

# John A. Jones

Businessman and Barber  
1867-1937

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by Susan Jezak Ford

John A. Jones owned and operated his barber shop and pool hall as one of the most respected businesses in the 18th and Vine neighborhood. By installing the best equipment and insisting on high standards of conduct, Jones' business succeeded as one of the earliest and longest-lasting establishments in the neighborhood.

Jones was born in Arkansas and was raised in Ontario, Canada. He received honors for his bravery in the Spanish-American War and moved to Kansas City in 1906, where he began working as a barber.

The Jones Barber Shop and Billiard Parlor opened at 1514 East 18th Street in 1911. At the time, the establishment contained three barber chairs and four pool tables. The business grew, gradually adding more pool tables, until it became one of the best equipped and largest billiard parlors for African Americans in the country. Jones was the fifth businessman in the country to purchase Johnny Kling billiard tables, designed for the baseball catcher and owner of the Kansas City Blues. The tables were known at the time as the best billiard equipment available.

Jones, an excellent pool player himself, insisted on good sportsmanship, proper conduct, and respect for others in his place of business. By 1928, he employed 12 black men and women in his establishment. His high standards attracted not only business leaders from the 18th and Vine community, but also visiting jazz musicians.

Poor eyesight forced Jones to retire in 1928, but he continued to visit the shop and his friends there. When his eyesight was restored, he again claimed his title as one of the best pool players in the city.

Jones' health began to fail in 1937 and, despondent over his lack of strength, he killed himself. At the time of his death, his shop was the longest continuously owned business in the 18th and Vine neighborhood. The soft voice, unhurried pace, and outstanding

management of John Jones was frequently cited as the key to the success of the Jones Barber Shop and Billiard Parlor.

Sources

"John A. Jones, Business Man, Kills Himself." *Kansas City Call*, 29 October 1937.

"Leaves Duties." *Kansas City Call*, 27 July 1928.

"Smiling Service Gets It." *Kansas City Call*, 15 June 1928.

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