

William S. Jenkins

1872 Kansas Commander

1872, honors transferred

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William S. Jenkins was born, April 13, 1834, in Zanesville, Ohio. His father, Abednego W. Jenkins, is still living (1879) and doing business at Indianapolis, Indiana. His mother, Sarah Barbee, died when he was but eight years old. At the age of twelve, young Jenkins started in the world to master his own destiny, the only instruction he ever received in school having been obtained previous to that time. While pursuing his various avocations, he applied himself to study, took lessons as he could get them, and educated himself.

His first business was as a boy in a grocery store at Indianapolis, where he acted as clerk for about one year, when he went to learn the trade of a tailor, at which he served an apprenticeship of three years. On emerging from his apprenticeship he opened a merchant tailoring establishment at Shelbyville, Indiana, which he continued for about one year. His health being indifferent, he went to Indianapolis and entered his father's dry-goods store as a clerk. Here he remained a few years. In 1856 he immigrated to Nebraska. Staying a short time in Omaha, he located in a town



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just starting, sixty miles above Omaha, on the Missouri River, called Decatur, which he aided in building up. He pre-empted a quarter section of land adjoining the town, and engaged in dealing in city lots and real estate generally. In the spring of 1857 he moved to Leavenworth, Kansas, and began dealing in stock and merchandising, which he continued until 1861.

He then sold out his stock of goods and commenced enlisting troops for the 7th Kansas Cavalry, and was mustered into the service as captain of Co. C, September 5, 1861. May 27, 1863, he was advanced to be major, and March 21, 1864, to be lieutenant colonel. For a large portion of the time, after his promotion to the latter rank, he had entire command of the regiment, his colonel having been assigned to the command of a brigade. The regiment was in active service in Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee. He participated in the battles of Morristown, Guntown, Okolona, Germantown, Jonesboro, Tupelo, Rienzi, Coffeyville, Holly Springs, Florence, Corinth, Ripley, and, in fact, all the numerous engagements of that celebrated regiment. He was severely wounded at the battle of Ripley Mississippi, while in command of the skirmish line of the brigade, December 4, 1863. He was mustered out, to take effect October 11, 1864, by reason of the expiration of his term of enlistment.

He returned to Leavenworth and engaged in mercantile business, which employed his time until 1868. He then disposed of his goods and entered into the real-estate business in that city, continuing it until February 1871. In 1869 he was elected to succeed Hon. Stephen A. Cobb as department commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, holding the position until he resigned, in consequence of his removal to Washington, in 1875, having represented the State in the national encampment at Cleveland, Ohio, in 1871, and at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1873. In 1868 he was a member of the Leavenworth city council.

In 1871 he removed to Wichita, Kansas, and in July of the same year was appointed by President Grant, register of the United States land office for the Arkansas land district, the office at Wichita, a position he held three years. In 1874 he entered into the practice of law in the trial of land cases before the local land office and the departments at Washington, and in December of that year was admitted to practice in the several courts of Kansas. In January 1875, he removed to Washington City and entered into partnership with W. K. Mendenhall, devoting himself to practice before the several departments of the United States government. He remained in Washington until July 1, 1876, when, having visited the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, he returned to Wichita and continued in the practice in the land departments.

He also devoted a portion of his time to the cultivation of a large farm near Wichita, which he had previously improved. There he remained until December 1877, when he removed to Kansas City and purchased the Leland Hotel, the only first-class public house in West Kansas City, situated immediately opposite the new Union depot, where he is doing a large and prosperous business. He is an Odd Fellow, a member of Leavenworth Lodge, No. 2, and has passed through the chairs and served as Noble Grand of his lodge.

He was married at St. Louis, Missouri, November 19, 1862, to Miss Laura Gertrude Weibling, daughter of William G. Weibling, a soldier of the war of 1812. They have had five children, only two of whom, Clara L. and Laura Gertrude, survive.

Colonel Jenkins occupies the position of a man of the strictest integrity, and of good business qualities as well as generous impulses. He is a good speaker, a thorough organizer and a liberal contributor to every good work.