

**[Bonus] AFD Ep 359 Links and Notes - Samuel Milton “Golden Rule” Jones, Mayor of Toledo [Bill/Rachel] - Record Mar 16**

- In this week’s bonus episode, we’re talking about Samuel Milton “Golden Rule” Jones, a “progressive” industrialist and the eccentric Christian Socialist reform Mayor of Toledo from 1897 until 1904. You might recall that we talked about the Toledo Auto-Lite Strike of 1934 on a recent episode [#338 Dec 2020: <http://arsenalfordemocracy.com/2020/12/22/dec-20-2020-toledo-auto-lite-strike-of-1934-arsenal-for-democracy-ep-338/> ] and I think we speculated in passing that his legacy at the turn of the century after the previous biggest economic depression might have influenced some of the public solidarity for striking workers during the astronomical local unemployment of the Great Depression. We also speculated that his police reforms like taking away their truncheons might have had some lasting influence as well, but we weren’t sure on that point. We’ve also talked on previous episodes [#316 July 2020: <http://arsenalfordemocracy.com/2020/07/14/july-14-2020-hazen-pingree-john-altgeld-thomas-marshall-arsenal-for-democracy-ep-316/> ] about other rich progressive industrialists who entered politics, like Detroit Mayor and Michigan Governor Hazen S. Pingree, who was a contemporary of Samuel M. Jones less than a hundred miles away. While Pingree was a shoe-making tycoon of old New England yankee stock, Jones was a Welsh-born oilman, who immigrated as a toddler and got wealthy in the 1860s as a worker and then financial speculator in the northwestern Pennsylvania oil rush that we devoted several episodes to last year [#305-309 May 2020: <http://arsenalfordemocracy.com/2020/04/28/apr-26-2020-the-early-us-oil-industry-part-1-arsenal-for-democracy-ep-305/> <http://arsenalfordemocracy.com/2020/05/05/may-3-2020-the-early-us-oil-industry-part-2-rise-of-standard-oil-arsenal-for-democracy-ep-306/> ] in exploring the origins of Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Monopoly. One of the major features of Standard Oil’s monopolization was buying out the competition, for a very good deal if willing and a much less favorable deal if unwilling. Jones’s oil company, eventually centered in Ohio (like Rockefeller’s operations) rather than Pennsylvania, was one of those that sold to Rockefeller for a windfall, including for Jones specifically. He eventually relocated to Toledo, Ohio just ahead of the national economic depression that would last from 1893 to 1897, and he was shocked by the poverty of the large number of unemployed masses in the greater Lucas County area during this crisis. He decided to turn his knowledge and money toward developing and producing technological innovations for the oil industry which could be produced in Toledo to create jobs. It would also give him a chance to voluntarily put into practice his progressive views on how factories should be governed.
- <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/gilded-age-golden-rule-jones/> PBS American Experience Video Clip transcript: *By the time he was 40, Samuel M. Jones was already a wealthy man. When he patented an improved oil-pumping mechanism, his fortune grew larger. In 1892, Jones moved to Toledo, Ohio – a city [soon] plagued by economic depression. He opened a factory to manufacture his oil pump and vowed to treat his workers ethically. Jones sought an efficient yet moral workplace. Factory workers got 8-hour workdays, paid vacations, child-care assistance, subsidized meals, above average wages, profit sharing. [Image of a posted sign reading "The rule that governs this factory: Therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them."] Samuel earned the nickname "Golden Rule" Jones. Eventually Samuel Jones was elected as Mayor of Toledo.* (The sign with the golden rule was apparently the only posted conduct rule for employees in the facility.)
- Jones’s company for manufacturing his patented device was hilariously called the “Acme Sucker Rod Company.”  
<https://www.toledolibrary.org/blog/samuel-milton-golden-rule-jones-toledo-mayor-and-pro>

[gressive-businessman](#) Unlike any other business at the time, the Acme Sucker Rod factory provided education and entertainment for employees and their families. The factory compound contained the Golden Rule Park used for Sunday outings and lectures. And a kindergarten classroom was established to give young children of employees a head start in education and to teach children to respect all others. Samuel Jones was also a believer in promoting physical fitness.

