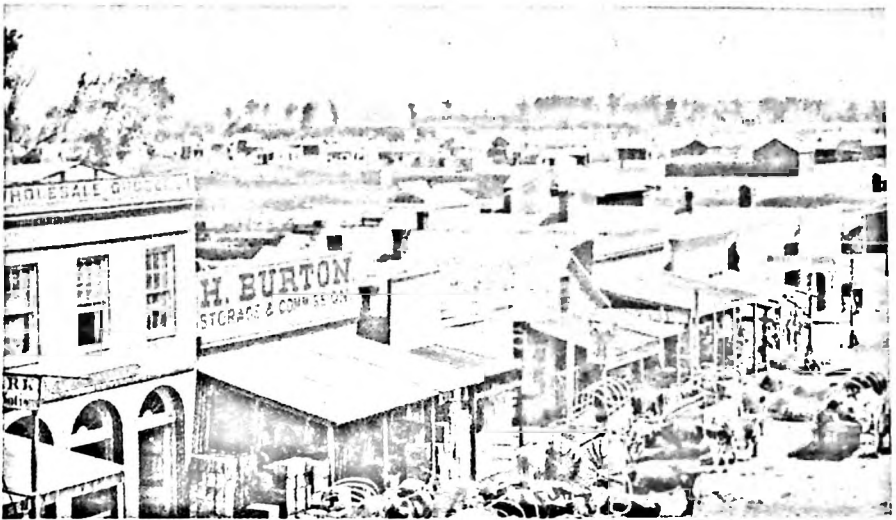




The DENVER WESTERNERS
ROUNDUP

November - December 2020



Courtesy Western History Department, Denver Public Library, Z-7012

*Denver's Blake Street, Between Present-day 15th and 16th Streets.
The Building that Housed Jones and Cartwright Grocers at Far Left*

John S. Jones
Denver 1859er and co-founder of the Pony Express

By Lee Whiteley

(presented January 22, 2020)



Our Author

Lee Whiteley, Posse member and past Sheriff, is a fourth-generation Coloradan. He graduated from Englewood High School and the University of Denver, then spent two years in the U.S. Army including a year in Vietnam. Following a very early retirement from the City and County of Denver, where he was a computer programmer-analyst, Lee and wife Jane began writing books on the transportation history of the West. His first book *The Cherokee Trail: Bent's Old Fort to Fort Bridger* was the 1999 *Denver Posse of Westerners Brand Book*. His program on this topic won the 1996 Westerners International Phillip A. Danielson Award for best presentation. Lee received the Denver Posse of Westerners Fred A. Rosenstock Lifetime Achievement Award in 2003.

John S. Jones Denver 1859er and co-founder of the Pony Express

By Lee Whiteley

Death of John S. Jones, Esq.

He was well and favorably known all over the northern part of the Territory and belonged to that hardy, honest class of men that one so much likes to meet. He was one of the earliest settlers of Colorado, started the first pony express across the plains, and was one of the first freighters of the year 1859. The war, by its changes, reduced him from a rich man to comparative poverty, but with the energy of a man to whom the word fail is an incentive to action, he labored with a zeal and a hope for the future.¹

John Stykes Jones, a true Denver 1859er, supplied Denver City and the mines to the west with one of the most important services possible: better communication between this isolated region and the states back east. Jones was born February 20, 1811. He became a partner in 1850 with the company formed by James Brown and William Russell. They obtained a contract from the War Department to haul military supplies from Leavenworth to Santa Fe. Brown died after being caught in a blizzard in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The unprofitable company ended in 1851.

Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express Company (L&PPX)

William Russell, Alexander Majors, and William Waddell signed a partnership agreement on January 1, 1855. Their company, Majors, Russell & Waddell, held a monopoly on the transportation of military supplies west of the Missouri River.

