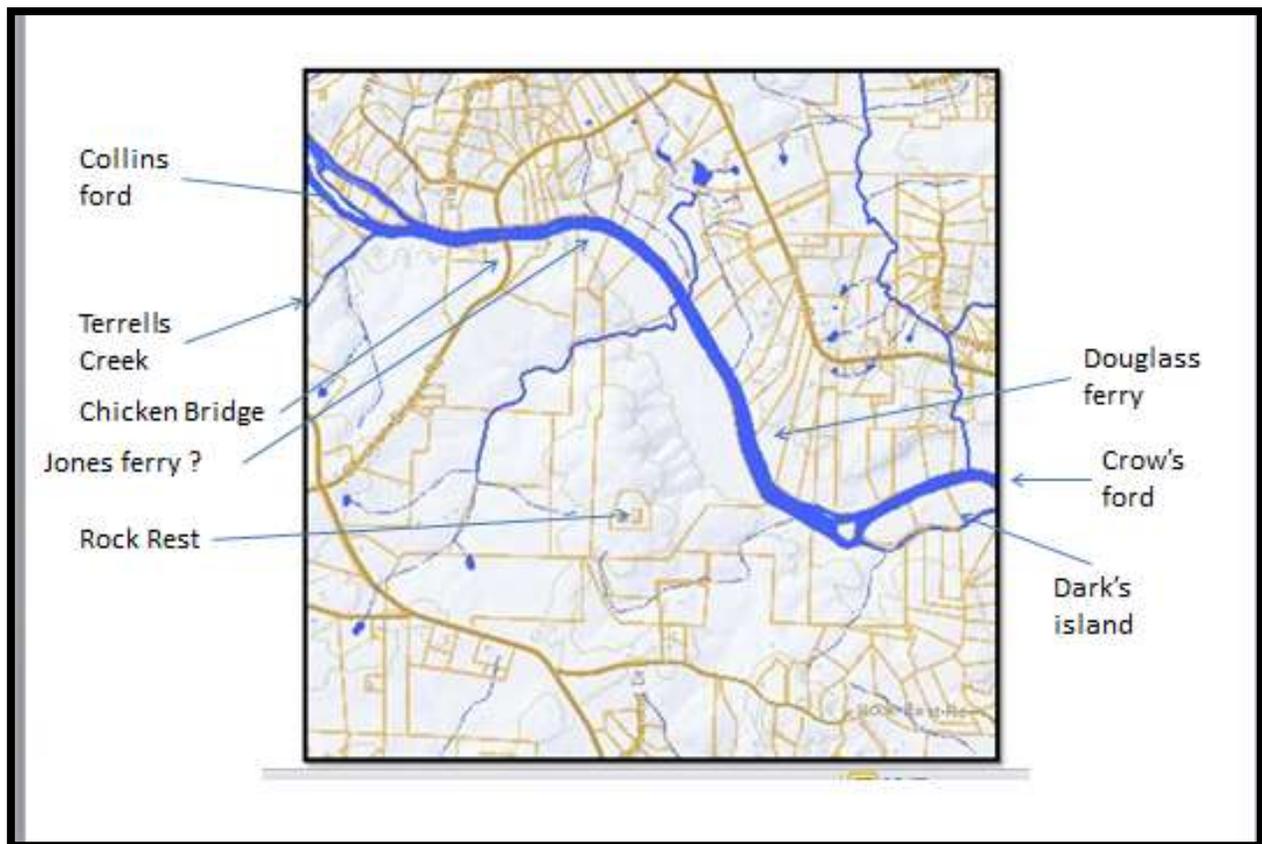


# Searching for Jones Ferry Crossing

By Doug Berg\*  
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People have long wondered where Jones Ferry was. Somewhere on the Haw River, in Chatham County, North Carolina is all that is agreed upon. The present-day Jones Ferry Road runs south out of Carrboro, but exactly where it led when once across the county line is uncertain. This article proposes that Jones Ferry existed in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and was approximately a quarter mile below where the present-day Chicken Bridge is, and that Edward Jones of Rock Rest was the owner.



## Edward Jones and His Haw River Properties

This search starts with the question: Who was Jones? Established fact tells us Edward Jones was proprietor of the plantation known as Rock Rest, which was situated on the Haw River just southeast of the present Chicken Bridge. Northwest of Rock Rest was the land Jones referred to as his "ferry tract." The conclusion has been arrived at from examining deeds pertaining to Edward Jones, tracing back from 1919 when Luther Baldwin sold what had once amounted to the 437-acre Jones ferry tract.<sup>1</sup> Luther Baldwin's father, Sam Baldwin, had bought the acreage in 1854, from a man named Britt<sup>2</sup> who bought it in 1838, from a man named Walker<sup>3</sup> who inherited it from his mother, Jane, who

bought it when sale was forced in 1825, by a trustee named Alexander Torrence, to pay debts the owner, Edward Jones, owed in Iredell County<sup>4</sup>. The 1825 transaction was recorded in Chatham County deed AE/373, and refers to “a certain tract of land situate on Haw River in Chatham County on the west of the tract on which said Edward [Jones] lived containing five hundred acres including the Ferry on the said river and being the same land which said Edward [Jones] bought from Lutterloh.”



