

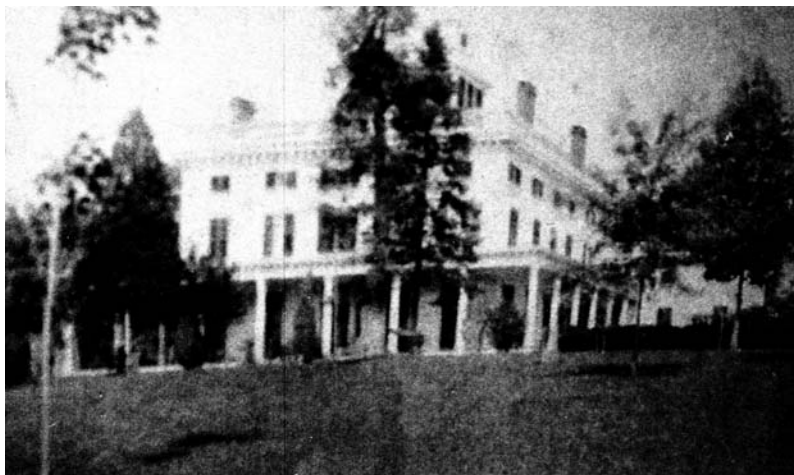
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Women of Long Island:

Mary Elizabeth Jones, Rosalie Gardiner Jones

by Judith Ader Spinzia

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Manor House

The original Greek Revival-style house on this site, said to have been the largest mansion on Long Island when it was constructed in 1855, was built by Walter Restored Jones (1793-1855) and named the *Manor House*. Charles Hewlett Jones inherited the *Manor House* from his uncle. It was renamed *Jones Manor* by Charles and his wife, the former Eliza Gracie (Gracy) Gardiner, the daughter of Jonathan Gardiner of *Cherry Lawn* in Eaton's Neck.¹ *Jones Manor* was subsequently inherited by their daughter Mary Elizabeth Jones (1854-1918). Mary married her first cousin Oliver Livingston Jones, Sr. (1850-1913), the son of her father's eldest brother. Oliver was a physician, a real estate investor, and the owner of the Laurelton Hotel in Laurel Hollow, the property on which Louis Comfort Tiffany would build two homes, *The Briars* and *Laurelton Hall*. The Joneses raised a large family and divided their time between the Cold Spring Harbor house and their Manhattan home at 116 West 72nd Street.

In 1909 the original *Jones Manor* burned. Rumors surround its destruction but it is generally believed that the fire was started by the Joneses' eldest son Oliver, who suffered from serious mental instability. In 1911, situating it on the original 1,000-acre parcel, Mary Elizabeth started building the present Georgian Revival-style house, just two years before Dr. Jones committed suicide, supposedly distraught over his inability to treat his troubled son who was eventually institutionalized.²



Jones Manor fire, 1909



*the second Jones Manor,
rear facade, 2004*

Mary Elizabeth Jones inherited an estimated \$5 to \$8 million from Dr. Jones at his death but she was already wealthy in her own right having wisely invested her \$3 million family inheritance. Her very extensive real estate holdings extended from Queens County into Suffolk County. In 1909 it was reported that she owned real estate in every state in the Union. Mary died in October 1918 of complications of influenza in the pandemic known as the Spanish Flu, just nine days before her son Phillip died and seven months after her son Oliver had died.³ Mary's son Arthur Eaton Jones inherited the house with the proviso that his sister Louise could continue to reside there until her death.⁴ After years of family squabbling and accusations of mismanagement of Mary Elizabeth's estate, her daughter Rosalie Gardiner Jones was given the house, one hundred acres, and \$65,000 in a court settlement in return for a promise not to file any more petitions in reference to the management of Mary's estate. Anticipatory of these kinds of problems, Mary had limited her children's access to the proceeds of her estate by placing it and both the Eaton's Neck and Cold Spring Harbor properties into a spendthrift trust.⁵

If all the stories about Rosalie Gardiner Jones (1883-1978) are even partially true, this space would certainly be inadequate. Her niece, Mary Gardiner Jones, went so far as to entitle a chapter of her remembrances “Aunt Rosalie, the Maverick.”

Rosalie and her mother appear to have been complete opposites, albeit both strong-willed and opinionated.

