

(31) J. R. Looney and C. H. Jenkins

J. R. LOONEY left his name and impress upon many enterprises and institutions in Brown County during the fifty-odd years of his residence here, and devoted more time to public service in the municipality than any other man. He served ten years as alderman, beginning in the nineties, was a public school trustee for years, and served five terms as mayor, during a part of which time he also was city manager. (John or Jonathan Rush Looney)

Mr. Looney came to Brownwood in 1875, moving here from McKinney with his wife, a bride of one year. The remainder of their lives was spent here, Mr. Looney dying July 11, 1929, and Mrs. Looney August 2, 1933. Both were natives of Tennessee. He was born near the small village of Goodlettsville, about twelve miles north of Nashville, while Mrs. Looney was born and reared a dozen miles west of Lebanon.

When he was twenty years old in December 1869, Mr. Looney and a brother-in-law, W. P. Cloyd, started from Tennessee to Texas. Making the long, difficult trip partly by boat and partly by freight wagon, and the latter part of the journey in unusually bad weather.

Mr. Cloyd was a minister of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of which Mr. Looney was a member, and his purpose in coming to the Southwest was to establish a new home and to do missionary work for his church. He was also a teacher, and with Mr. Looney as an assistant the pair engaged in teaching during their first year in the Lone Star State.

Going back to Tennessee for a visit later, Mr. Looney was married to Miss Laura Hewgley, September 24, 1874, and the young couple immediately came back to Texas, reaching McKinney in October. After another year they moved to Brown County, making the trip in company with Dave Mallow, and reaching the Promised Land October 23, 1875.

The new-comers pitched their tents in the vicinity of what later was known as the Mallow Well in the Clio community. Mr. Looney found a man who owned a small preemption, and traded a wagon and a pair of mules for the claim. This left the two families of settlers with only one wagon. Mr. and Mrs. Looney lived in a tent until a cabin could be built of poles on a quarter section of the land, and their new home was then firmly established.

For thirteen years Mr. and Mrs. Looney lived here, clearing their land and getting a good start of cattle, hogs and other livestock.

Then the severe drouth of 1886-87 came along to add hardship and difficulty, but in spite of this they practiced close economy and managed to pay for their 592 acres of land.

In the autumn of 1888 Mr. Looney decided to move to Brownwood with his family, and took a job with the Brown County Milling Company as manager. He held this position for a couple of years, and in 1890 he and John F. Wilson, another pioneer, bought a small

stock of groceries and established a store, beginning the mercantile business which was known for the next several decades as the Looney Mercantile Company, with commodious quarters on the public square. Mr. Looney soon purchased Mr. Wilson's interest in the business, and the latter then conducted his own business until his death in recent years.

Mr. Looney's career of public service began immediately after his removal to Brownwood, and continued throughout the remainder of his years. In 1894 he was elected alderman and served continuously for ten years. He served as a member of the board of Public School Trustees, and the Looney ward school bears his name. He was elected mayor in 1907 and retired voluntarily after serving four terms, or eight years; and again in 1920, after the city manager charter was adopted here in 1916, he again was elected mayor and for two years served as city manager as well as the municipality's chief executive.

During this period of public service he instituted many permanent improvements throughout the town, and worked unceasingly in behalf of municipal ownership of public utilities, strengthening the city's water and sewer department and laying the groundwork for the establishment of the city's gas service in later years.

In the early nineties Mr. Looney with other civic leaders began working for the establishment of a water reservoir such as Lake Brownwood, and in honor of his memory one large bay of the present lake bears his name. While Mayor he greatly increased the city's water supply by improving the dams on Pecan Bayou which impounded the domestic water supply. Both Mr. and Mrs. Looney were active in church work, serving as members of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church until that organization was merged with the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. After retiring from active business life Mr. Looney spent his time in various activities of civic a nature, and even in his eighties was a popular player on the Country Club's golf course.

Another eminent pioneer of the seventies, who mixed law, politics and journalism in a long and successful career, was Charles H. Jenkins. He reached Brownwood May 1, 1877, when he was twenty-five years of age; and for the next half century was an outstanding figure not only in Brown county but throughout Texas. Judge Jenkins was born in Dallas County May 17, 1852, and died in Brownwood February 23, 1931. He was a practicing attorney when he came here, and immediately launched in to a career of public service and professional activity that soon made him well known over a large territory. He served the town as alderman and mayor, and for many years was a public school trustee. He was a member of the 30th and 31st Legislatures. From 1910 to 1923 he was Associate Justice of the Third Court of Civil Appeals, sitting at Austin. In 1925 he served the state as chairman of the codifying commission to whom was entrusted the task of codifying and editing the revised civil statutes. His service with the public school board here covered twenty-four consecutive years, during most of which time he acted as president of the board. On several occasions during his earlier years here Judge Jenkins engaged in the newspaper business. Shortly after it was established he bought the weekly Bulletin, and a short while later sold it to Will H. Mayes for \$1,000. Mr. Mayes, who had come here in 1880, bought the paper after he had served two terms as county attorney.

After buying The Banner, Mr. Mayes combined the two weekly newspapers, making one edition called The Banner-Bulletin. Typical of the friendship and confidence that existed between Judge Jenkins and Mr. Mayes throughout their long association here is the story of the sale of the newspaper.

