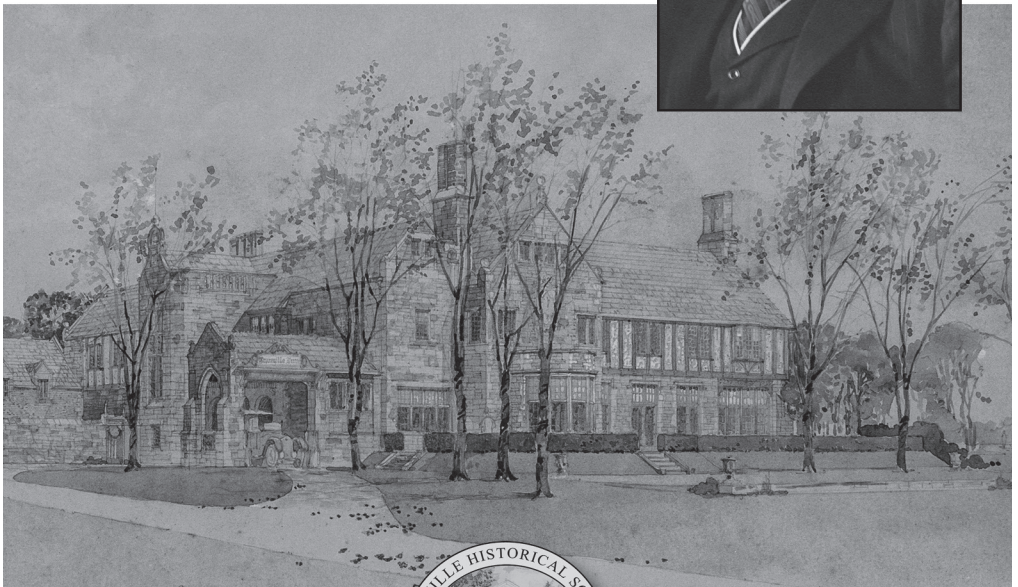
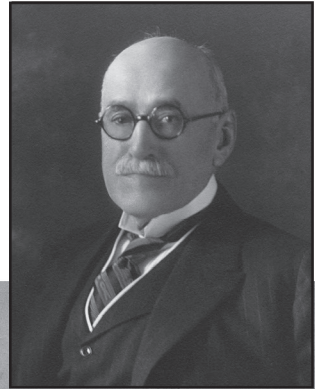


GRANVILLE'S TYCOON

*John Sutphin Jones
and the Gilded Age*

LAURA EVANS



GRANVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
POCKET HISTORY

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Preface

During the last half of the nineteenth century, up until twentieth-century Progressive-era reforms such as anti-trust actions, labor laws, and the institution of the income tax in 1913, several American individuals amassed the greatest personal fortunes in history to that point. The most ruthless and unethical were called the Robber Barons, while others were called Tycoons, Magnates, Captains of Industry, or simply Capitalists. Names such as Rockefeller, Carnegie, Gould, and Vanderbilt were prominent in the news of those days as they built empires of railroads, steel production, oil, and coal and iron ore mining. All levels of government were largely acquiescent at the time, doing little to protect workers or prevent or moderate the cartels, trusts, monopolies, and vertical businesses that capitalism must avoid if it is to work successfully as an economic system.

Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland were among the seats of these empires. So too, down the scale of magnitude of these fortunes—but well above any reasonable expectation for a village of fewer than 1,000 people—was Granville, Ohio. John Sutphin Jones was a heavy investor in coal, as well as shipping and railroads, and he became Granville's great man of wealth. The tycoon who acquired



An 1883 cartoon from *Puck* magazine, “*The Protectors of Our Industries,*” critiquing “robber barons” including Cyrus Field, Jay Gould, and Cornelius Vanderbilt seated on bags of money, aboard a large raft carried by workers of various professions. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

most of the land between the Dugway Hill (leading from Newark to Granville) and today’s elementary school in the village, who built the Granville Inn and significantly enhanced Monomoy Place and Bryn Du Mansion, referred to himself as a “magnate” and a “capitalist.” Although his fortune was not on the scale of the men mentioned in the previous paragraph, he was, by any measure, an extremely successful businessman and investor who worked his way up from low-ranking railway jobs to the circle of those very men, the “Big Boys.” He even met with some of them in New York but declined to make a major investment with them.

