

Who is Paul Ross, Mr. Feb. 5th?

Baseball fans from a certain recent era remember “Mr. October,” nickname for Reggie Jackson. For years now, a gravestone has stood at the West Hill Cemetery in Barre Town, Vermont. The marble tablet had been broken off and the remaining top section set back into the soil. To all that came to visit, he remained “Paul Ross, died Feb. 5,” with no year or age in sight. Given the age of the adjacent tablets, no one is around that would have known Paul Ross and most anyone who reported on him only had the day of his death, but not the year; kind of like not having a last name, hence, he is Mr. Feb. 5th. Then, it happened; the tablet fell over again. When the sexton stood the stub up, the year “1847” magically appeared.



Armed with new information, a search began to find out more about Paul. The local historical publications did not have anything about him. Casting a more widely spread net, a Paul Ross who died on a Feb 5 could be found on a well-known genealogy pay to play website with enough information to provide some hints as to his identity.



The remnants of Paul’s stone are located at the right hand end of a string of eight Ross family monuments. Ross Row is shown in the photo here and from the left end nearest the road, there are Jane, Marcia, and “An infant” Ross, all children of Stephen and Charlotte Ross, next are Charlotte Ross, and lastly, Stephen Ross. There is a space, perhaps room for two or three more graves, then three more Ross stones, Tryphena Ross, Olive Ross, and finally, Paul Ross. Tryphena’s stone had been broken off and eventually replaced with a simple granite tablet; research showed her as a wife of Paul

Ross. Tryphena lived until 1853 and she died in March of that year at the age of 75 years. Olive’s slate stone can still be read, she would be Paul’s first wife; she passed away in 1800 at the age of 26 years.

Concerning Paul’s wives, what if Olive Moore Ross turned out to be Olive Mower? The Mower Family History has a biography of Thomas⁽⁴⁾ Mower and his wife, Mary Kenney. Born in Lynn, Massachusetts, his mother moved the family to Topsfield, Mass. at the death of Thomas⁽³⁾. Young Thomas grew up there and married Mary. In 1788, he moved his family to the wilds of Jaffrey, New Hampshire after purchasing Lots 11 and 12 in the 10th range. The couple had eleven children, the last being Olive, born in 1775, about the same time as Paul Ross. No further information is given concerning Olive, but a search of the Topsfield vital records does show Olive, daughter of Thomas, baptized in 1775. He mentioned his daughter Olive in his will,



leaving her 10 pounds upon her wedding or in two years after Thomas's death. Olive would have been about 13 when her father died.

Coincidentally, Ross Row is in the West Hill Cemetery, formerly known as the Mower Cemetery and purchased in 1804 from yet another Thomas Mower. The old Barre land records, Book 3, page 63, have the transfer of land from Thomas Mower to the selectmen of Barre, a parcel of land to be used for a burying ground. In the description of the parcel's location are the words, "... the west line of said lot at the

south side of the road that leads to Paul Ross, thence ..." Thomas Mower, 1768 – 1850, is also buried at what is now West Hill Cemetery. Thomas Mower, Jr. can be found in the same family tree as Olive Ross's older brother. There is apparently an error in the date of Thomas's death, his gravestone shows March 2, 1851, however, his death notice appeared in the Vermont Chronicle of Bellows Falls on April 2, 1850, giving his death date as March 2, 1850.

Among the children of Paul and Olive is Paul Moore Ross, his birth took place on the same day as the death of his mother. There is a birth index card for Paul *Mower* Ross, born 1800, Oct. 15, but the index card for his burial reads Paul *Moore* Ross, born 1800, died 1870 with his burial in East Poultney, VT. Also, in a biography of Charlotte Moseley Dewey, wife of Paul Moore Ross, he is identified as the son of Paul and Olive (Mower) Ross.

Three years after the death of Olive, in 1803, another index card showed Paul Ross and Triphena Chandler married on Sept. 4th, in Barre by R. Paddock, Justice of the Peace. No details came to the surface about Tryphena. A few families named Chandler did live in Barre, Massachusetts, other records place Paul Ross in Barre, Mass. for a time.

Paul and Tryphena had at least four sons, among them is Stephen Chandler Ross (1806 – 1884) and his death index card stated he worked as a cooper in Barre, although his death notice in the Argus and Patriot newspaper referred to him as a farmer. His wife, Charlotte Browning (1805 – 1881) provides yet another link to the Ross family and to the legends of Barre. She is the daughter of Asaph and Lucy Whitney Sherman of Barre; Jonathan Sherman, Lucy's brother, won the legendary fist fight of September 3, 1793 held to change the name of Wildersburg, to what is now



Barre. There is one other connection between Stephen and Charlotte's families, Stephen's father Paul's youngest sister Persis married Thomas Browning, Charlotte's oldest brother.