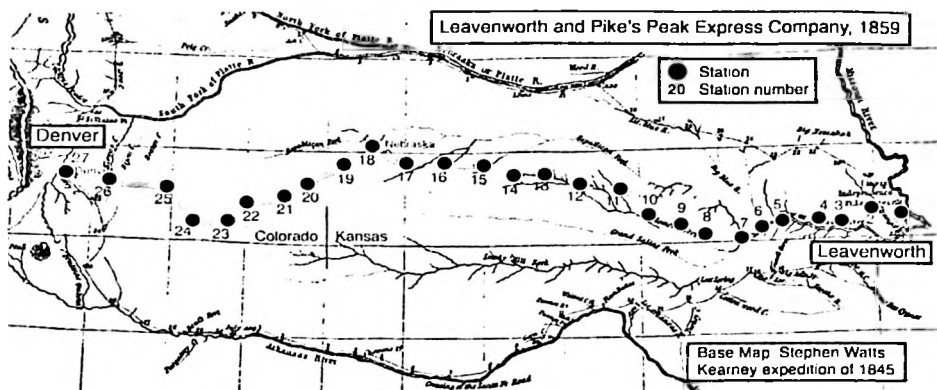
Russell wrote to Waddell in 1858, "Pike's Peak will rage next year and make no mistake. We must keep our eyes open and try to make enough out of it to cover our extraordinary losses next season arising from high prices of cattle and wagons....

I am for sending cargo of supplies out there."² Majors and Waddell were not supportive of the idea, so Russell teamed with John S. Jones to form the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express Company (L&PPX). Russell was president and Jones the general manager. Concord stagecoaches from New Hampshire and mules from Missouri were ordered.



Courtesy National Archives via Wikimedia

Typical Stagecoach of the Concord Type Used by Express Companies on the Overland Trail, ca. 1869



Courtesy Library of Congress

Map of the Route of the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express Company, First Stagecoach Route to Denver. Route of the Stage Road and Station Numbers Added by the Author

There were twenty-seven stage stations, spaced about thirty miles apart. The selected route followed the established military road between Leavenworth and Fort Riley, Kansas then turned northwest to follow the divide between the Republican and Solomon rivers. This section of the road had been used by John C. Fremont in 1842. The L&PPX then followed the South Fork of the Republican to its headwaters before crossing over to Big Sandy Creek. It continued northwest to Denver. This road northwest of present-day Limon would become the Middle or "Starvation" branch of the Smoky Hill Trail. The L&PPX was the first stagecoach line to Denver.

The Great Express Line. John S. Jones and W. H. Russell have established an Express and Transportation line from this place [Leavenworth] to the gold mines. Mr. Jones is now here, and has his office in the Planter's House, and is actively and energetically engaged in outfitting his companies, hiring his hands, and putting the line into complete and successful operation. He is preeminently qualified for the position he occupies as general superintendent of the whole business. He is a practical man, of great energy and indomitable perseverance. There was a general rush of men at his office on Monday last, from early dawn till night. He hired on that day about 100 hands as drivers of teams.³

The first set of two stagecoaches departed Leavenworth on April 18 and arrived Denver on May 7.

Arrival of the First Express. On Saturday evening last—7th inst.—two coaches, the first of the 'Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express', arrived in our city [Denver], having made the trip in nineteen days, bringing news from the States, also nine through passengers. This is the beginning of the stupendous enterprise undertaken by the above named express company—the making of a new road, over a comparatively unknown country, and immediately stocking it with a working force of men, animals and wagons, sufficient to forward

*with passengers and dispatch a daily mail and passenger coach from each end of the line. The coaches which we have seen are the very best of Concord coaches, finished in the best style, and perfectly new.*⁴

Only a few sets of coaches used the L&PPX Republican River route, but the passengers on these coaches were of great importance. After receiving free passage on the L&PPX, Horace Greeley, founder and editor of the *New York Tribune*, Henry Villard, future president of the Northern Pacific Railway, and Albert D. Richardson, historian and travel writer, went to the newly discovered "Gregory's Diggings," near present-day Central City.

Their findings were published in a *Rocky Mountain News Weekly* extra on June 11, 1859.

