

ARKANSAS BLACK HISTORY



Image courtesy of Encyclopedia of Arkansas

Scipio A. Jones was born to an enslaved mother in Tulip, Arkansas (Dallas County), but from these humble beginnings went on to become one of the most prominent lawyers in Little Rock (Pulaski County). Jones studied at what is now known as Philander Smith College in Little Rock and Shorter College in North Little Rock (Pulaski County), where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1885. He passed the bar exam in 1889 while working as a teacher. Jones practiced law for the rest of his life, with his most famous case defending the 12 Black men arrested during the 1919 Elaine Massacre. In a previous and poorly executed trial, all 12 had been convicted and sentenced to death. Jones worked alongside the NAACP for the release of these men, proving their trial was unjust, lacking eyewitnesses and clear evidence. By January 1925, all 12 of these men had been released. As a leader in the Black community, Jones would continue using his legal skills to defend the civil rights of African Americans in Arkansas until his death in 1943.



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