Unlike her mother who was a member of the New York State Anti-Suffrage Association, Rosalie was an active suffragist and Nassau County President of the National

American Woman Suffrage Association. Aligning her thinking and methods with the more militant British suffragettes, the “Pankhursts,” she courageously battled for “the vote.” Her remarkable march, or pilgrimage as she chose to call it, to Albany in December of 1912, her march to Washington, DC, in February 1913, and her suffrage activity on Long Island have been well-chronicled.⁶



Rosalie Gardiner Jones



Campaigning for the vote in Ohio with the “yellow wagon,” July 1912, “General” Rosalie Gardiner Jones at the reins with Elizabeth Freeman

Eccentric in the extreme, Rosalie was, none-the-less, a highly intelligent and an extremely well-educated woman for her day. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Adelphi College, then located in Brooklyn, and attended Brooklyn Law School. She earned a LL.B degree from George Washington University, Washington, DC, in 1919 and a Doctor of Civil Law degree from George Washington College of Law, now part of American University, in 1922. Her master’s thesis “The Labor Party in England” was written in 1919; her doctoral thesis *The American Standard of Living and World Cooperation* was published in 1923.

In 1925 she protested to Governor Alfred E. Smith, demanding the removal of Robert Moses as president of the Long Island Park Commission and chairman of the State Parks Council because of his appropriation of property without condemnation, a power vigorously assailed by Long Islanders but upheld by Judge A. T. Clearwater, former Supreme Court Justice of Kingston. Rosalie cited family property that had been appropriated for parks and for which they had not been adequately compensated. Moses accused the family of hiking the value when they found out that the State was interested making the entry and appropriation provision of the law the only feasible alternative for the acquisition.⁷ The judge's adverse decision was to impact more than just the Joneses.

On March 15, 1927, at the age of forty-four, in St. John's Episcopal Church in Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, near her family's estate, Rosalie married Clarence Cleveland Dill (1884-1978), a United States Senator from the State of Washington, defying tradition by removing "obey" from the marriage vows and by declining "to be given away" since it was obviously a decision of *her* free will to marry and not a bargain struck by Dill with her family.⁸ While married to Dill, she authored *Matthew Dill Genealogy: A Study of the Dill Family of Dillsburg, York County, Pennsylvania, 1698-1919* and *Matthew Dill Genealogy: A Study of the Dill Family of Dillsburg, York County, Pennsylvania, 1698-1935*. Their marriage dissolved in 1936 with Dill accusing her of being an abysmal housekeeper and of embarrassing him by her apparel. He complained of her off-handed remarks, her correspondence with his parents about his drinking habits, and her lack of support of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The fact that she was observed "burying dogs and garbage in their [Spokane] yard" was also cited.⁹ After Dill won his petition for divorce, Rosalie ran for congressional office in November 1936 from a district in the State of Washington east of the Cascades on a platform supporting a balanced budget and the building of the Grand Coulee Dam as part of the Columbia Basin Project in the State of Washington, despite the fact that the lake created by the dam was to be named Franklin Delano Roosevelt Lake. Rosalie ran as a Democrat, which in itself was an accommodation to the establishment since she was reported to have been a Socialist.¹⁰ The voters were not impressed enough with her or her platform to elect her. There was little else to do but just go home.

"Miss Rosalie Gardiner Jones" came back home to Long Island and here she stayed, composting her garbage, raising goats, defying traditions, and fighting with her neighbors and relatives using her sharp mind and, when all else failed, English Common Law.

Her idiosyncratic exploits and lawsuits often made the newspapers. The headline "Rosalie's Goat Commits Suicide" appeared when a goat, leashed to a second goat in the second floor ballroom, jumped out a window and hung itself. The goats were the source of much "local news" and amused gossip since



Rosalie Gardiner Jones, c. 1925

she bred them, milked them, delivered their kids, drove them about in her car, and allowed them to graze as they saw fit. When the railway car containing Rosalie's goats, who traveled by train to and from winter pastures in the South, was placed on a siding because of the necessity to move fuel oil north during a critical World War II fuel crisis, Rosalie, quoting the Interstate Commerce Act, informed the authorities that all 150 goats would have to be milked each day that they were delayed in their northward journey. The goats arrived in Cold Spring Harbor the very next day.¹¹ On another occasion the goats ate a neighbor's dahlia crop. The commercial use of the property as a nursery was in violation of village ordinances but Rosalie chose to defend herself by using English Common Law and the provision, then still in

effect on the Island, which required property owners to fence off their property against livestock not for the livestock owner to restrict the grazing of the animals.¹² Another bout with Eaton's Neck neighbors concerning her decision not to promptly bury her dead horse ended with the dead horse down the well which supplied the homes of the complainants.

