



# Thomas Goode Jones: Race, Politics, and Justice in the New South

*Brent J. Aucoin*

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## **Thomas Goode Jones: Race, Politics, and Justice in the New South** Brent J. Aucoin

This first comprehensive biography of Thomas Goode Jones records the life of a man whose political career reflects the fascinating and unsettled history of Alabama and the Deep South at the turn of the twentieth century.

Often overshadowed by the pharaonic antebellum period, the Civil War, and the luminous heights of the civil rights movement, the deceptively placid decades at the turn of the century were, in fact, a period when southerners fiercely debated the course of the South's future. In tracing Jones's career, Brent J. Aucoin offers vivid accounts of the great events and trends of that pivotal period: Reconstruction, the birth of the "Solid South," the Populist Revolt, and the establishment of racial disenfranchisement and segregation.

Born in 1844, Jones served in the Confederate army and after the war identified as a conservative "Bourbon" Democrat. He served as Alabama's governor from 1890 to 1894 and as a federal judge from 1901 until his death in 1914. As a veteran, politician, and judge, Jones embodied numerous roles in the shifting political landscape of the South.

Jones was not, however, a reflexive conformist and sometimes pursued policies at odds with his party. Jones's rhetoric and support of African American civil rights were exceptional and earned him truculent criticism from unrepentant racist factions in his party. His support was so fearless that it inspired Booker T. Washington to recommend Jones to Republican president Theodore Roosevelt as a federal judge. On the bench, Jones garnered national attention for his efforts to end peonage and lynching, and yet he also enabled the establishment of legalized segregation in Alabama, confounding attempts easily to categorize him as an odious reactionary or fearless progressive.

A man who both represented and differed from his class, Thomas Goode Jones offers contemporary readers and scholars an ideal subject of study to understand a period of southern history that still shapes American life today.

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