The Kansas Gold Mines. We are indebted to the kindness of Mr. William, of the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express, for the following report from Messrs. Greeley, Richardson, and Villard, which will give satisfaction to the public mind, and at once set at rest the cry of 'humbbug' reiterated by the returning emigration from this region.

It was Richardson who clarified the term "Pike's Peak Gold Rush."

Thus far no gold has been discovered within sixty miles of Pike's Peak; but the first reports located the diggings near that mountain, and 'Pike's Peak'—one of those happy alliterations which stick like burs in the public memory—was now the general name for the whole region.

Russell and Jones, again without the support of Majors and Waddell, purchased the St. Joseph, Missouri, to Salt Lake City mail contract on May 11, 1859. The contract called for the use of the Oregon-California Trail along the Platte River through Fort Kearney, present-day Nebraska, and along the North Fork of the Platte River through Fort Laramie, present-day Wyoming. Russell, Majors & Waddell took over the operations of the financially troubled L&PPX and moved it to this north route. A branch line ran from Julesburg, Colorado, to Denver, along the South Platte River. The first coaches along this new route arrived in Denver on July 9.

*Jones, Russell & Co.'s Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express is winning golden opinions. The stages now make their regular trips in a little over six days, carrying their mails with unflinching regularity, and putting passengers through with more comfort, and giving better and more regular meals than can be obtained on any other stage line in the Western States. The fact is, this express is about the only link that binds us to the states. Long may it prosper.*⁵



Author's Collection

Jones and Russell Pike's Peak Express Co.
Postmark, Dated September 15, 1859

Excerpts from the newspaper advertisement for the stage line included:

Jones and Russell & Co's Express Stage Coaches—Each stage coach is capable of carrying eight passengers with comfort and ease. Passengers through to Leavenworth \$100, board included.... Especial attention is given to the comfort of ladies traveling the coaches.... Our drivers are sober, discreet, and experienced men. The teams are the choice of 800 mules. John S. Jones, General Superintendent.

In November 1859, the L&PPX name was changed to Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company (COC&PP), but informally called Clean Out of Cash & Poor Pay.

The New Overland Express Co. The Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company was organized yesterday under a liberal charter from the Territorial Legislature, with A. Majors, John S. Jones [Jones], Wm. B. Waddell, B. C. Card, W. S. Grant, J. B. Simpson, and Wm. H. Russell, as directors. They have purchased the old company of Jones, Russell & Co., who are running the Pike's Peak Express and Utah Mail Line, for the sum of five hundred thousand dollars, and will continue to run the same, together with the Pony Express to Sacramento, California.⁶

The Pony Express

Russell was the driving force behind the establishment of the Pony Express. Once again, Majors and Waddell were less enthusiastic. It was Russell and Jones who forged ahead with the Pony Express by advertising in the *Leavenworth Daily Times* expressing their need for horses:

WANTED
TWO HUNDRED GREY MARES,
from four to seven years old,
not to exceed fifteen hands high,
well broke to the saddle, and
WARRANTED SOUND,
With black hoofs, and suitable
for running the 'Overland Pony Express'
JONES, RUSSELL & Co.⁷

Almost three weeks later when the news arrived in Denver, the *Rocky Mountain News* published the exciting words that Jones, Russell & Co.

are advertising for horses to stock the line of their Pony Express from Leavenworth to Placerville, Cal. They will put on 300 ponies, and expect to make the time in eight days; will commence the 3d of April. To this Rocky Mountain country, this Pony Express will be of incalculable importance, bringing us, at once, within three and a half days of the Eastern States, and within six and a half days, of those on the Pacific slope. Thus time and space are annihilated. Less than a year ago, news from the States was considered late if not more than a month old. The Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express Company

have reduced that time to seven days, and now propose to again reduce it one half, and we have no doubt that before another year has passed, the electric flash will give us instantaneous communication, with all the cities and towns of the Union. The greatest possible success, say we, to such men as Messrs. Jones, Russell & Co.⁸



Copy in Author's Collection

The Pony Express was Established by The Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company. Note that the Apostrophe had been Removed from Pikes

It was the completion of the first transcontinental telegraph by the Western Union Company on October 24, 1861 that ended the need for horses. The Pony Express ran from April 3, 1860 to October 26, 1861. A few remnants remained such as horseback service that linked the Pony Express station at Julesburg with Denver until the telegraph arrived in Denver from Julesburg on October 10, 1863.

