



3-9-2009

Steve Rucker-Director
Arkansas National Guard Museum
Camp Robinson/NLR

Mr. Rucker,

While going through a filing cabinet today I came across a resume for the artist Joe Jones and an overall image of a mural created by Jones. I recognized the mural immediately because I had just recently seen a couple panels from that mural at Cowden Conservation. I hope you find the enclosed information useful.

Sincerely,

Colin N. Thompson
Art Administrator
CALs/Butler Center

Joe Jones (artist)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

	Joe Jones
	Joseph John Jones
Born	April 7, 1909 <u>St. Louis, Missouri</u>
Died	1963 <u>Morristown, New Jersey</u>
Nationality	American

Joseph John Jones (1909–1963) was an American painter, landscape painter, lithographer, and muralist. *TIME* magazine followed him throughout his career. Although Jones was never a member of the John Reed Club, his name is closely associated with its artistic members, most of them also contributors to the *New Masses* magazine.

Background

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, April 7, 1909. Self-taught, he quit school at age fifteen to work as a house painter, his father's profession.^[1]

Father of Peter Jones, Timothy Jones, Katie Jones Allen and Reverend James Jones. Grandfather of Lobbyist Jonathon Jones, Susannah Hooker, Brooke Jones, Jodi Jones Miller, Allison Jones Arcangel, Stephanie Jones, Timothy J. Jones, Kasey Errico, Jennifer Allen Flynn, Elizabeth Grace Jones Knier and Katharine Jones. Great Grandfather of Wells, Lawton, and Olivia Jones, Mariah and Christopher Miller, Jonathan and Nicholas Arcangel, and Daniel and Kalli Errico.

Career

Jones worked in his native St. Louis, Missouri, until age 27, then spent the rest of his life based in or around New York City.

TIME reported on both of these one-man shows in New York, first at the ACA Gallery in 1935, followed by the Walker Gallery in 1936. The first show included the paintings *We Demand*, *Garbage Eaters*, *Demonstration*, *The New Deal*, and the shocking *American Justice*.^[2] The second show included *We Demand*, *Garbage Eaters*, *Demonstration*, and his latest, *Threshing No. 1*.^[4]

In 1937 the Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired at least one Joe Jones painting as part of (then) 85 paintings of living American artists.^[5] His work was still being classed as "proletarian" in a *TIME* article, "Art:Year." in 1938^[6] and a second article on Baltimore's first exhibition of "Labor in Art" at the Baltimore Museum of Art.^[7]

World War II

In 1943, Joe Jones was enlisted into the United States Department of War's combat artist program. Although the Army background check revealed Jones was a member of the Communist Party, the art program's chairman George Biddle supported Jones, stating that Jones was "willing to swear that he never had any intention or obligation to disrupt the American Government." Jones was assigned to the Alaska Defense Command, at Fort Richardson, outside Anchorage, Alaska.^[8]

New Jersey

By 1951, for a new show in New York, *TIME* was reporting the "angry man calms down." The paintings on exhibit showed "delicately colored, wiry-lined pictures of beaches, towns, and harbors... without a park of sorrow or anger in them." Jones (then, 42 years old) did not want to "sit on top of a reputation," had lost interest in Communism, and removed "class war" from his paintings. He became interested in delicate lines and low-toned colors, a reaction against "the preoccupation with light and shade that has victimized Western art since the Renaissance." By this time, he saw paintings as "space, not objects" and sought humanism not in subject but "of the line." By this time, he was already residing in Morristown, New Jersey.^[9]

By 1952, *TIME* had cited him as one of 48 artists whose 250 paintings had been commissioned by Standard Oil of New Jersey. *TIME* mentioned Jones with other of the 48 artists by name: the other two were Peter Hurd and Thomas Hart Benton.^[10]

***TIME* magazine covers**

For May 1961, Jones painted *The Faraway Places* for a *TIME* cover story in its Modern Living section on travel.^[11] *TIME* announced his addition to "the small group (about 80 men over the past 38 years) who have painted a *TIME* cover." According to a Letter from the Publisher, Jones, who had done little foreign travel, "riffled through scads of travel photographs" and produced a work depicting a girl from Tahiti, cliffs near Beirut, a Greek island, and a Portofino harbor.^[12]

For December 1961, *TIME* used one of his paintings for their annual Christmas issue.^[13] (Jones based the painting on "impressions of the seasonal scene in Atlanta."^[14])

Missouri

Jones' experiments in painting won him a series of prizes at the St. Louis Art Guild exhibitions. Following these came a commission to paint a mural at the KMOX radio station and a solo exhibition by the guild.^[1]

