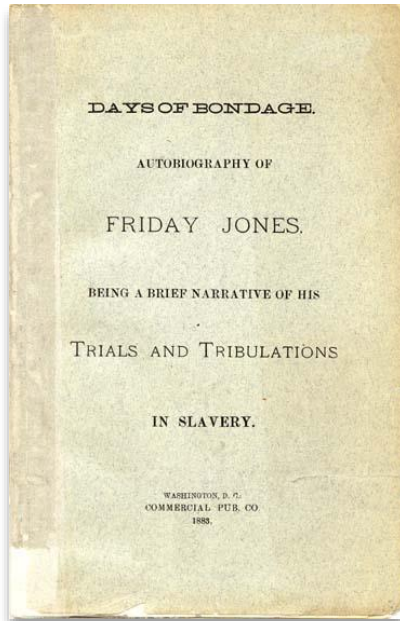


**BACKGROUND:** *Friday Jones was born in 1810 near Raleigh, North Carolina. When he was a teenager, his enslaver, Olser Hye, died and Hye's daughter, Emily, inherited him. Repeatedly abused by Emily's husband, Colonel Tignal Jones, Friday repeatedly ran away. But he did not head north—instead, like most enslaved people who engaged in this type of resistance—he sought temporary respite from the abuse hiding out in nearby woods or visiting loved ones.*



*On several occasions, he snuck out to visit his wife who was enslaved on a nearby plantation. Jones's devotion to his family shapes much of his narrative—as he does his efforts to shape the sales of his loved ones in order to remain together. In this respect, Jones appears to have had much more success than the average enslaved person. Similarly, he had greater access to material objects, such as a horse and buggy, which provided an extraordinary degree of personal mobility that made this possible.*

*Jones recounts hiring his wife and children out, an almost unheard situation in which he determined where they worked in their “free” time. “Hiring out” was somewhat common in urban areas. When an enslaved person was allowed to hire out their own time, after working for their enslaver, they performed odd jobs for others who paid them for their labor. Typically, they had to give a portion of these earnings to their enslaver and were allowed to keep the remainder. Jones's account suggests that he arranged these positions for his wife and children—exerting significant control over their labor.*

*Jones repeatedly created a narrow degree of autonomy for himself within which he resisted his enslavers and worked to keep his family together.*

*Jones and his family claimed their freedom when Sherman's Army marched through the South. After the war, Jones worked as a night watchman at the North Carolina State Capitol. He eventually moved to Washington D.C. where he dictated his autobiography to an editor.*

*His remembrances do not form a linear account of his life, but rather represent specific events that he links together under unifying themes. Central to his autobiography are his roles as husband and father and the unbearable anguish he experienced as an enslaved man, repeatedly threatened with the loss of his family. Almost as constant as his trials and tribulations is his reliance on his faith to carry him through each new obstacle.*

*The following excerpts come directly from his autobiography.*

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LIFE OF  
FRIDAY JONES.

My first remembrance of my life begins when I was from 8 to 10 years of age. I was born in North Carolina in 1810, the property of Olser Hye, within 15 miles of the capital of the State—Raleigh. My mother's name was Cherry and my father's, Barney. I was taken away from them when I was small and hired out to Sim Alfred, who lived about two miles from where I was born. My mother was traded for a tract of land and sent to Alabama. My father died about this time. Just at this time I was brought to know

right from wrong. I was afraid to plough in the corn-field by myself—always used to working with a large force of hands before that. I promised then and there that if I lived to be a man I would get religion. It occurred to me that if I had religion I would not be afraid of dying. When I was a boy, whichever way I turned it looked as though something was going to catch me. Though I was but a small boy I promised that I would not live the life my father had lived. I knew my father was a desperate wicked man, would get drunk. His associates were all wicked. My poor dear mother, I could not say anything about her religion but she taught me how to pray before she left me. The morning she left I could not bear to shake her hand and bid her good bye. I heard from her. She was the mother of eleven [11] children. She left four little ones of us. I was the oldest one of the four, being only about 10 years of age myself, father dead, and mother gone to the State of Alabama. It has been over 60 years since she left us, and I have never forgotten my mother; have no remembrance of ever having heard from her since.

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In 1856 my, wife and three children were for sale. I was for sale also. My two oldest children were sold—we were all the property of Dr. Ben Rogers then. Seven other of his servants were for sale, but he refused to sell any of them to a trader, either letting them select homes for themselves or he selecting one for them. He was pressed for \$10,000—his youngest son got into a difficulty and he had to give a \$10,000 bond. He forged \$1,000 on the Wilmington N.C., Bank.

Jno. O'Neil, of Raleigh, saw my wife and I in Raleigh, and told me to see my master and get him to sell them to him (O'Neil) and it would be a home for them for their life-time. See what a lie a

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man will tell. A short time after that he sold my wife and youngest child for as much as he gave for the four.