But Jones and Russell knew the value of telegraph communication before then.

Telegraph to the Gold Fields. We are informed from a reliable source, that it is the intention of Messrs. Jones, Russell & Co., to establish, in the spring, a telegraph line through from the Missouri River to Denver City.... A line to Denver is such a far stretch towards the Pacific, that we think it a safe prediction that another year will see the continent spanned by the electric wires.⁹

Jones & Cartwright

John Jones teamed with J.T. Cartwright to establish a large freighting and wholesale-retail mercantile business. On June 8, 1859, twenty-five Jones freight wagons arrived in Denver, and by September large advertisements began appearing in the *Rocky Mountain News*. Excerpts from one of their many ads included the following on April 4, 1860:

Wholesale Grocery. Ferry Street, Auraria, and Blake Street, Denver City.... We will keep constantly on hand, a full and complete assortment of groceries and provisions, bacon, flour, sheet iron, fry-pans...mining implements.... All orders for shipment of goods from the states, entrusted to our care, will be promptly forwarded by Jones Russell & Co.'s Express line, or our freight trains, as the person may desire. Gold dust will be received for goods or payment for freight.

Another advertisement elaborated on the mining equipment.

We are fully prepared to furnish the best quartz crushers, and gold retorts, made under the supervision of old California miners, with all the latest improvements made in California, wholly adapted to Pike's Peak.

Freight Transportation

The subscribers are prepared to forward all kinds of freight from any point on the Missouri River to Denver City and points throughout the mining region, upon the opening of spring, and during the summer and fall, at reasonable rates. The well-known character of the firm, as successful freighters over the plains, is sufficient guarantee that contracts will be faithfully carried out. Jones and Cartwright, Denver City and Leavenworth, Kansas.¹⁰

The firm of Jones & Cartwright operated from these two locations. In January 1860 the *Rocky Mountain News Weekly* began describing buildings along the streets of Denver and Auraria. The February 1 description of Ferry Street, now 11th Street, noted:

This brings us to Fourth Street [now Walnut Street], and some of the most valuable ground in the country—except some of the big paying quartz leads. It is held at about \$25 per front foot, or \$1,500 to \$2,000 per lot. Next on the right is Jones & Cartwright's mammoth grocery and provision store, from which has been sold the past fall and winter near a thousand tons of goods. They occupy the old Pollock House, which has been extended to serve their necessity. Next door is the gun shop of S. Hawkins, the oldest gun maker in St. Louis.

This location is now the northwest corner of the open space in front of the former Tivoli Brewing Company building.

On February 22 the newspaper described the east side of Denver's Blake Street, north of F Street, now 15th Street:

JONES & CARTWRIGHT.

Wholesale and Retail Dealers in

GROCERIES,

Provisions, Hardware,

MINING TOOLS, &c.

We will make **Liberal Discounts** on prices to MOUNTAIN MERCHANTS or WHOLESALE BUYERS

Also, General Freighters.

HAVING Trains leaving Leavenworth and Atchinson EVERY WEEK, from this to the middle of September next.

We can give parties unusual facilities for getting out freights. All orders promptly attended to, and Goods forwarded without delay.

Being Agents for Foundries both at Leavenworth and St. Louis, we can at any time

Order and Freight out Quartz Mills on the shortest time possible. We are situated on
BLAKE STREET, EAST DENVER,

— AND —

Ferry street, West Denver,

Call on us before buying your goods or contracting for your freight.

JONES & CARTWRIGHT.

Denver. June 27. 1860.

21.