Edward Jones, it will be remembered, was Solicitor General of the state of North Carolina and guardian of future sea captain hero Johnston Blakeley.<sup>5</sup> Edward Jones is said to have moved to the area about 1801, acquiring a large tract, in foreclosure, on the Haw, and building a home he called Rock Rest. The Rock Rest tract, known at the time as “Douglass’ Ferry” was acquired with the aid of Jones’s father-in law, Peter Mallette.<sup>6</sup> In 1851, Jones heirs

Charlotte Jones Hardin and Johnston Blakely Jones sold the “Rock Rest place” to Willis Dark: Chatham County Deed book AH/461.<sup>7</sup> The Dark Cemetery on the property and the name Rock Rest on the 1870 Ramsey and other maps leave little doubt as to the location of the Jones home. Legend has it that the Jones house burned in the 20s or 30s and was replaced by the current one.

Edward Jones’ wife, the former Mary Curtis Mallette, operated a finishing school for ladies, from Rock Rest. The referred-to “ferry tract,” northwest of Rock Rest, is said to have been acquired from one Lutterloh. That deed from Lutterloh appears to no longer be extant, but it is referred to in several other deeds, including AE/373 (referenced above). Deeds of trust, Y/215 and Y/246, refer to the same tract of land “containing 500 acres lying to the west of the tract of land on which I have lodgings, lying on the Haw River including my ferry it being the tract I bought some twenty years since of Wm Lutterloh.”<sup>8</sup> These deeds of trust list properties Jones is putting up as sureties.

It is not known if a Jones Ferry ever actually saw operation; a ferry can be defined as a franchise or right to operate a ferry service across a body of water. However two deeds have been discovered

Deed of trust Jones to Torrence (Y/215):

“...Our tract of land containing five hundred acres laying to the west of the plantation on which I have lodgings, laying on the Haw River, including my ferry, it being the tract I bought some twenty years ...of Wm Lutterloh ... one other tract of two hundred fifty acres including an island of fifty acres being the tract of land I bought of James Moore, one other ... two hundred fifty acres of William West, also the following personal property towit Harry, his wife Ami and three children towit Sam and Nelly and an infant just weaned, a negro man named Lonart a negro man named Christmas and a negro woman named Denise, also the following stock between thirty and forty head of cattle, two hundred head of sheep ... 2 teams of horses, one [?] horse, one chair horse, all my plates and household and kitchen furniture, two guns and three stills, my blacksmith tools and all my farming utensils ... my library—all the above I do for the purpose above mentioned I do hereby convey to the said Alexander...at any time henceforth to enter upon the premises... and to take into his possession the property....” (Punctuation has been added for clarity.)

which make reference to “the great road leading from [and to] Jones ferry”: Deed N/546,<sup>9</sup> on the southwest bank refers to “the great road leading from Jones Ferry to Pittsborough,” and L/315<sup>10</sup> on the east cites: “the great road to Jones ferry.” Such references strongly suggest there was an actual ferry.

What is known is that this property belonging to Edward Jones and known as his ferry tract was foreclosed and sold to one Jane Walker for \$400, in 1825. Ninety-seven years later, brothers E. A. and J.B. Thompson gave Luther Baldwin \$4,807 for it.

In 1831, the Joneses relocated from Rock Rest to Pittsboro. An announcement in the Raleigh Register claimed: “The very remote situation of Rock Rest rendered it on many accounts inconvenient for a school, while all the advantages of retirement, without any of the inconveniences are secured by the present commodious and pleasant situation, a few hundred yards from the town. Pittsborough and its vicinity are remarkable for health, being the resort of many families from the low country during the summer months.”

The new location was later called Kelvin. The relocation of the school may have been a matter of something more than mere convenience: In 1825, Mr. Alexander Torrence of Iredell, as trustee to the estate of one Alexander Jefferson Clarke, had forced the 1825 sale of two additional tracts along with the ferry tract. Torrence posted the three tracts for bids at the courthouse. It appears that Jones owed \$3346.86 to the estate of one Alexander Jefferson Clarke; therefore, in addition to the ferry tract, a tract downstream, 125 acres plus island, “east of the Jones plantation ... including an island in Haw River containing fifty acres,” went to one Thomas Ruffin for \$122.<sup>11</sup> The island would appear to be the one now known as Dark’s island, actually closer to forty acres. The third adjoining tract, 240 acres, downstream, went to one John Mann, for \$190.<sup>12</sup>

**MRS. EDWARD JONES'S  
PRIVATE BOARDING SCHOOL,  
FOR YOUNG LADIES.**

**T**HE School, which has for several years been conducted at Rock Rest, the family residence, is now removed to the vicinity of Pittsborough, and the next session will commence on Monday, the 7th of February, 1831, and continue five months.

