

James Jones and the Handy Writers' Colony

George Hendrick, Helen Howe, and Don Sackrider

“[This book is a] valuable folk history of the Marshall, Illinois, Handy Colony for writers and of its founders, Lowney and Harry Handy. . . . The story of Lowney Handy and the Marshall colony for writers, while often forgotten now, was in fact an important moment in Illinois, Midwestern, and American literary history.”—**James R. Giles**, author of *The Naturalistic Inner-City Novel in America*

This story of James Jones and the Handy Colony is a popular account of one of the most unusual writing colonies ever established in the United States.

Between his Army enlistment in 1939 and the wound that sent him to a Memphis hospital in 1943, James Jones suffered the loss of both his mother and his father, a victim of suicide. Psychologically precarious, Jones drank heavily, often brawling in bars. Concerned about his erratic behavior, his aunt took Jones to meet Lowney Handy, who took virtual control of his life, securing his discharge from the army and, with her husband Harry, inviting him into their home. Lowney became Jones's writing teacher—and his lover.

An aspiring but unpublished writer when she began the Handy Writers' Colony in Marshall, Illinois, Lowney Handy developed a reputation as an inspirational teacher of writing. Her husband, an oil refinery executive from nearby Robinson, supported her in this endeavor, which proved quite successful. The Handy colony achieved national attention through the success of Jones, its most celebrated member and the author of *From Here to Eternity* and *Some Came Running*.

George Hendrick, who served as first president of the James Jones Literary Society, edited *To Reach Eternity: The Letters of James Jones*.

Helen Howe taught American literature, composition, and creative writing at Lincoln Trail College in Robinson, Illinois, before retirement. Her husband, Tinks, was a childhood friend of James Jones.

Don Sackrider, a retired airline captain, was born in Robinson, Illinois, and became the second student in the Handy Colony after James Jones.

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