Coloradohistoricnewspapers.org

Jones & Cartwright ads in the Western Mountaineer [Golden City, Colorado], July 26, 1860

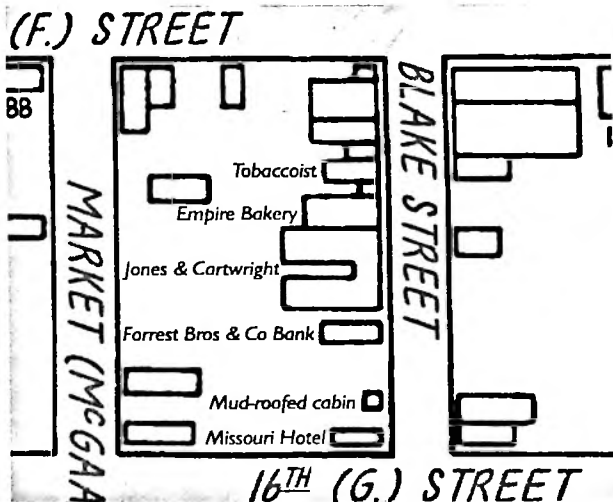
Passing several inferior buildings, occupied as bakeries, saloons, etc., we will next notice the two story block of stores occupied by Messrs. Jones & Cartwright and E. B. Sutherland. There are three: the first as yet unoccupied, and just being finished. Messrs. Jones & Cartwright occupy the second as a wholesale and retail house; dealers in groceries, provisions and hardware. Their room is twenty-five by one hundred feet, and in the fall was filled from floor to ceiling with their mammoth stock. It will be early refilled.¹¹

New Store in the Mountains. Jones & Cartwright, Wholesale and Retail Dealers in Groceries, Provisions & Hardware. In order to accommodate our friends and customers in the mountains, and meet the wants of the trade there, we have rented the store lately occupied by Mr. Storms, in the Bank Building, in Central City, where we have opened a Branch of our House in Denver.... Wholesale purchasers



Author's Collection

A Section of the Diorama at History Colorado. Shown is Blake Street Between 15th Street and 16th Street. The Jones and Cartwright Building is at Left Center. The Museum's Diorama Depicts the Downtown Area of Denver in 1860



Author's Collection

Diagram of this Same Block of Blake Street Shown in the History Colorado Diorama.

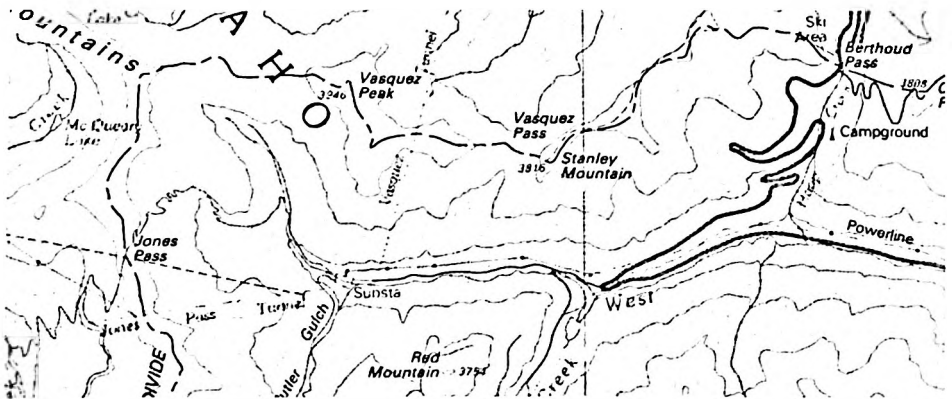
will be supplied at Denver prices, freight added. A large stock of the best St. Louis Flour always on hand. Jones & Cartwright.¹²

Ferry Street. Those who think Ferry Street is 'played out,' should drop in at Jones & Cartwright's old stand—the immense brick warehouse, which has held more goods than any other in this country—and glance over the immense stock of staples there displayed. The old pioneer merchant, John S. Jones, Esq., who has done as much for the country as any man who ever 'struck' it, is there as affable as in the balmy days of '59, when he held the reins of the P. P. Express, and the heaviest mercantile company at Pike's Peak. Wholesale buyers remember the place.¹³