In 1933, ten patrons led by Elizabeth Green in St. Louis formed a "Joe Jones Club" and financed his travel to the artists' colony in Provincetown, Massachusetts. While some critics have considered his early paintings as typical of the Midwestern Regionalist style exemplified by the work of Thomas Hart Benton, others have stated that he was in fact "anti-Regionalist." By then, Jones had only from magazines; art historian Andrew Hemingway surmises that Jones absorbed Modernist and Cubist ideas also from paintings. Upon his return to St. Louis, Jones lived in a houseboat.^[1]

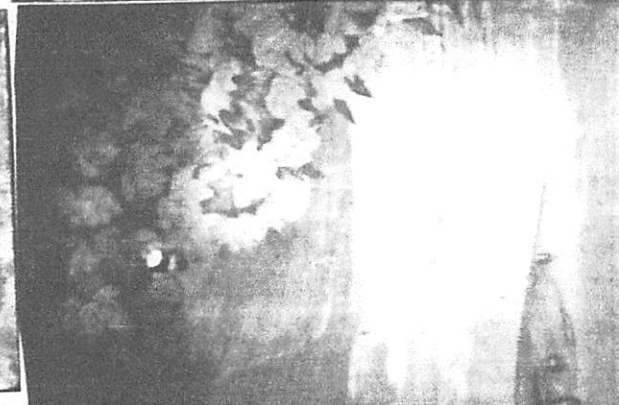
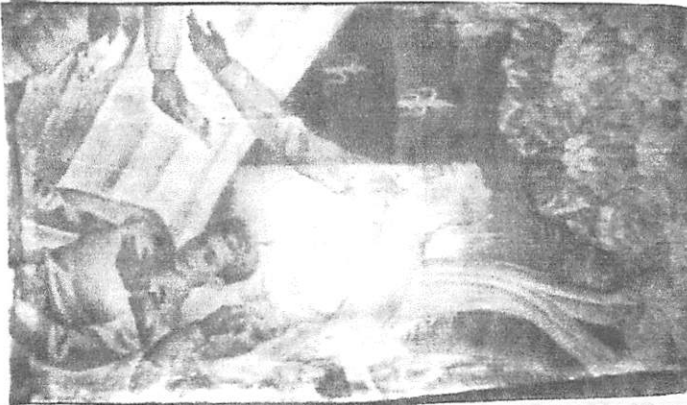
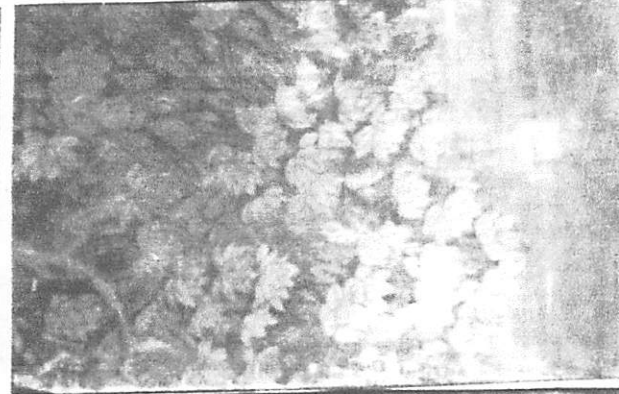
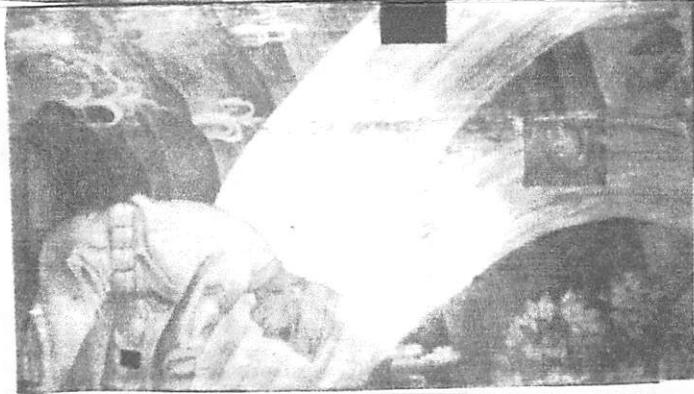
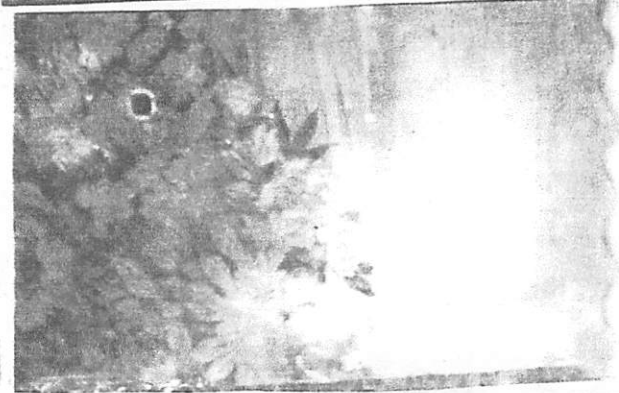
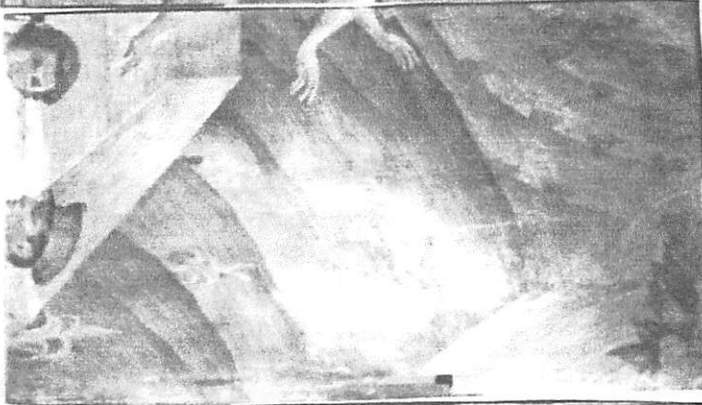
In August 1935, Jones painted a mural series at the Commonwealth College at Mena, Arkansas.^[1] Mr. Jones painted a New Deal mural for the post office in Charleston, MO titled *Harvest* in 1938. This mural was done at the height of Jones' fame and is a classic subject for Mr. Jones. It depicts the harvest of wheat in a very labor-intensive manner showing the cutting, gathering, and stacking of it onto a wagon. Under a cloudy dark sky, wheat dominates the perspective with the farmers providing a great deal of motion. Another New Deal mural entitled *Men & Wheat* was painted by Joe Jones in 1940 followed by *Husking Corn* in 1941 for the Dexter, Missouri post office, *Turning a Corner* in 1939 in Anthony, Kansas and *Threshing* in Magnolia, Arkansas in 1938. All the murals depicted some process during a wheat harvest. Of the "revolutionary element" his early work, Jones wrote to Green, it is "not warped to bias to any party" except for the "militant struggle of the working class," which he contrasted to artists who believed in the Communist Party.^[1]