I became so uneasy and troubled I could not work; I went away but I could not stay. I had to come back to Raleigh to watch where they sent my wife and children—he had now bought my wife and children, and did not ask me any odds. I asked him to sell again and let me pick their homes. I was worse troubled then about my wife and children than I had ever been before in so short a time. I went twenty or thirty miles down the railroad, getting up cord wood, and was so troubled I could not work at all. I took the train on one occasion and landed at the depot before day. I cut me a big hickory stick and concluded if he had sent my wife and child away when I got there (there was a ditch between his house and the market house where I would lay in wait,) to cut him down below the knees, so that he would never be of any more account. We got cross that day and he attempted to strike me. I knew there was no show for me, so I stood perfectly calm and cool, not even winking my eye.

That morning before day, I jumped up and ran into the house, and felt the bed; finding my wife and child there, no one call tell how joyful I felt. He then said to me that he would sell all of them for so much, and he would not take that after sunset. This was some time in February—I remember of a heavy snow being on the ground. I said to him, "Then, sir, you intend to part myself and family?" I stepped out the door, and having no dependence at all that I knew of, I raised up my hands and gazing across the street, said, "Lord, I have done all that I could, the matter is in your hands; my wife and children are gone without your assistance." In a second thereafter, my eyes rested on Joshua James, a Baptist minister, who was the editor of the Baptist Recorder. I went up the steps into his office and related the occurrence to him. He immediately came down and went over and looked at them; he then turned back and he and I went to

O'Neil's and agreed to give him such a price for them; it was a trade and O'Neil and I had nothing more to do with each other.

My troubles made a new beginning with James: my wife and James' wife could not agree. For a short time after James bought her I did not hire her out, but later on I hired her until the surrender.

Some time in 1863 while the war was going on, James moved away from Raleigh, up in Caswell Co., N. C. At that time I had my wife and three youngest children hired, Mary, Cherry and Katy. I had two sons hired out in Raleigh at the same time—I hired them from their master, Dr. Rogers. Mary was nearly a young woman; I watched over her, knowing James would not hire her to me. Mrs. Martin, a very respectable lady, hired her before James left Raleigh. I got one of James' friends, who was also my friend, to hire Mary for me—I took her away from Mrs. Martin's by paying a big price for her. No matter how much they asked for my wife and children, I paid it.

At this time he had an agent in Raleigh, to whom he wrote,

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telling him to put my family on the auction block on the first of January. The letter was written about, the middle of December, and in it he wrote his agent to see Friday Jones, that he might get someone to buy the[m]; if he didn't, to put them on the block and sell them for the cash—he wanted no more women and children on his plantation. Heavy trouble on poor me again about my wife and children. I prayed some and studied some. I hitched up my horse and buggy and went to his house, about seventy-five miles away. The first day I reached the town of Hillsboro, some forty miles from home; the next day I got within three miles of Yanceyville C. H., Caswell Co. I then drove up to his house just at dark. He was not expecting me. I had been praying to Almighty God before I left home, and I now continued and dictated what I must do and what I wanted to do. He (James) was naturally a short, crabbed speaking man, his manner was not very pleasant and he was a rough looking man, but my wife and children were at stake and I had no fear of him—I had God with me.

I had left mourning hearts at home on the Friday morning I started. He fed me and my horse that night and the next morning and treated me very well. He invited me in after supper and I told him my story; it was between God, him and myself. We set with his wife until near one o'clock, talking of many different things. I had to agree with him a great deal in his talk. I told him I could not get anyone but a trader to buy my wife and children. My master was dead and his estate had to be settled the next fall; his oldest children had settled out in Tennessee and would not be in until the fall, and he (James) could buy my wife and children if he choose. He sat down and made me out a pretty stout letter to Alfred Williams, his agent. Before he wrote that letter, I promised him a large amount of money for their next year's hire, which he agreed to take. I returned home very proud. I strutted to my buggy, feeling that I had accomplished so much good.

I arrived home that evening, after being away for five days, and my wife was a happy woman when I told her I had accomplished my aim. My brothers and sisters in Christ had me in their arms and were sending up prayers for me.

I could not stay away from home contented; I was troubled until I got back. Two boys I had hired six or seven years back, had grown to be men and were in town when I returned, and they appeared so glad to see me. My oldest daughter, whom I took from a trader about a year previous to that Christmas, I had left locked up in a house I had rented in Raleigh. I was still a restless man and never slept sound for any length of time. To show you readers how important it is to trust Almighty God, you will readily see by the

way I have been tried. All those troubles I put before you; man never dictated at all—it was my God and me.

In 1853 a trader bought my oldest daughter. Before she was sold, Dr. Dozier, her master, attempted to whip her and she refused to let him; he imprisoned her in a corn crib, and called Tom Gill, one of his slaves, to assist him in whipping her, but she whipped them

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both, flung the door open and left. She was then living within seventeen or eighteen miles of Raleigh; and she came to see me; she only staid in the woods a short time. 'Twas a sad thing to see so likely a young woman abused as badly as she was.