The Civil War years brought most Jones' businesses to an end. His name rarely appeared in the Denver newspapers. After the war, his interests changed to such things as the "Fifty-Niners." The first meeting of this group consisting of gentlemen who lived in the Colorado Territory since 1859 met on June 22, 1866 in an East Denver court room at 7 1/2 o'clock. Among the 33 in attendance, the list included Daniel C. Oakes as president, E. R. Sopris, W. N. Byers, John Q. A. Rollins, and John S. Jones. Dues were one dollar. The official uniform for members was a black felt hat, black pants and belt, and a red flannel shirt with a silver "59" badge on the right breast.¹⁴

Jones Pass

Colorado and California Wagon Road. A meeting of citizens of Empire City convened this day, attached at the request of John S. Jones, President of the Colorado and California Wagon Road Company, the following proceedings were had: Mr. Jones stated that the object in calling the meeting was for the purpose of taking measures for the immediate completion of a wagon road



United States Geological Society's Denver West 1:100,000 scale topographic map, 1983
 Map of the Berthoud Pass, Vasquez Pass and Jones Pass Area West of Denver.
 All Three Crossed the Continental Divide

across the Snowy Range into the Middle Park.... [H]e had selected a few of our most competent citizens, who, with himself, had thoroughly examined a new pass, and found it a much easier grade than either Berthoud or Vasquez.... Also this new route would open a nearer communication with Breckinridge and Snake River than any other.¹⁵

Altitude by Boiling Point of Water, 12,400 Feet. In 1866 Mr. J. Jones with indefatigable energy, undertook to continue the road which is built six miles above Empire City on the main fork towards Vasquez Pass.... but whether it will be a success, or become a traveled route, is as yet undetermined, but is considered very doubtful. The route as located necessarily is much exposed to snow, and even in midsummer drifts were found from fifteen to twenty feet deep on the very route chosen.¹⁶

Jones Pass is six miles west-southwest of Berthoud Pass. The 7.1-mile-long Jones Pass road, classified as a 4x4 road by the U.S. Forest Service, passes the Henderson Molybdenum Mine. The Jones Pass Tunnel, renamed the Gumlick Tunnel, carries water from the Williams Fork to the eastern slope.

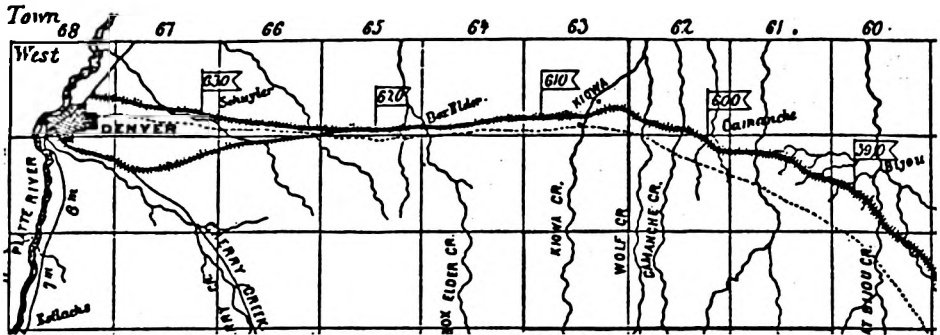
Railroad Construction

The Kansas Pacific Railway, originally known as the Union Pacific Railway Company, Eastern Division, began construction west from Kansas City in 1862. As the railroad advanced westward, the freight wagon distance to Denver along the general route of the Smoky Hill Trail was shortened.

