

**Collection #**  
**M1538**

**ELISHA JONES**  
**DIARIES, 1871-1911**

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Processed by

Rachel Lewchanin  
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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department  
William Henry Smith Memorial Library  
Indiana Historical Society  
450 West Ohio Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

VOLUME OF  
COLLECTION: 2 manuscript boxes

COLLECTION  
DATES: 1871-1911

PROVENANCE: Gift of Pamela Butler, Hinsdale, IL

RESTRICTIONS: None

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NOTES:

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Elisha Ebenezer Jones (August 31, 1820-February 6, 1911) was born to Hullum Jones and Sarah Kimball Jones in Gibson County, Indiana. He lived most of his life near Princeton, Gibson County, Indiana. He married Susan Lynn (1828-1901) on April 23, 1845, and the couple had seven children: Alonzo, India, Gilbert, Alfred, Emma, William, and Tom. Jones worked as a carpenter but was also a meteorologist and served as a local representative of the government weather bureau at Indianapolis for twenty-eight years. As part of his duties, Jones would arrive at the local post office every day at 10 o'clock to report temperatures and barometrical conditions to his counterparts in Indianapolis. Jones was inspired to keep a diary and daily account of the weather when, as a young man, he experienced the meteor shower of November 1833 in Owensville, Gibson County. Jones began keeping a diary around 1840. At the time of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, he was noted as being the oldest member of the co-operative department of the United States Signal Service. In his late 80s, he was still advertising the services of his machine shop in the newspaper, and he also tended a sizeable garden and orchard. In early 1911, Jones left Princeton, Indiana, after his son Tom, whom he was living with, took a job in East St. Louis. Jones died shortly after the move.

### Sources:

“His Big Diary of Sixty Years and His Weather Records Furnish Elisha Jones Many Tales,” *The Indianapolis News*. 10 December 1904, page 14.

“Oldest Signelman Now Nonagenarian,” *The Star Press*. 5 September 1910, page 3.

Ancestry.com

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection mainly consists of 37 diaries kept by farmer and meteorologist Elisha Jones. One other diary in the collection belonged to Jones' son, William Lynn Jones. His diary, kept from 1880-1882, was solely used to record expenses.

The diaries of Elisha Jones were kept as daily journals. They chiefly documented the weather and noted temperatures, rain/snowfall amount, road conditions, and other miscellaneous information generally related to Jones' area of residence in Princeton, Indiana. It appears that these journals were (at least in part) used for his work as a signal service reporter, for which he submitted monthly reports to Indianapolis and Washington D.C. Copies of such reports were provided in newspapers, which were then cut out and included in various diaries at the end of their subsequent months.

Depending on the season, Jones described the vegetable crops and flowers that he grew, oftentimes in relation to how the weather had impacted them. Events of natural disaster in and out of state were also recorded, such as the break of the South Fork dam in Pennsylvania in 1889 and a tornado that touched down in St. Louis May 28, 1896.

In addition, both Mr. And Mrs. Jones were involved within the temperance movement. Jones recorded his and his wife's attendance of such meetings, rallies, and festivals. Of note, the Joneses were particularly involved during the Murphy Blue Ribbon movement for temperance when it reached Indiana in 1877. June and July of that year held multiple meetings. Years later, on September 27, 1890, Jones still expressed desires for a "prohibitional era," and continued to document when such meetings were held. On February 3, 1901, he made mention of Carrie Nation, the temperance advocate and saloon raider.

Jones also documented local events and happenings around Princeton. The most common issue recorded was related to sickness, with influenza and scarlet fever being mentioned by name. On July 9, 1873, Jones wrote that his son Lynn [William] contracted typhoid fever and throughout July and into September of that year, Jones documented the progression of the illness.

More pleasantly, Jones also documented the work that he and his wife did for a local orphanage. As of October 1, 1889, Mrs. Jones had been appointed the matron of the home. In caring for the orphanage, the Joneses took the children to school, church, and into town for various events. They also facilitated the entrance, exit, or return of individuals from the orphanage.

Aside from daily happenings, Jones also recorded world news and events. Unfortunately, Jones did not provide much in the way of analysis or observation regarding these occurrences, but their mention is nonetheless noteworthy.

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