He then sold her to Perry, who lived about three miles from Raleigh; Perry sold her to Leroy Jones, eight miles from Raleigh. She came to Raleigh to see me at Christmas. Perry, who owned her then, ordered a policeman, unbeknowing [sic] to her, to put her in jail. The policemen came to my house and tried to make a fuss with me by taking her out, so as to arrest her, but I held my peace; they struck my children, who were crying, a blow or two, but still I said nothing. This occurred at night—Parker, Driver and Beavers were the names of the policemen. They carried her to jail that night—no sleep, no rest for me.

I arose early the next morning and got in the roadway that Perry had to travel—I knew what block and what street to wait to see him; I asked him what she had been doing.

“Nothing,” he replied; she had behaved allright [sic], she was a good cook and suited him exactly, but the Yankees were going to take the country, and he had to be conscripted and carried into the war. He had to sell her because he wanted the money back he paid for her, to give to his children. I left a sad family, the oldest daughter being snatched from our midst by a merciless trader.

The next morning Perry came in person and took her out of jail and carried her home. The next day, while standing in the yard, she saw a strange party of horsemen coming down the lane; she knew Leroy Jones, and attempted to make her escape; poor woman, the four men soon out-ran and caught her in the open field. Reader, common trouble cannot kill me, but one of my saddest feelings was when they told me she was sold to a trader.

Her husband, Allen Tate, and his master’s overseer got into a fight, and Tate had to be sent away to keep the overseer from killing him. Her youngest child, a girl, died, leaving her oldest child, Bobby, and her sister still in the Dozier family.

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I had made up my mind what to do when I heard that Jones had bought her. Reader, when you get to this place, just pause and see how many of you would have done as I did. I fixed up myself as though I was going on a trip to New York—clothes and thick blankets in the bottom of my buggy. I passed within half a mile of the trader’s that day and made a stop a few miles the other side. I saw some of my acquaintances and inquired for her; they said she was over at Jones’ the trader. I told Charley Moore, a young man, to go over and see her and to tell her that I was in the neighborhood and must see her that night, but she must let no one know. I then went seven or eight miles further to my mistress’, who was a widow, and staid there until after sunset. I had then sixteen miles to go before I got to Raleigh—Jones’ was about half-way. Dr. Roger’s wife did not want me to go home that night as it was so very cold. I told her I could not stay, as my business was so very important I had to be there early in the morning. I told her the reason I came up was to know

if they were going to make any alteration in the hiring of us—my boys and I had to be hired every year. She said she would make no change; we were to remain hired as our master had hired us. I bowed my head and thanked her. I then shook hands with her, Henrietta and Aggie, her cook.

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It was now past midnight, I drove to Raleigh but stopped, at a friend's house and warmed her; I did not go a direct route because I knew they would follow and take me up.

After warming up, I pushed on to Raleigh. I got there just as day was breaking in the east and astonished her mother and the rest of the children, its they did not know where I went or what I went for. They arose early and wanted to know what I was going to do with her[.] I replied that I was going to keep her for awhile in my stable loft. After keeping her there for a short while, I carried her out into the country where she staid a month or so, but as she again got restless, I had to take my horse and buggy in the dead of the night and bring her in and kept in the stable loft.

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Some of the young men at Rogers' hired me and let me stay at Raleigh as usual.

Leroy Jones was the speculator and Kinyon Jones owned trained blood-hounds; they, with Leru House, went into my stable. I stood back and saw them go up the steps into the loft, and break the door open. She was in there at the time, but they went in and searched, and did not find her.

I left her then until the morning Sherman's, army arrived; as Kilpatrick's cavalry approached Raleigh, running Wheeler's army out, I turned her out. I had kept her within one square of the market house for twelve months; in the course of the two years she had been very sick—on two occasions her mother had said she could not live; to turn her loose in the road and let them take her, for they would ruin me. Bless my wife! I will never meet a woman that I will love as I love her. I said, "I shall not turn her loose, madam, if she dies I intend to bury her."

— *Raleigh Visitor*: An election has been ordered in Durham to take place September 17th next on the question of subscribing \$100,000 to the Durham, Blue Wing and Clarksville Railroad. The prospects are that the subscription will be ordered. — Friday Jones, an aged colored man, residing in the eastern portion of the city, in what is known as the old fair grounds, died last night. "Uncle Friday," as he was called, was perhaps as widely known as any colored man in North Carolina, and during his time has been a somewhat noted politician. He was over 80 years old.

*The Wilmington (North Carolina) Morning Star*, August 12, 1887.

Friday Jones, a colored man very well known in the city, died yesterday, aged 78 years. He had been quite prominent among his race as a politician. He was at one time watchman at the capitol. Some years ago he went to Washington City with a view to getting the position of janitor of the government building here. He remained there about three years, during which time he wrote a history of his life. He was there at the close of one session of Congress, and one evening just before the adjournment of that body, Gen. W. R. Cox took him into the hall of the House of Representatives and introduced him. He had been both a democrat and a republican, and died a democrat.

*The News and Observer (Raleigh, North Carolina)*, August 11, 1887.