

Brigadier General Patrick Henry Jones

by Mark H. Dunkelman

The Civil War was a cataclysm which uprooted a social order and planted a new strain of democracy in the United States. While the emancipation and military service of the blacks was the greatest upheaval, the fortunes of the Irish and Germans and other immigrants in America were also enhanced. After fighting in their adopted country's war, the foreign born veterans were awarded a larger role in the life of the nation. In the large volunteer armies of the Union, officerships and politics were intertwined, and after the war a flood of candidates ran for office on platforms supported by their war records. One man whose life reflects these changes produced by the war is Patrick Henry Jones, one of the twelve Federal generals who were born in Ireland.

He was the first of an eventual seven children raised by James and Ellen (Lynch) Jones, who were living in County Westmeath when Patrick was born on November 20, 1830. At age seven the youngster began attending school at a monastery in County Wicklow. Three years later the Jones family joined the tide of Irish immigration to America. After landing in New York City on June 5, 1840, the family traveled westward to Cattaraugus County, New York, and settled on a farm. In addition to working on the farm, Patrick attended the common schools until the age of twenty.¹ Then, in 1850, he took up journalism and became local editor of the Buffalo Republic. Soon after he became an editor of the Buffalo Sentinel² and traveled through the western states as a correspondent.

But Jones disliked this work and in 1853 he returned to the Cattaraugus County town of Ellicottville.³ Here he studied law under the tutelage of Addison G. Rice, a prominent attorney. In November of 1856 he was admitted to the bar and he joined his mentor in the firm of Rice and Jones. In 1859 the firm was joined by a young man destined to serve under Jones during the war. Alanson Crosby, from nearby Franklinville, had read law with Rice and Jones.⁴ In November of that year another future officer, Daniel B. Allen, studied law in the firm.⁵ Soon after these two joined, Jones left the firm and formed a partnership with Judge Allen D. Scott.⁶ During 1859 Jones also courted and married Sarah Morris. Sarah's father, the Reverend Thomas Morris, performed the ceremony in Ellicottville on December 20.⁷

His wife, a lucrative practice and many friends in the community were soon to be left behind by Jones as his adopted country was gripped by the crisis of the Civil War.⁸ After the firing on Fort Sumter and President Lincoln's call for volunteers in April of 1861 he responded without hesitation. On May 15 Jones enlisted at nearby Allegany, New York, to serve two years.⁹

The new soldier was thirty years old and was five feet, eight inches tall, "a gentleman of slight proportions, but plainly possessing powers of great endurance." Curly brown hair, a mustache and grey eyes marked a "pleasant face", and he carried himself with a "courteous, modest mien."¹⁰ His popularity was shown in his election as second lieutenant of his company. This was Company H of the 37th New York State Infantry Volunteers.¹¹ All but three companies of the newly formed regiment consisted of the 75th Militia, Irish-Americans of New York City. Two

companies came from rural Cattaraugus County: H, from Allegany, and I, from Ellicottville. Jones had undoubtedly been helpful in rallying to the cause the railroad workers who had settled on Irish Hill and elsewhere in Ellicottville.¹²

The 37th New York was frequently called the Irish Rifles because of its ethnic makeup.¹³ The regiment was organized at New York City, and there Jones was mustered in as second lieutenant, Company H, on June 7, 1861. From that date until June 30 Jones was on leave and when he returned to New York he found the regiment had proceeded to Washington on June 23. At his own expense the lieutenant journeyed to Washington and rejoined his regiment as ordered. In July, the 37th New York participated in covering the retreat after First Bull Run after being held in reserve during the war's first large battle. General George McClellan's long period of building the Army of the Potomac followed. As Colonel Samuel B. Hayman drilled his Irish Rifles, Jones learned the business of war. On September 21 he left his company to go on recruiting service and returned the following month. On November 4 he was promoted to first lieutenant and adjutant and mustered in as such four days later. Another promotion followed on January 21, 1862 and Jones became major of the 37th. The elevation in rank entitled him to a horse and a soldier as a servant.¹⁴

