

Historical marker event to commemorate Gov. Sam Houston Jones

By [By Elona Weston / Special to the American Press](#)

As a boy, Robert G. “Bob” Jones remembers falling asleep many nights to the sound of his father pecking away at his old typewriter.

Bob said his father, Sam Houston Jones, Louisiana’s 46th governor, was a driven man — a statesman who loved Louisiana.

“He didn’t play golf. He didn’t hunt, and he didn’t fish. His idea of relaxation was working some more,” Bob said.

Defeating Long

In a bitter campaign in 1940, Sam H. Jones defeated Earl K. Long for the gubernatorial seat.

Long had served as governor for about a year following the resignation of Richard Leche. Long was again elected governor for

two terms, in 1948 and 1956.

Sam H. Jones ultimately served as governor from 1940-1944.

“He decided that we had enough of bad stuff happen to the state of Louisiana and he decided to run for governor,” said Sam

H. Jones’ stepson James G. Boyer. “It was kind of a longshot. He ran second in the primary in 1939. In 1940, was the runoff election and he was elected at that time and defeated the Long regime. That’s how things got started.”

Humble beginnings

Sam H. Jones was born in Merryville in a two-room cabin on the family’s property, homesteaded by his grandfather, Moses Clark

Frazar.

At age 3, Sam H. Jones moved to DeRidder. He graduated from high school in 1915.

Sam H. Jones went on to attend

Louisiana State University and waited tables to make ends meet. He quit college and volunteered in 1917 for the Army in World War I. He would later serve in the reserves and received a commission as second lieutenant and retired as a major in 1957.

After his release from the service in 1919, Sam H. Jones began studying law while working with his father, Robert Jones, who was clerk of court in Beauregard Parish at the time.

In 1921, he was elected to the Louisiana Constitutional Convention. In 1922, and without a college degree, he passed the Louisiana Bar and began practicing law.

He practiced in DeRidder and then Lake Charles. He went on to serve as assistant prosecutor for the Southwest region. He also

served as state commander of the American Legion at one time.

Bob said his father, who died in 1978 at age 80, was a talented orator.

“And the words flowed pretty freely with substance,” Bob said.

Bob said his father continued speaking publicly well into his 70s.

“Even in his later years, I would get nervous. His mind was leaving him a little bit there when he was 75, 76.

Once he got behind that podium, it was like he was 40 years old. He never missed a lick. He gave really flowery-type speeches. He really knew how to capture an audience,” he said.

Bob, who served in the state House and Senate, said his father never pushed his politics on him, but was always there as a supporter.

“He was there if I needed him,” he said.

James and his brother, Billy, who is deceased, were adopted by Sam H. Jones, following his marriage to their mother, Louise

Gambrell Boyer.

James said he became an attorney because of his stepfather. James was in his early teens when Sam H. Jones was governor.

“I always admired him. I knew I could never become as great a statesman as he was, but I decided I liked that profession,”

James said.

Keeping them honest

Sam H. Jones is credited with helping to make government more honest. He pushed laws involving reforms on state contracting,

bidding and dual office holding. He embraced civil service as a way to take politics out of state hiring. He also focused

on improving the state’s education system.

“He wanted to get politics out of people’s lives,” Bob said.

James said Sam H. Jones could not seek re-election.

“Unfortunately, he was governor at a time when you could not succeed yourself so he could not run for re-election when his

four-year term ended. Jimmie Davis ran for it and was elected and then in 1948, he ran again against Earl Long, the guy he

beat in 1940 and Long defeated him,” he explained.

History remembered

The family is looking forward to an event at 11:30 a.m. on July 13 at Merryville High School which will commemorate Sam H. Jones.

A historical marker will be placed at the birth site of the former governor. The cabin is no longer standing. The property is across from the Merryville school, adjacent to La. 110.

“I think it’s great,” Bob said. “I think he would have liked that.”

The marker placement is part of Merryville’s centennial celebrations. The public is invited. There will be special speakers,

music and more.