These three families settled in Oberlin, Ohio, a stop of the Underground Railroad. By 1835, Oberlin College accepted African American students in integrated classrooms. Five of Allen's six sons attended Oberlin before the Civil War, including his eldest, James Monroe Jones (1821-1906).

² Much research was generously shared by Renée Cochée and Ron Clark, who are related to the family.

³ Bigglestone, William E. *They Stopped in Oberlin: Black Residents and Visitors of the 19th Century*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1981, p. 123.

⁴ Carr, Margie. *Kansas City's Montgall Avenue*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2023, p. 42.

⁵ Bigglestone, p. 123. Copeland, a carpenter, is the father of John Jr., who was one of 18 "soldiers" with John Brown at Harper's Ferry in 1859. Copeland Jr., considered a free mulatto, was hung by the government in December of 1859. Considered a radical White abolitionist by history, John Brown and other abolitionists had secretly convened in Chatham in May of 1858 to approve a constitution that would end slavery in the United States. Brown was also recruiting soldiers and funds. According to Steckley (pp. 29-30), James "Gunsmith" Jones donated \$75, but like most other African Americans members at this constitutional delegation, decided against joining John Brown when Brown left for Kansas in June.



Oberlin College Class of 1855 from Oberlin College Archives. Individuals in picture are not identified but four Jones brothers -James Monroe, John Craven, William Allen, and Elias Toussaint - graduated in 1849, 1856, 1857 and 1859 respectively. Source: https://www.communitystories.ca/v2/bc-black-pioneers_les-pionniers-noirs-de-la-cb/gallery/oberlin-class-photo-1855/



James Monroe "Gunsmith" Jones

James graduated from Oberlin College in 1849. Born into slavery in Raleigh, he was named for the president that signed the 1820 Missouri Compromise, but with the 1850

Fugitive Slave Act, James felt it was time to move again.⁶ In 1852, James moved north to a major terminus of the Underground Railroad: Chatham in Ontario, Canada. Chatham-Kent or the “Black Mecca of Canada”, was started with fifteen former American slaves in 1800s and grew to a self-sufficient Black settlement.⁷ Here, James earned the moniker of “Gunsmith Jones” as some recognize him as “the finest gunsmith that Canada every produced”. In 1874, he would also become the first African American Justice of the Peace in Chatham.⁸ Jones had four daughters and two sons – four of whom will move eventually to Monrovia, California.



This pistol is engraved “J. M. Jones” and attributed to “Gunsmith” Jones. It sold at James D. Julia Auctioneers in the fall of 2017 for \$18,400. Source: <https://www.americanrifleman.org/content/from-slave-to-gunsmith-the-james-jones-story/>.

⁶ Steckley, John. *Sophia B. Jones: The First Canadian Black Woman to Become a Doctor; Her Trials and Triumphs and Those of Her Family*. Ontario: Rock’s Mill Press, 2024, p. 26.

⁷ “On This Spot: Chatham-Kent” at <https://www.onthisspot.ca/cities/chathamkent>. Accessed 27 December 2024. Also see “Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society and Black Mecca Museum” with video at <https://www.doorsopenontario.on.ca/chatham-kent-1/chatham-kent-black-historical-society>.

⁸ Steckley, p. 31.



William Allen Jones. The sign is a reproduction at the Barkerville Historic Town and Park in British Columbia.

Source: https://www.communitystories.ca/v2/bc-black-pioneers_les-pionniers-noirs-de-la-cb/story/painless-jones-the-barkerville-dentist/