The Universalist Watchman, a newspaper formerly published in Montpelier, Vermont, carried a death notice for Paul Ross on Friday, Feb. 19, 1847 on Page 7 with a simple headline:

“Died.” In Barre, Feb. 5, Mr. Paul Ross, aged 72 years. The deceased was one of the excellent of the earth, a man of most amiable disposition and fine feelings. It is said of him, by those who have been his neighbors for many years, that they have never known of his ever having been the least ruffled in his temper or murmuring in spirit. His life was one of great serenity, living in peace with all men, and exhibiting the fruits of a strong faith in God and the Gospel of his Son. He was a Universalist in principle and practice, and died as he had lived, calm and resigned to the will of his Father in heaven. May the aged widow and sorrowing children, and all who mourn his departure, be strengthened and consoled by the consolations of God and his truth, which are great and sufficient for them.

Using the date of the notice and the age given for Paul, the year of his birth would have been 1775, but the history of Jaffrey, New Hampshire showed 1775 to be the year given for the birth of his oldest sister, Betsey. With that in mind, although not buried in Vermont, one way to follow Paul Ross is to investigate his father, Abraham Ross. One source set Abraham's birth as 1750 in Sudbury, Mass. At the death of Abraham's father, the Ross family removed to Bolton, Mass. where Abraham lived until his marriage to Persis Welch about 1774. Somewhere around 1777, the Ross family went to Jaffrey, New Hampshire. In the History of Jaffrey, their son Paul Ross is found on a list of soldiers dated 1795. With his parents in Jaffrey in 1777, perhaps New Hampshire is the place of Paul's birth, the reference to his time as a soldier there shows his residency and possible service at age 18 years.

The reference to our Paul Ross in the history of Jaffrey also provided a glimpse of the local militia. The year 1795 is about half way between the end of the Revolutionary War and the start of the War of 1812. Tensions between the US and Great Britain remained high both on land and on the sea. Anticipating war, the US congress made several provisions to be ready, including the organization of the local militias. Paul signed up for the service. The citizens voted to pay the soldiers three pounds per month in addition to the pay they would receive from congress should they be called to active service. Once a soldier had all the equipment required, he could get a certificate from his commander and receive an additional two dollars.

Abraham Ross also had a part in Vermont's history. He can be found in the New Hampshire State Papers, volume 15, pages 216-217, as a private in Capt. Salmon Stone's Company. The company belonged to Colonel Nichol's Regiment of General Stark's Brigade. They marched from Rindge, NH in July 1777 and joined the Continental Army at Bennington and Stillwater and fought at Bennington on August 16, 1777.

The genealogy section of the Jaffrey history has the Ross family listed on page 449. Abraham is listed as coming from Bolton and lists seven of his children but does not include any places of birth. Paul is shown between his older sister Betsey, born 1775, and younger brother Abraham, born 1781. In the remarks, it is stated Paul moved on to Barre, Mass. Also listed, is Persis Ross, no birth date given, she married Jan. 22, 1812 to Thomas Browning of Barre, Vermont. A further check of Bolton records does not contain a reference to Paul Ross, nor do the records for Sudbury. Abraham remained in Jaffrey until his death in 1841 at the age of 91 years and is probably in an unmarked grave in that town.

In the photo shown here of the Paul Ross stone, the year is clearly visible as 1847. The stem has been set back in the ground for now and currently sits on another piece of the tablet located beneath the surface. Two other features can be seen in the photo as well. In the lower right of the tablet, just above the year box, is a more or less horizontal brownish colored line. Upon further inspection, the line turned out to be soil which probably defined the soil level that hid the year from view for so long. Less apparent on the lower left is an arc shaped line above the grass and the brownish portion of the tablet. This would be a new crack and the tablet is sure to break again.



So with the magic year “1847” appearing on the stem of the broken marble tablet, research has made it possible to dance all around Mr. Feb. 5th. On the other hand, much more is known about Mr. Paul Ross and his family now residing in the West Hill Cemetery. We now know he came up through Massachusetts into Vermont including the reference in the Jaffrey, New Hampshire history that he lived in Barre, Mass. for a while. We know he lived on West Hill through the cemetery deed. He undoubtedly lined up behind his wife’s uncle Jonathan when he went up against Joseph Thompson of Holden, Mass. to earn the right to rename Wildersburg to Barre. Paul and his son Stephen, along with their allied families, contributed to the early history of Barre, Vermont.

