

BENAIAH JONES, JR.

Early Painesville Settler

Benaiah Jones, Jr. was born August 12, 1755 in Hebron, Connecticut to Benaiah and Experience Northam Jones. Leading up to the Revolutionary War, the Jones family lived in and near Hebron and Marlborough, Connecticut. In 1776, Benaiah and his brother, Elkanah, both enlisted in the Connecticut Continental Army. Benaiah served as a private in Captain David Miller's Company, part of Lieutenant Colonel Obadiah Hosford's 12th Regiment, which was recruited from Hebron and Lebanon, Connecticut. In September 1776, they marched to East Chester to join General Washington's army. Local legend claims that Benaiah served as a guard on General Washington's staff.

Benaiah married Jemima Skinner of Hebron, Connecticut on February 7, 1782. Jemima was the daughter of Abraham and Phoebe Strong Skinner of Glastonbury, Connecticut. She was a sister of Captain Abraham Skinner who was also one of the earliest settlers of Lake County, Ohio. Benaiah and Jemima became the parents of eight children. Jemima is credited with having provided "heroic service" during the Revolution, but the nature of her service is not recorded. It was said that Jemima was small in stature, but very active, energetic, and thorough in all of her undertakings. She was devotedly religious and one of the thirteen charter members of the First Congregational Church when it was organized June 17, 1810. A bronze plaque inscribed with the names of the charter members can be found in the sanctuary of the church in Painesville, Ohio.



Following the Revolution, many settlers were attracted to the region that is now known as Middlefield, Massachusetts. In 1782, Benaiah and Jemima joined the "Hebron contingent" of Middlefield settlers and purchased a farm that would later be known as the "Granger Place". Benaiah took an active role in nearly all civic matters while he and his family lived in Massachusetts. During his time in Middlefield, Benaiah became acquainted with a man named Henry Champion. Champion was a director with the Connecticut Land Company and it is likely through this acquaintance that Benaiah became interested in the settlement of New Connecticut in the Western Reserve. September 1808 saw Benaiah and his family arrive in Geauga (now Lake) County, Ohio. He left two married daughters behind who would later join their family in Ohio. Benaiah settled on 180 acres of land located on the south side of Mentor Avenue in what is now Painesville Township. His farm included a portion of the present Lake County Fairgrounds, the Painesville Commons Shopping Center and the Old Mentor Avenue (also known as Blish or Nye) Cemetery property.



Upon settling in the Western Reserve, Benaiah quickly became an important part of the early Painesville community. He became a leader in the local community and served as the Justice of the Peace. Known to all as "Squire Jones", in his capacity as Justice of the Peace, it was alleged that he officiated the marriage ceremonies for several of his children. Benaiah contributed to and helped to build the first meeting house in Painesville, although he was not a church member himself. He also donated the land on which the First District school was built. Benaiah was known for raising thoroughbred horses, farming and raising sheep. Local lore claims that he took great pride in all of his animals and cultivated an especially fine apple orchard. It was said that he was very neat and particular about his personal appearance and that he was very fond of children.

Sometime after the death of his wife, Benaiah sold his holdings in Painesville and moved to Jonesville, Michigan to live with his son Edmund and his family. Benaiah remained with his son until his death on August 19, 1839. Benaiah is interred today on land he donated to establish the Old Mentor Avenue Cemetery in Painesville, Ohio. A monument in the cemetery bears the names Jemima Skinner Jones, Benaiah Jones, Elkanah Jones, "Soldiers of the Revolution".

Benaiah is honored with a log used in the 1914 construction of the log cabin, better known as History Hall at the Lake County Fairgrounds in Painesville, Ohio. The New Connecticut Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR) have honored Benaiah and his brother Elkanah with inscribed bricks located at the America 250 Patriots Marker at the Lake County Courthouse in Painesville, Ohio.