That Granville had a Gilded-Age tycoon among its residents is not merely a historical curiosity. His presence permanently left its mark on the village—physically in the form of buildings and spaces, and



John Sutphin Jones (1849–1927)

culturally in the feel and identity of the town—and continues to resonate more than a century later.

Laura Evans has done extensive research in Granville, Chicago, Naples, Fla., Wisconsin, and southern Ohio and has been able to document the life and activities of John Sutphin Jones as much as is possible, given the fact that Jones appears to have covered his tracks as far as certain details of his business chronology were concerned. This was in keeping with the intentional obfuscation that the wealthiest men in the era employed. Evans is also able to convey the essential family and social aspects of Jones' life and illustrate how someone who had wealth of that magnitude spent his money.

The Granville Historical Society has also included in this volume two shorter histories: Wayne Piper's biography of Jones' legendary daughter Sallie Jones Sexton—a fascinating character in her own right—and James Hale's study of one of the most important houses in the village, Monomoy Place.

With all of the attention the Granville Historical Society has given over time to the founders and early movers of the village from the early nineteenth century, this book about another age is a welcome and valuable addition to Granville's written history.

— *Tom Martin, Past President, The Granville Historical Society*

Dedication

“Throughout the ages, researchers have had before them thousands of pieces of paper, all of which are silent. The hundreds of thousands of words printed on them are mute, waiting for their silence to be broken by the images researchers create as they read and interpret them, in an effort to bring to life again the lives they represent.”

— Lila Zuck
*Naples: A Second Paradise –
The History of Naples, Florida*
(2013)

Thanks for sharing, Lila, Researcher Extraordinaire.

Author's Introduction

As Granville approached its 2005 bicentennial, Granville Historical Society board members envisioned a set of publications to celebrate Granville's history. It was thought contributors could present a livelier picture of village life if they consulted *The Granville Times*, a local newspaper published from 1880 to 1941.

But access to the newspaper was limited: *The Times* was only available on microfilm, or bound in elephant folios locked away in a safe in the basement of the Granville Public Library. The board members wanted someone to read and index the paper, and quickly. Laura Evans, former Granville Public Library employee, was available. She had fielded questions about local history and genealogy for nineteen years. Would she take the job?

She did—and spent the next four and a half years in a quiet room at the public library, reading old newsprint and typing the index into her computer.

Laura often arrived home, exclaiming to her husband, "I read the most interesting thing in the newspaper today!" After many months, he suggested she write a newspaper column. Thus was born "The Time Traveler," published for over fifteen years. The stories were taken from the pages of *The Granville Times*, augmented by materials

from the Granville Historical Society's archives, and in later years, also from internet sources.

Often in the newspaper columns the Time Traveler would encounter John Sutphin Jones, or J.S. Jones, or simply, Mr. Jones. Jones was a railroad man, working the Toledo & Ohio Central line that came to Granville in 1880. He often rode the rails, as his work took him south to the coalmines in Ohio, north to Great Lakes shipping ports in Wisconsin and Minnesota, and to Chicago, where he set up his own company to pick up and deliver coal, returning with timber.

