

## T.M. Jones – Ally of R.J. Ackley



Moving to Garden City March 1, 1907, T.M. Jones soon began taking an active interest in the affairs of the Finney County Water Users association, which is the owner of the Farmers' Ditch, and in farmers' cooperative movements in Finney county. It is generally conceded that to him is due much of the credit for the development of the Farmers' Ditch and the improvement in the method of serving the water users under the ditch. For twenty-six years he has been a director of the ditch company, serving every year except one since the fall of 1908.

At that time the Farmers' Ditch wing dam on the Arkansas river was built of sod and brush and washed out with every good-sized flood. Mr. Jones urged the building of a new wing dam to be constructed of piling. This 1,100-foot dam has since given dependable service to the water users. Mr. Jones recommended the filing of a suit to establish the priority rights of the ditch. This was done in 1909 and resulted in securing a larger share of Arkansas river water for land owners under the ditch. In 1910 Mr. Jones recommended a change in the method of measuring water to users, wherein they were charged with water by the hour instead of by the acre, which proved a more equitable method of distribution. At his suggestion the ditch company, instead of the farmers, paid for the upkeep of laterals and for outlet boxes. These changes were of benefit to farmers whose land was located some distance from the main canal. After urging the straightening of the main ditch for fifteen years the work was done several

years ago, and the ditch now delivers a third more water per hour than formerly. At Mr. Jones' instigation a telephone system was built to accommodate water users under the ditch. Mr. Jones has taken a leading part in the fight of the Kansas water users against those in Colorado over priority rights, and while there have been times when he has met strong opposition in his own state and county he has never wavered from the course he believed to be right, and today is credited with having been largely responsible for most of the advantages Arkansas river water users in Kansas now have, or will have when, and if, the Caddoa dam is built.

Since 1888, when he joined the Farmers' Alliance in Wallace, Nebraska, Mr. Jones has been a member of some cooperative organization, and his work in that movement in Finney county as been hardly less outstanding than his work in the development of irrigation. He was instrumental in organizing the first cooperative equity exchange in Finney county in 1915 and was a director of that company during the two years it existed, until it was sold to the Ball Manufacturing company. In 1919 Mr. Jones called a meeting for the purpose of reorganizing the Garden City Cooperative Exchange. At the end of the first nine months after its reorganization, the new company pro-rated \$16,000 to its members, and has made a profit every year since.

Mr. Jones was a director of the Garden City Cooperative Equity Exchange for sixteen years, until he resigned. He has never received nor asked for pay for his services in the cooperative organizations to which he belonged.

Thomas Martin Jones was born April 3, 1862, near Carthage, Illinois. His parents were pioneer farmers in that state to which they had moved in 1850 from Tennessee. When Thomas M. Jones was eight years old his parents moved to southwest Missouri, but when the son became eighteen years old he returned to

Illinois to work on a farm at sixteen dollars a month. After a year in Illinois he returned to Missouri and remained eleven months, then went back to Illinois to remain two years, and in September, 1884, went to McCook, Nebraska, driving a team with a covered wagon the entire distance. He took a homestead in March, 1885, in Lincoln county, Nebraska, 40 miles southwest of North Platte. He built a two-room sod house where he made his home, making final proof on his homestead in May, 1892. His report of crops made when he made final proof, he believes, was probably seldom equalled, for in the preceding year, 1891, he had raised as heavy crops of timothy [hay crop] and oats as he had ever seen on the best farms in Illinois. But the years 1893 to 1901, he states, were as dry as the past three years in western Kansas have been. Mr. Jones moved to a ranch he purchased near Wallace, Nebraska, and leased additional railroad and school land in 1898. He operated this ranch until 1901, when he sold out and moved to Brush, Colorado, where he was engaged in the livery business for a time. Before and since that time he improved and operated a number of farms. He learned much about the rights of water users while driving irrigation officials and engineers over the Brush and Fort Morgan irrigated sections that became valuable to him in later years. From Brush Mr. Jones moved to Scottsbluff, Nebraska, where he bought an irrigated farm. Potatoes were among the principal products of that farm. In 1905 he bought a farm near Hastings, Nebraska, where he lived until he came to Garden City.

In January, 1906, before he moved to Garden City, he came here with a number of land buyers who were looking over the country with B.M. McCue, Mr. Jones and Chas. [Charles] Kindig, a brother-in-law of Mr. McCue, bought nine quarter-sections twenty miles northeast of Garden City of Mr. McCue. Later Mr. Jones traded his interest in the nine quarters for the SW 36-23-33, on which he built a set of improvements and gradually developed one of the best alfalfa farms in Finney county. In the spring of 1917 he purchased the northeast quarter of the same section from the late James Cowgill, mayor of Kansas City and owner of a large ranch in Finney county. This quarter - section soon became known as one of the most productie [sic] in the state, in one year producing alfalfa that sold for more than \$11,500. Mr. Jones built a modern home on this farm and lived there until 1923, when he moved to Garden City. Other improvements Mr. Jones has made in Finney county include a modern 7-room residence at 801 Seventh street, sold later to J.F. Walters. In the spring of 1932 he built the modern bungalow at 314 Ninth street, where he now lives. Since March, 1907, he has brought 2,310 acres of virgin sod under cultivation in Finney county. It is now all leased to other farmers except 480 acres which Mr. Jones hires farmed.

T.M. Jones was married to Emma Caroline Kohl in February, 1887, at Stockville, Nebraska. They have four children: Orville O., Roy M., Harvey F., and Lucille Nina (Mrs. G.C. Archer).