The Peninsula Campaign of the following summer put the 37th into its first fight. As a member of Berry's brigade, Kearney's division, 3rd Corps, the regiment reached the battlefield at Williamsburg during the afternoon of May 5 after a march delayed by crowded, muddy roads. Immediately, they were involved in their first full scale combat, officers

and enlisted men proving ready for the test. On the last day of the month they took part in the Battle of Fair Oaks, where the gallant Kearney led the 37th against the enemy. Colonel Hayman's report of the fight noted Major Jones' general good conduct and commended his advice on the Confederates' movements.¹⁵ Later during the campaign, the 37th fought again at Glendale (June 30) and Malvern Hill (July 1) during the Seven Days. Following the failure of the Peninsula Campaign, the Irish Rifles were involved in Pope's movement which culminated in Second Bull Run. The regiment suffered few casualties, although at Chantilly on September 1 their popular division commander, General Kearney, was killed.

With the war effort stalled, President Lincoln had issued a call for 300,000 volunteers to serve three years. In Cattaraugus and adjacent Chautauqua Counties, Jones' ex-partner, Addison Rice, had raised a regiment with the understanding that after equipping it and accompanying it to the front he would be relieved of the command by Major Jones. Consequently Jones was commissioned colonel of the 154th New York Volunteers on October 8, 1862. The new commander joined his regiment on November 19 at its encampment near Fairfax Court House, Virginia. One of his first orders established a strict regimen of daily drills, Sunday inspections and recitations in tactics by the company officers to prepare the raw troops for future campaigns.¹⁶

The 154th New York was then a part of Colonel Adolphus Buschbeck's 1st Brigade in Adolph Von Steinwehr's 2nd Division of the 11th Corps. With this command they made the march to Stafford Heights opposite Fredericksburg but were in the reserve during the great battle. After participating in the Mud March, the regiment made several ill-appreciated

moves of their winter camp until spring brought the campaign of their first battle. ¹⁷ During the winter Colonel Jones took ten days leaves ¹⁸ in February and March.

General Joseph Hooker had drilled and conditioned the army through the late winter months. Hooker's commands included the 154th through much of the war and "Fighting Joe" grew friendly with Colonel Jones. In their first review by the new commander the regiment led its division onto the field. Colonel Jones was told by Hooker that his command had marched as well as the veteran regiments. On April 18, 1863, Buschbeck's brigade marched to Kelly's Ford on the upper Rappahannock River, and two weeks later a large portion of the army joined them. On the evening of April 28, Jones gathered his officers and gave them their orders. The 154th was to lead the way for Hooker's bold flank movement. The regiment boarded pontoons and crossed the river under a hasty volley delivered by Confederate cavalry vedettes, who turned and fled. A bridge was laid and the Army of the Potomac was ¹⁹ on its way to Chancellorsville.

When "Stonewall" Jackson's mighty surprise attack rolled down on the 11th Corps on the evening of May 2, the 154th New York was the farthest regiment in line from the initial shock. It was posted in a clearing at Dowdall's Tavern on the Plank Road, which served as headquarters for corps commander Oliver Otis Howard and General Von Steinwehr. Thus there was ample time for Colonel Jones to get his men under arms and into line. A shallow rifle pit built facing the wrong way across the Plank Road was the only protection. The 154th formed the extreme left of the so-called "Buschbeck line" and as such

did its part in offering creditable resistance to the Confederates' overwhelming charge. After approximately twenty minutes of hard fighting, with most of the other Union troops having already scattered into the woods behind them, Colonel Jones gave the order to retreat. He had received a gunshot wound in the right hip, and like many others of his regiment, he became a prisoner of war when the victorious Rebels swarmed over the rifle pit.²⁰

During his brief tenure as a captive, Jones received kind treatment at the hands of the Confederates. On May 15 he was paroled at United States Ford and that day he returned to his command at their old camp at Stafford Court House. Sergeant William Charles of Company F made him a pair of crutches. Unable physically to do duty and as yet not exchanged, Jones bid the 154th New York goodbye on Sunday, May 17.²¹ A six months' separation from his command ensued. Much of May, June²² and July he spent in the hospital at Georgetown, D. C. Jones kept abreast of affairs at the front, however, and early in June he was in Albany suggesting various promotions in the regiment.²³ On the first day of July, at the Battle of Gettysburg, the 154th was again called on to cover a retreat of the 11th Corps, and, as at Chancellorsville, a rout ensued and casualties exceeded 200. Jones' former student, Lieutenant Colonel Dan B. Allen, commanded the regiment and escaped²⁴ unharmed.

