The Death of Jones

Harvey Jones had first arrived in Neenah in September, 1846, anxious to view the property in which he had invested. He was accompanied by his wife, Sally, and his eldest son, Gilbert. While there he boarded with Harrison Reed at his lakeshore house and began to take an active part in making improvements on his property.

The following spring, the Jones family returned to Gloversville to close out affairs there in preparation for a permanent move to the west. During the summer, Sally Jones died. His father also died before Harvey returned to Neenah to spend his second winter. In the spring of 1848, Harvey returned to Gloversville to gather his remaining family and bring them to their new home. During his absence, his father-in-law, Judge Gilbert, died. His youngest daughter, age 4, died in April. So it was with heavy heart, having lost his wife, father, father-in-law, and daughter, that Harvey undertook the final long and arduous journey.

The widowed Harvey Jones returned to Neenah with his three minor children, Gilbert, Willard, and Abigail, to take up permanent residence. He was accompanied by his sister, Mrs. Charles Yale, and her two daughters. After Harvey’s wife’s death, Mrs. Yale and her family had made their home with Harvey and had taken care of his children. Mrs. Yale’s husband, Charles, and their son, Perrine, were already residing in Neenah.

The party arrived in June and took up residence in the old blockhouse near the Council Tree with Mrs. Yale’s husband, Charles. While living there, Harvey had Newell Dermitt design and build as his residence a separate building adjoining the old blockhouse. This was the second frame dwelling erected in Neenah and was built in 1848.

While Jones had been away in Gloversville, the association between Doty, the Reeds, and the Jones brothers disintegrated. On March 10, 1848, Curtis Reed got a new charter from the territorial legislature which gave him and his associates authority to build a dam across the north channel of the Fox River. The act also threw all responsibility for the Neenah improvements onto Harvey Jones. Harvey did not let the splintering off of his erstwhile associates deter him in the least. He threw himself into advancing his plans for the development of the water power and the building of a village. Jones hired Marvin Babcock as contractor to build the spar dam, widen and deepen the canal, and, in order to permit navigation, construct a lock. A large crew of
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men was employed to carry out what was, in those frontier days, a huge undertaking. The spad dam stretched for 450 feet across the river and was bolted to solid rock. The canal, when finished, would be sixty feet wide on the bottom and four feet deep. The lock would be 140 feet long by 35 feet wide in the chamber.

Harvey Jones also furthered his plans for a new saw mill. The old government saw mill had done little else but rot since the mission had been abandoned. Jones set men to work to rebuild and reconstruct it into a new mill. Charles Lindsley was a partner with Jones in this venture but before the mill was finished, Jones purchased his interest.

In order for Jones to capitalize on all of the improvements he was making, he needed to sell real estate. To facilitate that objective, he had a plat of the village of Winnebago Rapids, in the Town of Neenah, recorded on January 6, 1848. This plat covered a large tract of land along the south side of Wisconsin Street in the center of the present city. Before this, Harrison Reed had surveyed, platted, and recorded on September 8, 1847, a tract of land in the eastern part of the settlement on the Winnebago shore. He recorded this plat under the name of the Village of Neenah. It should be noted that in both cases the names were only descriptive locations by which the lots could be bought and sold. These were not civil or political divisions and the fact that Reed and Jones called their plats "Villages" did not make either of them a true village. The question of incorporation as a village was decided by a special election ordered by the Circuit Court of Winnebago. The vote being favorable, the Village of Winnebago Rapids was incorporated by the Circuit Court on April 10, 1850. In 1856 the village plats of Winnebago Rapids and Neenah were consolidated by change of the corporate name of Winnebago Rapids to Neenah. Neenah would have its current name forevermore.

The already murky condition of clear title to Neenah real estate would become hopelessly clouded when, on April 17, 1849, Harvey Jones was sued by Harrison Reed for the title to 1/4 undivided section of the Winnebago Rapids tract. The lawsuit would drag on for years, long past the death of Harvey Jones. Luckily for Neenah's future industrial development, Harvey L. Kimberly had arrived in June, 1848, nine months before Reed's lawsuit. Prior mention has been made about Jones' contentious haggling over the sale of lots to Kimberly. Jones had no way of knowing, of course, but his final acquiescence to the Kimberly sale virtually guaranteed the industrial future of the village.

In September 1849, the Board of Public Works met in Oshkosh to make its decision. The $5,000 offer by Curtis Reed apparently swung the Board to his side and the Menasha channel would become the state's official canal. This was a bitter disappointment to Harvey Jones, as indeed it must have been to all of Neenah. Jones would be dead within two months of this decision. Given Jones' anxious nature, there is a belief that the series of problems and disappointments that befell him contributed to his early death. Cunningham says:
On the 9th instant the meeting again convened in the village hall, pursuant to adjournment. Mr. G. W. Edwards resumed the chair, and J. B. Hamilton was chosen Secretary.

The Committee on resolutions, by A. P. Ralph, Esq., submitted the following preamble and resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

Having heard with feelings of deep regret the sad intelligence of the sudden and unexpected death of Col. Harvey Jones, an estimable and highly respected citizen of our village, and the original proprietor of the place. Therefore

Resolved, That we sincerely sympathize with the friends and relatives of the deceased in their bereavement by this unexpected visitation of Divine Providence, and that as citizens of this place, who were in the habit of daily associating with the deceased, we entertain a high appreciation of his merits and deeply lament his loss.

Resolved, That by the death of Col. Harvey Jones our village has lost one of its most enterprising citizens, and one whose loss will be greatly felt, and long and sincerely lamented.