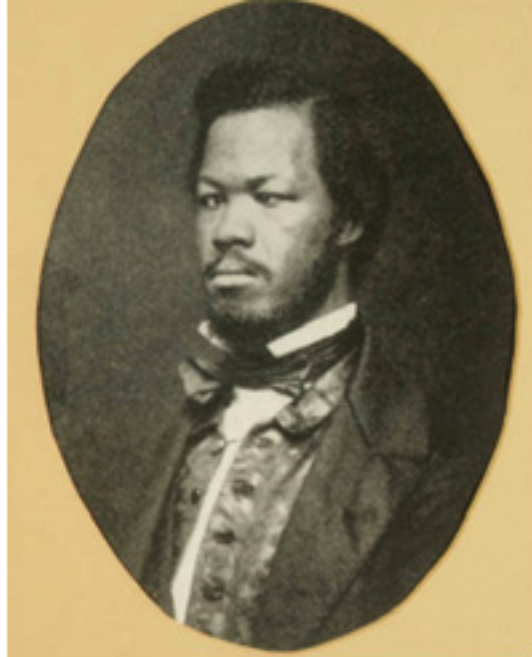
Three of Gunsmith Jones' brothers: William Allen (1831-1897), John Craven (1832-1911), and Elias Toussaint (1834-1917), near 1859, became "Black Pioneers" to British Columbia (BC). In 1858, four shiploads of some 800 African Americans moved from San Francisco to Vancouver Island – at the invitation of BC Governor James Douglas.⁹ William became known as "Painless Jones", serving as BC's first licensed dentist. John, born free, was a teacher and would later return to Ohio and North Carolina to serve as principal. Elias returned to Ohio in 1891 and was a founding member of the NAACP in Oberlin in January of 1917.¹⁰ Another Jones brother, Charles Brougham Jones (1826 -1927) was teacher, principal, tax collector, and mayor in Lovejoy, Illinois – another African American community known as "America's First Black Town." Near 1829, a group of eleven African American families fled slavery in St. Louis and settled in the free state of Illinois. Lovejoy was also an Underground Railroad designation.¹¹ The youngest Jones brother, James "Junius" B. (1839-1894) attended Oberlin and became a teacher, but less is known about him. Their one sister, Bethany (1824-1897), may have attended Oberlin and became a silver engraver working with her brother, James "Gunsmith", in Chatham.¹²

⁹ Steckley, p. 36.

¹⁰ Steckley, p. 61.

¹¹ Wikipedia. "Brooklyn, Illinois". Accessed 27 December 2024. Lovejoy is the common name for this town in St. Clair County.

¹² Steckley, p. 65.



Elias Toussaint Jones
(courtesy Oberlin College Archives)

Source: <https://www.oberlinheritagecenter.org/blog/tag/tappan-brothers/>

In Chatham, Gunsmith Jones and his wife, Emily T. Francis (1829-1914), raised six children:

1. Anna Holland Jones (1855 in Chatham – 1932 in Monrovia)
2. Sophia Bethena Jones (1857 in Chatham – 1932 in Monrovia)
3. Fredericka Florence Jones (1858 in nearby Charlton -1905 in Kansas City)
4. Emily Priscilla Jones (1861 in Chatham - 1950 in Monrovia)
5. George Allen Monroe Jones (1863 in Chatham -1944 in Monrovia)
6. William Livingstone Jones (1870 in Chatham -1893 in Ann Arbor)

Anna H. Jones



Principal Anna H. Jones (standing, left) leads a class at Douglass School in Kansas City, circa 1911. Source: The Black Archives of Mid-America. <https://kclinc.org/news/2020/12/10/we-chant-their-names-almost-as-if-holy>.

“Gunsmith” Jones insisted on college education for his daughters as well as his sons. The eldest, Anna, graduated from Oberlin in 1875 with a Literary Degree. She taught literature, history, and zoology at Wilberforce University in Ohio, the oldest privately-owned African American school in the U.S. She then became their Dean of Women. In 1892, she became the first Black female teacher in Kansas City, gaining a position at Lincoln High School (now Lincoln College Preparatory Academy), a school for African American children. In 1911, Anna H. Jones became the first African American principal in Kansas City, serving Douglass School, a public school for African Americans.¹³ She retired in 1919 and moved to Monrovia, California.

In Kansas City, Anna teamed with Josephine Silone Yates to work on temperance, suffrage and civil rights. In 1893, they established the Kansas City Colored Women’s League, with Yates as president and Jones as secretary.¹⁴ They held classes in needlework, sewing, domestic science, and – for “ladies over fifty”, a Saturday morning class to read and write their names. The Women’s League merged with the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC) in 1896. Other founders of the NACWC include Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, and Mary Church Terrell. Anna was president of the Missouri Association of Colored Women’s Club from 1903 to 1906.

In July of 1900, Anna H. Jones was one of two female speakers at the 1st Pan-African Congress in London, England. Her paper was entitled “The Preservation of Racial

¹³ Steckley, p. 97.

¹⁴ Carr, p. 48.

Equality". After a series of international meetings, the Pan-African Congress is the predecessor of today's African Union (AU). After the London meeting, Anna Jones went her with friend, W. E. B. DuBois, to the Paris World's Fair for the Negro Exposition that showed photographs of African American progress.¹⁵ In 1905, she published a two-part essay entitled "A Century's Progress for the American Colored Women" in *Voice of the Negro Magazine*. In August 1915, she authored "Women's Suffrage and Social Reform," published in *The Crisis*, NAACP's magazine.

During her time in Kansas City, Anna H. Jones lived at 2444 Montgall Avenue, and was probably the first single African American woman to purchase a home in that city. Anna's sister, Sophia, lived with her for some time. Next door to the Jones were other African American educators. There were many attempts to push African Americans out of this Montgall Avenue block. Hezekiah Walden and his family lived at 2442 Montgall, and this house was dynamited twice in 1917.¹⁶ The Waldens left, and the Jones retired and sold soon after.

