

Biography: Moses Andrew Ross

Moses Andrew Ross was born near Masontown, Fayette County, Pennsylvania on September 14, 1810 to Robert and Elizabeth Virginia (LeMaire) Ross.

Robert was the son of Robert Ross, a Revolutionary War Veteran and participant in the Whiskey Rebellion. Robert Ross the Elder narrowly escaped arrest when he was mistaken for a hired hand on his farm.

Elizabeth Virginia was born on the Ship "Virginia" during its passage from France to the United States. Her father Nicholas LaMaire, a government official, and her mother Elizabeth (Monche) LeMaire left France to escape the horrors of the French Revolution.

Elizabeth LeMaire died at the age of 19 years only three months after the birth of her son Moses Andrew Ross. The bereaved father placed his infant son in the home of his parents, Robert and Dorcas (Andrews) Ross and left Pennsylvania for the state of Indiana. Robert enlisted in the army during the war of 1812 and had a War Record that included severe fighting. Later he enlisted where he remained until January 9, 1822 when he died in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Moses Andrew was reared in a home that included his Grandparents and Aunts and Uncles, as few of the children married early. In a genealogy written by Moses in November 1883, he described his early family life as "the better class of Scotch Irish who were generous to a fault with plenty of good cheer and hospitality. They were farmers who had a comfortable living and all members of the Family sat around the board or fireside with equal rights and enjoyment subject, of course, to the rules of propriety and good-breeding".

It appears that Moses' school training consisted of a short period of formal instruction. He probably had some schooling in the local neighborhood. His Grandfather's will in 1823 provided that money be set aside for him to attend school for six months.

In March 1828 when Moses was 17 years old he left the home of his Grandparents, his cash assets amounting to fifty cents and his Grandmother accompanying him a few miles on his way. His first position was in a store in Somerfield, Pennsylvania then called "Smythfield", as a clerk, after which he went to Selbysport, Maryland. In 1832, he located to Petersburg (now Addison) Pennsylvania, where he entered into a partnership with John Darrell. In 1833 he became the sole owner of a General Store, beginning a career in the Merchantile Business which covered a period of sixty years.

Moses A. Ross kept a diary from March 13, 1828 when he came to Somerfield until his death. He recorded local Marriages and Deaths, as well as other items of interest. On March 18, 1831 he wrote that the weather was clear, that there was an election for Township Office and that there were two or three fights. On October 11, 1835 he noted that he saw his first view of Halley's Comet, and on January 4, 1839 he wrote that he signed a petition recommending William Condon as a suitable person to keep "Gate No. 1", on the Cumberland Road (Toll House).

In 1833, Moses married Diana Mitchell, a daughter of John Mitchell and Granddaughter of the Pioneer Andrew Friend, of Turkeyfoot. Moses and Diana had two children, Cornelia and Orville. Diana died when the children were young and sometime thereafter, Moses married Diana's sister Cynthia. They were married for forty-seven years and had nine children: Andrew Marshall, Felicia, Robert, Sophia, Mansfield, Hiram, George, Frank and Mary Ida. They were also the parents of two other children who died in infancy.

Moses began to build a home to accommodate his growing family circa 1842. It took about four years to build the large brick home located next to the Ross Store. It was reported that the workmen were skilled men from Cumberland and that much of the material was also brought from a long distance. The bricks were burnt specially in the neighborhood, reportedly behind the Ross property on the farm property of Robert Hunter.

Moses was always a devoted student and deeply interested in education. On May 30, 1837 he noted in his diary that he took up surveying and on May 24, 1839 at the age of 28 years, he recorded that he "commenced the study

of English Grammar". He was the first director elected under the School System at that time and served for thirty years. He was an avid reader and had a large and complete Library.

Moses A. Ross was a devout Methodist, becoming a member of the Addison Methodist Episcopal Church in 1839. Over the years he served in all the lay offices of the church and for fifty years was an active worker in the Sunday School. He was very generous in his support of the Church in its enterprises and charities.

In politics he was a Whig until that party went out of existence, then and ever after, he was Republican. He served as clerk of the Township, Justice of the Peace, Magistrate, Postmaster, Revenue Commissioner, Overseer of the poor and in later years, as a member of the State Legislature.

He was a member of the "Sons of Temperance" both in the Local Chapter and in the National Division. It was said that he never touched Liquor or Tobacco in any form. He felt that he lost his nomination for Associate Judge, "by the influence of the liquor sellers who feared my temperance views".

Moses associated himself with the local Militia as early as October 11, 1828 when he noted in his diary, "Addison Blues Muster in Petersburg". Although he never saw active service, in 1845 when the Petersburg Infantry was organized, he was elected Captain of the Militia. Through successive promotions gained the rank of Brigade General in 1849. He was universally known as General Ross and attended inspection musters throughout Somerset County.

In addition, Moses became an experienced traveler. In the early years, he visited Masontown regularly to see family and friends. He made two trips every year to Baltimore to purchase goods for his store. He attended religious conferences in Uniontown, Brownsville and Wheeling, West Virginia. He visited the Court House and Water Works in Pittsburg.

On February 2, 1835 he wrote that he visited Somerset for the first time. There were many successive trips to attend school conventions and temperance meetings.

From March 30 - April 11, 1848 he took a journey that included Harpers Ferry, Baltimore and Washington, D. C., where he toured the Government Offices, the Capitol grounds and other sites of interest.

However, Moses always seemed pleased to return home to his family in Petersburg. In his diary, he would underline his arrival at home, sometimes noting the time of day.

In conclusion, Moses A. Ross was a man of high "Principals and Integrity" who, early in his career, chose to make Petersburg his home. He accomplished a great deal in his early years there and worked hard to help the town progress.

*PLEASE NOTE SOURCE: Public Relations Committee of "The Old Petersburg-Addison Historical Society dated: 1992

Submitted by: Lawson L. "Buddy" Duckworth

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