Resolved, That the proceedings of this and the former meeting, and the preamble and resolutions be published in the Oshkosh Democrat and New York Observer, and a copy thereof be presented to the relatives of the deceased.

On the following Sabbath the funeral services of the deceased were attended at the village hall by an unusually large concourse of people, who listened to an impressive discourse from Rev. Henry B. Hawes, from the funeral epistle of St. John viii. 13. They were the only event that was dry, and all looked and seemed to feel as if they had lost a common friend.

G. W. Edwards, Chairman.
A. H. Cronkhite, Sec'y.
J. B. Hamilton.

Death of Harvey Jones as reported in the Oshkosh True Democrat, November 23, 1849.
A Tale of Twin Cities

... indeed, it is the general belief among the early settlers that his exceeding anxiety concerning the matters here, more particularly the vexatious litigation with Reed, and the disappointment in failing to secure the Improvement on this side of the Island, so wore upon him as to hasten his death, which occurred November 8, 1849.

His sons tell of his death, "Early in the fall of 1849 he made a hasty trip to Michigan, returning all worn out and sick with cold, refused to remain at home and doctor, saying he had no time, until about the 1st of November, when his malady assumed a typhoid form, and November 8, 1849, he died, aged 44 years".

Despite Harvey Jones' reputation as a meticulous businessman, he died leaving no will or at least none that was ever admitted to probate. Loyal H. Jones was appointed guardian of the three minor children. Jones was also chosen as administrator of the estate along with John R. Kimberly. Kimberly refused to serve and the court appointed Erastus W. Drury, of Fond du Lac, to replace him. The death of Jones would be a final blow to early Neenah's real estate development. As an old settler expressed it four or five years after the death of Jones, the outlook for business was "almighty blue". Nearly all the real estate was in hopeless litigation with no prospect of settlement until Jones' heirs should come of age. In addition Loyal Jones and Drury apparently mismanaged the estate rather badly. This combination of circumstances prevented capital from locating upon and improving the water power and almost entirely put a stop to any further business enterprise in the village. Neenah was at a standstill. Abigail Jones married the Rev. James Bassett, and in 1863 he resigned his pulpit to devote himself to untangling the mess. This he apparently did by 1864 and in the succeeding five years, Neenah made more substantial growth than in the whole 15 years preceding. Curtis Reed was reported to have said that had Harvey Jones lived, all their differences would have been amicably settled.

Harvey Jones was buried in Oak Hill Cemetery which had been set aside in 1848 when Neenah residents voted to buy four acres for a burial ground from Harvey Jones himself. Little did he realize that he would be one of its first occupants! As a final epitaph to his brother, Loyal Jones, as administrator, completed the work on the dam, canal, and lock. In 1852, to the great pride of
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all Neenah, the steamer Van Ness Barlow traveled from Little Lake Butte des Morts to Lake Winnebago via the Neenah lock and canal. This was four years before the work at Menasha was completed. Thereafter, Neenah would enjoy the increased commerce the river navigation would bestow. Somewhere, Harvey Jones was smiling.

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Daniel Haase
ERISK BUSINESS.
Our town is growing finely, and business was never better. Our Mechanics have more then they can do, and the number of new settlers that are daily arriving here gives quite an impetus to all kinds of trade. — During the past week we have heard of several more sales of real estate, among which is the property of Mr. Temple for $1,000, and a lot owned by Mr. McGinnes for $260. The last named was purchased three years ago for $25! We have given up all hope of recognizing any of the "old settlers" among such a multitude of "new comers," as the latter continually meet us in our office, in the stores, and in the streets — and appears to be increasing every day. The fact is, that the advantages of Menasha are becoming known to Eastern people, and they rush on to get the first chance. There is plenty room in Menasha for any number of Manufacturers, Mechanics, and Merchants, and every inducement is offered them for comfortable homes and profitable business. Our Water-Power alone is the most extensive in the West, and to-day affords employment to 300 men. Let those who are seeking a location visit Menasha. — Town Lots are cheap, and plenty employment can be had.

Important Suit Decided.
We see that the Supreme Court of this State has finally settled the title to the property of the village of Neenah, and awards one quarter of said village to Harrison Reed, Esq. This will make him one of the wealthiest men in this section of the State, and put him in possession of property which has been wrongfully withheld from him.

SUPREME COURT.—Judge Crawford has retired from the Bench, and Judge Cole has entered upon his duties. The Madison Democrat says that within a few hours after the retirement of Judge Crawford he had been retained in a number of important cases. — The change cannot but be to his pecuniary benefit, as no man in this State stands higher for professional ability, and none has enjoyed a more extensive or successful practice than he.

CLOTHING STORE.—We were surprised a few days since, on calling in at William Smith's store on Water street, to find there one of the largest stocks of Ready Made Clothing, Hats, Caps, Boots and Shoes, that we ever laid our eyes on, and fearing that others may be as ignorant of the fact as we were, we make it public. Mr. Smith is a public benefactor, and we are astonished that some people go so poorly dressed when he has so large a stock to select from. Smith says his trade averages $30 per day, and we don't wonder at it when he sells so cheap.

REMOVALS.—Judge Bryan, Register, has removed his office to his new building, near the steamboat landing. This will make it very convenient for passengers on the boats. The Exchange Bank of Darling, Fitzgerald & Co., has also been removed, and will now be found in the new Bank building, adjoining the Register's office.

MEAT MARKET.—Mr. Heilmann has again commenced Butchering, and announces by advertisement that he is on hand with fresh meat. It is a hard matter to procure cattle at the present time, and we hope our citizens will award him that patronage which his energy deserves.

PATRICK HUGHES, a brother of the Archbish-