¹⁵ Carr, p. 50.

¹⁶ Carr, pp. 60-63.



2444 Montgall Avenue, now on the African American Heritage Trail of Kansas City. Source: Kansas City Public Library Digital History. <https://pendergastkc.org/local-subjects/montgall-avenue>.

Dr. Sophia B. Jones

Also born in Chatham, Sophia Jones graduated from the University of Toronto in 1879. As the University of Toronto would not accept women as medical students, she attended University of Michigan Medical School and in 1885, became the first African American woman to graduate from there. University of Michigan Medical School has since recognized this significance by establishing (1) a Sophia Jones Lectureship on Infectious Diseases, (2) Sophia B. Jones Room, and (3) Fitzbutler Jones Alumni Society Scholarships. (William Henry Fitzbutler graduated in 1872.)¹⁷

¹⁷ Wikipedia. "Sophia B. Jones." Accessed 30 December 2024.



1897 Trained Nurses, Spelman Seminary. From The New York Public Library Digital Collections.

In 1885, Dr. Jones was the first Black female faculty at Spelman College in Atlanta, the oldest historically Black college for women founded in 1881 by White abolitionists.¹⁸ Dr. Jones established the nursing program there. She taught at Wilberforce University in Xenia, Ohio and worked at the Frederick Douglass Hospital in Philadelphia.

In 1900, while in Philadelphia and living with her sister, Fredericka, one of their “boarders” was a pregnant 24-year-old, Nina DuBois, the wife of the renowned Black scholar W. E. B. DuBois.¹⁹

In 1903, Sophia lived with Anna and practiced medicine in Kansas City.²⁰ Fredericka ran a boarding school on Bellfontaine Avenue in Kansas City. Their other sister, Emily, was a teacher in Jacksonville, Florida.

¹⁸ In 1881, the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary was established with 11 African American students. In 1884, the school was renamed Spelman Seminary after Harvey Buell and Lucy Henry Spelman and their daughter, Laura. Laura was wife of industrialist John D. Rockefeller. In 1918, The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial charter purpose was to support women and children; it later expanded to focus on research in the social sciences. In Fall of 2023, Spelman College had 2,588 students.

¹⁹ From Ancestry.com on “Fredericka F. Jones”, who was listed as head of household in 1900 census.

²⁰ Steckley, p. 87.

Sophia had other talents. In 1890, she earned a patent for a new-and-improved barrel trunk. In 1913, she authored “Fifty Years of Negro Public Health” in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.²¹ Her health began to fail in the last fifteen years of her life, and she moved to live with siblings at 1301 Shamrock in Monrovia.

When the Jones retired to Monrovia, they ran a commercial orange grove helped by younger family members who lived in the family home.

The Other Jones Siblings

Sister Fredericka attended the University of Toronto and graduated from the University of Michigan in 1887. She taught French and German alongside Anna at Wilberforce University in Ohio. Of fragile health, she transferred to warmer climate and was faculty and principal at Paul Quinn College in Waco, Texas - established in 1872 as the oldest HBCU in Texas. She then went to Tallahassee to teach at the State Normal College for Colored Students (now Florida A&M University). In 1896, she opened a private school for girls in Philadelphia, and then did the same in 1903 in Kansas City – presumably to be nearer her sisters. She was also a member of the Women’s League. She died at the age of 47 of pneumonia.²²

Emily probably was enrolled in a teacher training program in Detroit. She went on to work at the Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth in Virginia. In 1910, she was an English teacher at another Black college, St. Paul Normal and Industrial School in Virginia.²³ She was the last sibling to die in Monrovia in 1950.

Their youngest sibling, William, probably attended the University of Michigan and died of “consumption and bowels” as a young adult. Consumption is an early term for tuberculosis, perhaps partly explaining why family chose to live in Monrovia which had a reputation as a haven for respiratory disease. William is buried at Ann Arbor’s Forest Hill Cemetery alongside his father, his mother and Fredericka.

Legacy in Monrovia

Brother George was a carpenter and the only Jones that married or had children; he wed Martha C. Havenar in 1898. The story is that the sisters charged George to find for all of them a retirement home, and he chose Monrovia, California. With his wife and family, George moved to Monrovia probably near 1914. They had five children: Emily (1900-1994), George, James (1904-1977), Anna (1908-1937), and Helen (1913-1994). George’s remaining sisters followed him to Monrovia.

²¹ Steckley, pp. 87-89.

²² From obituary attached to “Find a Grave” website. Source: https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/77080091/fredericka_florence_jones.

