

John H. (1785-1859) and Walter R. Jones (1793-1855) *Cold Spring Harbor Entrepreneurs & Founders of Its Whaling Industry*

John Jones was the first member of the Jones family to come to Cold Spring Harbor in the early 1800s. He married into the prominent Hewlett family that had built a gristmill in the area in 1791. His sons, John H. and Walter R., were ambitious businessmen who created Cold Spring Harbor's industrial boom. They started out running a gristmill south of the harbor, adding woolen mills later. The younger John built a general store on the east side of the harbor. Although Walter was often in Manhattan due to his involvement in establishing and managing Atlantic Mutual Insurance, still a major force in marine insurance, his connections in both the shipbuilding and insurance industries became instrumental in the brothers' most ambitious Cold Spring Harbor venture.



Walter R. Jones (1793-1855), painting attributed to Shepard Alonzo Mount

With foreign competition undercutting their woolen mills, the Jones brothers decided to branch out into whaling. Markets for oil, candles, whalebone and other whale

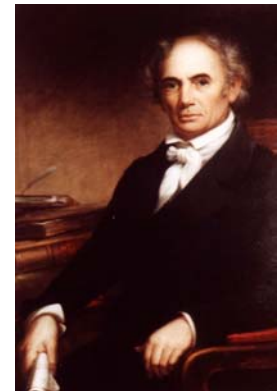


The Nathaniel P. Tallmadge sailed from Cold Spring Harbor 1843-1855. Painting by E.F. Tufnell.

products were burgeoning in the 1830s. In 1836, they invested \$20,000 to buy the old bark *Monmouth*. The next year they purchased the *Tuscarora*. The two ships did so well that in 1839 the brothers and their partners formed the Cold Spring Harbor Whaling Co., built docks and enlarged the fleet. John served as the managing agent of the company, while Walter used his Manhattan contacts to secure vessels and insurance. Most whaling-support operations and the homes of employees were located on the west side

of the harbor in Bungtown, named after the bungs, or plugs, used to seal the openings of barrels. The company continued to be modestly successful through the 1840s. By 1852, the whaling company owned nine vessels, including the *Sheffield*, the largest whaler to sail from Long Island. However, by then long voyages and dwindling profits were hurting marginal ports like Cold Spring Harbor.

Walter Jones died in 1855, followed by John four years later, leaving the local industry without a leader. When the last of the ships returned in 1862, the hamlet's whaling era was over after 37 voyages.



John H. Jones (1785-1859), painting attributed to Shepard Alonzo Mount.

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