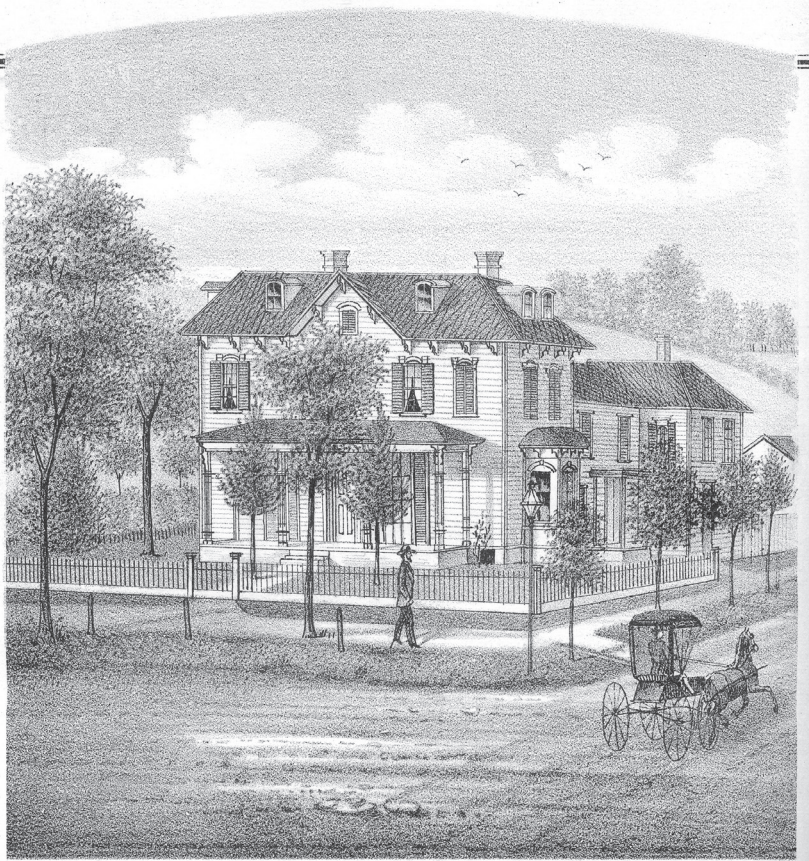
J.S. Jones had business associates, and the newspaper was full of lawsuits and countersuits involving the Sunday Creek Coal Company. When the dust settled, Jones won these legal battles, and he then owned extensive coal lands and mines. He was called "ambitious" and "industrious" by men of his time, and for that he was admired. He called himself a "coal operator" and a "capitalist" and a "magnate." He became an honest-to-goodness tycoon, a wealthy and powerful businessman.

In 1884 he married Sarah Fidelia Follett, daughter of Dr. Alfred Follett, who lived in the fine house on the northwest corner of West Broadway and Mulberry Street we now call Monomoy Place. Sarah's father died in 1897, and her mother lived in the large house. In 1905 John and Sarah bought a nice farm out on Centerville Road, but it took several years to transform it into the fine estate they envisioned. In the meantime, they lived at Monomoy and hosted several major events there during Granville's Centennial in 1905.

Sarah's mother died in 1909, and Sarah inherited Monomoy Place. A year later Sarah, known to her friends as Lady Sarah, died. Mr. Jones remarried and soon became a father. The family moved into the mansion at Bryn Du in 1914. J.S. Jones raised fine horses, sold coal, and developed interests in hotels, both in Granville and in Naples, Florida.

John Sutphin Jones died in 1927. He is buried in Maple Grove Cemetery in Granville.

His story is not just of an important Granvillian but of an entire era of Ohio and U.S. history.



RESIDENCE OF A.FOLLETT M.D. GRANVILLE, LICKING CO. OHIO.

A sketch of Follett House, later Monomoy Place, as it looked in an 1875 local atlas by L.H. Everts.

John Sutphin Jones' Early Life

Hubert Howe Bancroft, historian and publisher, called his birthplace “lovely little Granville,” an apt description of this Central Ohio village east of Columbus at the edge of the Appalachian escarpment, with foothills to the east and north, and where the Raccoon River valley sweeps through fertile farmland.

What brought John Sutphin Jones to Granville? He was not a native son, nor was he a student at one of Granville’s educational institutions. *The Granville Times* first took notice of him in 1881, reporting that J.S. Jones was staying at the Buxton House with other railroad men. This suggests that he was already known and worth a mention in the newspaper (admittedly a low bar in small-town papers of this era). But what drew this rising man of the world, this future coal operator, capitalist, and self-described “magnate” to make his home in Granville? And what sort of *man* was he?

Jones was the youngest son of Welsh immigrant parents, William Richard and Elizabeth Morris Jones, who had come to the United States in the early 1830s from Montgomeryshire in North Wales (see appendix for the genealogy). John was born January 4, 1849, near Washington Court House in Fayette County, Ohio. William Jones identified himself on the 1850 U.S. Census as a “laborer” whose

household included four children: fifteen-year-old Jane, seven-year-old Sarah, nine-year-old Alexander, and one-year-old John. By the 1860 census, William was listed as a “farmer,” and unfortunately for the historian trying to make sense of this, the 1860 census also added and subtracted a few children, now listing a 23-year-old Mary (“Molly”), 21-year-old William Morris (identified as “student”), nineteen-year-old Alexander, sixteen-year-old Sarah, ten-year-old John and eight-year-old Margaret. One possible explanation for these discrepancies is that it was not uncommon for daughters to serve as live-in help or for sons to work as farm help in other households, and they would be counted as residing in those households for census purposes.

What we do know is that, in the 1870 census, John Sutphin Jones was no longer counted in his father’s household. According to a later account, he lived in Middletown (between Cincinnati and Dayton) during this period and worked for the railroad. Both of his parents ultimately died in Middletown, his father William on February 8, 1876, his mother Elizabeth some years later on July 5, 1890.

Railroads apparently ran in the family: John’s brother William was a railroad agent before becoming a lawyer, and both his brother Alexander and his brother-in-law (his sister Sarah’s husband) worked as railroad conductors. With so many family members involved with railroads, it is not surprising that John was attracted to a railroad career, studying to become a telegraph operator and landing a railroad job.

It was a good time to be drawn to trains, and heavy hitters like the Vanderbilts, J. P. Morgan, and George J. Gould were making their fortunes thanks in part to the railroads. Although major train lines ran through Ohio by the 1840s, the post-Civil War era saw a major expansion of rail throughout the country. Most significant for Jones’ story was “the Ohio Central.” This railroad line started out as the Atlantic and Erie Railroad in 1870, was sold in 1879, and emerged as the Toledo & Ohio Central Railroad in 1885. Among other things, it moved coal from the Hocking Valley coalfields in southeastern Ohio north to Toledo for shipping throughout the Great Lakes. After a year tapping the telegraph, Jones worked his way up, holding positions

as brakeman, conductor, trainmaster, assistant superintendent, and superintendent.

It was also a good time for coal in Ohio, and men were getting rich at all levels of the coal trade: financing, mining, and moving coal on railroads. Crucially, as Jones rode the rails, journeying from coalmines in the south of the state to the shipping ports in the north, and later to Chicago, he gained a valuable understanding of the symbiotic relationship between coal and trains as part of a larger economic system. He would later put this to good use as a coal magnate.

Jones in Granville

Where does Granville come in? Before the railroad came to town, people had to rely on foot travel, horses, or canal boats to cover the last miles from the end of the railroad line or the riverboat. The path of the rail line was partially determined by subscription: if a town wanted train service, they needed local investors willing to advance the money. Granville, which had largely been bypassed by the canal earlier in the life of the village, did not want to repeat that mistake. Enough investors in Granville had the vision and the financial wherewithal to invest in the railroad, and thus the Ohio Central line came to Granville in 1880. Anticipating the benefits of rail service, a newspaper was launched, *The Granville Times*.

It's safe to say that the rail line had major transformative effects on the village. Folks could now get to Granville more easily—folks like students at Denison College, Granville Female College and Young Ladies' Institute, and Shepardson College. With more students, business picked up, as did the housing market: male students needed room and board off campus, while new faculty needed housing. More people meant more jobs and more money circulating in town.

Farmers planted more perishable crops, since now their fresh produce could arrive in distant new markets. Cattle were shipped to Buffalo and merino sheep to Texas, arriving in good shape in a matter of hours instead of weeks of travel to market. In addition, new goods



Undated photo of the Granville depot of the Ohio Central Railroad (which in 1885 became part of the Toledo and Ohio Central Railway). Built in 1880, the depot was thoroughly refurbished in the 2010s by the family of John and Eva Fitch Montgomery.

arrived in Granville by train. Live oysters came shipped in barrels of straw and seawater. Bananas and oranges began appearing in local grocery stores.

Residents also felt a cultural change. As Tom Martin, editor of the Granville Historical Society's *Historical Times*, noted in an article about the arrival of the railroad, "In a small town, passenger trains represent romance and adventure, an expanded horizon: a train takes riders to someplace that is important enough to serve as a *destination*, a place more exciting and full of much greater possibility than wherever they are now."

Interestingly for a story about a coal magnate, Granville also had a connection to the coal industry. In 1871 a group of Granville businessmen, including Dr. Edwin Sinnet, a Civil War surgeon, Edward Mott Downer, banker, and Almon U. Thresher, Denison professor and real estate investor, raised \$500,000 to establish the Sunday Creek Coal and Iron Mining and Transportation Company to exploit coalfields

in Perry County, Ohio. These gentlemen had read *Mineral Lands of the Ohio Great Vein Mining Co. in the Sunday Creek Valley, in Perry County, Ohio*, a prospectus published in 1870 that claimed the value of the coal and iron ore “can scarcely be estimated. It is not too much to say that the Sunday Creek Valley, and for that matter, the lands owned by (the Ohio Great Vein Mining Co.), contains ores which, if reduced to metal, would exceed the entire iron product of Great Britain and the United States during the last one hundred years—the period of the greatest iron product known in the history of man.”