Messrs. John S. Jones and L. F. Bartels, contractors, have some fifteen thousand ties in Platte Canon, which are to be delivered on the first ten miles of the Kansas Pacific, out of Denver. They propose, if permission is obtained, to attempt to float them to town down the Platte Water Company's canal.... If successful it would demonstrate to the Platte Water Company the value of their canal as a sort of cheap railroad, down which enough wood could be floated each summer to supply the city during the winter.¹⁷

Wanted—Teamsters and Graders, to Work on the Kansas Pacific. Work will commence between Kiowa and Bijou. Inquire of Jones & Armor.¹⁸ Jones & Armor, contractors on the Kansas Pacific, have orders to commence work, and they advertise for more men today. They propose to begin on Monday next to Bijou [West Bijou, present day Byers], forty miles from town, and grade this way. They will shortly begin at three other points also—at Comanche [present-day Strasburg], five miles this side of Bijou; at Kiowa [present-day Bennett], eleven miles, and Lost Creek [West Sand Creek], fifteen miles. They begin with eighty teams and about 300 men. The road is located to within about fifteen miles of Denver; somewhere near Box Elder [present-day Watkins], and will not be located any farther this way until the company decides to come in near the fairgrounds or via Cherry Creek and West Denver.¹⁹

Located at Last. Our Denver exchanges inform us that the junction of the Kansas Pacific and the D.P.R. [Denver Pacific Railroad] has been finally located 'near the fair grounds,' and this is about all they have to say about it.²⁰



Courtesy Wesley Brown Collection

A Section of an 1870 Kansas Pacific Railway Map Showing the Line of the Railroad East of Denver, 637 Miles from Kansas City to Denver. Note that the Company had not yet Decided on the Final Route into Denver. The North Route was Selected

The railroad decided to build west to "Denver Junction," near present-day 43rd Avenue and Race Street. Here it met the Denver Pacific's Cheyenne-to-Denver line. The Kansas Pacific followed closely present-day Smith Road.

The importance of the completion of the Kansas Pacific on August 15, 1870 was noted in the *Rocky Mountain News*, September 4, 1870:

Colorado now joins hands socially, commercially, politically, with the East. We are no longer isolated. We belong to the nation and to the country. The Missouri River is no longer the frontier. Omaha and Leavenworth no longer preside over the great far west. There is a 'New West,' growing and prosperous, situated on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, of which Denver is the commercial queen, and for which the Kansas Pacific is now the grand highway.

The Coal Business

The Denver & Boulder Valley Railroad, on January 14, 1871, completed tracks from Hughes, now Brighton, to the coal fields at Erie. To commemorate this event the *Rocky Mountain News* ran the following headlines on January 25:

THE RAILWAY EXCURSION.

Opening of the Denver and Boulder Valley R.R.
Denver and the Coal Fields United by Railroad.

The new town of Erie and the Boulder Valley Coal Company.
A Pleasant Ride—Speeches—Good Humor and a Flow of Wine.

The article continued with a list of thirty-six railroad and Denver officials on the excursion. One of the names was John S. Jones.

Four days later, the newspaper continued with a report on the coal:

It is the best locomotive coal found in Northern Colorado, and will be mined extensively for the use of the Denver Pacific, Kansas Pacific and Boulder Valley railways. It will be sold in Denver at about \$5 per ton, the right of delivering it having been granted to John S. Jones, who is bound not to charge over sixty cents per ton for this service.

The Red Barn

[John S. Jones] takes pleasure in informing his friends and the general public that he has just purchased the old Butterfield Corral, Cor. F [15th Street] and Wivatta Streets. where he has opened a Livery, Feed and Sale Stable. Grain of all Kinds and Hay Constantly on Hand. Coal Always for Sale. Also for sale a first class Railroad Grading Outfit, comprising everything necessary for a railway camp. J. S. Jones, Proprietor.²¹

With the purchase of this new property, he again opened a large retail operation, the Red Barn.

Fresh arrival of dressed hogs, always on hand, hams, shoulders and sides, dry, salt and fresh smoked hams; leaf lard in twenty and forty pound cans. Also, just arrived, a car load of corn and a car load of nails, assorted sizes. John S. Jones, Red Barn, F Street.²²

Having completed a fine fire-proof brick warehouse, with railway tracks running alongside, raised platforms, and all modern improvements for hauling freight to the best advantage, I am now prepared to receive, store and forward freight of all descriptions, to any point in Colorado or New Mexico. Also, store and transfer to any point in the city. John S. Jones.²³

I have just received two car loads of apples fresh from the orchard in Kansas. John S. Jones.²⁴

