

# CHILTONIAN

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## James C. Jones Influential Merchant of Clanton

James C. Jones was one of the fundamental influential building block citizens of Clanton at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. He was a popular merchant for over two decades.

He and his wife Sophia were active members of the Clanton Methodist Church. They were important threads in the social fabric of the town. For most of J. C.'s life, the Methodist Church was the original wood-frame building (at the same location as the present one). The current Clanton FUMC Church building was completed in 1924.

J. C. was born in the "Yellow Leaf" community, near Jumbo northeast of Clanton, on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1873 into a farming family. His mother was from the Mullins family in the Jumbo community. By 1900 he was 26 years old, boarding in Clanton with W. I. Mullins, and working as a salesman. Later in 1900, he also married into the Mullins family by wedding Sophia Leah Mullins. By the 1910 U. S. Census, they have had one child who did not survive; they would have no other children to survive.

By the first of January, 1903, J. C. opens his own mercantile store, running an ad saying, "I have just opened a full line of Dry Goods, Notions, Shoes, Hats and Fresh Fancy Groceries. Come and look at my line before purchasing elsewhere." So far it is undetermined exactly where his store was, but it seemed to have been a brick store on Main Street (2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North). He ran his store, with varying partners, for over two decades.

In the spring of 1906, J. C. and Sophia built a new one story wood-frame home on the south side of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, west of Clanton near what is now 12<sup>th</sup> Street. This new house was one of three featured on a postcard made for Upchurch Drug Co. around 1908. It is visible on the 1917 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. This house,

### QUARTERLY MEETING

The Chilton County Historical Society will hold its fall meeting on **Sunday, January 19<sup>th</sup>**, at **2:00 PM** at the **Senior Connection**.

Our speaker is yet to be determined at the time of this writing.

The meeting is free and open to the public.

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**P. O. Box 644**

**Clanton, Alabama 35046-0644**

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	(Dues payable in January)	Family	\$15
		Student	\$ 5
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**NOTE:** On your address label, the two-digits after your name is the year through which you are paid. "L" = lifetime

owned by J. A. Nivens at the time, burned on November 20, 1922.

Around 1915 another of the leading merchants in town, Mr. E. M. Pinckard, decided to leave Clanton and sell his home and property. He owned practically all of the city block enclosed by 7<sup>th</sup> Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North, and 6<sup>th</sup> Street (what is today the Police Station, Regions Bank, and more). J. C. and Sophia purchased this home and property.

Soon after J. C. decided to sell the business, retire, and travel, one of the first automobile service stations was built and opened (late August 1925) on the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue on J. C.'s property. It was leased from J. C. by J. P. Lawrence and was run by L. E. "Dief" Diefenderfer).

Back in Clanton from his travels, J. C. soon felt the urge to open a new store. This time he renovated an older wood-frame building on his 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue property just beside Dief's Service Station. The old wooden building (built by Judge Callen) was one of Clanton's original storefronts on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North. It was subsequently moved twice, finally ending up on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. In January 1926 the new store was announced.

J. C. continued to improve his property and in 1927 he renovated the old Pinckard warehouse building on 7<sup>th</sup> Street south of his home. He leased it to White's Garage, which previously was sharing a building with Robinson's Machine Shop on the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue (also J. C.'s property). Robinson's Machine Shop took over the whole space upon White's Garage's move. All these businesses can be clearly seen on the 1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

J. C.'s new store was simply called "J. C. Jones" and was very successful for several years, right up until tragedy struck in March of 1930. J. C. died suddenly, after a stroke, at the age of 57. His assistant of many years at the store, Mr. Cleve Armstrong, ran the store until Jones' brother-in-law, Mr. W. Z. Hodges, took over. Hodges continued to run the store for another year or two. Mr. Armstrong became the manager of the Clanton A & P Store in July of 1930.

The new U. S. Post Office was built on J. C.'s property on the corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North and 6<sup>th</sup> Street in 1935. Today, that building is the Clanton Police Station. The old wood-frame store beside Dief's Service Station was replaced by a brick building in August 1935, originally rented to Dr. Lawrence for his office.

Sophia remained very active in the Clanton social scene for several more decades and visited her family often. She continued to live in the house on 7<sup>th</sup> Street until her death in 1955. Both she and J. C. are buried in the Clanton Cemetery.

An interesting tidbit: Sophia's sister Ruth Kate Mullins married Jacob Shepard (they moved out of Clanton). They had a daughter named Kate Shepard, who married Hogan Jackson. Kate and Hogan Jackson then had a daughter whom they named Kate... Kate Jackson would become a very successful actress, in big TV series hits like *Dark Shadows* and *Charlie's Angels*! Ruth Kate Mullins Shepard would later marry Hoyt Taylor and eventually move in with her sister in her house on 7<sup>th</sup> Street and lived there almost until her death in 1987. As a child, in the 1960s and 1970s, Kate Jackson often visited her grandmother in the house on 7<sup>th</sup> Street in Clanton.

The grand old house on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, the old Service Station, and the brick building beside it were all torn down prior to or during the building of the new Regions bank location in the late 1980s or 1990.

*Sources: Union Banner articles & ads, Sanborn Fire Maps, postcards, photographs.*

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED