

# MRS. MARY ELIZABETH JONES OF NEW YORK IS PROBABLY WORLD'S WEALTHIEST WOMAN



MRS. MARY ELIZABETH JONES.

**N**EW YORK.—The richest woman in America—or in the world—may not be Mrs. Hetty Green. The greatest land-owner in America may not be one of the Astors. These are the conclusions that probably would be reached if the Green and the Astor possessions could be valued correctly and the figures compared with those which would represent the vast wealth of Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Jones of New York and of Cold Spring Harbor, L. I.

Further than that, the social crown of America, long held by the Astors by reason of their wealth, would belong to Mrs. Jones if she chose to claim it, for her fortune is doubtless greater and her lineage in this country runs a century further back. She is related also, far and near, to nearly every one of the great families in New York and New England whose names are written large on the pages of American history from the days of the Colonial wars to now.

Probably no one, not even Mrs. Jones herself, could say accurately how great is her fortune. It is mostly in land. She acknowledges that she owns and pays taxes on land in every school district on Long Island, in nearly every county in New York state and in every state in the union except Texas. The property immediately surrounding the old manor house at Cold Spring Harbor, where she lives in summer, is worth millions of dollars.

Her husband, Dr. Oliver Livingston Jones, is also a great land-owner, but his possessions fall far short of his wife's. Then there is the Jones estate, which is owned by some 25 heirs, which also runs up into scores of millions in value. Three or more theaters in New York city are owned by her, and it is said to be her ambition to own property in every city in the

down from the oldest of one family to the eldest of the next through five generations, until now the bulk of the vast accumulations rests with Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Jones.

Mrs. Jones is the daughter of Charles Hewlett Jones and of Elizabeth Grace Gardiner. She was born July 5, 1854, and was married to Dr. Oliver Livingston Jones, her cousin, when she was 19. They have six children, two daughters and four sons.

In summer, and in fact at intervals during the winter, the family live in the old Jones manor house, at Cold Spring Harbor, L. I. There is nothing ornate or especially striking about this country home of the woman who is perhaps the richest of her sex in America. It is simply a large, well-built mansion of the later colonial style of architecture, of which it is one of the best examples in this country.

The rather battered squire, driven by the son of the owner of the "backin' business" at Cold Spring Harbor, stopped in front of the main entrance to the mansion and remained there during the hour and more that the reporter was talking to Mrs. Jones.

The richest woman in America was gowned quite simply in something light blue, comfortable and well worn. A diamond ring or so, with the stones set in the fashion of a generation ago, sparkled on her fingers. Her almost white hair was combed straight back from her forehead, with just a slight puff to relieve its severity. In her girlhood Mrs. Jones must have been very beautiful; she is handsome in her middle age. But her chief charm and attraction now is her quick, clear-cut manner of speaking, and her large, dark eyes, which look straight at one while she talks. She is a woman of extraordinary strength of mind and character, and it takes but a moment's acquaintance to understand why the

originated by the founder of the family in America, Maj. Thomas Jones. Our policy has been to lease the lands we own for terms of years and to keep investing the surplus income.

"How large an estate have you here about the manor house?"

"I don't know the exact number of acres, but I own for two miles nearly all around it."

This would mean that the lands directly adjoining the manor house grounds form what in real estate parlance would be called a "parcel" of ground" which would contain about six square miles. Now, a square mile has just 640 acres. It is almost impossible to buy an acre of ground in the western part of Long Island nowadays. Practically every inch of even the barrenest of plains has been snapped up by real estate companies and is being sold off at from \$150 to \$1,000 a lot. The six square miles of land that Mrs. Jones owns about her home in Cold Spring Harbor, if it could be bought, would be snapped up in 24 hours at the average price of \$1,000 an acre. At this figure the value of that property alone would be nearly \$4,000,000.

**Antedate the Astors.**

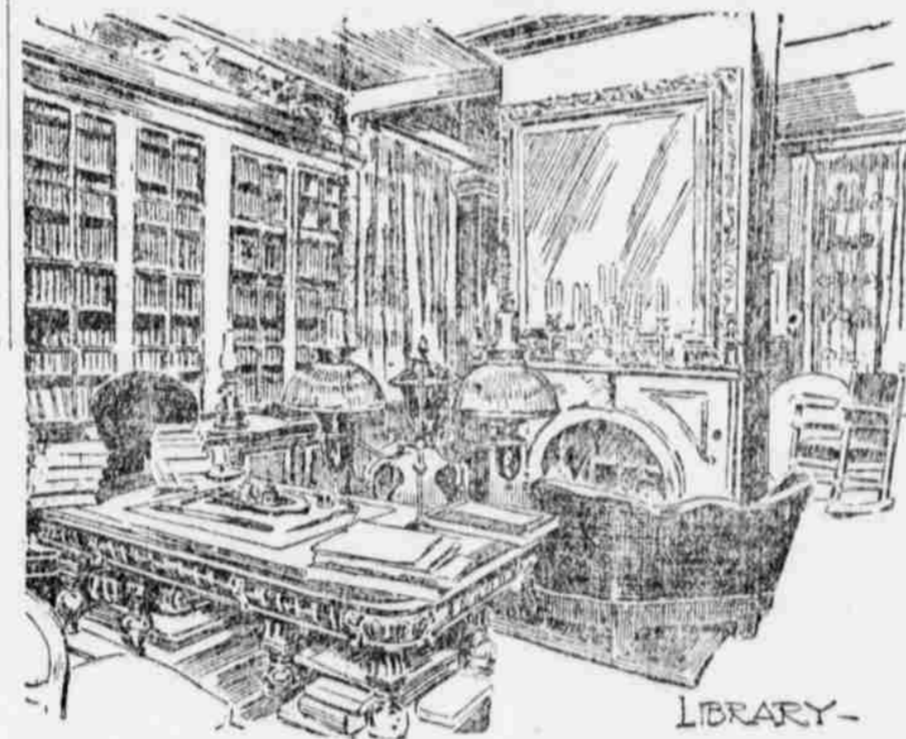
"Your family is older and has greater possessions than the Astors—isn't that so?" hazarded the reporter.

Mrs. Jones laughed. "We're certainly older by a hundred years or so in this country. As to which is the greater I couldn't say, for I know as little about what the Astors have as they do about what I own. I hardly know the latter myself—accurately, that is. But, speaking of the ancestry of our family, there is much that is interesting to me. In fact I always have been fond of and proud of the men and women who were our ancestors. I have several volumes of histories that have been written about the family, but, as is usually the case when one has a home in the city and one in the country, the things one wants at the moment always are among those left behind. That is why I haven't any of them here to show you. No, I think there is one over there. 'The Jones Family of Long Island.' You may take it to look over if you wish. The edges are a little tattered. I guess one of the puppy dogs must have been playing with it."

"One of the puppy dogs," who had apparently been lurking within earshot in the hall came sidling in just then as if to beg the visitor not to take away his book until he had given it a few more bites.

**Family Fortune Kept Intact.**

"I have spoken of Thomas Jones, our ancestor," went on the richest woman in America. "He came from Ireland—the history I will lend you tells all about him. He originated the policy of our family to keep handing down the bulk of the fortune intact, so far as possible, from one generation to the next. It is to a certain extent very much like the English laws of primo-



LIBRARY

geniture and entail. These English laws, however, could not be followed in this country, as the statutes are against such a procedure. With us, however, it has become a sort of family understanding.

"The Jones estate or property has passed directly through five generations in unbroken descent to its present holders. On my mother's side I am descended from Lion Gardiner, the first proprietor of Gardiner's Island, John Lyon Gardiner, the twelfth proprietor, married Elizabeth Coralie Jones. My maiden name was Jones, so when I married Dr. Oliver Livingston Jones I didn't have to change my name."

The visitor being somewhat of a connoisseur in colonial furniture could not help commenting on some of the splendid pieces of old mahogany in the room where he was sitting. This led Mrs. Jones to take him from one room to another on the ground floor.

"All this old furniture has been in the family for generations. Of course we have some that is new, but the old is too beautiful and too well built to be put aside. I am no reason why it should not be beautiful and serviceable still a hundred years from now." Mrs. Jones remarked. "I am fond of good pictures, too," she went on. "A good many of these paintings are inheritances from my father and those before him who had some taste in art, and some I have bought because I liked them rather than because they were done by famous artists."

Mrs. Jones was disinclined to talk specifically about the details of the various holdings which make up her own vast possessions in New York and throughout the United States. She acknowledged that her husband and herself were interested in almost every branch of industry to a greater or less

extent. But when the conversation would approach anything that related particularly to her personal business affairs or those of the great Jones estate, of which she is a sharer, she invariably shifted the conversation to matters genealogical or to generalities.

**Ancestor a Pirate?**

The most interesting of the many famous ancestors of Dr. and Mrs. Jones is the founder of the line in America. Some of the ruder historians say he was a pirate, and intimate that it was by scuttling ships and marauding on the high seas generally that he accumulated his many barrels of "pieces of eight" which he is alleged to have brought to Oyster Bay when he settled there. At any rate, he himself was markedly reticent about his earlier history, except that he fought for James II. in the Battle of the Boyne. He even wrote his own epitaph:

Here Lays Interred The Body of  
Major Thomas Jones Who Came  
From  
Strabane in the Kingdom of  
Ireland Settled Here and Died  
December 23d From Distant Lands  
To this Wild Waste He Came  
This Seat He Chose and Here  
He Fixed His Name. Long May His  
Sons This Peaceful Spot Enjoy And  
No Ill Fate His Offspring Here En-  
joy.

He died in 1713 and was buried a short distance south of the old Brick House, on the east bank of the Massapequa river. The ancient burial place, about 30 feet square, was threatened by inroads of the tides, and in 1893 his remains were removed. His headstone, bearing the inscription quoted above, is still well preserved. In the early days his was known as the "Pirate's Grave," and for many years after his death it was the common belief (says John H. Jones in his history of the family) that some of Maj. Jones' wealth was buried with him, and so deeply rooted had this become that his grave was opened by vandals in the quest of relics, and the ancient bones left strewn on the ground. His remains now rest in the burying-ground adjoining Grace church, at South Oyster Bay.

**Record of History.**

About Maj. Jones being a pirate little is known. There is extant a letter from Lieut. Gov. Colden to his son, written in 1753, in which he says: "While Col. Fletcher was governor the inhabitants of New York carried on a trade to Madagascar while that island was frequented by pirates, and many of the pirates came and dispersed on Long Island and around Delaware Bay. It has often been remarked that none of the pirates made any use of their money to any real advantage excepting one Jones, who settled on Long Island, and whose son made a remarkable figure as a speaker of the assembly while Mr. Clinton was governor."

It is also known that James II.

## THE REXFORTH CIRCULATING LIBRARY

By DONMARK LEMON

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He handed the beggar a half-dollar, for the pathetic old fellow had made a moving appeal, and was about to return to his pocket the other coins in his hand, when one of them slipped through his fingers and started to roll down the sidewalk.

He saw that it was his pocket piece, a Louis d'or with the image of the Grande Monarque, and made a hasty dash for the coin. It escaped him and shot away at accelerating speed down the sidewalk and just inside the flagstone. He lengthened his stride and made another dash for the coin. Some small silver spilled from his hand, but he let it go and followed the elusive Louis XIV. Suddenly the gold-piece struck a ridge in its downward path and shot around the corner of a public court-way. Baxter followed.

He heard a laugh at his amusing predicament, but did not look up, as his blood was aroused, and he was bound that the coin should not escape down some hole or cranny.

At about three-fourths its length, the court-way lifted a bit, retarding the speed of the coin, which finally swerved in its track and rocked along the flagstone, to rest at last like a very drunken Louis into a doorway, where it lay in the corner, half-propped against the footboard.

Baxter stooped and picked up the coin, and as he arose to a standing posture, a small, neat brass sign met his eye. It was set into the door before which the coin had come to a standstill, and it read:

THE REXFORTH CIRCULATING LIBRARY.

The court-way or narrow street down which the golden Louis had led him was wholly new to Baxter, and as he looked about he saw a couple of ladies across the way smiling at his late predicament.

He would step into Rexforth's and recover his serenity. He opened the



"Huckleberry Finn!" He Ejaculated.

door and found himself in a large, well lighted room, fitted up more like a ladies' parlor than a library. Where were the books? He could not see any, and the patrons—all ladies, it would seem—that came and went while he gazed around nonplused did not bring nor take away any object that could have been mistaken for a book.

"This is something new," commented Baxter, mentally; "must be a bookless library."

Fancies of a new idea in libraries floated through his brain. Perhaps the books at Rexforth's were not printed volumes, but phonographic records, and all the patron needed to do was to draw a wax cylinder of the latest popular novel—the record made by the author himself—take it home and place it on a phonograph, and science, the mother of convenience, would do the rest.

But all this was hypothetical, so he looked about. On the wall near him was a neat typewritten list, headed: "The Six Books Most in Demand by the Patrons of the Rexforth Circulating Library, for the Month of September." His eye ran down the list.

"Third-rail alive!" he murmured, "what kind of ladies patronize this library?"

For the list read:  
Isaak Walton's Compleat Angler,  
Shakespeare's King Henry The Fifth,  
Last of the Mohicans,  
Meditations of Aurelius,  
Samuel Johnson's Dictionary,  
Huckleberry Finn.

He shut his eyes and tried to puzzle it out, but the more he thought the deeper was his confusion. He studied the ladies waiting to give their orders for books. They all were stylishly dressed, and seemed cultured and well-read. His eye returned to the typewritten list on the wall.

"They're classics, all right," he granted, "but such classics!"

He got up and went over to the secretary's desk. He would join the library and learn something. He was handed a leaflet which informed him that the monthly dues were ten dollars, the members having the privilege of drawing each month two books in class one, three in class two, four in class three, and so on! a fine of two

dollars a day being imposed for a book kept overtime.

Baxter whistled mentally. "The books must be bound in vellum and gold-tooled!"

He laid ten dollars on the secretary's desk, and after a little telephoning, by means of which his references were authenticated and approved, he was entered in the books as a member of The Rexforth Circulating Library, and credited with one month's paid-up dues.

He did not remove the sealed wrapper from the catalogue that the secretary gave him, but upon being assured by the young lady presiding over the order desk that a copy of Huckleberry Finn was on the library shelves, he had her make out a slip for that classic.

He thought to get his Huckleberry and take it with him—he was in a hurry to have a look at the binding of the volume—but the young lady calmly informed him that the book would be sent around to his address that afternoon by the first delivery. If he would turn to rule seven in the catalogue, he would learn that such was the delivery regime of the library.

"Very well," he said, and left the building. By following downwards for a short distance the narrow but well-paved court-way, then turning to the right along a similar court-way, thence to the left and again to the right, he emerged upon a busy, familiar street, where a number of carriages were waiting, no doubt for patrons of the Rexforth Circulating Library.

That afternoon a parcel bearing the stamp Rexforth was delivered at Baxter's club room. It was of mammoth dimensions for a book, and he began to fear that the librarian had blundered and sent him, instead of a modest octavo by Mark Twain, a folio Shakespeare, if not the ponderous Johnson's dictionary itself. So he nervously undid the wrapping, and there lay before him in a neat paper box a lady's handsome skirt, with some manner of fluffy pink trimmings or flounces, he didn't know which.

He poked gingerly at the dainty garment. "Huckleberry Finn!" he ejaculated. Then a great, big truth leaped up in Baxter's mind, like the grimacing face of a jack-in-the-box, and hastily removing the manila cover and opening the catalogue he had received at the library, he turned to H. Bracketed with the title of Huckleberry Finn was the description of a lady's fancy ball skirt.

His eye ran over some other book titles, with the things in ladies' dress-wear bracketed against them. Then he sat down weakly. The Rexforth Circulating Library was a woman's dress-renting establishment, where ladies, by paying a certain monthly sum, could "draw" stylish dresses for temporary wear.

Each dress, skirt, waist, or hat, bore the name of some well-known book—a kind of code arrangement for privacy, brevity and convenience—and upon examining his library card Baxter found Mrs. prefixed to his name, the secretary, no doubt, having been under the impression that he had acted for his wife in joining the R. C. L., for that establishment made its appeal exclusively to the gentler sex.

**NEW PAINT DRIES WET ROOMS.**

Engineers Believe Old Roman Secret Has Been Discovered.

A discovery which promises to revolutionize the building and decorating trades and to be of vast importance to the shipping industry has been made by Inspector Simpson of the Blackburn (England) fire brigade. It is a liquid, and the principle of which, after tests extending over many months, has been pronounced by leading engineers to be an old Roman secret, which has been lost to the world for 700 years. When painted with this liquid the dampest room becomes absolutely dry, and freshly plastered walls, after treatment by it, may be at once papered without damage to the paper.

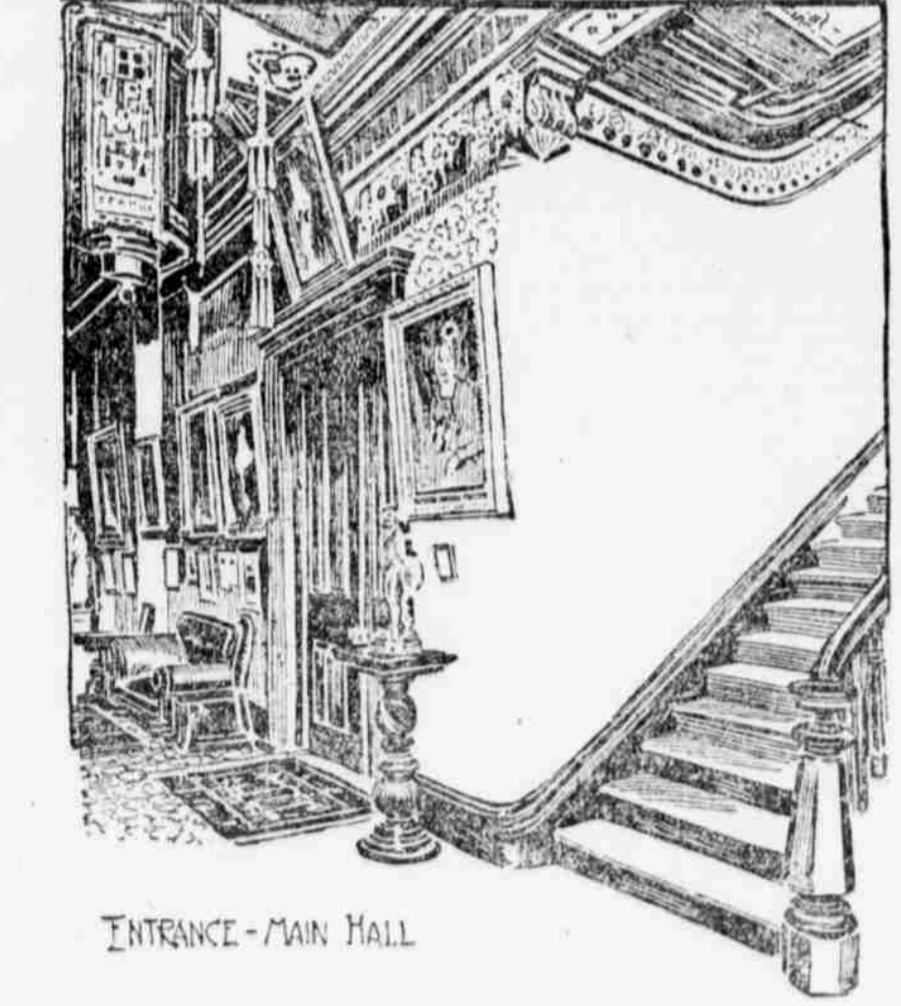
No ironwork painted with it can rust, and it completely prevents that "weeping" of the inner skins of iron ships, which causes so much damage to cargo. When applied to the bottom plates of ships it not only prevents oxidation, but allows no marine growth, barnacles or other parasites to attach themselves. It consequently preserves a glasslike surface, which the discoverer asserts will add several knots to the speed of Atlantic liners and warships.

**Hunting Coyotes in Manitoba.**

Hunting for young coyotes is all the rage here now. The method of securing them is to take a collie dog and go to the haunts of the coyote here, generally in thick scrubby undergrowth. When the old coyote sees the collie, she runs to the den where the young are and the collie follows and barks at the den. Then the hunters dig out the young.

At Under Almo and his son dug out 14 from two dens one day recently. Another man got 35, and this man has brought in 41 so far.

There is a bounty of two dollars on each coyote paid by the government agents appointed in several districts of the province.—Carman Correspondence Forest and Stream.



ENTRANCE—MAIN HALL

United States. She owns property in most of them now and each year gets nearer to a realization of her ambition. The other day she had a controversy with the city of New York about the ownership of the sunken meadows up in the East river. They are estimated to be worth \$1,000,000. The grant to the Jones family goes back to Queen Anne, so it is likely Mrs. Jones will retain possession.

**Founders of the Family.**

The foundations of her vast fortune were laid by Maj. Thomas Jones, "who came from Strabane in the kingdom of Ireland" and settled with his young wife near what is now called Oyster Bay, L. I., in 1653. He brought with him a comfortable fortune, won on the seas through privateering privileges granted him by James II., whose cause he fought for in the battle of the Boyne. This fortune has been handed

great Jones fortune has grown with such rapidity under her management.

**Property in Many States.**

"Is it true that you own property everywhere in the United States?" was asked.

"Yes, almost everywhere," she answered. "I pay taxes in every school district on Long Island, in every or almost every county in New York state, and in every state in the union. No, that last isn't so. I forgot about Texas. I used to own some property in Texas, but I was sold there a while ago and concluded to sell it. No, I don't care to say what the reasons were."

"That is the only property I have ever sold, except an acre of land that I sold to a very dear friend a while ago. My rule is to always buy and never to sell. In fact, that is the rule that has been handed down to us from generation to generation, and was