The information was solid: 157,000,000 tons of coal were available to mine as well as 80,000,000 tons of iron ore. Other mineral products available in the Sunday Creek Valley included salt, shale, and fireclay. With a viable railway to transport coal, the market was assured. The promise was: “*The field is, as yet, open to all. Come in and possess it.*”

The Sunday Creek Coal and Iron Mining and Transportation Company ultimately failed, but it showed there were people in Granville with money willing to take risks on the coalfields. One of those people would be John Sutphin Jones, who within a couple of decades would succeed with a different company, the similarly named Sunday Creek Coal Company.

Before *The Granville Times* was published, there was no record of Jones in Granville. The Buxton House hotel register is not available for examination, but as mentioned above, in 1881, *The Granville Times* noted that J.S. Jones stayed at the Buxton House with other railroad men. Clearly he did not own or rent property in Granville at that point.

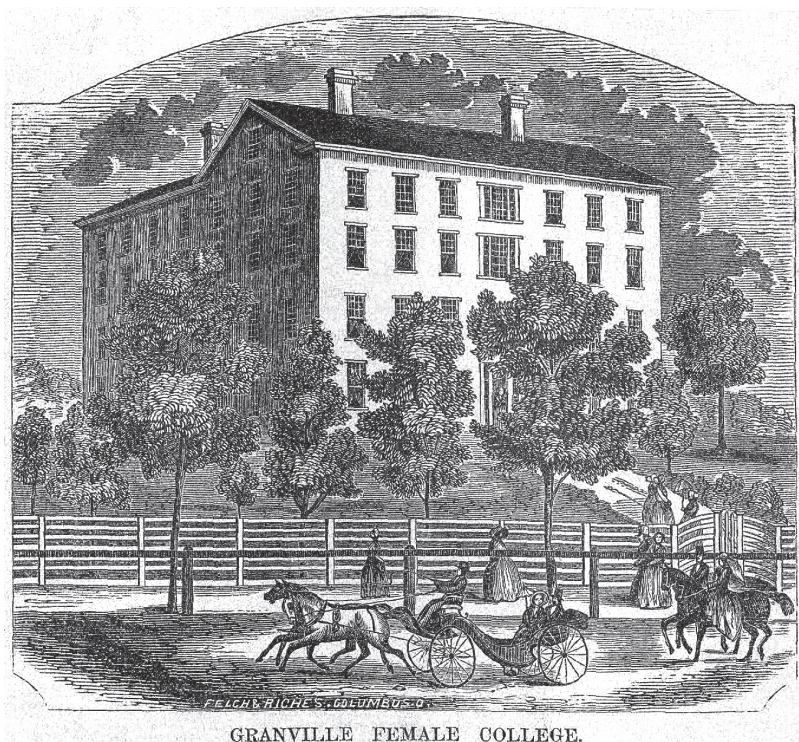
That Jones settled in Granville in the early 1880s may have had much to do with Sarah Fidelia Follett, daughter of Granville physician Alfred Follett, who lived on the northwest corner of Broadway and Mulberry Street.



Sarah (also called Sadie or Sally) Fidelia Follett

The Folletts were a very distinguished family, tracing their ancestry back to Eliphalet Follett and the Revolutionary War (see appendix for the Follett genealogy). Alfred Follett was an elder in the Presbyterian Church, and church records show that Sarah became a member in 1874, the year she graduated from Granville Female College. (In later life John Sutphin Jones became a member of that same church, a block east of Sarah's family's home.) Sarah, who was called "Sadie" by her classmates (and who was also called "Sally" at times), had studied art in college, with a concentration in portrait painting.

After graduation Sarah resided in her father's home on Broadway, pursuing her art, learning the skills of a hostess, and dabbling



Sarah Follett graduated from the Granville Female College in 1874. The building, on the East Broadway site where the Granville Inn now stands, was razed in 1908.

in teaching. Although the 1880 census listed her residence as her father's house in Granville, an item in *The Granville Times* in 1880 reported that she was teaching in Georgetown, Kentucky, and in 1883 the paper noted that she was chair of the art department at Glendale Female Seminary near Cincinnati.

