

Lewis Sylvan Jones (1827-1898) was born in South Wales, and grew up in England, where he began life in the mines, and worked there for twenty-six years. In 1860 he came to America and settled near Scranton. He moved to Wilkes-Barre in 1864.



Jones worked as an inside foreman at the Hollenback and Kidder Slopes until 1871. Lewis was at the Empire Mines as an inside foreman until 1890.

An account of Jones' involvement in an 1874 fire-fight in the Empire Colliery's #5 Slope was related by writer and poet Susan Dickinson in several stories for the *New York Herald*. Her stories were entitled "The Blazing Coal Mine"

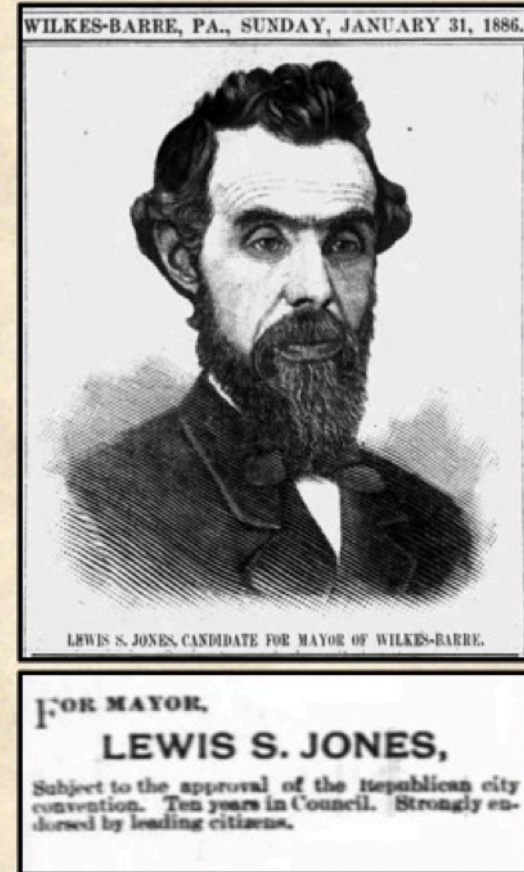
Efforts to fight the fire were unsuccessful for nearly a year, and finally using new techniques suggested by Lewis Jones, the fire was isolated and then stifled.





The Pennsylvania Middle District Inspector of Mines, A.I.M.E. Founder Thomas M. Williams, gave credit to Jones in the 1874 "Annual Report of Coal Mines." Williams wrote, "The new method was the sealing up of the mine...to exclude the atmospheric air from the fire, and the injection of steam into the enclosed territory. Mr. Lewis S. Jones, the mining boss, had been experimenting on the use of steam on the fire for a week or two previously, by letting it escape into the open fire — using it instead of water; its use in that manner was most beneficial." Williams also applauded the efforts of the management and staff of the Empire Mine, naming among others, both Jones and A.I.M.E. Founder Fredrick Parrish.

In retirement, Jones served three terms as Wilkes-Barre City Councilman and ran unsuccessfully for mayor in 1886.





One of the original “great objects” of the Institute was “The greater safety and welfare of those employed in these industries.”

In September 1869, sparks from the Avondale Mine ventilating furnace set fire to the timbers in the shaft, and the flames engulfed the breaker at the surface - the only exit for those underground. The fire collapsed the breaker into the shaft. It took two days of clearing debris and poisonous gases from the mine before rescuers reached the first victims. All told, the fire had asphyxiated 108 men and boys, and two of the men who attempted to rescue them. I’ve always thought that the deaths of the 110 men and boys were a key part of the impetus for establishing the Institute.

Lewis S. Jones was one of the men who attempted to rescue the victims of Avondale.





After the fire, miners from the area gathered to form rescue teams, especially Welshmen.

The disaster was called "A Welsh Tragedy" because 69 of the victims were of Welsh heritage, many of whom were recent arrivals from Wales.

Lewis Sylvan Jones, Wilkes-Barre Coal & Iron Co. Empire Shaft mine boss and one of the "original 23" of A.I.M.E. in 1871, was a volunteer foreman of one crew of the recovery party.

