

# The Clerk's Black History Series



**Debra DeBerry**  
Clerk of Superior Court  
DeKalb County



**James "Jack" Wormley Jones**

(September 22, 1884 – December 11, 1958)

**"First African-American FBI Special Agent"**

**James "Jack" Wormley Jones** was born September 22, 1884 on Fort Monroe military base in Hampton, Virginia. His father, John Bradford Jones, a former slave, was the lighthouse keeper for Old Point Comfort Light lighthouse located on the base. His mother, Sally Jones, was also a freed slave. In the mid 1890's, his family moved from Virginia to Cambridge, Massachusetts where he spent his teenage years. He returned to Virginia in 1902 to attend Norfolk Mission College in Norfolk, Virginia. He also attended Virginia Union University but did not complete a degree according to his FBI application. After school he started working for the Washington Metropolitan Police Department of Washington D.C., rising through the ranks from patrolman, horseman, and motorcycle policeman, before becoming a detective. During this time, he married his wife, Ethel, and they had three children.



James W. Jones childhood home in Hampton, VA

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, James joined the US Army. After training in the segregated Officers Training School at Fort Des Moines, he was commissioned as captain and was assigned to Company F in the 368th Infantry Regiment, 92nd "Buffalo Soldiers" Infantry Division. The 92nd Infantry Division was the only African American infantry division to see combat in Europe during World War II. James was sent to France where he saw combat action close to the Belgium and German borders. His leadership and fearlessness during battle was praised by his division commander and led him to become an instructor of the 92nd Division School of Specialists where he was promoted to senior instructor. After World War I ended in 1919, James returned to his job as a police officer in Washington, D.C.



Application for Appointment to Position of Special Agent of the Department of Justice.  
Washington, D.C.  
November 19, 1919  
The Attorney General, Washington, D. C.  
I have the honor to make application for appointment to the position of Special Agent of the Department of Justice, and for your use in this connection the following information is respectfully submitted:  
1. Name in full: James Wormley Jones  
2. Legal residence: 4612 Danvers St. N.W. Wash. D.C.  
3. Mail and telegraphic address: Same  
4. Age on last birthday: 35 yrs Weight: 175 lbs Height: 5 ft 2 1/2  
5. Place of birth: Fairfax, Missouri, Va  
6. Were you ever in the service of the United States? Yes  
7. If so, in what department of the service were you employed? Captain of Infantry from 10/2 of Oct. 1912 to 25 Oct. 1919  
8. Are you married? Yes  
9. Are you physically capable of discharging the duties of the position sought? (Any physical defects should be fully described.) Yes  
10. Do you use intoxicating liquors or narcotics? If so, to what extent? No  
11. General educational training: (Under this head the applicant's entire educational training should be given in chronological order, stating the period spent in each institution, degrees taken, etc. Knowledge of any languages other than English should be indicated.)  
Public schools Cambridge, Mass. one year  
Norfolk Mission College three years Virginia  
Virginia Union University. Did not take any degree

On November 19, 1919, James applied for a position as a Special Agent with the Department of Justice. He was hired by then director A. Bruce Bieluski, but soon after the start of his employment, the agency changed their name to Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and was headed by the newly the appointed director, J. Edgar Hoover.

James "Agent 800" Wormley Jones was the first black man to be hired as an FBI Special Agent and his assignments were all undercover, working and infiltrating "radical" black organizations. His first assignment came in 1921 when he infiltrated the African Blood Brotherhood - a black liberation group out of New York. During this same time he was assigned to infiltrate Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). There, he became a secretary with some role in keeping the books in Garvey's organization. His investigative

efforts led to the January 1922 arrest of Marcus Garvey for mail fraud.

In April 1923 James Wormley Jones abruptly resigned from the FBI at the age of 39. He went to work at the Pittsburgh Police Department as a detective until his retirement in 1958.

On December 11, 1958 James "Jack" Wormley Jones died in Dormont, Pennsylvania at the age of 74. He left behind his wife, children, grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. According to the FBI, there are no known photos of James available to the public although a photo of a different James W. Jones is being circulated on the internet.

JONES — Of 1106 Peermont Ave., Dormont, on Thursday, Dec. 11, 1958, at 6:15 p. m. James W. beloved husband of Ethel Peters Jones, in his 75th year; father of Mrs. Mildred Flanagan, John B. and Amor W. Jones; also 4 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild survive. Friends received at the E. B. Laughlin Funeral Home, 3310 W. Liberty Ave., So. Hills, where services will be held on Monday, Dec. 15 at 2 p. m. Visitations 2-4 and 7-9 p. m.