How did John and Sarah meet? Although Sarah probably traveled to her teaching jobs by rail, it is unlikely that she met her future husband on the train. According to one account, it could be that an uncle in Cincinnati, John Fassett Follett, Jr., knew Jones through family connections in Middletown and Butler County. So the pair could have met while Sarah was teaching in the Cincinnati area. Alternatively, we know that Jones rented a room in the (since-demolished) Thresher House on West Broadway, just a few doors down from the Folletts, so they may have met in Granville.

In any case, the ambitious and industrious Welshman fell in love with the very eligible Sarah Follett, and they married in 1884. She was thirty years old and he was thirty-five.

Jones Builds His Fortune

Jones and his wife retained strong ties to Granville, but John traveled extensively on business, and Sarah traveled with him to ports on Lake Superior and Chicago as his business interests grew. In 1885, John was building piers on the Great Lakes, shipping coal to Lake Superior ports. We know Sarah was with him, and she reported her residence to Granville Female College as Ashland, Wisconsin, for at least three years before the college's catalogs stopped publishing alumnae residences.

The time in Ashland was a key chapter in Jones' life. The city sits on Chequamegon Bay in Lake Superior, a fine deep-water port east of Duluth, Minnesota. As a book on Ashland, *Looking Backward Moving Forward*, put it, "The city was the hub of a network of rail and water transportation lines, the place where track met lake and cargo was shifted from one to the other. ... The smell of wood and coal fueling

steam boilers, the hiss of locomotive engines, the squeal of brakes, the roar of hematite in the chute on its way into the hold of an ore carrier, the clank and clamor of heavy industry in the machine age filled the air of a prosperous, hardworking city.” In Ashland, John served as division superintendent of the Milwaukee Lake Shore & Western Railroad and supervised the construction of the city’s coal dock.

Most significantly, it was during this period that he made the leap to wealthy magnate, thanks both to his ambition and to his understanding of the economic system in which he was working. In that system, coal moved from the coalfields of Ohio up through Toledo, then on to the upper Midwest; it was needed in the iron mines of Minnesota’s Mesabi Range. For the return trip, cargo holds could be filled with timber as well as Mesabi iron ore, which was needed back



Jones oversaw the construction of the coal dock in Ashland, Wisconsin.

Source: The Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

in Ohio by the steel mills. Robert M. Thorson wrote that Gilded Age capitalists were interested in commodities that were “rare enough to be monopolized, and which required huge infrastructure investments”; coal and iron ore fit the bill exactly, and port cities like Duluth and Ashland offered a front-row view of the vast fortunes that could be made by exploiting them.

By 1889, Jones understood that he could make more money brokering coal sales to the railroads and shippers on the Great Lakes than he could by working for the railroad. According to *The Newark Advocate*, “He thought the Wisconsin railroad was paying too much for their coal, and asked them if they would buy [off] him if he sold at a lower rate. They said they would. So did several others. Back to Ohio he came, made a contract as sales agent of the Columbus & Hocking Coal & Iron Company and branched out.” He left the railroad behind and moved confidently into the coal business, buying his first coalmine, the Congo, in the Hocking Valley, in 1890. By 1905, he was the principal owner and president of the National Hocking Coal Company in control of 40,000 acres of Ohio coal lands.

Jones’ business history is convoluted, but in summary, over the next three decades, partnerships and business relationships came and went as Jones amassed ever greater wealth as a coal magnate, serving markets in Chicago, Cleveland, Toledo, and Columbus with south-east Ohio coal.

It was not always a smooth ascent. For example, he and a partner suffered financial setbacks during the great coal strike of 1897, an early moment in the bitter labor struggles between coal barons and workers during this period. The 1897 strike was called after coal barons had consistently reduced the wages of miners over several years, then exploited the miners further by forcing them to spend whatever remained of their paychecks in company-owned stores. The result was that many mining families were driven to the brink of starvation. Jones’ attitude toward the miners may be gleaned from an essay he published in 1927 in *The Columbus Dispatch*, when he was head of the Ohio Coal Operators’ Association: “It is easy to see that there are without doubt too many miners. Some mines must close and some miners must seek employment elsewhere. ... Ohio operators

are face to face with the absolute necessity of reducing freight rates and operating costs, and securing steady operation for their mines.” Although Jones would not live to see it, in 1930, just three years after he wrote that defense of coal-industry cost-cutting and labor policies, one of the Sunday Creek Coal Company’s mines in Millfield was the site of the worst mining disaster in Ohio history, killing 82 men and prompting stronger mine-safety laws in Ohio.

