

Jonas, Charles Andrew ^[1]

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by Mary A. Baker, 1988

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Charles Andrew Jonas, attorney, state senator and representative, congressman, and Republican party ^[2] official, was born near Lincolnton, the son of Cephas and Martha Scronce Jonas who were transient tenant farmers. He attended public schools in Lincoln and Cleveland counties; and, after completing high school, he taught in the Lincoln County ^[3] public schools for six years.

In debt throughout his school career, Jonas worked at small jobs to pay his way through The University of North Carolina ^[4]. During his freshman year he won the Dialectic Society debaters' medal and as a junior was awarded the Intersociety medal for best debater. Finishing a four-year curriculum in three years, Jonas was graduated with honors in 1902 and several months later married Rosa Petrie, also from Lincoln County. He became a member of the board of trustees of The University of North Carolina in 1917.

After graduation, Jonas taught in the Winston public schools for one year. Between 1903 and 1906 he was the first superintendent of graded schools in Mount Holly and then headed a boarding school in Dallas. During these four years, he completed work at The University of North Carolina Law School, was admitted to the bar, and began a practice in Lincolnton in 1906.

Jonas was instrumental in founding the *Lincoln Times*, a newspaper first published in 1903, and later became its editor. He was postmaster of Lincolnton from 1907 to 1910 and then briefly city attorney. He first ran for elective office in 1912 as the Republican candidate for state senator in Lincoln and Catawba counties, but lost the race by a large number of votes.

On his second try for the state senate in 1914, Jonas was successful and was reelected in 1916. In 1918, 1926, and 1934 he was elected to separate terms in the state house of representatives. From 1921 to 1925 he was assistant district attorney for the Western District of North Carolina. Beginning in 1927 he served for fifteen years as Republican national committeeman, and he was a delegate from North Carolina to four Republican National conventions (1916, 1928–36). In 1928 Jonas was elected to a single term in Congress, serving from 1929 to 1931. He was defeated in the 1930, 1932, and 1942 congressional elections.

Following his defeat in 1930, Jonas was named U.S. district attorney for Western North Carolina and held the post for one year under recess appointment. Just before his appointment, Jonas had alleged that proper investigations had not been made into possibly fraudulent North Carolina elections. As a result, Senator Cameron A. Morrison ^[5], a North Carolina Democrat, objected to the nomination and Jonas's appointment was rejected.

Jonas was an outstanding Republican from a Democratic state. While in the North Carolina Senate, he introduced a woman suffrage ^[6] bill applying only to school elections. In the senate in 1917 and again in the house in 1935, he introduced bills for better enforcement of prohibition ^[7] laws in North Carolina. Jonas was active in securing passage of the congressional bill to establish the Kings Mountain Military Park. He also helped consolidate the North Carolina and South Carolina postal accounting offices, establishing the new location in his own district. In addition, he helped obtain appropriations of approximately \$500,000 for a postal annex in Charlotte. He was a vocal advocate of tariff protection.

After several years of failing health, Jonas died in Charlotte. His wife died in 1962. Jonas was survived by three children: Celeste Gibson; Charles R. ^[8], a congressman; and Donald. He was buried in Hollybrook Cemetery at the First Methodist Church, Lincolnton.

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