- <https://www.archives.gov/nhprc/projects/catalog/samuel-milton-jones> National Historical Publications & Records Commission / Ohio Historical Society collection "The Samuel Milton Jones Papers" - Known as "Golden Rule" Jones, he was an influential advocate of municipal reform and oversaw implementation of a series of humane modifications including free kindergartens, a park system, playgrounds for children, free public baths, an eight-hour day for [public] city workers, and other reforms.
- <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Samuel-M-Jones> His guide in dealing with employees, Jones attested, was the Golden Rule, and admirers and critics alike (many businessmen despised him as a supposed socialist) applied that term as his sobriquet. Nominated by the Republican Party and elected in 1897 as mayor of Toledo, he set about governing by the same ideal. He established free kindergartens and playgrounds and free lodging for the homeless, he granted city employees benefits comparable to those his factory workers enjoyed, he sought to root out corruption from city government, and he advocated public ownership of utilities.
- [https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Samuel\\_M.\\_Jones](https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Samuel_M._Jones) (largely repeats what other sources have, except to clarify more on his role in the oil industry)
  - Jones encouraged voters and politicians to renounce political parties. He believed that non-partisan politics would unite the American people together, rather than divide them as political parties seemed to do.
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel\\_M.\\_Jones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_M._Jones) These policies made Jones unpopular with the Toledo's business community and his tolerance of saloons caused him to lose the support of many moral reformers. When his term was over in 1899, Jones was not renominated by the Republicans. He ran as an independent instead under the slogan "Principle Before Party" winning a second term with 70 percent of the vote. He was re-elected in 1901 with 57% of the vote and again in 1903 with 48% of the vote in a three-way race. "Golden Rule" Jones died suddenly during his fourth term as mayor on July 12, 1904. Citizens of Toledo lined the streets to view his funeral procession.[3: George Tanber, "City Flourished Under Golden Rule of Jones," Toledo Blade, Dec. 15, 1999] His successor, Brand Whitlock, continued Jones' reform efforts.
  - A contemporary quote from Jones published in 1899, giving insight into his highly unusual socio-economic and political philosophy, especially for a wealthy capitalist: "Is not machinery a social product, the result of centuries of experiment and invention? In short, is not our whole civilization essentially a social product? Back of every inventor stands a thousand others who made his invention possible. Back of every enterprising capitalist stands the entire nation, without which not one of his schemes could succeed. ... No man can point to his pile of gold and say 'Alone I earned it.' What is called Socialism is not a visionary plan for remodeling society; it is a present fact, which is not yet recognized in the distribution of wealth." (Samuel M. Jones, *The New Right*. New York: Eastern Book Concern, 1899, p. 238-239.)
  - Quote from historian Robert M. Crunden: *Golden Rule Jones was one of the genuine eccentrics in American history. Physically, he gave the impression of a man both strong and innocent...with large blue eyes that could transfix an audience or an interviewer. He was also genial, yet earnest and completely humorless....He was a self-made American businessman who for some unknown*

*reason decided that business, politics, and religion were somehow all the same, and spent the last decade of his life trying to convince others. In part, his progressivism was serious, as when he campaigned for public control of natural monopolies, like the trolley or electricity; at other times, it was quite frivolous, although he would never have it admitted it....**He should be remembered as a rather extreme example of the naïve, religious side of progressivism, inspiring people rather than accomplishing very much.***

- Summary thoughts:
  - Strange guy, hard to say that he was “good”, since he was still a capitalist who made his fortune off exploitation
  - Was his factory with higher wages only possible because he was producing a patented device he had invented, and thus not competing with other manufacturers?
  - Was his political platform & independence only possible because he was rich?