

Charlotte A. Jones: Painter Extraordinaire

By Chloe Nehme

When it comes to visualizing the past, most may use photos to get a clear picture of the old days. However, there exists another way to snapshot a bygone era—the medium of painting. The past can come to life under an artist’s delicate hand, and we are able to view it through their perspective and opinion. After all, every stroke is intentional. Painting was a preferred hobby of this Fascinating Find’s subject: Ms. Charlotte A. Jones. Charlotte gives us an interesting look into life in the Worcester County, as well as an artist’s portrayal of Boylston Center.

The artist known as Charlotte, was actually born Lorette Amelia Jones, the daughter of Seth Colburn Jones and Louisa Weeman on 22 July 1850 in Dorchester, Massachusetts.¹ Seth Jones was part of the Unitarian Society and worked as a farmer. Lorette was the third child born to the couple, having been preceded in birth by her brothers Walter Weeman Jones, born in 1846 and Alfred Hathaway Jones, born in 1848.^{2,3} On 3 April 1857, they welcomed another daughter: Anna “Annie” Weeman Jones.⁴ The family resided in Malden, where Lorette would reside until the death of her father.

Lorette, known throughout life as ‘Charlotte’ or ‘Lottie’, was a graduate of Boston Normal Art School. By 1870, Lottie, was a poet who was employed as an art teacher at Malden High School.⁵ She also served as an officer for the Unitarian Church. In 1880, she resided with her cousin in Newark, New Jersey.⁶ Lorette never married, and would live with family her entire life. However, the same could not be said for her sister, Annie, who would become another character in today’s story.



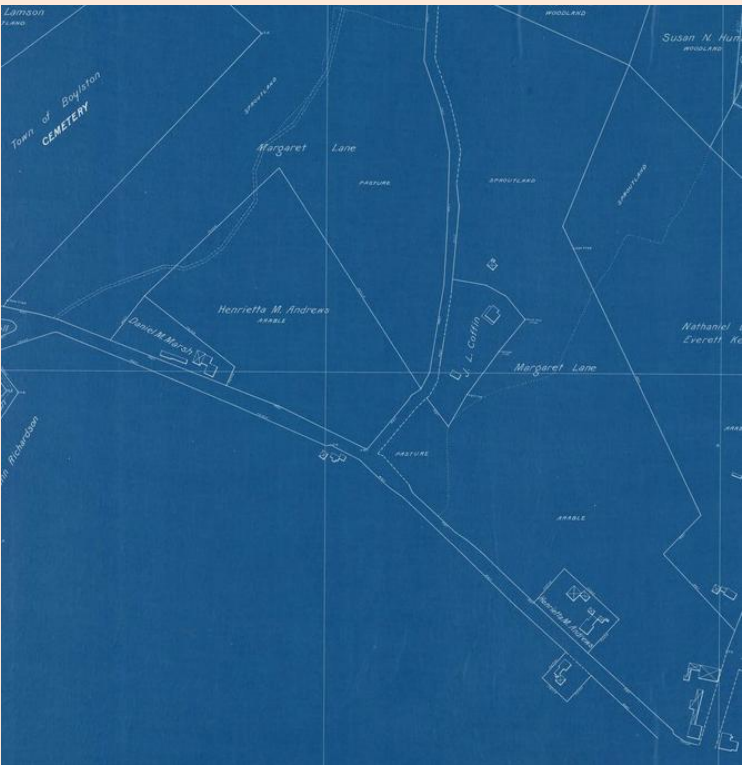
ANNIE COFFIN
SISTER OF CHARLOTTE JONES
Northboro Historical Society

Annie married Doctor John Lambert Coffin on 8 November 1880.⁷ John was born to Abel H. and Julia A. Coffin on 20 February 1852, in Boston and was a descendant of Tristram Coffin, an early settler of Massachusetts. Dr. Coffin graduated from Tufts College in 1871 and studied in London schools. He was a dermatologist and professor.^{8,9} Together, John and Annie had four children; Julia, born 1883; Louisa, born 1883; Bartlett, born 1887; and Holland, born 1890.^{10,11} By 1900, Annie’s family was living in Northborough on 22 Pleasant Street, property they had purchased in 1893.¹²

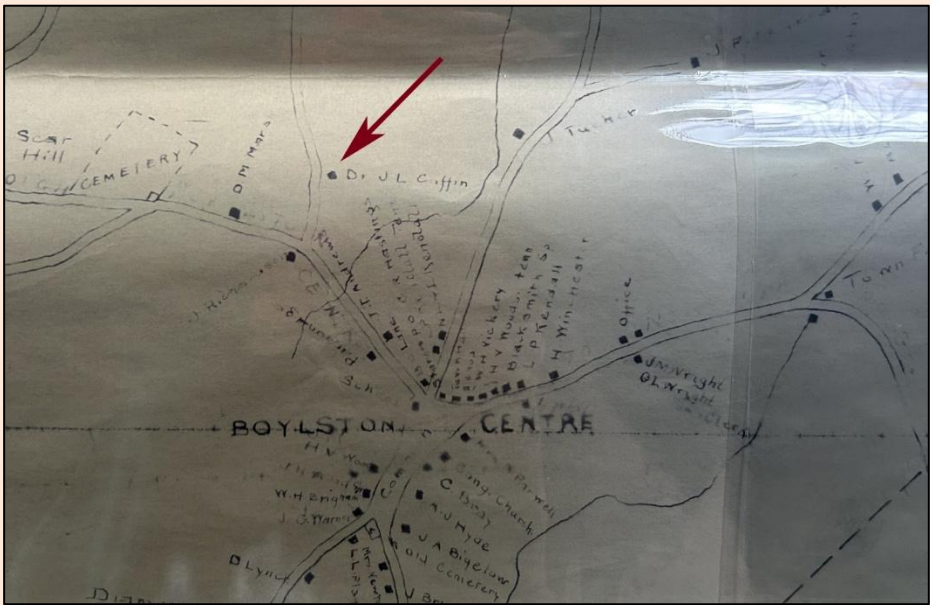
¹ Birth Records, Dorchester, Suffolk County, Massachusetts, 1830, digital image, familysearch.org
² United States Federal Census, Dorchester, Norfolk County, Massachusetts, 1850, digital image, familysearch.org
³ Mason Membership Card, Alfred Hathaway Jones of Malden, Massachusetts, digital image, ancestry.com
⁴ Birth Records, Malden, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, 1857, digital image, familysearch.org
⁵ Federal Census, Malden, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, 1870, digital image, familysearch.org
⁶ Federal Census, Newark, Essex County, New Jersey, 1880, digital image, familysearch.org
⁷ Marriage Records, Malden, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, 1880, digital image, familysearch.org
⁸ Birth Records, Boston, Suffolk County, Massachusetts, 1852, digital image, familysearch.org
⁹ Obituary of Dr. John L. Coffin of Northboro, Evening Gazette, March 16th 1935
¹⁰ Birth Records, Medford, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, 1883, digital image, v3 p167, familysearch.org
¹¹ Burial Records, Oak Grove Cemetery, Medford, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, 1888, findagrave.com
¹² United States Federal Census, Northborough, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1900, digital image, familysearch.org