Late in July, Jones arrived at Camp Parole at Annapolis, Maryland, and on July 27 he was assigned to the command of the 3rd Battalion of paroled prisoners. However, sickness kept him away from his post and in the hospital at Annapolis through August and until September 13. Jones was finally exchanged on October 31 and left Camp Parole that day.²⁵ By that time the 154th New York had been transferred to

Bridgeport, Alabama, in support of the besieged Union army in Chattanooga. The regiment was encamped at the foot of Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga, after helping to open the famous Cracker Line, by the time Colonel Jones reached it in late November. That day camp was broken and the 11th Corps marched to Chattanooga. In the subsequent three days' battle the corps was minimally engaged. Skirmishing on November 23 and 24 cost the 154th New York six enlisted men wounded. On the morning of the 25th Generals Howard and Von Steinwehr and Colonel Buschbeck, with the balance of the brigade, moved to join Sherman's attack on the Confederate right and were heavily engaged. Colonel Jones was left in command of the 134th and 154th New York and saw no action. When he and his command rejoined Buschbeck the following morning, the victory had been accomplished. ²⁶

The campaign to Knoxville to relieve Burnside and the return to Chattanooga was a hard one on the men of the 154th New York. Instead of enemy fire they contended with long forced marches over frozen roads with worn-out shoes. At sunset of December 17, the ragged troops returned to Lookout Valley and the prospect of winter quarters. The regiment built for themselves and General Hooker comfortable log houses roofed with canvas and 1864 came and began to slip by. ²⁷ The monotony of the routine was interrupted for Jones on different occasions. ^e ¹ ²⁸ In late January and early February he commanded the brigade. During the same period he served on a court of inquiry requested by Major General Carl Schurz to investigate his conduct during the night battle of Wauhatchie back in October. At the termination of the lengthy hearing Jones and the other officers of the court found no reason to censure Schurz's actions during the battle. ²⁹ On February 25, Jones left Lookout Valley for home on a 25 days leave of absence. On his return,

March 22, a foot deep snowfall had many members of his regiment filled with thoughts of Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties. ³⁰

During March of 1864, Reuben E. Fenton, a member of the U. S. House of Representatives from Chautauqua County, presented to President Lincoln a petition signed by himself and seventeen others. The appeal recommended the promotion of Colonel Jones to brigadier general. The President turned the paper over to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and there the matter lay. ³¹ When Jones led the 154th New York out of Lookout Valley on May 4, 1864, Adolphus Buschbeck was in command of the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, 20th Corps. The regiment was now a part of the Army of the Cumberland in General Sherman's reorganized command. The 11th and 12th Corps had been consolidated to form the 20th. Von Steinwehr left and Major General John White Geary assumed command of the division. ³²

Four days after the opening of the campaign, May 8, Geary's division was ordered to make a demonstration against Dug Gap on Rocky Face Ridge, Georgia. The mountain was crowned with a palisade of boulders behind which waited the Confederate infantry. Huge rolling stones as well as rifle fire confronted them as Colonel Jones led his regiment up the mountain. Underneath the large outcropping of rock the men of the 154th paused to catch their breath and then Jones led his command to the summit. He had no sooner mounted the rocks at the crest when he was thrown back over the escarpment. In this fall he was injured by a contusion. After safely removing their colors from the mountaintop, the remaining members of the 154th were ordered to retreat by Lieutenant Colonel Dan Allen. ³³