Ranching and Farming

For Sale: Thirty head of large American work oxen, with yokes, chains and wagons, on my ranch, fifteen miles up the Platte River, north side. John S. Jones.²⁵

Enclosed Pasture for Stock—I will take in a limited number of horses to graze. Inside a good fence. Good grass and water. Terms, \$4 per month, or \$1 per week. Ranch 15 miles from Denver, up the Platte, in Jefferson County. Apply Jones and Streets' coal yard, Denver. John S. Jones.²⁶

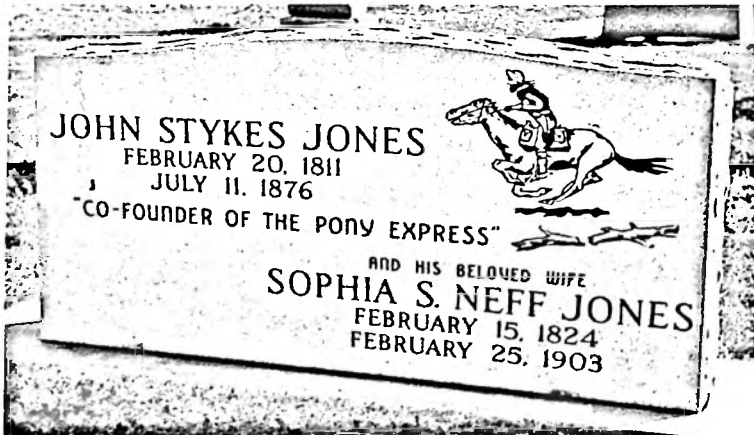
John S. Jones, Platte Canyon. Wheat first rate; oats, barley and rye good; potatoes thin; hay fair in the valley of the Platte. Within the hog back crops not so good; his experiments with alfalfa is very satisfactory.²⁷

A trustee sale notice appeared in the *Denver Daily Times*, October 25, 1876. The Jones property was listed as being in Section 2, Township 6 South, Range 69 West. This parcel was just northwest of present-day Chatfield Reservoir.

End of the Trail

Jones died July 11, 1876. His beloved Colorado Territory would become the State of Colorado twenty-one days after his death. He was buried at Riverside Cemetery, Block six. A new marker was placed in 1976 by his great-granddaughter Adelaide Field Donnelly.

The *Rocky Mountain News*, July 13, 1876 noted his cause of death: at the celebration of the Fourth of July he went to Denver and marched in the procession as a '59er. The change of water and diet added to the heat, brought on a violent diarrhea which caused his death.



Author's Collection

John S. Jones is buried in Denver's Riverside Cemetery



Endnotes

1. *Rocky Mountain News*, July 13, 1876.
2. Raymond W. Settle, *Empire On Wheels*, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1949.
3. *Leavenworth Herald*, March 26, 1859.
4. *Rocky Mountain News Weekly*, May 14, 1859.
5. *Ibid.* October 3, 1859.
6. *Ibid.* March 1, 1860.
7. *Leavenworth Daily Times*, February 10, 1860.
8. *Rocky Mountain News Weekly*, February 29, 1860.
9. *Ibid.* January 11, 1860.
10. *Ibid.* February 1, 1860.
11. *Ibid.* February 22, 1860.
12. *Rocky Mountain News*, April 24, 1861.
13. *Ibid.* July 11, 1862.
14. *Ibid.* June 23, 1866.
15. *Ibid.* June 29, 1866.
16. *Colorado Transcript*, May 29, 1867.
17. *Ibid.* March 30, 1870.
18. *Rocky Mountain News*, April 1, 1870.
19. *Ibid.* April 2, 1870.
20. *Colorado Transcript*, May 25, 1870.
21. *Rocky Mountain News*, November 6, 1870.
22. *Ibid.* January 27, 1871.
23. *Ibid.* July 19, 1871.
24. *Ibid.* September 5, 1871.
25. *Ibid.* September 31, 1870.
26. *Ibid.* August 15, 1873.
27. *Ibid.* July 31, 1874.