In 1897, however, that was still far in the future. Jones’ partnership, Turney-Jones, handled half the coal tonnage for Columbus at this point, but due to the strike they were unable to deliver on several large contracts. They could not get the coal until late summer, when lake shipping rates were very high, and the company ended up in receivership. Unlike many of the miners, of course, wealthy men like Jones usually landed on their feet. As *The Newark Advocate* reported, “He met with disaster, but his nature is not the sort to be turned away by one such rebuff. From one coal project to another he turned with seemingly inexhaustible energy and recently with unvarying success.”

Jones subsequently devoted his attention to the Jones & Adams Company, with general offices in the Fisher Building in Chicago. The company operated coal docks at Ashland and West Superior, Wisconsin, and in Duluth, Minnesota, with offices in St. Paul and Minneapolis. He transported coal and iron in the Great Lakes using several ships operated by the Buckeye Steamship Company of Cleveland. Timber was shipped on return runs.

Although not nearly as well known as Carnegie or Rockefeller, John Sutphin Jones was a formidable businessman whose associates included many of the “big money men.” *Black Diamond*, a weekly trade journal for the coal industry, wrote, “[N]o man living...knows the Ohio situation better than he. ... Mr. Jones is what might be called a financial and a coal diplomat.”

Some of those “big money men” were central to what was perhaps the most momentous of Jones’ business dealings: the Sunday Creek Coal Company. Not to be confused with the similarly-named venture funded by Granville investors in the 1870s, this Sunday Creek consisted of railroad investors who formed syndicates to buy up coal lands; Jones was involved with the Little Kanawha syndicate, which

was connected to railroad titan George J. Gould. As an Ohio resident, Jones was able to purchase 17,000 acres of Ohio coal lands, which he did using his own money and on the basis of only a verbal agreement.

Unfortunately, at least for Jones, the federal government began to regulate the railroad/coal interface under the 1890 Sherman Anti-trust Act, ruling that companies that owned railroads could not also own coalmines. Jones' associates in the syndicate abandoned the railroad line that was to serve the coalfields, and they also reneged on their promise to reimburse Jones for the purchase. Long story short: Jones was left holding the bag. He sued his partners for recovery of his costs and commission, plus interest and damages. *The Granville Times* covered the various decisions and appeals over the years; one



This 1905 picture of workers at the Sunday Creek Coal Mine Number 9 in Hocking County, Ohio, reveals something of the nature, if not the danger, of coal mining during this period. Image courtesy of the Ohio History Connection; used with permission.

headline read: “Granville Capitalist Files Suit Against Men Prominent in Railroad World.”

The legal process took ten years and was finally decided in Jones’ favor by the New York Supreme Court in 1915. Jones recovered his investment, and the railroad men were required to divest their interest in the coal lands and mines. When the Sunday Creek Company was put up for sale, an anonymous potential buyer was in the mix. When asked by *Black Diamond* whether he was that man, Jones “demurred on the statement that he was getting on in years, had practically no heirs to whom to leave his estate and did not care to involve himself in any such arrangement as this might suggest.”

In fact, however, he *was* that man. Jones purchased the New Jersey-based Sunday Creek Company in 1915, changed the name back to its original form of the Sunday Creek Coal Company—one of the largest coal companies in the United States—and continued to operate the company with no railroad affiliations until his death.

Jones was not finished in his career, however. But for the rest of the story, we need to return to Granville, Ohio, with a slight detour to Naples, Florida.

Life in Granville During the Joneses’ Era

During most of this period, 1890–1911, the Joneses did not live in Granville. But they returned often to Granville to visit Sarah’s family and remained prominent in Granville life. The social center of the marriage was Sarah. John could run a business brilliantly, but Sarah could plan and execute an interesting social life that included both of them and lots of other people. For example, Christmas 1895 featured a party at the Folletts’ house for Granville’s children, which was reported by *The Granville Times* as follows:

About sixty participated in the festivities, ranging in years from five to fifteen years.

Shortly after the arrival of the guests they were conducted to the third floor of the elegant Jones residence, where the Christmas tree, illuminated with sparkling