

Lewis Jones

(1799 - 1876)

Lewis Jones is listed among the prominent early settlers of Fort Osage Township, Jackson County, MO. He was a Santa Fe trader, merchant, and financial backer for other Santa Fe Merchants and traders, and as such, was a successful businessman. Census data from 1830 lists three males in Jackson County, all of whom were part of the Jones family. Jones was one of the very early wagon makers in Independence and established a blacksmith shop on the town square of Independence in 1827. For several years in the 1830s he worked as the government blacksmith for the nearby Shawnee Indian Tribe. Eventually, he quit the life of a smith to partake of other business opportunities, including trading expeditions to New Mexico and Chihuahua, beginning in 1829. In 1831, Jones was appointed a Justice of the Jackson County Court. His other involvements included helping to found the West Fork Baptist Church in December, 1842; the church was located one mile east of Raytown and was the first permanent church organization of any denomination in the central southwestern portion of Jackson County. Jones was also a Land Commissioner and an Election Judge for Independence. In 1849, Lewis Jones built the Nebraska House, known for its ballroom and fine food. His name appears on additions to the original plat of the Town of Independence, including an October 21, 1851 addition and a March 14, 1853 addition. After the Civil War, Lewis Jones joined others in the wagon business to gain government contracts to supply the outposts on the borders.

Lewis, and his wife Elizabeth were married on January 16, 1820. He died on April 19, 1876 and Elizabeth died at age 93 on October 10, 1881. During his tenure in Independence, Jones was always active in the trading business related to the Santa Fe Trail. Having participated in expeditions, outfitted wagon trains, repaired wagons, and operated a hotel, Lewis Jones was directly associated with the commerce related to the Santa Fe Trail. Jones' broad Trail-related activities are representative of the businessmen who settled in Independence during its heyday as the eastern terminus of the Trail. The Lewis Jones House (pictured), located at 104 Elizabeth Street, Independence,



MO, was listed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1994.

An article by Christine Rinck, “The Rise and Fall of Lewis Jones’ Nebraska Hotel on Independence Square” was published in the Autumn 2005 issue of *The Jackson County Historical Society Journal*, volume 46, number 2, beginning on page 3. That article can be found online at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51181e81e4b04512ec820440/t/5150f5bae4b0e340ec53be4e/1364260282717/Vol46-2.pdf>