²³ Steckley, pp. 105-106.

In the 1920 census, Anna H. Jones is listed as a “teacher” and in the 1930 census as a “farmer” in Monrovia. It is not known whether Sophia practiced medicine in California.

Interestingly, George did not believe in paying property taxes, but fortunately his daughter, Helen, was able to maintain some of the family property near the original family home on Shamrock. The 1301 Shamrock site was bought by Solidaire, Inc. which had a machine shop there that burned in 1959. When George died in 1944, he was at 1237 S. Shamrock.²⁴ When Emily passed in 1950, her obituary listed her of 1310 S. Sherman, around the corner from 1237 S. Shamrock.²⁵

In 1934, Edwin “Ebby” Thompson came to the Jones’ compound at the age of nine months. His mother, Anna Havenar Jones Thompson (1908-1937), was unwell, so Ebby and his brother were brought up by Grandma Martha and Great Aunt Emily. He said, “I grew up at 1237 S. Shamrock, this was the second little house. My Grandfather George built both houses... He did some gardening, raised vegetables and fruits. I was told that when I was nine months old, Annie, Emily, and Sophia lived in the big house.” Ebby continued, “I remember the orange grove around Plum (now L.A. Street). It was across the street from the airport. And as kids, we could walk on the runaway as a plane was coming down. Nobody stopped you! Every Sunday, there was entertainment at the airport. This was between 1936 to 1940. Route 66 and the train tracks sandwiched the airport – so you had to get the planes up fast. We’d fly kites there.”²⁶

Ebby’s niece is Renée Cochée. Renee lived in Monrovia on Central Avenue for a while. Ebby said, “My sister was strong, and she didn’t want her kids to go to a certain school [Huntington Elementary], and she was going to sue the city.” This was near 1954, and Renee attended Santa Fe Elementary before moving. She said, “My parents were doing upward mobility. They thought Altadena was better. My 4th grade assignment there was to do a family tree, and that’s how I got interested in our genealogy.” Renée continued, “Every generation in our family has had a medical person – dentist, doctor - since 1885. Ebby’s granddaughter just finished medical school at UCSD. Every generation has interest in art. Ebby’s mother was an artist; my mother, Patricia, was in the art club; my cousin is a commercial artist; and I was an art major at the Art Center. We have a 7-year-old relative that draws beautifully. And Anna H. Jones drew.” And every generation in the 20th century has connections with Monrovia.

²⁴ *Monrovia News-Post* dated 9 March 1944.

²⁵ *Monrovia News-Post* dated 3 October 1950.

²⁶ From an interview with Edwin Thompson and Renee Cochee on 23 January 2025 by Sandy Burud in Los Angeles.



1301 Shamrock, Monrovia with Emily Jones holding grandnephew Kenneth Chavis near 1926. Chavis graduated from Monrovia in 1944. Photo courtesy of Renée Cochée,

Probably in 1920, Anna established what is now known as the “Anna H. Jones Women’s Club” – still a prominent part of the community today. The Club’s 75th Anniversary pamphlet describes its mission: “The Anna H. Jones Club of Monrovia works to promote advancement in education for many and to assist those students who strive to obtain high academic achievements, in vocational fields and secondary, graduate and/or post graduate levels.”²⁷

After the Jones’ sisters passing in 1932, the club became affiliated with the National Council of Colored Women’s Club (NACWC).

The Anna H. Jones Club’s Scholarship Foundation has made a difference to many. Jennie Lockett, Mattie Boulter, and Eldora Polk are some of the notable past presidents. The scholarship funds have supported young people pursuing higher education including Jessica Blount, Edwin Thompson, Lois Gaston, Joannie Gholar (Yuille), John Parker – just to name a few.²⁸ The Club has also supported the Red Cross, Foothill Developmental School, City of Hope, and various museums and convalescent homes during its 100-year existence.

The other Jones’ legacy is to inspire us to be more. Against powerful headwinds of prejudice against both their race and their gender, they established educated younger generations; made advancements in health and welfare; and worked tirelessly on building better and more equitable communities. While we cannot hear their voices anymore, their actions and their ambitions speak to us.

²⁷ “Anna H. Jones Scholarship 75th Anniversary Booklet”, dated 28 September 1996. Accessed on 10 February 2025. <https://ppolinks.com/monrovia/B13%20198%201.pdf>

²⁸ On pages 14 and 15 of the Anna H. Jones Scholarship 75th Anniversary Booklet are names of other scholarship recipients. On page 25 is a list of some former members.



Jones sisters circa 1889 from left to right: principal Anna, teacher Fredericka, teacher Emily (seated), and Dr. Sophia (standing). Photo courtesy of Renée Cochée.