Boylston Property

On 7 September 1894, Annie Coffin bought property from Margaret A. Lane of Boylston.¹³ The land was adjacent to Lane’s property, and is in Boylston Center, down Scar Hill Road and a road later named Kendall Place. In an 1856 H.F. Walling map revised in February 1896 to reflect the owners of property, the Town Clerk, George L. Wright, listed the said property under the ownership of ‘Dr. J.L. Coffin’ as did the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Metropolitan Water Works on Sheet 168 of the Nashua Reservoir Land Survey of June 1896.



**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
METROPOLITAN WATER WORKS LAND SURVEY**
CROPPED FROM SHEET 168
JUNE 1896
DIGITAL COMMONWEALTH.ORG



BOYLSTON CENTER MAP
*Cropped from 1856 H.F. Walling Map as annotated by George Wright, Town Clerk of Boylston
February 1896
Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc. Collections*

After the death of her father in 1901, Lottie, moved into the Coffin home at 22 Pleasant Street in Northborough.^{14,15} It is from these properties where Lottie would enjoy her hobby of painting.

¹³ Deed, Massachusetts Land Records, Worcester County, masslandrecords.com
¹⁴ Seth Jones Memorial, Forest Dale Cemetery, Malden, Middlesex County, Section 28 Lot 210, findagrave.com
¹⁵ Federal Census, Northborough, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1910, digital image, familysearch.org

In an article, Dorrie Coffin Prouty, the daughter of Holland Coffin, reminisced about the summer mornings she spent with Charlotte in her painting studio.¹⁶

“She talks of summer mornings passed in Aunt Charlotte’s painting studio on the third floor of the old house... “We didn’t talk much, but I loved to watch... We left the hot room and the paint smells, descended the attic stairs, then to the first floor where Aunt tried to solve the daily newspaper crossword puzzle and I found another member of the family to visit.”

The Boylston Historical Society has two paintings by Charlotte, painted from vantage point of the Coffin property on Scar Hill Road, both painted around the 1910s. Both are sketches that were painted over with watercolor. The first one BHSM Collection #1973.48 is depiction of Boylston Center. The view from the property is not blocked by forest as it is today, giving as a clear view of the buildings. Can you guess which ones they are? The red chimney protruding out of the bushes just to the right of center would be the Hastings Tavern. Right behind the other red building, the greyish blue building would be the Town Hall (today’s Historic Town Hall, the home of the Boylston Historical Society!). Behind the Town Hall, we are seeking to determine if the structure in the distance is one of the engineering benchmark control points for the Wachusett’s Reservoir construction or a windmill for pumping water? Please email us at info@boylstonhistory.org, if you have any knowledge about this structure. The steeple shown in the center background would have been on the Third Meeting House, the current day location of the Boylston Congregational Church!



BOYLSTON CENTER
PAINTING BY CHARLOTTE JONES
#1973.48

Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc. Collections

¹⁶ A Memoir by Dorrie Coffin Prouty, “*That’s Another Story*”, Northborough Historical Society, northboroughhistoricalsociety.org

The second painting BHSM Collection #1973.48.a is a view of a cottage on the Coffin property built by John Coffin. The color of the leaves implies an autumn setting, or perhaps creative liberty by the artist.



COFFIN HOME
PAINTING BY CHARLOTTE JONES

#1973.48.a

Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc. Collections

Charlotte kept up her artistic talent even as she grew older. On 26 May 1926 she won a prize for an original poem.¹⁷ Charlotte Jones passed away peacefully on 18 November 1944, at the age 94 years in the Coffin home.¹⁸ She was preceded by her brother-in-law John Coffin, who passed away in 1935. Her sister Annie passed away 7 years after Charlotte in 1951.¹⁹ However, Charlotte's paintings give us a nice picture of the quaint village life of Boylston in the early 20th century; the ideal peaceful rural setting for any artist.

¹⁷ "Northboro, Miss Charlotte Jones Awarded First Prize", Evening Gazette, May 27th, 1926

¹⁸ Obituary Charlotte A. Jones of Northboro, Boston Globe, Sunday November 19th, 1944

¹⁹ Annie W. Jones Coffin memorial, Oak Grove Cemetery, Medford, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, findagrave.com

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Archives Collections, Boylston Historical Society & Museum, Inc., Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts

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