The very remote situation of Rock Rest rendered it on many accounts inconvenient for a School, while all the advantages of retirement, without any of its inconveniences are secured by the present commodious and pleasant situation a few hundred yards from the town. Pittsborough, and its vicinity, are remarkable for health, being the resort of many families from the low country during the summer months.— The young ladies will be chiefly under the instruction of Mrs. CHARLOTTE JONES, with a competent Assistant.

When it is desired, young ladies who have friends in town may be boarded with them. It is proper, however, to remark, that those who reside in the family must necessarily enjoy more opportunities of improvement, and that the customary attentions to them during the intervals of school hours, will not be abated or interrupted on account of the admission of pupils that may board elsewhere.

**TERMS PER SESSION.**

For young Ladies exceeding twelve years of age, Board and Tuition, \$75, including Books and Stationary with all other necessary expenses. For children under twelve, \$70, or \$65 if Books & Stationary be furnished by themselves.

Mrs. Jones has much pleasure in stating, that in the Musical Department, she has obtained the services of Mrs. LE MASSURE, a lady well known as an accomplished instructress in Music. A practising Piano provided by Mrs. Jones without extra charge.

Chatham Co. Jan. 29, 1831. 12—4t.

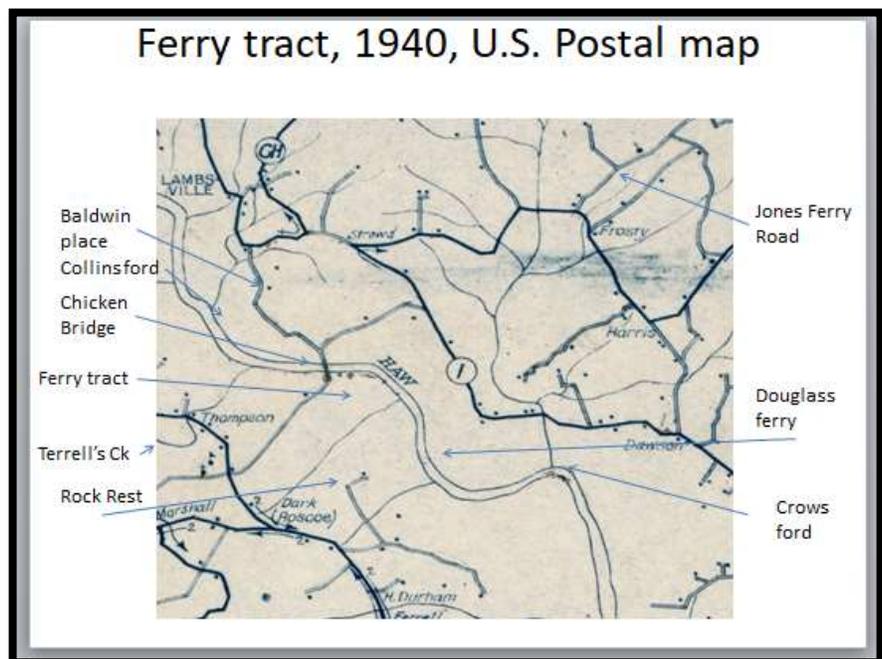


## Historical Maps Are Not Much Help

No Jones Ferry name appears on any pre-1980s map of Chatham that I know of, except a “Jones’ Br” appears on the 1865 Coastal Survey, and “Jones B” appears on an 1874 map, by GW and CB Colton & Co. The maps have Jones Br. and Jones B. right about where Chicken Bridge now stands; unfortunately, these maps are riddled with error—they show Rock Rest below Dry Creek, and Tyrrells Mountain right across the Haw, lapping at the banks like a thirsty beast. (One is led to speculate that Colton was merely copying the earlier map.)

Ramsey 1870, shows but does not name, two roads—the one we know, from Carrboro; and the George Tate 1891 map’s Jones Ferry Road (presently named Crawford Dairy Road). The two roads converge at the S. Baldwin place and then cross Collins ford, but this was fifty years after any Jones ferry. (Collins ford was known as “Love’s dam,” in 1870. Today it’s better known as “Baldwin’s crossing.”) It may be that the great road to Jones ferry had once branched southward at this point. If high water prevented use of the ford, one could continue on to the ferry. Edward Jones was a trustee at the North Carolina University, in Chapel Hill. He probably used the ferry. Traces of the “great road” no doubt are extant, but the area’s woods are crisscrossed with old roads. Additional deed and site research may help identify where these roads were.

