

Moses A. DuMass

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Moses Aaron DuMass (Other spelling variations of the family name include “DuMas” and “DeMass”) was born May 28, 1836, in the town of Sterling, NY. His ancestry can be traced to the time when the Colonies sought their independence from England.

Pierre (Peter) DuMas, grandfather of Moses, served in the French Navy prior to coming to America in 1778. He is also said to have known LaFayette, both men from France who fought in the American Revolution. Pierre settled in the town of Sterling in 1805 and is credited with being the town’s first settler.

Jasper DuMass, son of Pierre and father of Moses, was strongly opposed to slavery and therefore, was an active member of the Abolitionist Movement. His home was often a resting place for runaway slaves.

Jasper DuMass moved to Hannibal, Oswego Co., NY, in April 1842, when Moses was a boy. Moses received a limited education in the district school, worked on the farm and did carpentry work with his father during the summer season. He engaged in lumbering the last few winters before he was twenty-one years of age. He

then went to Hillsdale, Michigan, for three years laboring on a farm and at his trade.

Moses then returned to Hannibal and was engaged in carpentering until the outbreak of the Civil War.

On August 8, 1861, he enlisted in Co. C of the 44th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment. The regiment was mustered into service in October 1861, and left for the seat of war. The regiment spent the winter of 1861-62 near Hall's Hill.

In the spring of 1862, the regiment was moved to Old Point Comfort and afterward took part in the siege of Yorktown. On the evacuation of that place, the 44th occupied it for a few weeks. During the siege of Yorktown, Moses was detached to carpenter work, and was engaged in the construction of signal towers. The regiment was then ordered to

become part of the advance army and went to Hanover Court house. There in an engagement with the Confederates on May 27, 1862, Moses was wounded in his right

leg just above the knee, the ball passing through the limb. He saw that the flow of blood was such that he would soon die if nothing was done. Having no bandages, he thrust his thumb into the wound, thereby stopping the bleeding, and after a few hours, it was hastily bandaged. The next day, he was returned some sixteen miles to camp in a horse d r a w n



Moses Aaron DuMas
1836 - 1906

ambulance.

The following week, he developed

a severe infection in the injured leg. He was told by the medical director that he could not live over three days, and asked what messages he wanted sent home. Moses asked if there was any hope of life if the limb were amputated. The director's reply was that due to the great loss of blood, there was only one chance in a thousand of surviving the operation. Moses expressed his desire to take the chance so the operation was performed. He was cared for like a babe by the nurses for a number of weeks. On July 4, 1862, the Yorktown Hospital was evacuated, the Confederates having driven the Union forces back. He was placed on an ocean steamer and taken to Portsmouth Grove, RI, where he was discharged on October 16, 1862. He returned home and eventually was able to walk with the aid of crutches.

Although disabled, he was ambitious and actively engaged in business. He is listed in the 1866-67 directory of early Hannibal enterprises as a retailer of sewing machines. He also carried on a small dairy using a "Cooley Creamer", making and marketing his own butter.

Moses was a very religious man and an independent thinker. He was deeply involved in the Temperance Movement of that time. He allied himself with the Prohibition Party serving as a member of the Oswego County Committee where for several years he held various positions such as Secretary, Treasurer and Chairman. He was also Hannibal Town Tax Collector for two years.

Moses died September 19, 1906 and is buried in the Hannibal Village Cemetery near his parents.



Civil War Surgeon's Kit,
Wikimedia Commons
Author: Quadell

Written by Lowell C. Newvine, Hannibal Town and Village Historian.

Questions:

1. Why do you think there are so many variations of spelling the name: DuMass?
2. What did Moses do prior to the Civil War?
3. On a map, locate the areas in which Moses fought during the Civil War.
4. How did Moses get injured?
5. What did the doctors think about his injuries?
6. What did Moses do to make a living after the Civil War? How is it different from his previous carpentry work?
7. There are many clues in this article as to the type of person Moses A. DuMass was over the course of his life. From those clues, write a paragraph that explains the type of person he was throughout his life.
8. If you could ask him a question about the Civil War, what would it be?
9. What difficulties do you think he may have endured as a result of the loss of his leg?