The use of English Common Law was again used by Rosalie when she defended herself against the village's action brought against her for allowing low income people to build beach houses or "shacks" on the Jones family beach along Eaton's Neck, from which she then collected rent. Some of those "shacks" could be seen there in the late 1950s on untidy lots that are today desirable, beach-front property. She gained some support from the locals because she had refused to rent to a black family, just as she had refused to allow the "Negro Suffragists" to march with her contingent to Washington, DC, in 1913. But in the end the community was strongly divided and Rosalie charged forward, successfully defended her action in a lengthy court case.

She had also angered Eaton's Neck residents by erecting a gate close to where the firehouse is today. She charged \$1 to park for the day and an extra 50¢ to spend the night on her Eaton's Neck beach property; this, in 1920. When the village lost a "Rosalie"-instigated suit to have the causeway road declared a public road, Rosalie's plans for wetland development of Asharoken property were foiled. Characteristically she responded and built a hot dog stand at the corner of Duck Island Road and

Asharoken Avenue to harass the families who had won the suit. The village was victorious in 1948, however, in preventing Rosalie from turning all of the Eaton's Neck and Asharoken holdings managed by her for the Jones family, some 186 acres, into a sand and gravel pit.¹³

Her relationship with her family was one of constant turmoil. In addition to the fact that she had not distributed the money collected from her rentals to the other members of the Jones family, in whose name she managed the Suffolk properties, she proceeded to sell Eaton's Neck property despite the explicit restriction of Mary Elizabeth's spendthrift trust that provided that nothing was to be disposed of until after Louise's death. She sold and defended in court her sale of one-eighth-acre lots thus destroying the two-acre residential zoning plans of the community.¹⁴

The oil storage tanks at the mouth of Cold Spring Harbor are another "Rosalie." With intent or just by unfortunate oversight by Walter Jennings and the Board of Governors, Rosalie was the only member of the Jones family not invited to join the Cold Spring Harbor Beach Club, established on the spit at the foot of Snake Hill at the site of the Glenada Hotel Casino. Rosalie bought the parcel of land next to the club property in 1927 and sold it for use as an oil depot to Jennings' former partner-turned-competitor Herbert Lee Pratt, Sr., who resided at *The Braes* in Glen Cove and, then, headed Socony Oil.¹⁵ Jennings, vice-president of Standard Oil Co., lived at *Burrwood* on Shore Road in Lloyd Harbor. His property atop Snake Hill overlooked the harbor. Although he died in 1933 and, consequently, did not have to endure the storage tank landscape long, the rest of us have just had to get used to it.

The Joneses owned properties extending down the hill and out along the harbor in the Nassau County portion of Cold Spring Harbor and around the harbor in the Suffolk County portion of Cold Spring Harbor all the way to West Neck Road (then, West Neck Avenue) in Huntington. In 1937 Rosalie petitioned the Village of Huntington to change the residential zoning on West Neck Road in order to eliminate the rural environment and allow for the creation of a business district. Her petition called for the commercial development of West Neck Road all the way down to the causeway, to the present site of West Neck Beach, a beach then owned by the Joneses. She claimed a real "city street" would be infinitely more beneficial to the community than a rural road. Her petition, fortunately, was disregarded. In 1946 the beach, then known as Fusaro's Beach, was conveyed by the Joneses to the Village of Huntington in return for forgiveness of unpaid taxes.¹⁶

Courageously defiant of conventions, she lived her life to suit herself; a life that challenged her into her ninety-fifth year during which time she remained aloof from the establishment to which it seems she may really have wanted to belong. In 1978 Rosalie Gardiner Jones' ashes were scattered outside of her mother's crypt, on the cemetery hillside above St. John's Episcopal Church in Cold Spring Harbor.