1801 is the earliest reference to Jones ferry that has been discovered so far. That’s the year Jones acquired Douglass Ferry. The 1801 deed, L/315, describes “the great road to Jones ferry” as situated between Crow and Baldwin lands—well-known properties on the northeast side of the Haw—properties directly flanking the area across from the ferry tract. “The great road from Jones ferry to Pittsborough,” referred to in N/546 in 1804, obviously must be on the southwest side of the river. That deed references Fike, Brewer, Lutterloh, and John Hackney—all names associated with the southwest side of the Haw River. The problem with finding old road beds is that they crisscross everywhere. “The great road to Jones ferry,” on the northeast, cites a “saddleback rock,” which may be extant.



In an earlier attempt to locate the Jones Ferry crossing, Richard Ellington and Margaret Grove used Orange County roads and structural remains along the river to suggest a possible landing site on the north side of the Haw River a short distance to the south of

Dark's Island. While the location they found could well be a ferry landing, the deeds presented in this paper suggest that Jones Ferry was upstream of the location they pinpointed.<sup>16</sup>

*\*A word from Doug Berg:*

*Our family moved to the Chicken Bridge area of Chatham in 1967. I was twenty-three years old. The population of Baldwin Township was declining; folks said it was nice to see some young folks moving back. I recall old-timers reciting memories that had Jones Ferry Road from Carrboro taking a right at Frosty and winding around headwaters and hills and so on to the river. "That was Jones Ferry Road," one fellow said, pointing from the Frosty store, toward what we now know as Crawford Dairy Road. "Coming down from Carrboro you'd hit a stop sign here—left to Mt Pleasant; right to the river." Indeed, Crawford Dairy Road is identified as Jones Ferry Road on George W. Tate's 1891 map of Orange County. As for the ferry itself: it was said to have been a little below Chicken Bridge. Years later, in the 1980s, when the Chatham roads were named, the Jones Ferry name was extended to River Road. (Crawford Dairy Road is a name invented in the 1980s.) The current Jones Ferry Road from Carrboro does indeed take a southern sweep at Frosty. It's been satisfying to discover that the memories of those old-timers are more or less in agreement with these old deeds and maps. Special thanks to Moody descendant Allan Lane, of Winter Garden, Florida, for the Moody ferriage documentation; and to Bev Wiggins for discovery of those two deeds that reference "the great road."*

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Chatham County Deed Book F-T/202, 1919 Baldwin to Thompson
- <sup>2</sup> Deed book A-I/293, 1854 Britt to Baldwin
- <sup>3</sup> Deed book A-G/66, 1845, Walker to Britt
- <sup>4</sup> Deed book A-E/373, 1825, Tr. Jones to Walker
- <sup>5</sup> Jones was also guardian to others, including Elisa C. Lotterloh and possibly Alexander Jefferson Clarke referred to in A-E/373.
- <sup>6</sup> Deed book Z/224, 1802, Sheriff Tr. to Mallette
- <sup>7</sup> Deed book A-H/461 1851, Hardin and Jones to Dark
- <sup>8</sup> Deed book Y/215, 1822, Jones to Torrence
- <sup>9</sup> Deed book N/546, 1804 W. Petty to I. Petty
- <sup>10</sup> Deed book L/315, 1801, S. Crow to W. R. Davie (William Richardson Davie, 10<sup>th</sup> governor of North Carolina)
- <sup>11</sup> Deed book A-A/103. 1825, Tr. Jones to Thomas Ruffin. (Future North Carolina Supreme Court Justice Ruffin resold the tract to Jones sons-in-laws William Hooper and John D. Eccles, A-A/105, 1826. Lifetime rights were granted to Mary Jones.
- <sup>12</sup> Deed book A-A/105, 1825, Tr Jones to Mann
- <sup>13</sup> Deed book D/423, 1788, Moody to Douglass
- <sup>14</sup> Deed book A, p. 14, 1770, Cate to Moody
- <sup>15</sup> The United States to the State of North Carolina for services allowed by the committee of claims as of Report Dated April 1776. Revolutionary Army Accounts, Reels: S,115.45 Vol. B. pg.9; S115.48 Vol. 1-6 1-6, pg. 299; S115.61 Vol. XI, pg. 2, folio 2.
- <sup>16</sup> See the Ellington Grove presentation here: <https://chathamhistory.org/pdfs/JonesFerryCrossingProgramWriteupSep2017.pdf>