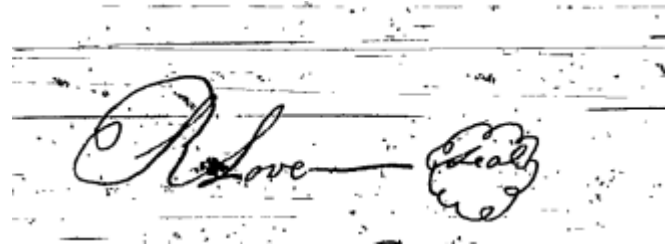
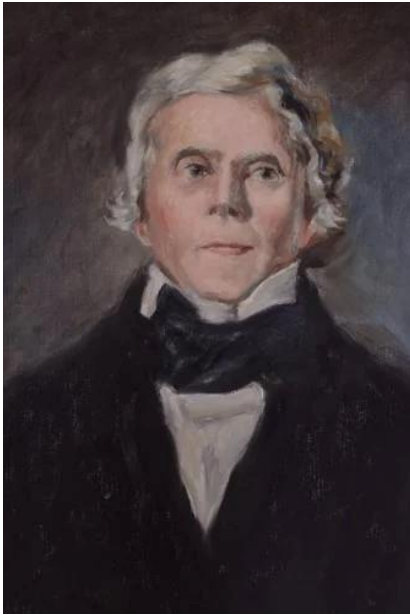


Robert Love



Robert Love was born on 11 May, 1760 in Augusta County, Virginia. He was the son of Samuel and Dorcas Love. He joined the military in 1776, and was a soldier for the Virginia militia in Wythe County, Virginia. Later that same year, he served in Colonel William Christian's army against the Cherokees. He was stationed at Fort Patrick Henry near Long Island of the Holston in present-day Kingsport. As a Colonel, he was present at the Battle of Kings Mountain, marching with the Overmountain Men.

After the war, he emigrated to eastern Tennessee from Virginia, settled on a farm along the Nolichucky River, and married Mary Ann Dillard. They were the parents of twelve children. The first four children, born prior to 1792, were born while living in what was Washington County, now modern-day Unicoi County. By his own accounts, Love had few resources when arriving in Tennessee, but he apparently thrived, for he and Thomas Love began buying land there. As a militia captain, he gathered tax list information for the Greasy Cove area in 1791.

It was in Greasy Cove, that Andrew Jackson and Robert Love almost came to blows in a fight over a horse race. According to the late historian Wanda Harrell, Jackson moved into east Tennessee, and heard that Robert Love had a horse, Victor of All, who had the reputation of being a supreme racer. Jackson challenged Love to a horse race. The day of the race, Jackson's jockey became ill – some accounts speculate the rider may have been drunk. Love asked to ride in the race instead. Jackson agreed to allow it.

Love's horse won, and Jackson was furious! As Harrell wrote in her account of the race, "when Jackson denounced the entire Love family as a band of land grabbing pirates, Love stood still no longer, and fierily retorted, 'You are nothing but a damned, long, gangling, sorrel-topped soap stick!' A fight broke out between the two, but before it became too serious, friends of both parties interceded, leading the men off the grounds in different directions." Some versions of the story claim that Jackson believed his jockey's illness was the result of liquor provided by Robert Love.

In 1784, people in this area attempted to form the State of Franklin. Unsatisfied with the lack of protection provided by North Carolina, many believed that governing their own state was the best plan to see that the people had more of a voice. Robert Love opposed the movement. His beliefs were not popular, however, as most people in the area favored leaving North Carolina.

In early February of 1788, the State of Franklin was almost finished. Jonathan Pugh, sheriff of Washington County was ordered by the county court under Colonel John Tipton to seize property of John Sevier, who had been chosen governor of the new state, for taxes owed to the state. The sheriff seized some of Sevier's property, including several slaves, from his home while he was in Greene County. Sevier's property and slaves were brought to Colonel Tipton's cabin for safekeeping. This action led to the Battle of the State of Franklin. John Sevier was charged with treason by North Carolina, relating to his attacks against Native Americans in this area. When Tipton rode out to arrest Sevier, he surrendered to Robert Love. The two travelled together to North Carolina where Sevier was jailed, but never prosecuted. Love was one of only a few delegates to vote against a new constitution for Franklin.

In 1833, Robert Love attempted to obtain a pension from the Federal Government, but was not having any success. For the next several years, he attempted to convince the government of his eligibility, by having comrades write letters attesting to his service record. One person that he reached out to was a bit surprising—President Andrew Jackson. Jackson did, indeed, write a letter for him, stating in part,

“...I sincerely regret to find from the contents of your letter the treatment which that worthy man & patriot Colonel Robert Love has received at the hands of the Pension Office – that a man who through life has sustained such an exemplary character, honesty, & probity, should be suspected in his decline of life, must be truly mortifying to him, as well as to the people of North Carolina who have shown by their repeated acts of confidence in him, their high estimation of his moral worth. As you have requested, it gives me pleasure to state my knowledge of Colonel Robert Love. I became acquainted with him in Salisbury North Carolina, I think in the fall of 1784, and have known him ever since and I hazard nothing in saying that no man in this union has sustained a higher reputation for integrity then Colonel Robert Love, with all men & with all parties...”

Love stated in his pension application file that he was bed-ridden at that time, and was unable to walk without a cane for the last eleven years of his life. He had been kicked on the hip by a horse.

Robert Love died in Haywood County, North Carolina in 1845, and is buried there. The painting of Robert Love at the top of this article hangs in the old Haywood County Courthouse. Love donated the land for the county seat, and named it Waynesville.

Today, when driving on I-26 near Erwin, you will notice signs directing the way to “Jackson Love Highway.” This road was named for Robert Love, who owned property in the town, and President Andrew Jackson.



The map below shows two of Robert Love's land grants, North Carolina grants #732, and 1154. This land is in the town of Erwin, modern-day Unicoi County.



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