Mary Elizabeth Jones' crypt, 1998

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ENDNOTES

1. Jonathan Gardiner (d. 1833), the son of John Gardiner and his first wife Joanna Gardiner, had large holdings in Eaton's Neck, properties that were eventually inherited by his granddaughter Mary Elizabeth Jones. Jonathan Gardiner is buried with his wives Sally Gelston Gardiner (d. 1803) and Fanny R. Gardiner (d. 1813) in the Gardiner Family Cemetery on Cherry Lawn Lane on Eaton's Neck.
2. Oliver Livingston Jones, Jr. (1880-1918), known as Ollo, never married and died on March 21, 1918. *The New York Times* Mar. 22, 1918, p. 13.
3. Philip Livingston Jones married H elene von Stolz Lucas in 1910. *The New York Times*, Oct. 8, 1910, p. 11. Coincidentally, a Philip Hone Leroy Jones drowned on September 12, 1918. This accidental drowning death in Oyster Bay is often confused with that of Philip Livingston Jones (1890-1918). *The New York Times* Sept. 14, 1918, p. 7. Philip Livingston Jones died of pneumonia on October 30, 1918. *The New York Times* Nov. 2, 1918, p. 15. His mother Mary Elizabeth died of hemiplegia nine days before him. *The New York Times*, Oct. 23, 1918, p. 13.
4. Arthur Eaton (b. 1884) married Ethel Josephine Gibney in 1906. He married her sister Mary H. Gibney in 1912, two years after Ethel had died of appendicitis. They resided in New York City. Charles Herbert (1877-1941) married Anna Livingston Short, the daughter of Edward Lyman Short, and resided at an 1873 Jones family house called *House on the Hill*, later known as *Hill House*, in Laurel Hollow. Charles and Anna also were cousins. *The New York Times* Apr. 19, 1941, p. 15. The surviving descendants of Charles and Anna decided to sell the house in 1996. *The New York Times*, Mar. 10, 1996. Louise (1875-1952) remained unmarried, living at *Jones Manor* until her death. At Louise's death, Rosalie and Arthur were the only surviving siblings. *The New York Times*, June 15, 1952, p. 85.

5. According to a family member, Mary Elizabeth's will was drawn up by her attorney Edward Finch, who became a Supreme Court Justice. Theodore B. Klapper, a Mineola lawyer with offices on Liberty Street in Manhattan, was appointed by the court as executor. His signature and approval, along with that of Louise, was required for all transactions. After Louise's death in 1952, Klapper alone made decisions.

6. See Funnell, Walter S. "General Jones, a Real Fighter." *Nassau Daily Review* Apr. 10, 1936; Matthews, Jane. "General Rosalie Jones, Long Island Suffragist." *The Nassau County Historical Journal* 47 (1992):23-34; Matthews, Jane. "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Suffolk County, New York: 1911-1917; A Case Study of the Tactical Differences Between Two Prominent Long Island Suffragists: Mrs. Ida Bunce Sammis and Miss Rosalie Jones." M. A. thesis, Adelphi University, 1987.

Mary Elizabeth was outspokenly against Rosalie's trek to Albany in December 1912, saying at one point that "her daughter is not going to do it." *The New York Times* Dec. 11, 1912. Ostensibly out of concern for Rosalie's health, she sent a male nurse to stop the march, attend to Rosalie's foot sores, and bring her home. Rosalie told her mother's messenger, "I am carrying a message to Garcia—beg pardon—Sulzer [Governor-elect of New York State]. You may go right home and tell mother so." *The New York Times*, Dec. 21, 1912, p. 11. The suffragists continued on to Albany fortified by shelled peanuts, chocolate, and jelly sandwiches, the apple jelly for which, reportedly, had been canned by Mary Elizabeth from apples grown at *Jones Manor*. *The New York Times* Dec. 13, 1912, p. 9, and Dec. 16, 1912, p. 8.

7. *The New York Times* February 27, 1925, p. 2.

8. *The New York Times* Mar. 16, 1927, p. 25.

9. *The New York Times* July 10, 1936, p. 21.

Dill was not required by the courts to return the \$40,000 that he had obtained from Rosalie. Having served two terms in the House of Representatives and two terms in the United States Senate, he decided not to run for the Senate again. Rosalie had tirelessly urged him to run again, calling him a "coward" for not doing so. *The New York Times* July 10, 1936, p. 21. Dill subsequently married Mabel Dickson, who had taught in college and worked in Washington, DC, as a home economics specialist. *The New York Times* May 14, 1939, p. 10. Dill practiced law in the District of Columbia after launching unsuccessful runs for governor of Washington and for a return to Congress. Rosalie, who died on January 12, 1978, preceded Dill in death by two days.

10. *The New York Times* March 31, 1936, p. 14.

11. Mary Gardiner Jones, *Tearing Down Walls: A Woman's Triumph* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2008), pp. 18-19.

12. Federal Trade Commission, Oral History Interview: Mary Gardiner Jones, October 9, 2003.

13. Carr, Edward A. T., Michael W. and Kari-Ann. *Faded Laurels: The History of Eaton's Neck and Asharoken* (Interlaken, NY: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1994), pp. 66-72; 81; 195-98.

14. Carr, p. 70.

15. "Walter Jennings, 'Burrwood' and the Feisty Rosalie Jones" in *Tales of Old Lloyd Harbor* by George P. Hunt. Village of Lloyd Harbor, 2001, pp. 79-84.

16. Alexander, Irene K. *A History of the Incorporated Village of Lloyd Harbor 1926-1976* (Village of Lloyd Harbor, NY, 1976), pp. 36-39.

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