

JONES, JOHN RICE (1759 - 1824), pioneer of the American mid-west

Name: John Rice Jones
Date of birth: 1759
Date of death: 1824
Spouse: Eliza Jones (née Powell)
Child: Maria Jones
Child: John Rice Jones
Parent: John Jones
Gender: Male
Occupation: pioneer of the American mid-west
Area of activity: Law; Politics, Government and Political Movements; Travel and Exploration
Author: Arthur Herbert Dodd

was the eldest of fourteen children of John Jones, excise officer, Mallwyd, Meirionnydd, born in February 1759. Family tradition attributes to him an Oxford education, but this is unconfirmed. In January 1781 he married, at Brecon, Eliza, daughter of Richard and Mary Powell of that town, where he was in practice as a solicitor in 1782, with London chambers in Thanet Place, Strand. In 1784 he sailed for Philadelphia, returning in the course of the year for his wife and his son, John Rice, but leaving behind an infant daughter, Maria. In 1786 he moved to Kentucky (then federal territory, not yet admitted as a state), and fought in the Indian wars under George Rogers Clarke, ending as commissary-general at Vincennes (later in Indiana), where he received a grant of land from Congress and made a large fortune as the first English-speaking lawyer in the area during the period when population was flocking in. On the death of his Welsh wife in 1790 he married, 1791, an American lady, by whom he had a large family. When, in 1800, Indiana was organised as a territory, Jones became its first attorney-general (under W. H. Harrison) and helped to frame its first code of laws (1807); and as a member of the territorial legislature he took a prominent part in the unsuccessful agitation for the retention of slavery in the territory (1802) and in the successful agitation for the admission of Indiana (1816) and Illinois (1818) as states of the Union. From about 1809 he was engaged in lead mining operations across the Mississippi in what became the state of Missouri, owning the oldest and most prolific mine in the territory, and introducing the reverberatory furnace. In 1817 he joined in petitioning for the admission of Missouri as a state, and took a 'conspicuous' part in the convention which drafted its constitution in 1820. From 1821-4 he was a judge of the supreme court in the new state. He was also an original trustee of Indiana University (1806) and of Potosi Academy, Missouri (1817). He has been described as 'a student till the day of his death,' and credited with a wide knowledge of languages. He also had the reputation of being 'a good speaker and a brilliant advocate,' and was believed to be in his day 'one of the wealthiest men of the great west' - and at the same time 'a friend of the indigent, the ignorant and the distressed.' His Welsh-born son and namesake (a member of the Indiana legislature) was killed in a political affray in 1808; the children and descendants on his second marriage have been prominent as soldiers and lawyers in the states of the Middle West.

Author

Emeritus Professor Arthur Herbert Dodd, (1891 - 1975)

Sources

Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society, ii, 1956, 249-59, and sources therein cited

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [John Rice Jones](#)

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