



This appeared in the Plattsburgh Sentinel in 1886 -

Mr. Jonas Maurice, a veteran of the late war, but who is now incapacitated for labor, has opened a stand near the post office, on Custom House Park, where he has for sale peanuts, oranges, cigars, etc. Remember him, kind readers.

Jonas Maurice was a “character” well-known in Plattsburgh at the end of the 19th Century and must have been a favorite of the Sentinel’s editor because there are many snippets about Jonas in the paper. He made a living by various occupations. For instance, in 1884, he made about \$30 from the Village of Plattsburgh for lamp-lighting and other jobs for which he was paid out of the General Fund. He also helped look after Riverside Cemetery, was a grave digger and was called on by the coroner. For these services, he was paid out of the Cemetery Fund. Jonas was known as the “autocrat of the cemetery” and was said to have known “the history of the occupants, and their moral fitness for earth, heaven and that other place”. In 1868 he became the “general bill poster” for Clinton County. He had a wagon from which he would take orders and sell posters. In 1897, he was presented with a silver medal by the State of New York for his life

saving efforts on Lake Champlain and the Saranac River. Fifty-one lives were saved and many bodies were recovered by him. He was often called upon to help in water searches as far away as Saranac Lake for drowning victims because of his expertise in diving. Steamer companies hired him to find bodies that had fallen off their boats.

After the Battle of San Jan Hill, that took place on July 2, 1898, Jonas remembered his friends about town with wooden cubes suitable for watch charms. The wood was taken from a house on the famous hill. He got the wood from Lieut. Reeves, of the 15th Infantry, formerly stationed in Cuba, who had a table made from timber taken from the historic building. The table was broken in transit and manufactured into smaller articles. The fragments left over were given to Jason and he turned these tiny cubes into souvenirs. He presented of them to people in the Sentinel's office.

That he was held in high esteem by the populace of Plattsburgh is shown in the presentation of a silver tea service to him by **D.S. Binning** and **Moses Bourdon** in 1898. Maurice, decided he could not afford it at that time because he was so sorely afflicted by rheumatism, so they decided to raffle it off in window of Larkin's Drug Store. The raffle realized a substantial sum for the gallant old soldier.

Maurice loved politics and was a Democrat until Cleveland's reelection as governor. He, along with other Democrats, switched to the Republican party. He spoke at many political rallies and was often elected to office at party meetings. On November 7, 1900, he was stricken when coming home from watching the election results at the Town Hall, in District 4 and died at his home on Platt Street, at 9 pm. He was survived by his wife, maiden name **Ashline**, and son **William Maurice**. His funeral was attended by many members of his G.A.R brotherhood and members of several fire companies of which he was a member. He is buried in St. Peter's Cemetery and his cemetery records say that he was with the 192nd New York Infantry.

In 1931, the following piece appeared in the Plattsburgh Daily Press. It looks like this editor didn't appreciate Jonas Maurice as his predecessors.

One local celebrity who was known to everyone was Jonas Maurice. Jonas posed as a Civil War veteran and did odd jobs of bill posting. Work had no terror for him but he preferred to leave it to those who were more ambitious. He is said to have taken an odd job on occasions and then turned the work and the pay over to a subordinate whom he sat and watched perform the manual part, of the labor. He always turned the money over to his assistant getting his own pay out of Ills philosophy that it was "worth something to be boss." Although Jonas could neither read nor write he claimed to be a printer, reaching that distinction through turning the crank once a week on an old-fashioned flatbed cylinder press. He made good on one claim which was that of being the champion swimmer. This was a good thing in its way as it afforded Jonas an opportunity for an occasional bath.