They agreed upon the price and Judge Jenkins suggested, "Come around some day and we will fix up the papers." But both neglected the matter, and the obligation was finally paid by Mr. Mayes without having ever signed a note or other written instrument. Judge Jenkins was a staunch Democrat, but a free-thinker. In the nineties he was among those who dissented and withdrew temporarily from the Democratic party. A statement of his political tenets, written two decades ago with his own hand-he usually scorned the typewriter, as did many old-time lawyers-said among other things:

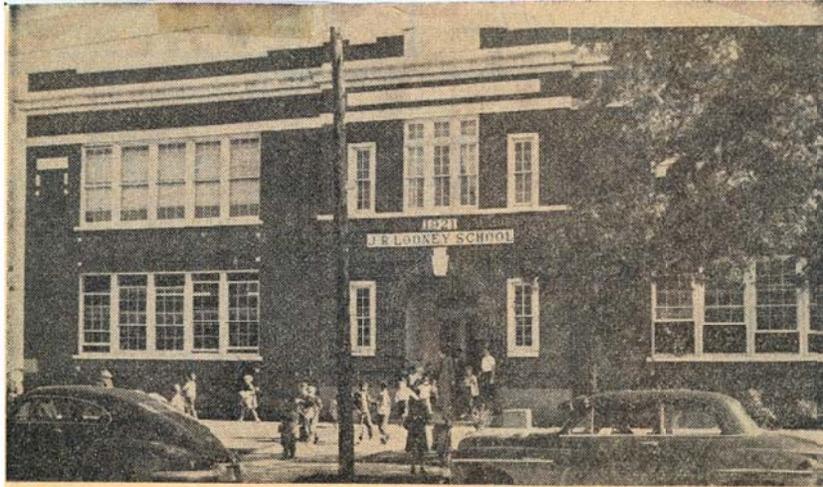
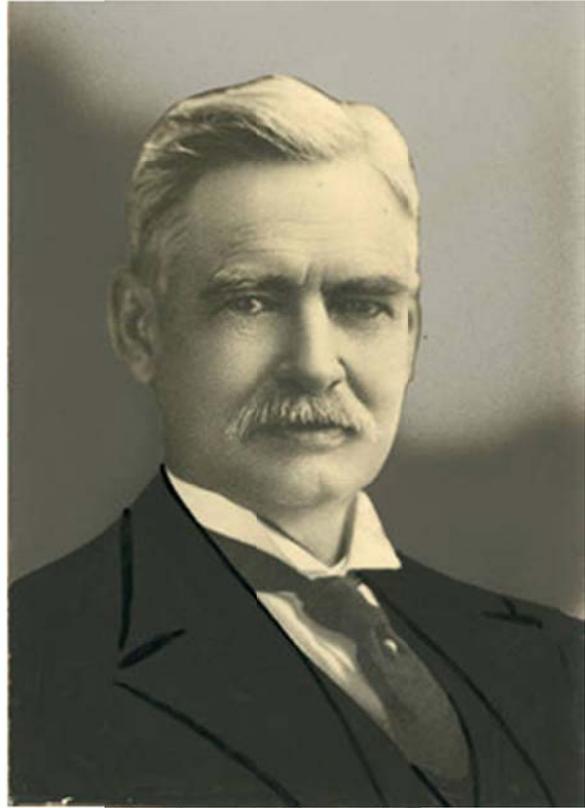
"I was born a Democrat which means, if it means anything, that my father was a Democrat. I vote for General Weaver in 1890 because I believed in full legal tender of paper money, and was opposed to refunding our bonds and converting them into gold bonds.

I was opposed to the demonetization of silver. I advocated the free coinage of silver, and believed in the quantitative theory of money as advocated by William Jennings Bryan. I have not changed my views as to those matters. "Beginning with 1888 I was a member of every Democratic precinct and Brown county Democratic Convention, and of my state Democratic Convention until I went on the bench at Austin in 1910, and thereafter without my solicitation I was elected to and attended all state Democratic conventions except two until I resigned from the Court of Civil Appeals. Otherwise I took no part in politics while I was on the bench. "I was a member of the Platform committee of the subcommittee in the state conventions of 1908 and 1910, and also of the state conventions to select delegates to the St. Louis convention that nominated Alton B. Parker. I was an alternate delegate to that convention, and attended the same. I did not favor the nomination of Judge Parker. I was and am in favor of the United States becoming a member of the League of Nations. I believe that Woodrow Wilson was a wise statesman."

The statement is a reminder of the fundamental issues that once determined the identities of the major political parties, and also that many years ago our leading men were looking into the future and foreseeing conditions as they are today.

Judge Jenkins was a staunch and active churchman, a member of the Christian church. Although outspoken on all matters of public moment, he was tolerant toward the views of others and many of his warmest friends were in opposing political camps. He became widely known as a practicing attorney, and was associated as counsel with many of the notable cases that were entered on the dockets of Central Texas courts during his active career as a lawyer.





JOHN R. LOONEY'S RECENT DEATH AT BROWNWOOD

John R. Looney, 79, died at his late home at Brownwood, Texas, July 11. The deceased was for 54 years a prominent citizen and community builder and church leader of Brownwood and Brown county.

He served as mayor of Brownwood for ten years. Prior to being elected mayor he served as alderman for many years. He also served as member of the city school board for 22 years and part of that time as its president.

He served as Sunday school superintendent for more than 50 years of the Presbyterian church of that city. He is survived by his wife, and three children, Early Looney, Faye Looney and Mrs. J. H. Ragsdale, all of Brownwood. During the funeral and burial all business houses closed and business was suspended in his home city for which he had accomplished so much in his long, active business career of more than half a century.

Mr. Looney was well known in McKinney where he often visited relatives. He was a brother of Mrs. W. W. Kerr of this city, and was also a brother of the late Prof. Isaac Looney a pioneer educator of this city. Only a few weeks before his death, he had visited his sister and brother-in-law in McKinney.