

JONES, BENJAMIN DUNHAM

Born at \_\_\_\_\_ New Jersey (according to the 1870 Census, other information indicates that he might have been born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvannia, or that he had made his home there before coming to Arizona) in approximately 1832, month or day unknown. Son of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Married (1) Ruth White (18\_\_-1878), daughter of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, divorced wife of George White, at Arizona City (Yuma), A. T., December 18, 1872; children: Lillie (1873-78), Gertrude (or Catherine), born approximately 1876 or 77, date of death unknown; married (2) Jennie Templeman, daughter of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, at Yuma, A.T., January 8, 1879; no children born of this marriage. Reference is made to a Mable Stanley who was reported to have been Jones' wife and deserted him in 1881, however, there is no evidence that he had ever been married to a woman by that name.

No record is available as to the exact date Jones came to Arizona. There is reason to believe that he was employed by the government as an express rider between Fort Yuma and Wilmington during 1865. He is not listed in the census of 1864, however. In the 1870 census Jones was listed as a liquor dealer residing at Arizona City with real estate valued at \$3500 and personal property valued at \$1000.

In December of 1870 Jones was indicted, along with Miss Toot, for the murder of Charles Matthews. They were taken to La Paz by the deputy sheriff aboard the steamer Colorado to stand trial. On March 23, 1871 the indictment against Jones was quashed.

and he returned to Arizona City.

Jones was the owner of the Snug Saloon in Yuma when he married his first wife, Ruth. A year later, in 1873 he owned and operated the Golden Eagle Hotel and Saloon on Main Street. He sat on the Grand Jury in 1874. Jones closed the Golden Eagle for some time in 1875 for extensive alterations and repairs, re-opening it later that same year as the Cosmopolitan Hotel and Saloon, advertising it in the Arizona Sentinel as a "first class hotel."

During February of 1877 Jones went on a prospecting trip to the Cargo Muchacho Mountains with James Taylor and E. A. Copeland. According to the Arizona Sentinel they were well outfitted and expected to make a good strike. However, no mention of the result of their expedition has been found. Also in 1877 Jones was the proprietor of an establishment called the Jones Museum in Yuma and the local agent for the Philadelphia Brewery.

Shortly after the death of his first wife Jones put his house up for sale. The advertisement run in the Arizona Sentinel indicates that he was quite affluent at this time, owning both a large home and the Cosmopolitan Hotel and Saloon.

The Territorial Expositor mentioned in July of 1878 that "B. D. Jones is about to build a theater." This was repeated in the Arizona Sentinel and it appears that this was to be the first theater built in Yuma. Later the same paper reported that the dance hall run by Jones had been declared a public nuisance by the Grand Jury and subject to the highest license fees allowable as well as all other dance halls in the future. This raises some question as to what type of a theater Jones was running.

Jones organized a variety show in 1879, traveling to Phoenix during June and July, and featuring his new wife, Jennie, as one of the star performers. His show was well received by its patrons but he ran into trouble with the county treasurer's office over the assessment and collection of license fees, which he managed to avoid paying. There was also a petition circulated to have Jones and his act leave town, or not perform again, but nothing came of that and the troupe played in Phoenix through the month of July, moving on to Tucson in August. Apparently the troupe broke up shortly after that as an article appearing in the Arizona Weekly Star reported that Jones was prospecting with Vincente Fiers during January of 1880 in the Graham Mountains, about thirteen miles east of Camp Grant.

In 1881 Jones' wife, Jennie, is reported to have deserted him and gone to San Francisco. Jones was probably living in Tombstone by this time as all available accounts mentioning him during this period give Tombstone as his place of residence. In 1882 Jones was working an old Spanish mine in Sonora, although residing in, or visiting regularly, Tombstone, where he met Judge Purdy of Yuma and showed him specimens from the mine according to Purdy as printed in the Arizona Sentinel.

The Arizona Weekly Citizen carried a story about a court battle between Jones and the C. L. Murphy of Tucson over the custody of Gertrude (or Catherine as she was called on one occasion by the Arizona Weekly Citizen), Jones' youngest daughter by his first wife. Jones had left the child with the Sisters of St. Joseph at his wife's death, supposedly paying her board for one year and

visiting her once a year afterward for several years. The Sisters claimed they had no knowledge of Jones' whereabouts and there is some doubt as to whether he actually visited the child at all. The Sisters took her to Tucson and about five years later placed her with a foster family, the C. L. Murphys. In time she was adopted by Murphy and his wife. When Jones found out he sued for the custody of his daughter but Judge Wood, who heard the case, decided in favor of Murphy. Jones promptly appealed and the case went to Court Commissioner Gregg to be heard. While the case was still in progress Jones left for Philadelphia for a planned stay of about a month. It is not known when Jones returned to Arizona or what he did about the custody case when he did return. Evidence indicates that custody of Gertrude remained with the Murphys. Jones did return to Tombstone where he was reputed to have been a painter during his last years.

Died at Tombstone, A. T., February 15, 1888, aged 56, buried at \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetary, Tombstone, A.T. The Tombstone Prospector reports that at the time of his death Jones was living alone in a cabin in Tombstone at the rear of Pasquale Nigor's saloon on Allen Street, between 5th and 6th Streets, hardly the home of a prosperous man. He was found by Charley Blair about 7:30 in the evening and was judged to have been dead for several hours. At the inquest it was determined that death was the result of natural causes since he had a known heart ailment. The funeral was held at the undertaking establishment of A. T. Ritter. There is no record of a probate of his estate.