Colonel Jones returned to Chattanooga after the battle and spent a month convalescing while his regiment continued south to battles at

Resaca and New Hope Church. When he returned on June 7, he assumed command of the brigade. Colonel Buschbeck and his regiment, the 27th Pennsylvania, had returned home upon the expiration of their enlistment. Jones' brigade consisted of the 73rd and 109th Pennsylvania, 119th, 134th and 154th New York, and the 33rd New Jersey. A week after returning, Colonel Jones led his command towards Lost Mountain, Georgia, where on June 15 and 16 they were heavily engaged in Hooker's storming of the Confederate positions there. Jones' former law student, Captain Alanson Crosby of Company D, 154th New York, was mortally wounded during the second day's fight. The colonel deeply regretted the loss of "a brave and gallant soldier, a bright lawyer, and a young man of great promise."³⁴ Through the remainder of June and early July the brigade engaged in occasional skirmishing as Sherman's army approached Atlanta. Colonel Jones and General Geary were occupied in advancing a portion of the brigade when the Confederate surprise attack opened the Battle of Peachtree Creek on July 20. The officers and men were powerless to resist the onslaught in their exposed position and scurried back to the 20th Corps' line, where the attack was repulsed. It was the last large battle the command would fight.³⁵

During the siege of Atlanta Colonel Jones was relieved of the command of the brigade on August 8 to enable him to perform special duty as president of a court martial. The city had fallen when he resumed brigade command on September 17.³⁶ During the occupation of Atlanta Colonel Jones' headquarters were in a red brick house on the McDonough Road. All excess baggage had been sent to the rear when he led his brigade seaward on November 15, 1864. During the famous

ensuing march the command did its share of foraging and railroad wrecking.³⁷ Jones was especially pleased with their work in tearing up track and a large bridge over the Ogeechee River on November 30. It was accomplished, he noted in his report, "in a very effectual manner."³⁸

The brigade was on the far left of the Union line, on the banks of the Savannah River, as Sherman approached the city of the same name. It suffered some casualties from Confederate gunboat shells and some of the men were captured when they were posted on Hutchinson Island, the eventual avenue of escape for the bottled up Rebel army.³⁹ Early on the morning of December 21, Geary's division entered the city of Savannah. Jones' brigade encamped on Forsyth Place and were ordered to guard and patrol a district of the city.⁴⁰

On January 4, 1865, Jones left for New York State on a leave of absence. Ten days later his old regiment learned of and cheered his promotion to brigadier general, to rank from December 6, 1864. This advance in rank had been recommended at various times by Generals Howard, Hooker and Sherman. Jones did not receive his commission,⁴¹ however, until April 18, 1865.

Because he was suffering from chronic diarrhea, Jones' leave of absence was twice extended, and in the Campaign of the Carolinas his brigade was commanded by Colonel George W. Mindil of the 33rd New Jersey.⁴² After his recovery Jones returned and assumed command at Goldsboro, North Carolina, on March 30, 1865. Sherman had gathered a large army there to begin a final campaign against Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston. From April 14 to 25, Jones' brigade was camped on the grounds of the insane asylum in Raleigh. Many visitors,

including General Sherman, stopped by to watch the antics of the inmates. On the 25th the brigade moved to Jones' Cross Roads. The following night news of Johnston's surrender reached camp, which was soon in an uproar. General Jones contributed the commissary department's liquor to the celebration. After a hard march of over 300 miles, which took them past their old battlefield at Dowdall's Tavern, Jones' brigade arrived in the vicinity of Washington. On May 24, the general led his brigade on its last march, the Grand Review through the streets of Washington amidst tumultuous crowds, to Bladensburg, Maryland. On June 17, 1865, Patrick Henry Jones resigned his commission as brigadier general, U. S. Volunteers.⁴³