New York

Perhaps Jones' first appearance in New York came with his painting "Wheat" at the Whitney Museum's Second Biennial of Contemporary American Painting (1934–1935).^[1]

In 1935, *TIME* magazine ran its first story about Jones: "Housepainter" (June 3, 1935). It reported that Jones had contributed a painting to the "Sixteen Cities Show" in Manhattan's Museum of Modern Art, whose autobiography read, "Joe Jones. Born St. Louis, 1909. Self-taught." By this time, Jones had become a Communist... Back in St. Louis, Jones promoted such thinking in his art classes at the St. Louis Artists Guild. In response, the city's Public Safety director had Jones removed.^[2]

When Jones came to New York, a symposium by the New Masses celebrated his arrival on February 2, 1936. Participating were Louis Bunin (puppeteer), Stuart Davis (American Artists' Congress), Joseph Freeman (literary critic and founder of the New Masses), William Gropper (fellow painter and cartoonist), Jerome Klein (critic of the New York Post, and Roger Baldwin (chairman).^[3]



Joe Jones

Born: April 7, 1909 St. Louis, MO

Died: April 9, 1963 Morristown, NJ

Studied: Self Taught

Member: Independent Artists of St. Louis; National Society of Mural Painters; New Hats, St. Louis; Provincetown Art Association.

Exhibitions (Galleries): 1933, 1939-40, 1945, 1947 ACA Galleries, New York, NY; 1936 Walker Galleries, New York, NY; 1943, 1953, 1955, 1959 Associated American Artists, New York, NY; 1959-63 Selected Artists Gallery, New York, NY.

Exhibitions (Institutions): 1936, 1944 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; 1937 Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, PA; 1939 New York World's Fair, Queens, NY; 1939 Golden Gate Exposition, San Francisco, CA; 1939 traveling retrospective: Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, MI; Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Colorado Springs, CO; Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MO; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA; St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; 1983 Boston University Art Gallery, Boston, MA (traveling exhibition).

Work: WPA commissions: 1938 U.S. Post Office, Magnolia, AR; 1939 U.S.

Post Office, Charleston, MO; 1939 U.S. Post Office, Anthony, KS; 1940

U.S. Post Office, Seneca, KS; KMOX Radio Station, St. Louis, MO. **Positions:**

1942-43 Artist War Correspondent, Alaskan Theater; Art Advisory Committee;

1944 commission from Fortune magazine. **Taught:** St. Bernard School

for Boys, Ralston, NJ; Peck School, Morristown, NJ.