He returned to Ellicottville and the practice of law. But the prominence he had attained during the war and changes in his political beliefs prevented him from remaining a small town lawyer. A Democrat before the war, Jones was now a staunch Republican.⁴⁴ In the November state elections he was voted clerk of the Court of Appeals on the Republican ticket, and spent much of the next three years in Albany attending to his duties.⁴⁵ During his term as clerk he refused to take the interest on monies in the hands of the court, which had been the custom and principal reward of the office. Instead, Jones gave all the money to charitable institutions.⁴⁶ In 1867 he opened a law office in New York City and also was appointed counsel to the Commissioners of Immigration of the state.⁴⁷ In August of 1868, General Jones was appointed by Governor Reuben Fenton as register of New York City to finish the term of General Charles Halpine, the poetic creator of "Private Miles O'Reilly", who had died in office. Jones presented his salary to the widow and family of General Halpine until the election of Michael Connolly to the post.⁴⁸ In 1868 he was a

delegate to the Republican National Convention held in Chicago. That year Addison Rice moved to New York City, and with Edward I. Wilson, they formed the law firm of Rice, Wilson and Jones. This firm was dissolved on April 1, 1869, when General Jones was appointed postmaster of New York City by President Grant.⁴⁹

The appointment as postmaster was a surprise. After Grant's election, Horace Greeley, a close friend of General Jones, had been promised by the president that Jones would be appointed marshall of the Southern District of New York. Grant had forgotten the promise and appointed someone else, and Greeley was irritated. Taking General Jones to Washington, Greeley presented his grievance in an audience with the president. Grant told Greeley the promise had slipped his mind, but he would try to find something for General Jones. The first Jones knew of his appointment was when it was placed in his hand. While postmaster, General Jones formed a law partnership with General George W. Palmer and Colonel Mitchell Knowland. Jones remained in office during Grant's first term and resigned in 1873.⁵⁰ Jones was held in high esteem by the employees of the post office but declined to receive a testimonial from them after his resignation.⁵¹ A certain Norton of the money order department had defalcated with over \$100,000 during Jones' term, and the general was legally liable for the loss.⁵² The case dragged on in the courts and was finally settled in 1877.

Following his resignation as postmaster, Jones resumed the practice of law in New York City. In 1874 he was nominated for and elected register of the City and County of New York, and served a three years term. Then he again resumed his law practice.⁵³ In January of 1879, Jones became involved against his wishes in a bizarre case. The previous November the coffin and body of the enormously wealthy New

York entrepreneur Alexander T. Stewart was stolen from its vault. Now Jones was surprised to be approached as an intermediary by the grave robbers, and for eight months he unsuccessfully negotiated with the court, the police and the criminals. Also involved in the strange case was Giuseppe Sala, the stone cutter who had perpetrated the Cardiff and New Hampshire Giant hoaxes, who claimed he had been approached by the ghouls.⁵⁴ The case was closed in 1880 with the payment of a ransom and return of Stewart's corpse.

General Jones resided from 1885 until his death on Staten Island, at 3 Ann Street in Port Richmond. After an illness of four years, he died of heart failure on Monday, July 23, 1900.⁵⁵ Funeral services were held the 25th at Saint Mary's Church in Port Richmond, and he was buried in Saint Peter's Cemetery,⁵⁶ where a marble stone marks his grave. General Jones was survived by his widow, Sarah, who died in 1912, and four sons.⁵⁷ When word of his death reached his old home town, the Ellicottville Post noted his "generosity, self abnegation, gentility and affability....He had a host of true, admiring friends and he was always sincerely true to them. He loved and served his country with devotion. Of course, unlike some others whose service was cheap compared to his, but 'banked on' and flouted before the public to gobble honors and questionable wealth- General Jones died, as he had lived, comparatively poor, for he never could withstand the appeal of a friend in need, and never enriched himself at the expense of a human being. The moist eyes of so many, far and wide, as they learn that General Jones has answered 'the last roll call' are eloquent tribute to his worth, valor and character and bespeak the truth that his memory shall not fade among men."⁵⁸

Notes

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- 45.. Adams, op. cit.
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- 47.. Adams, op. cit.
- 48.. Harper's Weekly, May 15, 1869.
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- 50.. Ibid.
- 51.. New York Times, March 29, 1873.
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